

The Irish Catholic

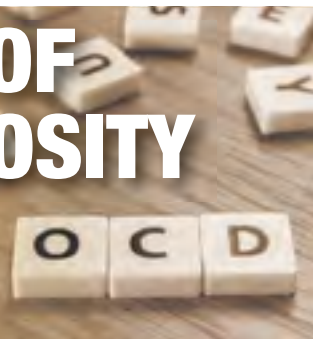
UNDER FIRE

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When Faith becomes obsession Pages 27 & 29



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New focus on pilgrim sites could bring tourist bonanza

Chai Brady

A new plan to focus on Ireland's religious heritage could lead to a massive influx of spiritual tourists from abroad as well as a rebirth of spirituality for Irish Catholics, organisers have said.

Sharon Hearty from Lough Derg predicted that spiritual tourism in Ireland could even become the "new Camino", a pilgrimage which saw more than 300,000 people walk through Spain last year to visit the reputed shrine of St James in Santiago de Compostela.

As a member of the voluntary body Pilgrim Paths Ireland, the communications officer for St Patrick's Purgatory said there are many ancient pilgrimage routes that pre-date the likes of the Camino de Santiago, and that people may not think "of the richness there is in Ireland and what they can uncover in terms of Celtic monastic history".

No doubt

"There is no doubt that spiritual tourism throughout the world is a huge industry and Ireland has a tremendous opportunity."

Over 278,000 people walked the Camino de Santiago in 2016, with

The ancient monastic site at Clonmacnois.



6,500 of them being Irish.

In 2017 the number of pilgrims increased by more than 22,000.

Currently there are 12 ancient pilgrim paths that are part of the initiative, with five being combined to create a route 125km long.

According to Dr Michael

O'Sullivan SJ, who is organising a conference in Waterford next month on the theme 'Pilgrimage and the Evolution of Spiritual Tourism', they hope to "give sustenance" to people in terms of their spirituality and their life journey.

Through pilgrimages and visits

to holy sites, he said, "it's a way that people are finding they are becoming more spiritually alive than sometimes is the case in the institutional Church today".

"I think it shows really that we are spiritual beings and that that has to be catered for in ourselves,

and if it's not being satisfied in one area people will look to see can it be satisfied in another area."

The group will be holding Pilgrim Paths Week from March 31 to April 7 for the fifth year running. The Easter-time event is organised by local communities that are close to the medieval pilgrim walking routes.

Dr O'Sullivan added that with ecological concerns becoming more prevalent the idea of going on pilgrimage is a "way of expressing a spirituality connected with the natural world".

Ancient pathways

Some of the ancient pathways include Tochar Phadraig which starts in Ballintubber Abbey and goes to Croagh Patrick, the 30km St Kevin's Way which begins at Hollywood and ends in Glendalough and St Declan's Way which is 96km and stretches from Ardmore to the Rock of Cashel.

The conference focusing on the growth of spiritual tourism will be held at Waterford Institute of Technology on March 9.

It will look at how the idea of pilgrimage can be factored into current policy around tourism in Ireland.

MARY KENNY

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CELEBRATING FAMILIES

Derry embraces World Meeting challenge PAGE 13



DAVID QUINN

Children's rights scorned yet again PAGE 8



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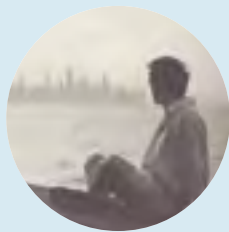


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Time to honour Ireland's martyrs

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Managing Editor: Michael Kelly, editor@irishcatholic.ie

Features Editor: Mags Gargan, mags@irishcatholic.ie

Chief Reporter: Greg Daly, greg@irishcatholic.ie

Northern Correspondent: Martin O'Brien, martin@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874029

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Layout: Declan Moroney

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874094

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874020

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

Office hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
9.30am–5.30pm

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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment returns next week

Failure to reappoint experienced advisers 'disappointing' – Collins

Greg Daly

The decision to reappoint only two non-religious members of the Vatican's child protection commission has been described as "disappointing" by leading advocate and former commission member Marie Collins, adding that this is "not a hopeful sign".

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was established in 2014 for a three-year period, closing on December 17, 2017, but it has been in abeyance since then while new members were being approved. The new members were announced on February 16.

Mrs Collins, who served as one of the commission's original members until her resignation last year, says that the six lay members of the commission whose terms were not renewed were "the most active and independent"



Marie Collins.

members of the commission, four of them having led working groups.

"The group that was dealing with all the survivor issues and the care of survivors – there were only four members in it and all three lay members are gone now," she told *The Irish Catholic*.

"And they were in it because they were the three people with the most on the ground experience of dealing

with survivors and with protection."

"I think it's significant that the idea in the beginning was to bring international external experts in to advise the Pope," Mrs Collins explained, adding that the original lay members wanted the involvement of clerical members to work on canon law and theology.

"There were eight lay members, and of those eight there are now only two left,

yet all the clerical and religious members who were willing to remain were allowed to remain," she said.

Confusion

Expressing confusion at why experienced experts who were working on projects were not reappointed Mrs Collins expressed a concern that some commission members may have been too independent-minded. "That's not always comfortable for the Church, but that was the whole point of this group – it was to bring in challenging views and new views as to how this whole issue should be handled by the Church."

"If you're not comfortable with that and prefer to have comfortable views and go back to the way you were handling it in the past – so be it, but that's not a hopeful sign for radical change," she added.

ICGP to remain neutral in abortion referendum

Chai Brady

The largest organisation representing General Practitioners in Ireland has decided to remain neutral in Ireland's upcoming abortion referendum, it has been revealed.

The Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) issued a letter to members acknowledging that each member was entitled to their opinions "as a matter of personal conscience".

"However, the Board of ICGP will not have a formal policy position in relation to the referendum, specifically," stated the letter, seen by *The Irish Catholic*, which was sent to over 4,000 GPs.

With possible policies on abortion being uncertain and evolving – if the

Eighth Amendment is repealed – the Board said they were "very aware" that there are concerns among GPs about the implementation of an abortion service in the future.

The report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution recommended that if abortion legislation is introduced, it should be GP-led.

Service

The National Association of GPs, who represent 2,000 GPs, revealed earlier this month that the association "strongly objects" to the assumption that GPs would lead the service, with its members being "outraged" about the lack of consultation around the issue.

Representative Dr Andrew Jordan said some of their members were concerned whether conscientious objection would feature in proposed legislation.

Minister Simon Harris later confirmed there would be grounds for conscientious objection in any proposed legislation.

According to the letter the ICGP has been requested to liaise with the Department of Health to "possibly contribute to standards and guidelines in conjunction with other postgraduate training bodies".

"If we are asked to provide input, the College will represent all members' concerns. Evidence, quality and safety – including the right of GPs to conscientiously refuse to provide such a service – will be articulated."

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Fight for Brexit that suits the North, bishop urges

Greg Daly

Northern politicians need to fight for a Brexit that suits the people of the North, Derry's Bishop Donal McKeown has said.

"For the sake of peace on the island, as well as for the sake of economic development on the island, we need to have those who are elected in some sort of a process where they are making decisions for us: we don't want to be the victims of somebody else's decision-making process."

"We have to be able to make decisions ourselves," Bishop McKeown told *The Irish Catholic*.

Northern Ireland's politicians have a duty to serve their people, and are paid to do so, he said.

"They have been elected to provide an executive for Northern Ireland."

"The people on the ground, particularly the poor, are suffering most because of the failure of our system to deliver, and if they're not prepared to deliver services they have to ask themselves very serious questions," he said.

Uncertainty

Commenting on how Brexit is adding an extra layer of uncertainty to the problems of the North, the bishop said

in his own diocese of Derry there is a real concern about the implications of Brexit.

"We don't have an Assembly actually functioning and engaging with the process of Brexit, and all decisions are being taken by people outside of Northern Ireland," he said.

"I think we as Church leaders and as civic leaders have to keep saying: 'find ways of ensuring that decisions are taken for the benefit of the people and particularly for those most affected by whatever forms Brexit takes'," he said.

"We need people fighting for a Brexit that suits us."

Concerns

Dr McKeown expressed concerns about the consequences of an ongoing failure of politics in the North.

"Unless our politicians can make politics work, others will simply exploit the space and say there's a non-political way that we're going to try to influence things in our direction."

"They have to prove that politics works – that's the whole essence of the Good Friday Agreement," he said.

"Please make politics work," he appealed to Northern politicians, "otherwise you are opening the door to undemocratic forces."

Ashes distributed in Laois Shopping Centre



Fr Paddy Byrne and Fr David Vard with Sr Sybil of the Ursuline Sisters of Mary Immaculate in Laois Shopping Centre where over 1,000 people received blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday, as well as receiving leaflets from the diocese and parish detailing activities over Lent. Photo: Agnes Sasiada

Vatican relinquishes world wine drinking crown

Chai Brady

The Pope's city has lost the wine-drinking world title after being pipped at the post by a tiny island off the coast of Australia.

The latest world wine consumption statistics show that per capita those on Norfolk Island enjoy a tippie slightly more than folk in the Vatican.

Residents of the 8km long and 5km wide island in the Pacific Ocean spend an average of €550 a year on wine, and wet their beaks with 77.8 bottles.

However, the Vatican is not far behind, with on average each person slurping 76 bottles a year – this doesn't take into account those who don't consume alcohol, meaning the figures per person could even be higher.

Crown

Wine isn't a big hit in most of Asia and Eastern Europe, but Pakistan takes the crown for the least amount of wine consumed, with 0.00011 bottles drunk a year per Pakistani.

The data was collated from the Wine Institute, the World Bank and Numbeo by moving company Move Hub.

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Eighth committee head's command of facts questioned

Colm Fitzpatrick

Pro-life organisations have scorned claims by the chair of the Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment that the committee could not find a single medical expert to make the case for retaining Ireland's constitutional protections for the unborn.

Speaking on RTÉ radio, Senator Catherine Noone said: "Nobody was willing to come forward, none who were experts in this country. There was no single GP who offered, or any way indicated, that they wanted the status quo to remain."

Witnesses

Cora Sherlock of the Pro Life Campaign (PLC), however, said that because 28 pro-repeal witnesses were invited to present before the Committee, whereas just five pro-life speakers were invited in total, "it is totally understandable that some of the invited pro-life speakers chose not to attend in order to draw attention to the entirely biased proceedings".

Pointing out that a simple online search would have alerted Senator Noone to medical experts who would have been willing to address the committee, Savethe8th said that the senator's claim "raises serious questions about her command of the facts in this debate".

Bishop insists no 'kneejerk reaction' to abuse criticism

EXCLUSIVE
Martin O'Brien

Bishop John McAreavey, who has been under fire for not revealing details of allegations of abuse against a now deceased cleric, has insisted that he will not take the "kneejerk reaction" of stepping down, but will reflect on "how best to go forward".

In an exclusive interview

with *The Irish Catholic* (see Pages 10 and 11) Dr McAreavey admits that there were "missed opportunities" during his tenure as Bishop of Dromore to make parishioners aware Fr Malachy Finnegan had been forced to step down as a result of abuse.

Dr McAreavey also reveals that the diocese has made settlements totalling hundreds of thousands of pounds with some of Finnegan's victims.

Asked by *The Irish Catholic* if he believed after 19 years as bishop that he had what it takes to remain at the helm and bring the necessary healing and renewal to Dromore or whether it might be more beneficial for the diocese to get a fresh start, he said: "I don't think it would be appropriate for me to make a kind of a kneejerk reaction."

"What I will want to do is

for the good of the diocese. I will obviously reflect in the coming period as to how best to go forward with that.

Right place

"On a plus side, I have learned a huge amount and I think I would want to say that I think my heart was in the right place.

"But obviously when you are in a leadership role around issues as sensitive as

this it is easy for trust to be damaged, so the question really is to assess that and to see can you recover trust and rebuild trust.

"Certainly, the whole issue of safeguarding has been a massive preoccupation of my time as Bishop and a stressful one for myself and for victims and for priests and so on," he said.

Dragon takes on WMOF €15 million challenge

Susan Gately

Well-known TV personality Norah Casey has taken on the task of raising around €15 million to finance the WMOF in August.

Speaking on RTÉ's *Claire Byrne Live*, the former dragon said Pope Francis had given her back her faith. "Like most Irish people I have a chequered history with Catholicism," she said, going from "cradle Catholic" to divorce, IVF and "falling out with the Catholic Church when my husband died" and ultimately returning "back into Catholicism".

The WMOF is slated to cost €20 million, with €5 million coming from church collections like the national collection this weekend. Ms Casey and teams of fundraisers, also in the US, aim to raise the balance.

Other faiths

Private funding through suitable corporates and individuals, means "taxpayers don't have to pay for it" and "high profile people who do like this Pope very much" including members of other faiths can contribute, she said.

Unlike the visit of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, the WMOF will bring "tens of thousands of people to Ireland," said Ms Casey. "I do think that his [the Pope's] visit to Ireland will be pretty monumental."

Norah Casey.



Plastic pollution reaches deep into Atlantic

Microplastics (small plastic fragments) and microbeads (in personal care products), are contaminating fish in the north west Atlantic, 600m down in the ocean, according to an Irish study in *Frontiers in Marine Science*.

NUIG scientists took 233 dead deep-sea fish from North Atlantic mid water trawls and discovered that 73% had ingested plastic. "Some of these toxins on the microplastics can be transferred to animals that eat them, with potential harmful effects," said lead author Alina Wiczeorek.

Co-author, Dr Tom Doyle said daily activities like washing synthetic clothes in washing machines "results in billions of microplastics entering our oceans through our waste water stream" that can end up in deep sea fishes.

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Niall Walton's message is vital



Mary Kenny

How many nostalgic memories are triggered by the news that Walton's Music Shop in Dublin's South Great Georges' Street is closing down! What a fine institution it was, and how valiantly it upheld the cause of Irish music down through the decades, ever since 1922.

But Niall Walton, who inherited the business from his father and grandfather, also makes another very good point with wider application: if we want to see towns and communities survive, then we really must do some of our shopping locally – patronise and use the small retailers, instead of ordering so much on-line and via Amazon.

Of course, on-line shopping is useful and convenient, and there are times when we all have recourse to it. It also has its downside – sending a dress back to a retailer in China is tedious and expensive: not receiving the garment in the first place while the retailer pesters you by email to buy more is also a pain in the neck –

● If you ever fancy a small but delicious treat around the Euston area of London, take afternoon tea at the St Pancras branch of Fortnum & Mason (not far from the Eurostar train exit). An exquisite pot of tea (real tea-leaves), poured into a china cup, accompanied by a scrumptious little scone, jam and cream, and served with old-style courtesy – all for a sterling tenner.

And if you don't finish your pot of strawberry jam, you can take it away with you in an F&M bag. You can also sit peacefully and watch the world go by for as long as you want. Calming and reflective in the busy bustle of modern life.

an experience I've had.

Yet the Irish music business is itself an example of how something that seems to be in doldrums can revive brilliantly.

In the 1940s and 50s, Irish people wanted the big American band sound, and Irish music was downright unfashionable. But there was a marvellous



Gone: Walton's city centre branch.

revival and renaissance, and the same thing can happen in keeping alive the family retail businesses.

Real buzz

In the small Kentish seaside town where I reside (I'm also in Ireland for a week each month), we've seen a blooming of small shops and businesses which has added a real buzz to the area.

There are now two fabulous delicatessens, a terrific local theatre and performance centre, two brilliant small household shops which sell everything domestic, two greengrocers, two electrical appliance shops, several attractive dress shops,

several independent cafes and teasops, a new bookshop and an art gallery. None of these were in existence 20 years ago when my late husband chose the location because (perversely) it was "dull".

It's such a positive experience to shop locally: to engage with the shop assistants, to ask their advice when looking for a domestic appliance or to try on a garment properly to see if it suits and fits.

Niall Walton's message is vital, and a slogan could be adapted from the old Walton's radio advert: if you must shop, do try to shop locally.

● There are occasions when you might be sorry for an individual setback, mishap or accident: but compassion for the individual cannot always over-ride a general principle of the common good.

The case of Antoinette Johnston illustrates this. Ms Johnston, aged 28, a cleaner from Clondalkin, sued a pub that she had visited – Clondalkin Taverns Ltd – after she dislocated her ankle on the stairs visiting the ladies' room there. She was wearing stiletto heels, which was her choice but which may not always be conducive to perfect balance. Then the ladies' room of the pub was three floors down, which doesn't seem to me to be ideal either.

Her case was that the stairs were defective, and because of the fall, she was hospitalised with a broken ankle and off work for three months.

The pub denied liability and laid the blame on a snapped stiletto heel.

The judge, Mr Justice Kevin Cross, said that Ms Johnston did not exaggerate her injuries, but he could not accept the allegation that the premises had been negligent, and thus did not accept her case.

You could feel sorry for Antoinette Johnston for this piece of bad luck, and you could believe that public premises should put loos in suitable places (especially ladies' toilets, which don't always merit the description of "conveniences"). But there has to be an element of personal responsibility in all our actions.

The old motto is a good one: hard cases make bad law; misfortunes cannot always be met with compensation.

Great news: the polls show that the **LIFE CANVASS** is driving support for abortion down – but we urgently need your help!

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But we urgently need funds to print more booklets and keep the Life Canvass going. And we also need YOU on board with us at the doors.

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#SAVE THE 8TH

WMOF organisers should highlight climate issues – Caritas

Chai Brady

The World Meeting of Families is a time when Ireland will be at the “centre of the world” and is an opportunity for organisers to highlight climate change issues, the Secretary General of the world’s largest Catholic Charity has said.

Michael Roy of Caritas Internationalis – a worldwide confederation of over 165 Caritas organisations – spoke to *The Irish Catholic* after a Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) conference held in Maynooth.

“There are various factors that will bring Ireland to engage more, the World Meeting of Families is an event in which a strong voice can be pushed for,” said Mr Roy, “but I think your parliamentarians and your government are listening to the people, and so that’s from the grassroots.”

With the Environmental

Protection Agency predicting last year that Ireland would not reach the carbon emission reduction commitments set out in the Paris climate agreement, the Government faces international pressure to increase efforts.

The Secretary General said: “This is the right moment and with the World Meeting of Families I think Ireland is really the centre of the world where significant steps can be made.”

The GCCM started as a grassroots movement in 2014 and encourages the divestment of fossil fuels and lifestyle changes in order to preserve the environment and implement the Pope’s encyclical on the environment *Laudato Si’*.

“We have taken a number of initiatives, like the *Laudato Si’* Pledge, inviting everyone to pledge through prayer and action to change their way of living to something more sustainable,” added Mr Roy.

New rules in state schools will make religion optional

Susan Gately

The Department of Education circular introducing new rules insisting that schools provide alternative tuition for students who wish to opt out of religious instruction will have the effect of making religion an optional subject, and place huge additional pressures on state schools, according to the Chief Executive of the Cork Education and Training Board, Timothy Owens.

Announcing the new rules, Education Minister, Richard

Bruton said no new resources or funding would be available to schools which would have to “reconfigure their timetabling”. The rules apply to 160,000 students of community colleges under the patronage of the Education and Training Boards (ETB).

The crux of the problem, said Mr Owens, is what the alternative to Religious Education might be. It will probably become an “optional subject in a package of subjects. It’s going to cause great timetabling difficulties. Every school will be different,” he

told *The Irish Catholic*.

Exam subject

Under the Deeds of Trust (or Model Agreements) of community colleges, school patronage is shared between the ETB and the diocese / religious order of an area. The Deeds provide for two hours a week of religion. While Religion can be an exam subject at both Junior and Senior Cycle, in practise it is not available in most State schools.

Dr John Murray, lecturer in moral theology in DCU, is

concerned that the “area of religion would be neglected in these schools in order to solve the so-called problem of diversity of students in the classroom”.

If it is left off the curriculum and forgotten, “students would be deprived of an important part of education. Religion should be an important part of any rounded education – culturally and historically, and for many students it could be personally helpful as well.”

