

# The Irish Catholic

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# 'Love is all you need'

## Valentine's Day gets a re-boot for couples

Michael Kelly

Irish couples are being encouraged to get all loved up this St Valentine's Day as part of the countdown to next year's World Meeting of Families in Dublin.

The event's organisers are hopeful that, since Dublin is also home to the famous Shrine of St Valentine the patron saint of romance, he will fire his arrows and inspire couples to let love blossom this February 14.

The novel approach is aimed at couples tired of the traditional red roses and chocolates side of things to give one another 'gift tokens' for presents that are a little bit more meaningful.

### Romantic

The tokens, available in cathedrals across the country, offer rewards such as a romantic hand-in-hand walk together, a promise of a technology-free evening, an intimate dinner together, time set aside to pray together or the promise of 'loads of tender hugs'.

But, fear not. Those unlucky in love or spending St Valentine's Day alone are not being forgotten. A prayer card for single peo-

ple still looking for that special someone to settle down with is also being distributed.

More than 150,000 of the tokens are available, and it's in response to a call from Pope Francis for the Church to rediscover St Valentine's Day as a celebration of love in the life of the Church.

According to Fr Tim Bartlett, Secretary General of the World Meeting of Families 2018, the idea is to try to recapture some of the original sense of St Valentine's Day that may have become lost in a more commercial celebration of the day.

He told *The Irish Catholic* the "gift tokens encourage simple little gestures, and help us to appreciate that these simple gestures are also moment of grace and expressions of selfless love for another which mirror the love of God for us, and are to be celebrated".

Pointing out that the Pope's document *The Joy of Love* will play a key part in preparations for 2018, Fr Bartlett said the Pope wants the Church to "recover the fundamental Christian themes

» Continued on Page 2

## Raised hands and voices for Faith



School children taking part in the *Laudate* Festival last week in Our Lady of Victories Church, Dublin. The *Laudate* Project aims to encourage children and their families across the generations to learn, recall and sing hymns together in schools and parishes. Photo: John McElroy

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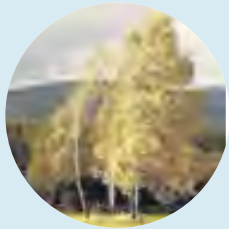
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# 'Show must go on' mentality cannot go on forever



**Editor's Comment**  
**Michael Kelly**

**F**ew things attract more controversy in a parish than a decision to cancel a Sunday Mass or reconfigure the weekend liturgical timetable. There's often an undercurrent from some parishioners that if a priest cancels a particular Mass or tries to consolidate, it's a sign that he just wants less work.

I had correspondence from a parishioner recently who explained that for the last few years in their parish there have been seven weekend Masses across three churches. These Masses were celebrated by the parish priest, a curate and the retired parish priest. Unfortunately, the retired parish priest has recently had to give up celebrating public Masses (he's in his mid-80s). As a result, the parish priest has cut the number of weekend Masses from seven to five. Some parishioners are understandably disappointed that the Mass they traditionally attended is no longer available and they must attend a different Mass.

My correspondent adds "I can't understand that between two priests they can't celebrate seven Masses over a Saturday night and a Sunday morning".

### Helpful

The parishioner, undoubtedly in a bid to be helpful, reckoned that if each Mass took approximately 45 minutes, that was a total of five hours and 15 minutes, "that's less than three hours each [for the PP and curate], which doesn't seem unreasonable".

There was no thought expressed in the letter as to the quality of the

liturgy. The focus seemed entirely on quantity. I wonder too if the parishioner had given any thought to the fact that if priests are entitled to four weeks' leave a year (a fairly minimal amount of annual leave nowadays), then in a parish of two priests, there are at least eight weeks per year when there is only one priest available due to the other's leave.

**“There's no quick or easy solution – despite what some may think”**

One wonders, at a certain level, why the parish priest – no doubt aware of this fact – didn't go for a more radical approach given that there will now be eight weeks a year when one of the priests has to celebrate five Sunday Masses.

It's a reality in the Church in Ireland that in many parishes we are still in a 'keeping the show on the road' mentality. It can't continue for much longer. Each summer brings more clerical retirements with fewer and fewer younger priests to fill the vacancies.

Some priests have spoken to me of feeling bullied by parishioners. Often not in a direct way, but in frowns of disappointment when the hugely-stretched priest is unable to

meet unrealistic expectations. Or the whispering that goes on about 'Father' cancelling Masses while continuing to go on holidays. As if rest for body, mind and soul is not a prerequisite for healthy, integrated ministry.

There's also pressure from those who no longer go to Mass regularly but want the consolation of the Church when it comes to a death or to celebrate marriages and baptisms. If many parishioners in the pews seem largely unaware of the pressure placed upon priests by the vocations crisis, those who are rarely at Mass have no cognisance of it.

**“There's also pressure from those who no longer go to Mass regularly but want the consolation of the Church when it comes to a death”**

There's no quick or easy solution – despite what some may think. But, people can start by taking an honest look at expectations, and asking themselves whether or not there's more they can do to build up the community of faith in their parish. It's easy to grumble, not so easy to take on a challenge.

## Church gives St Valentine a makeover

» **Continued on Page 4**

that are behind the now-familiar contemporary cultural celebration of St Valentine's Day".

He said that the Pope "reminds us very beautifully

that in the seemingly ordinary things of romantic love, for example, God's grace and plan is present".

Centred around the theme, 'The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World', the event is expected to draw tens of

thousands of people to Dublin for a celebrate and reflect on the place of families in the life of the Church.

As well as cathedrals, couples can collect tokens from Veritas bookshops and Accord Centres across the island.

The Shrine of St Valentine is housed in the Dublin church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Whitefriar Street. It is a popular venue for couples, or those seeking love – especially on the martyr-saint's feastday, February 14.

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# Opposing Trump while turning blind eye at home branded 'hypocritical'

Greg Daly

Irish opposition to US President Donald Trump's clampdown on refugees is hypocritical as long as a blind eye is turned to our own system, priests who have campaigned on the issue have said.

"We can all get up in arms and rightly so about the outrageous actions of the President of the United States," Msgr John Byrne, parish priest of Portlaoise, told *The Irish Catholic*, "but really, there is a touch of hypocrisy about it if we can tolerate a direct provision system that just has gone on and on and has treated all people badly, but none more than the children caught up in the system."

Describing Ireland's detention centres for asylum applicants as "horrible places", Msgr Byrne said he knows people who have been in the system for six and seven years, adding that while the process has been improving, the Government has been "dragged into the improvement".

## Enthusiasm

"I don't believe it's done with any enthusiasm, because the bottom line still is – and this is maybe a comment on ourselves – there are no votes in it," he said.

Msgr Byrne's comments follow a High Court ruling which found that a woman who spent several years in direct provision with her family is entitled to compensation over delays in processing her asylum application. Mr Justice Michael White ruled that the delay was contrary to the State's duties under the Constitution and EU law.

