

The Irish Catholic

MARY KENNY

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Warning of parish 'class divide' if lay ministry not funded properly

Ruadhán Jones

There is a growing danger of a "class divide" emerging between parishes if there isn't proper financial investment in lay ministries, the country's first ever parish manager has warned.

Lay leaders have also said that it will be "impossible" to encourage co-responsibility and encourage laypeople to take on more responsibility if there isn't proper pay and job security in the future.

The warnings come as Irish dioceses push for expanded lay ministries and more responsibility for parishioners to encourage them to fulfil their baptismal call, as part of the synodal pathway.

There is already a "split" between middle- and working-class parishes, as working-class parishes are finding "it harder and harder" to get volunteers, Belfast-based Glen Philips told *The Irish Catholic*.

Mr Philips made the headlines in 2011 when he was appointed Ireland's first parish manager in St Oliver Plunkett's parish.

"If it is difficult to get volunteers, it's going to be very

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'O come, O come Emmanuel'



The children of Terra Sancta College in Bethlehem welcome the custos of the Holy Land Fr Francesco Patton, in Manger Square on Saturday, December 2, as Advent begins in the birthplace of Christ, amidst the ongoing war in Gaza. Photo: CNA/Marinella Bandini

Shane MacGowan: a man of 'deep seated prayerfulness'

Chai Brady

Shane MacGowan had an "inner Faith that spoke to him" according to a member of The Priests, who recorded *Little Drummer Boy* with the renowned musician.

Tributes have poured in for the former frontman of The Pogues who has often spoken about the importance of prayer in his life. The influence of his Catholic upbringing is often reflected in his songwriting and art. Mr MacGowan had a deep devotion to Our Lady and will be laid to rest on Friday, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, one of the members of The Priests, Fr Martin O'Hagan said that when he met Mr MacGowan in 2010 for the recording in Dublin that "It was a wonderful experience I have to say. He spoke about his own life, particularly mentioning his own mother who had a profound influence on him growing up and probably enabled him to have the skills in regard to the Faith."

"I think through all his life he was a man who had an inner faith that spoke to him and that would have impressed me about him. Prayerfulness was very much part of his identity, deep seated because of his early childhood, I suppose it was something that gave him life and gave him hope," he said.

In a 2017 interview on RTE's *Sunday with Miriam*, Mr MacGowan said: "I've seen miracles and miracles have happened in my life."

"I was brought up an Irish Catholic and I pray, I don't go to Mass every Sunday, I do get Communion when I go to Mass but I don't go to Confession because I don't think I do anything bad enough to go to Confession," he said.

However he described Confession as an "amazingly comforting thing".

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Four killed at Mass in bomb attack

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Grim reality of 'assisted dying' slippery slope

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BISHOP DORAN

Lay catechists needed to fan flame of faith

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The Irish Catholic

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The lost art of waiting

I think if we're honest, none of us actually like waiting for things. Think of the tedium of waiting in the doctor's surgery, or at the dentist. Or, if like me you use public transport, waiting on buses that never seem to arrive – and yet waiting is part of life. As is hope, as is disappointment.

We all know that young children can't hide the fact that they find waiting difficult. Car journeys are punctuated with cries of "are we there yet, are we there yet, are we there yet..." – this time of year, in particular, brings constant questions of "how many more sleeps until Santa?" The excitement is infectious.

Part and parcel

Waiting is part and parcel of the Christian life. In fact, it's of the essence of the entirety of salvation history. Eucharistic Prayer IV captures this sense poetically:

"Even when we disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon us to the power of death, but helped us seek and

find you.

Again and again, you offered us a covenant, and through the prophets taught us to hope for salvation..."

“Waiting has become a lost art, and the challenge for Christians is not only to wait, but to wait well”

For Christians, of course, that hoped-for salvation came in the incarnation of Jesus Christ that we celebrate especially at Christmas.

I was struck at the weekend, even before Advent had begun, to hear the presenter on RTÉ Radio One on Saturday morning wish a contributor a "very merry Christmas".

Christmas seems to be getting earlier every year, at least in the marketplace.

“Where is the darkness that we are unwilling to let God touch to heal us and make all things new in our lives?”



Editor's Comment
Michael Kelly

Waiting has become a lost art, and the challenge for Christians is not only to wait, but to wait well.

We might even say that Advent is the season for waiting well. We are joyfully anticipating the commemoration of the coming of the Christ-child at Christmas.

Pretending

Of course, we're not fools and we're not pretending that we are living in a time before Jesus, or trying to recreate the time before the incarnation to imagine what it is like.

No, God has definitively entered the world – and history is changed forever. But, Advent might be a time to ask do we allow ourselves to be constantly changed with our encounter with Jesus?

Where are the parts of our lives where Jesus has yet to enter because we have not opened ourselves

up to his loving and merciful embrace?

Where is the darkness that we are unwilling to let God touch to heal us and make all things new in our lives?

That's how we can live Advent well, reflecting on where we need Jesus more in our lives, in our families and in our communities and inviting him in and preparing to let him and meet him anew day after day.

There'll be time for the marketplace, and the presents, and the turkey and ham and even the prosecco – we are not against material things and God, who took on human flesh, rejoices in matter.

But, a truly "merry Christmas" is found in using Advent well as a time of waiting and preparation.

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Warning of parish 'class divide' if lay ministry not funded properly

» **Continued on Page 2**

difficult to get almost full-time lay ministers who are doing it on top of a job as well," said Mr Philips.

There is a "danger of a class divide" where wealthier parishes have loads of resources and working-class parishes have none if there isn't proper funding, he said.

"I think there's a danger of us missing out on really good candidates, because there are people there - if there was a fully-funded route - who would be excellent lay

ministers."

Some middle-class parishes benefit from people who retire early and "may have 20 years to give their retirement to loads of good causes", the former pastoral manager said.

But parishes in working class areas don't have that opportunity and "are finding it very difficult" because people have to work to earn a living because there is no credible role for laypeople in paid employment in the Church.

According to Ger

Gallagher, an experienced lay pastoral worker and interim Secretary General of the Association of Missionaries and Religious in Ireland (AMRI), it will be "impossible" to give laypeople more responsibilities "and not remunerate them" properly.

"To expect people to do it voluntarily, I don't think there would be the commitment here," said Mr Gallagher. "You're basically looking at people who are retired, who have the means to look after themselves," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

"I don't think we need just retirement people involved in lay ministry, we need younger people involved as well."

He called for a clear plan around investment in lay ministry, saying there has been a decline in lay people actively employed by the Church in recent years.

Ever since Pope St John Paul II's 1988 document *Christifideles Laici*, "there has been a role and a vision for laity within Church but it really hasn't been actualised in a real way" in Ireland, said Mr Gallagher.

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Italy's 'most handsome man' set to pursue priesthood

Jason Osborne

A young man once voted the most handsome man in Italy has quit his modelling job in order to join the priesthood.

Edoardo Santini (21) was just 17 years old when he was voted Italy's most handsome man in 2019, as part of a modelling pageant.

The social media star took to Instagram to share with his followers his plans to give up on modelling and acting in favour of serving God in the priesthood.

"At 21 years of age I find myself on the path towards becoming a priest, God willing," Mr Santini said, adding that he's "decided to give up modelling work, acting and dance".

"But I won't abandon all my passions, I'll just live them differently, offering them up to God," the young man said.

Mr Santini reflected that at just 21 years old, he finds himself "taking the path to become, God willing, a priest".

"In these past years I've been able to meet people who have shown me what it means to be 'church'...They have given me the strength to investigate this question that I've taken with me from childhood but various fears stopped me from studying it at a deeper level. Last year, I took the first step."

Mr Santini said that the discernment decision to live with two priests was the "best experience of my life," and that he is now

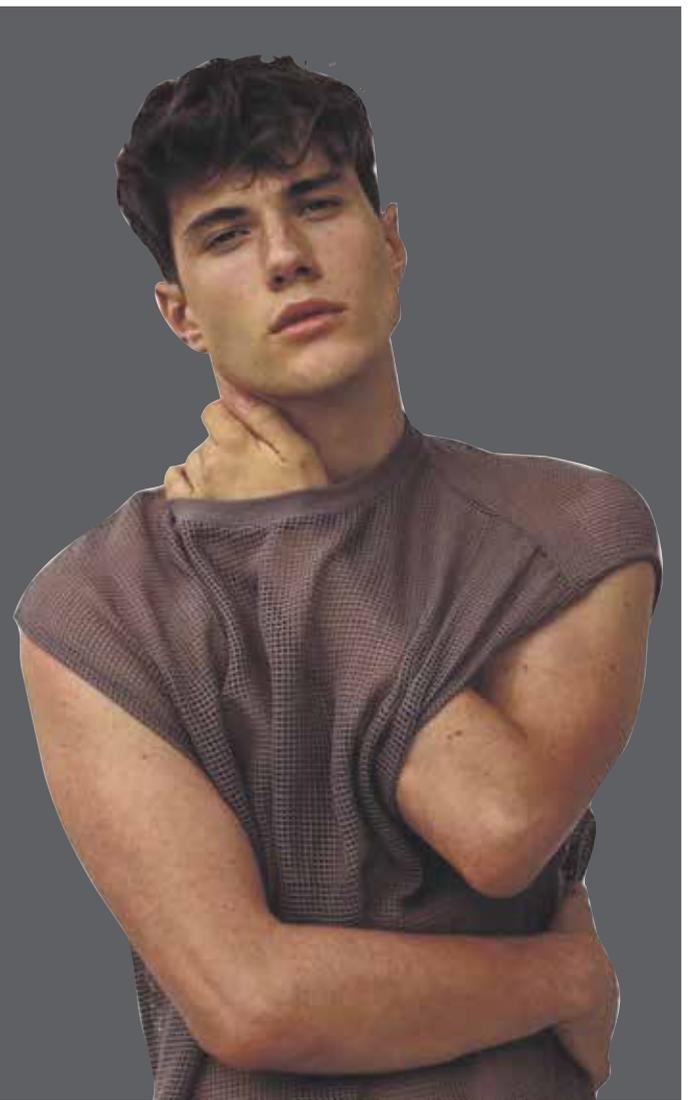
enrolled in a seminary near Florence.

At the end of his discernment, he said it was "natural" to ask the bishop to enter the preparatory course for priesthood, and that he's now studying theology and serving two parishes in the Florentine diocese.

Mr Santini received backlash for the decision, "even in my family," but that he now "can shout: I am Edoardo, I am 21 years old and I am happy".

Mr Santini shared a clip of himself on Instagram praying in a church, with the caption: "I got back on my path."

He also updated his profile bio to read, "I'm a Christian, priest wannabe".



PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY



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Michael Kelly to step down as IC Editor

Staff Reporter

Long-serving Editor of *The Irish Catholic* Michael Kelly has announced that he will step down from the position early in 2024, after more than 12 years in the Editor's chair.

Mr Kelly, a native of Co. Tyrone, served as the paper's Rome Correspondent before joining the Dublin office in 2005. He was appointed Deputy Editor in 2008, and succeeded Garry O'Sullivan as Editor in 2012.

As Editor, Mr Kelly has been a respected and trusted commentator and broadcaster on religious and social affairs, both at home and abroad. He has also frequently been a guest speaker at Church gatherings, clergy conferences and parish missions and novenas.

"It has been the great honour of my life to serve as Editor of *The Irish Catholic*," Mr Kelly said of his coming departure. "Over the past 135 years, *The Irish Catholic* has told the story of Irish Catholics in good times and bad, and always sought to be a voice for Catholics both within the Church and in the wider society.

"When I was appointed

Editor in 2012, I said then that I wanted everyone for whom the words 'Irish' and 'Catholic' resonate with to see something of themselves within the paper, with the help of great colleagues I think we achieved that," Mr Kelly said.

"I move on with mixed emotions, but you have to know when you have given as much as you can give to one thing, and it is time to move on – and sometimes a desk in Dublin can be a very dangerous place for a journalist from which to view the world," he said.

Publisher Garry O'Sullivan said that he wished Michael well in this new chapter in his life and thanked him for the extraordinary editorial judgement that he brought to the job. "Michael is not replaceable, there is no one that I've met that would match him for his judgement and encyclopaedic knowledge of the Church, its rules and laws, its customs and traditions, its history and politics.

"But most of all, Michael is and was a great friend to all who work here and his humour and sense of fun will be sorely missed," Mr O'Sullivan said.

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Tánaiste urges calm over Armenian Quarter dispute in Jerusalem

Jason Osborne

Tensions are sky-high in Jerusalem's Old City as a battle plays out between the city's small Armenian Christian community and an Australian-Israeli businessman, which sees the Christian presence in the Armenian Quarter of the old city threatened by development plans.

In a statement on the

recent developments, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said that they are "worried" that these events "potentially endanger the Armenian presence in Jerusalem".

Armenians have had a presence in Jerusalem since the fourth Century.

November saw Israeli settlers aided by dogs and bulldozers disrupt a long-

running sit-in at a site known as the 'Cow's Garden', where businessman Danny Rothman plans to build a hotel.

"The provocations that are being used by the alleged developers to deploy incendiary tactics threaten to erase the Armenian presence in the area, weakening and endangering the Christian

presence in the Holy Land," the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said.

Asked by *The Irish Catholic* whether the Tánaiste intends to address this threat to the Christian presence in the Holy Land, a Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson said that the "Tánaiste's position – and that of Ireland's EU and international partners – is clear".

"It is imperative to preserve the status quo of the holy sites and ensure peaceful coexistence between Christians, Jews and Muslims," in the Holy Land, the spokesperson said.

"The special status and character of Jerusalem and its Old City must be preserved and respected by all."

Mr Rothman's Xana Capi-

tal Group reportedly made a secret deal in 2021 with the Armenian Christian patriarchate to lease a swath of the Armenian Quarter, which includes part of the Armenian Theological Seminary and several family homes.

When the deal became public, the local Christian community reacted with outrage.

Referendum would downgrade marriage – campaigners

Staff Reporter

Pro-family campaigners have warned that a proposed referendum to amend the Constitution would be a "further downgrading of the importance of marriage to society".

The Government announced on Tuesday that it intended to ask the people to amend Article 41 of the Constitution to pro-

vide for a wider concept of Family; and delete Article 41.2 of the Constitution to remove text on the role of women in the home, and recognise family care.

A spokesman for The Iona Institute said that while they needed to study the wording before giving a full reaction, "our initial response is that we would see the rewording of the section on the family to include

relationships other than marriage as a further downgrading of the importance of marriage to society, indicating that the State does not see any special value in the institution of marriage".

They also pointed out that "the proposed replacement to the section on mothers in the home, no longer mentions the home at all.

This seems highly significant. Why not mention the home? The Government could make the language in this section gender-neutral but still give special mention to the home and its value to people".

The so-called family amendment proposes to describe the family as "founded on marriage or on other durable relationships".

Conference celebrates 'unique' Catholic education in Ireland

Staff reporter

A week-long conference in Kilkenny, underlined how "distinct and unique" Catholic education is in Ireland, at a time when it is frequently under the spotlight.

The joint initiative of St

Kieran's College and the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) brought together education leaders and teachers for a conference on 'International Perspectives on Forming Catechesis/ Catholic Educational Leadership'.

One of the conference

organisers Fr Eamonn Conway, Prof. of Integral Human Development at UNDA, said it helped Irish educators to "recover confidence in representing and battling to protect" the Catholic ethos.

There was a "growth in confidence and clarity" for those

who attended, while a sense of the "fragility" was present as well.

While the event was intended to be a one-off, Prof. Conway said they were "very encouraged" by the conference and would continue to explore similar projects.

Proud son and mum...



Newly ordained Deacon Jordan Mac Gabhann is pictured with his mother Majella Smith after being ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Martin Hayes, part of his path to priesthood for the Diocese of Kilmore.

THE SYNODAL TIMES



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How Advent has been eclipsed...

The supermarket sound system is playing 'Rudolfph the Rednosed Reindeer', while at the church, we are reminded that this is Advent, the season of quietly preparing for the Nativity – and not yet Christmas itself.

The contrast between what the secular culture expects of us, and what Christianity teaches, is obvious. Time was when a Christmas tree, or decorations, were only put up on Christmas Eve: but Christmas now begins well before Advent in the world where we dwell.

And maybe – what harm?



Mary Kenny

The Christmas lights and decorations cheer people up in the midst of a bleak mid-winter. The Christmas tree is a pagan symbol anyway, with its roots in German forest fairytales, and is a late import to the Christmas tradition. So it's hardly out of place to start ornamenting it in early December.

It would be priggish and

mean-spirited to be overly strict or exacting about these matters.

Lost

And yet, as Advent has, for most of society, now been erased, something has been lost. The 'Advent Calendar', which was once a way of measuring the wait – the coming of – the birth of Jesus

is now largely just another consumerist indulgence.

'Advent Calendars' may now offer chocolates, alcohol, perfumes, lipsticks, and almost any other artefact desired. They would be denounced as examples of vanity and greed by traditionalist preachers.

Attentive Christians still ponder seriously on the meaning of Advent; but what has been lost to a wider soci-

ety is the understanding of waiting, preparing, reflective expectation.

Anachronistic

Because we can access so much, now, at the click of a mouse, the notion of patiently waiting and carefully preparing seems anachronistic. The idea that a feast is all the better if it is preceded by a fast may appear to be quaint. The credit card, remember, was

introduced to a mass market with the unforgettable slogan: "Take the waiting out of wanting."

But after the supermarket music has moved on to a blaring rendition of 'Jingle Bells' I find it strangely restful to hear a thoughtful address from the altar about the meaning of Advent, and putting the waiting back into the great main event.

“Attentive Christians still ponder seriously on the meaning of Advent; but what has been lost to a wider society is the understanding of waiting, preparing, reflective expectation”

Consumer culture parenting...



Heiress Paris Hilton, one of the many celebrities who have embraced the practice of surrogacy.

In October the EU parliament officially designated baby surrogacy as a form of human trafficking but I'm not sure this will halt the practice.

It seems to have become fashionable among celebrities like the international model Naomi Campbell, the screen stars Amber Heard, Lucy Liu, Cameron Diaz and Elizabeth Banks, the media personalities Kim Kardashian and Khloé Kar-

dashian, among others.

The model and heiress Paris Hilton had her first baby by a surrogate last year, a son, and has just welcomed her new infant, a daughter, by the same method.

Some people seek surrogacy citing health reasons or infertility. Male couples like Elton John and David Furnish obviously require a female to carry a pregnancy.

Some of the celebrities cite work convenience or fear of childbirth as the motive. The actor Alec Baldwin and his wife Hilaria had a surrogate baby almost simultaneously with a biological child through the normal channels.

It's been reported that the average surrogate mother is paid around \$50,000 for each pregnancy, which is a lot of money for a needy young woman.

● Seán Ó Briain of Bray in Co. Wicklow recently wrote to *The Irish Catholic* [The Irish Catholic – November 30, 2023] expressing his concerns that the history of the Church in Ireland is inadequately taught, and perhaps weakly defended, to younger people now.

Indeed so – a one-sided and dark version of our history has become the norm. The Booker Prize Winner Paul Lynch has described Ireland to the influential *Financial Times* as having been a “theocracy”, which is rubbish.

From the inception of the Free State, as the historian JJ Lee has written, Ireland remained a parliamentary democracy with free institutions, an independent judiciary and an uncorrupted civil service.

It was conservative, even old-fashioned, and there were abuses of power – as there are everywhere. But it was no ‘theocracy’ –

like Iran.

I wrote a book last year, *The Way We Were*, in which I endeavoured to present a narrative of Ireland since 1922 – not a whitewash, but a balanced view of the context of the past, and the normality of many Irish Catholic values in the lives of people such as Ken Whitaker, Delia Murphy, Seán Mac Réamoinn, Mary Lavin, Frank Duff.

I can't say it attracted many rave reviews – except for a wonderful message from the historian Lady Antonia Fraser, who called it “fascinating and intriguing”.

I think it will take another generation to see history in a more nuanced way, grasp the wider picture of how the Faith gave birth to the Irish State, as it had sustained the people for many centuries. If that includes the ‘warts and all’ of human failings, it doesn't define the whole story.

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Selling Bishop's House in Dromore signals no new bishop

Chai Brady

After more than five years without a bishop the Diocese of Dromore's plan to sell Bishop's House and surrounding land in Newry to fund their redress scheme signals there will not be another bishop appointed.

The land is believed to be worth about £3 million (€3.5 million).

It is expected that Dromore and the Archdiocese of Armagh will be overseen by one bishop, similar to the announcement in 2022 that the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora, and the Diocese of Clonfert would be led by Bishop Michael Duignan.