Ice and snow, bless the Lord



Bishop Michael Smith turning the first sod for the construction of a new monastic church for the Benedictine community at Silverstream Priory in Stamullen, Co. Meath. Bishop Smith was followed in turning the sod by Dom Mark Kirby, OSB, Prior of Silverstream (right).

Priest celebrated for artistic contributions

Fr Pat Ahern, founding member of Siamsa Tire, the National Folk Theatre established in 1973, was honoured by Kerry County Council this Monday for his important contributions to the arts in Ireland spanning over four decades.

A native of Moyvane, Fr Ahern, was artistic director of the theatre until 1997, and also took part in broadcasting projects with Radio Kerry and RTÉ. He was also involved in a number of productions at the Abbey Theatre and known for his pastoral work in Knocknagoshel and at St John’s in Tralee.

He was honoured with a civic reception for his outstanding contribution to the artistic, cultural and literary tradition of the country.

Cork reader wins Christmas Crossword competition

Mrs Mary Murphy, Co. Cork is the winner of *The Irish Catholic* Christmas Crossword competition, and as her prize wins a pilgrimage for two to Lourdes courtesy of Pilgrimages Abroad.

Runner-up prizes of a Pope Francis 2018 Calendar have been won by John Baker, Co. Clare, Kathleen Ryan, Co. Laois and Patricia Gray, Dublin City.

Solutions

Gordius/Irish Catholic Bumper Christmas Crossword, December 21 – Across: 1 Best bib and tucker 6 Wine cellar 11 Hopeful 14 Inane 15 Artesian well 19 Ketch 20 Pilates 23 Duo 24 Ivanhoe 25 Ale 26 Net 28 Ewer 30 Colder 33 Matt 36 Gospel 37 David 38 Jenny 39 Maintain 40 Neaten 43 Ensign 45 Ask 46 Shepherd 48 Tense 49 Appear 50 Kept 51 Winter 54 Poor Clare 56 Roared 57 Manger 58 Iron 59 Hasty 61 Ole 62 Exits 65 Cue 66 End 67 Witty 68 Lea 70 Space 74 Veda 77 Prompt 78 North Pole 79 Ninety 80 Laos 83 Admits 84 Elope 86 Theatres 88 Toy 89 Tardis 93 Fiesta 95 Stallion 97 Prays 98 Atoms 100 Whisky 101 Drew 103 Ignore 105 Plum pudding 106 Keg 108 Arm 110 Braille 111 Ill 112 Sapling 113 Wrote 116 Joy to the World 117 Adjacent 118 Fling 119 Cayenne pepper 120 Neapolitan 121 Astrologer

Down: 2 Sparkled 3 Bleats 4 Brash 5 Notepad 7 I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In 8 Cock 9 Lamb 10 Reason 11 Hold it 12 Pentagon 13 Flight plan 14 In the Bleak Midwinter 16 Solar 21 Saint Anthony of Padua 22 Hem 23 Data 27 Enter 29 Raki 30 Cinnamon 31 Ode 32 Emerald 34 Amber 35 Tight 36 Gig 41 Aspire 42 Seven swans a-swimming 44 Supporter 46 Stem 47 Doomed 52 Ray 53 Agree 54 Prod 55 Alice band 59 Helps 60 Yes 63 Lychee 64 Almost 65 Cape 69 Zen 72 Ponies 73 Apostate 76 Ribs 81 Valid 82 Crane 85 Obligatory 87 Halve 90 Ramp 91 Sty 92 Drums 94 Tar 95 Skeleton 96 Oral 99 Sleep-ing 100 Webs 102 Wax 103 Ibiza 104 Nuggets 106 Kettle 107 Gideon 109 Woeful 113 Water 114 Wrap 115 Idol

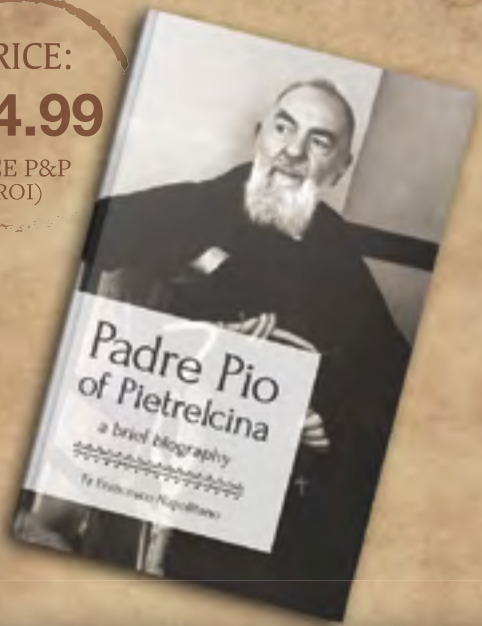
Gordius/Irish Catholic Bumper

Christmas Crossword, December 28 – Across: 1 Transcribe 6 Strengthen 11 Agonise 14 Crumb 15 Withdrew 17 New South Wales 20 Druid 21 Eminent 24 Dye 25 Scherzo 26 Ail 27 Act 29 Lies 31 Darned 34 Lode 38 Newel post 39 Flint 40 Top brass 41 E-boats 44 Tur-nip 46 Gnu 47 Preceded 49 Nadir 50 Botany 51 Near 52 Stress 55 Turn over a new leaf 57 Sunset 58 Teller 59 Hits 62 Ave Maria 63 Lithe 66 Era 67 Tap 68 Admit 71 Grove 75 Snip 76 Moiety 78 Plains 79 Altar boys 80 Saints 81 Bloc 84 Superb 85 Hopes 87 Glad rags 89 Off 90 Buddha 94 Estate 96 Turncoat 98 Dishy 99 Errol 101 Master 102 Miss 104 Barley 106 Redo 107 Met 109 Leo 111 Cheerio 112 Ita 114 Motto 117 Compassionate 118 Prospect 119 Death 120 Absence 121 Razor blade 122 Stationery

Down: 2 Amundsen 3 Subdue 4 Rowed 5 Between the Devil and the deep blue sea 8 Nuns 9 Town 10 Nausea 11 Aghast 13 Inebriated 16 Dried 18 Fool 19 Splitting head-ache 22 Tawny owl 24 Dodo 28 Carve 30 Seen 32 Alb 33 Extinct 35 Other 36 Epees 37 Asp 42 Obtuse 43 Great Expectations 45 Reattempt 48 Dorset 49 Noodle 54 Plate 55 Trap 56 Entangled 61 Egg 64 Storms 65 Oolong 66 Elms 70 It’s all my eye 72 Out of this world 73 Camera 74 Snob-bery 77 Yaps 78 Prussia 82 Idiom 83 Warts and all 86 Prosperous 88 Lance 91 Door 92 Fur 93 Timon of Athens 95 Tee 96 Terrapin 97 Aida 100 Lemonade 101 Mock 103 Sly 104 Bless 105 Reflect 107 Mousse 108 Tinier 110 Studio 114 Motet 115 Faro 116 Herb

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The more things change...



An artificial human reproduction law is the Government's latest attack on children's rights, writes **David Quinn**



With almost no public – or indeed political – scrutiny, a law intended to regulate the practice of Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) is currently before the Oireachtas. It is being considered at the moment by the Health Committee.

Among the AHR practices to be regulated are IVF, donation of sperm and eggs, surrogacy, plus the creation and use of human embryos.

The proposed AHR Bill is the companion piece to the Children and Family Relationships Act which was hastily passed, with almost no debate, in 2015. It is one of the most unjust pieces of legislation ever passed in this country, a wholesale attack on the rights of children in favour of presumed adult rights to have children in virtually any way they please.

Marriage is given no special standing in this law, nor is there a requirement that a child conceived

through AHR have a mother and a father, married or not, or indeed two parents at all. This law is about giving adults what they want. It is the same with the proposed AHR law. 'Choice' is the mantra, as in the abortion debate.

The fact that 'choice' is the predominant morality in these two pieces of legislation is proven by their use of the term 'intending parents'.

For all of human history, indeed for all of natural history, the parents of a child are the natural parents, the biological parents. That is still the case, if course, but under this new legal dispensation we no longer think the natural ties between parents and children matter very much.

What matters now is the intention of a person to be a parent. These are called the 'intending parents'. Let's consider the following scenario. A couple approach an IVF clinic intending to be parents. The man can provide his own sperm, but the woman is infertile. Therefore, they will have to obtain an egg from another woman, the 'donor'.

“Well, if natural ties mattered then, why don't they matter now?”

If the clinic succeeds in impregnating the woman, the resultant child will, in fact, have three parents – namely the father, the egg donor and the birth mother.

Only two of these three will be considered by law to be the child's parents, namely the man and his partner, the birth mother. This is because they intend to be the parents. Hence the term, 'intentional parents'.

The egg provider in this scenario is not considered to be the child's parent at all because she did not intend to be its parent. The fact that she is actually the child's biological mother is regarded as of little

importance. Intention is all that counts – 'choice', in other words.

The child, in time, might well have a different view, of course. The child might not give a hoot for the intention of her parents or what the law says. She might rightly take the view that nature is what makes you a parent whether you like or not, and therefore the egg provider is her mother every bit as much, if not more, than her birth mother.

I realise this is complicated but bear with me. Let's try a different scenario. Let's imagine that the female 'intending parent' in the first scenario can neither provide an egg nor bear a child in her womb. In this case, the couple will have to use a surrogate mother as well as an egg donor if they want to have a child. The surrogate is whatever woman is willing to carry the child for them.

Little importance

Now the resultant baby will have four parents, that is, the two 'intending parents', plus the egg provider (the biological mother) plus the birth mother (the surrogate).

The Irish law will discard both the biological mother and the birth mother in this scenario because they will not be the 'intending parents'. Again, the law will treat the biological connection as having little importance. This is despite all the scandals in this country about how adoption used to be practised. We are disgusted at how the Irish State, often with the help of the Churches, used to make it very hard, if not impossible, for the birth mother and her child to trace each other.

We are disgusted because we know the natural ties matter. Well, if they mattered then, why don't they matter now? Why do they count for so little in this AHR Bill or in the Children and Family Relationships Act?

In Britain last week, another scenario came to our attention.

This one involves British Olympic diver Tom Daley, who is married to Dustin Lance-Black. They announced that they will soon have a baby. How is this possible? They are both men, after all. Well, they are using the egg of one woman and the womb of another. The right of the child to a mother doesn't come into the picture at all. Once again, it is the 'rights' and choices of the adults that matter.

“The AHR Bill will ban 'commercial' surrogacy, which involves big fees. But it will permit 'reasonable expenses'”

No matter who uses surrogate mothers to have children – whether they be single people, same-sex couples, or opposite-sex couples – the practice of surrogacy is almost inherently exploitative of women. It is almost invariably women from lower income groups who rent out their wombs to people in higher income groups.

The AHR Bill will ban 'commercial' surrogacy, which involves big fees. But it will permit 'reasonable expenses' which can run into many thousands of euro.

In addition, the ban on commercial surrogacy can be circumvented by going abroad, coming back with the baby and asking the courts to legally recognise the child in the child's 'best interests'.

At the present time, there is almost no debate about this Bill, but here is a guarantee; in years to come this will come back to bite us. Why? Because the children produced in the ways permitted by the proposed law will demand to know how Ireland came to treat the natural ties as having so little importance and allowed them to be cut away so easily in the name of adult choice.

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Breda O'Brien
The View



Oxfam must convince that theirs is not a culture of sexual exploitation

Trust is much easier to maintain than to re-establish after it has been lost. The scandals engulfing Oxfam illustrate this clearly.

Serious allegations have been made regarding Oxfam personnel making use of women in prostitution during an aid operation in earthquake-hit Haiti.

Worse, allegations appear to involve not just women working as prostitutes, but minors as well.

However, as Catherine Bennett of the *Guardian* commented, we have yet to hear from Amnesty International, which supports the decriminalisation of prostitution, including decriminalising those who profit from it, more commonly known as pimps.

Bennett quotes Amnesty as saying that it's people "who live on the outskirts of society that are forced into sex work. It may be their only way to earn a living."

Bennett comments savagely: "Once you see it that way, Oxfam workers who live, courtesy of charitable donations, in villas suited to large pool parties, can be seen as doing prostitute attendees a tremendous kindness."

Revulsion

Most people share Bennett's revulsion at the abuse of women already living in dreadful conditions. Likewise, while few would begrudge aid workers living in decent conditions, a pool in an area devastated by earthquakes seems like an unnecessary luxury.

Imogen Wall, a former Irish aid worker who runs a support group for people working for aid NGOs, also commented on the allegations.

She said: "Everyone is hanging Oxfam out to dry, but actually it's all agencies who have this problem to some extent because we are a sector that works with vulnerable people. Any sector that works with the most vulnerable is going to attract one or two dangerous people who want



to abuse others. It's not a new phenomenon."

UN Peacekeeping forces have been plagued by similar scandals, everywhere from Haiti to the Central African Republic, but few prosecutions have followed.

“An allegation is not the same as a proven assault and due process is important”

Associated Press did an exposé in 2017 saying that there have been more than 2,000 allegations against peacekeepers, many of which involve children.

Of course, an allegation is not the same as a proven assault and due process is important. However, the UN has been very dilatory in how it responds to such cases, saying the countries who provide the peacekeepers must take responsibility.

In relation to the Oxfam case, the failure of management to take action and in at least one case, the re-deployment of someone after allegations had been

made, has eerie echoes of scandals involving church personnel.

When authorities do not act promptly and transparently, it has dreadful repercussions for trust. For example, a 2011 poll conducted by the Iona Institute, of which I am a patron, found very high levels of unfavourable opinions of the Church.

In response to a question about whether when they think about the Catholic Church in Ireland their view is favourable or unfavourable, among over 55s, only 55% of them regarded the Church favourably, and this dropped as low as 18% among 25-44 year olds.

When asked why, 56% suggested that sexual abuse of children had created this unfavourable viewpoint.

However, people also grossly over-estimated the number of priests who had committed the crime of child abuse. The average estimate was 28% of priests, with 18% estimating over 50%.

The true figure is 4%, according to the John Jay Institute. Citing the lower,

accurate figure, is not to minimise, much less excuse the sexual abuse of children, or of anyone, by priests and religious.

Nonetheless, the inaccuracy in public perception perhaps indicates how much it was covered by media and perhaps in a way that made it seem a uniquely Catholic phenomenon.

“People also grossly over-estimated the number of priests who had committed the crime of child abuse”

Tragically, it is a phenomenon everywhere there are vulnerable children and adults.

In order to restore trust, there are key questions for Oxfam to answer. Is this an entrenched culture of sexual exploitation?

Is there a culture of reporting transgressions which involve sexual exploitation of minors

or vulnerable women to police? If the government in the area is unstable, what action is taken in that case?

Are there robust procedures and are they financed adequately? What safeguards are in place for whistle-blowers? Are aid workers living in unduly luxurious conditions? This in itself would be disillusioning for people who donate.

Oxfam and other organisations with similar allegations have a long road to recovery. From being a flagship, it is now seen with suspicion.

The Catholic Church has done Trojan work to restore trust and to make the Church a safe place for children. A small army of volunteers who do thankless work means that even the sternest of media critics of the Church now has to acknowledge how child safeguarding works very well at present.

However, it is also true to say that the Church's ability to witness has been damaged, and recovery may take decades. Unless it takes swift and decisive action, Oxfam will find the same.



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Sat 24 Mar	Looking towards the Light! As we journey through Holy Week towards Easter we see the hurt and shame transformed by the light of God's love.
Sat 28 April	New Life! The whole of creation reveals God to us, we just need to slow down and become aware of his presence with us.

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Workshop for Choirs'
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Under-fire Bishop McAreevey admits his abuse failings

During my long stint producing BBC Radio Ulster's *Sunday Sequence*, dominated by the apparently unending clerical sex abuse scandals, one bishop was more available than any other to come on the radio to face the music.

That bishop demonstrated then and again when I last spoke to him – on Saturday morning last – that he has a passionate concern for the plight of victims and an empathy with them that few if any other bishops have.

That person is John McAreevey, Bishop of Dromore since 1999. I also found Dr McAreevey helpful to journalists like me. On one occasion, when I was seeking contacts in the Vatican he suggested I look up Charles Scicluna, the determined investigator of clerical abusers at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whom I subsequently visited on several occasions, and who once asked me why virtually all the US priest abusers on his books had Irish surnames.

Now Archbishop of Malta, Scicluna is currently investigating Bishop Barros of Chile on the instructions of Pope Francis, the Holy Father having realised that a damage limitation exercise is necessary after his ill-judged comments about the Barros case on a papal visit to the country last month.

Interview

Last Friday Bishop John McAreevey embarked on his own damage limitation exercise.

He did so by offering an interview to *The Irish Catholic* after his diocese was left reeling in the wake of shocking revelations by the BBC Northern Ireland TV programme, *Spotlight*, broadcast the previous Tuesday, February 13, about the appalling sex crimes committed by the late Fr Malachy Finnegan, a former president of St Colman's College, Newry from 1976 to 1987 and parish priest of Clonduff (Hilltown) from 1987 until his forced retirement in 1996. Many of the crimes were perpetrated against pupils in his rooms in the college.

Finnegan was also employed by the college as spiritual director (grotesque

EXCLUSIVE

The Bishop of Dromore tells **Martin O'Brien** about 'missed opportunities' to expose appalling crimes



when you look back on it) between 1967 and 1971 and as a teacher from 1973 to 1987.

We did the interview, which ran for an hour and a half, in the Newry Parish Centre on Saturday morning. Throughout, Bishop McAreevey, who was unaccompanied, freely answered my questions and was anxious to be as candid and as transparent as possible.

He went "off the record" just once for a few seconds over a relatively minor matter. Only once, when I was trying to extract details of the sums of diocesan money involved in settling cases by three of Finnegan's victims, did I sense he was reluctant to volunteer information.

On two occasions Bishop McAreevey showed distress, and appeared lost for words, when I asked him how a priest, who had just celebrated Mass and raised the Body of Christ could perpetrate such deeds.

“Dr McAreevey explains that it is not a black and white issue and that he was caught in a dilemma”

Finnegan died in January 2002, still a priest 'in good standing' as far as the public and his fellow priests were concerned. Bishop McAreevey says there have been twelve allegations of abuse against him in the period 1994-2016.

He was never tried in the courts for his wicked crimes nor had he received any canonical sanction by the Church for his sacrilegious and criminal acts which included repeatedly raping a young boy, Sean Faloon, an altar server, over several years in the parochial house in Hilltown.

Finnegan's crimes did not happen on Dr McAreevey's watch as bishop. But the central question facing McAreevey is his failure over almost two decades as bishop, to share with the Catholic community that he tends in Dromore, the dark secret about Finnegan, his fellow diocesan priest.

The bishop accepts that many people in his diocese, particularly in the parish of Clonduff where Mr Faloon had his innocence destroyed, suffering horrifying abuse over a five-year period, starting when he was ten – have lost trust in him because they think he simply covered up for Finnegan to protect the institution of the Church.

However, Dr McAreevey explains that it is not a black and white issue and that he was caught in a dilemma because victims were divided over whether Finnegan's past should be publicised.

But he now accepts that he missed several opportunities to go public on Finnegan, which he bitterly regrets.

* * * * *

Finnegan's crimes against children go back almost 50 years to 1971 when he started abusing a victim *Spotlight* called 'Patrick', during the tenure of Bishop Eugene O'Doherty (1944-1977) and continued during the episcopacy of Bishop Francis Brooks (1976 to 1999).

The *Spotlight* programme was not easy viewing, to say the least, but it served the public interest by centring on the previously untold stories of three of Finnegan's victims, including Mr Faloon, and raising legitimate questions about what the Church knew about what the Church knew about Finnegan, and when it knew.

The Finnegan scandal first came to the attention of the wider public when Bishop

Bishop of Dromore John McAreevey. Photo: Press Eye



McAreevey issued a statement, apparently out of the blue, on February 7, in which he announced that his diocese had settled a claim against Finnegan and apologised for his error of judgement in celebrating the funeral Mass for Finnegan.