## No rights

Fr Alan Hilliard, author of *Open Heart, Open Hands: Welcoming Migrants to Ireland*, said: "Courts both in America and Ireland are basically the last recourse for people who have no rights to gain their rights," and that as things stand, "the present realities around migration would highlight the fact that the Universal Charter of Human Rights is basically null and void."

Expressing a hope that the High Court decision would prove "a shake-up that's needed" Fr Hilliard told *The Irish Catholic* detention centres for asylum seekers are a tool used across the world to discourage migration.

"We do pride ourselves on human rights, and say it over and over again across the world that we're known for our human rights, but this is a total violation of human rights at every level," he said.

## Washington guided by 'God-fearing' faith

The actor Denzel Washington has described himself as "a God-fearing man" during an awards ceremony speech.

Already a two-time Academy award winner – for his roles in *Training Day* and *Glory* – Washington added to his accolades in recent weeks with a Screen Actors Guild award for his performance in *Fences*, signalling a potential third Oscar. And it was during his acceptance of the prize that the actor said that once, "I didn't have faith" but now "I'm a God fearing man".

To those who know Washington

closely through working with him, his Christian faith comes as no surprise as the actor has never been reticent about sharing the importance of faith in his life.

In previous interviews he has detailed how, after wild teenage years that threatened to derail his life, he returned to the faith of his father, Denzel Sr, who served as a pastor for 60 years. This, he has explained, came when he realised, "there's never been a time when God didn't direct, protect and correct me".

Today, Washington remains an

active member of his local church and reads his Bible every morning. Of the major on-screen roles that he has excelled in, he says he makes acting choices based on a desire to communicate positive messages or his own personal faith.

And, while he set aside thoughts of becoming a pastor in favour of acting, Washington believes he has honoured his father's efforts to raise him in faith.

"My father, my earthly father...he's smiling in Heaven, seeing his son doing the best I can do today, by the grace of God," he said.

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# Donegal newly-weds become centre of star-studded Catholic 'flashmob' tribute

**Paul Keenan**

The wedding ceremony of a Donegal couple has become an internet sensation after singer Daniel O'Donnell led other singing stars in a musical 'flashmob' from the altar in honour of the newly-weds.

In a move unexpected by either Patricia Swan or new husband Neil, after celebrant Fr Pat Ward had sung the opening line of *How Great Thou Art*, the voices of Patricia's uncle Daniel O'Donnell, Tony Allen, Shaun Cuddy and Tony Kenny took up the following lines from their hidden places in the congregation, and moved to the altar for the hymn's culmination, to the joy of the couple and their guests

in St Mary's Church in Kincasslagh.

"It was a lovely idea," Fr Pat told *The Irish Catholic*, crediting Patricia's lifelong friend, Gavin Doyle, for having organised the surprise event for immediately after the exchange of vows. Fr Pat said further that while the musical 'flash mob' had been a unique moment for Kincasslagh, "it added to what was a lovely ceremony without taking it over".

The musical moment has now been uploaded to social media under the title 'Flash Mob - Catholic Style' where it has been viewed thousands of times and has led to an outpouring of good wishes for Patricia and Neil as they begin their married life.

# Call for Government to streamline school vetting

**Greg Daly**

The Government has been urged to streamline the process for vetting people to work in schools amidst a huge backlog in the safeguarding system.

Changes in the vetting process, to ensure that people are safe to work with children, led to a "very large upsurge" in applications for such clearance, according to Seamus Mulconry General Secretary of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA).

He said that the backlog has been caused by the need for people to be vetted multiple times. For example, a special needs assistant who works in three different schools has needed to be vetted three separate times.

Since the vetting legislation came into force in September, Mr Mulconry said there has been an enormous increase.

## Upsurge

"In most dioceses it has increased by factor of three, and in some dioceses it has increased by a factor of four, so there's been a massive upsurge," he said.

It ought to be possible to streamline this arrangement, he said, so multiple vetting is no longer necessary and the system made more fit for purpose. "The legislation refers to an agreement which can

exist between a school and an external body such as the GAA, and we have been waiting since last September for legal clarity from the Attorney General's office as to how that letter would operate" he said. This would mean that vetting provided for one setting could be valid for other settings.

"This has also led to an outlay of resources on behalf

of diocesan offices as they've struggled to cope," he said.

Colette O'Doherty, Director of Safeguarding for the Diocese of Ferns, echoed this. "Pressure is being placed on dioceses, because we're the conduits," she said, adding that dioceses do not have the resources to meet the duplication required.

"In Ferns we don't have

the capacity to double-vet," she said, calling for pressure to be "focused upwards" so the mechanism of the shared agreement can be put into practice.

Requests to the Office of the Attorney General for clarification on the delay went unanswered as *The Irish Catholic* went to press this week.

## Some crosses for Brigid



Fifth class pupils at Scoil Eoin, Balloonagh Primary School, Tralee, making a St Brigid's Cross on her feast day (February 1); (left) teacher Seamus Brosnan helps Evan McCarthy as Lily Ryan (standing, left), and Lia McLysaght watch on. Photo: John Cleary

# Priest questions Dublin City honour for Obama

A Catholic priest in the Archdiocese of Dublin has questioned the awarding of the freedom of Dublin to former US President Barack Obama.

In a message on social media reacting to news that Lord Mayor Brendan Carr had proposed the honour during a City Council

meeting, Fr Pádraig Ó Cochláin of St Canice's in Finglas asked: "Why honour a man who fomented war in Arabian countries and also forced Catholic charities and taxpayers to wage war on the innocent unborn."

Throughout his administration, Mr Obama defended funding for the abortion provider Planned

Parenthood and, through his Affordable Care Act, sought to force religious-run institutions to offer contraceptive and abortion cover through insurance schemes.

The Freedom of the City motion was carried by a narrow margin, prompting a walk-out by councillors linked to People-Before-Profit.

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# Crucial differences between two referenda

Those organising the campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution – which recognises the unborn as a human life – are hoping to follow the example, and the success, of the same-sex marriage referendum.

Ed Brophy, formerly chief of staff to Tánaiste Joan Burton at the time of the same-sex marriage plebiscite, Colm O’Gorman of Amnesty Ireland and Kate O’Connell TD are among those advising the ‘Repeal the Eighth’ campaign, in the mould of the 2015 referendum.

Some of the advice offered is shrewd. Mr Brophy counsels avoiding extremes, and Ms O’Connell says that the best tactic is to “tell stories” about real people.

Well, we shall see what transpires from the Citizens’ Assembly findings and how the repeal lobby decides to focus its tactics.

But it seems to me that there are crucial differences between approaches to same-sex marriage and attitudes to abortion.

## Propositions

I encountered quite a few individuals, during the same-sex marriage campaign, who did not agree with the proposition, and who still adhered to the view that marriage was between a man and a woman. And yet, they chose not to make their views felt publicly, and to abstain from voting, out of a sense of kindness and tolerance.