It was the first move in reforms that are expected to see a dramatic reduction in the number of bishops in Ireland. Due to resistance to formal amalgamation from the hierarchy, it's believed the process of uniting two dioceses, while both retain their individual identity and separate structures, will be the way forward.

However, a major barrier to this process is the financial

liability Armagh archdiocese would face due to the costly redress scheme currently underway in Dromore.

Primate of All Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin has led Dromore as apostolic administrator since 2019. He has prioritised responding and "bringing healing" to survivors of abuse, launching their redress scheme in 2021.

In a letter to the Faithful of Dromore in late November, Archbishop Martin noted that "remaining diocesan funds are limited".

He said that it is "vitaly important that the diocese has the necessary human and financial resources going forward for safeguarding best practice and for responding, via counselling, support and just compensation and redress to those who have been abused".

For this reason, the prelate said he has been working to identify diocesan assets that could be sold to meet "existing and ongoing safeguarding responsibilities".

He said the Directors of the

Dromore Diocesan Trust have identified lands at Armagh Road, Newry, which it proposes to sell in order to finance the liabilities of the diocese – this includes Bishop's House.

He said: "Given their proximity to the amenities of Newry City Centre and to various educational and retail facilities, we understand that sections of the land would likely be very suitable for residential development in order to help meet the identified social and private housing need in the Newry area."

Archbishop Martin added:

"On behalf of the diocese, I once more apologise unreservedly for the hurt and damage caused to victims and survivors of any priest or church representative acting under its authority. Such behaviour towards children and vulnerable people was and remains abhorrent, inexcusable, and indefensible.

"I also apologise to the people of the diocese who have felt that their trust in the Church was betrayed and that they were badly let down."

Irish priest in Philippines tells of bomb attack 'shock'

Jason Osborne

A bomb attack that saw four killed and dozens injured at a university Mass in the southern Philippines has "shocked" the Church there according to an Irish Columban living in Manila.

Media reports state the December 3 explosion caused panic among dozens of students and teachers in a gymnasium where Mass was taking place, at Mindanao State University in Marawi, capital of Lanao del Sur province.

At least four people were killed, and nearly 50 others were brought to two hospitals for treatment, authorities said. The explosion took place at around 7am local time.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Fr Shay Cullen said that "everybody was so shocked" and "very, very sad".

"Many people were killed.

It's very worrying that there might be some upsurge again in the campaign against the Church. This was done by an Islamic jihad kind of group, ISIS, and they apparently stashed a bomb somewhere inside the university gym that was being used for Sunday Mass," Fr Cullen said.

Later that day, Islamic State militants claimed responsibility for the deadly blast, according to *Reuters* and *The New York Times*.

"It's not a new campaign against the Church," Fr Cullen said, adding that there's "almost no defence" against this kind of attack.

"The Catholic Church, even us Columbans, are working in dialogue with Islam, with the Islamic communities to try and bring mutual understanding, respect and work together to bring peace to Mindanao."

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Filipino 'rooster Mass' sees Belfast up bright and early

Staff reporter

Belfast's Catholic community will be gathering bright and early to celebrate 'Misa de Gallo' or the 'Rooster Mass', with St Vincent De Paul parish priest in Ligoniel, Fr Vincent Cushnahan describing it as a "beautiful" Filipino tradition illuminating the Church in Ireland.

"In the Philippines there's an old tradition whereby families would gather the nine days prior to Christmas, I suppose a novena in preparation for Christmas, but that would be very early in the morning for two reasons. Firstly, because it gets very warm during the day. Second, it sets the day up and they meet family and friends

in the run-up to Christmas," Fr Cushnahan told *The Irish Catholic*.

The Filipino community have "taken it with them as the diaspora" to communities across the world," including in Ireland.

"The community here maybe 13 or 14 years ago asked the then-parish priest would it be possible for him to facilitate that tradition for them here, and he agreed to that and it's been an ongoing tradition since," Fr Cushnahan said.

The *Misa de Gallo* will run from December 16-24 inclusive at 6am in St Vincent De Paul Parish, Ligoniel, Belfast, and will be followed by traditional Filipino breakfast food in the church porch.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pope Francis meets with Celtic football team

Pope Francis met with players from Celtic football Club, a team founded by an Irish religious brother.

The Pope, who is known to be an avid soccer fan, met with the team November 29 while still recovering from the flu and lung inflammation, according to the Vatican.

Francis told the team: "Excuse me, but with this cold, I cannot speak much, but I am better than yesterday." The Pope asked a priest to read his message to the athletes and then greeted them one by one.

Celtic FC is based in Glasgow and was founded in 1887 by Brother Walfrid, a consecrated Marist brother, to help raise funds to feed the poor.

Births down seven percent in second quarter of the year

The number of births decreased by almost 7% from April to May of this year when compared with the same period in 2022, according to the latest stats from the Central Statistics Office.

Commenting on the figures, Seán O'Connor of the CSO said: "we can see the number of births has decreased by 1,002 (or 6.9%) when compared with the same quarter in the previous year, down from 14,449 in Q2 2022 to 13,447 in Q2 2023.

"Births to mothers aged less than 20 fell from 222 in Q2 2022 to 176 in Q2 2023. The average age of mothers was 33.3 years in Q2 2023, up slightly from 33.2 reported in the same quarter in 2022, while 10 years ago, the average age was 32.2 years for the same period."

Archbishop Martin in Malta praises ties with Ireland

Attending the annual Council of European Bishops' Conferences plenary assembly in Malta last week, Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin took the opportunity to highlight the ties between Ireland and the island nation.

"I am very conscious that I'm following in the footsteps of one of my predecessor Archbishops of Armagh, Cardinal Michael Logue, who visited Floriana back in 1895," Dr Martin said during a homily.

"We are not absolutely sure why Cardinal Logue came to Malta in the first place, although it's likely he either was friendly with your archbishop, or with someone who lived here on the island, or perhaps he simply wanted to pay a pastoral visit to the many Irish people who lived here including those who were billeted in Malta as soldiers," Dr Martin said, thanking the Maltese for their hospitality.

'Malign forces at work' says prelate after riots

The Archbishop of Dublin has warned there are "malign forces at work that exploit anxieties to foment hatred" in a homily following the riots in Dublin on November 23.

Speaking on the first Sunday of Advent in St Andrew's Church, Westland Row, Archbishop Dermot Farrell said: "Communities that are grounded in solidarity and a sense of fairness are the best defence against the corrosive influence of those who seek to foster division and violence.

"Strong communities are built on trust and foster trust. They express their values by supporting each other. They are sufficiently confident in their identity to welcome newcomers," he said.

The riots occurred following the stabbing of three children and a woman at Parnell Square.

Waiting for baby Jesus...



Students from St Eithne's Primary School in Derry lay down pieces of straw into the school's crib as they prepare for the coming of baby Jesus.



KNOCK

Advent Programme

'A LIGHT TO ENLIGHTEN THE WORLD' – ALL NIGHT VIGIL

Thursday, December 7th

Confessions from 10pm until Midnight on the night of Thursday 7th December. The Vigil will continue in the Basilica from Midnight with Rosary, Holy Hour, Reflections and Prayer, concluding with Mass at 4am on December 8th.

'SEEING IS BELIEVING: REFLECTING ON ART AS A GLIMPSE OF THE SACRED'

Saturday, December 9th: 'Regarding Mary; A Visual Inquiry into Images of the Virgin in Art'

Saturday, December 16th: 'With Respect to Art; Looking at the Miracle that is Christmas'

These illustrated lectures are designed to make sense of Art. Indeed, Nora Donnelly hopes to help not only to make some sense of Art but to make *new* sense by attending to what we see just for its own sake. In this way she hopes to show that God is immanent and embedded, in all things visual and that our world is charged with the wonder of His presence.

Lectures will take place in the Prayer Centre at Knock Shrine at 10.30am and will last for approximately one hour. For bookings, see www.eventbrite.ie.

'CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT'

Sunday, December 17th at 8pm

Join us for a joyous evening of Christmas carols, hymns and festive favourites at Knock Basilica. Featuring Schola Cantorum Basilicae and Knock Youth Choir, with ConTempo String quartet and organist Mark Keane. Admission free and all are welcome. This performance will also be streamed live on the Knock Shrine website.

ADVENT RECONCILIATION SERVICE

Tuesday, December 19th at 8pm

An evening of music, prayer and reflection as we prepare for Christmas. Join us as we make ourselves ready in heart and mind for the coming of Christ. The service will take place in the contemplative surroundings of the Chapel of Reconciliation at Knock Shrine. Musical accompaniment will be provided by the Schola Cantorum Basilicae.

www.knockshrine.ie



Niamh Uí Bhriain

The View



Pro-life frontline organisations must be supported as abortions surge

Imagine that most people reading this are saddened and appalled by the number of abortions now taking place in Ireland. We've gone from being one of the safest countries in the world for mother and baby, to seeing our abortion rate soar to heart-breaking numbers in just under five years.

Equally saddening is the smug enthusiasm of Government ministers who seem focused on actions that push the number of babies killed by abortion higher and higher. There never seems to be a point where the abortion rate might give ministers pause, despite the false assurances given in the referendum that the procedure – the ending of a life – would be “rare”.

The numbers are stark: 6,666 abortions in 2019 alone. Another 6,577 in 2020 and 6,700 lives ended the following year. And then a massive jump again to 8,156 in 2022, and indications that there may have been up to 10,000 abortions in 2023.

What are pro-life advocates to do in the face of so much reckless indifference to human life? The first step is to realise that we are undertaking the enormous, decades-long, task of rebuilding a broken culture. It won't be easy and it will take time.

Demographic

We can also be sure in the certainty that, while a minority might have voted pro-life in 2018, we represent the section of society that is not aborting our own future. Given the unprecedented demographic shifts we are currently seeing, change might come sooner than expected.

But what we also have is an unshakable certainty, an enduring truth, that prevails: that every baby is precious and wanted and loved in God's eyes. And that we must work to cherish and protect every mother and every baby.

It's also why we must celebrate every baby saved from abortion, and every mother who turns away from what is often sold to



women in need as their “best option”.

“All so-called ‘pro-choice’ campaigners have to offer women is abortion. They have no real solutions”

To that end, it must be an imperative to ensure that the organisations who work on the frontline offering real support and compassion and love to both mother and child are supported to the extent that they become established in every county and with the help of every parish.

This is a mission for pro-life people everywhere, and always has been. It has always been the quietly consistent and selfless volunteers of organisations like Gianna Care, Every Life Counts, and Stanton Healthcare who offered mothers a better answer, and protected so many tiny, vulnerable babies.

All so-called “pro-choice” campaigners have to offer women is abortion. They have no real solutions.

The mission of those frontline organisations is life-saving work, and it can be all-consuming and difficult, but it brings a reward beyond measure, and the knowledge that together we can light a candle rather than cursing the darkness.

Truth

The truth is that the Government is simply throwing millions at facilitating abortion. GPs can earn more from providing abortion than they would from providing healthcare to pregnant women, for example. A GP can make €450 from giving a woman abortion pills to kill a living growing baby, but he or she will only be paid €250 for providing care to a woman throughout her pregnancy.

It shows exactly where this government's priorities lie. It is callous and

shameful and profoundly morally wrong. In fact, between advertising and payments to GPs and other costs, the state has already paid more than €45 million to provide abortion in under five years – money taken from your taxes and mine, of course.

“It's knowing how to offer women the kind of truthful, compassionate, counselling that makes all the difference”

So the daily work done by the wonderful frontline groups – who of course receive no funding at all from the government – is even more important. Women are being hor-

ribly deceived by the whole apparatus of the State selling abortion to them as an easy option. In that situation, showing a mother that she can choose life is often all the more difficult.

It might mean calling on a whole network to find temporary housing or a job or other vital supports for a woman who is often in very difficult circumstances. Those circumstances can include violence or poverty – or being terrified because you are being told both your lives will be ruined.

Desperate

Sometimes needs are desperate, such as when Gianna Care sought to find accommodation for a young mother who was being kicked out by her family because she wouldn't have an abortion. I thought of the Holy Family and their desperate search for shelter that night in Bethlehem, and of this Government which can pump millions into abortion but which can't house the homeless.

And sometimes the needs are very pressing, such as establishing a new network of parents who have carried and loved very sick babies and who know how important support and kindness and real information is at that time.

If we want to make sure that every life counts, then we need to help the heroic efforts of those who work night and day to help parents cherish their babies no matter how short their lives. We need to make sure an alternative to abortion can be heard and be sought and found.

At Christmas, many good people give generously to these frontline organisations so that they can continue to offer hope and love and real compassion. Just as the light of the Christ Child extends beyond this holy season, we need to work and pray that the frontline heroes working to provide real alternatives to mothers are supported in and out of season.

“If we want to make sure that every life counts, then we need to help the heroic efforts of those who work night and day to help parents cherish their babies no matter how short their lives”

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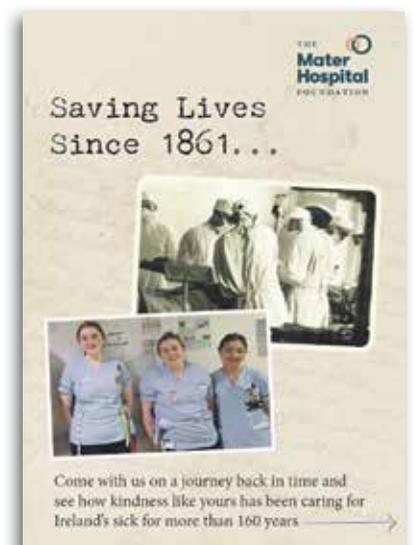
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Committee hears about grim reality of the 'assisted dying' slippery slope



The idea that so-called assisted dying can be limited is a dangerous lie, writes **David Quinn**

The Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying has been hearing expert testimony on the matter for months now, both for and against.

The term 'assisted dying' is, of course, a euphemism. It really means assisted suicide where you administer a lethal drug or gas to yourself, or euthanasia, when a doctor does it for you.

The committee

The committee was established after a Dáil vote on a private member's bill by left-wing TD, Gino Kenny, that proposed to permit assisted suicide for anyone with a terminal illness. The bill did not stipulate how close to death the person needed to be, although supporters of the proposed law generally say the person should be within six months of dying, even though doctors often find these things very hard to determine.

In any event, the general principle behind the law was supported by around half of the TDs, including some Government ministers, and it was agreed that a committee should look into the matter and then return to the Dáil with a report for further consideration. The report is due around March, although these things often get delayed, but presumably we will see it by next summer.

Without doubt it will recommend a law permitting assisted suicide for those within six months of death and also recommend all sorts of 'safeguards' to try and ensure the law is not

abused.

We will then need to see what the Oireachtas does. Will the Government back the recommendations and draft the necessary legislation, or will one of the other parties or individual TDs do so and the Government permit a free vote in which case the law could easily pass?

I doubt if the Government will want a vote this side of the next General Election, which must take place in the early part of 2025, but after that, we could well see a bill before the Oireachtas that is passed that year or the year after.

In other words, we could have assisted suicide and/or euthanasia in Ireland by late 2025 or at some stage in 2026, unless TDs start to listen to the voices of common sense, and especially to all the doctors who are opposed to assisted suicide.

They would do well, for example, to have a read of what professional medical organisations have been telling the 'assisted dying' committee. All of them are concerned that once you permit assisted suicide even on seemingly limited grounds, the law will then be expanded to allow ever more people, including those who are not terminally ill, or are not physically sick at all, but have a mental illness, to avail of the procedure.

The committee also heard from overseas experts who live in countries which already permit assisted suicide/euthanasia. One of them was Theo Boer from the Netherlands, which has a very permissive regime and has seen the numbers availing of it grow into the thousands each year.

“For the sake of preserving true dignity and true choice for disabled, ill, old, and other structurally vulnerable people in Ireland, do not be Canada”

He told the committee that in the 20 years since the law was passed, the numbers availing of it had quadrupled and, in some neighbourhoods, medically



assisted euthanasia accounts for 15% to 20% of all deaths. These figures are underestimated, he said, as a governmental evaluation has found that between 10% and 15% of doctors do not report their participation in the programme.

He also pointed out that insurance companies now provide customers with money so they can avail of 'assisted dying'.

Canada

The committee heard from Canadian experts horrified at how the euthanasia regime is unfolding in their country.

Explaining how the grounds for permitting euthanasia keep expanding in Canada, Dr Heidi Janz of the Health Ethics Centre of the University of Alberta, who is herself severely disabled, pleaded with committee members: "I sit before this Committee today to implore you, for the sake of preserving true dignity and true choice for disabled, ill, old, and other structurally vulnerable people in Ireland, do not be Canada."

There was an interesting dynamic at work on the committee. Pro-euthanasia advocates like Gino Kenny and Lynn Ruane would push back strongly, and often rudely, against experts who pointed out the reality of the slippery slope, but then when

pro-euthanasia experts expressly declared that they want euthanasia to be made available on broad-ranging grounds, there was no pushback.

“They want the procedure made available to any adult who arrives at a 'rational' decision to die”

This was very revealing. Why were they so upset when experts opposed to euthanasia warned of the slippery slope, but had nothing to say when experts in favour of assisted suicide openly declared that they want to go far beyond people within six months of death?

If the likes of Gino Kenny and Lynn Ruane were truly committed to keeping a euthanasia regime restricted, then why had they nothing to say to those euthanasia advocates who don't want the grounds for it to be kept restrictive?

For example, last week the committee heard from Philip Nitschke, the head of Exit International. This is the most radical and extreme of all pro-assisted suicide organisations. They want the procedure made available to any adult who arrives at a 'rational' decision to die.

The person does not have to be sick, either mentally or physically.

Mr Nitschke expressly said that sometimes his organisation helps out couples who wish to die by assisted suicide in Switzerland. One spouse might be very seriously ill, but the other spouse might not be sick at all, but doesn't want to live alone.

Neither Mr Kenny nor Ms Ruane voiced an objection.

Nor did they do so when a woman told the committee at an earlier meeting that their uncle had been helped to die by assisted suicide in Switzerland thanks to a member of Exit.

The head of Exit in the UK has been convicted of three murders in South Africa after he illegally helped three people to die there.

End-of-Life Ireland

But on the less ultra-radical end of the spectrum, the committee heard from Justin McKenna, a lawyer from End-of-Life Ireland. He indicated that he would like to see euthanasia made available to dementia patients when they have reached an advanced stage of the condition and had previously indicated that they would want to die with the help of a doctor once they had become bad enough.

Fine Gael's Emer Higgins,

who asked him the question, raised no objection.

Janie Lazar, chairperson End-of-Life Ireland, told the committee: "We're asking you as legislators, to honour a person who has a terminal or life-limiting diagnosis. Because time alone, 'foreseeable death' ought not be the sole basis for calculating eligibility criteria; some neurodegenerative conditions can go on for years as we see with dementia, with MS."

Note that term 'life-limiting'. She makes a clear distinction between that and a terminal illness. In other words, her organisation wants euthanasia made available to those who are not terminally ill.

Let's see how often RTÉ etc. raise this sort of admission as the debate about euthanasia hots up or will they continue to pretend that the aim of euthanasia advocates is to keep it strictly limited?

We will be told as the debate goes on that talk of the slippery slope is 'scaremongering'. But we can clearly see that it is not. The slippery slope is all too real in countries like Canada, the Netherlands and Belgium, and in addition, advocates here are very clear about what they want, which is a regime that is not restricted to those within six months of death. Don't say we haven't been warned.

Reconciliation as an act of humility



Far from being a guilt trip, Confession is a transformative process that unites us with God writes
Darach Ó Maoláin

I remember on one occasion I had a small-scale debate with some locals of my generation. The debate revolved around the Church and its teachings. Naturally, I defended the Church. My counterparts were vocally disregarding very basic teachings on morality and practices. To my dismay, the topic that was being argued was the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It amused me to hear my opponent claim to be a “good Catholic,” whilst making a very heretical comment which included very explicit language. I was annoyed. I was angry. I wanted to lash out and call this person every name under the sun.

However, I didn't. It was quite miraculous to say the least. My response was to list my wrath as one of my sins when I went to Confession. Whilst I have had this discussion with a few priests, all of whom told me that I should have stood up and called out heresy for what it was, I knew that I was not in the right frame of mind to do so. Committing a sin to combat sin defeats the whole purpose. I knew that I was angry. If I acted in anger, I would have said things that would have been unkind and that is not what my Lord would have wished.

Humility

One of the most difficult things a person can say is, “I was wrong. I'm sorry”. Does that hurt our pride? I think it does. Men have a frailty that can lead us down a path where we never say that we are wrong. This pathway leads to more wrongs being committed. Confession is an act of humility and solemnity, and it is a very beautiful act to partake in. You are telling Christ that you are wrong, and he is



A boy kneels in prayer before an image of Blessed Carlo Acutis during eucharistic adoration at St Rita of Cascia Church in New York. Photo: OSV News

“A person is more than the worst thing they've ever done”

present with you. He knows you are sorry.