On the same day, St Colman's College, where Bishop McAreevey is chairman of the board of governors, issued a statement disclosing that following the settlement of a diocesan claim back in October [with the victim, 'Patrick'], the governors had instructed that images of Finnegan be removed from photographs that were on public display in the school.

This applied particularly to pictures of him with Gaelic football teams.

It then emerged that *Spotlight* was planning a programme about Finnegan. It looked to this writer and others that the earlier simultaneous statements by Bishop McAreevey and St Colman's were an attempt to pre-empt the *Spotlight* revelations and limit reputational damage, but this is denied by Bishop McAreevey.

"We continued to do what we had planned to do," he insists, "the school issued a statement and the diocese followed up. It looks as if we were responding to *Spotlight*, but we had a process in train."

Dr McAreevey was careful not to criticise *Spotlight*, but he had approached *The Irish Catholic* because: "I think there is a broader story [than that told in *Spotlight*] and I think it is not black and

white, and the issues in this whole matter are complex. I have struggled with various dilemmas and tried to find balance between one thing and another.

“Some victims felt they could not have coped with the media splash”

"I remember once suggesting to a victim that I was considering putting Finnegan into the public forum and I remember having the sense that this person froze. So, while there were some victims who said, 'put this out into the public forum', others were terrified."

So, wasn't it a case of victim A or victim B saying, "put it out there" and C and D saying, "hold off, this will open a can of worms that I can't cope with", I asked.

"Yes, that was my dilemma in those years. Some victims felt they could not have coped with the media splash through naming this man and rightly or wrongly there are pros and cons with this and you try to balance things."

He added: "It would have suited me many times to have put this into the public domain, to have this off my conscience, if you like."

Throughout the interview he kept referring to "Finnegan" or "this man" and on the sole occasion he used the title "Father" he immediately corrected himself.

It was evident to this writer that Dr McAreevey is

immensely relieved that the Finnegan story is finally out even if it emerged during our interview that he had no fewer than five "missed opportunities" to make it public in the period from his appointment as bishop in September 1999 and December 2017.

I reminded Bishop McAreevey that in his previous interview with *The Irish Catholic* in October 2013 he had spoken of "his long learning curve" in relation to the child abuse issue and his frank admission that there were times when his primary response was to protect the Church.

Failure

Was his failure to "out" Finnegan motivated by his desire to protect the Church? He rejected that and said that his answer to me in 2013 referred to the early 1990s and not to his time as bishop.

Bishop McAreevey said he first met Finnegan when he spent a year teaching under him in St Colman's in 1978-79. He "never picked up anything" to suggest future horrors.

If he remembers very much about him, and his personality traits, he is not saying, but says enough to suggest he didn't particularly like Finnegan. "We were not friends, so I didn't pal around with him. I felt a distance between us and I was happy to leave it [at that]."

Aware

He first became aware of an allegation against Finnegan in 1994 when Bishop Brooks



asked him to give pastoral support to a victim who was then living in the Republic, maybe because he also lived there. I was intrigued why Brooks should ask Fr McAreavey, a canon lawyer, to carry out a pastoral role. "That was the brief I was given, to be a kind of victim liaison person."

Had Brooks ever drawn on his expertise to carry out inquiries of the kind that resulted in landing Fr Seán Brady in hot water so many years later, I asked. "No, no, my contact with Bishop Brooks in those years was specifically to do with this particular case, in that pastoral role."

"That first experience I had with that victim defined my whole approach to this issue for the rest of my life, leading to a victim-centred approach. You saw the impact of abuse on every aspect of their life, on their physical and mental health, their work, relationships and not least on their faith, which was disastrous."

Victims

That 'victim-centred' approach has led him to meet numerous victims and help meet their needs "but what it doesn't do is acknowledge the victims that don't come forward. And it is arguable that by not making a public statement there are other people who could have come forward and didn't come forward, such as the people who are coming forward now."

"I find myself in a situation now, where all that people know is what I didn't do."

He says he told Bishop

Brooks in the mid-1990s of his [the bishop's] responsibility to inform the authorities, as he considered Brooks to be in charge of "the overall management of the case" and felt confident at the time Brooks would do it.

Obligation

When he himself took over as bishop in 1999 he saw a letter from Brooks' solicitor confirming the obligation to inform the civil authorities which stated, "when you do that it will cover Fr McAreavey."

However, more than 20 years later he says: "In truth I do not know whether he [Brooks] reported that or not, there is no record."

Was Finnegan ever canonically censured as a priest? "No, that was the bishop's call."

He says Bishop Brooks "forcibly retired" Finnegan in 1996 after he returned from therapy at a centre for the treatment of paedophiles in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

But, given what he now knows about the ways of paedophiles does he consider Finnegan remained a danger to children up towards 2000, until his health declined through dementia? "Yes, I have to say yes because the capacity of the diocese at that time to monitor an abuser scarcely existed."

“That was the brief I was given, to be a kind of victim liaison person”

Bishop McAreavey says many members of the faithful in his diocese rightly ask why the Finnegan case only came to light so recently. "Absolutely, one of the biggest mistakes in relation to the management of the Finnegan case is that Bishop Brooks did not put it into the public forum when he asked him to retire. Had that happened many of the subsequent mistakes and developments would not have happened."

He contrasts Brooks' inaction with his [McAreavey's] decision [admittedly, I must add, in very different times] to publicly announce when priests 'step aside' and his decision to publicly confirm allegations against the late Fr Séamus Reid in 2015.

However, I put it to Dr McAreavey that he had the power to put the Finnegan case into the public domain the moment he became bishop in September 1999.

"It pains me yet that I didn't, but what I effectively did was to accept the arrangements in place when I came

[to be bishop]."

Was this him protecting the institution, I persist? "I don't think I set out to protect anything or anybody, you take the diocese as it is, as you find it and you pick up the reins."

He says he visited Finnegan shortly after he became bishop by which time his health was in decline. Any signs of remorse, I ask? "I don't remember him saying very much, I don't recall him saying 'I have done serious wrong.'"

By his own account in this interview, Bishop McAreavey had four further opportunities to redress the consequences of that first "big mistake" by Bishop Brooks, which he deeply regrets.

November/December 2002: One of Finnegan's victims, Paul Gilmore, expressed his anger at Dr McAreavey's decision to say the funeral Mass and in email correspondence reported by *Spotlight* asked the Bishop to publicise Finnegan. He declined, although he admits to being "stung by a victim's perception that I was siding with Finnegan."

February 2006: After the publication of the book *Up the Creek with a Paddle*, in which American author Mary Anne Boyle Bradley revealed that her husband had been abused by Finnegan, the bishop felt "At that point I thought, gosh, this is an opportunity. I invited somebody round from social services and he specifically advised me not to do it."

June 2011: Bishop McAreavey had specifically asked the National Board for Safeguarding Children to go beyond their terms of reference to include deceased priests, especially Finnegan, in their review of the diocese and expected journalists to question him about this. They didn't, and the bishop didn't prompt them. "I would certainly have named Malachy Finnegan for my peace of mind. Later I would ask myself, why didn't I just do it?"

November/December 2017: The pictures of Finnegan had been removed from St Colman's pending their digital alteration, but the public were not told and another opportunity for a cathartic public naming of Finnegan was missed.

Bishop McAreavey said there had been three "formal settlements", to 'Patrick' in November, to the victim of the first allegation about five years ago, also abused in St Colman's and to Mr Faloon in the early-2000s.

He said these settlements cumulatively came to hundreds of thousands of pounds

and the diocese "had made some provision for this" and they had not been covered by insurance.

Dr McAreavey says the two main pastoral concerns now are "first, the ongoing care of victims and second, to support priests and people who are affected by it."

"I am very aware of the shock and anger of people, especially in Clonduff, where Sean Faloon was abused and Malachy Finnegan was parish priest."

I asked Bishop McAreavey if in the light of recent developments, he still believed, after 19 years, that he had what it takes to remain at the helm and bring the necessary healing and renewal to Drogheda or whether it might be more beneficial for the diocese to get a fresh start.

“I am very aware of the shock and anger of people, especially in Clonduff, where Sean Faloon was abused”

Bishop McAreavey said: "Well, the *Spotlight* programme came out on Tuesday, so we are still in the first week of that. Just as people across the parishes are still trying to digest that, to understand what happened, and [this interview] is part of an effort also to help people understand what was happening."

"So, I don't think it would be appropriate for me to make a kind of a kneejerk reaction."

"Certainly, the whole issue of safeguarding has been a massive preoccupation of my time as Bishop and a stressful one for myself and for victims and for priests and so on."

"So, what I will want to do is for the good of the diocese. I will obviously reflect in the coming period as to how best to go forward with that."

"On a plus side, I have learned a huge amount and I think I would want to say that I think my heart was in the right place. But obviously when you are in a leadership role around issues as sensitive as this it is easy for trust to be damaged, so the question really is to assess that and to see can you recover trust and rebuild trust."

"This happens in marriage relationships all the time and in all kinds of relationships, so the question is to try and assess that and do what is for the best," Bishop McAreavey adds.

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Christ wasn't shy, so we shouldn't be either

One of the fundamental tasks given to every Christian is to spread the Good News. In our Catholic tradition, this task has been extremely well-served for centuries. Communication is key to the life and mission of our Church. I know too 'actions speak louder than words' – actions of kindness, compassion, inclusion and love that inspire us in our daily lives.

In this regard, the Good News witnessed in our families, local parishes, workplaces and school communities has a fundamental need to be celebrated, commented upon and communicated where information and conversation takes place in all its mediums.

We live in challenging times. Often our Catholic tradition and values are belittled,



Fr Paddy Byrne

demeaned and even ridiculed by secular culture. As Pope Benedict highlighted in his World Communications Day message in 2006, 'The call for today's media is to be responsible – to be the protagonist of truth and promoter of the peace that ensues – carries with it a number of challenges.'

While the various instruments of social communication facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, and mutual understanding among groups, they are also tainted

by ambiguity. Alongside the provision of a 'great round table' for dialogue, certain tendencies within the media engender a kind of monoculture that dims creative genius, deflates the subtlety of complex thought and undervalues the specificity of cultural practices and the particularity of religious belief.

“The Gospel has an enormous amount to contribute to conversations where people feel let down”

These are distortions that occur when the media industry becomes self-serving or solely profit-driven, losing the sense of accountability to the common good. I believe this brings an even greater responsibility for members



of the Church, not to bury our heads in the sand but to get out on the airwaves and communicate the great and continued relevance our Gospel serves in these turbulent times.

Homelessness, inequality, education, direct provision, the Eighth Amendment, climate change and healthcare are just some issues in recent times that I have made public comment upon, on either the airwaves, social and print media.

When we embrace the val-

ues of Jesus Christ in the Gospel, we become sensitive to the many structures of injustice in our society and world.

Conversations

Jesus Christ wasn't shy when it came to communicating his message. The Gospel has an enormous amount to contribute to conversations where people feel let down on the outside and not part of the main stream.

I have honestly never been discouraged in any way regarding my experience in

communicating the Gospel values of Jesus Christ.

I also find many opportunities and open doors in relation to getting the good news out there. This invitation to engage in a positive, hope filled and respectful manner is not just for the ordained but to all members of the church, particularly in Ireland.

i Fr Paddy Byrne is a curate in Portlaoise parish, during Lent he will be a guest on the Pat Kenny Show on Newstalk every Tuesday.

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We must make it easier for people to live in rural Ireland



Fr Éamonn Fitzgibbon

It is just 12 months since the Government launched 'Realising our Rural Potential: The Action Plan for Rural Development'. This Plan generated hope and optimism in many rural communities as it outlined 270 actions to support rural Ireland.

However, much of this positivity has been dented by the recently launched National Planning Framework Plan. The introduction to The Action Plan for Rural Development promised us that The NFP: Ireland 2040 would build on these actions and seek to address structural issues facing rural Ireland in the longer term, as part of an ongoing process.

However now that the planning framework is

published there seems to be a disconnect between the two plans published within 13 months. The National Planning Framework Plan is seen by many as being 'Dublin-centric' and it seems to accept the migration from rural communities which was identified by comparing census figures from 2011 to 2016.

While Census 2016 showed a significant upswing in population in major urban areas – Dublin 3.7% and Cork 5.4%, for example – parts of rural Ireland recorded population declines of in excess of 20% from the previous census in 2011.

“The recession hit rural communities more severely than urban areas”

The movement from many parts of rural Ireland in to urban centres has now become a steady flow. While much concern is expressed at official level about the decline of rural Ireland, evidenced by declining populations,

closed Post offices, Garda Stations, local shops and pubs, the reality is that as a nation we haven't made it easy for people to live there.

The recession hit rural communities more severely than urban areas and again this was reflected in census figures – unemployment in rural areas increased by 192% between 2006 and 2011, compared to 114% in urban areas. In the economic recovery which we are now experiencing it seems that rural Ireland has been left way behind.

Rural Ireland is a tremendous place to live, it is rich in culture and community, offering quality of life for those who live there. To safeguard rural Ireland it is essential that any long-term framework plan places connectivity, services and employment opportunities in rural Ireland front and centre of its stated aims.

i Rev. Dr Éamonn Fitzgibbon is Director of the Irish Institute for Pastoral Studies, Mary Immaculate College.

Derry Diocese celebrates family



Fr Pat O'Hagan

In anticipation for the World Meeting of Families the Diocese of Derry held a conference entitled 'A Celebration of Family', which was organised by the diocesan working group set up by Bishop Donal McKeown in December 2016

The venue was St Mary's College on Derry's Northland Road, and it proved to be an excellent choice. The Principal, Mrs Marie Lindsay, along with her Vice-Principals and other members of the teaching, support and administrative staff, made everyone feel very welcome. The facilities and the catering were excellent, from the welcoming tea and scones, through lunch-time to the afternoon tea and delicacies.

The day began with a video message from Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, speaking as President of WMOF2018 and, to almost everyone's surprise, a Derry man by birth! He wished everyone attending a fruitful time together, and expressed the wish to see many travelling to Dublin in August.

After some introductory words from myself and Mrs Lindsay, a liturgy of morning prayer was led by the Nelis family from St Mary's parish, Creggan: John and Nicola Nelis, together with their five children, Nicola's mother and sister-in-law. They spoke of the importance in their family, and in every family, of the three words/expressions highlighted by Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*: 'please', 'thank you' and 'I'm sorry'.

Discussions

Delegates were asked to break into groups to discuss their reasons for attending the conference, what they hoped the day might achieve, and what they could bring to the area of family ministry in their parish or in the diocese as a whole.

The first speaker of the day was Gráinne Doherty, a native of the parish of Moville, a theologian and teacher who has worked in a variety of fields, and is currently giving talks and seminars, as well as speaking at conferences and other events around the country, while completing a doctoral thesis.

Gráinne spoke about Pope Francis' vision for the family, as outlined in *Amoris Laetitia*, and how we, in our homes, our parishes and our communities, can implement



The Nelis family from St Mary's parish in Creggan, Co. Derry, pictured with the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, and the bishop of Derry, Donal McKeown at 'A Celebration of Family' event.

that vision. Noting that Pope Francis has sometimes been accused of deviating from Church teaching, Gráinne showed how the present Pope's teaching is very much in keeping with, and is simply an extension of, the teaching of his immediate predecessors, St John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

“It's the hope of the diocesan working group that parishes throughout the diocese will adopt a day”

This was followed by some discussion in the groups. Gráinne took some feedback from the groups afterwards, but time constraints meant there was little room for comment. After lunch Gerard Gallagher, a native of Strabane who now works in the Office for Evangelisation and Ecumenism in the Archdiocese of Dublin, spoke about how we might reach out to the young

people of today, the group sometimes called 'Generation Z' or the 'Millennials'.

At the end of his talk he asked the delegates to break into parish groups to discuss how they might address the area of family ministry in their parishes.

Fr Johnny Doherty, a native of Carndonagh in the Inis Eoghain deanery of the diocese of Derry, is a well-known member of the Redemptorist community who has given retreats in parishes all over the country, and who has been involved in marriage preparation and renewal for many years.

Fr Johnny spoke of the movement he founded almost 20 years ago. Having seen the need for prayer in one particular area of his ministry he set up the Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage and Family Life which encourages parish communities to adopt one day of each month during which parishioners will pray for one hour, from midnight to midnight, for all aspects of marriage and

family life.

It's the hope of the diocesan working group that parishes throughout the diocese will adopt a day so that each hour of each day of each month is covered, and that prayer is constantly being offered for marriages and families who need those prayers most. One of the advantages of taking on an hour's prayer each month is that it can be done anywhere – in a church, in bed, at work or in the car.

If it isn't possible to say formal prayers, whatever the person is doing for that particular hour can be offered up for the intentions of the movement.

The guest of honour at the conference was the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, who was making his first visit to the diocese of Derry since being appointed by Pope Francis last year. The Nuncio spent the whole day at the conference, mingling with delegates, joining in some of the group discussions and then offering

Mass and preaching on the readings of the fifth Sunday of the year.

He asked delegates to appreciate and pray for their priests, borrowing his theme from St Paul's words in the second reading. He also referred to the family themes in the reading from Job – a family man who was tempted by the devil, by his friends and even his wife, to abandon all faith in God, but who resisted and remained loyal to his Creator.

“He asked delegates to appreciate and pray for their priests”

Archbishop Okolo also talked about the problem of pain and suffering in our world, how there's no easy answer to that particular problem, but how we must all work together to alleviate the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters.

Since the weekend the



diocesan working group have been working on keeping the spirit of the "Celebration" alive, encouraging the delegates to speak with their priests and with their Parish Pastoral Councils to promote family ministry throughout the diocese as it continues to celebrate a 'Year of the Family' (August 15, 2017 – September 8, 2018) and to prepare for the much anticipated expected Papal Visit to the WMOF in Dublin, and to being part of the great legacy of that event.

Fr Pat O'Hagan is the Diocesan Delegate of Derry to the WMOF2018 and chair of the diocesan working group.

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Please contact World Meeting of Families correspondent Chai Brady with photos, news or articles relating to your parish or diocese's WMOF2018 preparations and events for inclusion in the weekly update:

email chai@irishcatholic.ie • 01 6874020

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Where to now for Confirmation?



There is a growing concern that young people are just sliding into the sacrament, writes **Susan Gately**

Wexford-based Fr Paddy Banville attracted publicity recently after calling a public meeting to address the issue of the forthcoming Confirmation ceremony in the parish. When the students enrolled for the Sacrament, Fr Banville, the administrator of the parish "made it abundantly clear"



that for Confirmation families, participation in Sunday Eucharist was not optional, but "absolutely essential".

However since the beginning of the school year in September, "the majority of Confirmation parents and children have been absent from the Sunday Eucharist",

he wrote in the parish newsletter.

Priests the length and breadth of Ireland are conflicted over sacramental preparation, in particular Confirmation. Dr Mary McCaughey a theologian at the Priory Institute in Tal-laght, expresses that conflict

well. "The Sacrament of Confirmation doesn't seem to have the effect it should have. It seems to be an exit sacrament rather than a sacrament where they stand up and take responsibility for their faith in public," she told *The Irish Catholic*.

Dr McCaughey worked at a Catholic girls school in England for a year. There, Confirmation was offered at age 15. Out of a class of around 30 she recalls that only three chose to receive the sacrament. Coming from Ireland, she found that heart-breaking, but on the plus side, those who were confirmed saw the sacrament as a big commitment.

"At 15, 16 they were leaders in their parishes and involved in the diocesan youth service. I was impressed by their maturity and how they were ready to see themselves as young adults in the Church who had the responsibility of leadership."

To nurture this commitment there has to be a programme of preparation"

However, she would still be reluctant to go the English route. Through the sacrament, a "grace is given" and that needs to be shared. But being 12 today is different to being that age ten or 20 years ago, she continues. "I've heard stories recently about children going into second level, who are bullied to the point of nearly taking their own lives. So if faith is to have any meaning, the gifts of the Holy Spirit must help them navigate the culture they are in. We need to help children connect the gift of Confirmation to the pressures of life that they face from 12 onwards."

