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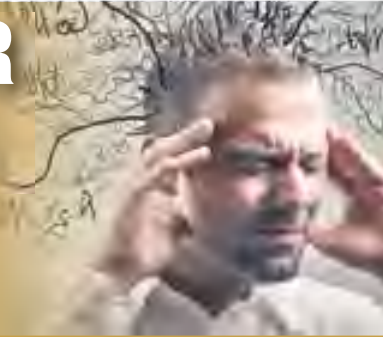
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Future of Catholic boarding schools threatened

Paul Keenan

The future of the Catholic boarding school sector faces a serious threat in a changed Ireland, following the closure of Cistercian College Roscrea, which has been described as “a very sad death knell”.

The announcement of the closure of the college, at Mount St Joseph Abbey in Co. Offaly, means there are now just two Catholic schools offering all boarding for boys in Ireland. These are the Jesuit Clongowes Wood College in Co. Kildare and the Benedictine Glenstal Abbey in Murroe, Co. Limerick.

Two other Catholic schools, Dublin's Blackrock College and Rockwell College in Co. Tipperary, mix boarders with day pupils.

This is in stark contrast to the

1990s when there were over 30 Catholic schools offering boarding for boys – 20 being diocesan colleges.

Dom Richard Purcell, Abbot of Mount St Joseph Abbey said the decision to close was “extremely difficult” but the school “is simply no longer financially viable”. “The school has witnessed a 45% drop in enrolment in the past 10 years with just nine 1st Year students enrolled for September 2017. Clearly this is unsustainable.”

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* this week, Glenstal headmaster Fr William Fennelly lamented the loss of Roscrea as “a very sad death knell for what was a fine part of the Irish Catholic experience” and “once a lively part of the educational terrain” which

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Cardinal Desmond Connell 1926-2017



Cardinal Desmond Connell, portrait by Conor Walton, College of Maynooth collection.

Tributes have been paid to the former Archbishop of Dublin, Cardinal Desmond Connell, “a just, holy, prayerful man, aware of his own failings” who died peacefully on Tuesday at the age of 90.

Born in Dublin in 1926, and ordained by Archbishop John Charles McQuaid in 1951, Cardinal Connell would go on to become a prominent figure in Catholic teaching, not least during his tenure with the Department of Metaphysics at University College Dublin.

His lack of pastoral experience did little to affect his later nomination and subsequent elevation as Archbishop of Dublin in 1988, though it would inevitably be cited in connection with his handling of the clerical abuse scandals that became the defining feature of his tenure.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin recalling Cardinal Connell's work on the abuse scandals in Dublin said: “He was the one person who began to change things. At the start, he had no idea of the extent of the problem. He was the one who tried to understand it.”

Dr Martin said he was grateful to Cardinal Connell for being the one who established the child protection services in the Archdiocese of Dublin.

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Future of Catholic boarding schools threatened

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has "literally evaporated".

He said a range of pressures over the last number of years had adversely affected the boarding landscape in Ireland. "The sheer fall in numbers in religious life is one factor," he said, explaining how costs had risen for educational institutions as paid lay staff replaced religious staff who did not normally work for a wage.

"Then there was the sexual abuse issue – which did not touch Roscrea – but which made parents far more wary."

Elements

Added to these elements, Fr Fennelly said, were other developments, for example in "free secondary education and improvements in transport", presenting alternatives to boarding.

And, he added of an increasing secular society, "It is not clear in Ireland where it is going to stop".

Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe, in whose diocese the Cistercian College had operated since 1905, said the loss of the school will be "deeply felt" after an "immense" contribution to "key facets of Irish life" for over a century.

Meanwhile, parents opposed to the loss of Roscrea are set to meet to explore how to save the college, which is still catering for 167 boarders.

Flawed data used to push secular world religions course

Greg Daly

A survey on proposals for a new primary school course in religion, beliefs and ethics used leading questions and drew from an unrepresentative sample, a prominent research institute has found.

A study for the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) analysed an online survey conducted by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to seek stakeholders' views on various aspects of the proposed Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics course.

Survey questions were "strongly skewed towards positive answers, possibly leading to a response bias", report authors Dr Merike Darmody and Prof. Emer Smyth said, noting that some participants in the survey had challenged this.

"The ESRI report has shown that the consultation process conducted by the NCCA was seriously flawed,

Prof. Eamon Conway of Mary Immaculate College told *The Irish Catholic*, continuing: "Unfortunately, this fits into a pattern of flawed research and consultations, which can only lead to a loss of confidence in other consultation processes that are currently underway including in regard to the curriculum."

Respondents

The authors also noted how survey respondents "were not drawn from a nationally representative sample of the population", those who completed the survey having been, the ESRI said, "more likely to have held strong views on the subject", with educators in non-Catholic schools and the parents of children in such schools over-represented.

Describing the survey's flaws as "regrettable", the theologian observed that "Insofar as these surveys have provided anything that is reliable, they show a much

greater support for Catholic education than is either recognised or accepted by the Department of Education and Skills and the NCCA."

The NCCA's final report on the consultations revealed that primary schools are already struggling with 'curriculum overload', with significant parts of the proposed course already being covered in schools and teachers having little overall appetite for the proposed new course. The report also recorded widespread concerns about how the ERB and Ethics approach could undermine the ethos of religious schools.

Despite this, Prof. Conway said, the NCCA is "attempting to implement ERB and Ethics by the back door".

"In order to restore confidence, what is needed is honest, open, genuine engagement with parents and other representative bodies in which their views are listened to and taken on board," he said.

Galway church's 'drive-thru' Ash Wednesday service



Fr Paddy Mooney demonstrates the Lenten petition box in Glenamady parish.

Paul Keenan

A Co. Galway church will 'move to the pace of modern life' this Lent with a 'drive-thru' Ash Wednesday service and Lenten Petition box.

Following discussions between PP Fr Paddy Mooney and the pastoral council of Glenamady church on how best to prepare for the Lenten season, it was recognised that something of a novel approach might work best for people on the go who, while eager to keep up with the life of their church, remain under modern time constraints and pressures.

"We looked at the situation on the ground," Fr Paddy told this newspaper. "People and families are on the move all the time."

Thus the idea of the 'drive-thru' Ash Wednesday service was born, made viable by the driveway design of

Glenamady church which will allow those availing of the service to progress in one gate and out another – from 8am to 9.30am on March 1.

Prayer

"It's about meeting people where they are," Fr Paddy explained, adding that this was also the thinking behind the Lenten Petition box, which will stand in the church grounds and allow for people to pull in and submit prayer requests throughout Lent.

"We're just putting [the initiative] in front of people to help them think of Lent, as a reminder of it," Fr Paddy said, adding that he was confident that in Glenamady, "a great parish with very active people always thinking of new things for the church", the novel Lenten ideas will be warmly received.

Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment returns in two weeks



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RTÉ response to 'haunted bread' complaint 'inadequate'

Paul Keenan

A Co. Kerry priest who lodged a formal complaint against RTÉ after a guest on *The Late Late Show* referred to the Eucharist as "haunted bread" said he is disappointed that the national broadcaster has chosen to view the incident as "provocative" but "not sacrilegious".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* this week following an email he received from RTÉ regarding the issue, Fr Kevin McNamara insisted that the response was "inadequate" and that he would continue his case with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

"A line was crossed here," Fr McNamara said, "and you have to stand up for your faith."

Sacrilegious

In the email sent to Fr McNamara, *Late Late* producer Larry Masterson wrote: "The phrase 'haunted bread' was certainly provocative. [The guest] used it to get a reaction, and indeed it did. I do not believe however that it was sacrilegious."

"It was, in my view, a linguistic phrase that encapsulates 'The Holy Ghost' and Holy Communion... In attempting to hear new

voices on *The Late Late Show*, it is inevitable that some will not like what they hear."

He concluded: "I accept that the phrase 'haunted bread' has caused offence to some viewers and has been seen by some as disrespectful or mocking and for that I apologise."

Reaction

Fr McNamara said "to get a reaction" was a loaded comment. "What reaction, and why? Would it have been done to any other faith to gain a reaction?"

The priest also complained that RTÉ failed to deal with the "core issue", which was the way *Late Late* host Ryan Tubridy chose to deal with the comment, praising his guest for the 'haunted bread' description.

"It is crucial for a presenter to be impartial and not to endorse the views of guests on a show," Fr McNamara said.

"Calling something entertainment or comedy does not give anyone the right to go to the core belief of my Catholic faith."

Hundreds of letters have been sent to RTÉ from parishes across the country to complain about the show.

College champs give thanks in Knock



St Mary's University College, Belfast football team hold up their captain Conor Meyler after winning the Sigerson Cup. Photo: Gerd Curley

Mags Gargan

The winning team from St Mary's University College, Belfast "gave thanks" at Knock Shrine after defying the odds in an incredible 'David and Goliath' football final.

St Mary's is the North's only Catholic institution of higher education and with just over 1,000 students

and less than a quarter of them male, the underdogs unseated the Sigerson Cup holders UCD in a gripping GAA final at Began in Co. Mayo at the weekend.

The team, who had not appeared in a final for 24 years, had to beat the top university teams in the country including NUI Galway, DCU and UCC.

Team captain Conor Meyler, who is studying

religion, said it was a real "David and Goliath story". "We stopped in Knock after the semi-final against UCC to say thank you. A lot of boys who were injured were fit to come back and we just seemed to have a wee bit of luck that we hadn't got in the year before, so someone was looking down on us," he said.

"We stopped again after

we won the final to say thank you. There was a lot to be grateful for and moments in the game when things went in our favour, and it seemed appropriate to stop and say thank you."

Professor Peter Finn, Principal of St Mary's University College, said the "entire institution is immensely proud" of the team's "remarkable achievement".

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Cardinal Desmond Connell – ‘distinguished and caring’

Paul Keenan

“He was a just, holy, prayerful man, aware of his own failings.”

Among the tributes paid as the news of Cardinal Desmond Connell's death came on February 21, Msgr Dan O'Connor's was one steeped in a long-time personal knowledge of the prelate and the man who was his friend for so many years.

Having known Desmond Connell since 1969, Fr Dan also served as the later Archbishop of Dublin's education secretary, and celebrated the last Sunday Mass for the ailing prelate on Sunday, February 19.

Beyond the respectful tributes for the archbishop and cardinal emerging over the course of the day, Fr O'Connor led in recalling the man, who “loved music, history, gardening, dogs. He loved his pipe”.

“He was a very proud Dublin northsider, having been born in Phibsborough,” he added, “and always kept contact with lots of his old neighbours.”

Indeed, Fr O'Connor offered a picture of an archbishop who “was always caring of the people and priests of the diocese, and [who] sent a Christmas card to every one of his priests every year, including this last Christmas”.

He also displayed a particular care for the young in

Biography

- Born in Dublin in 1926, Desmond Connell was educated at Belvedere College before beginning his studies for the priesthood in Clonliffe. Earning his BA in UCD in 1946, and an MA the following year, he continued his studies in Maynooth and was ordained in 1951 by Dublin's then Archbishop John Charles McQuaid.

- In 1953 he was awarded a PhD in Philosophy from Belgium's Pontifical University of Leuven.

- He taught in UCD, where he became Professor of General Metaphysics in 1972 and Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology in 1983. A lifelong academic, he was a surprise appointment when picked to succeed Dr Kevin McNamara as Archbishop of Dublin in 1988, and struggled with the abuse crisis that came to light during his term in office.

- In 2001 he was – along with Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, now Pope Francis – one of 38 prelates created cardinal by St John Paul II.

- He stepped down from the Congregations for Clergy and for the Doctrine of the Faith that April, and submitted his resignation as archbishop that year. In April 2004, less than a year after the appointment of Dr Diarmuid Martin as his co-adjutor bishop, his resignation was accepted.

- Still a cardinal with voting rights until 2006, he took part in the 2005 conclave that chose Pope Benedict XVI.

his keen interest in the Dublin archdiocese's provision for the education of children with special needs.

Not seeking to avoid the clerical abuse scandals which became so dominant a feature of Cardinal Connell's time as Archbishop of Dublin, Fr O'Connor said “the child abuse scandals, the hurt that people experienced really affected him. He was hurt at the abuse of innocent children by priests. That shocked him.”

Cardinal Connell retired from the archdiocese in 2004.

“When he retired, the highlight of his year was travelling to Lourdes as part of the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage,” Fr O'Connor recalled of the prelate's later life. “He loved meeting everyone on the pilgrimage, especially the young people, for whom – fascinated with his pipe smoking – he became something of a ‘grandfather figure’.

“He was also a close friend of both St John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.”

Connections

It was Pope John Paul who elevated Archbishop Connell to cardinal in 2001.

Such lofty connections are balanced with another revelation from Fr O'Connor, that during his periods in hospital



Cardinal Desmond Connell with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.



Cardinal Desmond Connell laying his hands on Bishop Denis Nulty during his Episcopal ordination in 2013. Photo: John McElroy

in later life, Cardinal Connell insisted on being registered simply as ‘Fr Connell’.

Among others paying tribute to Cardinal Connell this week was Taoiseach Enda Kenny who said: “Cardinal Connell had a long and distinguished academic career and while his time as archbishop was controversial, those who knew him recognised his

desire for holiness and his gentleness and humility of character.”

Fianna Fáil Leader Micheál Martin said “Dr Connell was a strong advocate for social justice and highlighted the difficulties facing communities in inner-city Dublin throughout his ministry”.

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Primate of All-Ireland,

expressed his sorrow and described Cardinal Connell as “a gentle and holy priest who was dedicated to his priestly and episcopal calling”.

Abuse survivor Marie Collins, who met on numerous occasions with Cardinal Connell during the period covered by the Murphy report said: “He was a man of his time, we had our differences, I hope he rests in peace. My condolences to his family.”

Rev. Damian Mc Neice, Master of Ceremonies in the Dublin archdiocese said in a personal reflection on the cardinal's life: “His brother priests in Dublin are aware of his pastoral kindness to many and of his deep integrity, even to the point of scrupulousness, a trait and sensitivity that could be misunderstood and misconstrued.”

Cardinal Desmond Connell died on February 21, the 16th anniversary of his creation as a cardinal.



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Fr D'Arcy's reflections on a parallel life

Fr Brian D'Arcy was in rueful mood when he reflected, on *The Late Late Show* that: "Nobody put a gun to my head and said, 'you must be a priest'. In fact everybody said to me 'you shouldn't be a priest'. But I would have been a far better priest had I married."

Such reflections are just part of the thoughts everyone has in the evening years of life. What if I had done things differently? What if I had emigrated to Canada: or taken up that job I declined: or married B instead of A: or gone to university instead of starting work? What if I'd had children, or more children, or no children?

In the last section of the movie *La La Land*, Emma Stone's character, Mia, re-runs her life choices, imagining that she had married Sebastian, rather than the blank guy she did marry, and re-running the whole story as a parallel narrative.

Different

Things might indeed have been different, but she has no way of knowing in what way they would have differed.

Brian D'Arcy might have been happier and more fulfilled if he had married: but then again he might not. His marriage might



Mary Kenny



Fr Brian D'Arcy.

not have been a success: his wife might have fallen in love with someone else: his wife might have fallen seriously ill and he might have had to spend decades caring for her.

He might have had wonderful children, but he might have had problems with his children too. Perfect families are rare, and I've known everything from drug addiction to suicide to schizophrenia to violent personality disorder

arise among families where the parents were beyond reproach and harmoniously united.

Fr D'Arcy cannot say whether he would have been a better priest if married, because he cannot know.

But many who have had pastoral contact with Brian D'Arcy say he is a very good priest, especially to families bereaved by suicide, and that, surely, is a source of gratitude.

Recalling Cardinal Connell

I spent some time talking with the late Cardinal Desmond Connell [pictured] during the 1990s, when he was in the throes of the unfolding clerical abuse scandals. My abiding impression of him was a well-meaning man who was completely bewildered by the storm swirling around him. I was pretty bewildered myself, as I had no experience whatsoever, at that time, of anything sexually improper among the clergy. So I sympathised with him in finding some of the claims almost unbelievable.

But I also thought he seemed isolated. He was surrounded by young, somewhat deferential clergy who addressed him as "My Lord" and "Your Grace". Archbishop's House in Drumcondra struck me as a mournful old mausoleum, set in its own grounds, almost deliberately designed to keep a pastor at arm's length from the world.

Dr Connell didn't appear to have any close family links, which must have added to the isolation – I had cousins who were priests, always surrounded by a gaggle of sisters, brothers and extended kin which provided a window on the everyday.

He was upset and disturbed by the

growing power of the media, and was particularly obsessed with *The Irish Times*. Born in 1926, he had grown up in a world where the media was more decorous, and usually more respectful of rank.

The Murphy report was harsh on Desmond Connell, judging that he had failed in his responsibilities in that he had failed to address the abuse scandals adequately.

But: walk a mile in another man's moccasins – which of us would have done better, given the circumstances, the context, and the temperament with which we are born?

One of the best aspects of Pope Francis' pontificate is the example that he has given in terms of contact with people, and outgoing lifestyle. Francis refuses to live in a papal palace, eats in ordinary canteens, drives around in a modest car. This puts him in touch with people in a meaningful way.

I felt sorry for Dr Connell, because he seemed to be walled up in a Victorian pile, raging against an outside world that assailed him, but also puzzled him.

And desperately hurt, too, that the Irish Church tradition he so clearly loved was being brought low.

Re-running the Reformation

Is 'Brexit' a re-run of the Reformation, when Henry VIII broke with 'Europe' by rebuffing the Pope's authority? That's a theory that's been around for a while, and it's being advanced by Lord Hattersley

in a new book about British and Irish Catholics. He suggests that Henry VIII was "soft Brexit" (he wanted to keep some links with Rome) while Elizabeth I was "hard Brexit" (she wanted complete separation). It's

a piquant idea, somewhat contradicted by the fact that many modern British Brexiteers are Catholics – Paul Nuttall of UKIP, MPs Bill Cash and Edward Leigh, and commentator Charles Moore.

NEWS IN BRIEF

IC columnist named 'Distinguished Professor'

Columnist with *The Irish Catholic*, Michael W. Higgins has been named Distinguished Professor of Catholic Thought at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut, USA.

Prof. Higgins previously served as vice president for Mission and Catholic Identity and Professor of Religious Studies at the University.

In his new role, Mr Higgins will focus on teaching, research, lecturing, mentoring and collaborating with faculty, staff and students on projects and programmes.

He will assist the Office of Mission and Catholic Identity with its lecture programmes and the Presidential Seminar. He will also expand the subject matter of his

weekly blog, 'Pontifex Minimus'.

Knock Shrine to celebrate the family

Knock Shrine is hosting a one-day conference to begin preparations for the World Meeting of Families in 2018.

The conference on Saturday, April 8 will include a presentation with Fr Timothy Bartlett, Secretary General for WMF2018 as well as testimonies with families facilitated by

Breda O'Brien, followed by Mass at 3pm in the Basilica celebrated by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.

"We are looking ahead to 2018 which will be an enormously significant year in the life of the Church. An important aspect of faith renewal is supporting families and doing what we can to help them prepare for it," said Fr Richard Gibbons.

To find out more call 094-93 75355 or email: faithrenewal@knockshrine.ie

Priest's house targeted during Mass

A Co. Tyrone priest said he was left frightened after his home was broken into as he celebrated Mass on Saturday evening.