Let's not take away from that amazing fact. He knows we are burdened by our sins, and his love and compassion have no end. A common trend I have heard from the hip atheists and anti-Catholic rhetoricians is that God is a tyrant who loves to torment his children. What sort of mindset would come to this conclusion? When we were growing up, we had our chores to do in the house. Sometimes that was cleaning your room, other times that was to put the washing out on the line. If you forgot to do one of those chores, sometimes your mother's roar could be heard in the neighbouring village! You've opened the door to a vengeful and wrathful demonic presence...or you may just have a slightly miffed parent. That parent may be angry, but do you think that parent would stop loving you? Of course not. So, why would God not be the same? Therefore, Penance is an act of learning, not torment.

Inspiration

I'm lucky to say that Carlo Acutis and I are of the same generation and only a few years separate us. Despite

sadly passing at the age of 15, he had shown such grace and humility. He was in part an inspiration to me. Carlo encouraged weekly Confession. Before you think to ask, no. Confession is not a guilt trip. The best course of action is taking a step back and asking, “What would Jesus do in this situation?” Again, we go back to the question, “Could I have done better?” This is what Confession is all about. It's a transformative process, much like coming in from hurling training after being drenched in rain and getting a hot shower. Helen Prejean, CSJ, said, “A person is more than the worst thing they've ever done”. Jesus had given the keys of heaven to a man who denied him three times, a man who had taken up the sword against his neighbour. Peter was a human who feared for his life, yet he became our first pope. We can wallow in our sins like the Pharisees, or we can ask for God's forgiveness like those who first followed Christ. Christ's sacrifice opened the doors of Heaven for all. It isn't easy to admit when you're wrong, and it takes a certain level of bravery to do so. Don't let guilt hold you down, you can hold onto hope.

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For more information about leaving a legacy to *The Irish Catholic*, please phone 01 6874028 or email info@irishcatholic.ie in strictest confidence.

Mercy College Coolock celebrates 60 years

Staff reporter

There were scenes of jubilation and delight at Dublin's Mercy College in Coolock with past pupils and former staff from the last 60 years coming together to mark the six decades since the school was established. Displays of photos over the past 60 years were on show.

Dr Patricia Dwyer, principal since 2003, thanked current staff who made the occasion possible and who continue to promote the vision of Catherine McAuley every day in the school community.

Sr Moira Lynam RSM, principal from 1985 to 1994 launched the event and spoke about the history of the school and the many students who come back to visit.

Dr Dwyer, Sr Moira and Mrs Maura Mooney, who was principal from 1994 to 2003, then cut the anniversary cake, a gift from the Parents' Association, and made by staff member Rosemarie O'Kelly. Members of the choir sang Christmas carols and the Class of 2020 received a special presentation.

Guests were invited to walk around the school, into classrooms and down memory lane. Those in attendance were invited to place the names of deceased loved ones, former classmates and staff in a memory box in the prayer room.



Eithne Finegan and Pauline Kane, who were in the first class of 14 pupils in the Mercy College Coolock in Dublin in 1963, are photographed beside the 60th anniversary cake. Photo: John Mc Elroy.



Siobhan Cassidy, past pupil and current teacher in the school, Paula Moran, former teacher at the school and Jacinta Mullooly former teacher at the school.



Saoirse Bird (6th Year), Taylor McLoughlin (5th year) and Leah O'Keeffe (6th year) who greeted guests at the event on Friday.



Shona Whelan who graduated in 1985, Joan Sheehan of the class of 1986 and Joanna James, class of 1986, at the event.



Mary Lynch and her sister Catherine who graduated in 1974 and 1979 with Sarah Payne who graduated in 1974 and Adrienne O'Donnell who graduated in 1975.



Amy McMahon, who graduated in 2020, with her Grandmother Mary McMahon.



Gemma Sheridan, Susan O'Brien, Louise Gavin, Rachel Broughan, Tracey Jones and Marta Bugler taking a selfie.



Megan Shanley, Alex O'Rourke and Anya McCreary, the class of 2020.



Carol Halton and Sheila Noone who graduated Mercy College in 1973.



Teachers and pupils Rosie Doherty, Claire Mogan, Megan Coulahan and Mia McGuire.



Breda Harrington, Betty Smith, Eta O'Brien, Eithne Finegan and Pauline Kane who all graduated in the 1960s.



Students from the class of 2020 who were presented with school certs on Friday. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the presentation was delayed for three years.



Deirdre Garvey and Deirdre Arthur who graduated in 1984.



Teacher Pamela McLoughlin with student Emily O'Hara Deegan.



Principal Patricia Dwyer, Sr Moira Lynam RSM principal from 1985-1994 and Maura Mooney principal from 1994-2003 cutting the anniversary cake.




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Lay catechists needed to fan flame of faith



The ministry of catechist is important for evangelising modern Ireland, writes Bishop Kevin Doran

As Christians, we have been invited into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. That invitation is not just for us. We have a gift to share; we have a story to tell. But how do

we go about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with our sisters and brothers in today's Ireland?

In 2021, Pope Francis announced the establishment of the lay ministry of catechist. In a document called *Antiquum Ministerium*, he explains that this is really a very ancient ministry, dating from earliest times in the Church, when there were many different forms of ministry carried out by lay people, both women and men.

Pope Francis often reminds us that Baptism is not just a Sacrament of Church membership, but a sacrament of Christian mission and that every baptised person is called to be what he describes as a "missionary disciple".

In response to the invitation of Pope Francis, the Irish Catholic bishops, having consulted widely over the past two years, have proposed a vision for the

establishment of the ministry of catechist in the Church in Ireland.

What is the need?

While the Church is one, the lived experience of the Church varies considerably from place to place and from time to time. The family is sometimes described as the domestic Church, and it is in the family that young people should first encounter Jesus and learn to pray.

This childhood faith should be deepened in the partnership between the family and the parish community. The reality is that generations of Catholics have been taught the content of faith, but many have relatively little confidence to "give an account of their hope" as St Paul says. Many adult Catholics in Ireland have not yet experienced a personal relationship with Jesus.

Our parishes need to be

much more than places where people come for Mass and the sacraments. They need to be communities in which people are helped, like the blind beggar Bartimaeus, "to follow Jesus along the road" (Mk. 10:52). This is the space in which the ministry of catechist finds its meaning and purpose.

The Directory for Catechesis, published in Rome in 2020, explains that catechists, as well as being called to explain the content of faith, are expected to bear witness to their own personal encounter with Christ and, in that way, to be "keepers of the memory of God" (literally ensuring that the presence and action of God is noticed and not forgotten).

They are called to walk with (or accompany) their brothers and sisters, especially those who may need particular support or encouragement in faith (young people, the elderly, prisoners, migrants, people with a disability); helping them to work out what it might mean for them to live their Baptism in the particu-

lar circumstances of their lives.

Forming Catechists

In order to be able to undertake a ministry like this, Catechists will need a particular formation. This will certainly involve some serious academic study, so that catechists will be able to open up to others the scriptures and the teaching of the Church.

But catechists will need much more than book-knowledge. Their formation will also help them to know how to be a supportive presence with people, listening as well as speaking, much as Jesus did. They will need to develop communication skills, including public speaking and the effective use of IT.

They might learn to use art in the service of the Gospel. Alongside all of this they will be helped to deepen their own personal faith and relationship with Jesus Christ, without which they could never be witnesses.

We are proposing a two-year programme of formation which will be tailored to the needs of people who have family and professional

commitments, but who have time and energy for mission.

Many gifts, one Spirit

The Ministry of Catechist is described in *Antiquum Ministerium* as a "stable form of service", which means that it is formally entrusted for life. Pope Francis invites us to see the lay ministry of catechist in the light of what St Paul wrote to the people of Corinth. "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord" (1 Cor.12).

Catechists will inevitably have different gifts with which to serve. But these words of St Paul also remind us that the ministry of catechist is one ministry among many, formal and informal, lay and ordained.

All these ministries, if they are truly to serve the Lord, need to be exercised in communion, rather than in competition or in isolation. All those who make up the rich diversity of ministry in the Church, are called to see one another one another as "partners in mission".

In that way, the many gifts given by the Spirit bear fruit, and together we build up the Body of Christ. There is plenty of work for all of us.

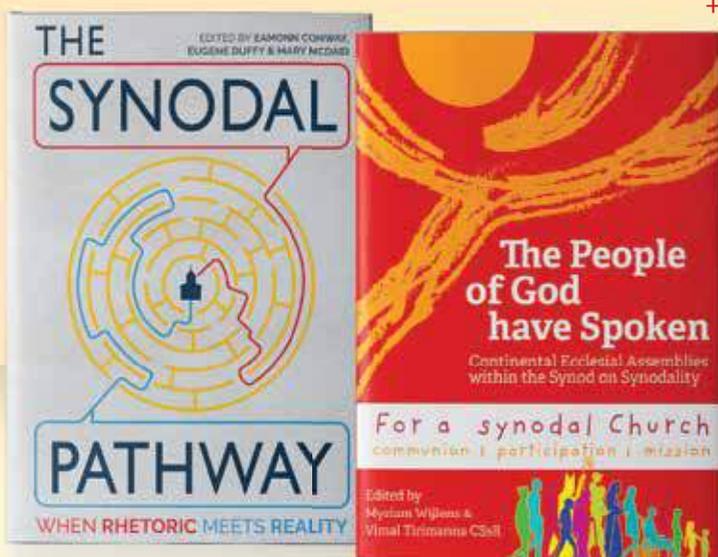
Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran is chair of a working group tasked with drafting national norms and guidelines for the Ministry of Catechist in Ireland.

“The reality is that generations of Catholics have been taught the content of faith, but many have relatively little confidence to ‘give an account of their hope’ as St Paul says”

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Pope Francis wants the whole church to discern together the way God wants the Church to go. In *The Synodal Pathway*, leading scholars from Ireland and beyond bring you fifteen essays that introduce the meaning of synodality and its rich foundations within the Catholic tradition, as well as make the case for synodality as "that which God expects of the Church of the third millennium".

In the first phase of the Synod on Synodality, the faithful participated within their local churches and the Continental Ecclesial Assemblies. *The People of God have Spoken* contains seven studies written by the participants of these meetings, shedding light on a unique moment in history, indispensable for discerning how the Holy Spirit guides the Church in our times to fulfil its mission.



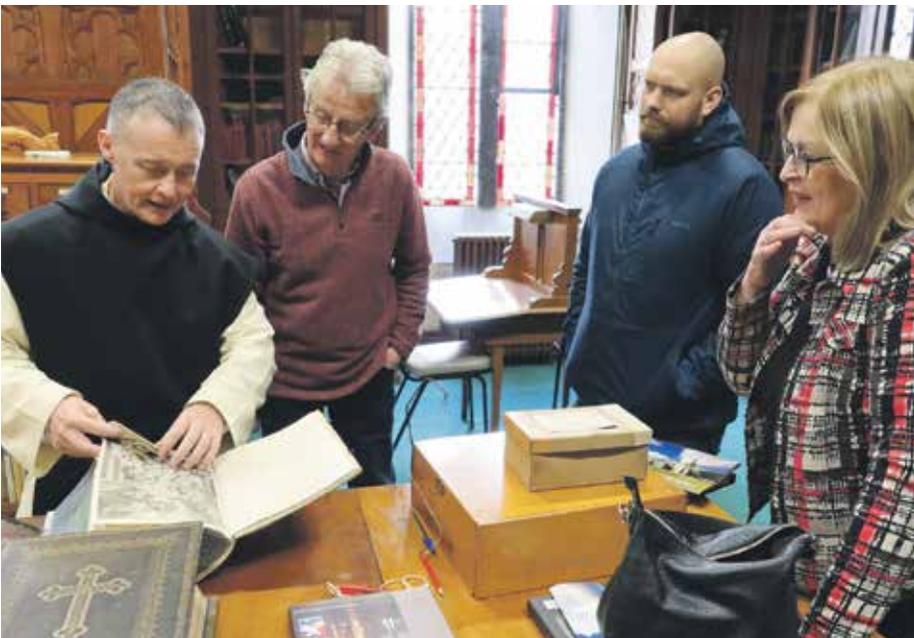
Staff of the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA), Profs. Eamonn Conway, Leonard Franchi and Renée Kohler Ryan are pictured with Bishops Niall Coll and Kevin Doran, under the portrait of Cardinal Francis Moran of Sydney, at 'International Perspectives on Forming Catechists', a joint initiative of UNDA and St Kieran's College, Kilkenny, on November 28.

Out&About

Future friars?



CORK: Kinsale Carmelites welcome friary alumni from Terenure College, who spent time sharing in the life and rhythm of the Carmelite Community.



TIPPERARY: Dom Malachy Thompson displays some of the Mount St Joseph community's treasured artefacts following the presentation of awards to the winners of the calendar photo competition.



DUBLIN: Students from St Mary's Secondary School Baldoyle prepare for their Transition Year Mini Companies' annual Christmas Fair on Wednesday, December 13 in the School Hall. It will be open to the public from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

INSHORT

'Clear signs of hope' in vocations crisis

The 36 men who attended a vocations weekend in Maynooth are a "clear sign of hope" during Ireland's vocations crisis, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan has said.

Speaking at a panel discussion in Queen's University Belfast, Bishop Cullinan said that "the level of interest meant that the event was oversubscribed".

The 'Come and See' vocations weekend in St Patrick's Pontifical University was part of the ongoing Year for Vocation to the diocesan priesthood, organised by Bishop Cullinan as head of the bishops' council for vocations.

"In answer to the naysayers, in contempo-

rary Ireland there continues to be interest in the priesthood," said Bishop Cullinan. "This reality is a clear indication that God is still calling, and that men are responding with generosity."

Panellists for the audience in QUB's Catholic Chaplaincy included Fr Thomas McGlynn, PP St Malachy's City Centre Parish, Belfast; Fr Martin Mayerhoffer, European Chaplain for FOCUS and International Theological Institute, Vienna; Fr John Joe Duffy, Curate in Creeslough, Co. Donegal, diocese of Raphoe; Fr Dominic McGrattan, chaplain to QUB and former chaplain to the Mater Hospital; and Deacon Brett Lockhart KC, retired barrister, family man and permanent deacon.

Lough Derg team meets Pope Francis

Early in November, members of the Lough Derg pastoral team attended the Conference for Rectors and Pastoral Staff of Pilgrimage Sites at the Vatican as the Church prepares for the 2025 Jubilee "Pilgrims of Hope".

Attending from Lough Derg was the Prior Msgr La Flynn, Deacon Martin Donnelly, Director of Pastoral Programmes, Mark McDonnell, and Fr Linus Bugran-Yabo Anaba, who ministered on the island during the summer.

Joining with up to 500 attendees from 43 countries across the continents, in preparation for the 2024 'Year of Prayer for the Jubilee', speakers covered topics which included

methods of prayer, the welcoming of pilgrims, and music and song.

The Lough Derg representatives shared their experience with Fr Richard Gibbons, Rector of Knock Shrine, who, along with representatives from three other recently accredited international pilgrimage sites, provided testimony on some of the key initiatives there.

The conference concluded with an audience with the Holy Father. In his address, Pope Francis reminded conference attendees that "special places", like Lough Derg, must be places of prayer, with care for the sacraments and the welcome of pilgrims.

He encouraged all those present to offer consolation to visitors carrying burdens and problems through a "compassionate closeness".



DUBLIN: Clodagh O'Brien of Bayside Parish is pictured with her Benemerenti medal, bestowed on her by Pope Francis in recognition of her years of service to the community.



DUBLIN: Ms O'Brien is pictured with Fr Peter Finnerty PP Bayside and Fr Joe Kelly CC.



WATERFORD: Pictured are the Waterford and Lismore diocese team who led a Holy Spirit retreat day for Mercy Secondary School TY students as part of an Alpha Youth programme, made up of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Holy Family Mission, parish faith representatives and experienced local Alpha facilitators and clergy.



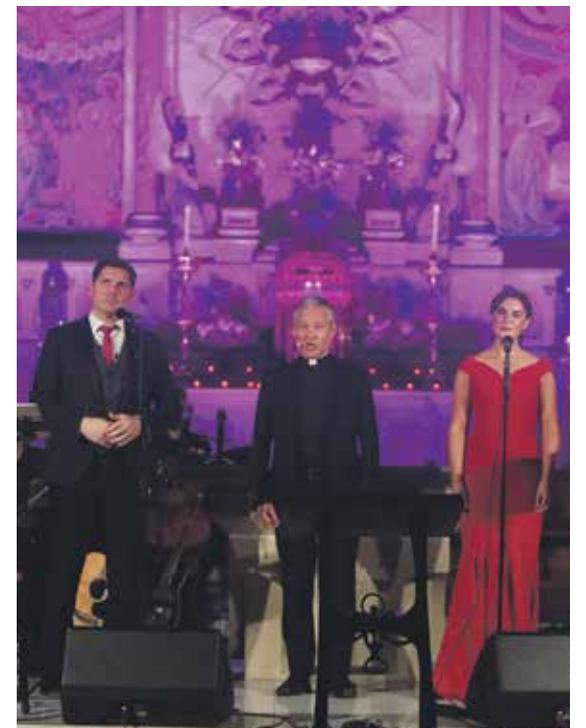
ROME: Fr La Flynn, Deacon Martin Donnelly and Mark McDonnell, members of the Lough Derg team, take part in the International Conference of Rectors and Pastoral Staff of Shrines in the Vatican.



BELFAST: Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region, is pictured with Malachi Cush, Margaret Keys, Claire McCollum and Fr Martin O'Hagan at the launch of St Vincent de Paul's annual appeal in Clonard Monastery.



BELFAST: St Clare's Primary School choir perform at the launch of SVP's annual appeal.



BELFAST: Malachi Cush, Fr Martin O'Hagan and Margaret Keys perform at a concert in Clonard Monastery.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



KILDARE: Fr Willie Purcell addresses the 36 men who attended a priest information weekend in Maynooth, as part of the Year of Vocation to the diocesan priesthood.



CAVAN: Pictured are Amanda Carroll, Sarah Geary, and Louise McKeon, founder members of the Kingscourt and district breast Cancer Support Group – for survivors by survivors – at their recent inaugural meeting. They meet monthly with the next meeting at The Parish Centre, Saint Mary's Road, Kingscourt on Wednesday, December 20, at 7.30pm.



KILDARE: Pictured at the launch of *Reforming the Church: Global Perspectives* are Fr Gerry O'Hanlon, SJ, who launched the book, editor Fr Declan Marmion, editor Prof. Salvador Ryan, and Prof. Pádraig Corkery, who MC'd the event. In St Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth on November 20.

ANTRIM

St John's Parish Falls Road to celebrate a children's liturgy for P3-P7 students during the 12pm Mass beginning Sunday sharing the Gospel through story, arts and crafts in a child friendly way.

ARMAGH

Evening prayer for the Immaculate Conception takes place in St Patrick's Cathedral on Friday, December 8 at 7.30pm, followed by candlelit vigil and benediction. Music provided by the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal.

CAVAN

Lectio Divina takes place every Tuesday for 30 minutes in the Conference Room (Ss Patrick and Felim Cathedral) behind the altar after 10am Mass.

CLARE

Mid Clare Youth Connect meets on a monthly basis in Fahy Hall/Church of Our Lady, Roslevan, Ennis for games, learn about their faith and grow in friendship. For more information contact Fr Donagh O'Meara on 087 232 2140 or Myriam Black on myrblack@gmail.com or Joanne O'Brien on joannebrien07@gmail.com

CORK

First Friday devotions take place in St Patrick's Church, Whitechurch, with adoration from 6-8pm, beginning with two hearts devotion from 6-7pm followed by a holy hour of reparation until Benediction. First Saturday Fatima devotions take place during Adoration 11am-12pm midday, with Confessions 11-11.45am. Benediction takes place at 12pm, with Mass 12.10pm.

DERRY

The Maghera Parish Pray and Play for parents, grandparents and tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10am Mass. It runs from 10.30am-12pm.

DOWN

Lectio Divina in Newry Cathedral takes place in the Parish Centre on Thursday after 10.30am Mass, usually getting underway by 11.15am.

DUBLIN

Rathmines Young Adults group to meet on Saturday, December 9, at 9.30am for a crib building class in Church of Mary Immaculate, Refuge of Sinners. A carol singing rehearsal will also take place on December 14 at 7pm.

Rosary and carols at the Dublin city centre crib at the Spire takes place Sunday, December 10 at 3pm, organised by the Legion of Mary.