Bishop Fintan Monahan celebrated Confirmation in his diocese for the first time last year, and is now into his

second season. "The preparation for and participation in the sacrament is quite satisfactory and worthwhile," he says.

In his diocese, there is no pressure on any parent or child to "put themselves forward for Confirmation and they are challenged to think seriously about it if they are not practising the faith," he told *The Irish Catholic*, but most still do, he added.

"I would favour the position taken by Pope Francis who when questioned about non-practising parents putting their child forward for Baptism – that if there is any possibility of faith – why not cooperate with that!"

Rite of passage

Eileen, a parish catechist in a Dublin city centre parish, says culturally Confirmation is seen as a "rite of passage between primary and secondary school". The challenge presently is "commitment".

"To nurture this commitment there has to be a programme of preparation that brings together home, school and parish, which is in place in many parishes," says Eileen. "Of course, ultimately the commitment has to be a personal one on part of the candidate and their parents."

Bishop Monahan is acutely aware of the debate over deferring Confirmation to a later date but personally feels the it is a "wonderful pastoral opportunity at the stage the children are at, in their time of transition".

His confrère in the Limerick diocese does not agree. "I believe we should explore deferring Confirmation to a later age," says Bishop Brendan Leahy. "My reason is simply that we need to get beyond the 'package deal' approach to Confirmation and move beyond the cultural practice in Ireland that when you are around 12 nearly everyone automatically makes his or her Confirmation."

mation."

At a later age, there would be more choice involved, he continues. "Not all would make their Confirmation but at least then we would be indicating that Confirmation isn't something we just slide into."

He recognises that sacraments are always a gift that "don't depend on our merits or choice as such" but even though Confirmation ceremonies in Ireland are "lovely and really well prepared," and "we would lose something if we let go of what we have now – maybe it's a step we have to take", he suggests.

If Confirmation is pushed out, "there would have to be a programme in place or some form of support from youth groups or prayer groups that encourages the young adult to consider this," says parish catechist Eileen, "as it is an age when many young people can feel isolated in their faith".

Bishop Monahan praises the way young people are currently tutored in the meaning of Confirmation. "In most cases it links them into the wider parish community, along with their school and family. I find it a great opportunity to link in with parents and encourage them to continue in the practice of the faith."

“It is part of a bigger question, of what is parish, parish community”

Which is fine and dandy, but why is it then that so many exit the Church shortly afterwards and what can be done to keep them engaged? "I don't think it's a question of young people exiting immediately after Confirmation," says Bishop Leahy. "Since their family are not coming regularly to church, many children are no longer coming to Mass regularly before Confirmation."

He admits to having "no magic wand solution" on keeping them engaged. "We all have to work on that together. It is part of a bigger question, of what is parish, parish community, how are we interacting with the young Church?"

Meanwhile the bishop of Killaloe sees great potential in the Pope John Paul II awards, which are "growing from strength to strength in many parishes" in keeping teenagers plugged into the Church and developing faith. He also commends pilgrimages to Lourdes and other "sacred places, World Youth Days and organisations like Youth 2000 which are a great help for people who participate in them".

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Former President of Ireland

FR BRIAN D'ARCY

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SR STANISLAUS KENNEDY

Social innovator and founder of Focus Ireland

FR MARK PATRICK HEDERMAN OSB

Author and former Abbot of Glenstal Abbey

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Remembering we're dust at a chaplaincy full of life



A thousand copies of *YouCat*, the Church's catechism for young people, were given to students who attended Ash Wednesday Mass at the Queen's University Belfast Catholic Chaplaincy. Every year some 2,000 students attend and receive ashes at one of the five Masses celebrated in the chaplaincy on Ash Wednesday. Fr Joseph Mary Deane of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal preached at all five Masses this year, with Down and Connor's Bishop Noel Treanor celebrating the 6.15pm Mass.



Thousands flock to Divine Mercy Conference at the RDS in Dublin



Ruth Hayes, Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow the founder of Mary's Wheels and CEO, Robert Hayes and fundraising administrator Jeannie Higgins highlight the work of charity Mary's Meals who provide food for those in dire poverty around the world. Photos: Chai Brady



Mary Murphy, Nicola Griffin, Godelieve As and Maura Garrihy promote Holy Family Mission.



Torbjonn and Sallyann Huss represent Retrouvaille Ireland who run programmes to improve communication between married couples.



Ruth Aherne (20), Helen Kelly (22), Rónán O'Dubhghaill (30), Matthias Conroy (16) and Peadar Hand (22) at the Love Both stand encourage people to get involved in the pro-life movement at the Divine Mercy Conference in Dublin's RDS last weekend.



Tara Scuffins from Cork, Fiona Clancy, Co. Waterford, and Stiofán Ó Dromasaigh from Dublin.



▲ Sr Stella and Sr Mary Euginia of Little Sisters of the Poor, based in Dublin, enjoy the conference.

◀ Wendy Grace from Spirit Radio with her son Matthew (11 months) beside Carlos Fidalgo representing the Knights of St Columbanus.



Eamon and John McDonagh and Tom Reilly from Lucan in Dublin said the conference was "a brilliant and welcoming event".



In prayer at the Divine Mercy Conference at the RDS.



Maire and Liam Mac Meanmain who are married 61 years.



Finbarr and Mary Lyons who are 57 years married with Betty and Jim Smyth who are 56 years married.



Nuala and John Murphy who are married 54 years.



Couples renewing their marriage vows last Sunday.

Renewal of marriage vows

**On Sunday morning last in Our Lady of Victories Church, Ballymun Road, Dublin, 25 couples renewed their marriage vows from 40 years to 61 years with a blessing by Fr Frank Reburn, co-PP.
Photos: John McElroy**



Couples being presented with a certificate and cross by Fr Frank Reburn, co-PP.



Seán and Madeline Hurley who are 50 years married.



The 25 couples who renewed their marriage vows on Sunday in Our Lady of Victories Church.



Paddy and Heather Fagan who are 57 years married with Catherine and Martin Smyth who are 58 years married



Brid and Vincent Mc Aree who are 61 years married with Finola and Bill Jordan who are 53 years married.

Out&About

Castleisland Parish brings Mass to the nation



DUBLIN: Parishioners and Fr Dan O'Riordan PP, from Castleisland Parish in Kerry, in RTÉ's studio for Mass for Our Lady of Lourdes and World Day for the Sick.



DUBLIN: Jane Langan and Miriam McDonald attend the official opening of a Crosscare Community Cafe in Dún Laoghaire. The cafe provides approximately 150 meals a day to the local community effected by food poverty and social isolation. Photo: John McElroy



DUBLIN: The annual Mass of Healing and Anointing of the Sick took place in St Agnes Church in Crumlin as part of World Day of the Sick. The main celebrant was Archbishop Diarmuid Martin with hundreds of sick people and their families and carers participating. Photo: John McElroy



PHILADELPHIA: Present at the Launch of Foróige the Minister of State Ciaran Cannon at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for the Diaspora and International Development is pictured with young people.



DUBLIN: A major celebration took place in Fairview parish as Fr Aidan Walsh OFM and Fr Joe Connick OFM marked the 50th Anniversary of their Religious Vows as Franciscans.

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DUBLIN: Married couples at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Kingscourt attend a Mass to celebrate Valentine's weekend in preparation for the World Meeting of Families and to mark their wedding jubilees.



MEATH: At the Meath Diocesan Pioneer spring meeting a presentation was made to Mary Brady appreciating her many years of support at Pioneer Central Office. From left to right: Sean Keane, Jack Matthew, Rita Clarke (Chairperson) Peter McCrum (Treasurer) Mary Brady, Michael Clarke, Maureen Matthews, Peter Fagan (Secretary).



WEXFORD: Representatives of various local charities receive generous cheques as a result of the support given by the public at Christmas to a four day ecumenical fast by Fr Arthur Minion and Fr Aodhán Marken which raised €47,550.



▲ **DUBLIN:** People from Bohola and friends, along with Bishop Brendan Kelly, at the newly-erected and blessed memorial to Philip Taaffe, sole benefactor of the building of Bohola Church, Co. Mayo, in Glasnevin Cemetery.

◀ **DUBLIN:** Bishop Denis Nulty blessed engaged couple Anna Keegan from Glenageary, Co. Dublin and Seamus Walsh from Ballycastle in Mayo. They will be married on October 5 this year in St Joseph's Church Glashule in Dublin. The blessing took place at the shrine of the Holy Relics of St Valentine in Whitefriar Church in Dublin. Photo: John McElroy

ARMAGH

Eucharistic Adoration in St Malachy's Church daily from 6am to midnight, and all night on Wednesdays. Adoration chapel, Edwards Street, Lurgan, adoration on weekdays from 9am-9pm.

Lenten Retreat Day: A 'day with a difference' will take place in St Vincent de Paul Centre, Chapel Lane, on Tuesday, February 27 from 10pm-2pm in preparation for the WMOF, with reflections on family life. Booking essential at parish office: 028 37522813. Tea/coffee and light lunch provided.

CLARE

Divine Mercy Chaplet prayer group meets every Tuesday in the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul in Ennis at 8pm in the chapter room. There will also be a short Lectio Divina after the chaplet.

CORK

Life in the Spirit Seminar in Knockavilla Community Centre (Inniscannon/Knockavilla parish), with seven weeks Life in Spirit talks, every Friday, from February 9 to March 23 at 7.30pm. Contact: 087 4589133.

A pro-life Mass is held on the last Friday of every month at the Poor Clares monastery, College Road, at 7.30pm.

Maria Vadia and Fr John Keane will lead a day of prayer, praise, worship and healing in Rochestown Park Hotel, Douglas on Sunday, March 4, commencing at 9am and concluding with Mass at 5pm. Registration not required. Contact Celia on 087 2405568.

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8am-noon and 3-9pm.

DUBLIN

Divine Mercy Devotions in the Church of Three Patrons, Rathgar every First Friday at 7pm. Mass, Benediction, chaplet and blessing with relic of St Faustina. Confessions available.

The Dublin 15 Faith and Justice Group welcomes new members and currently meet on the first Friday of the month in Harts-town Church. Contact Fr Joe 087 6632944.

Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home, Glenayle Road, Raheny, from 8pm-9pm.

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Wednesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7.30pm. www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

KERRY

Jer O'Donoghue, founder of Rathmore Social Action Group, will explore the topic, 'A parish caring for all people', in Ben-ners Hotel, Dingle at 7.30pm on February 27.

Martina Lehane Sheehan, accredited psychotherapist and spiritual director, will explore 'A Spirituality for the Home -

Creating Sacred Space, Hospitality and Compassionate Listening' in River Island Hotel, Castleisland on February 28, at 8pm.

Abortion - is it health care? Medical information night in the Rose Hotel Tralee. Sunday, February 25, 6pm.

KILDARE

A centring/contemplative prayer group meets in the Old Baptist-ry of St Michael's parish church in Athy every Thursday at 8pm. For more info ring Dolores at 086-3474679.

Leixlip Parish is hosting 'Amoris', a six-session programme to reflect on our experience of family based on 'The Joy of Love'. It will take place in Our Lady's Parish Centre, Leixlip, on February 28, March 7, 14, 21, April 11 and 18 at 8pm.

LOUTH

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Bal-lymascannon, Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00353 863623361 from NI or 0863623361 from ROI.

The Rosary will be prayed for the protection of life every Saturday at 3pm at The Square, Dundalk.

MAYO

On Wednesday, February 28, the Irish Church Music Association will facilitate a 'Workshop for Choirs' at 7.30pm in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. It will provide choirs with music and resources to help them prepare for the WMOF 2018.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacra-ment at St Croan's Church, Bal-lymoe, every Monday 10-11am and Thursday 8-10pm. Also at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday 7.30-8.30pm.

SLIGO

Latin Mass in Carraroe church on the last Sunday of each month at 3pm.

TIPPERARY

'Come and See' weekend for men discerning a priestly vocation is open to all dioceses in the Munster region, taking place in Pallotine College, Thurles on Friday, February 23 at 6pm and concludes February 24 at 3pm.

WATERFORD

A celebration of the anniversary of charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church will take place on Sunday, February 25 in The Edmund Rice Centre from 2pm-5.30pm. Contact Sile 086 8590394.

WICKLOW

Midweek Lenten study pro-gramme begins February 21 with a penitential prayer service in thanksgiving for the gift of the earth, and an introduction led by Archdeacon Rountree and Fr Kennedy.

One-week Icon Course held in the Carmelite Monastery in Delgany from February 26-March 2, beginners welcome. Tutor is Mihai Cucu. Email: mihaicucu78@gmail.com



World Report

IN BRIEF

Indonesia targets all sectarian sermons

● To prevent sectarian conflict ahead of this year's regional election, the Indonesian election authority is working on a set of guidelines for sermons.

About 160 million voters will head to the polls during regional elections on June 27 in 171 regions.

Fritz Edward Siregar, an official of the Election Supervisory Commission, said the agency has invited religious leaders to help formulate the guidelines for religious groups.

The aim is to prevent sectarian sentiment to promote certain candidates. "The sermon can be used as a guideline for Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Confucians," he said.

Nasty ash causes rash

● A bishop in the Philippine capital Manila has ordered an investigation into reports that several Mass-goers developed rashes after having their foreheads marked with ash on Ash Wednesday. Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan said a thorough investigation will be carried out, and even suggested the ashes used might have been purposely contaminated.

"Rest assured that we will not leave a single stone unturned in order to find out what caused this unfortunate incident," said the prelate.

Bishop David said several Mass-goers reported feeling a burning sensation on their foreheads immediately after being marked. When the people washed the ashes off, rashes and blisters appeared on their skin.



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Pope allows Nigerian bishop to resign after furore

Eight months after ordering priests in a Nigerian diocese to pledge their obedience to the Pope and accept the bishop that now-retired Pope Benedict XVI had named for them, Pope Francis accepted the resignation of the disputed bishop.

Bishop Peter Ebere Okpaleke, who since 2012 has been prevented from exercising his ministry as bishop of Ahiara because most of the priests in the diocese refused to accept him, said in a statement: "I am convinced in conscience that my remaining the bishop of Ahiara Diocese is no longer beneficial to the church."

Bishop Okpaleke's appointment was met by protests and petitions calling for the appointment of a bishop from among the local clergy. Ahiara is in Mbaise, a predominantly Catholic region of Imo state in southern Nigeria.

Bishop Okpaleke is from Anambra state, which borders Imo to the north.

The Vatican announced



Women attend Ash Wednesday Mass at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Abuja, Nigeria.

that Pope Francis had accepted the resignation of Bishop Okpaleke, who will turn 55 on March 1.

Collaborators

The Pope named as apostolic administrator of the diocese Bishop Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji of Umuahia.

"Exercising the ministry in a diocese where priests who are supposed to be my

immediate and closest collaborators, brothers, friends and sons are at war with one another, with the laity and with me as their chief shepherd would be disastrous and a threat to the salvation of souls – including my own soul."

Pope Francis in June gave each priest of the diocese, both those resident in Ahiara and those working outside

the diocese, 30 days to write him a letter promising obedience to him and accepting the duly-appointed bishop or face suspension.

According to a statement from the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, the Pope "received 200 letters from individual priests of the Diocese of Ahiara in which they manifested to him obedience and fidelity".

The statement continued: "Taking into account their repentance, the Holy Father decided not to proceed with the canonical sanctions and instructed the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples to respond to each of them. In this line, the congregation has urged every priest to reflect on the grave damage inflicted on the Church of Christ and expressed hope that in the future they will never again repeat such unreasonable actions opposing a bishop legitimately appointed by the supreme pontiff."

Nuns leave Mexico school after kidnappings and murder

An order of nuns has withdrawn from an especially violent city in Mexico after the parents and sister of one of the women religious was kidnapped and killed.

The Diocese of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, where two priests were murdered this month, said in a statement that the nuns from the *Comunidad Guadalupano* (Guadalupe Community) had withdrawn because of a lack of security, leaving a school it operated in the city of Chilapa without staff.

Schools in Chilapa suspended classes from September to December because of the insecurity, the statement said.

The nuns' withdrawal from Chilapa

is the latest hardship for the Diocese of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, which serves parts of southern state of Guerrero, where the heroin trade has exploded in recent years. At least six priests have been murdered there since 2009.

Two priests, Fathers Germain Muniz García and Ivan Anorve Jaime, were shot dead as they drove back from Candlemas celebrations with four other passengers, three of whom were injured.

State prosecutor Xavier Olea Pelaez said originally that the priests had attended the celebrations, where there were armed individuals from three states and that a criminal group from a

neighbouring state had shot the priests.

Mr Olea also said a photo, showing Fr Muniz holding an assault rifle and posing with masked men, prompted confusion.

Bishop Salvador Rangel Mendoza of Chilpancingo-Chilapa rejected the prosecutor's version of events as a "fairy tale", saying the photo was at least a year old and likely taken with members of a community security force in Fr Muniz's hometown.

The state government said the priests were not members of a criminal group and confirmed details voiced by the bishop.

Bishops glad of South African president resignation

The resignation of the president of South Africa is long overdue, the country's bishops said, noting that his scandal-plagued presidency fostered corruption.

While Jacob Zuma was in power, the bishops said, there was dereliction of duty at all levels of government.

"The fact that Mr Zuma has been allowed to hold on to the highest position in the land despite long-standing

and overwhelming evidence of his unfitness for office has done immense harm to our country's international reputation, to its economy and, especially, to its poorest and most vulnerable citizens," said the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Zuma, 75, resigned last week after nine years in office. In a televised address to the nation, he said he

disagreed with the way the ruling African National Congress had pushed him toward an early exit, but would accept its orders. Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa was confirmed as president until 2019 general elections.

While for some Zuma's resignation "may be a painful event, we call on all to accept his decision as part of our democratic process,"

the bishops' conference said in a statement issued by its president, Archbishop Stephen Brislin of Cape Town.

Noting that the Zuma presidency "degraded standards of morality and honour in our public life", the bishops urged the ruling party "to take careful note of the way in which it allowed this situation to develop".



Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie

Remembering the slain innocents



Parishioners of Mary Help of Christians Church in Parkland, Florida, pray during an outdoor Stations of the Cross service dedicated to the victims and survivors of the deadly mass shooting at nearby Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. At least 17 people were killed. Photo: CNS

Pope Francis prays for those who accuse him of heresy

Pope Francis has said he tries to dialogue with those who disagree with him in the hope that he will learn something; but he just prays for those who call him a heretic.

"When I perceive resistance, I seek dialogue whenever it is possible; but some resistance comes from people who believe they possess the true doctrine and accuse you of being a heretic," the Pope told a group of Jesuits during a meeting in Santiago, Chile.

"When I cannot see spiritual goodness in what these people say or write, I simply pray for them," Pope Francis said in response to a question about the "resistance" he has encountered as Pope.

The exchange was part of the usual question-and-answer session Pope Francis has with Jesuit communities

during his Papal trips abroad. With the Pope's approval, the Jesuit journal *Civiltà Cattolica* publishes a transcript of the conversation several weeks later.

Pope Francis told the Jesuits in Chile that he tries not to think of opposition as "resistance", because that cuts off an opportunity for dialogue, discernment and learning something or at least recognising a need to explain something better.

Resistance

As for blogs and internet sites devoted to leading the "resistance" against him, Pope Francis said: "I know who they are, I know the groups, but I do not read them for my own mental health."

People are naturally resistant to change, and "this a great temptation that we all faced in the period after the

Second Vatican Council", the Pope said. The resistance continues today with some people trying to "relativise" or "water down" the Council's teachings and the course it set for the church.

Reiterating what he had told Jesuit communities over the past five years, Pope Francis told the groups in Chile and Peru that the Church needs them to share their expertise in St Ignatius of Loyola's formal process for discernment, which involves prayerfully seeing where God is at work and where God wants to lead a person.

"One of the things that the Church most needs today is discernment," the Pope said. "This is put very clearly in the pastoral perspectives and objectives of *Amoris Laetitia*," the 2016 apostolic exhortation on the family.