They personally knew and liked gay people, often had good friends who were homosexual, or might have been themselves of



Mary Kenny

a homosexual orientation – and they didn’t want to send a message that seemed bigoted or rejecting. And, in the public eye, there were sunny-tempered and popular celebrities like Graham Norton. You wouldn’t want to ‘rain on their parade’.

**“Where people were silent on the issue, they may have felt intimidated”**

These ambiguous feelings – of retaining the historical view that marriage is between a woman and a man, yet not wanting to disrespect the aspirations of friends and neighbours – played a major role, I would suggest, in the outcome of the same-sex marriage referendum. Where people were silent on the issue, they may have felt intimidated by a certain element of ‘political correctness’: but often they genuinely didn’t want to offend.

Abortion is a much starker situation. You may indeed feel that no woman should be forced into motherhood, as well as having the deepest sympathy for parents faced

with a distressing diagnosis of carrying a child with life-limiting conditions. Yet when you see the clinical evidence, in photographs and in written testimonies – Abby Johnson’s book about working in an abortion clinic, *The Walls are Talking* or McAleer and McElhinney’s alarming study of the American abortionist Kermit Gosnell – the facts of the situation emerge in a terrible light. A Graham Norton-ish sunny-tempered reaction belongs to a different world.

We are in much darker, much more distressing territory. Pointedly, Rory O’Neill – aka ‘Panti Bliss’ – has himself spoken out against assuming that gay and transgender people are pro-abortion.

When the same-sex marriage vote was carried, the celebrations were a riot of pink. Even for those who didn’t support the ‘Yes’ vote, there was a sense that the victors were entitled to their street parties, which, for the participants, was a celebration of human love.

Does anyone open a bottle of champagne to celebrate terminating a pregnancy and ending a human life? It’s an entirely different scenario.

## Learning from failure

The science broadcaster Professor Brian Cox says that he loves to fail when he is doing science, because failing means he has learned something. Science, he says, is all about failing, and learning from it. His hero is Thomas Edison, who failed to invent the electric light many thousands of times before he finally succeeded. Inspiring.

## A mother’s influence

There is a noticeable number of Irish names emerging in the Trump administration: Paul Ryan, John Kelly, Kellyanne Conway, Steve Bannon, Mike Flynn (and not forgetting Mike Pence, whose family hails from Sligo). Like it or not, the Irish in America have always been drawn to politics and often succeeded in the field too.

The new conservative judge of the Supreme Court (nominated by President Trump, not yet endorsed), Neil Gorsuch [pictured], has some Irish roots too, being the child of a Catholic Irish-American mother, a feisty Republican politician herself, Anne Burford Gorsuch, born Anne Irene McGill; her own mother was Dorothy O’Grady.



Mrs Gorsuch was a brilliant lawyer who garnered many laurels as a student and post-grad. She was elected to the State Legislature of Colorado and appointed by Ronald Reagan to run his environmental agency, but her tenure ended in a debacle when she was accused of being too lax on polluting businesses and she resigned. Described as a funny, tough woman who had a great way with people, her

son Neil feels deeply that she was unjustly treated. (A fierce smoker, she died in 2002 aged 62.)

I am always interested in how people are influenced by their mothers, and according to the *New York Times*, his mother was the strongest influence in Judge Gorsuch’s life.

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## Bestselling Gosnell exposé 'ignored' by *New York Times*

Paul Keenan

An Irish author whose exposé on the crimes of infamous US abortionist Kermit Gosnell has become a nationwide bestseller in America has attacked the *New York Times* for failing to feature the book on its respected Bestseller List.

Documentary maker Phelim McAleer, who is co-author of *Gosnell: The Untold Story of America's Most Prolific Serial Killer*, accused the newspaper of "messaging with the figures" in order to keep attention away from the book's revelations.

Kermit Gosnell was a Pennsylvania-based abortionist who, in 2011, was exposed as performing abortions beyond the state's 24-week limit. FBI investigators who moved against the doctor would later describe the "charnel house" that was his clinic, where countless infant body parts were found. Gosnell was subsequently convicted of three infant murders and the manslaughter of a woman who died at the clinic. He is currently serving life in prison without the chance of parole.

### Popular

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* this week, McAleer said the book, which shot to No.3 on the

Amazon bestseller list, has just as quickly become the fourth most popular non-fiction hardback in bookshops across America. "But the *New York Times* has not listed it."

In addition to the low level of coverage afforded by the liberal media to the Gosnell case after the FBI revelations, McAleer pointed out that the

Gosnell book has received a similar level of media attention in America, yet the book's status demonstrates that people want to know the truth of his actions.

"We thought we would do well," McAleer said, "but not fourth on the bestseller list. But the interest [in the Gosnell case] is there." He added: "People hate the truth to be kept from them. The cover-up is driving sales."

He went on to explain that the refusal to shed a bad light on the issue of abortion is a pattern he and co-author Ann McElhinney have experienced since they completed a film on the Gosnell case in 2016. To date, the filmmakers have been unable to convince an American studio or distributor to promote it, though McAleer voiced hope that the success of the book might now change minds.

"We're hopeful the splash will help drive the movie," he said.



# Parishes add 1,000 complaints over *Late Late Eucharist* ridicule

Greg Daly

Leinster parishioners have submitted hundreds of complaints to RTÉ about how the Eucharist was ridiculed in the national broadcaster's flagship chat show.

More than 900 letters have been sent from parishes in Laois, Carlow, and Kildare, *The Irish Catholic* has learned, following a discussion on *The Late Late Show* in which the Eucharist was referred to as "haunted bread".

Over 400 letters have been sent to RTÉ from Abbeylax, Co. Laois, according to Fr Gerard Ahern, PP, with about 350 being sent from Hacketstown, Co. Carlow, and roughly 200 more from Naas, Co. Kildare.

During the January 6 discussion, comedian David Chambers - 'Blindboy Boatclub' in the comedy duo The Rubberbandits - said any young people attending midnight Mass at Christmas were going because it was a family event, with them "not going there for haunted bread".

### Description

When presenter Ryan Tubridy remarked that the phrase 'haunted bread' was "a great expression", Mr Chambers said that was an accurate description. Claiming that the Church "does not want us to use critical thinking", he said the Church wanted people "to eat the ghost of a 2,000-year-old carpenter".

Describing the discussion as "terrible", Fr Ahern told *The Irish Catholic* he had arranged for the exchange to be transcribed, and read the transcription at Mass, asking that any parishioners who were troubled by it to send a letter to RTÉ about the matter. Sample letters were supplied, he said, with the transcribed exchange on their reverse side.

Signatories to the letter wrote saying that they were "greatly offended" by the discussion on *The Late Late Show*, arguing that Mr Tubridy failed in his duty to maintain balance and uphold

the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) code of programme standards which require broadcasters to "show due respect for religious views, images, practices and beliefs in programme material".