The burglary occurred at the parochial house beside St Theresa's at Melmount Street in Sion Mills at around 6.30pm while Fr Peter McLaughlin was saying Mass in the adjacent church.

"It's worrying because, given my duties as a priest, the times are known when I will be in church and not in the house," he told the *Belfast Telegraph*. "But I can't allow myself to get to that level or you'd never go out again."

Nothing was taken from the house.



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Pro-life groups invited to address the Citizens' Assembly on abortion

Paul Keenan

The Iona Institute and the Pro Life Campaign (PLC) are among a number of life advocates set to address the Citizens' Assembly next month.

Following its own written submission to the Assembly as part of the consultation process around the gathering, Iona confirmed that it had received a formal invitation to make a 10-minute presentation to the 99 Assembly members on March 5.

Submission

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Iona's director David Quinn said his organisation has now prepared its presentation, based on the original submission.

The Citizen's Assembly received the draft of that presentation today, February 23.

entation today, February 23.

"The presentation will restate the reasons why we believe a referendum to remove the Eighth Amendment is not necessary," Mr Quinn said, "and deal with the concerns we have about the [Assembly] process and some of the speakers invited to present."

On this latter element, Mr Quinn was referring to the angry reactions from political and life advocate quarters when the last sitting of the Assembly invited representatives of the partisan Guttmacher Institute and the British Pregnancy Advisory Service to address the delegates.

This paper understands that other pro-life groups invited include Family & Life and Youth Defence.

Bishop invites community of sisters to Elphin



(L-R) Bishop Kevin Doran, Sr Ruth Maria (Dublin) (Leader of the Roscommon Community), Sr Michelle Maria (Minnesota), Sr Karen Maria (Florida), Mother Ana Maria Campo (Superior General). Standing – Sr Bernadette Maria (Cork).

Mags Gargan

A new community of the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother will be established in Roscommon at the invitation of the Bishop of Elphin.

Last week Bishop Kevin Doran visited the Servant Sisters of the Home

of the Mother in Cantabria in the north of Spain to finalise the agreement with Mother Ana Maria Campo, after almost a year of discussions. "These are four joyful young women of faith, who bring between them 40 years or more of living the consecrated life," said Bishop Doran.

The new community of four sisters

will be established in Sacred Heart Parish, Roscommon on May 13. Their mission will include prayer guidance and retreat ministry with young people, the development of catechetical resources using social media, promoting devotion to the Eucharist and Mary and visiting the elderly who live alone.

Bishops unhappy with speed of Vatican trials for alleged abusers

Greg Daly

Delays in how the Vatican tackles cases of priests accused of abuse continue to be a concern for Irish bishops, a spokesman for the hierarchy has confirmed.

Addressing Australia's royal commission into the institutional handling of abuse allegations earlier this month, Teresa Devlin, CEO of the Irish Church's safeguarding board, said she believed

that Ireland's bishops may have asked for steps to be taken to address these delays and she knew "there is a keenness" on the part of the bishops "for this to be moved along much quicker".

However, a spokesman for the Bishops' Conference told *The Irish Catholic* that while "The lengths of penal trials have always been a concern for bishops and priests," he had no information available on "particular representa-

tions to the CDF on this matter".

Elphin's Bishop Kevin Doran told *The Irish Catholic* that as far as he was aware, "no specific changes" had been sought from the CDF.

Highlighted

He said the subject was not highlighted during the Irish bishops' January *ad limina* pilgrimage to Rome, although the difficulty was recognised in meetings there.

"When in Rome in any of the conversations, there was an awareness on all sides that from the point of view of fairness to people, it's best

if things are not delayed," he said, adding that, "Everybody's aware it can take time get to the bottom of things in the case of abuse or alleged abuse."

Emphasising that cases go to Rome when there is a question of what ecclesiastical discipline should be imposed on clergy convicted of or admitting to abuse, Dr Doran said, "In situations when something doesn't come back as quickly as you'd like you'd ring up and ask."

Mrs Devlin had described the need for ad hoc personal contacts to expedite cases as "not reasonable".

Thai Children's Trust undergoes rebranding

Overseas children's charity, Thai Children's Trust Ireland, has unveiled its new name as part of ambitious new plans to protect more vulnerable children in Thailand.

Thai Children's Trust was established in 1982 to support the work of Irish-American Redemptorist Priest, Fr Ray Brennan. It now supports an increasingly diverse range of partners, caring for over 4,000 children throughout Thailand.

Under its new name, Safe Child Thailand, the charity plans to work with communi-

ties and families in Thailand, with an increased focus on keeping vulnerable families together.

"For many years we have been supporting children's homes and helping children when families have found it too hard to care for them," said Adele Kierans. "Whilst we will continue Fr Ray's legacy of looking after these children, we will also try to support vulnerable families before it is too late."

To find out more go to www.safechildthailand.org



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Martin Mansergh

The View



Neutrality – a foreign policy which has served us well

Neutrality in Ireland is a morally charged concept, both for supporters and critics. For supporters, it is a principled stance to avoid becoming embroiled in armed conflict and military alliances and to support the peaceful resolution of disputes. For critics, it is an evasion of responsibility and taking a free ride behind serious defence measures of friends and neighbours.

When Ireland was part of the United Kingdom, it made a substantial contribution to the manpower of the British army and navy. A permanent exhibition in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich shows that broken down by county Ireland contributed more sailors to Nelson's fleet at Trafalgar than Scotland, and that Dublin was second only to London. For Redmond, most of the Catholic Church, and other leaders of opinion, the passage of Home Rule justified enlistment in 1914.

Resonance

A minority did not want to fight Britain's wars or for other small countries in the absence of freedom for this small country.

The banner outside Liberty Hall, 'We Serve Neither King nor Kaiser – but Ireland', had a resonance about it that echoes to this day. However, the ideal of neutrality did not sit easily with Casement's attempts to recruit an Irish brigade from prisoners of war to fight alongside the Germans in the Near East, if not in Ireland, the reference in the Proclamation to 'gallant allies in Europe', and subsequent naive expectations that a German victory would secure Ireland's place at the Peace Conference.

Ireland did not figure



The old Liberty Hall and, left, a World War I recruitment poster.

but their negotiated return in 1938 to secure Irish goodwill in the event of war enabled the State to stay out of World War II.

Both for financial and internal security reasons, recalling the so-called army mutiny of 1924 and an ongoing paramilitary menace, the State's armed forces had been reduced to a minimum, making it very vulnerable to any external threat.

Neutrality was conducted more pragmatically below the surface, but Ireland received no credit for this from Churchill, who still did not accept the reality of Irish independence and who tried to squeeze Ireland economically.

Any other policy would have been divisive and destabilising, as well as inviting destruction from the air. The offer of a united Ireland in June 1940 in exchange for joining the war was, if closely examined, a mirage, not unlike Home Rule passed in 1914.

Neutrality was the strongest possible demonstration of independence, but it left Ireland out in the cold at the end of the war, especially after revelation of the extermination camps. Northern Ireland's position in the UK was strengthened.

In 1955, de Valera in opposition stated the classic

case for neutrality, when he said that a small country has to be extremely cautious, when entering alliances which will bring it into wars.

It would not be consulted when wars started, nor on the terms on which they finished – the great powers would decide that. However, he did support collective security under international auspices, such as the League of Nations, then the United Nations, and to this day UN approval is needed for Irish participation in overseas military tasks.

Attempts

Post-war, there were sporadic attempts to use neutrality as a bargaining chip for the ending of partition, but this overestimated the strategic importance of Ireland in a cold war context. In 1990, one of the foundations of the peace process was the public acknowledgement that Northern Ireland no longer had any selfish strategic importance for Britain.

Collective European defence is organised on a transatlantic basis round NATO. While Lemass and Lynch would have been prepared to sacrifice neutrality, if a full-blown common defence policy had become a condition of EU membership, many partners did not want to weaken or

duplicate NATO, most of all Britain.

Today, an independent EU defence policy without Britain or North America looks even less likely. Ireland makes a valued contribution to international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, and is fully committed to partners in protecting against international terrorism.

It is and was legitimate for different countries to play different roles in accordance with their values and traditions and also their position and their interests. The EU effectively exercises 'soft power', something that Ireland broadly speaking is comfortable with, though the EU's critics often accuse it of neo-colonial or super-state ambitions (hard to sustain on an EU budget of about 1% of GDP).

Irish neutrality is, at the latest since we joined the EEC in 1973, military, not political. The EU strives to reach common positions on foreign policy issues, but does not always succeed. Military neutrality is a policy rather than a status. Its content is decided by

the Government, not by international law. If we were members of NATO, we would be committed to doubling our defence expenditure.

We are now members of NATO's Partnership for Peace, which facilitates our participation with other countries in peacekeeping. Our geographical position makes territorial defence less of an issue.

Our close political and economic relationship with the United States underpins our willingness to allow US military transport planes to use Shannon, a fraught issue at the time of the Iraq war which stretched neutrality to breaking point, as did controversy over rendition, but which we were assured did not take place through Irish airspace.

All countries have to exercise restraint in their comments and actions in international relations, and cannot crusade. Some groups want the State to take sides on issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but in general our foreign policy is within reason ethical and has served us well.

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Faith in an age of authenticity

**Divine Mercy
Conference organiser
Don Devaney tells
Greg Daly about
bringing God's mercy
into the world**

“THE REASON for this year's conference is that we're encouraging people to be apostles of mercy,” says Don Devaney of Ireland's 26th Divine Mercy Conference, held in Dublin's RDS this weekend.

“The theme for this year is ‘Have mercy on us and the whole world,’” Don continues, explaining that the call to be apostles of mercy “follows on from the Year of Mercy when the Pope was asking us to do this”.

“There are about 1.2 billion Catholics, of whom about 40% are actively participating, out of the seven billion people in the world,” Don says, adding, “Pope Francis is trying to reach out to the 60% who fall away, and to non-Catholics too. God's mercy is for everybody and everybody needs God's mercy.”

While opposition to the Pope among small numbers of Catholics has gained media coverage of late, Don is steadfast in his loyalty to the Holy

Father. “Personally I like his message,” he says, continuing: “It's misunderstood by a lot of people, but I like what he's trying to do.”

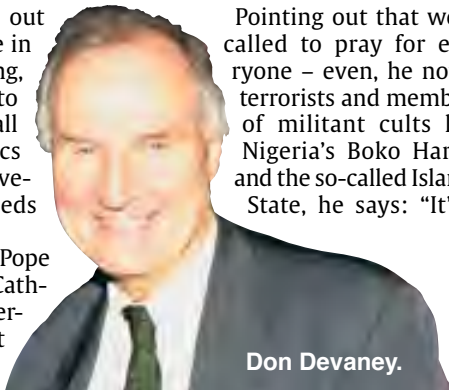
Don says of the kind of Christianity to which the Pope is calling us: “In the age we live in, people want to see an authenticity where people believe what they say and do what they say – a practical authenticity.”

Given this, he says: “If our lives are an authentic example of Christianity, this will convert more people than preaching and talking about the Catechism.”

Encouraging

This year's Divine Mercy Conference then, he says, is a petition to God to have mercy on us and the whole world, and is also about reaching out and encouraging apostles to intercede for the world, for all those who don't pray, and for people to have the courage to take a wider vision.

Pointing out that we're called to pray for everyone – even, he notes, terrorists and members of militant cults like Nigeria's Boko Haram and the so-called Islamic State, he says: “It's a



Don Devaney.



Last year's conference drew a record attendance.

spiritual war, and the only way that we'll win it is through prayer.”

“Mercy, like family, begins at home, with the people closest”

This year's conference has a packed agenda, he says, starting with a free evening session of prayer and Mass from 6.30pm on Friday, focused primarily – though

not exclusively – on young people, with the more traditional conference starting at 9.30 the next morning, with morning prayer being followed by a talk by Fr Bernard McGuckian on the connections between the Sacred Heart and the Divine Mercy.

“We've a line up of eight speakers, which is a good variety and also

gives value for money,” says Don.

After lunch, the weekend's reconciliation service is, according to Don, “the highlight of the conference”, when thousands of people come to Confession and “the floodgates of God's mercy will open”. Mass later that afternoon will be celebrated by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, he says, while the evening will be devoted to a healing service.

Sunday, then, is scheduled to start with morning prayer at 10am, followed by three further talks, a Holy Hour, and – after the Divine Mercy chaplet – the conference's closing Mass.

Record figures

While Don does not expect this year's conference attendance to match last year's record figures, when, he says, the Year of Mercy gave the conference “a tremendous boost”, he still hopes to keep momentum going ahead of next year's World Meeting of Families.

“Mercy, like family, begins at home, with the people closest,” he says, observing that “the challenge of that can be the most difficult challenge of all”. Even if this is a challenge, he says, there are always grounds for hope.

“The essence of Divine Mercy is that everybody's a sinner,” he says, “and that everybody's welcome.”

● **Tickets to the Divine Mercy Conference cost €30 for Saturday, €20 for Sunday, and €35 for the entire weekend.**

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The President and the Cardinal



President Michael D. Higgins meeting with Cardinal Jaime Ortega during his official visit to Cuba last week. President Higgins told *The Irish Catholic* he was “delighted” to meet with the cardinal and they had “an hour long discussion on current events, local, regional and global”. Cardinal Ortega was Archbishop of Havana for 35 years and played a behind-the-scenes role as an emissary for Pope Francis during secret talks between the United States and Cuba that led to a reestablishment of relations. Photo: Maxwells

Faith meets everyday life at ‘Monday at the Monastery’ Lenten talks

The Presentation Brothers are hosting a series of Lenten talks which offer practical tips for living faith in Ireland today. The ‘Monday at the Monastery’ series of talks returns to the Presentation Brothers' house in Glasthule, Co. Dublin for four Mondays during Lent.

The series has proven popular since it began in 2013, as part of the Brothers' desire to re-engage anew with their mission. In the last decade their focus has moved from work in schools to a mission of youth ministry. They also seek to be “bold

and creative” in their efforts to be authentic and attractive witnesses to the Gospel. Evangelisation Officer, John Quinn said that he endeavours “to get speakers who have a relevant message for people today”.

This Lent, the talks will focus on where faith meets everyday life in Ireland today.

Former Down GAA footballer John McAreevy will speak about his experience of trying to live out a merciful, loving faith on March 6. The next week, broadcaster and Presentation Brothers College

Cork alumnus George Hook will explore a life of faith.

On March 20, Maria Steen of the Iona Institute will look at maintaining the Catholic faith in today's culture.

The final talk for this series will take place on March 27, when lay hospital chaplain and mother of three, Marianne Quinn will discuss the challenges of keeping the Faith.

The talks are free to attend, but booking is advisable by emailing events@presentationbrothers.org

Each talk begins at 7.30pm and finishes by 9pm.



Our attitude towards the disabled is something we must seriously consider as we debate abortion, writes **David Quinn**

One of the issues that has given rise to the very strong possibility of an abortion referendum in the next year or two is that of unborn babies diagnosed with a life-limiting disability, also known as a 'fatal foetal abnormality', even though this is not a medical term.

It strikes many people as unreasonable that a woman who is told her baby will not survive long past birth should be expected to carry her fatally disabled baby to term. A strong focus on this issue by pro-abortion campaign groups and large sections of the media helped to bring about the establishment of the Citizens' Assembly which has now spent several weekends over several months considering whether or not to recommend the holding of a referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment, that is, the pro-life section of our Constitution.

What's notable since the Assembly has begun its proceedings is that delegates are now hearing arguments for abortion being legally provided for here in Ireland on grounds much broader than 'simply' the 'fatal foetal abnormality' ground.

Impact

Either directly or indirectly several of the speakers at the Assembly have argued for abortion to be permitted here on similar grounds to in Britain, which would mean we would *de facto* have abortion-on-demand. This would disproportionately impact on disabled unborn children because they are far more likely to be aborted than are able-bodied unborn children.

How abortion disproportionately targets the disabled

Last weekend in Oxford, the Anscombe Bioethics Centre organised a conference called 'Abortion and Disability' which could hardly have been more relevant to the Irish debate.

The Anscombe Bioethics Centre is a Catholic bioethics body set up by the Catholic bishops of England and Wales in 1977. The Irish hierarchy also supports the organisation. It advises all interested parties on the Catholic response to various bioethical issues, including, obviously, abortion.

“90% of unborn babies in Britain diagnosed to have Down Syndrome are aborted”

The choice of topic of last weekend's conference was prompted in part by the fact there is a growing awareness of the disproportionate impact abortion has on disabled unborn children.

A Bill is currently being debated in the British parliament that has been tabled by Lord Shinkwin who himself suffers from a disability. It is called the Abortion (Disability Equality) Bill.



Prof. John Finnis.

Lord Shinkwin says this exemption is clearly discriminatory because it means that disabled unborn babies can be freely killed after 24 weeks, whereas able-bodied unborn babies cannot.

As he pointed out when he first introduced his bill late last year: "It is illegal for an unborn human being to have their life ended by abortion beyond 24 weeks, but if they have a disability their life can be ended right up to birth by law. Where is the consistency, the justice or the equality in that?"

"If anyone thinks such obvious discrimination is acceptable, I respectfully invite them to imagine the outcry if the same were applied to skin colour or sexual orientation. Such discrimination would rightly be regarded as outrageous."

A BBC documentary called *A World Without Down Syndrome* aired last year. It was presented by comedian and actress, Sally Phillips, and it caused widespread shock when it conveyed to the wider public the fact that 90% of unborn babies in Britain diagnosed to have Down Syndrome are aborted. In Iceland, the figure is 100%.

Last weekend's Oxford conference heard from, among others, renowned legal theorist, Prof. John Finnis. He reminded delegates how he had predicted many years ago that British law would allow, among other things, for unborn babies with

something as minor as a cleft palate to be aborted. He was widely accused of scare-mongering at the time by, among others, David Steele, the man behind the liberalisation of Britain's abortion law in 1967.

But Finnis has since been proven to be correct. Unborn babies can indeed be aborted even for having a correctable defect like a cleft palate.

Caroline Simons of the Pro-Life Campaign also addressed the conference. She acquainted delegates with the state of the debate in Ireland, including what is happening at the Citizens' Assembly.

One of the most interesting talks of the day was delivered by John Wyatt, Professor of Ethics and Perinatology at University

College London.

He has spent a great part of his career dealing with couples who have been told their unborn baby suffers from a disability that may, in some cases, eventually kill the baby.

“Many people still insist that Edwards' Syndrome is invariably a 'fatal foetal abnormality'”

Prof. Wyatt, a Christian, also questioned the use of terms that seem to suggest a severely disabled baby will die very soon after birth. He pointed out that as medicine improves the life expectancy of babies with Edwards' Syndrome grows longer

all the time. Yet in debates, many people still insist that Edwards' Syndrome is invariably a 'fatal foetal abnormality'.

He spoke about the pressure parents sometimes come under from doctors to abort a disabled baby. This might not be direct advice to abort the baby, but it could come in the form of advice that paints a wholly negative picture of life for the baby and its family if the baby is born.

Finally, the conference heard moving testimony from women who have Down Syndrome children, and of the joys and challenges that having Down Syndrome children can bring.

A 21-year-old woman, who herself has Down Syndrome also spoke. This humanised what this whole debate is about.

The conference made clear that our attitude towards the disabled is something we must seriously consider as we debate abortion. We have to be made aware that liberalisation of Ireland's abortion law will almost certainly have a disproportionate negative impact on disabled unborn children. Is this something we really want? Is that really humane?