Bishop warns of ISIS growth in Somalia

As it loses its grip in the Middle East, the Islamic State is finding a foothold in Somalia, said a bishop who oversees the Catholic Church in the troubled country.

The insurgent group – linked to mass killings, abductions and beheadings in Iraq and Syria, where it is facing defeat – see Somalia as a suitable base due to its lawlessness according

to Bishop Giorgio Bertin, apostolic administrator of Mogadishu.

"I think they have chosen Somalia because there is no central authority. The country also represents a good possibility for them to continue their search for an Islamic state or, at least, they can continue their ideology without many obstacles," Bishop Bertin said.

Somalia has experienced chaos since 1991, when warlords overthrew President Mohammed Siad Barre. The conflict remains one of Africa's longest civil wars.

Twist

But in 2006, the war took a different twist with the emergence of the al-Shabab extremist group, which

swept across the country, enforcing a radical form of Shariah (Islamic law). Since then, the country has served as the traditional base for the militants who are in the al-Qaida network affiliate in East Africa.

The emergence of the Islamic State faction will complicate the scenario in an already fragmented country, Bishop Bertin said.

Vatican roundup

Reflect on what corrodes Faith during Lent – Pope

Lent is a time for Christians to get their hearts in sync with the heart of Jesus, Pope Francis said.

"Let the Lord heal the wounds of sin and fulfil the prophecy made to our fathers: 'A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh'," the Pope said, celebrating Mass and distributing ashes at the beginning of Lent.

After a brief prayer at the Benedictine's Monastery of St Anselm, Pope Francis made the traditional Ash Wednesday procession to the Dominican-run Basilica of Santa Sabina on Rome's Aventine Hill for the Mass.

He received ashes on his head from 93-year-old Cardinal Jozef Tomko, titular cardinal of the basilica, and he distributed ashes to the cardinals present.

In his homily, he said the Church gives Christians the 40 days of Lent as a time to reflect on "anything that could dampen or even corrode our believing heart".

Vatican denies Ratzinger claim on Benedict health

The Vatican denied that retired Pope Benedict XVI has a degenerative neurological disease or paralyzing condition after his brother, 94-year-old Msgr Georg Ratzinger, told a magazine that Pope Benedict had a debilitating disease.

In an interview published in the German weekly entertainment magazine *Neue Post*, Msgr Ratzinger said Pope Benedict suffered from a nerve disease that was slowly paralyzing him.

"The greatest concern is that the paralysis could eventually reach his heart and then everything could end quickly," Msgr Ratzinger was quoted as

saying.

"I pray every day to ask God for the grace of a good death, at a good moment, for my brother and me. We both have this great wish," he added.

Although news about the interview also was published on the German edition of the Vatican News website, the Holy See press office said in a statement that "the alleged news reports of a paralyzing or degenerative illness are false".

"In two months, Benedict XVI will turn 91 years old and, as he himself recently said, he feels the weight of years, which is normal at this age," the statement said.

Resignation norms for prelates updated by Pope

Updating the norms and regulations governing the resignation of bishops and of Roman Curia department heads who are not cardinals, Pope Francis said they will continue to hold office until he accepts their resignations.

The update was published in a document titled *Imparare a congedarsi* ('Learning to say farewell') and was given 'motu proprio', meaning on the Pope's own initiative.

The Code of Canon Law previously stated that a resignation that requires acceptance "lacks all force if it is not accepted within three months" while one that does not require acceptance "takes effect when it has been communicated by the one resigning".

However, the Pope said that after consultation, he "became aware of the need to update the norms regarding the times and methods of resignation from office upon reaching the age limit".

Under the new norms, "the acceptance or extension, for a specified or unspecified amount of time, is communicated to the person" resigning.

The ending of a Church assignment, the Pope wrote, "must be considered an integral part of the service itself, in that it requires a new form of availability".

Letter from Rome

Good works of Pope's anti-abuse commission overlooked by media



John L. Allen Jr

As President John F. Kennedy famously said after the Bay of Pigs disaster in 1961, more or less paraphrasing Tacitus, "victory has a thousand fathers, but defeat is an orphan". The odd thing from a media point of view is that it's often precisely the opposite way around – failure is a celebrity, success a nobody.

That is to say, it's considered news when war breaks out, planes fall from the sky, systems break down and leaders stumble. When peace holds, the plane lands safely, the cheques arrive on time, and leaders quietly do their jobs, nobody seems to notice.

Perhaps that insight helps explain why the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, the body established by Pope Francis in 2014 to advise him on policies to combat sexual abuse, has long struggled to tell its story to the world – against the backdrop of spectacular failures and noisy controversy on the Church's anti-sex abuse front, steady lower-level success doesn't quite cut through the noise.

Naturally, the commission has had some stumbles and setbacks.

Much has been made of the fact that two former members of the body, who are also survivors of sexual abuse – Peter Saunders of the UK and Marie Collins of Ireland – both departed under different sets of circumstances, and both later expressed frustration with the pace of change and perceived internal resistance.

Both have also been critical of what they see as missteps by Francis, including his handling of the case of Bishop Juan Barros in Chile and accusations that Barros engaged in a cover-up of crimes by that country's most notorious abuser priest, Fernando Karadima.

Commission

Likewise, much has also been made of the fact that Francis allowed the membership of the commission to 'lapse' in December, and only got around to appointing new members last week. It's fair to point out that's basically business as usual in the Vatican, so the delay



Pope Francis listens as Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, speaks during an audience with commission members at the Vatican. Inset, Marie Collins.

is hardly unusual, but then critics will say that's precisely the point – in the struggle against child sexual abuse, 'business as usual' just doesn't cut it.

Still there's a strong argument to be made that over the almost four years of its existence, the commission has quietly had a substantive impact on making the Catholic Church a safer place for children in many parts of the world.

“There are also indications that the commission's example is having a leavening effect on local churches around the world”

For one thing, commission members have criss-crossed the planet delivering training seminars on abuse prevention, detection and response for Church leaders, including in regions of the world that were once resistant to accepting the idea that child abuse was actually a serious risk in the Catholic Church. As time has gone on, the number and range of those invitations has continued to grow, suggesting a growing awareness and receptivity to the commission's

leadership. Further, there are also indications that the commission's example is having a leavening effect on local churches around the world.

In 2016, for instance, Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India – a member of the Pope's 'C9' council of cardinal advisers, and the president of the Indian bishops' conference – set up his own child protection panel in Mumbai, telling *Crux* that his idea in doing so was to "bring the spirit of the commission" to his own archdiocese.

The commission has also contributed significantly to reviewing anti-abuse guidelines in countries that already have them, and prodding and assisting countries that don't into producing them, in part by developing a model set of guidelines to serve as a basis for local adaptation.

Educational days

Moreover, the commission has developed a 'Day of Prayer', as well as educational days on how different churches can work on the anti-abuse fight within their communities. It has also undertaken a theological reflection on the significance of the sex abuse crisis for the theological understanding of the Church and

for its core spiritual convictions.

Admirers believe that the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors has helped foster a growing culture of child safety in the Church, often without a great deal of fanfare, but also with real, if imperfect and incomplete, results.

The appointments made on Saturday reflect, and arguably augment, that track record.

“In recent weeks, Francis has drawn significant fire for his record on the sexual abuse scandals”

Nine new members were unveiled, including Teresa Kettelkam, a former Illinois state police colonel and head of the US Bishops' Child Protection Office from 2005 to 2011, who was working for the commission in Rome but has now returned to the United States. She's widely recognised as a leading reform voice in child protection issues, and thus will remain part of the commission's mix.

Monsignor Robert Oliver, another American and a former

aide to Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, who was confirmed as president of the commission, remains a full member as well as the director of its office.

In other words, the appointments were a broad thumbs-up from the Pope for the work of the commission, while also broadening its global scope and range with members from Ethiopia, India, Tonga and Brazil, as well as Australia, Britain and the US.

Affirmation

O'Malley stressed the basic affirmation delivered by the Pontiff. "The Holy Father has ensured continuity in the work of our commission, which is to assist local churches throughout the world in their efforts to safeguard all children, young people, and vulnerable adults from harm," he said.

A statement released on Saturday indicated that victims and survivors of abuse are among the appointments, though the individuals have chosen to disclose their experiences only within the context of the commission rather than doing so publicly.

Despite that anonymity, survivors may have an even greater voice if a possible panel of victims eventually gets off the ground. It's currently being studied under the leadership of the Baroness Sheila Hollins, a former commission member and a former president of the UK's Royal College of Psychiatrists.

In recent weeks, Francis has drawn significant fire for his record on the sexual abuse scandals, including not only the Barros' case itself but also his testy response to critics on the way back from Chile – among other things, accusing victims of 'calumny' and suggesting they should offer 'proof' if they want him to act.

The Pope's recent revelation that he meets 'regularly' with abuse survivors on Fridays in the Vatican was of consolation to some.

Perhaps the quiet progress being logged by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, and the continuity Francis apparently has ensured for that progress, may not be enough to crack the headlines in quite the same way, at least for now.

If history does eventually judge the Church's efforts at recovery a success, however, the events of Saturday may go down as one of those quiet moments in which the tectonic plates shifted once more in the right direction.

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of *CruxNow.com*



The European Union has become too focused on narrow economic goals, writes **Ben Ryan**

I've finally found common ground with British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson. I can finally come out in public as someone who also likes to think of the EU as a "teleological construction". Of course, Johnson is learning, as I've long experienced, that using phrases like that about the EU is likely to lead to much unfair mockery and the experience of being shunned by friends and family alike.

The Guardian has even written a stinging three paragraph explainer for its readers on what the pretentious term means. It being *The Guardian* they lacked the sense of irony to resist condemning it as a "polysyllabic dogwhistle to the paranoid [which] is just fallaciously redundant"; a far more blue-collar turn of phrase.

What I find interesting, however, is that in this term Johnson has struck exactly at the heart of what is going wrong in the European project, if not quite in the way he thinks he has. Johnson believes the EU is a teleological construct (that is, an organisation which only exists because it is set towards a particular, specific, end goal – or *telos*), because it is hellbent on achieving full political unity and the destruction of the nation state.

Truth

There is some truth in that. The EU is committed to greater unity, particularly (for all sorts of obvious current economic reasons in the Eurozone) in terms of fiscal policy. The European project really was designed with the conscious desire to limit the power of nation states – specifically their power to independently militarise.

The first part of the European project was the European Coal and Steel Community, which was explicitly designed to make war "materially impossible".

The point there is that, at least in its origins, the project was not designed to achieve unity for its own sake, as Johnson seems to believe, but for a higher cause of peace and solidarity. As the Theos report 'A Soul For The Union' argued, the early European project had an explicit moral core to it, based deeply



Pope Francis speaks during the European Union summit at the Vatican. Photo: CNS

European Union must regain sense of purpose

in Catholic social teaching. It was founded on the principles of peace, of solidarity (between nations – and between classes, with a great focus being placed on working rights and conditions), subsidiarity (a term drawn explicitly from a Papal encyclical), and to create a new moral means of international politics.

It absolutely was a teleological construction – but the *telos* it sought was not authoritarian unity the way Napoleon or Hitler had sought it, but a redeemed model for international politics.

However, even though Johnson's vision of the EU's *telos* is wrong, it still does get at the heart of the current European

malaise for two reasons. First the EU still believes in itself as a teleological construction (which means it struggles to respond to

challenges), and second, paradoxically, it has stopped believing in itself as a teleological construction, which may ultimately kill it.

“The EU's greatest danger is that it has stopped believing in itself as a teleological construction”

On the first point, because the EU still does believe in itself as a teleological project it has never come to terms with the idea that progress is not inevitable.

In the EU's teleological worldview, once a nation is fit to join the great moral crusade that is Europe it will only ever become more liberal, more social, more committed to human rights and more European. To join the EU there are criteria that countries have to meet to demonstrate that economically and constitutionally they are suitable European member states.

What there isn't, is much by way of means of intervention should a member state backslide. There was never any expectation that what the current political

movements in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic – where constitutional gains are being reversed and hard nationalist governments hold sway – would ever be possible.

The EU's belief in its own inevitable teleology has left it blindsided to those shifts (as, to some extent, with Brexit too). This is a serious problem which the EU is struggling to confront.

Paradoxically, however, the EU's greatest danger is that it has stopped believing in itself as a teleological construction. Albeit that, as argued above, it still believes in a sort of inevitable progress once member states join, the EU's greatest failing is that it has abandoned the vision of its founders.

The bold moral mission, based on peace, solidarity, subsidiarity and new politics has become more and more muted over time (again see the Soul for the Union report for a more in-depth discussion). In its place the EU has become technocratic, and ever more focused only on narrow economic goals.

The commitment to the common good has become more of a commitment to sovereign debt.

This is a tragic failing (although

not entirely hopeless; I still had and have hope that it can reverse some of those more recent trends) and one which could ultimately finish the EU.

“The commitment to the common good has become more of a commitment to sovereign debt”

Without a strong *telos* – that is a mission at which the EU is aiming, that its citizens support and feel some sort of deep commitment to, the EU is always going to be vulnerable. If you make yourself a body that bases its popular support on economics alone, you will always be vulnerable to the vagaries of the international economy.

If it could recapture its *telos* it would be in a much stronger place. In a way, Johnson's expression is the ultimate challenge that Brexit should present to the EU: what are you really for? If it's just the money, expect to see some more 'exits'.

1 Ben Ryan is a researcher with Theos think tank. This article first appeared on the Theos blog.



Boris Johnson.

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2,
or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Some people will never be convinced

Dear Editor, I find it very uplifting that the 70th formally recognised miraculous cure in Lourdes has been announced (IC 15/02/18). It highlights the sacred nature of the place, and how God works mysteriously in the world.

I think it's a real shame that in our modern age people often reduce the supernatural down to the superstitious. The piece pointed out that the Lourdes International Medical Committee ruled in 2016 that the cure had been "unexplained according to current scientific knowledge". If medical experts are finding this kind of phenomenon difficult to explain for the

70th time, how much more evidence is needed to prove its veracity?

Often atheists accuse religious believers of being biased, claiming that just because science can't explain something yet, believers resolve that it must be God's activity. This is often called the 'God of the Gaps' argument.

However, atheists also do the same thing. They claim that although science hasn't explained something, it will eventually. They're filling in the gaps in their argument with science that doesn't yet exist! This is the height of hypocrisy, and reveals a hidden bias. No matter how much evidence is shown to non-believers, they

will always dismiss it as an unknown scientific or psychological phenomenon.

A question often asked to atheists is what would it take for you to believe in God. The answer is usually something like "if God rearranged the stars in a formation that read 'I exist', or "if Jesus appeared to me visually".

However, I suspect that if this happened many of the sceptics would reduce these revelations to a constellational coincidence or a deceiving hallucination!

*Yours etc.,
Cathal Rafferty,
Rathfarnham, Dublin 14.*

We should think in terms of the 'eternal now'

Dear Editor, David Quinn, writes that 'Suffering is the flipside of love' (IC 8/02/18) and then says this doesn't explain the suffering caused by something like cancer.

The universe began with the Big Bang, 14 billion years ago, with all matter-energy blemished by original sin. Matter-energy at its lowest level had only potential for animation.

From 'the Big Bang', the universe expands at near the speed of light. All animate life is subject to pain and death – and inanimate energy/matter to disorder

and decay.

In 1985, Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, wrote: "The inability to understand original sin and to make it understandable is really one of the most difficult problems of present day theology and pastoral ministry."

The key to understanding is that original sin is/was a transcendental catastrophe, not an historic event on earth! Such fusion (short circuit) between good and evil, in the transcendental realm of Paradise, caused

the Big Bang and the evolutionary process. After billions of years, this produced human life on Earth, eventually Mary: 'Our tainted nature's solitary boast', the mother of Our Saviour. All else is blemished by original sin, as are human souls emerging at conception. All that existed at the Big Bang was matter-energy at its lowest level, with only potential for animation

Thus, God uses the evolutionary process, also the life, death and resurrection of His Son – and

the ongoing sacramental life of His Church, as the means of our redemption. Immaculate matter rightfully belongs in heaven. Hence the 'living bread down from heaven', the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, and the Assumption of Mary.

The difficulty with this logical new synthesis is that we think in distorted finite terms of time and space – particularly in terms of time. Whereas, everything remains in the 'eternal now of God'.

*Yours etc.,
Brian Rooney,
Downpatrick, Co. Down.*

Oh for the Penny Catechism...

Dear Editor, Religious instruction declined in our national schools nearly 60 years ago and that is the reason for the lack of Faith in Ireland and few vocations to the priesthood and religious life. When will the high-up people, who are responsible for the Faith in Ireland, come out of their bunkers (apart from collecting their money) and reintroduce the *Baltimore Catechism* or the *Penny Catechism* in our schools and so protect the next generation from this deprivation? May I suggest no money in the envelopes until this is done.

*Your etc.,
Anna Brady,
Farragh, Co. Cavan.*



Constitution is right place to recognise human rights

Dear Editor, I noticed that in a recent speech our Taoiseach, in promoting wider access to abortion, said: "I do not believe that the Constitution is the place for making absolute statements about medical,

moral and legal issues."

Excuse my ignorance, but if the Constitution is not the place for recognising basic Human Rights and making statements relating to moral, legal and medical issues, then what is the Constitution

for?

I always believed the Constitution was the place for certain laws, and the appropriate place to acknowledge UN-drafted Human Rights. I am nineteen years old and I support

constitutional recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I campaign to keep the Eighth Amendment.

*Yours etc.,
Sean Blackwell,
Co. Limerick.*

Don't label people with disabilities

Dear Editor, It has been widely debated as to why a human being needs to be recognised as a human person to possess 'a right to life'. One argument is based on the belief that foetuses and new-born babies cannot be considered human persons with 'a right to life' because they do not possess the properties (capacities) that endow them as such (Tooley 1975).

If the prerequisite to be a human person with a right to life is the possession of certain capacities, what then are the implications for a foetus diagnosed with Down syndrome? Should their predicted disorder decide their fate without giving them the opportunity to live – the equivalent of a death sentence? Sadly, this is a eugenic reality!

It is impossible to know before birth, and often not until a considerable time after birth, as to what degree these capacities will develop. Each child with Down syndrome is unique and they should all be given the opportunity to reach their full potential. A young man with Down syndrome says: "Give a baby with a disability a chance to grow a full life. To experience a half-full glass instead of the half-empty glass."

Disability and illness are extrinsic factors and should never be used to 'label' a person with a disability. The way in which language is used is very important; a child with Down syndrome is more than a label, they are a 'person' first. Using 'person' language takes the focus off the disability and to the person. A person who has dignity, feelings and rights but who just happens to have been diagnosed with an extra chromosome.

*Yours etc.,
Christina Coakley,
Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo.*

Status quo should remain

Dear Editor, The recent assertion by a spokesperson for GPs that decisions be left to politicians was presumably a case of blowing in the wind.

In its preamble, the UN asserts that the child needs special safeguards both before and after birth. This need is recognized in the Declaration of Human Rights, and the General Assembly calls upon National Governments to recognize these rights. The rights include the "inherent right to life".

Despite, therefore, Ireland's signature to this declaration, politicians when asked, fail to explain themselves. So how can we make an informed judgment? Regardless of other arguments, are we not better off leaving the Constitution as it is?

*Yours etc.,
Gerald Murphy,
Rathfarnham, Dublin 16.*

Impressive Pope Paul VI

Dear Editor, A new book *Heartbreaker* about the first heart transplant in 1967 describes how after the transplant the surgeon, Prof. Chris Barnard, met hundreds of eminent, famous and gifted people from many different countries. Later in life he was to say that the most impressive person he ever encountered was Pope Paul VI.

*Yours etc.,
Mrs Judith Leonard,
Raheny, Dublin 5.*

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.

Around the world



▲ **PHILIPPINES:** A lay minister marks a cross on the forehead of a worshipper during Ash Wednesday Mass outside the National Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Paranaque.