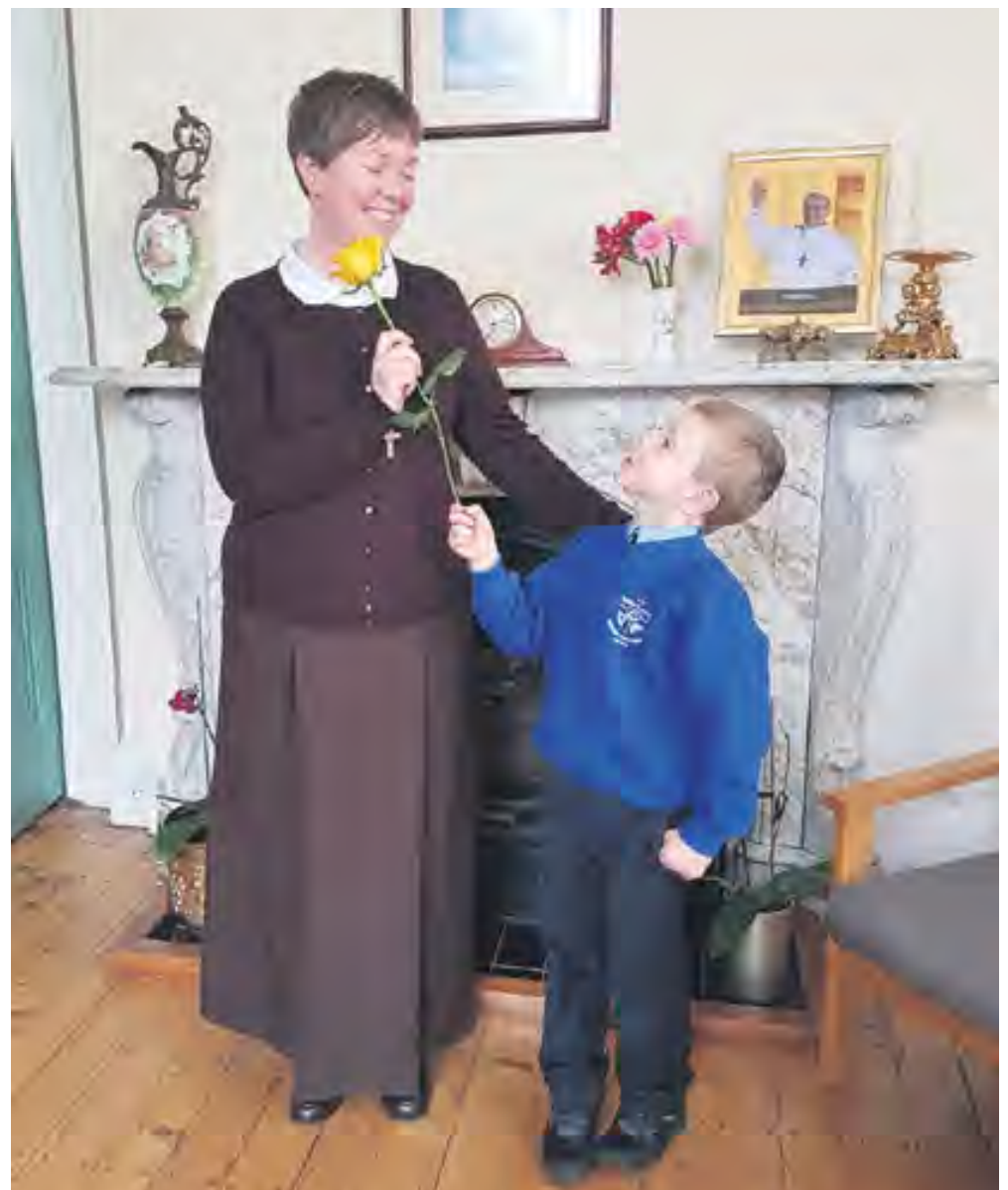
Describing the term "haunted bread" as "particularly offensive", the letter took issue with how Mr Tubridy encouraged the term's use.

Fr Ahern contacted the BAI to ensure that proper procedures were being followed,

he explained, adding that "RTÉ have a number of days to reply, and if they don't it can be taken up with the BAI afterwards".

"I just wasn't prepared to sit back and do nothing," he said.

## Sweeter than a rose



Gráinne McElwee, who previously worked with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in the diocese of Down and Connor, with her nephew Finn after becoming the newest postulant with the Adoration Sisters on Belfast's Falls Road.

## Irish Times forced to apologise over 'homophobia' label

Staff Reporter

The *Irish Times* newspaper has been forced to apologise to respected columnist John Waters for an article over two years ago that was "open to the interpretation" that he was homophobic.

A note in the February 6 edition of the *Irish Times*, referred to "an opinion

column in the edition of January 20, 2014, headed 'Homophobia watchdog needed before marriage equality referendum'. The article referred to was written by Una Mullally.

The *Irish Times* admitted that the article "was open to the interpretation due to an editing change that columnist John Waters was

homophobic and held anti-equality views".

The paper admitted that "this was unfounded" and apologised to Mr Waters "for the upset and distress to him". The apology went on to add "we thank him for his long and distinguished contribution to the *Irish Times*, and we wish him well".

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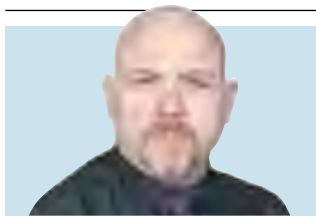
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# Citizens' Assembly on abortion looks increasingly like a foregone conclusion



Fine Gael fig-leaf gathering is arousing more than a little suspicion, writes Paul Keenan

From the outset, there have been those voices who argue that the current Citizens' Assembly, rather than giving voice to the popular will, was actually a diversionary tactic to shift the blame for any move towards introducing abortion to Ireland from the shoulders of a Government all-too-cognisant of the depth of feeling on all sides on the issue in this country.

During the gathering in Dublin at the weekend, pro-life Sinn Féin TD Peadar Tóibín spoke for many when he took to social media to express the view that the outcome of the assembly is in "little doubt if it continues to stack sessions with pro-choice witnesses".

Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran, also on social media, was emphatic in his allegation that the meetings are "becoming more and more like a pro-abortion rally". The bishop's comments came after reports that many delegates were annoyed that there were so many pro-life submissions.

## Misgivings

Despite misgivings about the selection process of the 99 members of the assembly, many hoped that under the stewardship of the highly-respected Justice Mary Laffoy, the gathering would be afforded room for fair debate and access to contributions from across the spectrum.

It hasn't been promising so far.

Convened to consider further the issues of rape and of the availability of abortion in other jurisdictions (as well as allowing for discussion of the 13,500 submissions made to the assembly by members of the public), the weekend



The Assembly has been accused of ignoring the 100,000 lives saved by the Eighth Amendment.

session was informed that it would hear from two leading voices from beyond these shores in the fields of abortion.