Part four of a Theology of the Body series for all Christians takes place Friday, December 15, at 7pm on 'The great mystery of marriage' in 23 Merrion Sq North, D02 XE02.

FERMANAGH

A novena Mass to St Peregrine, patron of those who have cancer, is celebrated every Tuesday at 7pm in Holy Cross Church in Lisnaskea. It is also live streamed at Churchservices.tv/lisnaskea.

GALWAY

A Youth 2000 prayer group takes place in Church of St Oliver Plunkett, Renmore, on first Fridays at 8.15pm.

KILDARE

Youth 2000's Christmas retreat takes place in Newbridge College, December 8-10 for ages 16-35. Free booking online at www.youth2000.ie.

KILKENNY

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

LAOIS

The rosary will be prayer at the grotto of the Church of the Assumption at 8pm on the first Friday of every month. The Divine Mercy Chaplet is prayer at 3pm every Sunday in Portlaoise parish church.

LEITRIM

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

LOUTH

Oasis of Peace addiction recovery group takes place in the Oasis of Peace Centre, Collon, on the last Saturday of every month from 12-1.30pm. Contact

085 8101614.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass will take place in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel Knock on Sunday, December 10 at 6pm.

MEATH

Fr John Byrne to continue his introduction to the Bible on Mondays at 12 noon via the Kells webcam, accessible on www.kellsparish.ie. This year he will introduce the St John's Gospel and each session will last 25 minutes. For queries, you may contact Fr John on email: jplowebyrne@gmail.com

MONAGHAN

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place every Friday in St Joseph's Church immediately after 10am Mass, ending at 6pm.

OFFALY

Tullamore parish to host an eight-week Bible study course in January and February 2024, beginning on Monday, January 8, at 7.30pm in Tullamore parish centre with tea after.

ROSCOMMON

Bishop Barron's *Catholicism* series will be presented in St Patrick's Castlereagh Parish Office (attached to the Parochial House, F45D284) on Mondays at 8-9.30pm.

SLIGO

St Patrick's Church, Stran-dhill, to host 'The Way of Gentleness', an advent journey on Mondays at 9pm on December 11 and 18, in person and online at churchservices.tv

TYRONE

The Rosary is prayed in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher every Monday after 10am Mass, and in Corpus Christi, Mountfield every Thursday evening at 8pm.

WATERFORD

Lectio Divina takes place Tuesdays 2.30-4pm in St John's Pastoral Centre, John's Hill and Thursdays 7.30-9pm in the Sacred Heart Convent, Newtown Road. Gathering to read and pray with the Sunday Gospel, followed by tea and a chat.

Parish climate actions do not come without suffering

Laura Madrigal-Estebas

About 220 people gathered in a fabulous setting of the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Blanchardstown, Dublin, to attend an inspiring conference called 'Parishes Caring for Creation' at the end of November.

A collaboration between Trócaire, the Archdiocese of Dublin and the Laudato Si' Movement, this conference aimed to help parish communities respond to the ecological crises in the spirit of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical on care for our common home. How can faith communities respond to the challenges our world faces at this moment?

In the morning, four inspirational speakers took to the floor: Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin called us to action, challenging us to come out of our inertia and dream of solutions to the world problems, affecting health, food production, poverty and migration. "Our future", he said, "and the future of our planet depends on facing up to our responsibility both globally and locally."

He gave a hopeful message: "Our Faith is founded on the one who came to take fear away", so he encouraged us not to "support positively a personal commitment to change and inclusion, which sees the interrelatedness of all", and with a sense of finitude and limit, aware that we do not have infinite resources.

“Our future and the future of our planet depends on facing up to our responsibility both globally and locally”

Prof. John Sweeney, Emeritus Professor of Maynooth University, reminded us of the string of extreme weather events and climate disasters we are experiencing, and how each person in Ireland is on average responsible for one tonne of greenhouse gas emissions per month, with Irish per capita emissions (11.9 tonnes per year) 50% higher than the EU average (seven tonnes

per year), a good reminder that it is time for us to reconsider how we live, and to move into action! He also brought to our attention that the huge reduction in biodiversity since the emergence of humans is now on the scale of the sixth mass extinction due to human activity. Paraphrasing Pope Francis, we need to accompany our immense technological development by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.

“The challenge is to recover the theology of creation, to celebrate the sacredness of all God's creation”

Lorna Gold, chair of the international Laudato Si' Movement, spoke about how the changes that are necessary do not come without suffering. It is not easy to make changes in our families, in our ways to live and eat, but these efforts are now essential and will be worth it for nature and for all our futures. Lorna emphasised how we need to bring the concept of integral ecology to our parishes, to the way we prepare children and adults for the sacraments, to the way we celebrate liturgies; and it is time to bring the love of God to our every situation. Each of us has a circle of influence within which we can engage with other people and influence many towards a greater concern for God's creation. Lorna encouraged us to increase our circle of influence to address our concerns. In the words of Pope Francis, "Let us sing as we go".

Interconnectedness

Author Sr Nellie McLaughlin RSM, spoke about the old story of separation and dominance falling away and a new one emerging story of interconnectedness: we human beings are affecting each other constantly, forming the oneness of all life. She spoke about how we are genetically and energetically related to the entire community of creation: "The challenge is to recover the theology of creation, to

celebrate the sacredness of all God's creation and this awareness becomes a way of life rather than an issue among issues." She left us with some very important questions, to be asked of ourselves personally and collectively, about which world we are envisioning, what are we giving energy to and what is already flourishing and with whom can we partner to make it grow.

Eco projects

Many groups were present at the 'Marketplace', ranging from organisations mainly focused on the spiritual journey of discovery and conversion to schools sharing their work for the environment, to the wonders of making beautiful bags out of waste materials to name but a few. Parishes were

able to access information on energy grants, local community grants to help bring their eco projects to life.

The six workshops taking place in the afternoon ranged from eco-congregations to Laudato Si' Awards to SEAI grants for cleaner energies, to the role of Laudato Si' animators among others. The ideas and the energy gathered around the workshops were

tremendous, and everybody left the meeting with hope and the strength of knowing that there are many of us walking this same path of working towards a better future of caring for the environment in a practical way.

i Laura Madrigal-Estebas is the Laudato Si' Officer with Trócaire



Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin chatting with speakers at the conference, Nellie McLaughlin RSM, environmental educator and activist co-founder of Green Sod Land Trust, Prof. John Sweeney emeritus professor and climate scientist from Maynooth University, member of the Laudato Si' working group, and Dr Lorna Gold, chair of the Laudato Si' movement, CEO of FaithInvest. Photos: John McElroy



Some of the attendees at the 'Parishes Caring for Creation' conference in Dublin.

Dana sets Long Tower alight with St Patrick's fire

Ruadhán Jones

Dana Rosemary Scallon performed her new song *Light the Fire*, about St Patrick's work to spread the Faith in Ireland, to a packed Long Tower Church, Derry, on November 26.

Ms Scallon was performing as part of the Derry parish's annual novena, which takes place over nine Sundays before Christmas.

The Irish singer shared her memories of how the seeds of faith were planted in her life, a spokesperson for the parish said.

She was "encouraging us to play our part in keeping the flame of faith alive in our homes, in our families, where seeds of vocations can grow and flourish," the spokesperson said.



Dana meets Long Tower parishioners after the novena.



Fr Ger Mongan displays the Blessed Sacrament.



Dana Rosemary Scallon, guest speaker at Long Tower's novena on November 26, is pictured with Fr Stephen Ward and Fr Ger Mongan PP. Photos: Stephen Latimer.



A packed Long Tower Church, Derry, listens attentively to Dana.





World Report

IN BRIEF

Constant thefts plague Mexican archdiocese

● The Archdiocese of San Luis Potosí expressed its concern about the constant wave of thefts that is plaguing churches in the Mexican state of San Luis Potosí.

Fr Tomás Cruz Perales, spokesman for the Archdiocese of San Luis Potosí, said in a statement to *ACI Prensa* that although thefts from churches are a constant, most of them have so far been insignificant, primarily thieves looking for money in the poor box.

"It's a situation that we're going through, but it's very identified with people seeking to satisfy needs, perhaps related to [drugs and alcohol], or who live from day to day," Fr Cruz commented. He also lamented that in some cases, when confronted, the offenders "have even attacked the sacristans".

New York diocese offers \$200 million to abuse victims

● In what it called its "best and final" offer to survivors of abuse, the Diocese of Rockville Centre in New York recently proposed a plan that offers \$200 million to approximately 600 survivors of abuse, the largest-ever settlement offer made in diocesan bankruptcy history.

The new plan includes an immediate cash payout of a minimum of \$100,000 to claimants with a lawsuit

and a \$50,000 minimum to claimants without a qualifying lawsuit.

In a statement, the Long Island diocese called the plan "the best, most efficient, and most effective means to immediately begin compensating all eligible survivors equitably while allowing the diocese to emerge from bankruptcy and continue its charitable mission".

New Holy Land virtual Advent pilgrimage to fill 'holy sites with peace'

● The Magdala Tourist Centre, located in the biblical town of Magdala on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, announced a virtual pilgrimage due to the conflict in the Holy Land, which is preventing pilgrims from visiting in person this Advent and Christmas season.

The 'Star of Wonder Advent Pilgrimage of Peace' will start on Sunday, December 3, and continue throughout the Advent season. Each Sunday, a video will be released from a holy site and will discuss its biblical meaning and include daily reflections.

Holy sites in the virtual pilgrimage will include Magdala, the hometown of Mary Magdalene; Nazareth; Ein Karem, the place of the Visitation and birth of John the Baptist; Beit Sahour; and Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus.

'No one listened,' says alleged Rupnik victim

● On October 30, three days after Pope Francis lifted the statute of limitations and opened the path for a Church trial and possible removal from the priesthood for former Jesuit and mosaic artist Fr Marko Rupnik, a woman previously known as Anna gave the world her real name, revealing it in the Italian daily newspaper *Domani*.

Emerging as Gloria Branciani, she openly wanted to protest Church policies that put the alleged victims in more pain instead of healing.

Ms Branciani alerted Church authorities about Fr Rupnik's behaviour years ago, but it was a losing battle, she told *OSV News*.

In a first-ever interview by an alleged victim of Fr Rupnik, published by *Domani* she spoke about a "descent into hell" she experienced for nine years and recalled how "Fr Marko at first slowly and gently infiltrated my psychological and spiritual world by appealing to my uncertainties and frailties while using my relationship with God to push me to have sexual experiences with him".

Four killed at Mass in Philippines bomb attack

A deadly bomb that exploded during a Mass December 3 killed at least four people and injured dozens at a university in a predominantly Muslim city in southern Philippines.

Media reports that the explosion caused panic among dozens of students and teachers in a gymnasium where Mass was taking place, at Mindanao State University in Marawi, capital of Lanao del Sur province. At least four people were killed, and nearly 50 others were brought to two hospitals for treatment, authorities said. The explosion took place at around 7am local time.

Later that day, Islamic State militants claimed responsibility for the deadly blast, according to *Reuters* and *The New York Times*.

After praying the Angelus, Pope Francis assured the attack's victims of his prayers. He added that "I am close to the families, to the people of Mindanao who have already suffered so much".

In a telegram, addressed to Bishop Edwin de la Peña of Marawi, the Pope also said he was "deeply saddened to be informed of the injuries and loss of life caused by the bombing," according to *Vatican News*.

Nearly 80% of the population in the Philippines – which according to US government estimates has 114.6 million people – is Catholic. According to a census conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority, about 6% of the population identifies as Muslim.



Lanao Del Sur Governor Mamintal Adiong Jr looks on as law enforcement officers investigate the scene of an explosion that occurred during a Mass in a gymnasium at Mindanao State University in Marawi, Philippines, December 3. Photo: OSV News/Lanao Del Sur Provincial Government via Reuters

In 2017, Marawi saw a five-month battle between government forces and Islamic militants aligned with the Islamic State, which left over 1,000 dead, including some civilians, and displaced around 100,000 people. International forces helped the army to regain control of the besieged city.

Prior to Islamic State militants claiming responsibility, authorities had called the explosion a "terror attack," and regional military commander Maj. Gen. Gabriel Viray III said they were trying to identify those responsible, according to *Reuters*. The motive was

yet to be determined, but police were investigating the possibility of Muslim militants' involvement.

Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr condemned the attack on the social media platform X December 3, offering condolences to the victims' loved ones, urging calm and promising that the perpetrators will be brought to justice.

"I condemn in the strongest possible terms the senseless and most heinous acts perpetrated by foreign terrorists," he said. "Extremists who wield violence against the innocent will always be

regarded as enemies to our society."

He added that the armed forces and police have been instructed "to ensure the protection and safety of civilians and the security of affected and vulnerable communities".

According to *The Associated Press*, the December 3 explosion set off alarms beyond the Lanao del Sur province area, as the Advent and Christmas season "ushered in a period of travel, shopping sprees and traffic jams" across the predominantly Catholic country.

Witnesses testify to torture by Nicaraguan dictatorship

At a recent US congressional hearing, members of Congress and human rights activists urged Nicaragua dictator Daniel Ortega to immediately release imprisoned Catholic Bishop Rolando Álvarez, who they said is being mistreated and possibly tortured.

The hearing, which was held by the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organisations and chaired by New Jersey Republican Rep. Chris Smith, was titled 'An urgent appeal to let Bishop Álvarez go'.

Among the witnesses testifying were

several Nicaraguan exiles who had undergone or witnessed the inhumane treatment of political prisoners by the Ortega regime.

Mike Finnan, a representative for Rep. Smith, told *CNA* that the identities of these witnesses were kept secret "for their safety and the safety of their families".

Rep. Smith said during the hearing that Álvarez, the 56-year-old bishop of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, "is an innocent man enduring unspeakable suffering".

The regime, run by Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo, has been targeting the Church in the country. Rep. Smith said that

"bishops and priests as well as worshippers have been harassed and detained" and that the international community "can no longer turn a blind eye to what is happening to the people of Nicaragua, including and especially to people of faith".

Bishop Álvarez, a beloved bishop in Nicaragua and a critic of the Ortega-Murillo regime's human rights violations, was arrested by Nicaraguan authorities on August 19, 2022. After refusing to go into exile he was convicted of treason on February 10 and sentenced to over 26 years in prison.

German bishop describes local divisions as 'disaster' for Faithful

A prominent German bishop and steadfast opponent of the controversial Synodal Way has levelled his harshest criticism yet of the state of the Church in his own country, describing the German episcopacy as deeply "divided" – and warned of potentially catastrophic

consequences for Catholic believers.

In the latest in a series of high-profile critiques of the German Synodal Way, Bishop Stefan Oster of the Diocese of Passau did not shy away from identifying profound theological disagreements as the source of division within the

Church in Germany.

"It is a tragedy that we, German bishops, have so little agreement on key issues of anthropology and ecclesiology," Bishop Oster told the Polish Catholic publication *Gosc Niedzielny* in an interview published November 30.

The divided episcopacy

"is obviously a disaster for the Faithful in Germany," said the 58-year-old Bishop Oster, who was tapped by Pope Francis to participate in the Vatican's recent Synod on Synodality assembly after he was not selected as a delegate by the German Bishops' Conference (DBK).



Edited by Jason Osborne
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Home has never been sweeter...



A man who was in the first group of Thai nationals released by the Palestinian group Hamas November 25, after being held for nearly two months in Gaza, walks through a crowd at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport November 30 after arriving home. Photo: OSV News/Jorge Silva, Reuters

Catholic cathedral bombed as Myanmar crisis worsens

The pastoral centre of Christ the King Cathedral in Loikaw, Myanmar, was bombed on November 26 and occupied by the Burmese military the next day, according to reporting by *Agenzia Fides*, the news arm of Pontifical Mission Societies.

Though no one was killed in the bombing, the pastoral centre's ceiling collapsed and Bishop Celso Ba Shwe and the 80 refugees taking shelter in the church were forced to flee, per the Hong Kong Catholic news service *UCA News*.

Bishop Shwe said in a statement published by *Agenzia Fides* that "the

Burmese army tried to take the Christ the King Cathedral complex three times" before finally occupying it on November 27.

"As a local bishop," Shwe said, "I, together with the priests, tried to convince the military generals of the importance of the religious sites and asked them to leave the place to spare, where displaced people are also welcomed".

The cathedral complex had been sheltering about 82 refugees from throughout Myanmar's Kayah state, a region that has become a major battleground between the Burmese military junta and several rebel militias.

According to *LiCAS news*, an Asian Catholic news source, the bishop also reported that "50 soldiers came and occupied [the cathedral] to make use of it as a shield".

Agenzia Fides reported Bishop Shwe saying that many elderly, disabled, sick, women and children were among those taking refuge in the cathedral complex. Ten priests and 16 religious were also among those taking shelter in the cathedral. Now, the refugees and bishop have fled the cathedral to seek refuge in other churches or the nearby wilderness.

Myanmar, which is

bordered by India to the west and China to the east, is a majority Buddhist country that has large Catholic and Protestant minorities in some states. The country has been caught in a bloody civil war since 2021 after local militias united to oppose the military junta that had seized control of the government earlier that year.

This is not the first time that Catholic churches and holy sites have been caught in the crossfire in the ongoing war. Catholic sites in Kayah state and in the Loikaw Diocese have been especially hard hit by military strikes.

Pope offers condolences to mourners at Indi Gregory's funeral

Pope Francis offered condolences to the parents of Indi Gregory and to the mourners at the funeral of "this precious child of God".

The 8-month-old baby girl, who suffered from a rare mitochondrial disease, died November 13 after courts denied repeated attempts by her parents, Dean Gregory and Claire Staniforth, to stop the withdrawal of life support from her and to allow her to go to the Vatican-owned

Bambino Gesù hospital in Rome for care.

Her funeral was celebrated December 1 in St Barnabas Cathedral in Nottingham, England.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, conveyed Pope Francis' condolences to the family and other mourners in a message to Bishop Patrick McKinney of Nottingham.

"His Holiness Pope Francis was saddened to learn of the death of little Indi

Gregory," the message said, "and he sends condolences and the assurance of his spiritual closeness to her parents, Dean and Claire, and to all who mourn the loss of this precious child of God. Entrusting Indi into the tender and loving hands of our heavenly Father, His Holiness joins those gathered for her funeral in thanking almighty God for the gift of her all-too-short life," the cardinal wrote.

Serious bronchial infection plagues Pope

● "As you can see, I am alive," Pope Francis told a group of health care managers November 30.

At the brief meeting with participants in a seminar on the ethics of health care management, the Pope said he was suffering from a "bronchial condition. Thank God it was not pneumonia," but he said it was a very serious bronchial infection.

"I no longer have a fever, but I am still on antibiotics and things like that," he told the group. He had cancelled his appointments November 25 because of "flu-like symptoms" and went that afternoon to a Rome hospital for a CT scan of his chest.

In the following days, he cancelled some appointments and had aides read his prepared texts at other events.

But, he said, "the doctor would not let me go to Dubai," United Arab Emirates, December 1-3 to speak at COP28, the UN climate conference.

"The reason is that it is very hot there, and you go from heat to air conditioning," he told the health care managers.

The most recent medical bulletin from the Vatican press office, issued late November 29, said Pope Francis' condition is "stable. He does not have a fever, but the pulmonary inflammation associated with respiratory difficulty persists. He is continuing antibiotic therapy".

Cardinal Parolin: No one can or will change the nature of the priesthood

● The only way to carry out the new evangelisation called for by Pope Francis is to adopt the pastoral style of a compassionate, humble, patient and simple priest who walks at the same pace as his people, Cardinal Pietro Parolin told seminarians.

"This is how the priest will touch the hearts of his faithful, win their trust and bring them face to face with Christ," the cardinal wrote in a message sent on behalf of Pope Francis to seminarians in France.

The Vatican published the written message from the Vatican secretary of state December 1.

"No one has the power to change the nature of the priesthood and no one ever will, even if the ways in which it is exercised must necessarily take account of changes in today's society and the serious vocational crisis we are experiencing," he wrote. At the very heart of the priestly identity is celibacy, the cardinal wrote.

"Priests are celibate – and they wish to be – simply because Jesus was celibate. The requirement of celibacy is not primarily theological, but mystical: may this be understood by he who is able," he wrote.

Pope asks theologians to help 'de-masculinise' the Church

● Asking pardon for speaking plainly, Pope Francis told members of the International Theological Commission that "one of the great sins we have had is 'masculinising' the Church," which also can be seen by the fact that only five of the commission members are women.

The Pope, who appoints the 28 members of the commission, said the Church needs to make more progress in balancing such bodies because "women have a capacity for theological reflection that is different from what we men have".

Pope Francis met members of the commission at the Vatican November 30. He handed them a prepared text, which he described as a "beautiful speech with theological things," but said that because of his ongoing respiratory problems due to bronchitis, "it's better that I don't read it".