► **VATICAN:** Pope Francis celebrates Mass in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae at the Vatican. In his homily, the Pope said that if a Christian's Lenten fasting does not help others and lead to a real awareness of one's own sins, then it is "fake".



HOLY LAND: A clergyman marks a cross on a young Palestinian woman from the Latin Patriarchate School during Ash Wednesday Mass at Annunciation Church in Beit Jala, West Bank.

USA: People attend a candlelight prayer vigil for the victims of a mass shooting at nearby Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland in Florida. At least 17 people were killed when 19-year-old former student Nikolas Cruz stormed the school with an AR-15 semi-automatic style weapon.



USA: Demonstrators calling for new protections for recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program gather outside the US Capitol in late January in Washington.



SOUTH KOREA: US women's ice hockey player Hannah Brandt and Canadian player Blayne Turnbull battle for the puck during a game at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea. Canada held on for a 2-1 win.

Celibacy

revisited

Writing in the first person is always a risk, but the subject matter of this column is best done, I feel, through personal testimony. In a world where chastity and celibacy are seen as naïve and to be pitied and where there's a general scepticism that anyone is actually living them out, personal testimony is perhaps the most effective protest.

What's to be said for celibacy and chastity, whether these are lived out in a vowed religious context or are simply the given situation of anyone who is going through life celibate? Here's my story:

At the age of 17, I made the decision to become a priest and enter a religious order, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. That decision involved committing myself to celibacy for life.

Strange as this may sound, since I was only 17, I didn't make that decision naively or out of some passing fancy. I intuited pretty accurately the cost, so much so that virtually everything inside me strongly resisted the call. Anything but that!

Ministry

While I was drawn to ministry the accompanying vow of celibacy was a massive stumbling block. I didn't want to live as a celibate. Who does? Indeed, nobody should. But the inner call was so strong that, despite



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

its downside, when I finished High School I gave a reluctant but solid assent and entered a religious congregation. Now, looking back on it more than 50 years later, I see it still as the purest, most unselfish decision I've ever made.

I've been in religious life now for more than 50 years and have served as a priest for more than 45 of those years and, all told, celibacy has served me well, just as I can honestly say that I have served it in essential fidelity.

Celibacy has its upside: beyond the inner work it forced me to do in terms of my relationship to God, to

others and to myself (often painful work done in restlessness and prayer and on occasion with the help of a counsellor), celibacy also afforded me a privileged availability for the ministry. If you move through this life as a priest and missionary, celibacy can be a friend.

But it isn't always a friend. For me, celibacy has always been the hardest struggle within religious life and ministry, an habitual emotional crucifixion, as it should be. There have been seasons – days, weeks, months and sometimes many months – when most everything inside of me screamed against it,

when because of falling in love, or dealing with an obsession, or dealing with the one-sided energy within a male congregation or when I was overcome with the fact I will never have children or when the simple, raw physical and emotional power of sexuality left me restlessness and frustrated enough that the man inside of me wanted to take back what the priest inside of me had once vowed. Celibacy will have you sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane sometimes. It goes against some of the deepest, innate, God-given instincts and energies within you and so it doesn't allow itself to be dealt with lightly.

“Celibacy has always been the hardest struggle within religious life and ministry, an habitual emotional crucifixion, as it should be”

That being said though, something else also needs to be said, something too little understood today: celibacy can also be very generative because sexuality is about more than having sex. Just before creating the sexes, God said: “It is not good for the man to be alone!” That's true for every person who will ever walk this earth. Sexuality is given to us to take us beyond our aloneness; but many things do that for us and full sexual intimacy is only one of them.

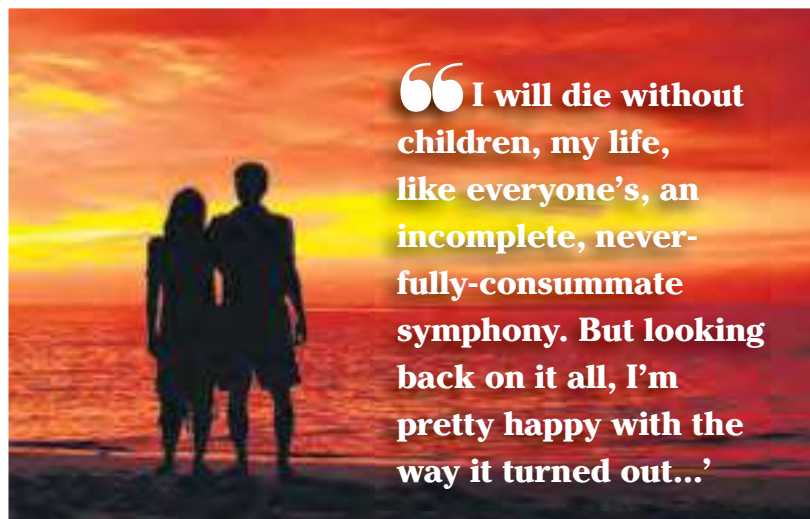
Perhaps the single, biggest misunderstanding about sex today is the belief that deep friendship, warm companionship, faith community and non-genital forms of intimacy are only a substitute, some second-best compensation for sex rather than a rich, generative modality of sex itself. These aren't a consolation prize for missing the real thing. They are, just as is having sex, one rich aspect of the real thing.

Recently, I phoned a priest on the 60th anniversary of his ordination. He's 85 years old now and he had this to say: “There were some rough times – all of my classmates left the ministry and I had my temptations too. But I stayed and, now, looking back, I am pretty happy with the way my life turned out.”

Looking back on own life and my commitment to celibacy I can say something similar. Celibacy has made for some tough seasons and remains, as Merton once put it, the deep anguish within chastity.

But celibacy has also provided me with a life rich in friendship, rich in community, rich in companionship, rich in family of every kind, and rich in opportunity to be present to others.

I will die without children, my life, like everyone's, an incomplete, never-fully-consummate symphony. But looking back on it all, I'm pretty happy with the way it turned out. Celibacy can be a very life-giving way of being sexual, of creating family and of being happy.



“I will die without children, my life, like everyone's, an incomplete, never-fully-consummate symphony. But looking back on it all, I'm pretty happy with the way it turned out...”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, February 22, 2018

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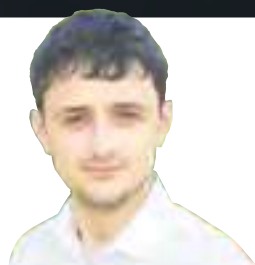
When Faith becomes obsession



Although piety is a virtue that should be extolled, there are circumstances when devotion can become neurotic and damaging.

All of us have compulsive tendencies at times that take shape in either the form of thought or action. This may be as simple as wondering if you should have behaved a different way when you met your friend for coffee, or perhaps making sure that you actually closed the fridge before going to bed.

We all, at times, have a niggling inclination to think or behave in a particular way that other people might perceive as odd. These types of proclivities are natural, normal and healthy,



**Religious
scrupulosity can be
destructive, writes
Colm Fitzpatrick**

varying innocently in degree from person to person.

However, when taken to the extreme these usually benign tendencies can become destructive, taking over your life and leaving you in a continuous state of self-doubt. This problem may be a symptom of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), a condition where people experience repetitive and upsetting thoughts and/or

behaviours.

OCD is in the top 20 illness-related disabilities worldwide according to the World Health Organisation. It affects about one to two people in every 100, and yet despite this it takes, on average, 17 years for someone with OCD to be diagnosed.

There is no one specific obsession that people develop, says Fionnula MacLiam, a cognitive behavioural

psychotherapist and lecturer at Trinity College, Dublin.

"It's haphazard in what people become concerned about", she said, adding that "people become attached to something that has meaning for them".

Impulses

Common obsessions arising from this disorder include fears about contamination, infection and disease, fear of acting out violent or aggressive thoughts or impulses, and intrusive thoughts incompatible with one's own comfortability. The main features of obsessions are that they are automatic, frequent, sporadic, upsetting or distressing, and very difficult to control or eradicate.

Compulsions are observable

actions that are carried out in order to reduce the anxiety created from an obsession. This may take the form of excessive cleaning and washing, repeating words or phrases or acts that reduce obsessional fears such as only wearing a particular colour.

OCD tends to arise in adolescence and early adulthood, and it doesn't always have the same form over one's lifespan. Everyone's presentation of the disorder is idiosyncratic and genuine.

Religious scrupulosity is a branch of OCD and usually involves a doubt about carrying out an action to do with religious belief. Although only a small percentage of people in Ireland

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Family News



AND EVENTS



A book to last a lifetime

As Mother's Day looms closer and closer, finding the perfect gift can be a real challenge. However, a visit to the National Museum of Ireland Country Life in Castlebar next month will make your decision-making much easier, as it is providing the opportunity for you and your mother to create and decorate a special keepsake.

The gift-making workshop will be the perfect way to spend an afternoon hour, as you collaborate with the most important woman in your life on a decorative hardback book that she will treasure for years to come. Hosted by the National Print Museum, you'll learn how to use traditional and contemporary methods and materials to handcraft and decorate your own book.

The workshop takes place on Sunday, March 11, and admission is free. Booking is required.

LINK BETWEEN ARTHRITIS AND DEMENTIA FOUND: A new study has revealed that drugs used to treat rheumatoid arthritis could halve the risks of patients developing dementia. A team led by Prof. Chris Edwards, of the NIHR Southampton Biomedical Research Centre, and colleagues at the University of Oxford, analysed the records of more than 5,800 people living with the condition across the UK and found a positive link between patients taking drugs to treat arthritis and reducing their risk of developing dementia – potentially by up to 50%. Prof. Edwards said: "The results we've seen make us optimistic that we are getting closer to better treating this neurological disease and supports further investigation in clinical trials to confirm if these drugs can be used to prevent or treat dementia."

It is estimated that in Ireland over one in five adults and more than 1,200 children have some form of arthritis.

The baby-friendly thermometer

A feverish child can be a nightmarish prospect for a worried parent, who may be unsure how to deal with the situation. Crucially, parents need to monitor their child's temperature to gauge whether their child is improving or getting sicker. This can be particularly challenging if your child is sleeping or crying.

However, a new gadget may just solve this problem. The Pacifier Thermometer is disguised as a pacifier or soother so that it is able to calm your child while allowing you to easily check their temperature. Its glow feature also allows parents to get a night time temperature reading without disturbing the baby.

The memory feature in the device recalls the last reading to help monitor the child's progress and is able to measure in both Fahrenheit and Celsius. A protective cover is also included for ease of travel and clean storage.

Cancer – prevention is better than cure



Cancer is estimated to affect up to one in two people in their lifetime in Ireland, where it currently accounts for about 30% of all deaths. Indeed, the number of new cases of cancer is steadily rising on the back of an ageing population with about 40,000 diagnoses being made last year.

Whilst this may seem grim, survival rates have and continue to improve as a result of screening, earlier diagnosis and better chemoradiotherapy and surgery. A recent study published in *The Lancet* shows that survival rates in Ireland are now in line with the European average with about 60% living five years or more post diagnosis.

The most common cancer is skin followed by prostate in men and breast in women, with cancer of the bowel and lung being the next most frequent.

While there has been huge advances in cancer care, the 'war on cancer' cannot be won alone by investing more in cancer treatments and screening. It is estimated that up to 40% of all cancers could be prevented by modifying lifestyle factors which if addressed could go a long way in reducing new cancer incidence. Better cancer management also means that it is now not uncommon for patients to have a cancer diagnosis more than once in their lifetime.

Cause

So what causes cancer? Our cells are dividing all the time to replenish older cells that die but this process is complex and errors occur. When DNA gets damaged some of the genes that regulate cell division are affected and can no longer control the normal cell cycle.

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



This can lead to cells which continue to live indefinitely and replicate uncontrollably giving rise to a tumour.

In the majority of cases exposure to carcinogens in the environment causes this damage which accumulates with age. For example, smoking or asbestos exposure causing lung cancer, excess sun leading to skin cancer, viruses such as HPV causing cervical cancer and possibly throat cancer.

Chronic damage to cells for other reasons including inflammation may also cause cancer.

The rise in oesophageal cancer has in part been attributed to an increasing prevalence of acid reflux (related to being overweight) which leads to premalignant changes in the lining of the gullet.

“Even after long term heavy drinking the risk reduces after cutting down alcohol intake”

It is thought that cancer cells may arise from time to time, especially with increasing age. However, our immune system recognises them as abnormal

and generally destroys them. For this reason, patients on immune-suppressing drugs are more likely to get skin cancer.

So what can you do to reduce your risk? While this may seem like another list of "do's and don'ts" there are some simple practical measures that will substantially lower your risk.

Don't smoke or inhale second-hand smoke. Smoking is believed to cause about 30% of cancers and is responsible for about 90% of lung cancers. It particularly increases the risk of cancer of the throat and mouth but also of the gullet, stomach, pancreas, liver, colon and bladder.

Risk of cancer can drop by up to 50% within 5-10 years of quitting so don't think it's too late to stop. It's also worth checking if you live in an area with high radon levels as this increases the risk of lung cancer.

Avoid excessive alcohol as it has been associated with an increased risk of developing at least seven cancers. Its not just alcohol-exposed sites such as mouth, throat, gullet and bowel but also breast where risk is increased.

Ethanal

Alcohol is a carcinogen and in particular drinking too much in short space of time leads to the build up of ethanal, a breakdown product which has toxic effects on cells. However, studies show that even after long-term heavy drinking the risk reduces after cutting down alcohol intake. If you combine unhealthy drinking with other factors like smoking, the risk multiplies.

Having a healthy diet may reduce your risk of some cancers. For example, processed meats such as salami, ham and bacon are classified as definite

carcinogens by the WHO and higher intakes over many years results in a modestly increased risk of bowel cancer. Red meat might also confer a greater risk so consumption of both should be moderated.

Obesity has been linked to several cancers so you should do regular exercise to avoid weight gain. It is recommended to do 30 minutes of moderate exercise (like brisk walking) five times a week.

“Vaccination with the HPV vaccine can reduce the risk of cervical cancer”

Avoid excessive sun exposure, in particular midday sun when rays are strongest. Remember skin cancer is the commonest and affects about 10,000 people every year in Ireland. Use hats to protect your head in the sun and sunscreen should be at least SPF 30. Avoid sun beds and especially sunburn in children.

Vaccination with the HPV vaccine can reduce the risk of cervical cancer and is available to girls in their first year of secondary school.

For some cancers, screening may pick up precancerous growths and hence prevent cancer developing. This is true for both cervical and bowel cancer. Screening for breast cancer can also detect it at an earlier stage and is available from the age of 50 to 64.

Remember, prevention is better than cure so make sure to look after your body.

Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

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experience it, it can cause immense stress. This scrupulosity is expressed in a thought where the individual interrogates their religious behaviour with questions such as: “Did I really say the prayer properly?” “Did I maintain my fast for an hour before taking Communion?” “Will I suffer in the afterlife for having had an impure thought?” “Did I confess every single sin thoroughly?”

According to Fionnula, this type of OCD can be more daunting and destructive because of its religious aspects. Whereas in other cases people may worry about the finite consequences of not carrying out a particular action, for sufferers thoughts concerning the soul, hell and eternal life are “highly stressful because the stakes are high”, Fionnula explained.

Reaction

Although most people are able to dismiss intrusive thoughts, even ones that provoke a strong emotional reaction from violence or sex, those suffering from scrupulosity figure that “the random things that bubble up in your brain”, have some sort of meaning, Fionnula said, adding that they may interpret the thoughts to mean that deep down they are an evil person.

How much of this is interfering with a person’s ability to live a life, to work”

So, while the rest of us dismiss such thoughts as weird and disgusting, but meaningless, the person with OCD see themselves as bad or evil. They may see these thoughts as meaning that, if they don’t watch themselves very carefully, they might carry out an associated action. ‘What ifs’ loom large in their vocabulary. “If I see an attractive person in the Mass, what if I had a sexual thought about them?” “What if I actually touched them in a sexual way?”

The thoughts emerge and develop in various forms. Some ascribe them to the devil and so perceive

them as having supernatural cause. Others experience thoughts that are specific to a religion, such as crude, visceral images of Jesus which evoke personal disgust. Compulsions are also a product of religious scrupulosity which may result in continually rechecking and reassuring oneself about questions of Faith. Another form of compulsive action is the meticulous adherence and observance to religious rules and rituals. For example, if a prayer was said accidentally the sufferer would restart or begin excessive praying in order to ameliorate the fault. In an explicitly Catholic context, one might begin the decades of the Rosary and restart because they had forgotten how many they had said during recital.

Although religious scrupulosity can often be disguised as piety there are distinct ways to identify one from the other, as the former intrudes on people’s lives and well-being.

“How much of this is interfering with a person’s ability to live a life, to work and engage with the family and family obligation?” said Fionnula. “When it gets to the state of high anxiety, when someone is always watching to see what is happening in their mind, when their thinking affects their abilities to engage in normal life.”

Thoughts

These types of thoughts can be tormenting and debilitating, and sufferers will often seek reassurance from their families and priests. However, no matter how often they are reassured, the intrusive thoughts and behaviour continue to persist. They may also dismiss the assurances as they aren’t convinced you understood the question properly, or they have a new variation of the thought that you must now reassure them about.

The reason for this is that reassurance from others is usually futile. While it may assuage their anxiety for a short time the doubts will inevitably continue.

However, because religious scrupulosity is recognised as an OCD disorder, treatment is available and easily accessible. The treatment must

be very specific because general counselling is not effective, and in many cases can actually worsen the condition. The only effective treatment is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

As this is often viewed as a religious issue, Fionnula explained that most people ask a priest for direction, but this can actually be an impediment to receiving treatment faster.

The main role of the priest is recognising it and sending people on to the correct kinds of treatment”

“The first port of call is the priest, and priests aren’t always aware of what the problem is, and where to send people”, she said.

“The main role of the priest is recognising it and sending people on to the correct kinds of treatment. CBT is the only treatment that is really effective, and it’s just a matter of finding someone that is qualified.”

The therapy teaches the sufferer a form of mindfulness, allowing them to willingly accept intrusive thoughts without behaving in an erratic manner. It will also challenge clients to question the veracity and importance of unwanted thoughts. There may be an emphasis on Exposure and Response Prevention which will eventually help the client to reduce their unwanted and compulsive thoughts, allowing them to be free of these burdens.

CBT therapists can be found working in the HSE Mental Health Services, often as Clinical Nurse Specialists, and treatment is free of charge.

For more information about OCD and religious scrupulosity a list of accredited CBT therapists is found at the Find a Therapist page of the Irish Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies www.babcp.com/IABCP and at CBT Ireland, cbti.ie

Faith IN THE family

Bairbre Cahill



My 17-year-old son announced recently that the timing of Lent is perfect this year. He will arrive at the first match of the senior Gaelic football season without having a crisp, biscuit or sweet in his system for seven weeks!

We both know that there is more to Lent than help with the pre-season training but it is easy to get caught up in the additional benefits. I find myself wondering if by the end of Lent, I may have lost a few pounds!

I often find myself daunted at the beginning of Lent. It reminds me of looking at a steep and rocky mountain path, knowing I want to do the hike, aware it won’t be easy but that ultimately it will be worth it.

Whatever I give up, and however hard I may find that, the biggest challenge for me is creating space. It seems to me that unless I do that, unless I think and reflect a wee bit more during these weeks, then I have missed the point.

The readings for Mass through the week and on Sundays all through Lent are beautiful and powerful. There is an intensity to the scripture we are offered, which gathered together over Lent, offers us a profound insight into who Jesus is and what it means for us to follow him.

Are we open to being challenged and transformed by the Word of God?”

There was a line in the Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent which struck me: “The kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.” What are we being asked to repent of? Selfishness and sinfulness no doubt but also perhaps a failure to believe the Good News, a failure to recognise the kingdom of God that surrounds us.

We had a visiting priest in our parish recently who spoke about the need to hear the good news that happens around us and not just to hear it but to be a source of good news for others. That call to recognise and be Good News is something that any of us could take up as a challenge for Lent.