Sally Phillips with 32-year-old Halldóra, one of Iceland's few people with Down Syndrome.

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Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster and president of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, is the foremost Catholic Church leader in these islands, one of the Pope's principal advisors in the appointment of bishops and a major figure on the European ecclesiastical stage.

So, it was quite a coup for St Brigid's parish in south Belfast to have the pleasure of his company to deliver the annual St Brigid's lecture, now established as one of the highlights of the church calendar.

During a wide-ranging exclusive interview with *The Irish Catholic*, in the lecture – a reflection on the Year of Mercy – and in a subsequent question-and-answer session the cardinal delivered a compelling exegesis on the spirituality of Pope Francis and his programme for radical reform that is, he points out, in keeping with the tradition of the Church down the centuries.

Throughout, the cardinal quoted liberally from the Pope's *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), the apostolic exhortation that followed the Synod on the Family, the apostolic letter *Misericordia et Misera*, issued in November at the close of the Year of Mercy and *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), the apostolic exhortation that has been described as the programme of this papacy.

Culture of encounter

Cardinal Nichols told the audience of several hundred, including Bishop Noel Treanor of Down and Connor, Bishop emeritus Patrick Walsh and Auxiliary Bishop emeritus Anthony Farquhar, that the Pope wanted to generate “a culture of mercy” and “a culture of encounter” in a Church of “missionary disciples” that would lead people ultimately to the Father in Heaven, taking great care “never to demean the smallest of steps along the way”.

“Pope Francis says that the whole point of the Church is to bring us to the Father”

He said “the two words ‘accompaniment’ and ‘discernment’ were at the heart of the Holy Father's drive to see the Church become a place of mercy and salvation.”

“[Those two words] are central to *Amoris Laetitia*; they are central to the Year of Mercy and he has made them central to the next Synod of Bishops on ‘Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment’, by which is meant the task of helping youngsters to see the way in which the call of the Gospel is to take concrete expression and shape their

Mapping a mission of mercy



Westminster's Cardinal Vincent Nichols tells Martin O'Brien about Pope Francis' programme to reform the Church



lives.”

The cardinal said: “Pope Francis says that the whole point of the Church is to bring us to the Father. He said this is God's entire project working through creation and redemption and through every moment in the life of each human being.”

“In a wonderful phrase, Pope Francis describes this world as ‘God's construction site’. That is that God is trying to build in the lives of every one of us a pathway by which we reach Our Father's home.”

Drawing from *Evangelii Gaudium*, the cardinal focussed on two axioms which are, he said, at the heart of the Pope's vision for reform and renewal within the Church and within ourselves.

The first is “time is greater than space” by which he means “that we should not be trying to fill, or dominate space and shape it as we

believe it ought to be shaped.

“Rather we must respect the speed, the timing – slow or fast – by which things change and grow. This axiom can apply to us in many circumstances and it is so contrary to much that we are accustomed to in our hurried, busy culture.”

Second axiom

The second axiom is “reality is more important than ideas”. This means for Pope Francis “reform is always a matter of spiritual discernment, whether in the life of Church or of the individual. Such discernment attends first of all to the realities, to the limited degrees of goodness and failure that are to be found in every situation.”

What we are looking for, in this discernment, the cardinal said, were “shades of progress, not the black and white of a final judgement.”

* * * * *

alty, in the way some of his predecessors are said to have done.

He is one of the most effective media performers among the English-speaking world's Church leaders, becoming known throughout the UK when he was Archbishop of Birmingham for his BBC TV commentary from Rome on the funeral of Pope St John Paul II.

The day he arrived in Belfast, his first visit to the city in almost 30 years, he was up at dawn for an early morning appearance with Chris Evans on BBC Radio 2's *Pause for Thought* in which he highlighted to an estimated audience of more than nine million the plight of women victims of human trafficking on the eve of the feast of St Josephine Bakhita, the patron saint of modern-day slaves.

It is an issue close to his heart, as he recounted in his lecture; having only arrived late afternoon he had to return to London first thing the following morning to celebrate Mass at St Mary's University, Twickenham, where he is Chancellor, to mark the official launch of the university's Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery.

What came through in our interview again and again was Cardinal Nichols' admiration

and support for Pope Francis.

When I asked him right at the start to assess the impact of the Year of Mercy he replied: “I think one of the great capacities of Pope Francis is to speak to the heart of people with his words but especially with his gestures.”

The Pope, he said, “understands the dilemmas of human living and he very much wants to make space for people to be able to bring to the Church those dilemmas, the ambiguities in their lives and know that the expression of God's love is mercy [which is] not a rigorous demand but a merciful embrace”.

“We live in a public culture which is pretty unforgiving”

Although we “live in a public culture which is pretty unforgiving” the Pope is making space for people, whatever their difficulties, to come to the Church and feel accepted and his example was also giving a signal to wider society to treat people similarly.

But what had he to say to critics of Pope Francis in the Church who think that with all this talk of mercy and compassion the concept of sin is not spoken of at all?

“I would ask them to pay



Cardinal Nichols, accompanied by trafficking survivors Al Bangura and Princess Inyang and Vatican spokesman Greg Burke.

more attention to what the concept of mercy is because the way in which mercy takes its expression is in forgiveness and forgiveness is about sin," he said.

"So certainly, in Westminster and in many of the dioceses in England and Wales – and I choose the word deliberately – there has been an explosion in the number of people going to Confession. Now you go to Confession because you are conscious of your sin, but just as important, you go to Confession to celebrate that sacrament because the wonder of the mercy of God is being refreshed within you".

He describes the Francis papacy as "a huge tonic, a revitalisation almost" for a great many people in the Church in England and Wales.

"The Pope has taken the notion in *Lumen Gentium* of the People of God, a foundational image of the Church and he has unpacked that and opened it up, and his favourite expression is that the Church is the company of 'missionary disciples' and that goes deep in his thinking."

I asked Cardinal Nichols if in his work on the Congregation for Bishops he could see that Pope Francis had refocused the job spec for bishops.

"The Pope is very explicit about this. In his addresses to Nuncios and to the Congregation for Bishops he is very very clear and he uses an ancient adage: if a man is very holy ask him to pray for us; if a man is very learned ask him to teach us; but for a Bishop I want a pastor; somebody who is close to his people, in his famous phrase, one who smells of sheep."

The cardinal stressed that Pope Francis' emphasis on all members of the Church being "missionary disciples" – expressed forcefully in *Evangelii Gaudium* – comes from the Aparecida Document, chiefly authored by the then Cardinal Bergoglio, and issued by the Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops after their 2007 meeting in Aparecida, Brazil. The document uses the phrase 'missionary disciples' 121 times.

Cardinal Nichols says the key to understanding Pope Francis is his Ignatian formation: "We must never forget that Pope Francis is a Jesuit formed in the Ignatian discipline, a very demanding discipline of trying to discern the Spirit; there is nothing novel about it, it is deeply rooted in the Church, but we've never had a Pope before that has been formed by this Ignatian discipline."

* * * * *

If Cardinal Nichols has any concerns about those parts of Chapter 8 of *Amoris Laetitia* – six paragraphs out of 325 – that have troubled Cardinal Raymond Burke and three other cardinals, two of whom are over 80 and without a vote in a conclave, he is keeping them to himself. He did not give a hint of any such concerns in Belfast.



Pope Francis speaking about St Margaret Bakhita in the context of modern-day slavery.

This chapter addresses the issue of pastoral support for Catholics in "irregular situations", refers to "mitigating factors in pastoral discernment" and appears to suggest that Communion for those who have divorced and civilly remarried may be permitted in certain cases.

Cardinal Burke's doubts

are not shared by many of the faithful in Belfast if the evening in St Brigid's Church is any gauge – he wasn't mentioned by anyone.

In the interview, I asked the cardinal if he shared any of the concerns of Cardinal Burke and the others. Cardinal Nichols replied: "For me it is very simple. Pope Francis is the Pope. He is who God has given us and, therefore, we follow his lead."

I pointed out that Cardinal Burke has said some serious things and indicated that he and his colleagues may publish "a formal correction" if the Pope does not reply to them and clear up the supposed doubts they have expressed. How would he view such a development?

The cardinal replied: "The Pope is the one who has been chosen under the influence of the Holy Spirit to lead the Church and we will follow his lead."

"I am not going to say anything more than that because I think the Pope's patience and reserve about this whole matter is exactly what we should observe."

Did he think *Amoris Laetitia* had changed any of the Church's teaching?

He replied: "There is no question of that. There is no question. The issues raised by *Amoris Laetitia* are not core doctrinal issues, these are about how do we live, in very traditional terms actually, everything in *Amoris Laetitia* is drawn from the tradition of the Church: how do we live the mercy of God and how do we enable people who feel judged, feel excluded, feel as if they have no place, to begin to explore that."

In reply to a question from the floor about whether the English Church might follow the Maltese bishops and oth-

ers in responding to *Amoris Laetitia* he said: "We are reflecting still, listening to what the priests say, to the doubt or anxieties or expectations and we will come in due course to express some guidance."

The current situation in the North featured briefly when Baroness Nuala O'Loan,

a columnist with *The Irish Catholic*, asked if the cardinal had any words for politicians or voters given that there was an election under way that was already "marked by sectarianism".

He replied: "There is only one thing really that I like to say to politicians and it is this. I think to play on fear, to foster fear, to appeal to fear as a political programme is a real betrayal of what politics should be about."

He added: "We see a lot of it at the moment. I think the challenge to political leaders is to appeal not to what is most fearful or worst in people but to appeal to what is best in people."

“I think across the Church the leadership of women should be broader”

He may have had President Trump in mind, as well as some politicians in Northern Ireland. In our interview, conducted shortly before the lecture, I asked if in the light of Speaker John Bercow ruling out an address by Mr Trump in Westminster Hall, of the rare kind that Pope Benedict XVI was invited to deliver, he felt there was a danger of Prime Minister May "cosying up too closely" to President Trump.

"I don't think", the cardinal replied, "the responsible meeting of political leaders" carried out "to put on a new footing the very particularly special relationship historically between America and Britain should ever be described as 'cosying up'."

He felt this was a matter of "serious politics and I think Prime Minister May is a very serious politician, a very dedicated politician and I'm quite sure she knows exactly what she is doing."

"I think the question of a State visit is a political question, it is a diplomatic question, it is not a question of popular opinion. And to me a State visit is not a reward to somebody with whom we agree, it is a serious act of diplomacy."

I wondered if the English and Welsh Church was experiencing anything like the crisis in vocations to the priesthood that we see in Ireland. "I don't think we are in a crisis in England and Wales", he said.

The situation varied from diocese to diocese and in Westminster "we had 7, 8, 6 new priests each year and in that sense, we are not doing too badly".

He reminded me that traditionally the Church in England and Wales had depended on priests from Ireland and although it was "probably



Cardinal Vincent Nichols speaking during his visit to Belfast.

a slightly bold thing to say" they were now "more able to provide for themselves" although there were many priests in London "from all over the world".

Enthusiasm

I did not detect in Cardinal Nichols any enthusiasm for a relaxation in the discipline of compulsory celibacy for priests or for women deacons.

"I personally value both the celibacy of the priesthood and the fact that it is restricted, as I would believe is the wish of the Lord, to men. I also find it difficult to separate diaconate out of the one Sacrament of Holy Orders."

He stressed his support for women in leadership roles in the Church and was clearly pleased to impart that the "vast majority of Catholic schools in England and Wales are led by women, as are so many organisations in the English Catholic Church".

"What I would fear, frankly, is that the leadership of women in the Church would simply be channelled into the Order of Deacon. And I think across the Church the leadership of women should be broader and more varied than that. I would just be a bit fearful if everything gets focussed on Orders".

* * * * *

It was nearly time for the cardinal to go and deliver his lecture but he was keen to stress again the idea of "missionary disciples".

"If you think of the Church as 'missionary disciples' then the clergy are those who back up and support and nurture the 'missionary disciples'. The clergy are not in that sense the front line of the Church and I think we have to be able to understand that."

Pope Francis has said many times that he expects his papacy to be a short one though countless members of the faithful fervently hope this will not be the case. However, having seen Cardinal Nichols in action, his stewardship and renewal of the Diocese of Westminster and the wonderful way he oversaw Benedict's visit to Britain, he could emerge as a strong European contender in the next conclave.

He is sure-footed, lives a simple life and has a very understated approach. I think he is one to watch in a future conclave. In just a few hours he certainly made a big impression on those who observed him in Belfast last week.

ⓘ A slightly shortened version of Cardinal Nichols' lecture is available at www.stbrigidsparishbelfast.org

Out&About

President in Peru



LIMA: President Michael D. Higgins on an official visit to Lima at an informal gathering of Irish missionaries based in Peru, hosted by the brothers of the Missionary Society of St James, from left front row, Sr Winifred Doyle IBVM; Fr Dermott Carthy SSC, Fr Cathal Gallagher SSC, Fr David Costello, Society of St James, President Michael D. Higgins, Fr Peter Hughes SSC, Fr Des Tynan, Society of St James and Sr Irene Reynolds IBVM. Back row from left: Sr Ann Donnelly, Sr Mary Ellizabeth Kirk, Sr Patricia McLoughlin, Justin Harman, Ambassador of Ireland to Argentina, Gerry O'Mara, Society of St James, Ann O'Connell IBVM, Ubo Caseras, Christian Brother and Fr Joe McCarthy, Society of St James. Photo: Maxwell's



KERRY: Students from 5th and 6th class from Blennerville primary school with the principal Terry O Sullivan as they celebrate Grandparents Day.



ARMAGH: The Call to Fatima lifetime gift set was presented to Bishop John McAreavey and Fr Michael McGinn of St Anthony's Parish in Craigavon by Michael Lavey and Mary Watkins, the President of the Legion of Mary for the parish.

IN SHORT

Celebrating Our Lady of Fatima in Westmeath

This year marks the centenary of the appearance at Fatima, Portugal of Our Lady to the three children, Blessed Jacinta and Blessed Francisco Marto and their cousin Sister Lucia Santos from May 13 to October 13, 1917.

In celebration of this event, all are invited to Holy Mass in the church of Saint John the Baptist Whitehall, in the parish of Coole, Co. Westmeath at 8pm on the six Fridays of Lent (except Saint Patrick's Day).

The programme is as follows: Friday, March 3, The Story of Fatima, Fr Donncha

Ó hAodh, Opus Dei; Friday, March 10, The First Secret of Fatima, Fr Shane O'Neill CC, Tramore; Wednesday, March 15, The Second Secret of Fatima, Fr Seán Maguire CC, Butlersbridge;

Friday, March 24, The Third Secret of Fatima, Fr Noel Weir CC, Mornington; Friday, March 31, The Rosary and Fatima, Fr John Walsh OP; Friday, April 7, The significance of Fatima for today, Fr John Nally PP, Ballynacargy.

Carlow joint diocesan pilgrimage to Luxembourg

Bishop Denis Nulty of Kildare & Leighlin and Bishop Michael Burrows, Cofl Bishop of

Cashel, Waterford, Lismore, Ferns, Ossory and Leighlin will lead a historic joint diocesan pilgrimage in June from Co. Carlow to Echternach, Luxembourg in honour of St Willibrord.

St Willibrord was ordained in Co. Carlow in the 7th Century and is patron saint of Luxembourg.

In late Spring Carlow County Museum will open an exhibition about St Willibrord and his enormous impact on the continent.

On the Tuesday after Pentecost Sunday, June 6, there will be the UNESCO World Heritage Status annual 'hopping procession' in his honour in Echternach.

This procession sees upwards of 30,000

people descend on the town to honour their patron saint.

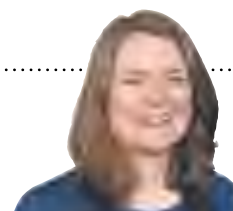
Bishop Nulty and Bishop Burrows will lead the historic pilgrimage from Sunday, June 4 to Wednesday, June 7.

For bookings and itinerary contact Tully's Travel Agents, Carlow Town, on 059-9136100 by early March or see www.tullystravel.ie

Fatima DVD gains backing in time for anniversary

The Irish-made film *The Call to Fatima* has received the backing of both the Fatima Shrine and the Portuguese government in exclusively promoting

Edited by Mags Gargan
mags@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



MAYO: Fifty young people from Ballyhaunis parish received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Archbishop Michael Neary.



KERRY: Relatives gathered in prayer at the monument to Bro. John Conway in St John's Park, Tralee. Bro. John Conway was murdered with priests and nuns 40 years ago by a guerrilla force in Musami Mission, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Fr Bernard Healy and Fr Pat Crean-Lynch PP led the prayers with the relatives: Shelia Conway, Paul McDonagh, Phil McDonagh, Phil Kelliher, Eileen Tobin, Michael Conway (brother of Bro. John Conway) Fr Bernard Healy, Pat Tobin and Ann Sheehan. Photo: John Cleary



DUBLIN: Forth year students from St Francis Capuchin College in Rochestown, Cork on a visit to the Capuchin Day Centre for Homeless People in Dublin where they presented Bro. Kevin Crowley with a box of socks. Also pictured: Bro. Martin Bennett and Fr Bryan Shortall.

the 100th anniversary of the Fatima apparitions.

According to filmmakers Thomas and Solvita McCormack, the award-winning DVD, now translated to 12 languages, "emphasises the importance of the Fatima Message left behind by Servant of God Sr Lucia for our times".

The support for the film means that the events at Fatima in 1917 can be brought to schools, together with free copies of Sr Lucia's own book, *Call from the Message of Fatima*, which the McCormack's hope will be of

special use to teachers preparing pupils for first Holy Communion, Confession and Confirmation. For more information, email srluciacalltofatima@gmail.com or visit the new online Fatima Store www.calltofatima.ecwid.com

'Strictly' fundraiser for Leprosy Mission

The Leprosy Mission is hosting a 'Strictly Dancing Competition' as a fundraiser on Saturday, February 25 in Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel, Killiney, Dublin.

Despite being the oldest known disease, leprosy is still not fully understood, in particular how it is transmitted.

The Leprosy Mission began in Ireland in 1874 and its research focuses on transmission, prevention and treatment.

Tickets for The Leprosy Mission Strictly Dancing Competition, where 30 people will dance and entertain, are now available at <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/strictly-your-best-foot-forward-tickets-30949310220> or by calling Leprosy.ie on (01) 293 85 70.

CLARE

Holy Rosary hour marking the centenary of the apparitions at Fatima at the square Ennis, first Saturday, March 4 from 2.30-3.30pm. All welcome.

Talks for adult and youth during Lent every Sunday and Wednesday at 7.30pm at Ennis Parish Centre hall, starting on March 5 for seven weeks by Fr Ger Fitzgerald and lay people from the Neo-catechumenal Way.

CORK

Catholic Bible teaching with Br Johnson Sequeira on Tuesday, March 21 in Leahy's Farm from 6-9.30pm; Wednesday, March 22 Glounthaune Parish Hall, 10.30am-4pm; Friday, March 24 Leahy's Farm 10am-1pm; Saturday, March 25 Mitchelstown Parish Hall 10.30am-7pm; Sunday, March 26 Glounthaune 11am-9pm.

DUBLIN

Ceiliúadh Naomh Pádraig: celebrate Saint Patrick in a bi-lingual gathering with ceol, dánta and stories. Dé hAoine 3ú Márta/ Friday, March 3, 7.30pm, 13 Geraldine Street, (off Berkeley Road), Dublin 7. Organised by the Legion of Mary.