Letter from Rome

Kissinger was counsellor to popes as well as presidents



John L. Allen Jr

It's rare indeed when an American president takes part in a four-way conversation and was, arguably, the least remarkable person in the group, but such was the case in June 1975 when President Gerald Ford made a visit to the Vatican.

On that occasion, Ford met Pope Paul VI, today St Paul VI, the pope who guided the Catholic Church through the close of the Second Vatican Council and the immediate post-Vatican II years. The two were joined by then-Archbishop Agostino Casaroli, the legendary Vatican diplomat who authored the Holy See's policy of *Ostpolitik*, or outreach to the Soviet bloc.

At the time, Archbishop Casaroli was playing a key role in negotiations that would lead to the Helsinki Accords, an agreement that brought together all the European states, East and West, as well as the US and Canada, and which has been cited repeatedly by Pope Francis and his aides as a template for multilateral engagement.

The other party to the conversation was Henry Kissinger, at the time still the US Secretary of State as well as the National Security Advisor, and perhaps the most celebrated, and controversial, statesman of the 20th Century.

The memorandum

Based on a now-declassified memorandum about that 1975 conversation, we know it was wide-ranging: The Middle East, including negotiations at the time toward an agreement between Egypt and Israel on the Sinai; Lebanon and its swelling population of Palestinian refugees; the Helsinki process (including Ford's warning that western Europe should not "capitulate and give in to Russia"); Vietnam, including the settlement of refugees in the US; the Portuguese

revolution, and US fears that a Communist-backed government in Lisbon could unravel the NATO alliance; the future of post-Franco Spain; not to mention Ethiopia, Malta and Cyprus.

It was not the first time Kissinger, who died November 29 at the robust age of 100, had swapped views with his Vatican counterparts. According to the transcript, Paul VI actually referred to Kissinger as an "old friend," noting that the two had met on at least two previous occasions.

Nor was Archbishop Casaroli the only opposite number in the Vatican with whom Kissinger had contact.

“Archbishop Benelli advised Kissinger to ignore reports of massacres and abuses by the forces of General Augusto Pinochet”

As part of the Wikileaks releases, for instance, we know of an October 1973 conversation between Kissinger and then-Archbishop Giovanni Benelli, at the time the *sostituto*, or "substitute," of the Secretariat of State, in which the two discussed the recent coup in Chile that brought down the government of Salvador Allende.

According to the cable, Archbishop Benelli advised Kissinger to ignore reports of massacres and abuses by the forces of General Augusto Pinochet, describing those claims as "Communist propaganda".

That bit of history is a reminder that while Kissinger is best known for having the ear of presidents, over the course of his remarkable career he was also often a counsellor to popes as well.

His first meeting with Pope John Paul II came during a private audience in October 1979, after Kissinger no longer had any official role in the American government, and it didn't occur under the most propitious of circumstances.

Chilean Foreign Minister Hernan Cubillos would later recall that a year earlier, just

after then-Cardinal Karol Wojtyla had been elected to the papacy, he met Kissinger at his Manhattan residence at the River Club, whereupon Kissinger delivered himself of the opinion that the choice of a Polish pope was a deliberate provocation to Moscow and might not be "good for humanity".

John Paul II

Nevertheless, John Paul II and Kissinger hit it off, and would continue to interact often during the next quarter-century. In 2001, for example, Kissinger brought his wife Nancy to the Vatican to receive a blessing from John Paul, and when the pope died in 2005, Kissinger told NBC he was convinced that John Paul II, not him, was the most influential figure of the 20th Century.

Whenever Kissinger was asked by interviewers about John Paul II, he would always say that he was so attached to the pope that he had saved the photos of every meeting they ever had.

Kissinger also had *entrée* with John Paul's successor, Pope Benedict XVI, who met the legendary American diplomat during a lengthy audience at Castel Gandolfo in September 2006.

The chemistry between the German pontiff and the German-born Kissinger was sufficiently strong that one Italian newspaper reported afterwards that Benedict had asked Kissinger to serve on an unofficial council of foreign policy advisors, a rumour the Vatican subsequently was compelled to deny.

One year later, Kissinger would be back in Rome to address the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, saying: "For somebody who has had the honour of having audiences with three Popes and to have respected and admired the role of the Church over the centuries, to be able to be in the Vatican with a group dedicated to these purposes means a great deal."

In fact, Kissinger was a regular on the Roman scene, in part as a result of his close friendship with Gianni Agnelli, the longtime head of FIAT and a fixture on the Italian political scene for decades. Gore Vidal, in his 1995 memoirs *Palimpsest*, recalls



Pope Benedict XVI talks with former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger during a private audience at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, Italy in 2006. Kissinger, the diplomat who dominated foreign policy as the United States extricated itself from Vietnam and broke down barriers with China, died at age 100 November 29. Photo: OSV News/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters

bumping into Kissinger during a 1994 dinner sponsored by Agnelli in the Hall of Statues at the Vatican Museums, to celebrate the restoration of the Sistine Chapel.

“He was right then, and he is right today, although some of us may add that it may take some divine guidance and not just insight to solve the problem”

"As I left him gazing thoughtfully at the hell section of *The Last Judgment*," Vidal wrote of Kissinger, in typically

caustic fashion, "I said to the lady with me, 'Look, he's apartment hunting'".

Over the years, Kissinger and the popes with whom he forged relations certainly had their differences, especially during the Paul VI/Casaroli era and the questions of how best to navigate the challenges of the Cold War.

On the other hand, Kissinger clearly admired the Vatican's capacity to take the long view of international relations. Despite being associated with an approach of *Realpolitik*, which critics would say was based more on cynicism than high ideals, Kissinger also seemed to appreciate the unique sense of the transcendent the Vatican strives to bring to very earthly

questions.

"The German philosopher, Emmanuel Kant, wrote an essay in the 18th Century, in which he said someday there will be universal peace. The only issue is whether it will come about by human insight or by catastrophes of such a magnitude that we have no choice," Kissinger told that meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in 2007.

"He was right then, and he is right today, although some of us may add that it may take some divine guidance and not just insight to solve the problem," he said.

John L. Allen Jr. is editor of *Cruz*.

African bishops affirm democracy amid wave of military coups



Ngala Killian
Chimtom

While acknowledging that a recent wave of military takeovers across Africa often have drawn strong popular support as an expression of “deep-seated frustration” over corruption and injustice, the continent’s Catholic bishops nevertheless have reaffirmed their support for democracy and opposition to coups.

“There might be queries regarding our stance on coups d’etat. Principally, we stand opposed to coups d’etat, a position that aligns with the teachings of the Church, which firmly rejects the seizure of power through force,” the bishops said.

Democracy

“The Church advocates for democracy, ‘a system that facilitates citizen participation in political decision-making and ensures that the governed have the ability to select, oversee, and, when necessary, peacefully replace their leaders,’” they said, citing the 1991 encyclical of Pope John Paul II *Centesimus Annus*.

The comments came in a November 23 statement from the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), the organisation of Catholic bishops on the continent.

Since 2020, at least a dozen coup d’états have taken place in West and Central Africa. Eight were successful, while others either failed or spiralled into conflict.

The latest was in Gabon, when a group of young military officers appeared on national television and announced that they had taken power from Ali Bongo Ondimba, who had just claimed victory in re-election for a third term. The new leader promised a short-term transitional period that will end with the organisation of free, fair and transparent elections, and the return of power to civilian rule.

Similar coups also took place in Niger, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Guinea, Chad and Mali, and with similar commitments.

The current wave of coups in Africa is significantly different from those that



General Brice Oligui Nguema is sworn-in as Gabon’s interim president during a September 4, 2023, ceremony in Libreville, the nation’s capital. General Nguema seized power August 30 after the military overthrew the incumbent president, Ali Bongo Ondimba, in the former French colony region in West and Central Africa. Photo: OSV News/Reuters

took place shortly after independence, according to Africa’s Catholic bishops.

“The coup in Mali in 2020 came as a relief to as many as 82% of the population who had lost faith in the leadership of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta”

“These occurrences contrast with the coups of the 1970s and 1980s, where the aim was predominantly the acquisition and prolonged retention of power,” the bishops said.

“The recent coups are characterised by a somewhat messianic intent, purportedly aimed at liberating the populace from injustices and terminating the monopoly of national wealth by entrenched ‘political dynasties’ and their international allies,” the bishops said following a standing committee meeting and celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Pan-African Episcopal Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS)

that took place in Lagos, Nigeria.

Injustices

The members of SECAM noted that the current wave of coups has enjoyed popular support, with the population viewing the takeovers as “an expression of deep-seated frustration and anger towards longstanding injustices”.

According to the polling agency Afrobarometer, the coup in Mali in 2020 came as a relief to as many as 82% of the population who had lost faith in the leadership of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta.

In Burkina Faso, the ouster of President Roch Kabore was welcomed by youthful crowds with chants of “what we want”.

In contrast with earlier coups that were usually violent, resulting in bloodshed and generalised panic, and usually led by older soldiers, the current coups have been largely peaceful, devoid of bloodshed, and have been generally led by younger soldiers, lower in rank.

The bishops said the events have prompted a critical re-evaluation of the longstanding geopolitical

strategies imposed on African nations, particularly those rich in natural resources.

“This shift marks a significant turning point in the political landscape of Africa, especially in the Sahel and Central African regions,” the statement reads.

The bishops nevertheless clarified that they opposed military takeovers, maintaining that democracy is still the best form of government.

“While acknowledging that democracy is not flawless, it is our belief that compared to other forms of governance, democracy is preferable. This preference is rooted in its fundamental commitment to upholding and defending human rights,” they said.

They said however that certain situations, like those in the Sahel and Central Africa, call for “discernment”.

The statement said the Church is deeply concerned about the well-being of the people in the regions where interim governments have been formed after the recent coups d’etats. It also said that it recognises the legitimate desires of these populations for improved living conditions

and governance.

The statement added that the Church commits itself to endorsing and supporting positive developments in these nations, aiming to foster a transition towards genuine democracy.

“The stability of our country and the well-being of its people hinge significantly on the conduct of free, inclusive, transparent, and peaceful elections”

“In light of this, we urge political leaders, stakeholders, and civil society groups to engage in collective and proactive efforts. This collaboration is crucial to avoid potential pitfalls, such as prolonging the period of democratic transition unduly.”

The clerics declared that they were keeping a close eye on upcoming elections across the continent. They did not name a nation, but a cursory glance at the electoral map reveals that four nations – the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Madagascar, and Togo – have elections set for this December alone. Elections are scheduled for next year in 19 countries across the continent.

“From our deliberations, it has become apparent that some of these elections are seemingly orchestrated to favour state-backed candidates, thereby undermining the democratic process,” the bishops said.

“On this matter, various episcopal conferences have voiced their concerns. We align ourselves with the stance taken by the CENCO (Episcopal Conference of Congo), which has stated: ‘The stability of our country and the well-being of its people hinge significantly on the conduct of free, inclusive, transparent, and peaceful elections.’”

They claimed that by holding these elections, the threat of military takeovers would be reduced and legitimately elected leaders would be free to focus on resolving issues that affect ordinary people.

1 Ngala Killian Chimtom is Africa Correspondent for Crux.

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Making Newman 'Doctor of the Church' very fitting

Dear Editor, Thank you for highlighting calls for Cardinal John Henry Newman to be made a Doctor of the Church [*The Irish Catholic* – November 23, 2023]. Cardinal Newman's profound impact on both the Church and society, particularly in Ireland, makes him a deserving candidate for this rare ecclesiastical honour.

Cardinal Newman, who was canonised as a saint by Pope Francis in 2019, played a pivotal role in shaping the Church's direction, earning him the title of the 'Father of Vatican II'. His emphasis on the importance of laypeople in the Church echoes loudly, and his legacy extends beyond his canonisation. As the founder of University College Dublin in 1854, his influence in Ireland is deeply ingrained, evident in the Notre Dame Newman Centre for Faith and Reason.

The recent plea by US bishops for the Vatican to confer the title of Doctor of the Church upon Cardinal Newman is a commendable move. I echo the sentiments of Fr Gary Chamberland of the Newman Centre for Faith and Reason in Dublin, who rightly emphasises Newman's continuing importance in shaping the Irish Church's self-conception and role in society.

The impact of Cardinal Newman's teachings on crucial aspects such as conscience formation, religious freedom, and the development of doctrine cannot be overstated. As Fr Chamberland rightly points out, many of our ideas on these matters trace their roots back to the pioneering thoughts of St Newman.

With only 37 individuals currently honoured as a 'Doctor of the Church', the recognition of Cardinal Newman would be a very fitting tribute to a figure whose influence has transcended time and borders.

Yours etc.,
Josh O'Hara
Finglas, Dublin 11

Mr Kelly is no 'plucky defender of traditional values'

Dear Editor, The inclusion of MEP Seán Kelly's name among the signatories to a letter refuting a claim that he supported the sale of embryos seems to me extraordinary [*The Irish Catholic* – October 26, 2023].

Let Mr Kelly confirm that his website regretted the removal of Roe vs Wade by the US Supreme Court, and let him show the record of his support for abortion during his time in the European Parliament

Where has he distanced himself from the hate speech legislation policy of the current Fine Gael government, or the exclusion zones for pro-life people, or the new curriculum for small children which has given rise to concerns among many of his constituents? The removal of the provision about women in the home from the Constitution? The attacks on Christians and religious freedom in Ireland now? One could go on.



Where has he demurred on a single occasion in the face of any or all of this, even, for example, to

question the societal impact of abortion on young men?

For me, I have to say, Mr Kelly is no plucky defender of traditional values

in a time of change, and no mediator of change among a people who love the past.

Yet this is exactly the constituency where Mr Kelly gets

his votes. Go away and figure that one out.

Yours etc.,
Gerald O'Carroll
Ballylongford, Co. Kerry.

A good solution for hand-wringing

Dear Editor, Hands are wrung about how to rescue the Church in Ireland as affiliation and belief decline, and it can seem a very dark time. In fact, the more we talk and analyse, the bleaker it seems!

Perhaps we could learn something from this, aside from truths about terminal decline and necessary changes. (Sometimes such rhetoric smacks of a desire to 'prepare' Irish laity for what's to come, softening them up rather than firing them up.)

But what can we learn? That evangelisation is a practical, not a theoretical, matter. It is about going out and doing something – anything really – to spread the news of God's love for the world.

Of course the problem of winning people over seems impossible when looked at from a distance. All you see are masses of unbelievers, not the individual soul.

If we really want to address the Church's decline, we should be getting out into the streets, into the schools, into the pubs – wherever! – and talking to people. If that doesn't work, then try something else.

Only by doing will we learn what it is we have to do; only by failing can we improve. Sitting back and wringing our hands does nothing. He who dares, wins – and we must be daring because there are external lives at stake.

We shouldn't worry about if they want to hear or not. We can confidently propose our message of hope without anger or anxiety, humbly and charitably offering God's love to all.

A good solution for hand-wringing is giving them something to do.

Yours etc.,
Patrick Gardener,
Blackrock, Co. Cork.

No spending on promoting abortion alternatives

Dear Editor, In an economic climate of belt-tightening and critical underinvestment in key areas, the Government has spared no expense in funding abortion provision. Since 2019 to mid-2023, an estimated €46 million of taxpayers' money has been pumped into abortion provision.

A report produced by the Pro Life Campaign and distributed to members of the Oireachtas has painstakingly collated information revealed in various replies to parliamentary questions which shows that an estimated €45,928,018 has been spent by the State on abortion provision in four and a half years.

This enormous bill has been footed by the Irish taxpayer. Meanwhile, nothing has been spent on promoting positive alternatives to abortion to women in unplanned pregnancies.

Some members of Government and the media baulk at abortion provision in Ireland being

referred to as the 'abortion industry', but it's hard to find fault with this description when one takes an honest look at the obscene amounts of money being spent to end the lives of unborn babies.

We believe this spending of €46 million to bankroll abortion in Ireland is a national scandal. The Govern-

ment should be more forthcoming with its spending on this deeply contentious issue. It should not be left to groups like the PLC to piece together the data to bring this spending issue to wider public attention.

Yours etc.,
Eilís Mulroy
Pro Life Campaign, Dublin 2

Upset with 'mothers and others' phrase

Dear Editor, I am a childless (not by choice) woman. I was very upset by Mary Kenny's article [*The Irish Catholic* – November 16, 2023]. It is hard enough to fight for equal pay for women but now Mary Kenny and Louise Perry are suggesting that women should be split into two groups "mothers and others". I find the "others" phrase highly insulting.

In my experience women without children (not by choice, and those by choice) get less time off work and usually work longer hours. We also have many other commitments outside of working life and they tend to include looking after elderly parents and family members. We almost have to justify being tired or needing time off for other commitments. We have

tailored our lives differently since it didn't work out the way we thought it would. We get ignored in most settings, including the Catholic Church as everything is focused on the "normal family". And yet again, we are being pushed aside as our lives are viewed as not as important or as meaningful as mothers. You don't suggest splitting men into two groups of "fathers and oth-

ers" and adjusting their pay accordingly. The split between "mothers" and "others" is hard enough to face every day without highlighting it even more. It is something that we will never get away from in our lives. I'm sure there are many other childless women upset by your suggestions.

Yours etc.,
Ann Kennedy
Carlow Town

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Your Faith

Comfort
crisis

Need consolation? Let
Advent help with that

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The Irish Catholic, December 7, 2023



Distinguishing between what God wills and what God allows

Question: Which of the following events were God's will?

The Fall of man? The Crucifixion? The most recent car accident you were in? Last month's breakup with your significant other?

Answer: They were all God's will ... at least in a way.

How's that for clarity?

Unfortunately, if you're looking for short, simple answers to questions about what events are and are not God's will, that's often about as clear as they come. Frustrating though it may be, the answer to whether or not the great events and minor happenings in human history are divinely ordained is rarely simple. Usually, the answer hinges on what one means by divinely



It's important to understand God's will properly, writes Emily Stimpson Chapman

ordained. And to that there are two possible meanings. There's God's positive (or ideal) will and God's permissive (or conditional) will.

Distinctions

Understanding the distinctions between those two is important, and not just for theologians with proclivities for debating how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. The distinctions

matter to all Christians because of the very practical implications that flow from them – distinctions that, when properly understood, can help us know God, the world and ourselves better, leading us closer to him and closer to heaven. Or that, when misunderstood, can confuse us about God, the world and ourselves, leading us away from him and away from heaven.

To prevent that from

happening, let's break out our Catholic lexicon and start defining.

“Because God is infinitely good and has no evil within him, he can only will that which is good and holy”

First up, God's positive (or ideal) will, which essentially means what God desires for us and the world. It's what, in a perfect world, we would always do – loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving our neighbour as ourselves. It's always good, never evil, and leads those who do it along the straight and narrow path to righteousness,

fulfilment and joy.

Jim Gontis, director of evangelisation for the Diocese of Venice, Florida, explained, “Because God is infinitely good and has no evil within him, he can only will that which is good and holy.”

That's why events such as the Crucifixion can't fall into the category of God's ideal will. They can, however, be understood to be part of his permissive will, which broadly defined, is everything that happens in the world.

“God's permissive will is what he allows,” said Mr Gontis. “If he didn't allow it, it wouldn't happen.”

That's true on multiple levels.

On one level, God's will is what holds the world and everyone and everything in it in existence.



Christ's crucifixion is depicted in a stained-glass window. Photo: OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz

Each of us exists because God wills it. Each of us moves, thinks, breathes and acts because God wills it. As such, everything we do, for good and for ill, is made possible by God's will.

Of course, you and I get to make choices about how we move, think and act because of a thing called free will.

"God is omnipotent. He's all powerful," said Fr Edward Connolly, a priest of the Diocese of Allentown, Pennsylvania. "But, in a way, he decided to limit his own omnipotence, or limit the exercise of it, when he created angels and human beings. It was a profound decision on the part of God. He said, 'I'm going to create beings who can freely defy me and freely love me'".

“We get angry with God for things that have little to do with God and a lot to do with us and our own bad choices”

Unfortunately, we do choose to defy him. We choose to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We choose to crucify the Son of God. We choose to hate our neighbour, drive recklessly, and run from responsibility and commitment. Those choices, time and again, thwart God's ideal will.

Again, however, the only reason we're able to make such choices is because God willed to give us free will. Man's sinful choices and the consequences that flow from them, while not God's ideal will, are still within God's permissive will.

In giving man free will, God didn't wash his hands of his creation; rather he remains intimately involved in every decision his free creatures make. As such, the nature of God's permissive will goes even beyond the gift of free will.