Specifically, these were Gilda Sleight of the New York-based Guttmacher Institute, whose website describes the body as a "leading research and policy organisation committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights in the United States", and Dr Patricia Lohr, medical director of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). 'Reproductive rights' is the favoured term of international pro-abortion lobbyists.

**“The storm from religious, lay and political quarters to the panel make-up was inevitable, and immediate”**

Alongside these contributors was Dr Donal O'Mathuna, senior lecturer in ethics, decision-making and evidence at Dublin City University, and Dr Joan McCarthy, lecturer in healthcare ethics in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at University College Cork.

Of these four contributors, only Dr O'Mathuna would subsequently argue the case for the unborn, whom he described as "totally without power" amid the arguments offered for abortion.

The storm from religious, lay and political quarters to the panel make-up was inevi-

table, and immediate.

In its response, the Pro Life Campaign (PLC) accused the assembly of lacking balance in its discussions on abortion and of ignoring the positive impact of the constitutional protection for the unborn.



Justice Mary Laffoy.

Spokesperson Sinéad Slattery said it was "bizarre, to say the least, that a leading abortion provider in Britain, a business that has publicly campaigned against Ireland's constitutional protection for the unborn, should be invited to present under the heading of 'case studies' and 'care paths'. Even more strange is that an invitation was given to the partisan Guttmacher Institute to present an 'overview of the availability of legal terminations in other jurisdictions.'" She went on to point out that, for real balance and impartiality, "a neutral institute or group of scholars should have been asked to present such a dossier".

Stronger still, in a state-

ment accusing the Assembly of a "fatal lack of fairness", Independent TD Mattie McGrath described the invitation to Guttmacher as "misguided and profoundly problematic".

"Guttmacher have long associations with International Planned Parenthood, the world's largest abortion providers, and have even been described as its research arm," he said. "I would suggest that this is definitely not the kind of partisan organisation that can be trusted to give a fair and balanced analysis of abortion in other jurisdictions."

Further, "when it comes to BPAS the problems are even more significant. This is an organisation that has actively campaigned against the criminalisation of sex-selective abortion. For BPAS, if a pregnant woman wishes to abort her child for the sole reason that it is a girl, then that should be perfectly ok."

## Reaction

Faced with the strength of reaction, Justice Mary Laffoy was at pains to defend the choice of speakers at the session, insisting in her closing remarks that assembly members had a right to hear fully the ethical, legal and medical arguments on abortion and issues surrounding it.

"We have consistently tried to put the medical and the legal material before you in a factual, neutral and balanced manner," she insisted, though she also added, "I have to say this balance can be difficult to achieve in such

a highly contested and controversial area."

She went on to stress that a striving for balance remains "fundamental" to the work of the assembly, and there is no suggestion that Ms Laffoy is responsible for the apparent lack of balance.

But, such a defence did little to assuage the suspicions that the assembly is now gearing itself up to an inevitable outcome and one that pushes for a referendum to remove the Eighth Amendment constitutional protection for the unborn.

**“A lot of the submissions had a religious ethos which were not relevant to the discussion”**

Approached by *The Irish Catholic* on the basis of his input on social media lamenting just such a potential outcome, Sinn Féin's Peadar Tóibín TD told this newspaper: "It has always been my view that Fine Gael created the Citizens' Assembly in order to outsource the decision on whether or not to hold a referendum on abortion. Fine Gael made this decision because they know that such a decision would seriously damage their voter base."

"However this process is increasingly transparent. Many of the witnesses invited

to the assembly are stalwarts of the international abortion industry. However, there seems to be few experts to detail the enormous impact abortion has on babies with disabilities, from poor backgrounds, ethnic minorities or indeed baby girls, all of whom are far more likely to be aborted in abortion regimes."

Deputy Tóibín went on to voice that which the PLC's Sinéad Slattery had previously accused the Assembly of ignoring.

"The Eighth Amendment has ensured that Ireland's abortion rate is significantly lower than comparative countries. Its stands to reason as a result that there are thousands of people alive and well in Ireland due to the Eighth Amendment."

While finding the submissions from the public 'emotive' and not adding anything to the work of the assembly, at least one member decried the fact that, according to a report, "a lot of the submissions had a religious ethos which were not relevant to the discussion".

Reacting to this, Bishop Kevin Doran cut succinctly through all arguments when he stated of that which looks increasingly inevitable: "We can make our point just as clearly if and when there is a referendum."



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# Focus urges caution on 'friendly vulture fund' plan

Greg Daly

A leading homelessness campaigner has expressed reservations about the proposal for the State to set up a so-called 'friendly vulture fund' to aid people experiencing mortgage distress.

Such a charitable organisation that would buy distressed loans from hard-pressed homeowners and allow them to stay in their homes would be a key step in tackling Ireland's housing crisis according to the chairman of the Oireachtas Finance Committee has said.

Maintaining that such a "friendly vulture fund" should be a registered charity, John McGuinness TD told *The Irish Catholic* that "the Government's input would be that they would provide the guarantee to the bank, and that once those bonds were provided, the return

would be either that the agency would collect rents, instead of a mortgage or that it would collect a mortgage payment that would be equivalent to the draw-down from the bank."

The effects of this on beleaguered homeowners would be immense, the Fianna Fáil TD said, as "it would mean that they would stay in their own home and would be paying according to their own means".

However, Focus Ireland's Mike Allen told *The Irish Catholic* the term "friendly vulture fund" highlighted the challenge Mr McGuinness's proposal would face.

Explaining that vulture funds operate by purchasing assets at the lowest possible price and then maximising profits, he said that "what's envisaged is that somebody will put money into

a fund which will not be used ruthlessly to extract profit".

Mr Allen said that he was "unsure of who would put money into such a fund", as "what isn't there is what would be the attraction for people to buy those bonds and how are those bonds to be repaid, since the purpose is to buy distressed debt

and not to squeeze the profits out of that debt".

Speaking ahead of his formal presentation of the idea to the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party, however, Mr McGuinness said the idea has broad support. "Someone has to do something, and the thing that it does is eliminate the legal costs of chasing people, bringing them

before the courts, clogging up the courts, ruining people's lives, bringing about schemes that would give them free legal aid," he said, concluding: "None of that is needed if we take the giant step of dealing with the Bank of Ireland and AIB and any other bank that sees this as part of their corporate social responsibility."



● Taking to the streets for Simon Community TV3's Cassie Stokes helps launch Virgin Media 10K Night Run Dublin City with Paul Farrell from Virgin Media. The Simon Community is the official charity partner for April 23 event that is expected to see 10,000 runners take to the streets for the run through the centre of the capital. Register now online at [www.virginmedia.ie/nightrun](http://www.virginmedia.ie/nightrun). Photo: Leon Farrell/ Photocall Ireland

## Maureen's pink angel inspires fundraising ball

Paul Keenan



A fundraising ball for health services in Co. Clare, prompted by a young woman's unshakeable belief in angels, will take place this May 20. The Pink Angel Ball owes its name to the description Maureen Lavery [pictured] offered of the figure she said was accompanying her through her final months with terminal cancer. Maureen died in January 2012 aged just 27.