Want to get fit? Embrace God in nature and build true friendships? Join other young adults (20's & 30's) for reflective hikes around Dublin area. Monthly event. Contact: siobhan.tighe@dublindiocese.ie or see <https://www.facebook.com/wewalk-godsway>

Life to the Full (Jn 10:10) Book Club for young adults (20's & 30's) every Thursday from 7pm-8.30pm in St Paul's Church, Arran Quay (Smithfield).

Divine Mercy Mass 7.30pm every Tuesday in St Saviour's Church, Dominick Street followed by holy hour. Also prayers of Divine Mercy every day at 2.30pm at the shrine with the relic of St Faustina.

Presentation Brothers are running their 10th Alpha series in Glashule on Tuesday evenings from 7.30pm for 10 weeks throughout February and March. For more information, email alpha@PresentationBrothers.org

The 11th annual Candleweek in Cherry Orchard parish runs every night at 7.30pm from Monday, February 27 – Friday, March 3.

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick each Wednesday evening in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Monea, at 7.30pm. All welcome. www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

GALWAY

Our Lady's School of Evangelisation, Unbound Programme of Healing Prayers with Fr Benny McHale and John McCarthy from 8-10pm on March 6, 13, 20 and 27 at Abbey Hall, Newtownsmith. Contact 087-9980525.

KILKENNY

Traditional Latin Mass every Sunday at 5pm in St Patrick's Church, College Road, Kilkenny (opposite St Kieran's College).

LIMERICK

Catholic Bible teaching with Br Johnson Sequeira (www.jcilm.info) from 7-10pm with Maranatha prayer group on Saturday, March 25 in Mitchelstown Parish Hall from 10.30am-7pm and Sunday, March 26 in Glounthaune from 11am-9pm. Further details from: Chris 085-2392207.

Eucharist Adoration each Tuesday and Friday in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel,

Abbeyfeale following 8.15am Mass until 10pm, also on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 6-8pm.

OFFALY

Catholic Bible teaching with Br Johnson Sequeira (www.jcilm.info), Church of the Assumption, Tullamore, on Saturday, March 18 from 10.30am-6pm and Sunday, March 19 from 2-6pm. Further details from: Chris 085-2392207.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoe, 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 on the last Sunday of each month at 3pm.

WATERFORD

New Beginnings in Faith: A series of talks given by members of the Neo Catechumenal Way each Sunday and Wednesday at 7.30pm in St Paul's Parish Centre, Waterford.

Catholic Bible teaching with Br Johnson Sequeira on Tuesday, March 21 in Leahy's Farm 6pm-9.30pm and Thursday, March 23 in Treacy's Hotel, Waterford 11am-9pm.

Taizé prayer in Good Counsel Chapel, New Ross from 8.15-9pm every Friday during Lent commencing March 3 and concluding with 'Prayer around the Cross' on April 14.

WESTMEATH

To mark the centenary of the appearance of Our Lady at Fatima the church of Saint John the Baptist Whitehall, in the parish of Coole will host a programme of events on the six Fridays of Lent (except St Patrick's Day) at 8pm starting on Friday, March 3 with The Story of Fatima by Fr Donncha Ó hAodh, Opus Dei.

WICKLOW

St Patrick's Prayer Meeting on Tuesday evenings at 8pm in the Scout Hall, South Quay, Wicklow. All are welcome to get together for prayer, scripture, music and a cuppa.

Holy Hour of Adoration, Prayer and Music continues every Wednesday, 8pm-9pm, in St Patrick's Church, Wicklow Town. All welcome. You can also join us on the live stream: <http://www.churchservices.tv/spatrickchurchwicklow>

World Report

IN BRIEF

US becomes 'warmer' towards religious communities

A new study in the United States has found that people there have more positive feelings towards religious groups today than four years ago. Undertaken by the Pew Research Centre, people surveyed were asked to rate groups on a 'feeling thermometer' ranging from 0 to 100.

The results showed nearly all religious communities receiving better feedback than in 2014. Catholics and Jews received the most positive ratings, at 66 and 67 respectively, both showing a four-point increase. Buddhists gained a rating of 60, followed by Mormons and Hindus, at 54 and 58. Only the rating for Evangelical Christians, at 61, remained unchanged since 2014. Significant increase in positivity was shown for both Muslim and atheist communities, with Muslims moving from 40 to 48, and atheists growing from 41 to 50.

The survey also found wide variation in the ratings that U.S. religious groups give one another. While for the most part Jews and Christians tend to rate each other warmly, atheists and Evangelicals continue to view each other in a negative light.

Holy Land church destroyed by arson reopens

A church on the shores of the Sea of Galilee which was destroyed by arson in 2015 has reopened.

The Church of the Loaves and Fishes, named for the miracle performed by Jesus in feeding the multitude, was refurbished at a cost of \$1million, of which the State of Israel donated \$400,000.

Three Jewish extremists were subsequently tried for their parts in the attack and await sentencing.

Attending the interfaith reopening ceremony for the church, Israel's President Reuven Rivlin said: "We stand up for religious freedom because, as a people, we know very well what it means to suffer religious persecution."

"And we stand up for religious freedom because we are a democratic state – who believe in the rights for everyone to worship God according to their belief."

Sainthood cause of Sr Lucia for Fatima advances

The first step in the Cause for the Canonisation of Fatima seer Sr Lucia has been completed in Portugal. In time for the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of Fatima, the Diocese of Coimbra announced on February 13 that its investigation into the life of Sr Lucia has reached its conclusion and is ready for submission to Rome.

The announcement came on the 11th anniversary of the nun's death.

Despite a special dispensation granted by Pope Benedict XVI to allow for Sr Lucia's cause to proceed so soon – in 2008 just two years after her death – Sr Angela Coelho, vice-postulator for the seer's cause said the diocesan examination had taken a long time and 30 fulltime staff due to the volume of letters and papers penned by a woman who lived to her 98th year.

"Each page that Sr Lucia wrote had

to be meticulously analysed and we are talking of a universe of 10,000 letters that we managed to gather and of a diary with 2,000 pages, in addition to other more personal texts," Sr Angela explained.

She added that Sr Lucia was "a woman who lived almost 98 years, who corresponded with Popes, since Pius XII to John Paul II [and] with cardinals".

Mosul may be site of Christian mass grave, warns watchdog

A Christian watchdog in Iraq has warned that troops advancing on the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) frontline in Mosul may be about to uncover the site of a mass grave for Christians slaughtered by the terror group during its time in control of the city.

The grim prospect has been offered by the Shlomo Organisation, a body tasked with documenting crimes committed against Christians in Iraq since the rise of ISIS.

According to the local *Ahl-ul-Bayt* news agency, Shlomo's head, Khals Aichoa Barbar has pointed out that of at least 150 Christians abducted by ISIS from towns and villages around Mosul, just 13 have reappeared alive, and only two have been located shot dead.

Murdered

Stating further that Shlomo has knowledge of a mass grave inside the former Baghdad School in Mosul, Basar said his organisation



Iraqi police examine the contents of a mass grave

has learned that a number of Christians were murdered there, but added, "we have no knowledge of the number of victims in the grave". "We are waiting for the liberation of [that part] of the city to document the grave."

A renewed offensive on the part of the Iraqi army and militias to retake Mosul got underway on February 19, with forces making early gains into the southern fringes of

the city. The battle is expected to be a tougher prospect for liberating forces, however, as the western side of the city is not only still heavily populated – some 650,000 civilians are trapped – but the architecture there is older, promising narrow streets through which soldiers must make their way in attempting to dislodge ISIS fighters who have had months to fortify their positions.

However, the officer commanding Iraqi forces has sounded a positive note on the advance, which at the time of reporting, had retaken Mosul's main airport.

General Abdul Wahab al-Saade insists that the fight against ISIS in west Mosul will be shorter than that in the city's east as "a lot of them [ISIS] have been killed and morale for them is down now".

Iraqi Muslims repair Christian church

It has been reported that Muslims in the frontline Iraqi city of Mosul have prepared the Virgin Mary Chaldean church for the benefit of Christian families returning after the left-bank of the city was liberated from the grip of so-called Islamic State (ISIS).

Having served as a logistical base for the terror group during its occupation of Mosul, the church was spared serious damage. Liberated in the advance of the Iraqi army, and now cleared of the potential



threat of booby traps, the church became a hive of activity in recent weeks when Muslim volunteers, mainly young people from the city, gathered to clear rubble and make the church building usable for Christian worship once more.

The clean-up operation was completed in time for the return of the first Christians, reported to be three Armenian families who have returned to the homes they occupied before the 2014 onslaught by ISIS.

Florist to bring religious freedom case to US Supreme Court

An American floral artist at the centre of a legal action around her refusal to supply flowers to a same-sex wedding is to take her case to the Supreme Court after a Washington state court ruled that she can be legally compelled to participate in events despite objections based on her deeply held beliefs.

Barronelle Stutzman had been sued by a former customer and was ordered to pay a fine and legal fees in the case. Now lawyers for Stutzman have announced plans to take the case further. "It's no wonder that so many people are rightly calling on President Trump to sign an executive order to protect our religious freedom," said senior counsel Kristen Waggoner. "That freedom is clearly at risk for Barronelle and so many other Americans, and we will ask the US Supreme Court to hear this case and reverse this grave injustice."

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US protests against immigration policy continue



People participate in a protest against US President Donald Trump's immigration policy and the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in New York City. As *The Irish Catholic* went to press this week, President Trump was expected to sign a new executive order on the issue of migrants. Photo: CNS

Fresh clashes in D.R. Congo as elections are threatened

A government official in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has announced that the much-anticipated presidential election may not go ahead after all this year due to the cost of staging such a poll.

The announcement is a bitter blow to the nation's Catholic bishops who had worked with opposing sides since late in 2016 when President Joseph Kabila indicated that he would not step down after his term-limit of two years expired.

That move caused an outbreak of violence which was only curbed when the bishops managed to keep all parties at the negotiating table towards a New Year's Eve agreement that promised polling for a new president by the end of this year.

Following the signing of the agreement towards elections, Archbishop Marcel Utambi Tapa of Kisangani issued

an appeal to the United Nations for assistance in ensuring the details of the document were met by all sides.

Cost

Citing a cost for polling DRC's 30 million people at €1.8billion, Budget Minister Pierre Kangudua warned that the nation would not be able to meet that cost in 2017. The minister's announcement came amid a fresh wave of violence in DRC's Kasai-Central region, where the military has reportedly been using heavy-handed

tactics to quell an uprising by a militia group known as Kamuina Nsapu.

It is alleged that during the most recent clashes, soldiers fired indiscriminately into a crowd, killing 39 women. Since the clashes began on February 9, at least 101 people are thought to have been killed.

Observers are now warning that the apparent efforts of President Kabila to hold onto power will only increase such violent outbreaks.

Pastor killed in outbreak of violence in Bangui

A Christian pastor has been killed in his church in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic (CAR) by militants angered at the loss of their leader in a military raid.

Pastor Jean-Paul Sankagui of the Eglise du Christ en Centrafrique (ECC) was one of at least three people reported killed, with a further 26 injured in the wake of an operation staged by CAR military and UN peacekeepers. Pastor Sankagui's church, and at least one other place of worship, was demolished during the violent outbreak.

US bishops back conscience defence Bill for doctors

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has insisted that a conscience protection Bill currently before Congress is vital in protecting medical professionals from being compelled to carry out abortions.

In a letter to lawmakers, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, chair of the bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities,

and Archbishop William Lori, chair of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Religious Freedom, said that Catholic physicians and other religious medics are "especially at risk" from policies on abortion which take no account of conscientious objection, adding, that "while existing federal laws already protect conscientious objection to abortion in theory, this

protection has not proved effective in practice".

For this reason, the prelates write, the proposed Conscience Protection Act of 2017 "will address the deficiencies that block effective enforcement of existing laws, most notably by establishing a private right of action allowing victims of discrimination to defend their own rights in court".

The Conscience Protection Bill has been tabled in Congress by Republican Senators James Lankford, Diane Black and Jeff Fortenberry. Senator Lankford has said the Bill, "is needed to give health care providers the right to provide medical care without violating their deeply held beliefs. Americans have very different views about abortion".

Vatican roundup

Vatican and Russian Orthodox Church strengthen links

The Russian Orthodox Church has announced plans to strengthen cooperation with the Vatican in the area of monitoring Christian persecution in the Middle East and other areas.

The announcement came ahead of a meeting in Havana, Cuba, on February 12 between Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Metropolitan Hilarion, the Russian Orthodox chairman of the Department of External Church Relations.

Speaking before that meeting, the Metropolitan said: "We keep in touch on this issue, and I believe during the talks with Cardinal Koch we will try to institutionalise the joint work we are doing already on the monitoring of the issue of Christians' persecutions in the Middle East and other regions. I believe it is the most important thing we can do together right now. And we will try to better organise the basis of this work."

The Havana meeting came exactly one year after the historic meeting between Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill in the same city, the first such encounter between leaders of the Churches in 1,000 years. During that meeting, the leaders had joined in calling on the international community to defend the persecuted Christians of Syria and Iraq.

Pope willing to mediate in Venezuelan crisis

Pope Francis has "expressed his availability" to mediate between the political opponents in the ongoing Venezuelan crisis.

As the Latin American country continues to struggle under mounting economic woes and a seemingly intractable divide between the administration of President Nicolas Maduro and opposition figures,

Archbishop Aldo Giordano, the apostolic nuncio in Caracas said that "The Pope has expressed his availability, if [both parties] consider it useful".

Previous talks between the sides broke down in December when Mr Maduro's government failed to abide by the agreed terms, specifically in relation to the release of political prisoners.

Vatican appoints Cardinal Burke to Guam trial

The Vatican has sent Cardinal Raymond Burke to the island nation of Guam to serve as a judge at the canonical trial of Archbishop Anthony Apuron, the prelate removed from office in the wake of allegations in 2016 of child abuse.

The appointment of Cardinal Burke, a leading canon lawyer and a former prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, was made by Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

The dispatching of so senior a Vatican figure, and one who has been identified in quarters as an 'opponent' to Pope Francis – given his links to both the *Amoris Laetitia* dubia and the recent row within the Order of Malta – quickly prompted media speculation as to the reasons lying behind the choosing of Cardinal Burke for the Guam mission.

The cardinal himself has been quick to dampen rumours, stressing in an interview before his departure that he does not view his mission as a "punishment by the Pope".

"I'm certainly not experiencing it as a punishment! It's normal for a cardinal, depending on his preparation and availability, to receive special assignments for the good of the Church.

"I wasn't surprised by the request of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and I accepted it, conscious of the grave responsibility it implied, but without any thought of other motivations on the part of Pope Francis or the congregation."

LENTEN AND EASTER

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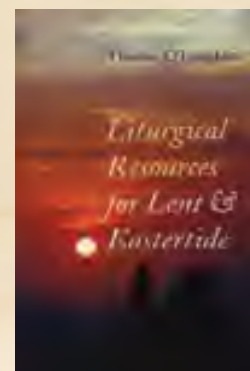
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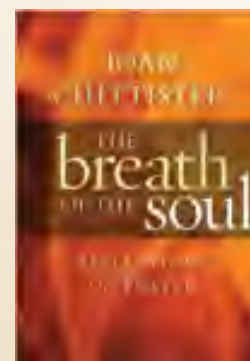
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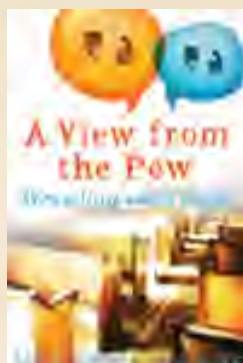
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Letter from Rome

On the 'Great Storm' and the trouble with the tremendous



John L. Allen Jr

Rudolph Otto famously described the religious sentiment as the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, "the tremendous and fascinating mystery", but to be honest, that's probably not how most Catholics experience it.

For many Catholics, the faith may be primarily about community and worship, or about a set of doctrinal convictions, or an ethical code, even a springboard for efforts to change the world. Catholics, however, generally don't go looking for experiences of the tremendous, seeking signs, wonders and miracles under every rock.

Except, of course, those who do.

In reality, Catholicism is a vast mosaic of styles of religious faith and practice. Some pieces of that mosaic get more attention than others, generally because they engage in political fights, hold press conferences, send out tweets or put up posters in Rome complaining about the Pope.

Others, however, exist in a sort of subculture, flying below the radar but being no less consequential. Such, for instance, is the world of private revelations, usually with an apocalyptic twist, that often exists in a state of chronic tension with ecclesiastical officialdom.

Reminder

We got a reminder last week from the Archdiocese of Denver, Colorado, which issued a statement debunking the alleged revelations associated with a visionary with the everyman-sounding name of Charlie Johnston.

The archdiocese said a theological commission had examined Johnston's purported revelations and issued a warning to be "prudent and cautious". Moreover, the statement said, Johnston is not allowed to speak in official venues in the archdiocese.

"The events of 2016/2017 have shown that Mr Johnston's alleged visions were not accurate, and the archdiocese urges the faithful not to condone or support further attempts to reinterpret them as



Charlie Johnston.

valid," the statement said.

The reference is to the fact that Johnston had predicted that Barack Obama would not finish his second term, which in fact did happen and was followed by the usual peaceful transfer of power. (That, of course, is the danger with the predictions game ... sooner or later, they come back to haunt you.)

"The conflict will begin, Johnston believes, with an Islamic jihad, but the real showdown will be with China"

The person who posted a blog about Johnston's revelations that triggered the statement, a woman named Beckie Hesse, quickly apologised, saying by "approved" she was referring not directly to Johnston but to Our Lady of Fatima. Here's the back story.

Johnston is in his early 60s, and was born a fundamentalist Protestant. In 1991, he was received into the Catholic Church. He claims to have been receiving visits from Jesus, Mary, the Archangel Gabriel and other heavenly figures since early childhood, and says he's guided in his prophetic mission by three Catholic priests.

The Archangel Gabriel is his primary muse, and most of his revelations are based on things he claims were revealed to him by Gabriel. The essence of Johnston's message is that a period of

global tumult began in May 2009 that he calls "the Great Storm": Governments will fall, economies will collapse, and technological systems will dissolve.

A great global civil war will ensue, beginning in North Korea and driven by China. Russia will eventually unite with the United States (interesting to contemplate what Johnston must make of the Trump-Putin relationship) and help us endure until a "Great Rescue" through the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The conflict will begin, Johnston believes, with an Islamic jihad, but the real showdown will be with China.

Originally, Johnston prophesied that the Great Rescue would come in late 2017, followed by the unification of the faithful into one flock under one shepherd and the building of a Shrine of Thanksgiving on Mount Meeker in Colorado, where Johnston concluded a cross-country pilgrimage in 2012.

All of this may strike many as preposterous, or silly, or any number of other things. What one would be ill-advised to do, however, is to dismiss it as marginal or meaningless.

Revelation

Private revelation has long had a powerful appeal in Catholicism, with the reputed Marian apparitions at Medjugorje being the most obvious current example. Even the sort of gentle mockery

we recently heard from Pope Francis, who said Mary isn't "the head of a post office that every day sends a different letter", doesn't stop tens of thousands of pilgrims from visiting every year. (Actually, Francis's own inclinations are a bit of a mystery, since he'll poke fun at Medjugorje in one breath but in another profess his fascination with the apocalyptic novel *Lord of the World* by Robert Hugh Benson.)