Michael Sirilla, professor of theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, explained, "God doesn't will sin. We can't say that God makes people sin. But you also can't say that somebody is committing a sin totally against God's will, and God's will has nothing to do with it. He permits it. He manages it. He doesn't lose control over the whole universe.

"He keeps sinners on a short leash," he added, "channelling, guiding and directing sin so some greater good can come out of it".

So, to sum up. God's positive will: What God wants. God's permissive will: What God allows.

And those distinctions matter because they determine how we feel about God.

"We get angry with God for things that have little to do with God and a lot to do with us and our own bad

choices," said Fr Connolly. "It's like walking up to a stranger on the street and saying, 'My shoes are too tight. I'm angry at you'. We must stop blaming God for things he didn't cause."

They also shape how we think about God.

"If we don't understand the consequences of free will, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking of God as a cruel or arbitrary dictator, willing all sorts of bad things in the world, even sin," said Mr Gontis. "On the other hand, if we downplay his omnipotence and involvement in the decisions we make, he can become like the deist's 'watchmaker God,' removed and inconsequential to what's happening in the world."

Moral confusion

That in turn, he added, can lead to a great deal of moral confusion about our obligations to self and others.

"The deist sense of God can lead to people making their own moral laws," he said. "If God sets everything in motion and says, 'You take it from here,' the conclusion is I can do what I want to do. Might makes right.

"The other conception of God – God as an arbitrary dictator – can lead us to think of ourselves as puppets on the string," he continued. "We can become passive about our responsibilities, even chalking our own sins up to 'God's will.'"

Given all that, what is the proper response to questions about God's will, suffering, grace and human choice?

According to Prof. Sirilla, St Augustine (or St Ignatius, depending on whom you ask) may have had the best advice.

"We're told to pray like it all depends on God, and act like it all depends on us," said Prof. Sirilla. "In other words, recognise that God's will is sovereign, but then step out in confidence, avoiding sin, fulfilling the duties of your state in life, and meeting the needs of others as God presents them to you and prudence guides you."

In the end, he advised, it all comes down to trust – trusting that God is working out all things for our good.

"Look to the saints who trusted against all odds," he said. "Joseph gets sold into slavery. Abraham is asked to sacrifice his only son. Mary watches her son die on the cross. How painful and traumatic that must have been for all of them. But they knew God, and although they knew they couldn't see the fullness of his plan – where it was all leading – they trusted it was leading to some greater good, and they did their best to obey him in all things. We need to trust and do the same."

Emily Stimpson Chapman is a bestselling Catholic author of nearly a dozen books, and a former contributing editor to Our Sunday Visitor.



It's true! There is more joy in giving than in receiving



Silvio Cuéllar

The air is now filled with Christmas music, special offers and sales. This materialistic culture invites us to buy and buy the latest, newest thing. However, this Advent season can also be a time to share our time, talents, and treasure with others.

Helping the poor

In his recent homily for the World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis challenged us to multiply love by helping the poorest and asked us the following question: "What path will we take in our lives: the path of Jesus,

whose very life was gift, or the path of selfishness? The path with hands open towards others in order to give, give of ourselves, or that of closed hands so that we have more things and only care about ourselves?"

“That master will come back one day and summon those servants, trusting that he might rejoice with them on how they had made his wealth increase and bear fruit”

In his message, the Holy Father used the parable of the talents in the Gospel of Matthew, where three men find themselves with enormous wealth in their hands, thanks to the generosity of their master who leaves for a long journey. "That master will

come back one day and summon those servants, trusting that he might rejoice with them on how they had made his wealth increase and bear fruit," the Pope said.

Serving others

This parable applies to us and our lives, for God has given each of us different talents and one day, he will ask us to give an account of the use we have made of them in serving others.

Sharing our time with someone who is lonely, who may have lost a family member, or visiting those who are ill can be a great grace and blessing. I experienced this firsthand, as my dad is in delicate health after having three strokes, and is recovering in a rehabilitation centre half an hour from my home. My younger brother and I take turns to visit him every day. Three or four times a week, I get up earlier to have breakfast with him. The

visits comfort him, give him peace, put a smile on his face and help him not feel lonely or abandoned.

You may know people in your parish community who have stopped coming to Mass because they are sick; it would be a great blessing to visit them and give them a little of your time.

“The people you meet will see in you the light of Christ and will want to join your community of faith”

God has given us different gifts and talents and asks us to make good use of them by multiplying them. Are you serving in a ministry in your parish community or in an agency that helps the poor in your community?

Parishes can be a vehicle for you to offer your talents, perhaps as a lector, Eucharistic minister, member of the choir

or serving in the hospitality ministry, in the food bank, soup kitchen. One might accompany the youth group, mentor young mothers, or participate in a prayer group or ecclesial movement. But above all, serving with your example of Christian life, so that wherever you go, the people you meet will see in you the light of Christ and will want to join your community of faith, not because of what you say, but because of your witness of life.

Sharing our blessings

Finally, God calls us to share our financial blessings and our treasure with others.

This Advent, I would like to challenge you to adopt a poor or immigrant family needing our help. A tradition can be to look for a family we can adopt, buying gifts for the children and perhaps a basket of necessities.

A few years ago, our pastor started an awareness campaign about our offerings, promoting giving God our first

harvest in thanksgiving for all the blessings we receive. One way to do this is perhaps to divide a tenth of our income by giving a significant portion to the parish, another portion to the annual diocesan Catholic Charities campaign, and a final portion to help other charities or people around you who are in need.

I want to conclude this month's column with the Pope's prayer in his message to the Day of the Poor: "Let us pray that each of us, according to the gift we receive, and the mission entrusted to us, may strive 'to make charity bear fruit' and draw near to some poor person. Let us pray that at the end of our journey, having welcomed Christ in our brothers and sisters with whom he identified himself, we too may hear it said to us: 'Well done, good and trustworthy servant... Enter into the joy of your master.'"

i Silvio Cuéllar is a writer, liturgical music composer and journalist.

Need a bit of comforting or consolation? Let Advent help!



Fr Patrick Briscoe OP

“Human beings possess a great and readily observable weakness for which they need much support and comfort,” says the Italian priest philosopher Luigi Giussani. “They have an endemic fear engendered by a temptation to reduce the total image of their lives to what can be visibly and materially experienced.”

How we need comfort! We need the constant reassurance of our friends. We need accolades and ‘attaboys’ at work. We need family members to check in and tell us they love us.

Part of this is simply the human condition. As Fr Giussani says, we are plagued by an “endemic fear”. The most common expression of this fear prompts us to indulge in material consolations. A Netflix binge. A few drinks. A Christmas cookie ... or three.

A comfort emergency

But we all know those aren't real comforts. Often we even know it as we seek them. Eggnog won't soothe the existential questions that haunt us. So we remain dissatisfied. We saunter on waging our tired campaigns of half-hearted rebellion. We have

another cookie.

We won't let our hearts hear the deeper words of comfort we need. As a society, we won't let ourselves be truly consoled. And it's only getting colder and darker, metaphorically and in reality.

Which is why we Christians find ourselves facing a comfort emergency. We must learn to let ourselves be consoled by our God, or we will never begin to understand what it means to meet “comfort and joy”. Consolation fills the valleys, making the crooked ways of our hearts straight so that love can enter in.

“Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; / in his arms he gathers the lambs, / carrying them in his bosom, / and leading the ewes with care”

Advent is about learning the consolation God offers. Isaiah the prophet is told, “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God” (Is 40:1). The prophet is supposed to herald the greatest consolation of all: God himself.

We have access to that consoling love of God. The Eucharist is the actual encounter with consolation if we only permit ourselves to be consoled. So what holds us back? What keeps us from embracing the comfort we need?

Turning to the Eucharist

Most people won't run to the Eucharist because they're afraid to trust. Everyone is afraid of feeling foolish or being snook-

ered. We've all clicked the silly ads that don't deliver. It's how we've been trained to think. A cookie may look nice, but the sorrow that comes when it turns out to be stale shores up our doubt.

And to all this, in Advent, the prophet simply says, “Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; / in his arms he gathers the lambs, / carrying them in his bosom, / and leading the ewes with care” (Is 40:11). He will comfort us. He will not betray us. He will be enough for us.

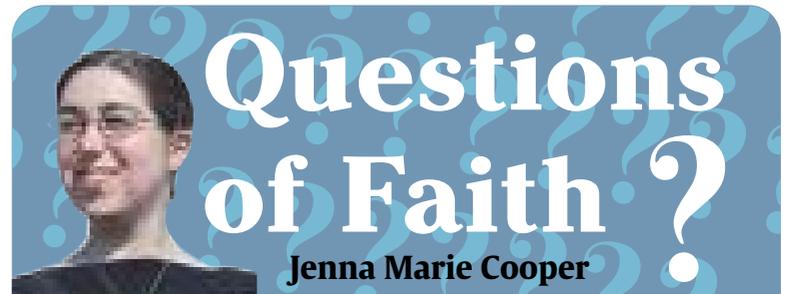
To console someone effectively, we have to be with them. Often we don't even have to say anything. We just have to be with our friends and loved ones. The presence of another, the presence of one we love draws us out of our suspicion. Presence is the answer to uncertainty.

In the Eucharist, God deigns to be with us. And he doesn't leave. He doesn't turn his back. He's never tired of listening. All he offers is comfort. But that comfort can't be visibly or materially experienced. So it takes courage. And commitment.

We must go to be with him. Over time, his Eucharistic love will wash away our scepticism. When we are with him, he will begin to speak. The first words we'll hear will be words of comfort and consolation. And slowly, those first gentle words will give way to a cacophony of joy.

O Jesus, come. Comfort, comfort your people!

Fr Patrick Briscoe OP, is a Dominican friar and the editor of Our Sunday Visitor.



Jenna Marie Cooper

Do Catholics pray for the souls of the dead to save them from hell?



Q: Why do Catholics pray for the souls in purgatory to lessen their sufferings? Is it possible that the souls already in purgatory would even go to hell, so our prayers for them would save them from going to hell?

A: We don't pray that souls in purgatory won't wind up in hell, because hell is no longer a possibility for them. We do pray because we hope that, through our prayers and sacrifices, the sufferings of their purgation might be eased and their journey to heaven might be hastened.

Let us recall that heaven is a state of eternal happiness arising from perfect union with God, and hell is a state of eternal suffering arising from one's freely-chosen rejection of God. It is by God's grace that heaven is possible for us in the first place, but to a great extent where we spend eternity depends upon us. We can choose to reject God through our sinful actions, or we can choose to accept God's gift of eternal life by striving for a life of virtue and in repenting from our sins.

Whether we go to heaven or hell is decided at the point of our death. But we know that God is merciful and wants us to be in eternity with him. God is therefore very forgiving and will save even the most sinful soul – even if that person only repents at the last minute! Think for instance of St Dismas, the “good thief” who was crucified next to Jesus, and to whom Jesus promised paradise (Lk 23:39-43).

However, not everyone ultimately destined for heaven will be ready to meet the all-holy God face-to-face immediately upon death. Catholics believe in a state called purgatory, which is a place of purification specifically in preparation for heaven.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us: “It is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the ‘eternal punishment’ of sin. On

the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the ‘temporal punishment’ of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin.” (ccc 1472)

In other words, all sin leaves some damaging effect on our souls which can often last even after we have repented or sought absolution in the Sacrament of Penance. Purgatory is a time of repairing this damage. We understand purgatory to be a finite period of suffering, often described or depicted artistically as a purifying fire. Still, the suffering of purgatory is of a radically different nature than the torments of hell, since the souls in purgatory have the joy of knowing that they are on their way towards God.

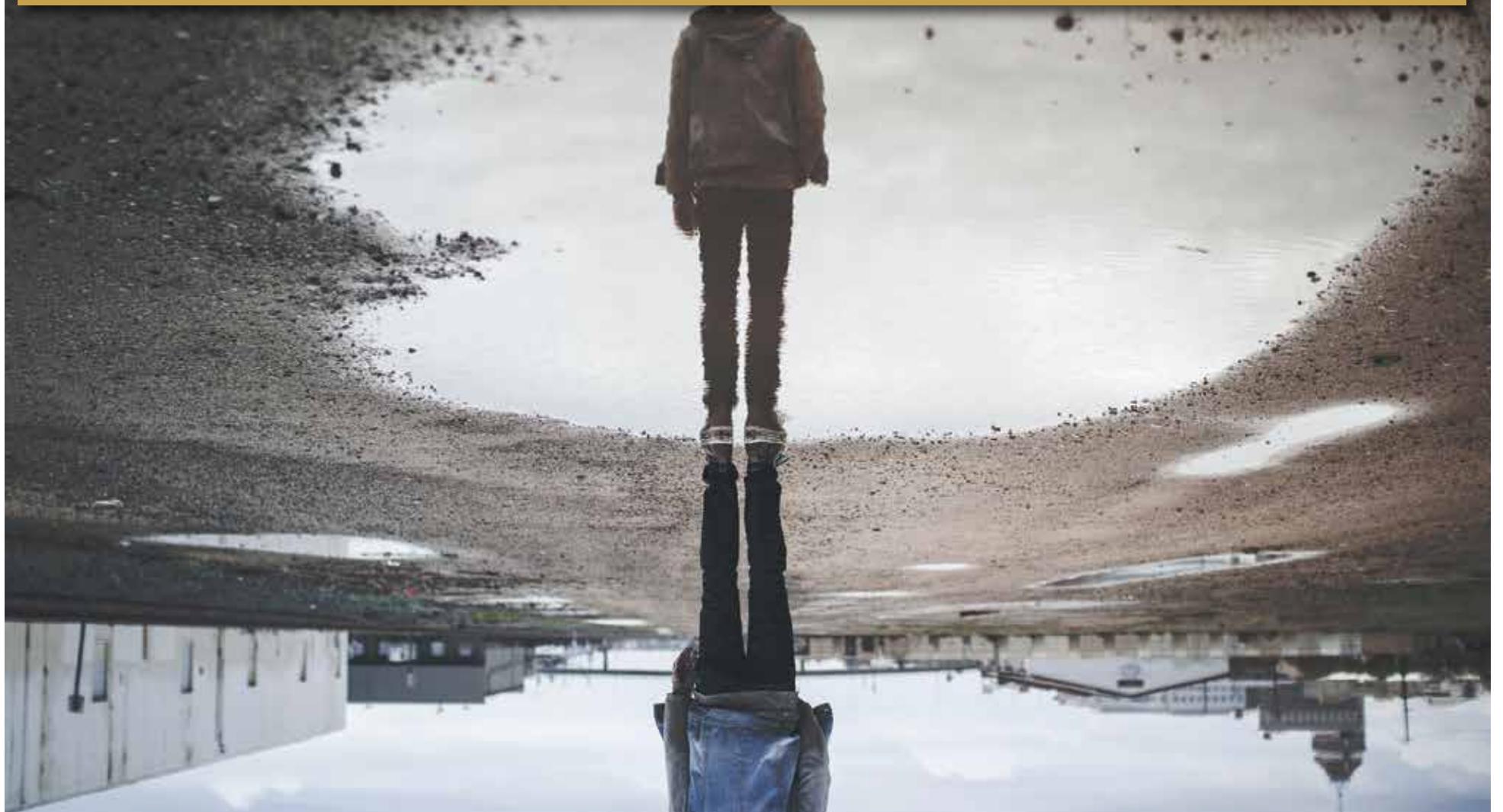
Incidentally, we can pray for the dead even if we may personally have doubts about an individual's salvation. While a soul in hell can no longer benefit from prayers, we never know what happens between a soul and God in the final moments of life. Prayers for the dead are never wasted.

There are several biblical citations referencing prayers for the dead, most famously, 2 Mc 12:44-45: “For if [Judas Maccabee] were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.”

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



Our over-complex, tortured selves



When all is said and done, our lives are not all that serene and peaceful. In a manner of speaking, we are always somewhat pathetic. That shouldn't scare us. Pathetic is not a pejorative term. The word comes from the Greek, 'pathos', which means pain. To be pathetic is to live in pain, and we all do because of the very way we are made.

Dignity

You might say that doesn't sound right. Aren't we made in the image and likeness of God so that each of us, no matter how messed up our lives might be, carry a special dignity and a certain godliness within us? We do carry that special dignity. However, despite that and largely because of it, our lives tend to be so complex as to be pain filled. Why?

Godliness isn't easy to carry. The infinite inside us doesn't easily fit itself into the finite. We carry too much divine fire inside to find much peace in this life.

That struggle begins early in life. To create a self-identity as a very young child, we need to make a series of mental contractions which ultimately limit our awareness. First, we need to differentiate ourselves from others (That's mom – I'm me); then, we need to differentiate between what is living and what is not (the puppy



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

is alive – my doll isn't); next, we need to differentiate between what is physical and what is mental (this is my body – but I think with my mind). Finally, and critically, as we are doing all this, we need to split off as much of our luminosity we can consciously handle from what is too much to consciously handle. With that we create a self-identity – but we also create a shadow, namely, an area inside us which is split off from our consciousness.

Notice that our shadow is not first of all a looming darkness. Rather, it's all the light and energy inside us that we cannot consciously handle. Most of us, I suspect, are familiar with the words of Marianne Williamson made famous by Nelson Mandela

in his inauguration speech: Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

Our light

Our light frightens us because it is not easy to carry. It gives us great dignity and infinite depth, but it also makes us pathologically complex and restless. Ruth Burrows, one of the foremost spiritual writers of our time, begins her autobiography with these words: I was born into this world with a tortured sensitivity and my life has not been an easy one. You wouldn't expect those words from a mystic, from someone who has been a faithful nun for more than

75 years. You wouldn't expect that her struggle in life was as much with the light within herself as with the darkness within and around her. That's also true for each of us.

“We ultimately learn that in this life there is no finished symphony”

There's a famous passage in the Book of Qoheleth where the sacred writer tells us that God has made everything beautiful in its own time. However, the passage doesn't end on a peaceful note. It ends by telling us that, while God has made everything beautiful in its own time, God has put timelessness into the human heart so that we are congenitally out of sync with time and the seasons from beginning to end. Both our special dignity and our pathological complexity take their origins in that anomaly in our nature. We are overcharged for life on this planet.

St Augustine gave this classic expression in his famous line: You have made us for yourself, Lord,

and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. There is an entire anthropology and spirituality in that single line. Our dignity and our perpetual restlessness have one and the same source.

Thus, you need to give yourself sacred permission for being wild of heart, restless of heart, insatiable of heart, complex of heart, and driven of heart. Too often, where both psychology and spirituality have failed you is in giving you the impression that you should be living without chaos and restlessness in your life. Admittedly, these can beset you more acutely because of moral inadequacy, but they will beset you no matter how good a life you are living. Indeed, if you are a deeply sensitive person, you will probably feel your complexity more acutely than if you are less sensitive or are deadening your sensitivity with distractions.

Karl Rahner once wrote to a friend who had written to him complaining that he wasn't finding the fulfilment he longed for in life. His friend expressed disappointment with himself, his marriage and his job. Rahner gave him this counsel: In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we ultimately learn that in this life there is no finished symphony.

There can be no finished symphony in this life – not because our souls are defective, but because they carry godliness.

“You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you”

Re-learning how to wait during Advent



Is 40:1-5, 9-11
Ps 85:9-10-11-12, 13-14
2 Pt 3:8-14
Mk 1:1-8

If nothing else, Advent should remind us of this inconvenient truth: We are people in a hurry.

The other day, I was leaving Walmart and noticed a tent set up in the parking lot. I looked closer. They had drones lined up, prepared to deliver almost anything to your front door in a matter of minutes. Think a delivery truck is too slow? Problem solved.

Waiting

Remember when we loved overnight delivery? Now, we want everything in 30 minutes – whether it's a pizza or paper towels. We can't wait to get to a phone or a computer – and we don't, because the phone and the computer are with us, every second, of every day, in our hand or in our pocket.

What did we do before we had tiny smartphone

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon
Greg
Kandra



screens to check every 10 minutes?

In 2023, we just don't want to wait. For anything. Ever.

But in the middle of this, for four short weeks, waiting is what we do. The Church presses the 'pause' button.

Stop. Watch. Wait. Here is Advent.

We find ourselves suddenly in a state of suspended animation. It's the season of expectation, of longing. The Church says, gently but firmly: wait for it.

Just wait.

A child is coming, a hope is dawning. In our liturgies and in our lives, we yearn

“This is Advent. It is the season when we wait – but also when we have work to do”

for something we cannot quite name. We pray for deliverance. We cry out to God, “O come, Emmanuel! Ransom us”!

“We light a candle. We make the walkway to the front door of our lives straight. We stand at the door and invite him in”

Like prisoners in a cell, we mark the days. We light candles in a wreath, one at a time, week by week. We fold open the cardboard windows of the Advent calendar, day by day, one day at a time, for 25 days.