Since then, and drawn to Maureen's courageous example in facing her illness, people from across Ireland have made the Pink Angel Ball an annual success in raising funds for cancer care and other services, and they hope to repeat the success this year once more.

### Preparations

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* this week amid preparations for the sixth Pink Angel Ball, Maureen's mother, Mairead, said that while her daughter "had been to Hell and back" during her final illness "she was never afraid, and always smiling".

"Maureen always said, 'I'm fine, the pink angel is with me'," Mairead said, adding, "her belief was always so strong."

Funds from the Pink Angel Ball, to be held at the Falls Hotel in Ennistymon, Co. Clare, will benefit Cahercalla Community Hospital and Hospice, and Slainte an Chalir, which provides cancer support and relies on donations for its existence.

The Maureen Lavery Pink Angel Ball can be found on Facebook.

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# Christians must assess Trump policies on a case-by-case basis



David Quinn

Every Republican president since and including Richard Nixon, with the possible exception of the first President Bush, has caused huge controversy.

Even before Watergate, Nixon was a controversial figure, in no small part because the US was embroiled in the Vietnam War, an entanglement begun under President Kennedy.

Reagan was controversial because of his hardline stance towards Communism.

The second President Bush was controversial because of his hardline stance towards Islamic fundamentalism, but also because he tore up the Kyoto climate change treaty very early in his presidency, something the Senate had rejected anyway.

You might see a commonality here. Republicans tend to deal with those they deem enemies of the US in a more aggressive way than Democrats typically do. Sometimes this has good results (Reagan's anti-Communist stance helped to bring down the Soviet Union) and sometimes bad (Bush's invasion of Iraq turned out to be totally misconceived).

## Continuation

Donald Trump is to some extent a continuation of this Republican tradition of taking a harder line towards those perceived, rightly or wrongly, as America's enemies. Thus, he wants to 'destroy' Islamic fundamentalism.

More controversially, he wants to defend America's borders against illegal immigrants. He has temporarily halted immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries for security reasons (it's an indefinite halt in the case of Syria), and he wants to build a wall along the border with Mexico and 'make them pay for it'.

Protestors took to the streets in huge numbers against Nixon, Reagan, and the second Bush (each of them was re-elected despite this, Nixon and Reagan in landslides). They are doing it again, only earlier on, in the case of Trump.

Trump is the most controversial Republican president yet. This is not because of his policies



US President Donald Trump.

only. It's also because of his extremely provocative style and his very problematic temperament and personality.

What should Christians make of Trump? Certainly, it is extremely difficult to approve of his personal lifestyle. He is married for a third time having divorced his previous two wives, and his personal attitude towards women is deeply sexist and obnoxious as revealed by that notorious tape released a few weeks before his election victory.

However, this tape didn't stop a majority of white American women, including very many Christians, voting for him, any more than Bill Clinton's terrible behaviour towards women like Paula Jones, not to mention his wife, stopped women, including very many feminists, voting for him.

**“Feminists voted for Bill Clinton despite his awful personal behaviour towards some women”**

What explains this? I think it is partly because when voters assess a particular candidate they look at who else is available to vote for, and then vote for the one that is least bad in their view. Feminists voted for Bill Clinton despite his awful personal behaviour towards some women because they believed he would advance their agenda, especially on abortion.

Many women, and many Christian women, voted for Trump despite his appallingly sexist behaviour because they preferred his policies overall to those of

Hillary Clinton. In particular, many liked his (newfound) opposition to abortion just as feminists liked Hillary's staunch support for abortion-on-demand, in some cases right up to birth.

A little over half of Catholics voted for Trump. That is not to say they all voted for him, or against him, for purely, or even partly, religious reasons.

## Economic factors

Many will have voted for or against him because of economic factors. For example, Trump won big support in blue collar, working class areas that have previously voted Democrat.

This is because these voters believe the Democrats, and the Republicans up until Trump, have been happy to see their manufacturing jobs disappear to countries like China and Mexico. In fact, 80% of manufacturing jobs have been lost to machines, but blue collar voters still opted for Trump in the hope something would be done. Many of these voters would be Catholic.

If a Catholic was voting based on what their religion has to say about the common good, it would have been impossible to give whole-hearted support either to Trump or to Clinton.

Trump is now President, so let's concentrate on him. On a relatively trivial level, few Catholics will approve of his overly provocative style, his lack of compromise on seemingly any issue, his win-at-all-costs approach.

Many will find his attitude towards climate change deeply objectionable.

All Catholics ought to approve of his support for the right-to-life, no matter how opportunistic it may be. Many will approve of his

desire to do the right thing by working class communities. If he manages to lift them up through his policies, it would be hard for Catholics not to applaud that.

However, as part of his efforts to help working class communities, he wants to curb illegal immigration, much of which is pouring

over the border from Mexico. Christians believe in 'welcoming the stranger'. Should this translate into support for open borders, no matter what effect open borders might have on the host society, including the poorest members of the host society? Christians can legitimately take up a variety of positions here.

**“I support a level of immigration that does not harm the receiving society”**

Speaking for myself, I support strong border controls, I support a level of immigration that does not harm the receiving society, and I support controls on illegal immigrants. I believe Trump's demand that Mexico pay for the wall is absurd, and absurdly provocative.

What about refugees fleeing conflict? The instruction to 'welcome the stranger' obviously applies

here. But again, the rights and needs of the receiving society cannot be ignored. Care for the refugee has to be balanced with the safety and security of your own citizens.

Again, speaking for myself, I believe those claiming asylum should be properly vetted, but I don't believe in Trump's temporary ban. I think that was, like the demand to pay for the wall, unnecessarily provocative, not to mention unjust.

To sum up, I don't believe any Catholic can offer whole-hearted and unqualified support to Trump. I think we have to take his policies on a case-by-case basis, and offer support or opposition based on our assessment of the merits or otherwise of his policies.

Sometimes Catholics in total good faith will disagree on what to oppose and what to support.

So far, I believe only his support for the right-to-life should enjoy our unqualified support.

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**Greg Daly** learns about a charity election that's electrifying a Wexford parish

Anyone paying attention to parish circles online in recent weeks can't but have noticed that something exciting is happening in the Wexford parish on Barntown. The Mayor of Barntown is a charity election, intended to galvanise the community while boosting parish funds, explains local curate Fr John Carroll. The 'mayor' would be a kind of 'first citizen' for the area, who could articulate the heard and felt needs of parishioners, he says.

"We have a very wide sort of semi-suburban, semi-rural parish, and a lot of people are actually unaware of the identity of the parish," he says, continuing, "they know a limited number of their neighbours, but have no great sense of the overall shape of the parish – what's in it, what it offers, what it does, and what it can do?"

With Barntown just a few kilometres from Wexford town, Fr Carroll muses that "we live on the outskirts of a town, and I suppose people are a bit more town-centred than they are local-church-centred".