There's a set of approved private revelations, such as those associated with St Teresa of Avila, but beyond that there's a vast galaxy of speculation and ferment that's in a kind of ecclesiastical limbo, neither condemned nor condoned.

"The devil gave the world 100 years to lose itself in perdition, but the deadline is up this year"

For instance, there's a popular conviction making the rounds that the devil gave the world 100 years to lose itself in perdition, but the deadline is up this year because it's the 100th anniversary of the Fatima revelations.

End-time speculation, however, is only one example of a movement that the learned classes in the Church tend to ignore, because it doesn't fit their tastes or worldviews – charismatic spirituality, premised on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is another, as is the vast interest in exorcism and

demonic combat.

Generally, these subcultures come into view only when a long-fester problem erupts – the celebrated case of Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo, the onetime faith healer and exorcist dubbed the 'Zambezi zinger', who eventually left the Church, is a classic case in point.

What experience would seem to show is that neglecting these movements hardly makes them go away. Instead, the challenge would seem to be the slow, patient work of engaging these subcultures and their leaders, pruning excesses but also encouraging where possible, to ensure that people don't go elsewhere, often with far less quality control, to feed their spiritual interests.

That way, if officialdom does have to intervene at some point, as Denver did this week, it won't feel like it's coming from the outside.

By the way, we journalists need to shoulder some share of responsibility too. We often purport to cover the Catholic Church, but in reality we're covering only those expressions of it that happen to interest us or resonate with our own experience.

Taking these movements seriously can be a bit of a stretch, but to invoke the famous phrase from James Joyce, this is the Catholic Church, so get used to it: "Here comes everybody!"

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of Cruxnow.com



Paul Keenan

A new front for ISIS in Egypt

Gamal Tawfiq, a Coptic Christian schoolteacher, was walking home from work when his killers struck on February 16. Having been stalked through the streets of el Arish, the largest city on Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Tawfiq was shot from a passing motorcycle, on which the killers then made their hasty escape.

The death of Tawfiq was the second shooting of a Christian in el Arish in less than a week. On February 12, a vet, Bahgat Zakher, was gunned down, another in a growing list of Coptic Christians murdered across Egypt, including another in el Arish back in January, that of a local shopkeeper murdered in his place of business.

To now, the raft of murders has been blamed by observers on separate and unknown killers, acting individually though bound by their intolerance of the minority Coptic community in their midst.

Strand

With Tawfiq's killing however, security sources pointed to the dark hand of a group known today as the ISIS-Sinai Province (also ISIL-Sinai Province), and in so doing, added another strand to an escalating campaign to secure a foothold for so-called Islamic State (ISIS) in Egypt.

Long the site of militant activity against rule from distant Cairo, Sinai has since 2011 been the area of operations for Ansar



Bayt al-Maqdis (Supporters of Jerusalem), a militant grouping behind multiple attacks on army and police personnel.

Crucially, in 2014, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis pledged allegiance to the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi and commenced attacks in that terror group's name, changing its own moniker to ISIS-Sinai Province at the same time.

The move has put 'soft target' Christians directly in the crosshairs.

As part of a drive to impose itself upon the populace of Sinai, ISIS turned to its online platforms to launch 'Tracking Down the Apostates of Egypt' which urged

a campaign of secret reporting (via an social media link to ISIS) to expose those to be targeted for activities – or an existence – at odds with the radical Islamic message espoused by the group.

“The move has put ‘soft target’ Christians directly in the crosshairs”

Thus, in addition to policemen and soldiers who thwart the will of ISIS, and the catch-all bogeymen of “crusaders and Zionists”, Christian leaders are nominated for summary execution.

Unfortunately for the Coptic

community across Egypt, already existing within a system that has proved less than speedy in dealing with much-needed protections for the vulnerable minority, ISIS has cast a wide net in terms of proposed targets for the administration of President Abdel Fattah al Sisi to fret about. The inevitable effect will be a slow descent of Copts along the ladder of priorities as Mr al Sisi diverts his security forces to ISIS challenges.

These are now numerous.

Take for example news of the February 9 rocket attack from Sinai to Israel's Red Sea resort of Eilat, claimed on behalf of ISIS. The lack

of casualties or damage will have done little to dampen extremist joy at the act or ISIS recruiting hopes in Egypt.

On the same day, ISIS 'named and shamed' Muslim clerics in Egypt and across the across the wider Arab world now deserving of attack by its supporters for voicing opposition to the ISIS message.

Meanwhile, observers of the political situation in the Gaza Strip have begun to sound warnings that ISIS is on a collision course with the ruling Hamas movement, which, having previously shown a measure of affinity with al Baghdadi's outfit, now risks being swept aside.

“It is an easy prediction that ISIS will not quietly give up on Sinai”

The implications of such a scenario are nothing less than apocalyptic for the region, and it is not hard to predict that political interests on all sides will stop at nothing to stamp out the ISIS virus before it can take hold.

However, as it continues to lose ground in Iraq, Syria and Libya (the latter once mooted as the new front for operations), it is also an easy prediction that ISIS will not quietly give up on Sinai.

The only truly unpredictable element is how long before another Christian exodus begins.

A dangerous stand-off between Church and State

Long before he assumed the highest office in the United States, President Donald Trump's contradictory statements on everything from the war in Iraq to abortion were subjected to quizzically raised brows and prime-time debates. None of which has done the billionaire businessman any harm as he harangues and denounces anyone brazen enough to try and point this out to him now.

A more robust challenge to his art of doublespeak may, however, be rising across the land, one with its seeds in the actions of one desperate woman in the state of Colorado.

Appointment

On February 15, illegal immigrant (some prefer undocumented migrant) Jeanatte Vizguerra deliberately missed her appointment with Immigration and Customs



Enforcement (ICE) officers and instead headed to the First Unitarian Society church of Denver where she announced she was seeking sanctuary from the deportation she knew must be coming.

For the record, Jeanatte has been present in the

United States since 1997, her husband is an American citizen and three of her four children were born there, though she has been the subject of a deportation order since 2011 (unenforced to allow sufficient time for her to apply – unsuccessfully – for

residency).

Quite aside from any debate over the correct/merciful/just course of action for Jeanatte today is the question over the response by agents of the state to her simultaneously novel and ancient course of action.

“He can hardly ignore the Christian calling to help the vulnerable and dispossessed”

At the time of writing, said officers were holding off from entering a place of worship to enforce a deportation order, this being in keeping with an instruction from the Obama administration that listed churches and schools among other sites where such actions were to be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

Indeed, in a separate case last week, members of ICE

undertaking an operation against suspected illegal migrants in Virginia opted to wait outside the Rising Hope Mission Methodist Church in Alexandria before swooping on their suspects as they exited the building. (That action has prompted a major petition drive by the ecumenical campaign group Faithful America.)

If and for how long this stand-off policy endures are the questions of the moment.

Situation

As Jeanatte's situation became the focus of US networks last week, news began to filter out that other churches across the United States – at least 800, it has been estimated – have proclaimed themselves ready and prepared to provide similar sanctuary space to those under threat of deportation (this in addition to a growing number of citizens apparently ready to offer

rooms in homes).

And herein lies the challenge to Mr Trump's credibility.

The man who built his campaign on promises to oust millions of illegal immigrants is also the president who, eager to please his evangelical (and other religious) base, has made strong and positive soundings about protecting rights of conscience for those of faith.

The president may argue that what he had in mind on this latter point is the right of florists to refuse service for same-sex weddings, but he can hardly ignore the Christian calling to help the vulnerable and dispossessed.

Mr Trump might choose to play to his tough man image on all, and the legal opinion is that the law is on his side if he does so.

But what then? Once a church door is kicked in, the damage will not be undone by cosmetic repair.

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

Commission campaigning for abortion

Dear Editor, The State-funded Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) is now campaigning for abortion. In its statement to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on February 13 in Geneva, and in its report submitted to the committee in January, it focused on “a woman’s right to bodily autonomy” and called for Ireland “to revise its legal framework on abortion”.

In other words, repeal the Eighth Amendment which saves lives of innocent babies who should enjoy the most basic human right to life and to equality.

The IHREC view is that the “bodily autonomy” of a mother always trumps the human right of a baby to its life, and that the baby has no dignity or worth in this re-engineered interpretation of human rights and equality that is promoted by the liberal elite with help from a supportive and campaigning media. The IHREC ignores the responsibility of the mother in its blind pursuit of her rights.

In its report to the UN Committee, the IHREC produced evidence stating that after consultation with women, 212 responses out of 217 received favoured repeal of

the Eighth Amendment. What a contrast to 70% of the published responses to the Citizens’ Assembly consultation favouring retention of the life-saving Amendment? What a contrast between a culture of death and a culture of life and equality? Is this a case of the IHREC discovering ‘alternative facts’?

Its report disguises the vast extent of the opposition to repealing the Eighth Amendment. Is that what is called ‘fake news’?

*Yours etc.,
Matt Moran,
Waterfall, Cork.*

Assembly heard sanitised version of abortion

Dear Editor, When first I learned that Dr Patricia Lohr, Medical Director of British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), was to address the Citizen’s Assembly (CA), I was pleased that this would occur. Dr Lohr would be in a position to explain exactly what is involved.

Ms Justice Laffoy, of the CA, made it clear that speakers were to dwell on facts only. However, Dr Lohr took it from this that, while she would dwell on facts, she was free to omit those facts

she considered unpalatable.

And so it was. According to her supplied script, she omitted any reference to the deliberate taking of human (unborn) life, any reference to the words ‘baby’, the 3rd trimester (when the taking of life is most gruesome), ‘feticide’ (related to ‘homicide’), or other words that might cause offence. The wording was so clinical that she might have been referring to the removal of a defective appendix.

With her address thus

sanitised, she was able to avoid the truth, and deal instead with differences between Irish and British women seeking abortions.

Equally surprising, her audience seemed to play along with this. She was indeed asked questions, including cost comparisons between those of medical and surgical abortions. But these did not address the main issue, i.e. how does the need arise in the first instance, the consequences for women, and particularly,

the deliberate taking of human (unborn) life. She was thus able to avoid also, the ‘roasting’ she deserved.

The questions asked were not at all adequate to be put to the medical director of a leading organisation. This organisation (BPAS), carries out abortions in the UK in its 40+ clinics. It is thus deriving benefit from an abominable trade.

*Yours etc.,
Donal O’Driscoll,
Blackrock,
Co. Dublin.*

Favouring accuracy of translation over aesthetics

Dear Editor, Oscar Wilde once said of the Palace of Westminster, “The Lords Temporal say nothing, the Lords Spiritual have nothing to say, and the House of Commons has nothing to say and says it”.

Not that Fr Tom Whelan (IC 09/02/2017) has nothing to say, but he is imposing on us another era of liturgical turmoil in pursuit of yet another English translation of the Mass without firstly and indispensably addressing the meaning of the Mass itself. The disagreements surrounding the current translation reflect, *inter*

alia, conflicting Eucharistic and other theologies.

Lex orandi, lex credendi!

His argument is primarily one of compromising accuracy of translation in favour of aesthetics. He equates translation with interpretation despite the latter’s dependence on its faithfulness to the former. He resorts to the old chestnut “consubstantial”, any difficulty with which can be offset by suitable catechesis as happened with “transubstantiation” in the past.

Fr Whelan seems to imply that the text of the Mass should promote

selective politico/social agendas. He overlooks that we already pray for ecumenism and that Anglican communities closest to Catholicism dislike the pre-2011 translation as do the Ordinariate today.

Given the inter-regional chaos pertaining to *Amoris Laetitia*, his confidence in the “competency” of de-centralised decision makers in core matters liturgical seems rather presumptuous.

*Yours etc.,
Neil Bray,
Cappamore, Co. Limerick.*

Right to question Obama honour

Dear Editor, The article ‘Priest questions Dublin city honour for Obama’ in IC 09/02/2017 was well received. Fr O’Cochlain of Finglas rightly asks “Why honour a man who fermented war in Arabian countries and forced Catholics to wage war on innocent unborn?” He defended funding for abortion providers Planned Parenthood and through the Affordable Care Act sought to force religious institutions to offer contraceptives and abortion through insurance schemes.

He also contrived a scheme to swindle service personnel out of their earned Pension Funds – therefore rendering them unable to afford a visit to grandparents’ graves – while Mr Obama will wine/dine in Phoenix Park and visit some distant roots in Offaly. I look forward to more opposition and thank People Before Profit who led the walk-out by Dublin councillors.

*Yours etc.,
Elizabeth McCluskey,
Enniskillen,
Co. Fermanagh.*

It’s time for Ryan Tubridy to apologise

Dear Editor, I write in order to protest at the mockery of the Eucharist on *The Late Late Show*. Describing the Eucharist as ‘haunted bread’ was an outrageous slur against the Eucharist and Catholics across the island of Ireland. Think of all the young boys and girls who will be making their first Holy Communion this summer and all the people who do an hour in the Adoration chapel every week. Shame on Ryan Tubridy!

The recent episode of *The Late Late Show* for St Valentine’s Day was another low. The language and double meaning talk that went on was appalling. So it is time for the powers that be in RTÉ to have a chat with Ryan Tubridy and all our prayers would be answered if Mr Tubridy apologised to all the viewers next Friday night.

*Yours etc.,
Anne O’Sullivan,
Kanturk,
Co. Cork.*

Will society object to Muslim schools too?

Dear Editor, All of the main faiths in Europe and the Near East – Christianity, Islam and Judaism – are to some extent ascetic.

While the 2011 census indicated that 84% of the Irish population identified themselves as Catholic (Roman) it seems that the same census reported that the Muslim population had increased by just over 51% since the 2006 census.

The devastation in the Near East, Syria especially, is not only the fault of the EU and NATO but shows no sign of abating. The increase of Islamic cultured people may therefore be expected to continue.

As Article 44 of the Constitution makes it virtually impossible for the State to forcibly acquire schools from the Catholic Church, (it is assumed that Protestant schools are sacrosanct), it is likely that the only body of people who will be able to buy the schools or build their own will be the variously ascetic adherents of Islam.

I suspect that today’s Christiano-phobes will not find this to their liking. But I could be wrong.

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

Thank you to our priests

Dear Editor, Having listened to a priest on *The Late Late Show* saying that he felt his life was wasted, I would like to say a big thank you to all our hard-working Catholic priests.

Every day, by your word and the sacraments, you give us strength and direction to deal with whatever is happening in our lives and in the lives of those we love. Thank you also for your celibate state which means that you are fully available to help those in the parish who are going through difficult times.

It is no wonder that the Curé d’Ars exclaimed: “If we once understood the beauty of the Catholic priesthood, we would die of joy!”

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



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: Students from a Catholic school in Manila make the heart sign with their hands during the 'One Billion Rising' campaign. The global campaign, marked annually on Valentine's Day in more than 200 countries, demands an end to all forms of violence against women worldwide. Photos: CNS

PERU: Sr Teresa of the pop band Siervas is seen playing her bass guitar. Sr Teresa and 11 other women, who are members of the Servants of the Plan of God, have taken their inspirational music to other countries but also do social service work in Peru.



FRANCE: A 15-year-old Iraqi warms himself in front of a fire next to his tent in a makeshift migrant camp near Dunkirk.



VATICAN: Pope Francis is greeted during a meeting with participants in the Indigenous Peoples' Forum of the International Fund for Agricultural Development at the Vatican.



UNITED STATES: Members of the Crusaders for Life pro-life youth group rally against Planned Parenthood in Aurora, Illinois. It was one of many nationwide rallies calling on Congress to end federal funding of Planned Parenthood.



POLAND: A priest wearing a cassock takes part in the annual Polish Priests and Clerics Alpine Skiing Championships for the Pope John Paul II Cup in Wisla.

— Of — WINNING — and — LOSING



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

Our society tends to divide us up into winners and losers. Sadly, we don't often reflect on how this affects our relationships with each other, nor on what it means for us as Christians.

What does it mean? In essence, that our relationships with each other tend to be too-charged with competition and jealousy because we are too-infected with the drive to out-do, out-achieve and out-hustle each other.

For example, here are some of slogans that pass for wisdom today: Win! Be the best at something! Show others you're more talented than they are! Show that you are more sophisticated than others! Don't apologise for putting yourself first! Don't be a loser!

Work harder

These phrases aren't just innocent axioms cheerleading us to work harder; they're viruses infecting us so that most everything in our world now conspires with the narcissism within us to push us to achieve, to set ourselves apart from others, to stand out, to be at the top of the class, to be the best athlete, the best dressed, the best looking, the most musically talented, the most popular, the most experienced, the most travelled, the one who knows most about cars, or movies, or history, or sex, or whatever.

At all costs we drive ourselves to find something at which we can beat others. At all costs we try to somehow set ourselves apart from and above others. That idea is almost genetically engrained in us now.

And because of that we tend to misjudge others and misjudge our own meaning and purpose. We structure everything too much around achieving and standing out.

When we achieve, when we win, when we are better than others at something, our lives seem fuller; our self-image inflates and we feel confident and worthwhile. Conversely, when we cannot stand out, when we're just another face in the crowd, we struggle to maintain a healthy self-image.

Either way, we are forever struggling with jealousy and dissatisfaction because we cannot help constantly seeing our own lack of talent, beauty, and achievement in relationship to other's successes. And so we both envy and hate those who are talented, beautiful, powerful, rich and famous, holding them up for adulation even as we secretly wait for their downfall, like the crowd that praises Jesus on Palm Sunday and then screams for his crucifixion just five days later.

This leaves us in an unhappy place: how do we form community

with each other when our very talents and achievement are cause for jealousy and resentment, when they're sources of envy and weapons of competition? How do we love each other when our competitive spirits make us see each other as rivals?

Community can only happen when we can let the talents and achievements of others enhance our own lives and we can let our own talents and achievements enhance, rather than threaten, others.

But we're generally incapable of this. We're too infected with competitiveness to allow ourselves

to not let the achievements and talents of others threaten us and actualise our own talents in a way so as to enhance the lives of others rather than to let ourselves stand out.

“Our Christian faith invites us not to compare ourselves with others”

Like our culture, we too tend to divide people into winners and losers, admiring and hating the former, looking down on the latter, constantly sizing each other up, rating each other's bodies, hair, intelligence, clothing, talents and achievements. But, as we do this, we vacillate between feeling depressed and belittled when others outscore us or inflated and pompous when we appear superior

to them.

And this becomes ever more difficult to overcome as we become more obsessed with our need to stand out, be special, to sit above, to make a mark for ourselves. We live in a chronic, inchoate jealousy where the talents of others are perennially perceived as a threat to us. This keeps us both anxious and less than faithful to our Christian faith.

Our Christian faith invites us not to compare ourselves with others, to not make efforts to stand out, and to not let ourselves be threatened by and jealous of other's gifts. Our faith invites us to join a circle of life with those who believe that there is no need to stand out or be special, and who believe that other people's gifts are not a threat, but rather something which enriches all lives, our own included.

When we divide people into winners and losers then our talents and gifts become sources of envy and weapons of competition and superiority. This is true not just for individuals but for nations as well.

One of these competitive slogans within our culture tells us: Show me a good loser and I will show you a loser!

Well, seen in this light, Jesus was a loser. People were shaking their heads at his death, and there was no championship ring on his finger. He didn't look good in the world's eyes. A loser! But, in his underachieving we all achieved salvation. Somewhere there's a lesson there!