This is Advent. It is the season when we wait – but also when we have work to do.

“Be watchful,” Jesus told us in the Gospel last week.

Here, on the second Sunday of the season, we hear it loud and clear. Make the highway straight, Isaiah tells us. “Prepare,” John the Baptist says. “Prepare the way of the Lord.”

What are we preparing for?

Spoiler alert: it isn't the presents and the tree, the cards and the tinsel.

No. It is Jesus Christ, the King of Kings.

Awakening

St Bernard of Clairvaux wrote beautifully about the three comings of Jesus: in Bethlehem, at the Incarnation; at the end of time, for the final judgement; and here and now, through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the grace of God, and the prayerful awakening of our hearts.

That last one, I think, merits closer attention. This is what Advent is really about: Christ, the saviour, dwelling within each of us – gracing us with mercy, with humility, with patience, with love.

If we make that a priority, we will make of our lives an ongoing Advent. We will live waiting and watching in joyful hope for Christ to enter our lives and to be with us, always.

After all, that is the essence of his name:

“Emmanuel.” God-with-us.

Only by making ourselves ready to encounter Christ today, can we make ourselves ready to encounter him at the end of time.

So prepare! Repent! Make the crooked paths straight. Heal a wound. Mend a fence. Comfort the suffering, sick and poor. Pray for the outcast and forgotten. Look beyond. And look within.

“Comfort the suffering, sick and poor. Pray for the outcast and forgotten. Look beyond. And look within”

And do it all with love.

Think of this as a time when we put out the welcome mat for the son of God. We light a candle. We make the walkway to the front door of our lives straight. We stand at the door and invite him in.

What will he find when he arrives? Will we be ready?

In a few weeks, wise men will be scanning the skies. They won't be looking for a drone from Walmart. They will be looking for the sign that the waiting is over, that hope is on the horizon.

A star will appear. Light will break through. That is what all the waiting and wondering and worrying is all about.

At a time when nobody wants to wait for anything – is that delivery here yet? – Advent assures us that some things really are worth the wait.

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

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



'Suffer the little children...'

Last week I finished on a somewhat positive note with the release of child hostages in the Holy Land. However, the positivity was short lived - it was abhorrent to see the end of the 'humanitarian pause'. Now it's more like humanity itself being on pause.

Once again, the news programmes last weekend featured images of injured children in Gaza after Israel's bombing campaign restarted - prompted it seems by renewed Hamas rocket fire and disputes over the terms of the ceasefire. The story of Christmas is embedded in the Holy Land, so it is disturbing to see the warring adults tolerating collateral damage to the children.

One of the many forces that damage children is pornography and the easy access of children to this scourge. Prominent British journalist Peter Hitchens had lots to say about it on **Times Radio Breakfast** (Thursday). He said society had failed to control porn, tolerated it, and so children had easy access to it. He wasn't too happy with what passed nowadays as sex education. It had always claimed to reduce underage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, but it had failed. And a lot of those pregnancies were 'suppressed', due to widespread resource to morning after pills abortion. He was "suspicious of adults who



There is much-needed wider focus on the effects of pornography on children.

want to talk dirty to children"!

On the **Nine News** (RTÉ One Saturday) it was reported that €25 million was to be given by the Irish Government to the 'loss and damage fund', compensating poor states for the effects of climate change. NGOs responded negatively, as this, they said, was just funding already promised rather than something new. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, addressing the COP28 summit, said we were a wealthy country. Of course we are, in some respects, but there's still a lot of poverty, homelessness and health services inadequacies. Another figure worth mentioning in this context is the

staggering €46 million spent on abortion 'services' since 2019 - spent largely on people who are not ill, while those who are ill face daily challenges. Where is the journalistic scrutiny?

A lesser figure did get some scrutiny on **Saturday with Colm Ó Mongáin** (RTÉ Radio One). This was the €1.5 million spent on an advertising campaign to promote the rights of people with disabilities. The sentiments in the ad are admirable, but the presenter raised a pertinent aspect of this expenditure when "the lived experience of thousands of people with additional needs would indicate their rights are

being infringed on, on a daily basis". It might also be pointed out that repeal of the Eighth Amendment and a previous Supreme Court judgement meant that those with disabilities were deprived, by law, of an equal right to be born. Equality campaigners remain remarkably silent. Having glossy campaigns while the reality falls very short is typical of PR driven Government. It often seems that the rhetoric trumps reality when it comes to priorities. Another symptom of that ailment is the irritating way politicians are constantly reminding us about how 'clear' they've been on any

PICK OF THE WEEK

MY LIFE AT CHRISTMAS WITH ADRIAN CHILES

BBC One Sunday December 10, 10.30am

Adrian Chiles meets veteran war correspondent John Simpson to discuss his memories of Christmas and discover how his eventful career has impacted his family and faith.

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday December 10, 1.15pm

Pam Rhodes discovers the fascinating stories behind some of our most-loved Christmas carols, and the Songs of Praise presenters reveal their own personal favourites.

FILM: THE BELLS OF ST MARY'S

Film 4 Thursday December 14, 1.35pm

(1945) After the success of *Going My Way*, Bing Crosby returned as Fr Chuck O'Malley in Leo McCarey's nine-Oscar-nominated drama.

given issue. It's like they're giving themselves a retrospective blessing.

Enough politics! Let's end on some musical notes. On **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4) Fr Eugene O'Hagan of 'The Priests' singing group told of their recording session with singer-songwriter Shane MacGowan who died last week. It was a collaboration on *The Little Drummer Boy*, a quirky version indeed. They found him "engaging and sensitive", having "depth and sincerity". He had asked for and received a blessing from the priests.

There was an uplifting item on the hymn *Amazing Grace* on **Alex Conran** (Times Radio, Saturday). This was prompted by a new book by James Walvin - *Amazing Grace: A Cultural*

History of the Beloved Hymn. Described by the presenter as "the anthem for human kind", it was first performed in 1773 and was written by a rural English vicar, John Newton, who had previously been a slave trader. It was this angle that had first attracted Mr Walvin, but he became more interested in the hymn when he heard Barack Obama singing it at a funeral (it's on YouTube). Since then, he had come across thousands of versions. He loved Paul Robeson's, but not the Elvis rendition. He said it was versions in the 1970s by Judy Collins, Aretha Franklin and Scottish pipers that had made it go global and become so universal - it appealed to all who had fallen on hard times and had hopes for a better future.

Film

Aubrey Malone



Prequel to Morse excels in every department

I have a theory. *Endeavour* is based on the same premise as *Doc Martin*. You probably think that sounds ridiculous but think about it.

Both series feature introverted eccentrics who come up with elaborate solutions to complex problems. In one case they're medical, in the other criminal.

I recently bought box sets of both on Amazon. *Doc Martin* has a homespun appeal. It teaches us some important life lessons. *Endeavour* is more stylised. Its production values are second to none. So are the sets, the plotlines, the acting, the direction.

It's a prequel to *Morse*. I was never 'into' that series despite its iconic stature. It's almost as if it doesn't need

to try anymore on account of that. I missed *Endeavour* when it was on ITV but lapped it up when it became available online. I found myself binge-watching it. It's €50 for the box set but good value for that. There are many CDs in it. You can also get it on Netflix.

At first, I thought Shaun Evans, the title character, was a bit of a smarty pants with his *Da Vinci Code* insights into thorny crimes. Then he grew on me.

In later episodes the writers have expanded his character, giving him a drink problem and a womanising side. Neither of these aspects of his character worked for me. That's why I enjoyed the earlier



Roger Allam as DCI Fred Thursday and Shaun Evans as DS Endeavour Morse in *Endeavour*.

episodes more.

I also had a problem with his relationship with Joan Thursday (Sara Vickers), the daughter of his colleague Fred (Roger Allam).

She seemed much more compatible with him than with her later beau, Jim Strange (Sean Rigby). Rigby loses an incredible amount of weight as the series goes

on. And in my view, much of his effect as a result.

Allam is heavier and has oodles of presence to go with it. You find yourself looking at him in a scene even when he doesn't speak. When he does, the voice is powerful.

I also like his relationship with his wife, Win (Caroline O'Neill). It's so realistic - much more credible than that with his wife in the more recent *Murder in Provence*. That to me was a limp attempt to trade off his *Endeavour* success. It was made ridiculous by asking us to believe he's a French man speaking with a cut-glass British accent.

Endeavour features a head police officer (Anton

Lesser) who's intimidating at the beginning of the series. He softens when his personal life becomes poignant.

There's also a pathologist (James Bradshaw) who seems to delight in relating the gory details of how the murder victims meet their fate. I found him obnoxious at the beginning but later on quite amusing.

I urge you to familiarise yourself with this series. You'll relax into it like into a comfortable pair of old shoes. It has intrigue, class, escalating tension. It grabs your attention and doesn't let go until our dynamic duo - or trio - discover the 'who' that 'dunit'.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



St Laurence O'Toole 1128-1180: A living memory for almost a millennium

J. Anthony Gaughan

It is instructive when looking back in history to ask whose memory endures. Is it that of a distinguished writer, a captain of trade and commerce, a statesman, a warlord, a political leader?

When one looks back in Dublin's history it is clearly not one of these at all, but rather it is that of St Laurence O'Toole (1128-1180), Archbishop of Dublin, whose feast day was celebrated recently.

Those readers who think that writing modern biographies is a controversial matter are right; it certainly is, but not as fraught as writing about a medieval biography. It is not so much a matter of rewriting the past, but of writing about it at all.

The 800th anniversary of the canonisation of St Laurence O'Toole falls in May 2025. He is one character from medieval Irish history crying out for a proper scientific biography. Perhaps a young historian, with that anniversary in mind, has such a book in hand. But I have doubts about that. A brief account of his career as generally received will illustrate the difficulties.

Born in 1128 Laurence O'Toole sprung from two princely families of those parts of Leinster now known

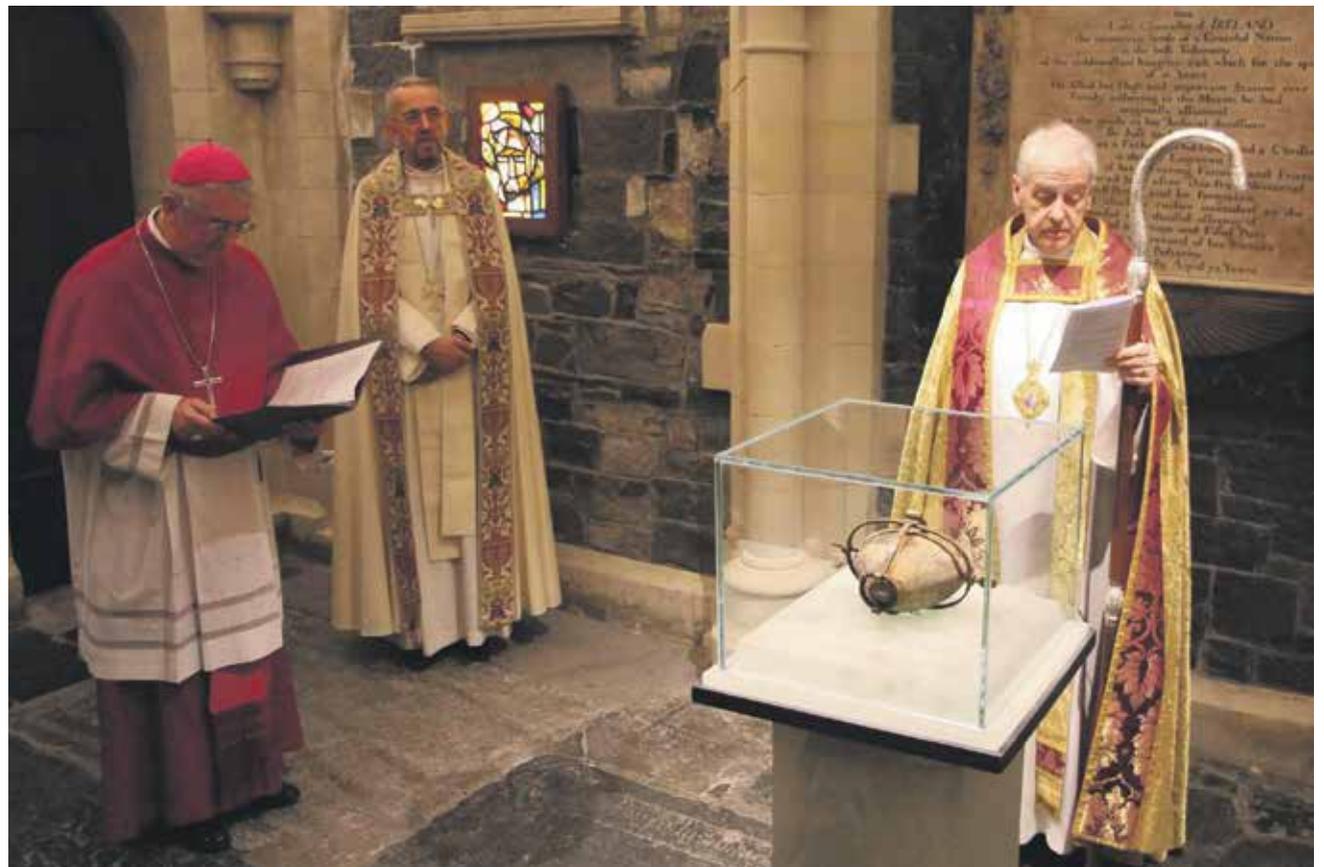
as Counties Kildare and Wicklow. His mother was an O'Byrne. When only ten years old he became a victim of one of the internecine conflicts waged by Irish chieftains in that period.

Hostage

Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster, attacked the O'Toole territory and carried off Laurence whom he held as a hostage. After two years Laurence was released into the custody of the Abbot of Glendalough. At the famous monastic centre, he was, it seems, a keen student, and decided to join the community and was ordained in his early 20s.

When the Abbot of Glendalough died in 1157, Laurence succeeded him. His appointment at such a young age indicated the high regard in which he was held by his contemporaries. Those who nowadays visit the extensive ruins of Glendalough are left in no doubt as to the importance of that foundation.

It was as large as a town. Besides being a place for worship and prayer, it was a famous educational centre. In addition, it concerned itself with the care of the sick, the infirm and the otherwise vulnerable members of the society of those times. Chroniclers attest to the competence and dedication with which Laurence presided over the manifold activities associ-



Back in 2012 the shrine containing the relic of St Laurence O'Toole's heart was stolen from Christ Church Cathedral. When it was eventually returned by the police, having been found in the Phoenix Park after a tipoff, it was installed in a newly designed shrine in the cathedral, which was dedicated in an ecumenical service by the Archbishop of Dublin on November 14, 2018, the saint's feast day. Pictured are Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson (right) with Archbishop Diarmaid Martin (left) and Dean David Dunne at the dedication ceremony.

ated with that great ecclesiastical centre.

Presumably not least because of his success as abbot, Laurence was appointed to succeed Gregory, Dublin's

first archbishop, in 1162. His time as archbishop coincided with a very difficult period in our history.

The Norman invasion generated a great deal of conflict,

on the one hand, between the Normans and the Gaelic chieftains and, on the other, warfare between Gaelic chieftains prompted by that invasion. Initially as the new archbishop of Dublin, he attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the Irish kings and chieftains to present a united front to the Norman incursion.

“From our perspective, perhaps the most serious problem faced by Laurence O'Toole was that of lay-investiture”

Thereafter he was indefatigable in his efforts to achieve peace and to avert the tragic effects of the conflict. By his exemplary life, forthright preaching and wise administration he greatly improved the Christian quality of the lives of the priests and people of his archdiocese.

According to a contemporary account he infused into his priests a new enthusiasm for the recitation of the Divine Office in choir, inculcated in

them a sense of mystery in the celebration of Mass and restored the reverence due to altars and churches.

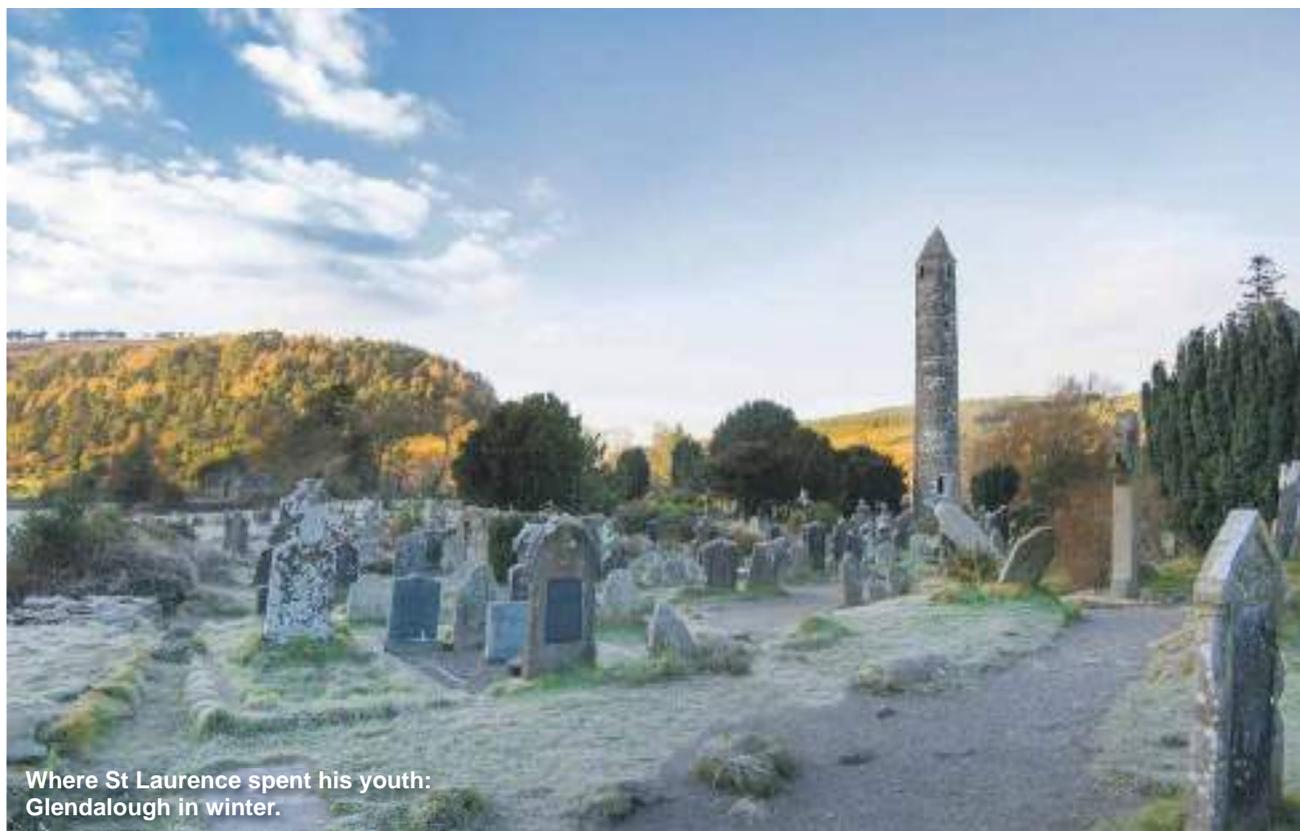
From our perspective, perhaps the most serious problem faced by Laurence O'Toole was that of lay-investiture. This was a problem which affected the Christian Church throughout the known world of that time. To understand it, it is as well to recall the nature of society then.

Egalitarianism

People today are generally committed to egalitarianism, at least in principle, and become impatient at overt signs of class-consciousness. Such divisions as exist in our community are as nothing when compared to the structures of society in Ireland of the 12th Century.

Then there were two classes, the princely families and the serfs. The former owned everything, controlled everything, the latter accounted for little or nothing. Besides controlling secular affairs the princely families also had great influence in ecclesiastical matters.

They claimed and in many places exercised the right to



Where St Laurence spent his youth: Glendalough in winter.

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.

invest or appoint bishops, abbots, parish priests and superiors to convents and other religious institutions.

As can be imagined, not all those so appointed were suitable and constituted a serious stumbling-block to the Church's mission. Laurence addressed the problem with tact, determination and, it appears, with considerable success.

“Dubliners take a special pride in Laurence O’Toole who remains a living memory and a symbol of the city’s Christian heritage”

Lay-investiture was on the agenda of the reforming Third Lateran Council held in 1179. Laurence was one of the six prelates who represented the Church in Ireland at the council. He was appointed Papal Legate to supervise the implementation of the reforms in Ireland.

On his return home he presided over the convocation of clergy at Clonfert at which “it was laid down by a constitution that no laymen should have the rule of any Church matters thenceforth”.