Given this, he says, the Mayor of Barntown was imagined as an attempt to bring Barntown together, so people can learn who their neighbours are and what their parish is, as well as to encourage them to see how they can contribute to community life and consider how community life can help them.

### Novel

"That's the primary thing, but it's also a novel, good-humoured slightly competitive way of fundraising," he says. "In the last 10 years, we've reduced our debt from just under €600,000 to about €280,000, and in that time we've also built a new school, we've developed our cemetery, we've put in car parks, we've put in new playing pitches – we've had an expenditure of millions. A lot of it's been Government-funded or assisted, but it's an awful lot of our expenditure too."

# Ask not what your parish can do for you...



Fr Carroll says that with the intentions of paying down debt while continuing to develop the area, the election was thought of late last year. "We sat down and looked at things in November – late October, early November – and set ourselves the task then of having the candidates agreed upon and agree to run by early December," he says, continuing, "then what we did was set ourselves the task of launching it in early January, and having it over by the end of March."

**“Last Sunday morning we had breakfast with 300 people”**

"It's a very simple thing," he adds, "as I keep saying, 'One euro, one vote – vote early vote often, and if Donald Trump wants to buy the

election he's more than welcome'."

Having come up with the basic shape of the election, the committee looked around the parish to find six people from different areas who would bring with them different sets of supporters, different skills and different outlooks.

The candidates could hardly be a more diverse bunch, ranging from Mag Gurhy who has long been involved in the Wexford Light Opera Society and has the backing, Fr Carroll says, of over 200 local factory workers, to Donie O'Dowd, "a man who lives up on the mountain, and is from a family that goes back generations in the parish".

Tom Dempsey, Declan Power, Martina Brazzill and Billy Codd all have distinct things to offer, he continues, noting that the candidates'

different campaign teams are all working hard and enlivening the parish in various ways.

"We have six or seven shared events in which they must participate, like we've a parish 'Come Dine With Me' for Valentine's Day, where they encourage as many people as possible to make dinner, invite people in and charge them for it to support their campaign," he says, adding, "we've the national heritage park in the parish, and so we've a parish treasure hunt."

Individual candidates have organised their own events too, he continues, citing a concert organised by Martina Brazzill as an example. "Last Sunday morning we had breakfast with 300 people, when we turned the local pub into a pop-up restaurant," he says.

"There's a lot of stuff like that going on," he continues. "There's nearly something



Tom Dempsey (left) beside elections posters and, above, a spot of post-Mass canvassing; below, altar servers sign up after Sunday Mass for a fundraising 'Split the Pot'.



going on every day, whether fun walks or Operation Transformation – they've come up with all sorts of ideas and they're just rolling them out all the time."

The competition is definitely having an important effect, he says, and is dramatically boosting the area's sense of community spirit. "My attitude to it is that anything that pulls people together and gives them a sense of who their neighbour is, where their community is, what their parish looks like," he begins, continuing, "if you start to get that movement going, even if it never made money, it would start to reinforce local social capital, local Christian capital, local Catholic capital."

**“It would start to reinforce local social capital, local Christian capital, local Catholic capital”**

That said, with seven or so weeks still to go, money is coming in, and the event is being warmly engaged in across the parish. "Everybody is pulling in behind it and considers it a very good idea," he says. "It's run like general election, you get your team in, you agree the rules, and then you go for gold and see how much you can make. We've election posters up on the roads around the parish, people have brought out their own election brochures, some are canvassing door to door, and while they're doing it, they're doing a promotion of where Barntown is, what it's

about, what's in it."

When the competition was in its preparatory stages organisers had to be a bit discreet about it, Fr Carroll explains. "We were afraid that if we went to public with the idea somebody might steal it, so we had to get it all in place and have it launched before anybody else had done it," but since then, he says, "Press coverage has been huge, and it's been a huge social media thing as well – it's been viral there."

Now that the story is out there, he says, he would be delighted if other parishes followed suit, and found out whether people just want to go home, shut their doors and settle in in front of their televisions in the evenings, or if they'd like to develop facilities that would help people to come out and engage in anything from exercise to chats with their neighbours.

"I hear that a lot – there is that need," he says, "when you watch the energy behind this, you'd wonder what people were doing before, because it seems they're hugely keen to get involved and there's been no shortage of imagination."

Speculating that Barntown's problem may have been one of geography more than of will, he says: "Barntown is built in 40 directions looking in 40 other directions. A lot of people are in different pockets. This is trying to stitch the pockets together."

As for those who'd want to emulate them he has one central bit of advice. "The key to this to keep it slightly competitive but always good humoured," he says, continuing, "that particular mix seems to bring out the best in everybody."



The O'Flaherty family enjoy breakfast at Mary Jo's, a Sunday morning fundraiser for the Mayor of Barntown competition.

# A wish-list for a new translation of the Mass

We live in hope that a review of the translation of the liturgy might point a way forward, writes **Tom Whelan**

**T**here are rumours that Pope Francis has established a working group (composed of bishops) to look at the rules of engagement regarding the translation of liturgical text.

These have been carried by the Jesuit weekly, *America*, which in turn cites an Italian journalistic source. However, there seems to be no reliable indication of what Pope Francis said, when he said it...or if he said it at all in the first place.

Print media began to speculate that this will lead to a 'revision' of the Missal and other translations, whereas the original report used terms like 'review' and 'revisit the rules for translation of liturgical text' that have been in operation since 2001, and which were responsible for the English translation of the current Roman Missal used in Irish parishes.

If a working group is to be set up, is it likely that they will authorise the re-translation of the Missal? Rome is not renowned for publicly admitting that it made an error, so a review is more realistic than a revision.

Eleven English-speaking Episcopal Conferences printed the *Missal* in 2011, at great cost, and for financial reasons alone it would be improbable that Conferences would approve a new text.

## Working group

If we are to accept that a working group might review the translation process, including modifying some of the 'rules' for translating, then we could reasonably expect a few changes to the translation process.

We should note that some years ago, Fr Paddy Jones, when leaving office as Director of the National Centre for Liturgy, expressed a hope in *New Liturgy* that Irish bishops would review the process that led to the current translation.

Unhelpfully, media in Britain and the USA reported that Ireland was planning for a revision of the texts, and peoples' hopes were unfairly raised.

What can we sensibly hope for if a review were to take place? Here is part of my wish-list:



**1.** The most far-reaching consequence of a review would be to give back to the conferences of bishops throughout the world the right to approve translations for their own local Churches.

**“It would be reasonable that Churches using the same language would work together to produce good translations”**

The liturgy constitution of Vatican II (no 33) stated that translations were to be prepared *and approved* at local level.

This was changed some weeks later, passing on this authority to Rome. Pope Francis is now systematically trying to decentralise decision-making so that what pertains to a local Church to be decided there and not in Rome.