“When we divide people into winners and losers then our talents and gifts become sources of envy and weapons of competition and superiority”



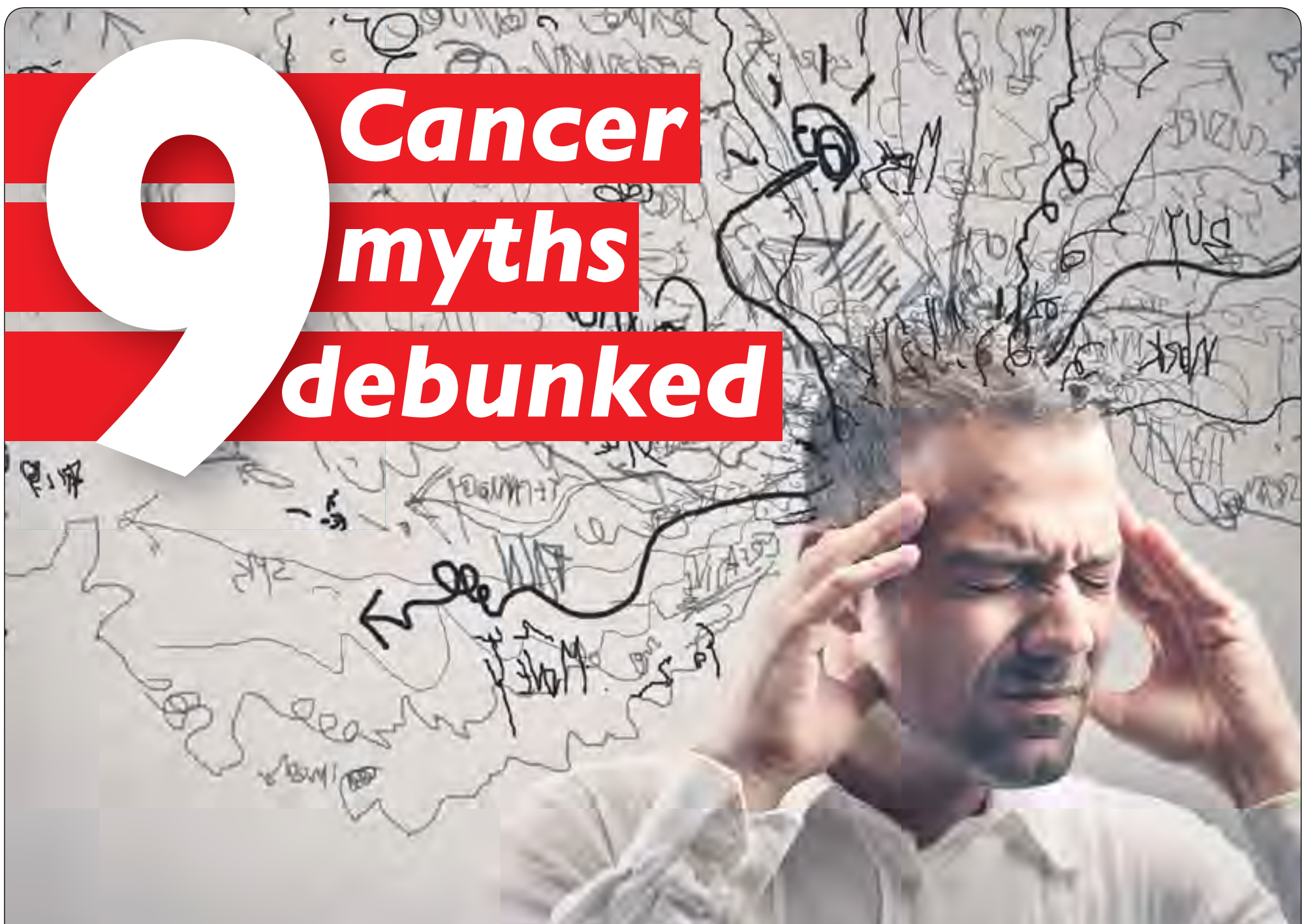
Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, February 23, 2017

Personal Profile

Letting the little children come

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Your body is a Ferrari car," says Dr Robert O'Connor. "It is an unique asset, the most valuable thing you will ever have in your lifetime, and like a Ferrari, if it's kept in good nick you have the best chance of it lasting a long time."

This is how the Irish Cancer Society's Head of Research began the lecture 'Cancer: Debunking the Myths' at the University of Limerick last week, as part of the charity's 'Decoding Cancer' series of public talks, which aims to dispel some of the myths around cancer and how they impact prevention, early detection, treatment and survivors' quality of life.

In an age of 'fake news',



Mags Gargan reports from a public lecture tackling some common cancer myths and the dangers they present to the public

'alternative facts', social media saturation and celebrity endorsements, Dr O'Connor warned that we "take a lot of our health advice from people we don't know and who don't know us". "It spreads through social media and main stream media."

But our bodies are unique and need specialist support, "like a Ferrari mechanic". He advised those gathered to only listen to "your GP, to dieticians

– who are the only regulatory qualified people to give dietary advice in this country – or consultants".

Misunderstanding

"Whenever we talk about cancer there is an inordinate amount of fear and a lot of misunderstanding around it and that doesn't help how we face the challenge in Ireland," he says.

"There are hundreds of

different types of cancer. When someone is diagnosed, their doctor will outline the medical treatments available to them, but we know most patients will seek further information – either online, or through friends and family. Unfortunately, though, most of this advice does not come from a qualified professional who has the knowledge to be able to guide an individual case and such information may in fact do more harm than good."

So what are the main myths surrounding cancer?

Myth 1: "We live in a toxic environment surrounded by chemicals that are responsible for the cancer rates."

"Not true," says Dr O'Connor. "By

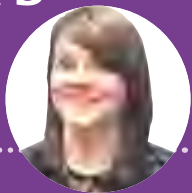
and large our bodies have a lot of defences against chemicals and the media tends to focus on the negative and sensationalist stuff. There is no advantage in eating organic over non-organic. No evidence of pesticides having a societal or community-level impact in terms of cancer. There is zero truth in things like fluoride in water causing cancer – in fact some of the data suggests the opposite. And if mobile phones were a significant cause of cancer, we would have seen it by now."

He says mankind has always had cancer and our basic environment is more regulated and healthier than it has ever been in humanity's existence.

» Continued on Page 25

Children's Corner

ERIN FOX



Lent and the art of flipping pancakes

Pancake Tuesday is coming up next week (February 28) and as soon as you finish school you'll be looking forward to racing home so you can get flipping.

Flipping pancakes can be messy work if you're not experienced at it. You can end up with batter on the ceiling, the floor, your hair and, if you're really unlucky, your face!

But it doesn't seem right to celebrate Pancake Tuesday without flipping any pancakes, so after you've gobbled down as many pancakes as you can muster, make some more non-edible pancakes that you can flip without creating a mess.

While you're having fun making pancakes, keep in mind the importance of Lent. So create your own Shrove Tuesday/Lent game for next week.

For the pancakes you will need some paper plates, paints, felt tip pens, or colouring pencils. You can flip the paper plate pancakes with a clean frying pan.



Colour each plate brown or golden yellow. On each pancake, write a question about Lent on one side, and the answer on the other.

Take it in turns to flip the pancakes and answer the questions. The person who flips, gets to answer the question.

Appoint someone to hold the pancakes and to ask the questions. The players then take it in turns.

“While you're having fun making pancakes, keep in mind the importance of Lent”

Knowledge in this game isn't enough and the challenge here is to answer the question correctly, and to flip the pancake successfully in order to reveal the correct answer.

Each player has three turns at successfully flipping the pancake. If you manage to flip it on your first go and answer correctly, then you get 15 points. On the second go you get 10 points and on the third go you get five points.

If you answer incorrectly then you miss a turn.

If you don't manage to flip it successfully to reveal the answer, then you pass it to the next person and they try to answer the same question correctly and also flip it successfully.

As a reward, you can always let the winner have a go at flipping a real pancake! Or instead let them have an extra pancake after dinner.

It's trickier than it sounds but it's a great way to test your knowledge of Lent, and it's good practice for flipping real pancakes.

If player one successfully flips the pancake and you answer the question correctly, you become the flipper next.



Ethical issues around animal organ transplants

Using organ transplants to replace failing human organs and tissues saves and improves the quality of many lives every year. Up until now suitable organs for transplantation have been available only from human donors, and donor organs are in very short supply. The number of people currently waiting for transplants significantly exceeds the supply of available organs. In the USA there is a requirement for about 120,000 transplants every year, but only 30,000 people receive them.

About 150 organ transplants are carried out annually in Ireland and about 650 people are currently waiting for transplants.

Two areas of research are currently trying to solve this supply problem. The latest research, aimed at growing human tissues and organs in pigs suitable for transplantation to human patients, is only in its early stages of development and involves the creation of human-pig chimera embryos. Chimera means the embryo contains cells from both pig and human.

Research

The second area of research is now well developed and is aimed at modifying pigs so that their organs are suitable for transplantation into humans. It is hoped that such organs will soon become available on a large scale.

Both types of research are attended by ethical issues but such issues are greater in the case of the chimera research. The aim of this work is to eventually grow human organs in pigs on a routine basis. This work was done at the Salk Institute in California and is just published in the journal *Cell*.

Scientists removed embryos at the blastocyst stage (several days old embryo) from pigs, injected the embryos with induced pluripotent stem cells



Science of life

Prof. William Reville

(iPSC) prepared from humans and returned the embryos to the sow for gestation. These stem cells are undifferentiated cells that have the potential to develop into any of the over 200 types of specialised adult human tissue cells.

After 28 days it was seen that some of the iPSC in the embryos had developed into precursors of various human tissue types including liver, neurons and heart. This result is an essential first step along the road to eventually growing transplantable human tissues and organs in the pig.

There are significant ethical issues associated with this animal-human chimera work, including the risk of accidentally creating animals with human consciousness or of accidentally releasing animal-human chimeras into the wild.

But, in addition, many people will find these animal-human chimera experiments intrinsically disturbing, seeing them as somehow going against nature itself and imitating the clumsy fumbings of Dr Frankenstein. On the other hand, some bioethicists see no problem with this work and enthusiastically justify it on the basis that it will relieve the chronic shortage of transplantable human organs.

The second approach to solving the human organ transplant supply problem is xenotransplantation, the transplantation of nonhuman organs or tissues into humans, but this approach has not been feasible to date. However, recent developments promise that it

will soon be possible to harvest largescale supplies of organs from genetically engineered pigs that are suitable for transplantation into humans.

Pigs seem to be the optimal choice as a source of non-human organs for transplantation into humans, although baboons are also a possibility. The physiology of pigs is quite similar to human physiology and the general biology of the pig is well understood. Pigs are also about the same size as humans, have big litters, are easily raised and mature quickly.

“Pigs seem to be the optimal choice as a source of non-human organs for transplantation into humans”

Baboons are genetically closer to humans than the pig and people would naturally feel more squeamish about harvesting baboons for spare parts than using pigs for this purpose. They are also more difficult to raise and reproduce more slowly than pigs.

Until now it has not been possible to transplant pig organs into humans because viruses that could not be treated or neutralised are embedded in the pig genome and would probably cause disease in humans.

Furthermore, the human immune system would also strongly reject pig organs. However, it seems that these difficulties have been overcome and there is great optimism that xenotransplantation from pigs to human will soon become a reality.

George Church, geneticist at Harvard Medical School, is developing pigs that will make suitable organ donors for pig to human xenotransplantation.

He recently announced the successful inactivation of 62

virus locations in the DNA of pig embryos using a powerful new gene-editing technique. Church's team also modified more than 20 other genes in another set of pig embryos that would cause immune rejection or blood clotting when pig organs are transplanted into humans.

These gene modifications and virus deletions will be incorporated into the pigs eventually used for xenotransplantation. Church is now ready to implant the genetically modified pig embryos into surrogate sows, and he has co-founded a biotech company to produce the genetically engineered pigs on a large economically viable scale.

Objections

Objections to this breakthrough will undoubtedly arise on ethical or religious grounds. Animal rights philosophy objects to using animals as a source of tissues and organs for humans, believing that this reinforces the notion that animals exist merely to satisfy human needs.

The genetically modified pigs may also have to be reared in isolation to keep them sterile and healthy. Isolation and frequent monitoring could be hard on pigs because they are social animals.

Other groups would object on the grounds that it is wrong to use animals for 'unnatural' purposes.

And on the religious side, many Muslims and Jews would object and would not avail of this new transplant technology.

However, on balance, this work will almost certainly be widely welcomed by both medicine and the general public as a major advance in the field.

i William Reville is an emeritus professor of biochemistry at UCC. <http://understandingscience.ucc.ie>

» Continued from Page 23

Myth 2: “There is a ‘magic bullet’ cure for cancer.”

“If we talk about cancer as a collection of diseases it makes no sense that there could be one herb or plant that can prevent or cure all cancers. There will never be a single treatment approach,” says Dr O’Connor.

Myth 3: “Pharma has the ‘cure’ for cancer but won’t release it.”

“Again there is no single cure for cancer,” Dr O’Connor says, pointing out that the people working in the pharmaceutical industry have cancer at the same rate as other professionals, so it makes no sense that they would be hiding a cure just to profit financially.

Myth 4: “Tight clothes/underwear cause cancer by restricting lymphatic flow or concentrating toxins.”

“No – not true and very upsetting for cancer patients,” Dr O’Connor says.

Myth 5: “Superfoods prevent or cure cancer.”

“There is no such thing as a superfood,” he says. Unregulated ‘nutritionists’ and celebrities endorse so-called ‘superfoods’ or particular fad diets as an aid to their cancer treatment, when in reality strict dietary regimes can do real damage to a cancer patient’s ability to fight their disease

“All the evidence suggests, from all the population studies, that a mixed diet rich in vegetables has the best association with overall health.”

Myth 6: “Certain diets can prevent/treat/cure cancer.”

“Again, a balanced diet is recommended for our overall heath,” Dr O’Connor says. “No diet focussing on a single nutrient or excluding a single nutrient has benefit in cancer treatment, including the Keto diet, Alkaline diet, juicing diet, vitamin supplements, herbs etc.

“There is no such thing as a superfood”

“Really it comes down to dietary patterns rather than individual elements. Are we eating lots of fats or lots of vegetables? It’s big picture things rather than are we eating enough goji berries or blueberries.

“Cancer patients are vulnerable to recommendations from family and friends and alternative diets can be hugely harmful,” he warns.

Myth 7: “Sugar causes cancer.”

“Carbohydrates are an important part of the energy in our diet, but eating too much of any ‘macro’ or energy nutrient will tend towards obesity and obesity increases the risk of a variety of diseases including certain cancers such as breast cancer,” Dr O’Connor says.

Myth 8: “Stress causes cancer.”

“Immediate short term stress does not cause cancer,” he says, “as cancers take many years to develop. Lifelong stress can impact diet, exercise, lifestyle etc. and that is going to increase our risk of cancer.”

Myth 9: “Cancer is always fatal and there is nothing you can do about it.”



Comedian Des Bishop launched the Irish Cancer Society’s 30th Daffodil Day in Croke Park with ‘Daff Man’, volunteer James Gilleran.

Daffodil Day’s 30th anniversary

The Irish Cancer Society was founded by Professor Austin Darragh in 1963. Professor Darragh was inspired to start the society after being shocked by a statistic that 100 people in Ireland died each year from curable skin cancer, simply because they did not know when to seek treatment.

Today, the Irish Cancer Society aims to provide the public with information about cancer, provide services and support for patients and advocate for improvements in cancer care and treatment.

The first Irish Daffodil Day was organised by Professor Darragh and Society CEO Tom Hudson in 1988. The day quickly became an annual March tradition, with the daffodil logo being adopted in 2001.

Daffodil Day encompasses a host of different events, including nationwide coffee mornings, community events and volunteers on streets providing the public with the yellow flowers.

The 30th Daffodil Day takes place on March 24. Find out how to support the day on www.cancer.ie



Dr Robert O’Connor.

“This is a common fatalistic view and often originates from older people and those who have seen advanced cancers. But more than half of all cancers diagnosed are cured, especially in the early stages,” Dr O’Connor says.

This year, 40,000 people will be diagnosed with cancer. That’s 150 cases per day. The disease touches the lives of so many of us, either directly or through family and friends, that it can seem unstoppable. But there is hope. Dr O’Connor says there are things that we can do to “empower us to prevent cancer as much as possible” and “early detection is vital as it

gives us a much better chance of being cured”.

“At the heart of any cancer recovery journey must be a healthy, balanced diet, which will often need to be tailored to that patient’s needs. Research is also pointing towards the importance of a healthy diet and physical activity as a way to reduce your cancer risk,” he says.

“These measures are actually fairly simple and the European Code Against Cancer has outlined 12 ways in which we can reduce our cancer risk, which includes not smoking, limiting our alcohol intake, taking exercise, minding our weight, availing of screening services and interventions like the HPV vaccine, and avoiding too much sun.”

He adds that there are several expert-driven and reliable services available for cancer patients and their family and friends in Ireland, so we don’t have to resort to internet searches, celebrity books or dietary fads.

i To speak to a cancer nurse on any aspect of cancer, contact the Irish Cancer Society’s Cancer Nurseline on 1800 200 700, email cancernurseline@irishcancer.ie or drop in to one of the 13 Daffodil Centres (daffodilcentreinfo@irishcancer.ie) in hospitals nationwide.

Dad’s Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



I spent last Tuesday at work in the rarefied environs of the Supreme Court in London. Just for contrast, I spent the next day knocking down a wall with a sledgehammer. I was working at a rapid pace, as I had to have the rubble cleared in time to pick the kids up from school. Such is the variety of life at the moment.

Since moving to the Isle of Wight, we lived in five different rented houses before at last buying our own place a few months ago. It needs a bit of remodeling and renovation to make it suitable for family living. I’m doing most of the building work, in between Andrea’s nightshifts and exams, the kids’ homework and Beaver projects, my legal work and whatever else life throws at us. To say we are busy is an understatement, but making a house a home for your family is cheerful work. In contrast to office work, you get the satisfaction of seeing something real and tangible that you made at the end of the day.

“Some of what I am building now will be used daily by future generations living in our house”

The kids are fascinated to come back from school to see a new hole in the wall, a new doorframe up, or a new light hanging from the ceiling. Séan in particular could watch me work for hours, and is a helpful assistant, readily running to get a spirit level or a box of screws when I need them.

There is a sense of creating something lasting about building. A well-built house will stand largely unchanged for 100 years, or perhaps for centuries. Some of what I am building now will be used daily by future generations living in our house.

I get the very same feeling about building a family and raising children. I feel that we are setting something in motion that will, God willing, ultimately resonate through the centuries. We parents, in how we raise our children,

are helping to shape their values and how they will treat others, and so how they will raise their own children in decades to come.

At this frantically busy time of our lives, I feel all of our varied work worthwhile, including the very mundane stuff, like waking to comfort



our toddler at 3am, or dealing with messy potty training accidents, or taking time to sit and read with the older children, or cooking nutritious food.

There is no glamour in any of these tasks. Nor is there much glamour in mixing cement. Yet in both cases, such routine work is part of a bigger creative process that involves building a better future for our family, and for many other people, long into the future.

Research

I’ve been researching our family tree, and it’s fascinating to look back through time at particular great grandparents, say a couple born in late 19th-Century Cork. You can see their descendants fan out below them, numbering well over 100 people, all now living and thriving in the US, Britain and Ireland. Each of those people carries genetically and culturally something of their great grandparents, often in unknown ways.