This Sunday’s Gospel is the story of the Transfiguration. Jesus is transfigured but those with him are transformed by the experience too. It becomes part of who they are and although it may get lost in the fear and chaos of what happens when Jesus is arrested and crucified, the experience reasserts itself at the resurrection and forms part of what sends Peter, James and John out to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.



The readings for each day are available on line at <https://www.catholicireland.net/readings/> If you have time, it is worth reading all the readings for any given day because the connection between them is particularly clear and powerful in Lent.

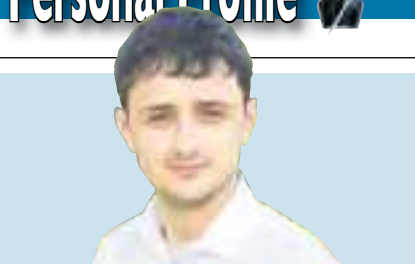
Question

Maybe in light of those readings a question for us on this Lenten journey is “What difference does it make?” Are we open to being challenged and transformed by the Word of God? Are we prepared to reflect on the implications for our own lives? As the journey draws closer to Jerusalem with the menacing threat that brings we are invited to consider what it means for us now, today, to be followers of Jesus.

That depth of reflection may not be going on for us as a family round the dinner table but it can help to shape the conversations we are having there. Why are we giving up anything? Why is the Trócaire box part of Lent for us? Why might there be more simplicity to our meals once or twice a week or on days of Fast and Abstinence? Why would we think of a wee bit more time for prayer or the possibility of going to Mass more often?

All these questions and more lead back to what it means for us to be Christians, Catholics, what it means to allow the Good News of Jesus to transform us so that we can become Good News for others.

Personal Profile



Colm Fitzpatrick learns about the power of the homily

Although homilies at Mass can sometimes sound repetitive or even boring, one Capuchin priest is offering helpful tips on how to make the homily more interesting and thought-provoking.

Cork-born Fr Silvester O'Flynn is well known for his reflections on the three cycles of the Sunday Mass readings and has this year published a book entitled *Homily Hints and Prayers*, in response to being frequently asked for reflections on the daily Mass readings as well as Prayers of the Faithful arising from the Gospel.

Fr O'Flynn, who was ordained in 1966, and has more than 50 years' experience of preaching, believes the homily is one of the most important parts of the Mass, allowing parishioners to understand the Word of God and how they can apply it to their own lives.

"People who come to weekday Mass like to get a thought or inspiration for the day. There is no better source than the Good News brought by Jesus," he said.

"It is said that a priest who breaks the bread but does not break the word is only half a priest. The Liturgy of the Word is not complete without a homily."

He explained that the Sunday homily is very important to him, and is the principal contact with people for the week. He begins his preparations on the Tuesday before Sunday Mass, and "plants it in his imagination somewhere in the background", allowing it to develop over the next few days.

Listening to the Word of God



Fr Silvester O'Flynn.

He describes our modern times as "the age of the catchy soundbite", as the attention span of people has been radically reduced having been invaded by the distracting noises of technology. Despite this, he maintains that the homily still has the power to be well received.

Effective

"Nonetheless, the spoken word has the potential to be very effective," he said.

As a result of this, Fr O'Flynn believes that the homily should be concise and direct, such that the Word of God can be heard and

understood by everyone.

"Pope Francis has taken to heart the advice of Blessed Paul VI to be simple, clear, direct and well adapted. Use simple language that anybody can understand. Have a clear message that can be summarised in one short sentence. Tell people what you are going to say, then say it to them and finally tell them what you have said," he explained. "Direct means getting straight to the point with no waffling. Well adapted involves connecting the Word of God with the lives of the listeners," he added.

Fr Flynn's inspiration for his homilies comes in part from advice Pope Francis received as a young priest by an experienced preacher who said that a good homily should have an idea, sentiment or image.

"An idea for the mind; a sentiment or feeling to reach the heart; and an image or story to capture the imagination," Fr O'Flynn said. "The Gospels tell us that Jesus spoke to the people in parables because he knew that everybody loves a story. A story lives on in the memory and it might be much later when its application strikes the listener."

He added that the homily is in some ways similar to showbusiness, in so far that you have to grab the person and that stories are able to grab the imagination.

This is vital for Fr O'Flynn who maintains that the homily is not some form of inconsequential jargon but actually allows for the possibility of people to hear the Word of God.

“The task of the preacher is to facilitate that dialogue by revealing the connection between the inspired Word and our lives”

Pope Francis called the homily "a living dialogue between God and his people", he explained.

"The task of the preacher is to facilitate that dialogue by revealing the connection between the inspired Word and our lives. So, the preacher has to spend time absorbing the Word as well as being aware of the lives of the listeners. Jesus looked at people,



he had compassion on them and then he spoke to them," he said.

Once the homily has been heard, a personal response is needed, ideally going forward into action. It is in this way that homily can have a concrete impact in people's lives.

"Very recently Pope Francis said that the Word of the Lord ends its journey becoming flesh in us, translating itself into action, as it happened in the lives of Mary and the saints," Fr O'Flynn explained.

"He added that if we listen to the Good News we will be converted and transformed by this, and consequently be capable of changing ourselves and the world."

Fr O'Flynn's *Homily Hints and Prayers* offers two short reflections on the daily Gospel Readings. Each reflection can be read in two or three minutes and is written for preachers who need some word or image that will trigger their own thoughts into action. Hence, these reflections are called hints. It is also ideal for parishioners who take leadership of alternative prayer services, providing great support to their reflection, discussion and prayer.

📖 Silvester O'Flynn's new book *Homily Hints and Prayers* is now available from bookshops or from www.columba.ie for €19.99. Call sales at (01) 687 4096.



Children's Corner

Colm Fitzpatrick

An egg-cellent trick to demonstrate your strength!

Displays of incredible strength have been a form of entertainment for centuries, whereby performers attempt to lift or endure the force of extremely heavy weights. Usually known as 'strongmen', these performers would dazzle crowds with their incredible feats, and would compete with one another to show their uniqueness.

One strongman was Pierre Gasnier, otherwise known as 'French Hercules'. Born in 1862, he could rip a deck of cards in half and was renowned for breaking a chain over his chest while expanding his ribcage. Gasnier was only 1.6m tall and weighed just 65kg, but was able to lift a dumbbell weighing 118kg over his head. This was a feat that many strongmen twice his size could not do.

Well, believe it or not, you will also be able to show immense displays of strength from your own kitchen, and all you need is an egg.

Surprisingly, eggs can be very tough and if you hold the top and bottom of one in your hand

and try to squeeze it, it is almost impossible to crack. The design of the egg allows the pressure of your fingers to spread over a large area, meaning that it is less likely to crack. However, if you hold the egg on its sides and squeeze, it will crack with ease.

With this new-found knowledge you will be able to present to everyone your unbelievable strength.

Magical properties

In order to perform the trick, you show the egg to a parent or friend and explain that it has magical properties. You tell them that it is impossible to crack, and that no matter how hard they try they will not succeed.

You hand them the egg and ask them to hold the egg on the top and bottom with their finger

and thumb. At this point they can squeeze the egg and nothing will happen.

When they give up, simply crack the egg very fast on its side when they hand it to you. They will be confused as to how you could crack the egg when they could not. This trick is a lot of fun and will make people think twice about your strength abilities.

In order for this trick to be most effective, make sure your friend or family member isn't wearing any rings or objects that may break the egg accidentally.

Also, make sure to perform this over the sink just in case someone does manage to crack it – if not, this might leave you with egg on your face!

Once you have this down, you can begin looking into other strength performance tricks, and who knows, perhaps you might begin an illustrious career as a strongman or woman!



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Some interesting new dramas dominate

We're well used to TV dramas scheduled for one episode per week, and in these days of box set bingeing (even if the 'box' is often virtual) it's a nice kind of anticipation.

Last week, however, ITV ran the new drama **Trauma** for three nights in a row. Tense and intriguing, with several unlikely plot strands, it concerned the stabbing of a teenage boy, whose father showed little concern as to who did it but instead became fixated with the surgeon who operated on the boy, and, allegedly made a mistake in the process.

It became a study in obsession, and in the arrogance and stubbornness of two fathers. Adrian Lester as the former and John Simm as the latter did really well though I think their performances were better than the plot, which reached a climax of intense menace.

By modern standards (or lack of) it was relatively restrained, with the violence downplayed. The surgeon's school-going daughter was pursuing a same-sex relationship, irrelevant to the plot, and we were assured this was normal. At a church funeral there was a eulogy featuring a dour declaration of atheism, though it was in character for the person delivering it.

On the night that this show



John Simm features in ITV's new drama series *Trauma*.

launched, BBC also started a new series. **Collateral** (BBC 2) opened with the shooting of a pizza delivery person, who was Muslim, so issues of racism were raised, though pretty quickly it seemed this was more than a random attack, with suggestions of security force involvement.

Inscrutable

Carey Mulligan was somewhat inscrutable as the lead detective, foul mouthed with colleagues, sympathetic with witnesses. Nicola Walker, always watchable, played a lesbian vicar who has

a gay bishop – she's out but he's in. Mind you, she does object to profanity – I think it's the first time I've heard a fictional character scolding another one for using the holy name in vain. She wondered if she was being hypocritical.

Last Sunday night saw the start of another BBC drama, **Hold the Sunset** (BBC1) a new sitcom starring John Cleese, his first since *Fawlty Towers*. It's a pleasant, mildly amusing comedy, with some sharp scripting and a few weak moments as well ('man gets stuck in window!'). In this late-life romance story,

the humour is gentle and as it is broadcast before the watershed, there's no adult content. I suspect it might become a slow-burning hit over time, thanks to the likeable characters and the fine acting by Cleese, Alison Steadman, Rosie Cavaliero and Jason Watkins.

Cleese's Phil is irascible at times but not remotely as much as Basil Fawlty, while his kind neighbour Edith finally agrees to marry him. Plans are upset when her middle aged son splits from his wife and comes home to relive his youth. Awkward!

The funniest show I saw during the week was last Sunday morning's episode of **Everybody Loves Raymond** (Channel 4). In this episode Debra's sister Jennifer announced she was going to become a nun, much to



John Cleese and Alison Steadman star in *Hold the Sunset* (BBC1).

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY SEQUENCE

BBC Radio Ulster, Sunday, February 25, 8.30am
Discussion of topical religious and ethical issues.

MASS

RTÉ1, Sunday, February 25, 11.00 am
Mass with congregation and choir from St Agnes Parish, Crumlin, Dublin. Celebrant, Fr. Paul Tyrrell. Musical director is Mary Louise O'Donnell.

CATHOLIC AUTHORS

EWTV, Monday, February 26, 11am (also Friday 7pm)
Fr C. John McCloskey and guest expert Dr Robert Royal explore the life and work of the great French poet and dramatist Paul Claudel.

the surprise of the family as she had been a freewheeling hippy in her younger days.

The family was awkward about it and of course the situation was thoroughly milked for comedy, though the vocation was treated respectfully. There were references to 'the nun thing' and 'the nun phase', and to *The Singing Nun* with her 60's hit *Dominique*. When Jennifer wanted to go to 6.30am Mass, Ray asked "Is God even up then?"

Touching

There was a touching moment when Debra finally explained why she was upset – she hadn't seen much of her sister in recent years, and now she is off on the missions, to Zaire. She declared, tearfully, "I want a sister, not a Sister sister".

Finally, the children's

series **Magical Sites** runs weekday mornings on RTÉ2. Various Irish heritage sites are visited by young children, and at times they are visited by characters from the past that explain the historical or religious background.

Last week, on the Tuesday, the children visited the high crosses of Kells and explored the weather-worn artwork.

A young girl from the past drew attention to the engravings that depicted the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den and that of the Baptism of Jesus.

The series, which also includes visits to Glendalough, Monasterboice and some pre-Christian sites is available on the RTÉ Player until March 1.

1 boregan@hotmail.com



Pat O'Kelly

Music

INO bringing *The Marriage of Figaro* to Wexford, Dublin

With conductor Fergus Sheil active as both artistic director of Wide Open Opera and Opera Theatre Company, it seemed a natural progression both companies would merge. And so they did. Formed last year, with generous beneficence from the Arts Council, the new company was launched under the banner of Irish National Opera.

With Sheil as music director, the new company's own first production will be Mozart's delightful 'upstairs/downstairs' intrigue *The Marriage of Figaro*. The piece opens at the National Opera House in Wexford on April 13 before transferring to Dublin's Gaiety Theatre to run from



Fergus Sheil.

April 17-20.

The promising cast includes Jonathan Lemalu and Tara Erraught as groom and bride-to-be Figaro and Susanna, Ben McAteer and Máire Flavin as Count and Countess Almaviva and Aoife Miskelly as the besotted Cherubino.

However, before this *Marriage* INO has formed its own union with Northern Ireland Opera to offer the first performances in the Republic of English composer Thomas Adès's remarkable *Powder Her Face*. This chamber piece, first seen at Cheltenham in 1995, when the composer was 24, has since had numerous productions on both sides of the Atlantic with favourable critical responses.

Powder Her Face is somewhat salacious in its portrayal of Margaret Campbell, Duchess of Argyll (1912-1993) whose nefarious exploits were the 'stuff of scandal and gossip'. Maybe I need say no more but the production comes with a 'suitable for

over-16s only' label.

While *Powder Her Face* has multifarious characters just four singers are needed to cover them. Soprano Mary Plazas is the notorious Duchess with the other roles shared by Daire Halpin, Adrian Dwyer and Stephen Richardson.

An old title

Already seen in Northern Ireland, *Powder Her Face* opens in Wexford this coming Saturday before travelling to Kilkenny on February 27, Navan on March 1, Sligo on March 3, Dublin's O'Reilly Theatre on March 6 and 7 and finally Tralee on Friday, March 9.

It is interesting that the new company should revive

an old title. An earlier Irish National Opera flourished for 20 years from 1965 to 1985. Under artistic director Tony O'Dalaigh and with Veronica McSwiney as music director, the late Paddy Ryan had charge of production and design.

Criss-crossing the four provinces, the old INO visited 70 venues with 16 productions including the premières of AJ Potter's *The Wedding* and James Wilson's *Twelfth Night*. Among very many others, casts involved Mary Sheridan, Paddy Ring and Suzanne Murphy who, incidentally, will be the Marcellina in the forthcoming *Marriage of Figaro*.

● The ambitious New Music

Dublin runs mostly at the NCH from March 1-4. The eclectic programme includes two choral works by Scotland's leading composer, and unashamed catholic, James MacMillan. He will direct his relatively short Credo as part of the RTÉCO's opening concert and his longer *Stabat Mater* with Chamber Choir Ireland and the Irish Chamber Orchestra at St Ann's Church in Dublin's Dawson Street on March 2.

This is an unfortunate clash with Haydn's striking *Seven Last Words*, which the Carolan String Quartet presents in Newman University Church at the same time. Would that bi-location were possible!

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The lost world of the Irish priesthood

A Lost Tribe
a novel by William King
(Lilliput Press, Dublin,
2017).

J. Anthony Gaughan

This novel derives from William King's experiences as a clerical student and priest in the archdiocese of Dublin during the last fifty years.

Through his character Fr Tom Galvin, a 70-something parish priest, he narrates the story of the Catholic Church in Ireland as it struggled to cope with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, a rapidly changing milieu, and the clerical sex-abuse scandals.

The scene is set with Fr Galvin arriving for the annual diocesan priests' retreat. Seeing students who were helping to organise it, he is reminded of a September many years earlier when he and more than 20 other young men had arrived at the seminary.

Discipline

They soon became aware of the discipline which would be required of them in their future lives. Rigged out in Roman collars and black soutanes and given their places on a seniority list they had the rules of the college



A young priest imparts his customary first blessing to his mother in 1965.

read to them by the rector who emphasised the crucial importance of obeying the rules, the college authorities, and (after ordination) the archbishop.

In a further flash-back Galvin recalls cycling in twos with classmates to lectures in UCD where after three years they graduated in philosophy and other subjects.

Strangely he recalls nothing about the lecturers or professors, but does remember the firm direction they were given not to socialise with the lay students, nor to join the various college societies.

Galvin muses how he and his classmates "let off steam" by grumbling. The main target was the dean of discipline.

Strict on *minutiae* such as deportment and dress one could receive a reprimand from him for wearing a biretta (the square hat worn by priests in the pre-Vatican II period) at a jaunty angle.

As Galvin recalled, the dean's attempts to impose a veneer of sophistication on some of the rough diamonds in his charge was never going

to succeed.

Galvin vividly remembers the banter and repartee of his fellow students, some of whom were openly ambitious for preferment, others less so.

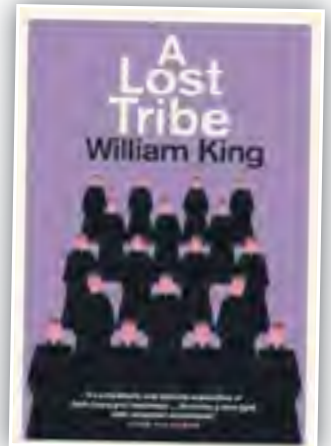
Galvin's arrival at the seminary with his classmates coincided with the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Three years later it concluded and proposed substantial changes and reforms in the liturgy, an updated approach to catechesis, and a new emphasis on the promotion of moral imperatives in society at large.

“William King's descriptions of some of the episodes in the life of 'Fr Galvin' are somewhat racy”

During the Council's deliberations there were occasional press reports that the requirement of celibacy in the priesthood would be relaxed.

After the Council, when this did not happen, some of Galvin's classmates left the seminary to pursue other vocations, while others did so after ordination.

However, as is clear from Galvin's recollections of his life and that of his elderly colleagues, celibacy was a



serious challenge for all of them and not only for those who left to get married.

William King's descriptions of some of the episodes in the life of 'Fr Galvin' are somewhat racy, almost with shades of the Graham Greene novels of the 1950s.

Throughout he focuses on the underside of the priesthood and laces his narrative with generous dollops of cynicism.

There is an underlying dismissive theme with regard to the present leadership of the Church and a naïve assumption that the abolition of celibacy would solve most of its problems.

There is no doubting the author's comprehensive knowledge of his subject.

His pen pictures of the archbishop of his time and of his high-profile and popular contemporaries are superb. Dublin priests will also have little difficulty in recognising some of the other characters featured.

The book is beautifully written and for the author's fellow diocesanists cannot be but a page turner.

Votes for Irish women: from subjects to citizens

Irish Women and the Vote: Becoming Citizens
editors: Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward
(Irish Academic Press, €19.99)

Emily Keyes

February 2018 marks the centenary of women over the age of 30 gaining the right to vote in Ireland and Britain, yet over 100 years and two feminist movements later, Irish women continue to struggle for equal representation in government, work, and home.

Therefore, the reissue of Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward's book on Irish suffrage is essential, as it allows readers to reflect on what has changed and yet what has remained the same for Irish women since gaining full citizens' rights 100 years ago.

The book provides vital information on the first wave



of the Irish women's movement, noting the importance of such figures as Anna Haslam and groups like the Dublin Women's Suffrage Association (DWSA) and the Watching the Court committee (WTC) in altering the prejudiced view of women's place in society, as well as the need for female participation in a government if women were required to obey the same laws as men.

Often, it is Mary Wollstonecraft, an English advocate for women's

rights from the 18th Century and the writer of the ground-breaking work of feminist philosophy, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, who gets all the attention when we talk about the history of the women's movement, so it was refreshing to read about Quakers Anna Haslam and her husband Thomas, called her 'co-feminist', helping to advance the cause through writing and participation in the DWSA, whose meetings were regularly attended by members of the Irish parliament.

Learning about the WTC committee was also fascinating; in addition to fighting for the right to vote, Irish suffragists were also monitoring the justice system, highlighting the illegality of sexual assault and abuse cases that invariably ruled in favour of the perpetrator.

Cliona Murphy's essay on the

humour of the suffrage movement is a vital addition to the book, reminding readers that suffrage and its proponents were not always serious; they knew how to make a good joke and use humour as a vehicle for promoting their message and attracting otherwise prejudiced people to their cause.