In 1180 Ireland was once again the scene of much conflict between the Normans and the Irish chieftains. Laurence was eager to meet Henry II in an attempt to have peace restored. The king, who had been greatly offended by Laurence's exertions to curtail lay-investiture, was not willing to meet him. Laurence, however, was not to be denied.

He travelled to Normandy to urge his peace proposals on the king. At Eu, 20 miles from Dieppe, he became ill and died some days later in the nearby Augustinian Abbey on November 14, 1180.

St Laurence O’Toole anniversary

The Archbishop of Rouen has invited the Archbishop of Dublin and the people of the Dublin Diocese to join him in the town of Eu in Normandy in May 2025 for the celebration of the 800th anniversary of St Laurence O’Toole's canonisation with the Diocese of Rouen.

Those interested in participating in, or organising a group for, this pilgrimage celebration, can contact Fr Ivan Tonge, Ringsend (ivan.tonge@gmail.com), or Fr John Flaherty, Portmarnock (john.flaherty@dublindiocese.ie), so that the planning can be advanced. This visit to Normandy will be co-ordinated by Marian Pilgrimages.

In 1226, less than 100 years after his birth, Laurence O’Toole was canonised. His tomb can be seen in the crypt of the parish church at Eu. His heart, enclosed in an iron casket, was brought back to Dublin and rests in a place of honour in Christ Church Cathedral.

Dubliners take a special pride in Laurence O’Toole who remains a living memory and a symbol of the city's Christian heritage. His service as archbishop is to be remembered especially for the courage and probity with which he faced the great issues of his time.

Divided

St Laurence O’Toole stands in history as a man in a troubled and divided time. He came from a Gaelic culture in decline, and laboured as a cleric in a new diocese in the hands of the invasive and ambitious Normans, and he had to deal with an unusual ruler King Henry II, a monarch more engaged at the time with the Angevin Empire in Europe.

The Church and St Laurence faced many problems. Today the problems associated with the achievement of justice and peace and the avoidance of violence are with us as before. And as one can see from the discussions and deliberations at the Synod in Rome, one of the great ongoing debates throughout Christendom is the role of the laity in the institutional Church.

As demonstrated in the life of Laurence O’Toole, these issues can and must be solved by the principles of justice and charity. In attempting their solution it would be wise also to take account of the experience acquired by the Church in wrestling with such problems for almost two millennia.

However, finding a solution to present day problems may be helped by a better and more inquiring examination of the past, and that is what we hope to get from historians.

Some children’s and young people’s books for Christmas

Peter Costello

This time of the year is for booksellers at least the busiest time for children's books. Books always make an acceptable present. But for those buying them, mostly parents and grandparents, some care has to be taken.

Don't get carried away by the title hypes in the press or prominently displayed in bookshop windows (that space is paid for in many cases - so you are seeing a commercial offering rather than a staff curated presentation of what is best). Here nevertheless are some notions for presents.



The President's Dog,

by Peter Donnelly

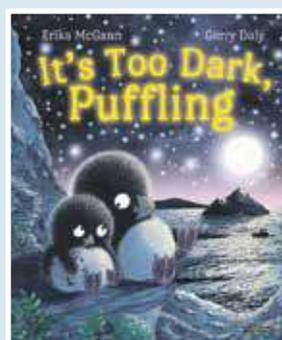
(Gill Books, €16.99)

This is the good news, a further addition to artist Peter Donnelly's series about the goings on up in the Park which have been the most delightful of Irish publications over the last decade.

The great hairy friend of his Excellency in real life is transformed into the friend of us all. In the new episode the President and his dog have an adventure on those high Wicklow hills to the south of the Park.

It's the first outing there for the dog. But the weather turns bad, as it does so quickly up there, and while he shelters, the President sends the dog off to find help. After some adventures this he manages to do, bringing the air rescue team to the right place. So all is well, and both the man and his dog “are back in the Áras in time for tea”.

It's Too Dark, Puffling,



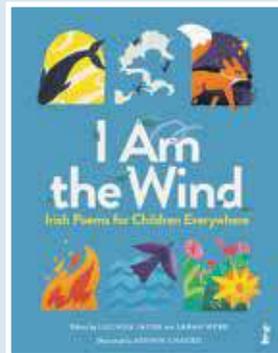
by Gerry Daly, illustrated by Erika McGann

(O'Brien Press, €14.99)

All is not well on Skellig. Puffling's little friend is afraid of the dark - how well we all

know that feeling - so Puffling and the other birds on the rock have to rally round and show the timid little one that the dark nights can be friendly too. (It's a lesson we all have to learn at some time, and this book presents a happy way of dealing with it.)

I Am the Wind: Irish



Poems for Everywhere Children,

edited by Lucinda Jacob, Sarah Webb and Ashwin Chacko

(Little Island, €22.99)

An anthology of poems suitable for younger readers from the Irish tradition. ‘The Song of Amergin’, from which the title comes, though found in a medieval manuscript, as they say, is a very ancient song, perhaps the earliest Irish poem known in fact, coming as it does from an ancient account of how this island was settled.

One cannot introduce children early enough to the long line of Irish verse, but the price seems a little bit steep for what is involved. Still this is an ideal book for this time of year.



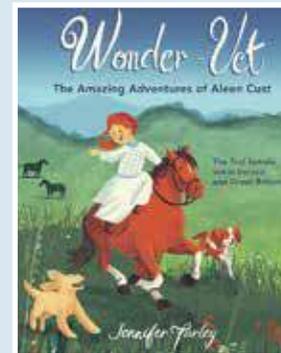
Peter and the Wolf,

text by Gavin Friday with illustrations by Bono

(DK Children, €16.99)

This book is sold partly in aid of the Irish Hospice Foundation. The text is by Gavin Friday, the illustrations from drawings by Bono. I have some doubts about this treatment of the great composer's own original narrative.

This is not a folk tale, but a story by the composer Prokofiev himself. But ‘reimaginings’ are, as we all know, current everywhere and often well respected, so perhaps I am just being old fashioned.



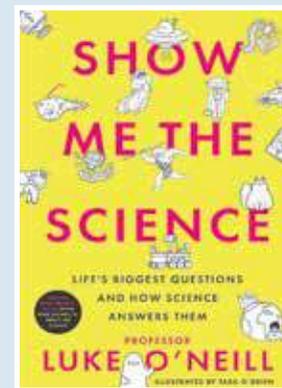
Wonder Vet: The Amazing Adventures of Aileen Cust,

by Jennifer Farley

(Beehive books, €16.99)

Within any family network there is always at least one pony-mad girl who wants to become a vet, and why not? This delightful book relates in graphic form the adventures of the girl who became the first qualified female vet in these islands.

By the way work is under way by a group of vets to create a museum to her memory in the west of Ireland; for many years she had a practice of her own in Roscommon. She was a remarkable woman.

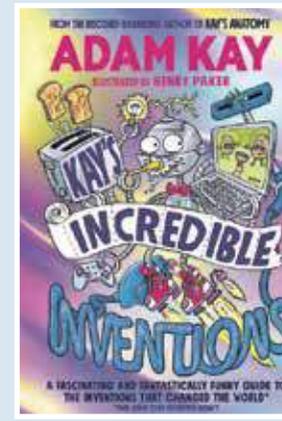


Show Me the Science,

by Luke O'Neill

(Gill Books, €16.99)

One of Ireland's best known scientists undertakes a mission to make science both real and relevant to young people, but it's worthwhile keeping in mind in our enthusiasm for the knowledge that has transformed Ireland in recent decades, that other elements in our culture are important too, such as literature and philosophy, which scientists too often seem to discount.



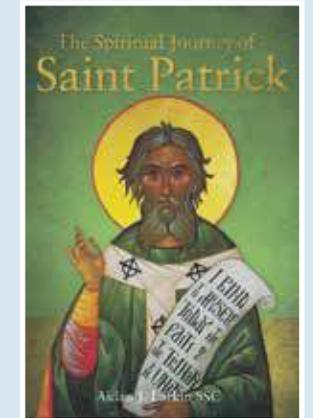
Kay's Incredible Inventions,

by Adam Kay, with illustration by Henry Parker

(Puffin Books, €14.99)

Coming as I do from a family of inventors, patentees and gadget makers I am all for those people who manage to transform our lives with better aids to living. I know too that many of their ideas are daft and in the end unusable, but where would we be without them.

They are the people, and not heroes and patriots, who have really changed and improved life over the centuries. If you have a budding inventor or two around the house this is the book to encourage them. A mechanical engineer is as valuable today as a digital mastermind.



The Spiritual Journey of Saint Patrick,

by Aidan J. Larkin SSC

(Messenger Publications, €14.95)

One often feels that there ought to be something serious for older young adults in their Christmas stockings. Surely in that wide family network alluded to above, there might be at least one young adult who might perhaps harbour what used to be referred to as ‘a vocation’.

For that young person this book might be one to think of. After 15 young people read books of an apparent difficulty that would surprise their parents. So why not?

If anyone wants to understand the role of religion in Ireland over the centuries, the place to begin is at the beginning. Nothing in this book would be beyond the understanding of a young person facing their Leaving. (If it is, they are in the wrong school.)

Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4027 or email advertising@irishcatholic.ie

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BETHLEHEM CARE & HOSPICE TRUST

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info@naturalfamilyplanningireland.ie
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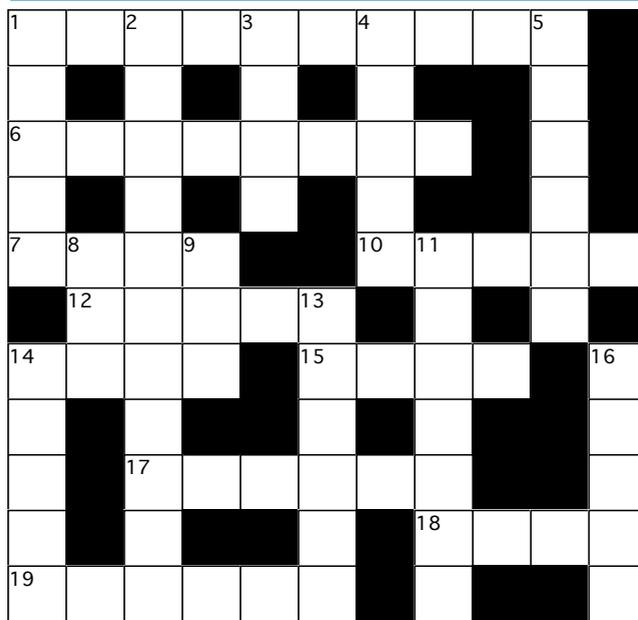
Cost: €320

Classifieds: 01 687 4028

Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 512



Across

- 1 You put a jacket on this before putting it into the wardrobe (4,6)
- 6 People who are _____ do as they are told (8)
- 7 Simple, flat boat (4)
- 10 Shouts (5)
- 12 Animals in a flock (5)
- 14 At what time? (4)
- 15 Fury (4)
- 17 Long, thin sword (6)
- 18 You tie it when you put on a shoe (4)
- 19 Paper hankie (6)

Down

- 2 A really good card from a red suit (3,2,6)
- 3 You use shampoo when washing it (4)
- 4 Female goat (5)
- 5 Baby's toy (6)
- 8 Its wood is used to make hurleys (3)
- 9 Moses was given have this many Commandments (3)
- 11 In a keen way (7)
- 13 Speak highly about (6)
- 14 You wear a belt around this part of your body (5)
- 16 What you get when you add five and two (5)

Down

- 1 Group of singers - often in

SOLUTIONS, NOVEMBER 30

GORDIUS NO. 639

- Across** - 1 Jug 3 Billionaire 8 Silver lining 9 Outmoded
10 Maids 11 Debug 13 Count 15 Reeking 16 Antacid 20 Heave 21 Divot 23 Waste 24 Necklace 26 Baton charge 27 Eve

- Down** - 1 Just married 2 Gullible 3 Brews 4 Lion cub 5 Nomad 6 In debt 7 End 12 Golden eagle 13 Conch 14 Tense 17 Chastise 18 Mandela 19 Avocet 22 Talon 23 White 24 Nib

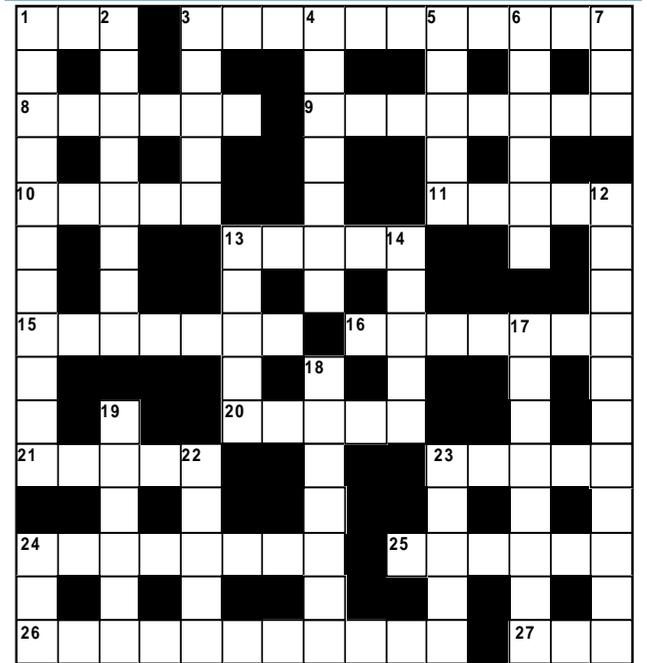
CHILDREN'S No. 511

- Across** - 1 Chestnut 6 Open 7 Overcoat 10 Knit 12 Lesson 14 Nicer 15 Huge 17 Rhine 19 Act 20 Candle 21 Pet 22 Dig

- Down** - 1 Clock 2 Evening 3 Noodle 4 Tot 5 Web 8 Assisted 9 Kneeling 11 Tie 13 Errands 16 Uncle 18 Leaf

Crossword

Gordius 640



Across

- 1 Public transport vehicle (3)
- 3 Fake, forged (11)
- 8 & 12d Statue of Our Lord that overlooks Rio de Janeiro (6,3,8)
- 9 Large Scottish broadsword (8)
- 10 Aristocratic (5)
- 11 Of little weight (5)
- 13 Panache (5)
- 15 What's required to make Ned fuel up (7)
- 16 Carnival, outdoor entertainment venue (7)
- 20 A person, not an animal (5)
- 21 Of tender years (5)
- 23 Fiasco or risqué comedy (5)
- 24 Careful; wary (8)
- 25 Drum struck with the hands (3-3)
- 26 Traditional theatrical makeup also associated with the circus (11)
- 27 Evergreen tree (3)

Down

- 1 Two-hundredth anniversary (11)
- 2 Word game with lettered tiles (8)
- 3 Indian social class (5)
- 4 Atomic (7)
- 5 & 13d The best possible poker hand (5,5)
- 6 Sufficient (6)
- 7 Definite article in grammar (3)
- 12 See 8 across
- 13 See 5 down
- 14 St Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in this French city (5)
- 17 A drink before dinner (8)
- 18 Clinical loss of memory (7)
- 19 Time to come (6)
- 22 Profits (5)
- 23 Rest on or in water (5)
- 24 Toothed wheel (3)

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www.mscmissions.ie

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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.

trócaire

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www.hospicefoundation.ie

Sudoku Corner

512

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 511

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

Last week's Hard 511

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

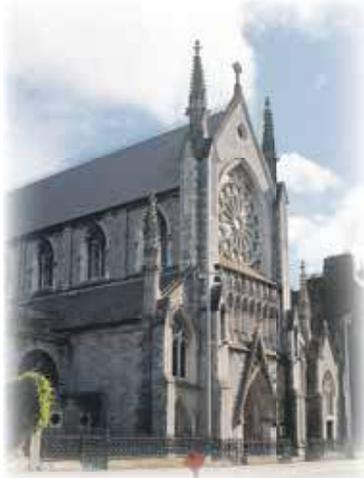


Notebook

Fr John Harris OP

Flourishing faith: 800 years of Ireland's Dominicans

The Irish Dominicans will celebrate 800 years in Dublin next year. Just three years after the death of St Dominic, they arrived in 1224 and were given land by the monks of St Mary's Abbey on which to found their church and priory. That land was at the precise location of the present day Four Courts. There they established a substantial church of St Saviour and adjacent priory. They ministered to the citizens of Dublin from that location from 1224 until 1539 when, as a result of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries policy, the church and priory were forfeited to the Crown. In 1541 Henry granted the King's Inns its charter and the former church and priory on the Four Courts site was leased to the Benchers. They remained in occupation until the present Four Courts was opened in 1796. Five years later the Benchers moved to the current building on Constitution Hill.



Little Denmark Street adjacent to present day Mary Street. In 1861 they opened St Saviours church in Dominick Street where they are to the present day. For 800 years the Dominicans have ministered to the people of Dublin and from Dublin they moved all over the country. I have been thinking a lot about our Dominican presence in Ireland for the last 800 years and asking myself, what has been the most important lasting legacy of the order to the Church in Ireland? I think it has to be devotion to Mary and her rosary. The Dominicans would have come to Ireland from

Oxford bringing with them their devotion to Mary learnt from St Dominic himself. One cannot overestimate the importance of devotion to Mary and her rosary has played in maintaining the Faith in Ireland. Through centuries of persecution, it was the rosary which kept the prayer life of the people alive.

Without a living prayer life there can be no growth of faith and no flourishing of the Church. In all our plans for the future of the Church in Ireland, I rarely see any concern about the encouraging and development of prayer. Yet prayer is basic if we are to have a life in God.

Traditions

We hear a lot about spirituality but surely any real spirituality must be grounded in prayer, from within all the spiritual traditions. How a person enters into a relationship with the spiritual must have some grounding in prayer. For 800 years we Dominicans in Ireland have maintained the importance of Mary and her rosary in any true Catholic prayer life. During these days of Advent let us be united with Mary and pray her rosary, thus deepening our welcome of Jesus into our lives.

The veneer of civilisation

Watching the scenes of violence from Dublin on Thursday November 23, I couldn't help but think of the writings of Sigmund Freud when he claimed that the customs and sanctions which lead human beings to behave well constitute a thin veneer over our baser instincts, a veneer which is threatened by destructive and selfish impulses from moment to moment. If one was to accept Freud's theory, then one can appreciate all the more the role which the Christian religion plays in the right ordering of civil society.

The Sunday after the riots was the feast of Christ the King. Reading the Gospel on that Sunday I couldn't help wondering how many of those who ran riot in Dublin city centre on the previous Thursday evening might have been at Mass that day to hear the words of Jesus, "I was a stranger and you made me welcome".

An extra decade of the rosary

Recently I was looking at a picture of the Virgin Crowned in Lourdes. If you check the statue closely you will see that her rosary beads have six decades. This was typical of the region at the time of the apparitions. An extra decade was added for the foreign missions. I wondered maybe during this year when we are praying for vocations to the diocesan priesthood might it be an idea to say an extra decade each time you pray the rosary for vocations.

Underground

With their church and priory taken from them the Dominicans had to move out and minister underground which they did throughout the Penal Laws until in the 18th Century they built a church in



Please make feeding school children, staff and families in Haiti your Advent gift to Our Lord

Sr Barbara Thomas is Provincial of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Haiti. She has written to The Little Way Association to ask us to continue supporting the children at their school in a poor area of Port-au-Prince, where 60-70% of children and families are food insecure. "There is so much violence and poverty in Haiti," writes Sister, "gangs were even confiscating food transports and demanding large payments for release." Despite these very bad times the Sisters have kept the school open, providing a safe space to nurture the children, helping them, their families, the staff and volunteers. They currently are serving 270 students, from 6 to 14 years old, from 220 families, including teachers and employees, many of whom also rely on the school for their only meal each day. Sr Barbara pleads: "Would it be possible for your Association once again to provide merciful assistance? With gratitude and hope, we offer our prayers for your sacrifice and service."

Your kind gift will be forwarded to the Sisters without deduction to provide nutritious food for the school children, staff and families. The children's well-deserved and necessary education cannot succeed without proper nutrition. Your support can make this possible.

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The picture shows the home of one family where all live and sleep in one room. The children eat a nutritious meal at school before going home – to little or nothing for supper.



"Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, but at the love at which we do them."
 - St Therese

Mission Chapels
 St. Therese, our patroness, wished to spread the Gospel throughout the world "until the end of time". We receive many requests for help from bishops and priests to build, renovate or complete their mission chapels. We are often asked for funds to provide a permanent roof for a chapel. In many places the only roofing chapels have is made of straw or other flimsy material which, as you may imagine, is easily damaged or destroyed in bad weather.
Your donation will help a priest in a mission country to provide a decent chapel for his congregation, a fitting place for the celebration of Holy Mass.

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