One day our descendants will look back at us from future centuries in the same way. Even the littlest things we do to nurture our own children can change the future, for the better.



Susan Gately

Letting the little children come: Antoinette Moynihan

When Antoinette Moynihan speaks to First Communion school children about Jesus in the Eucharist, she opens the door of the monstrance and peers through it at them. "They can see me. I tell them 'Jesus is looking through the monstrance and He can see you.'"

After explaining Eucharistic adoration, she brings them to the church and leads them in adoration for half an hour. A host is placed in the monstrance, and they sing 'O Sacrament Most Holy'. She leads them in prayer and then they join in. "They pray for everything: their mummies, grannies, cats, dogs. They connect with God in a way adults can't."

They sing the Our Father using hand movements and Antoinette reads a reflection. Then the children 'hunker down' and pray to Jesus in silence for five minutes. "Did he speak to you?" she asks them after. The hands go up and the children tell her what they felt. "Jesus told me he loves me," says one. "Jesus told me to try my hardest not

to worry about something," says another. "Jesus said I'll never be alone. He'll always be beside me, holding my hand even if I can't see him," says a third.

Since she began Children of the Eucharist, just over four years ago, more than 25,000 children have been involved in their programme.

It is a long way from the Meath woman's initial dream of being a nurse. After her Leaving Cert she did a secretarial course in preparation for a nursing course in the UK but the offer of a full time job changed her plans. In 1991 she met Peadar Moynihan from Cork. Fourteen months later they were married.

Antoinette grew up in a family of faith in Kentstown, Co. Meath – a faith that had been tried before she was even born when her mother, Evelyn, almost died. As she lay in

a coma, Antoinette's father, Tom, frantically prayed to St Peregrine. Evelyn could have died or suffered brain damaged, but instead survived and thrived. Antoinette was the second of four children.

“That weekend 600 young people participated in the prayer and adoration youth space”

After marriage, she continued working but following the birth of her second child she became a stay-at-home mum. "I had faith in God, Our Lady and the Church but they were distant realities. Mass was a Sunday ritual," she says.

It was a visit to Medjugorje in 2009 that lit a new flame. Antoinette came to an understanding that Jesus wanted her to do something connected to the Eucharist. On her return she and Peadar began a monthly Divine Mercy prayer group and two years later, they got involved in the 'youth end' of Eucharistic Adoration at the Meath Eucharistic congress. That weekend 600 young people participated in the prayer and adoration youth space and Antoinette got an inkling of the powerful draw of Adoration for young people.

At the International Eucharistic Congress the following year, she and Peadar worked again with youth adoration. "Talking to the children coming out of the tent, I

could see they were getting a lot out of it. I felt a sadness when I saw the tent going down."

Impelled by the IEC experience and supported by the Apostolate for Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration, Antoinette began the Children of the Eucharist programme, visiting schools around the country, where she would speak for an hour to First Communion classes about the real presence, Confession and Communion. She started with the local schools at Kentstown and Yellow Furze in Meath. From there the ministry grew organically across Ireland.

"Now we have visited schools in Drogheda, Newry, Belfast, Lurgan, Derry, Tyrone, Dublin, Wexford, Cork, Tipperary, Galway, Sligo, Donegal, Westmeath, Mayo,

Leitrim and Kilkenny. We start in one parish and then if another parish wants it we will visit as time allows."

In November 2016 Children of the Eucharist began in five schools in Scotland, and this February it pilots in Durham, Newcastle and Chesterfield in England. She has also had interest" from the US.

Support

Antoinette began on her own, with the practical and spiritual support of her family. Today two others work full time for the ministry, Helen Hand and Aoife Martin, another 100 plus 'core' leaders work in local areas and 200 more people help "directly and indirectly" as facilitators.

"It's a voluntary ministry," says Antoinette, "although recently we have had to fundraise to pay a small wage to one of our national leaders." We are very blessed with the people on board, she adds.

Meanwhile the programme's outreach grows and new programmes, like one for Confirmation students, are evolving. After a session with a Confirmation class last week two sixth class boys spoke to her: "It was the best day ever," said one. "Now I know I have someone to talk to who cares," said the other. "When we were standing outside the church after our adoration time with them, he was heading back to school as it was time to go home. Then he turned and came back. "I'm just going in again for a few minutes," he told us.

She is amazed at the growth in the ministry. "I could never have anticipated it," she says. "It's the power of Jesus working through it, that's why people are coming. God is working through the little ones because they are open to his word and love."



Antoinette Moynihan.

Personal
PROFILE

How to deal with unsolicited relationship advice

A close friend of mine loves to give me advice about my personal life. She is very keen on telling me what to do and I am fed up. How should I deal with this?

The first thing you have to consider is what is your friend's intention. Is she genuinely looking out for you or just being overbearing? On the one hand, your friend might genuinely have no idea that she is overstepping the mark.

On the other hand, there could be undertones of jealousy or other motivating factors that are not well-intentioned. Then you have to examine yourself. Are you suddenly changing the goalposts? Have you gone from allowing advice and discussion on your relationship to suddenly taking it off the table? You will need to understand these things in order to be able to approach and discuss the changing dynamic of your friendship.

Perhaps you were looking for lots of advice in

the early stages of your relationship and now that things are going well you feel advice is no longer needed. But have you explained this?

You also need to be honest with yourself. Is your friend being overbearing or are they giving you good advice that you don't want to hear.

Sometimes real friends tell you what you need to hear rather than what you want to hear, even when it might be difficult to hear.

Ultimately, your relationship is about two people not three. Once you have addressed these questions you might feel like avoiding the person, but the best thing to do is deal with it head-on as a result your friendship isn't badly affected.

The next time a piece of unsolicited advice comes your way, just be honest, say you really appreciate the advice but you are happy how things are progressing and will ask for help if

you need it. This will ensure your friend won't feel you're shutting them out completely. If they offer an opinion in future, start with a gentle reminder of your discussion, then try to change the subject to another topic.

Important

It's really important this is said with love and not on the attack or putting your friend on the defensive. Stay calm and warm, that way they will be more likely to properly absorb what you are saying. Of course, you still have to be prepared for a defensive reaction, "I was only trying to help". Once again, reassure them of your appreciation of their friendship, say you really value all the chats and advice you have been given to date.

It's important to let your friend know you are happy in your relationship, make it clear that you are different people and consequently might deal with situations and relationships differently. It's also important to find new things to share and talk about. Ask for advice in another area of life, tell them you could do with some tips and their opinion that your friend might be able to help you with.

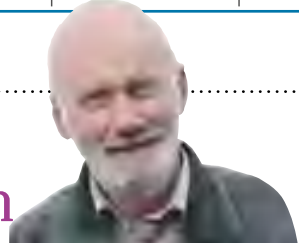


Love Notes

Wendy Grace

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



An antidote to conflict and cliffhangers

It was a dizzying week, with more drama on Oireachtas TV than on any mainstream channel.

It had all the features of fictional drama – moral dilemmas, cliffhanging tension, heroes (short supply), villains (don't ask), the rise and fall of interlocking story arcs. You didn't know from breakfast through lunch whether you'd still have a government by dinner time. Dáil sittings went on so late you couldn't even hit the sack without hitting the remote to check for the latest developments.

It was a field day, nay, field week, for the media, thriving as it does on conflict. Political anoraks who had the time feverishly button popped between RTÉ's *Morning Ireland* and Newstalk's *Breakfast*, and rejoiced that the *Pat Kenny Show* (Newstalk) got going before *Today With Sean O'Rourke* (RTÉ Radio 1) – crucial fresh news at 9am and then more at 10am. Often you had to listen to the same spokespersons, though it was worth staying alert for subtle nuances of difference.

On Newstalk's *High Noon* George Hook had a broader range of topics so you could risk tripping to the shop for bread, but headphones or car radio were essential just in case. RTÉ Radio 1's *News At One* was riveting, *Liveline* was optional, the *Ray D'Arcy Show* gave you a chance to cut the grass, but you had to get back



Newstalk presenter Sarah McInerney.

on the horse for Newstalk's *Drive*, where Chris Donoghue and Sarah McInerney upped the emotional ante for about 20 minutes before we got any real news.

Matt Cooper's *Last Word* (Today FM) meant you needed a third push button on the radio for an hour or two, but there was always solid news and minimal guff on RTÉ's *Drivetime*.

The *Six-One News* was obligatory and then you

could get relief therapy with Oireachtas TV until the *Nine News* and *Prime Time*. One Prime interview in particular impressed – Trevor Collins, solicitor for Garda Keith Harrison, explained what his client had to put up with, and it was ugly.

All this media consumption is assuming you didn't have a life! But you weren't finished yet after *Prime Time*. Two of the best programmes were yet to come!

I like Cormac Ó hEadhra's incisive no-nonsense style on RTÉ's *Late Debate*, rattling cages with great gusto on Tuesday and Wednesday of last week, including a bust-up over who was telling truth or not.

Meanwhile, the host was in fine fettle on TV3's **Tonight With Vincent Browne**. On the Monday night he gave a right old ragging to Colm Brophy of Fine Gael, making me wonder who he had cheesed off to get that gig – the party didn't provide any speaker to the same night's **Clare Byrne Live**.

Investigation

On the latter show on I was struck by an interview with Mary Lynch, the taxi driver who was beaten up and later ill served during the investigation by some in the gardai, who conveniently blamed whistle-blower Maurice McCabe for the errors.

On Tuesday's **Tonight**



Cormac Ó hEadhra.

show, Browne said he turned down the Fine Gael person he was offered because that person was a 'stonewaller'. Banning people from programmes is questionable – I'd rather see them getting a go, and filleted as necessary.

Anyway, that Browne show got you to midnight, and then, to prove you weren't too parochial, you had to listen to the **Midnight News** on BBC Radio 4 or BBC World Service, just to keep track of the rest of the world. Politics hath murdered sleep, and after that what dreams may come.

And so, an antidote was needed. It was a relief to tune into the calmer **Leap of Faith** last Friday night on RTÉ Radio 1. Religion teacher Ailis Travers was interviewed about her book of prayers for young people – (*Oxygen For the Soul*) – and the practice of saying prayers and lighting candles for young people doing exams.

She valued the old prayers that had been somewhat forgotten, along with some new and unfamiliar ones. She respected the prayer traditions of other religions and saw positive aspects even in secular meditation like mindfulness.

I liked her theme of praying for others, e.g. when you see their picture on your mobile phone. She suggested that praying for people who aren't themselves believers is often appreciated by them.

PICK OF THE WEEK

WHERE GOD WEEPS
EWTN Saturday, February 25, 7pm

Prof. Shahid Mobeen discusses the impact blasphemy laws are having on religious minorities in Pakistan, and their devastating consequences.

THE BIG QUESTIONS
BBC 1 Sunday, February 26, 10am

Nicky Campbell presents the programme live from Heatlands Academy, Birmingham.

QUEST FOR SHAKESPEARE
EWTN Friday, March 3, 7pm

The right to choose – themes of freedom and choice are seen as moral backbones among his dramas. Tensions exist between genuine free will and Calvinistic notions of predestination.

So, drawing my two strands together, how about we pray for our politicians and especially our whistle-blowers who are going through challenging times.

1 boregan@hotmail.com



Aubrey Malone

Film

La La Land likely to dominate this year's Oscars

Much as I admired *La La Land* I never like to see one film sweeping the boards at the Oscar ceremonies – as Damien Chazelle's film seems set to do this year – any more than I like to see the Lotto being won by one person instead of a syndicate.

At the time of writing it's 1/6 to win Best Film and Chazelle an equally unbackable 1/10 to emerge as Best Director. Ryan Gosling isn't the favourite to win Best Actor though, Casey Affleck being favourite for his blistering performance in *Manchester By the Sea* at 8/11. Denzel Washington runs him a close second at 11/8 for *Fences*.

It's reassuring to know someone is going to break

the stranglehold *La La Land* is almost certainly going to exert on the ceremonies. It's the part Affleck was born to play. Maybe if he wins he'll have the clout to command the kind of bigger budget productions his brother Ben walks into without a by-your-leave.

This is the only close race of the night. There isn't any contest in the secondary categories unless there's a huge upset. Mahershala Ali is 1/10 to win Best Supporting Actor for *Moonlight*. Viola Davis is 1/25 for Best Supporting Actress in *Fences*. Supporting? This is category fraud. She's the main actress in *Fences*.

Michelle Williams is sec-



Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone in *La La Land*.

ond favourite for *Manchester By the Sea*. This is also strange. Yes it was a fantastic performance but she was hardly in it for longer than 10 minutes.

Emma Stone is 1/5 to win

Best Actress for, what else, *La La Land*. Natalie Portman is closest to her at 4/1 for *Jackie*. Meryl Streep is 66/1 for *Florence Foster Jenkins*. This seems anomalous considering she was so endearing in it.

But Streep has won often in the past. That's one reason for the long odds: she's become a victim of her greatness.

I would also like the great Irish-Ethiopian actress Ruth Negga to be better-priced than 50/1 – for *Loving* – in this category. Isabelle Huppert (the French Streep?) is 10/1 for *Elle*.

She won Best Actress in the Golden Globes, sometimes a precursor of the Oscars. A repeat here is highly unlikely.

Depiction

I already said how much I liked Portman's depiction of Jacqueline Kennedy in *Jackie*. It lifted me off my feet. I was walking on air for days afterwards.

Stone didn't have quite the same effect on me despite her consummate acting skills – combined with singing and dancing ones.

I won't grudge the statuette to her but I'll still be sorry for Portman.

The fact that this lady is already the beneficiary of an Oscar – for *Black Swan* – might be another damning factor for her.

Whatever happens, 2017 has already been a banner year thus far. I've already seen half a dozen zingers and it's still only February. Some years I wouldn't have seen that much quality in the whole 12 months. So as they say, it's all good.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Recent books in brief

I Believe: The Promise of the Creed
by Pope Francis
(Orbis Books / Alban Books, £14.99)

This is the American translation of a book which originally appeared in German in 2015. It has been edited by Stephan von Kempis, who has picked out from a wide range of the Pope's writings and talks, passages that deal with the Creed, to create from them a unified presentation of the Pope's view of the that prayer, what is and what it does for us.

Basically the Creed is a confession of faith, but as the editor observes, in some Christian traditions faith is interpreted as leading to material success in life. But that is, he suggests, very far from the truth as Pope Francis sees.

The presentation parses the Creed, text relating to each phrase being introduced by a note about its origin and occasion.

The result is rather like attending a retreat with the Pope, for each step presents an aspect or an insight of the faith that the whole expresses. The Pope far from seeing a reward coming at the end, suggests that it is the journey itself and what it reveals of divine and human truth that is the true reward.

Saints for the Journey: Inspiring Lives from Every Age

by John Murray
(Messenger Publications, €9.95)

The author is a parish priest in Northern Ireland, and this little book is a follow up to his earlier one, *Saints of Our Times*. The pieces in it already appeared in the *Sacred Heart Messenger* and many will be glad to have them in a more permanent form. In his selection he mangos to encompass both the familiar, such as Bernadette and Columban, and the unfamiliar and surprising, such as Kateri Tekakwitha, the native American saint, and Giuseppe Puglisi, the Sicilian priest murdered by the Mafia in 1993.

The pieces are short, but concentrated, and will provide ideal daily reading for many. Certainly a book which deals with Julian of Norwich and John Wesley can be said to touch life and faith at many points.

The Church Cannot Remain Silent: Unpublished Letters and Other Writings

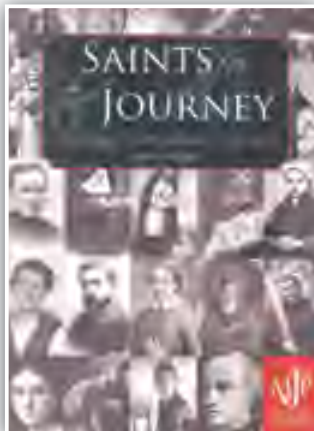
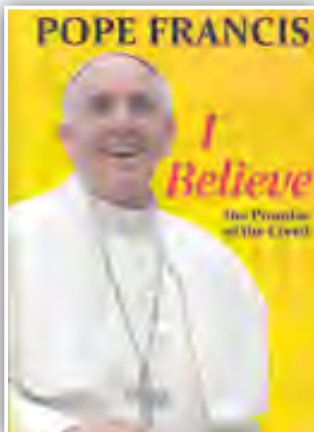
by Oscar Romero
(Orbis Books / Alban Books, £16.99)

The Pope's life and his views on religion and the world have been shaped, as so many commentators have observed, by the conditions prevailing in Latin America countries, such Argentina and El Salvador.

The experiences of Church and people in that continent are far removed from the often

too comfortable ease in which some Catholics in the USA and in Europe – and indeed our own little island – live out their lives.

The often foolish fears expressed about the radicalism of priests as pastors in Latin America reveal a certain shallowness of experience. In those countries the Church, though long established, remains a Church of Apostles and Martyrs (to adopt the title of Daniel-Rops' history of the early Church).



A turning point in Irish life

Thomás Flynn, Thomas J. Devine (1862 -1941), and The Election of the Snows: The North Roscommon By-Election of 1917

Published by the author; copes from Trinity Books, Carrick-on-Shannon and The Reading Room, Carrick-on-Shannon, €12. For further information: ring 086 067 5283

J. Anthony Gaughan

On February 6, the result of the North Roscommon Bye-Election of 1917 was announced as follows: Count Plunkett 3,022; Thomas J. Devine 1,708; Jasper Tully 687. While Count Plunkett went on to be an important figure in Irish affairs, Thomas J. Devine slipped back into relative obscurity.

In this monograph, the author provides an account of his life and especially his involvement in the crucial by-election in 1917.

From a farming background, Thomas J. Devine was born at Clarkwood, Co. Sligo, on November 16, 1862. As a young man he went to Minnesota in the US. On returning to Ireland he established a grocery and auctioneering business in Boyle, Co Roscommon. He entered local politics when he was elected a member of the Boyle Town Commissioners in 1899.

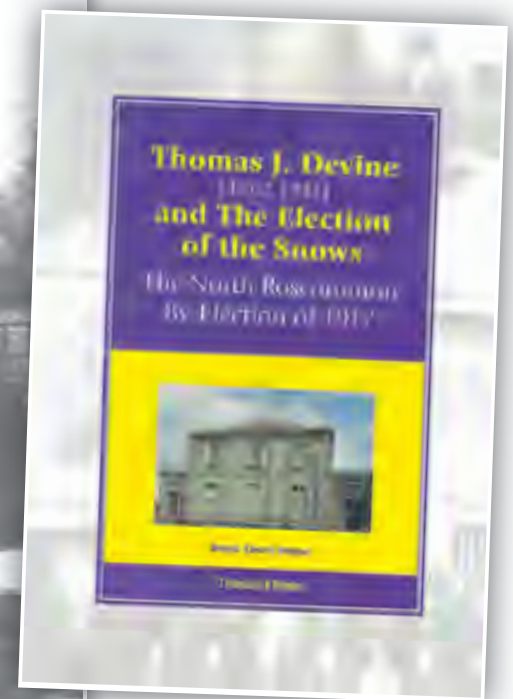
“No one campaigned more strenuously for Count Plunkett than Fr Michael O’Flanagan”

At his first meeting he supported a housing scheme to build 40 houses for families who were living in wretched conditions. After failing to be elected to Roscommon County Council he was co-opted to it in 1906 and again in 1914.