“The essays included in this book broadcast the multifaceted nature of the original Irish women's movement”

This levity is both essential to the women's movement as well as this essay collection, as it nicely breaks up the heavier pieces on abuse and imprisonment.

Indeed, the essays included in this book broadcast the multifac-

eted nature of the original Irish women's movement. The movement itself had different stages, the first in the late 18th Century and the second, of course, in the early 19th. Though many of the events and protests occurred in Dublin, suffrage activity went on all over Ireland, as far away as Galway and Belfast.

Research

Contributors to this book also make the important point that the activities and communities of the suffrage movement varied by place, with women in Galway focusing on researching and writing about their cause, submitting their work to local papers and even establishing a suffrage library despite severe lack of funds, while suffrage efforts in Belfast were focused within the female factory-working community.

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.

Secret lives along the troubled Border

Silence under a stone
a novel by Norma
McMaster
(Doubleday Ireland,
€14.99)

Ian d'Alton

Written "out of my own life experience" (the author grew up in Cavan, and is a Church of Ireland minister) this novel is a sometimes difficult read. Not in the literary sense – its touch is sure, its construction works well and its language is clear, elegant and rounded.

No; it is difficult because of what it treats. It raises, and confronts honestly, some extremely uncomfortable questions about love, faith and loyalty. Its punches are never pulled.

Spanning an Ireland from the 1920s to the 1980s, Harriet and Tom Campbell are strict Presbyterians living in the uncertain lands just south of the new Irish border, coming to grips with now being tantalisingly 'outside the glow'.

Marooned

This Irish Free State seems anything but free to these marooned on the wrong side of a border and a revolution. For this community, an already interior existence is magnified by feelings of isolation, difference and threat, as the Roman Catholicity of the new state asserts itself. The visible border between north and south is mirrored by an invisible – and much more significant – one, between religious communities.

The narrator, Harriet,

rails against Catholicism as credulous, authoritarian, prescriptive, with the absolutism of the clerics being the antithesis of what she believes of her Presbyterianism: "I recall how Rome had truly haunted our lives."

And yet, she's a prisoner of her faith, too. Her reliance on Presbyterian ministers



Melancholy Cavan:
'Loney Road' by
Patrick Collins.

may be only one of degree, not of kind, when compared to what she believes the relationship between Catholic priests and people to be. After God, it is her only son, James, who is her great love.

This New Testament resonance may underpin the novel, but it is overlaid by a darker reality. Harriet's husband is an unsympathetic character – "I looked over at Thomas at the kitchen table... while I sat in the corner, lost as a dropped stitch".

A Catholic servant arrives, unwanted by Harriet, and is a subversive force in this introverted, evangelical world. In Harriet's somewhat fevered vision, the servant is more like a serpent, corrupting the purity and integrity of the household trinity of Thomas, Harriet and James. And James is

the focus of the book, as he moves through a progression of Presbyterianism, the Orange Order, and life.

Faith, hope and charity – it is perhaps too much faith, sometimes little charity, and not enough hope that defines Harriet's relationship with her only son as she contemplates her life in extreme old age from the confines of a Dublin nursing home. Redemption is in short supply, and only comes through revelation.

There is an almost oral-history feel to this thought-provoking tale. It tells of a prejudiced society, prevalent all over Ireland at the time, but especially acute in the border areas.

“The visible border between north and south is mirrored by an invisible one”

To this reader, it evokes memories of life as a Protestant in a Catholic state, and of the barriers that could not be crossed without repercussion – on both sides.

The tragedy of the zero-sum game – a loss to one side was invariably seen as a gain for the other – was often accompanied by triumphalism, though not in this novel. A tragic story of unforgiveness, of bearing a grudge against a child for so long, and the consequences, it is a gripping and emotional read, and highly recommended.

An admiring Muslim view of the Christian faith

Wonder Beyond Belief: On Christianity

by Navid Kermani
(Polity, £25.00)

Peter Costello

There is an old saying that "I never knew what my house looked like, as I had never been outside it". This applies as well to religion: Christians cannot know what Christianity looks like because they never "go outside of it".

This book, by a distinguished Islamic scholar, provides one view, and an admiring one, of what it look like to a stranger's eye.

Author Kermani is Persian-born German writer and orientalist. His work is much admired in Europe and the books he has written in the last decade or so are currently appearing in translation.

He is the author of *God Is Beautiful: the Aesthetic Experience of the Quran* (Polity, £35.00), which explained aspects of Islam to the West. Here, by contrast is a book in

which his sensitive scholarship expounds for Muslims (and others of course) aspects of Christianity which they many not know about.

Though denying him a divine aspect, by tradition Islam reveres Jesus as a prophet, and his mother as an important figure in the world of faith. Yet often enough many Muslims, especially those who are more conservative or radicalised close their minds to this teaching of own faith.

Kermani is not an "unbeliever", as writers about religion so often are these days. He is a believer in another faith. And it is this position that gives his book its special resonance.

Many Christians, and especially many Catholics, will learn a great deal not just about the Islamic point of view, but about what they think of as their own true faith. Approaching Christianity through art and literature Kermani will enlighten many Catholics I suspect. This is a book which ought not to be missed by anyone concerned with issues in the modern world.

WebWatch

Greg Daly

Excommunication of remarried: was it ever a reality?

There's been a lot of debate in English Catholic journalism over the last week or two about a Cambridge lecture by Chicago's Cardinal Blase Cupich.

The lecture itself, 'Pope Francis' revolution of mercy: *Amoris Laetitia* as a new paradigm of Catholicism', conducted under the auspices of the Von Hügel Institute for Critical Catholic Inquiry, can easily be watched online through youtube.com, while commentary on it can be found almost wherever one looks.

Especially worthy of attention are two interviews with the cardinal, one by *Tablet* editor Brendan Walsh entitled 'The shock of the new' available at thetablet.co.uk, and one by *Catholic Herald* deputy editor Dan Hitchens entitled 'Let's not just make it about... sins of the flesh' available at catholicherald.co.uk.

Commentary

Much of the *Herald* piece is commentary on the cardinal's comments, perhaps the most interesting bit concerning an observation by Cardinal Cupich on excommunication.

"What John Paul II did in [his 1981 apostolic exhortation] *Familiaris Consortio* and also with the Code of Canon Law, in removing the status of excommunication from somebody who is in a second marriage, was a development that in fact was more significant than what the Pope is for doing now," reports Dan. "Because once you begin to say that even though they're in this quote/unquote sinful, irregular situation, they're still part of the Church, they're not excommunicated any more, even though they were before. So that was a change."

This observation, notes Dan, was first made by the philosopher and politician Rocco Buttiglione, a friend



Cardinal Blase Cupich.

and collaborator of St John Paul II whose comments on *Amoris* have been praised by former CDF head Cardinal Gerhard Müller and by the *Catechism's* lead author Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, but adds that "it has been criticised for historical inaccuracy".

He continues: "As the canon lawyer Edward Peters, an adviser to the Holy See's highest court, wrote in a response to Buttiglione: "John Paul II never lifted any excommunication against divorced and remarried Catholics because, quite simply, there was no excommunication against divorced and remarried Catholics for him to lift."

The Peters' point about Prof. Buttiglione can be found in an April 2017 piece at his canonlawblog.wordpress.com entitled 'Fake canon law goes on goin' on', linking in turn to a January 2017 one criticising Malta's Archbishop Charles Scicluna and an April 2014 one titled 'Was Jackie O excommunicated?'

Amazement

It's a peculiar article, sneering at the July 2016 *L'Osservatore Romano* essay 'The joy of love and the consternation of theologians' (at osservatoreromano.va), expressing amazement that Prof. Buttiglione "apparently thinks that the 1917 Code itself excommunicated divorced and remarried Catholics"

and declaring that the 1917 Code of Canon Law did no such thing.

Buried in his 2014 piece, however, is the admission that "bigamy and attempted bigamy were crimes under Pio-Benedictine law (1917 CIC 2356)", adding: "The penalty for bigamy, however, was not excommunication but 'infamy' (1917 CIC 2293-2295) and, while the consequences of infamy were significant, they were not equivalent to excommunication."

Translation

At this point it's worth digging out the 1917 code, which unfortunately has never been formally translated into English but can be looked at in Latin through Prof. Peters' own canonlaw.info/masterpage1917.htm

According to UCD Latinist Dr Martin Brady, section 2356 of the code reads: "Bigamists, that is, those who, in spite of the presence of a marriage-bond, may seek another marriage (even if only a so-called 'civil' marriage), are by that very fact notorious (*infames*). And if, having disregarded the warning of an Ordinary, they should persist in their illicit relationship, then let them, in accordance with the varying severity of their offence, be either excommunicated or punished by personal interdiction."

The 1917 code, then, did not deem remarriage after divorce as 'adultery' but as 'bigamy', and clearly allowed for excommunication as a penalty for those who persisted in their behaviour even after being warned.

Anyone interested in digging further into this could do worse than taking a look at the long post by Scott Smith on his reducedculpability.blog entitled '*Amoris Laetitia* and the 1917 Code of Canon Law'.

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Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre 2018 PROGRAMME

SILENT PREACHED RETREATS

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MAY

Dr. John Feehan and
Fr Hugh O'Donnell, SDB
Finding God in the Singing
Heart of the World: an
exploration of the creation
spirituality of Laudato si.

28th-2nd
MAY-JUN

Fr Denis McBride, CSsR
Where does the Jesus
story begin?
We will reflect on the different
beginnings of the Jesus story
alongside the question: given
who you are today, where did
that story begin?

31st-6th
AUG-SEPT

Fr Nick Harman, MSC
RECOVERING THE SACRED
IN OUR EVERYDAY LIFE.

9th-15th
OCT

Fr Daniel O'Leary
'AN ASTONISHING SECRET:
The Love-story of Creation -
the Wonder of You' Reflections
on the beauty, challenges and
pain of all life, and of our own
in particular.

6 DAYS DIRECTED RETREATS

AUG 31ST - SEPT 6TH @2PM

Elizabeth Dunne, SMR
Des Corrigan, SMA

9TH - 15TH OCT @2PM

Frank Downes, OP
Dermot Mansfield, SJ

4 DAYS DIRECTED RETREATS

31ST AUG - 4TH SEPT

Elizabeth Dunne, SMR
Des Corrigan, SMA

LENTEN DAYS

17TH FEB Fr. Aodhan McCrystal, SMA

10TH MARCH Fr. Des Corrigan, SMA

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28TH MAR @6 PM – 1ST APR @9 AM

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12TH MAY

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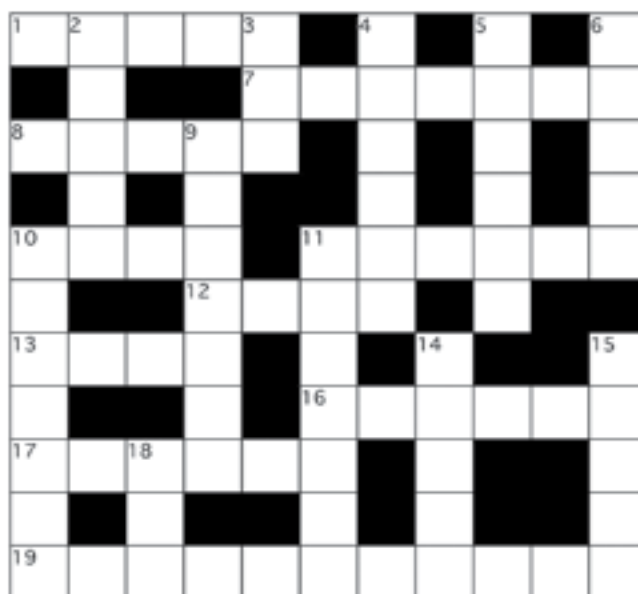
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 220



ACROSS

- 1 Actors perform plays on this (5)
 7 Post which is delivered using a plane (3,4)
 8 Burst open, like a volcano (5)
 10 Terror (4)
 11 Feeling like this, you find it hard to stay awake (6)
 12 Pain (4)
 13 You bake bread in this (4)
 16 A kind of vegetable (6)
 17 Baby (6)
 19 txt msg (4,7)

triangle (5)

- 3 Have some food (3)
 4 Part of a horse's harness (6)
 5 Stayed in a tent (6)
 6 Laneway (5)
 9 Dangerous fish you'll find in the Amazon (7)
 10 Person who will sell you flowers (7)
 11 The space _____ is a rocket that can land and be launched again (7)
 14 Angry (5)
 15 Ginger or pepper, for example (5)
 18 Repair (3)

DOWN

- 2 The number of sides in a

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.338

Across – 1 Eft 3 Granny Smith 8 Caesar Augustus 10 Unwed 11 Huron 13 Wasps 15 Epsilon 16 Bangkok 20 Grade 21 Ducat 23 Paged 24 Werewolf 25 Hearse 26 Tabernacles 27 Oak

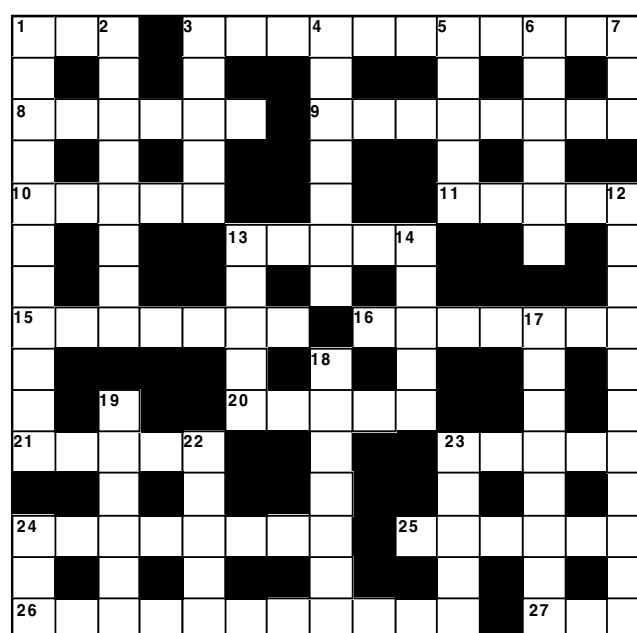
Down – 1 Encountered 2 The Swiss Guard 4 Neatest 5 South Pacific 6 Intern 7 Has 12 Neck and neck 13 Wrong 14 Shake 17 Kangaroo 19 Scarab 22 Tower 23 Peeps 24 Wet

CHILDREN'S No.219

Across – 1 Spotted 5 Cod 7 Aquarium 8 Weed 9 Cub 11 Taste 13 Banana 14 Hero 16 Lancelot 19 Dry 20 Reporter
Down – 2 Pine 3 Toadstool 4 Dracula 5 Chin 6 Dam 8 Watch 10 Plaster 12 Wallet 13 Bin 15 Euro 17 Axe 18 Coo

Crossword

Gordius 339



ACROSS

- 1 Taxi (3)
 3 & 8 Equestrian repasts, served up in a Vatican City location (5,6,6)
 9 Group of people listening to a programme or concert (8)
 10 In a strange way (5)
 11 An aid to picking up Oriental gangs (5)
 13 Deal them out for whist, etc (5)
 15 Mythical beast alluded to during an angry phone call (7)
 16 One who examines the cause of one's being late! (7)
 20 British port gives an Italian river Spanish cheer (5)
 21 This river flows through Nottingham (5)
 23 Stored records, documents etc (5)
 24 Historic prison in Paris (8)
 25 Note an inferior slang for telephone (6)
 26 Make the witness stir up girls who share a birthday (4,7)
 27 Any way you look at it, it's a failure (3)

- from sitcom logos! (11)

- 2 Buy radon around the outer limit (8)
 3 Expression of regret (5)
 4 & 23d Natural tourist attraction in New York State (7,5)
 5 Eject from a dwelling (5)
 6 The name of this weather phenomenon is Spanish for 'the boy-child' (2,4)
 7 Go to court little Susan (3)
 12 Yielded to a strangely redder nurse (11)
 13 Throat inflammation, often among children (5)
 14 Purloined a vestment (5)
 17 There is no longer a single description of such a person! (8)
 18 Competition (7)
 19 Powered personal watercraft (3,3)
 22 Attempts (5)
 23 See 4 down
 24 A pipistrelle, for example (3)

DOWN

- 1 One who studies the development of the universe

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Sudoku Corner

220

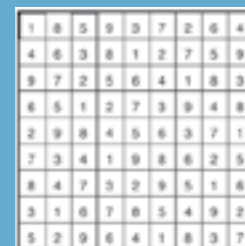
Easy



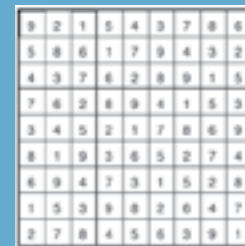
Hard



Last week's Easy 219



Last week's Hard 219



Notebook

Greg Daly



Time for the Pope to recognise the Irish martyrs

IT'S OFTEN NOTED that St John Paul II canonised more saints than all of his predecessors combined, but too often forgotten is that on the February day five years ago when he announced his resignation, Pope Benedict XVI authorised the canonisation of more saints than his Polish predecessor had ever done.

The then Pope's historic announcement was made during a consistory where he approved the canonisation of the 'Martyrs of Otranto', 813 martyrs, formally canonised by Pope Francis in May 2013, who were killed by Ottoman Turks in 1480 following a 15-day siege of the small southern Italian port town.

Accounts of Otranto's fall in subsequent decades detailed the murder of the town's bishop and clergy, the massacres and enslavement of others there, and how hundreds of laymen, led by the tailor Antonio Primaldo, were given the option of converting to Islam or being killed. They chose the latter.

Process

A canonical process for the men began in 1539, with Pope Clement XIV beatifying them in 1771. These



Oliver Plunket, by Edward Luttrell.

men, Pope St John Paul II observed in 1980, were not "deluded" or "outdated," but were "authentic, strong, decisive, consistent men" who loved their city, their families and their faith.

It's worth noting how little is known about these "Companions of Antonio Primaldi", since even the names of most of them are lost to us, while questions have been raised over how the earliest accounts of Otranto's fall are silent about whether the massacred locals were allowed choose between their lives and their Faith.

Recognition

The whole affair is worth pondering when we consider how few of those Irish who died for the Faith in the Reformation and penal times the Church has formally recognised as martyrs.

It's been over a century since Dublin's Archbishop William Walsh put forward the causes of 260 Irish martyrs, just one of whom – St Oliver Plunkett – has

● Asked on Bavarian television in 1997 how the Holy Spirit selects Popes, the then Cardinal Ratzinger rejected the notion that the Spirit picked out the Pope, as such, instead allowing the voting cardinals to make their own decision in the assurance that "the thing cannot be totally ruined".

During the 2005 conclave, however, as he notes in his 2016 interview *Last Testament*, he was struck by how many of his fellow cardinals said whoever was chosen should see the vote as a sign. "It is worked out with so much gravity and dignity that I believed, if the majority of the cardinals really elect me, the Lord is electing me, and then I must accept it," he said.

In resigning in 2013, it seems Pope Benedict XVI must have trusted that the Holy Spirit would choose his successor, and did not merely think that whatever happened, the Church would not be "ruined".

been canonised, 17 others being beatified in 1992.

These figures stand in stark contrast to England's 42 canonised martyrs and 242 beatified ones, with delays in the Irish cause seemingly being largely down to the shortage of resources for necessary historical research, and the challenge of distinguishing between political and religious deaths.

Given uncertainty around the identities of the Martyrs of Otranto and around how exactly they died, however, or even how St Maximilian Kolbe and Blessed Oscar Romero might more accurately be said to have been slain out of *odium amoris* – 'hatred of love' – than hatred of the Faith, are such delays really

justifiable now? Shouldn't the same standards be applied across the Church?

Pope Francis speaks often of an ecumenism of blood, holding that we live in an age of martyrdom. His impending visit to Ireland would be a fitting time for the Church to acknowledge how many of our ancestors preferred death to betraying the Faith.



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The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Catechism says: **"Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God."**

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