The North Roscommon seat became vacant following the death of James



Thomas J. Devine in his later years and, on right, the cover of the reviewed work.



J. O’Kelly, MP, in December 1916. A skilled public speaker, Thomas Devine at that time was president of the North Roscommon branch of the United Irish League, County Vice-President of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and a member of the Roscommon County Council.

In a convention attended by members of those organisations and the Catholic clergy of the constituency he was chosen to contest the forthcoming by-election in the interests of the Irish Parliamentary Party.

The ebullient Jasper Tully, editor of the *Roscommon Herald* and the third candidate, provided some merriment throughout the campaign.

No one campaigned more strenuously for Count Plunkett than Fr Michael O’Flanagan.

Already well-known because of his support for some of his parishioners in their dispute with the Congested Districts Board about turbury rights, he was accused by Tully of causing trouble in every parish in which he served.

Devine did not escape Tul-

ly's caustic comment that he had supported every increase in salary that came before the County Council, and claimed that if elected to parliament his policy would continue along those same lines.

The by-election was of crucial importance to the Irish Parliamentary Party and to Sinn Féin, the former were determined to vindicate their claim to still have the support of the people, the latter needed to show that they had popular support.

“On the hustings the Count claimed that he was unaware of what was happening during Easter Week”

The election was conducted during inclement weather with heavy snowfalls which made the holding of meetings and canvassing well-nigh impossible. Some of the widows of the executed leaders following the Easter Rising campaigned for Count Plunkett.

Traditionally the Catholic clergy were strong supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party but in this election, while the senior and elderly priests remained loyal to the Party, the younger priests favoured Count Plunkett.

Count Plunkett and his sons were active in the Rising. Yet on the hustings the Count claimed that he was unaware of what was happening during Easter Week.

Perhaps this was one reason for the acerbic comment by the contemporary editor of the Irish Catholic on the result of the by-election. He described the Count as ‘an anti-clerical with a papal title’ and ‘a government place holder as Director of the National Museum’ and concluded: ‘To us it seems probable that the Count’s capacity for practical usefulness was greater in the museum than it will ever be in parliament’.

In setting the scene for the by-election Tomás Flynn provides nuggets of Thomas J. Devine’s family history and that of other families in North Connaught, which adds further interest to an already interesting book.

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

The inimitable Enid Blyton



The Land of Far Beyond, The First Christmas and other Stories, Noah's Ark and other Stories from the Old Testament by Enid Blyton (Hodder Children's Books, £10.99 each)

Peter Costello

One has to feel some sympathy with the ghost of Enid Blyton if she were to return to see what has been done to her children's books, or at least to their titles and covers.

Last autumn a writer named Bruno Vincent (no, I don't know who he is either) issued a series of books which pastiche her famous series with title such as *Five Go Gluten Free*, *Five on Brexit Island*, *Five Give up the Booze* – an Irish equivalent would be *The Turf Cutter's Donkey Goes Gambling*.

These were issued by a once-admired publisher (Quercus), following the earlier trend for the much loved Ladybird Books to be vamped up as Ladybird Books for Adults.

These have been described as “a publishing phenomenon” – by which is meant a quick cash-making stunt which is aimed at rather mindless readers who want to trash their own youthful reading. The publishers will ride this venture as hard as they can until it collapses, in a few months.

The original Famous Five series and Ladybird books were an immense aid in

laying the foundation of full adult literacy among many socially deprived children.

So this stunt amounts to kicking away the ladder by which others might mount to literacy. Being over smart about your own childhood is very unbecoming. Perhaps I am losing my sense of humour, but I find this whole idea not simply stupid, but actually depraved.

So much credit to Hodder Children's Books for bringing back into print some of Enid Blyton own titles in very fine little hardback editions. All three are religious in theme – *The Land Beyond* is a juvenile version of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

“ Their reissue now suggests that the feisty Miss Blyton has achieved something akin to the status of a classic”

In her day, Miss Blyton was a phenomenally well-selling children's writer with a stupendous output – she could write up to 10,000 words a day. There cannot have been a house with both books and children that did not have some of her books: 600 million copies sold in 90 languages – can there be anyone who reads who has not read at least one of her books.

She was said, of

course, to be sexist, racist, xenophobic, and elitist, and worst of all middle class. But though, she was a boon to parents, and a joy to children, she was, poor lady, abhorred by teachers, librarians, and mind improvers generally. For years she was banned by the BBC.

Popularity

Her very popularity seemed to add to her literary crimes in the eyes of such people – which was odd as she had been herself when young a well qualified and effective Froebel teacher with a love of nature.

These texts were published back in the 1940s, and have been reprinted since. But their reissue now suggests that the feisty, if often troubled, Miss Blyton has achieved something akin to the status of a classic.

So much for all those *bien pensants* who so roundly abused her. She was naturally enough a lady who thought children should know right from wrong, have some idea of moral values, and have a jolly good time too – largely without those always interfering bossy-boot parents.

In this era of over protected infants, where even university students have to be preserved from the slightest thing that might distress them, her books are just the stuff to give the troops.

WebWatch

Shedding light on Amoris Laetitia

It's hard to deny that online debate about *Amoris Laetitia* has been marked far more by heat than light. Indeed, disagreement about the Pope's exhortation on love and the family has reached such a point that at least one commentator has claimed the Church is now entering a fully-fledged civil war.

This is, of course, nonsense: that bishops should interpret papal documents differently is hardly unprecedented, and febrile tweets aside, accusations of heresy and schism aren't exactly flying about. It's hard to see anything that might make sober critics think we're on the brink of a new Donatist controversy, let alone a new Western Schism. Whether we'll see anything even to rival the Lefebvrist spurning of the Second Vatican Council remains to be seen, but it seems unlikely.

In the English-speaking world, at any rate, it seems clear that the debate has been vitiated both by aggressive quasi-Catholic sites such as churchmilitant.com and by a common and misguided tendency to view Catholic issues through Anglican spectacles with outdated prescriptions.

History

At this stage, one could play 'Ex-Anglican Bingo' with the number of articles challenging *Amoris* that wheel out Ss Thomas More and John Fisher, Newman on the Arians and on conscience, the 1930 Lambeth Conference, and even the Anglican monk Dom Gregory Dix, as though a handful of storybook English examples are universally applicable to all aspects of Church life.

“To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant,” wrote Blessed John Henry Newman in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, which can be read online at the electronic treasure trove that is newmanreader.org, so it is as ironic as it is disheartening to see how often online



Monsignor Philippe Bordeyne.

discussions about *Amoris Laetitia* splash about in a shallow historical puddle.

All of which makes all the more welcome Stephen Walford's articles for lastampa.ie, which draw from a Catholic well of miraculous depth and breadth, notably in a piece entitled '*Amoris Laetitia*: where truth and mercy embrace'. It's a very long piece, in dire need of an editor, but is none the less valuable for all that in showing how *Amoris* fits into Catholic tradition and recalls nuances of Catholic teaching that are often forgotten.

Given Walford's profound and extensive knowledge of Catholic tradition, it was intriguing to see him recently praise a saltandlighttv.org interview as an “excellent interview that brings clarity to the debate”, noting that “authentic moral theology is the key to understanding *Amoris Laetitia*”.

“ English is the first language of fewer than a tenth of the world's Catholics”

Conducted in French with theologian Msgr Philippe Bordeyne, the subtitled interview is – all else aside – a useful warning against linguistic provincialism, implicitly reminding us that English is the first language of fewer than a tenth of the world's Catholics and that

we should look beyond our ghettos.

Msgr Bordeyne advises those approaching *Amoris* to start with the encyclical's fourth chapter, which he sees as following on from the Pope's programmatic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* in speaking of the need for integration “so that every person can take on a missionary role in the Church”.

Conscience

He praises Pope Francis for drawing together themes of conscience and limitation in line with Church teaching, psychological reality, and the possibility that God's grace is at work in our limitations, and rejects the notion that the exhortation is somehow unclear.

On the contrary, he says its teaching on sacramental access for the divorced and remarried is “as clear as one can be when we propose a path of discernment in individual situations”, allowing that a general rule intended to cover all situations “would not have been faithful to the tradition of the Church”.

The interview is long – it runs for an hour – but it could be a fruitful hour for anyone wondering about developments in synod processes in Rome, or how the Holy Father is trying to fulfil his Petrine ministry to feed and tend the Lord's sheep, and realise the Church's vocation to serve as God's field hospital in a world ravaged by sin and despair.

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PILGRIMAGE

MEDJUGORJE PILGRIMAGE for anniversary, 21-28 June 2017. Contact Tony Gray 01 837 0510.

WALSINGHAM: ENGLAND'S National Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. 21-25 April (4 nights). All-in cost €450. Day-Trip included. Pilgrims make their own travel arrangements on designated Ryanair flights. Private

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MIR MINISTRIES presents Return visit of Maria Vadia, Sat 11th March and Sun 12th March Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork. Starts 10am on both days. Rosary, Praise and Worship, Talks, Holy Mass and Healing service on both days. Details: 087 240 5568.

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S.M.

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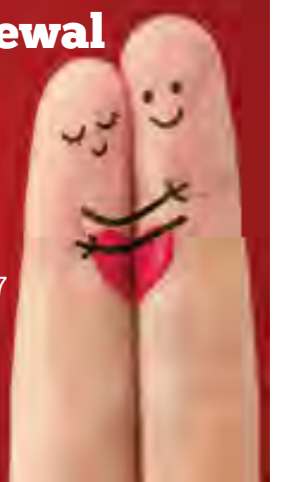
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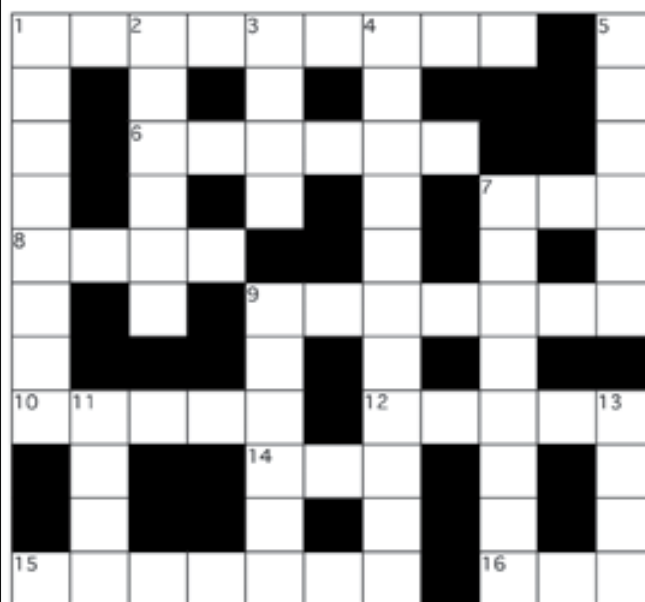
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 170



ACROSS

- 1 Harry Potter's favourite sport (9)
6 You can climb on its rungs (6)
7 Sprint (3)
8 The very top of a house (4)
9 Tour buses (7)
10 What you get when you add five and two (5)
12 Frightening (5)
14 A gorilla, perhaps (3)
15 It always shows where North is (7)
16 Fish that looks a bit like a snake (3)

DOWN

- 1 Has an argument (8)
2 Houses made of snow and ice (6)
3 Probably the most famous kind of extinct bird (4)
4 People who go where they are not allowed (11)
5 Uses a brush to make a picture (6)
7 Practice for a play or concert (8)
9 Country beside the USA (6)
11 It allows you to hear your own voice coming back from a cave or other place (4)
13 Shout (4)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.286

Across – 1 Tit 3 Flying start 8 Eleven 9 Escalope of veal 10 Irish 11 Threw 13 Viper 15 Endless 16 Counsel 20 Tawny owl 21 Fifty 23 Prang 24 Wretched 25 Novena 26 Beleaguered

Down – 1 The lilies of the field 3 Fresh 4 Ice caps 5 Smart 6 Aboard 7 The Wailing Wall 13 Visit 14 Roomy 17 Sarajevo 18 Swindle 22 Yucca 23 Proud 24 Web

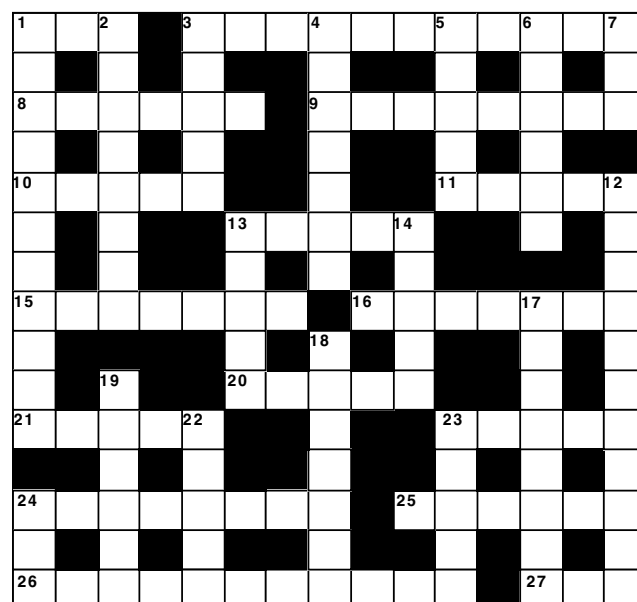
CHILDREN'S No.169

Across – 1 Armchair 6 Ouch 7 Tattoo 9 Disease 11 Straw 14 Admired 16 Visit 17 Dice 18 Sergeants

Down – 1 Aftershave 2 Mother 3 Hood 4 Rome 5 Cheered 8 Oil 10 American 12 Waiter 13 Smudge 15 Uses

Crossword

Gordius 287



ACROSS

- 1 & 5d A restaurant alternative to Table d'Hôte (1,2,5)
3 Being good in tricky situations allows one to make the flour secure (11)
8 & 16a To singer Charlotte, marriage is more than a civil ceremony (6,7)
9 Gateway (8)
10 A church official loses the right to the periphery (5)
11 Exactly the same (5)
13 Flinch (5)
15 Famous opera venue in Milan (2,5)
16 See 8 across
20 The custom of a monk or nun? (5)
21 Nick takes part in "Ninotchka" (5)
23 Make cloth (5)
24 Nomad (8)
25 Ball-shaped object (6)
26 Dad sends Don around for miscellaneous items (4,3,4)
27 Assistance (3)

DOWN

- 1 The criminal mastermind makes a structure beside the holiday home popular

(4-7)

- 2 Sign of the zodiac - the water bearer (8)
3 The mongrel turns up, then he finds frilling (5)
4 There's an opportunity, possibly, for a neon pig (7)
5 See 1 across
6 A mushroom, for example (6)
7 Strong, alkaline liquid that is part of a daily experiment (3)
12 Yearn to have little Kay finish with a Monday off (4,7)
13 Coming from the Land of the Valleys (5)
14 It happens in the middle of the seventh (5)
17 Are certain cases heard thus for the benefit of photographers? (2,6)
18 Potentially verbose side of the coin (7)
19 Made up for (6)
22 Doglike scavenger (5)
23 Cleans with a cloth (5)
24 It's a question of identity! (3)



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Sudoku Corner

170

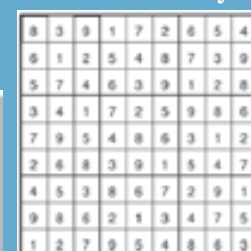
Easy



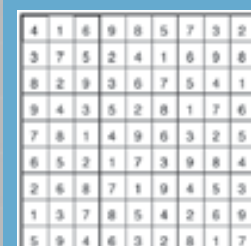
Hard



Last week's Easy 169



Last week's Hard 169





Notebook

Bro. Conor McDonough

Shining a light on ordinary parish life

PICTURE THE SCENE: a mid-20th-Century crowd of Irish emigrants in a newsagent's after Mass. They all rush to buy the 'Irish papers' to find out what the important people in Dublin are doing and how the metropolis views the provinces. Then in walks a Monaghan eccentric. He has notions, so maybe he's above the Irish papers and will buy a London paper, or even a continental one? But he has no interest in Paris or London or Dublin. This poet picks up a copy of the *Dundalk Democrat*. He wants only to know "who has died, and who has sold his farm".

Patrick Kavanagh was a poet of the parish (in the geographical, not ecclesiastical, sense). He explicitly subscribed to a world view he called 'parochialism', contrasting it with 'provincialism'.

The provincial has his eyes turned to the metropolis, and doesn't trust what he sees with his own eyes unless the metropolis approves it. But the parishioner has no such anxiety, and "is never in any doubt about the social and artistic validity of his parish".

Landscape

The parochial person sees and loves what is in front of him: the



The Patrick Kavanagh statue in Dublin.

landscape, people, and buildings that make up the microcosm he inhabits. But the provincial person

has no mind of his own, and "lives by other people's loves".

Just think of Kavanagh's poem 'Epic', where he contrasts the great geopolitical events of his time ("the Munich bother") with a local land dispute about "half a rood of rock, a no-man's land".

A provincial would be inclined to devalue the artistic and spiritual significance of a fight between Duffys and McCabes, but the ghost of Homer whispers to the Monaghan poet: "I made the *Iliad* from such/A local row". For Kavanagh, to ponder the universe of the parish is to come face to face with the universals of humanity,

and even the Creator himself: "Green, blue, yellow and red-/ God is down in the swamps and marshes".

Struggle

The struggle between provincialism and parochialism is an old one, but of late the value of the small and local has taken a real battering.

Thanks to the constant flow of images and information in our socially-networked age our lives are overshadowed by 'FOMO', the fear of missing out: we're afraid of missing out on the latest news and trends, the best concerts and festivals, the most intense experiences and most beautiful destinations our world has to offer.

Our eyes may not be turned to Dublin, but instead we admire and emulate, and seek the approval of, the stars of YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram, who seem to live a life less ordinary than ours.

Digital natives imbibe like mother's milk the sense that life is happening elsewhere, and that we have to chase it.

Our centre of gravity is outside of us, and we live largely by other people's loves.

● Kavanagh's wisdom is not entirely extinct. Ed Sheeran might seem an unlikely heir to Kavanagh, but I can't help hearing echoes of a healthy parochialism in his songs, especially his latest, 'Castle on the Hill'. It's a song of nostalgic return to the secret universe of his childhood home. The elements of this little world are perfectly ordinary: rolling down hills, drinking and smoking, friends who are retail workers and are dealing with disappointments.

Ed Sheeran is a superstar, he's meant to be living a life less ordinary, yet here he shines a light on his parish and all its ordinariness.

He's not singing about the glamour of fame, about nightclubs and models and 'likes' and 'follows', all these things that lure us out of ourselves. He's singing about Framlingham, about its grass and people and sunsets – "and it's real".

Knockadoon awakens all

● Since joining the Dominicans I've come to know and love a little headland in East Cork called Knockadoon. It's at the end of a very long country road, and is home every summer to hundreds of young people who attend summer camps under the care of the Dominicans.

The effect this place has is astonishing. The facilities are simple, so WiFi is not an option, and the campers, instead of having their eyes on the social media metropolis, are invited to see clearly the people in front of them, to open their eyes to the dazzling beauty of the sea, to inhabit and love this parish which is theirs for a week every summer.

I've heard many of these young people tell how they feel truly alive and happy when they're in Knockadoon and are glad to take a break from the stress of a socially networked life. For one week, they cease to be anxious provincials, and become parishioners, as happy as the swifts and seagulls that swoop overhead.



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