If that were to happen, it would be reasonable that Churches using the same language would pool resources and work together to produce good translations that respected the genus of a language, more local needs, respect for inclusive language and gender, while also taking into consideration other requirements of liturgy.

**2.** Rome should dispense with the need for its own agencies to oversee the translation work in the various language groups.

Up until now, *Vox Clara* oversaw the English work of translation, as did *Sapientia*

with that of the Irish language, and *Ecclesia orans* for the German language.

As had previously been the case, and now seems to be the mind of Pope Francis, Rome needs to trust the competency and integrity of local bishops' conferences to produce their own material and make their own pastoral judgments.

This might lead to appropriate cultural expressions that will promote the legitimate variety of liturgical expression which was not just permitted, but encouraged, at the Council.

**3.** The importance of this last point is well illustrated in the tendency in the 2011 translation of the Roman Missal to prefer a Latinate form of English over and against the more proper Anglo-Saxon. For example, we must now use 'chalice' – Latinate English – rather than 'cup'.

## Modern language

Peculiarly, when the so-called 'rules' of translation set out in 2001 proposed (in no. 53) that "whenever a Latin word has a rich meaning that is difficult to render into a modern language" (among the examples given is the Latin word 'consubstantialis'), it may be translated using another word or a phrase, etc.

However, English language translators chose to ignore this and opted for the Latinate 'consubstantial' in the Creed rather than a more accessible phrase such as "one in substance with", or "of one being with" – phrases not unlike those found in the current French, German, Spanish and Italian translations.

**4.** Many people do not realise that there are many other new translations in the pipeline – including those relat-

ing to Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, etc. In the process of producing these translations, a lexicon of Latin words with their 'equivalent' English meaning is being developed, as required by the Roman document of 2001, no 9.

**“This ecumenical feature of our liturgy (since the 1970s) was praised by Pope John Paul II in his visits to the USA”**

In all languages, including Latin, words can carry a multiplicity of meanings. Professional translators speak of the constant need to interpret and they cannot understand this requirement for liturgical translation.

**5.** One of the great losses experienced with the introduction of the 2011 transla-

tion has been the fact that we no longer pray with a common language prayers that we share with our brothers and sisters in other Churches.

This ecumenical feature of our liturgy (since the 1970s) was praised by Pope John Paul II in his visits to the USA and to Australia and New Zealand.

Had English-speaking Catholics throughout the world been allowed to use the translation of the Missal that was approved by 11 English-language Episcopal Conferences in 1998, these issues – among many others which could be named – would not be an issue today. We live in hope that a review might point a way forward.

**i** Tom Whelan, *Spiritan* missionary, teaches liturgy at *Loyola Institute (TCD)* and at *Maynooth*. He is a member of the *(Episcopal) Council for Liturgy*.

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# Out&About

They've got the whole world in their hands



**LAOIS:** Pupils from The Rock NS, Mountmellick, celebrating St Brigid's Day during Catholic Schools Week.

**CORK:** Participants from the dioceses of Cloyne and of Cork and Ross with Fr Charlie Kiely, Director of Pastoral Planning and Development in Cork and Ross, Sr Karen Kent, Coordinator of Pastoral Development in Cork and Ross and Dr Marie Cooke, Director of Further Education at the Maryvale Institute, after their first study day for the Maryvale Certificate in Catechesis.



**CORK:** Fr Pat Nugent, with children from Greenmount, Glasheen Boys and Glasheen Girls National Schools after the children from the Lough Parish's primary schools gathered for Mass during Catholic Schools Week.



**CLARE:** St John Bosco Community College, Kiladysart's school St Vincent de Paul group with chaplain Ms Patricia O'Brien, Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe and diocesan chancellor Fr Albert McDonnell PP after Mass in the parish.



**LAOIS:** Pupils from Clonaghadoo NS, celebrating Catholic Schools Week and St Brigid's Day in prayer and song.

Edited by Greg Daly  
greg@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**DONEGAL:** Fr Cathal Ó Fearraí with students and staff from the four schools in the parish of Kilbarron, Ballyshannon – Rockfield NS, Scoil Chaitríona, Br Mícheál Ó Cléirigh NS and Gaelscoil Éirne – following Mass to celebrate Catholic Schools Week.

► **DUBLIN:** Members of the Marianist community at Sr Laurence College, Loughlinstown, with the Marianist jubilee icon commissioned to celebrate 200 years since the order's foundation in Bordeaux. The following day the icon was brought to Kenya to begin its tour of Africa.



**GALWAY:** Poor Clare sisters in Nuns' Island with Franciscan Provincial Fr Hugh McKenna (rear, left) and members of the Galway Franciscan Community following a Mass to celebrate the sisters' 375 years in Galway.



**PARIS:** Fr William Coleman, parish priest of Rochfordbridge, Co. Westmeath, with Her Excellency, Geraldine Byrne-Nason, Ambassador to France, at a recent reception at the Irish Embassy in Paris.



**LIMERICK:** Transition year students from St Clement's Redemptorist College with members of Redemptorist youth ministry teams, during a week-long school mission in which all the school's 520 students and 40 staff took part.

**ARMAGH**

Eucharistic Adoration in St Malachy's Church, Armagh daily from 6am to midnight, and all night on Wednesdays.

Adoration chapel, Edwards St, Lurgan, adoration weekdays, 9am-9pm.

Celebration of commitment in love for married couples at 7:30pm on February 13 in St Patrick's Cathedral.

**CLARE**

A Mass of Healing and Anointing for the World Day of Prayer for the Sick will take place at 11am on Saturday February 11 at St Joseph's Church, Ennis.

The Killaloe Diocesan Youth Council annual overnight will be on Friday February 10 in St. Flannan's College, Ennis, open to all aged 16 to 19. For more information and permission forms, please contact Cora Guinnane 087 2400135.

**CORK**

Medjugorje prayer meeting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday at 8pm in Holy Trinity Church, Father Matthew Quay. Prayers for healing first Wednesday of every month.

**DERRY**

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in Dungiven parish from 8am to noon, and 3-9pm, Monday to Friday.

**DUBLIN**

St Gabriel's Church, Dollymount with host the Archdiocese Celebration of the 25th World Day of the Sick at 3pm on February 12, with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin as chief celebrant. All welcome, please contact Anne on info@stgabrielsparish.ie or 01-8333062.

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.

**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 Program of Healing Prayers with Fr Benny McHale and John McCarthy from 8 to 10pm on March 6, 13, 20 and 27 at Abbey Hall, Newtownsmith. Contact 0879980525.

**KILDARE**

A centring/contemplative prayer group meets in the Old Baptistry of St Michael's parish church in Athy every Thursday at 8pm. Ring Dolores at 086-3474679.

Suncroft parish church: Eucharistic Adoration on Wednesday in the sacristy from 10am to 6pm.

A parish cell meeting will take place on February 21 in Leixlip, Confey, Celbridge, Straffan and Newbridge, with meetings for parents, grandparents, and expectant parents in Leixlip par-

**KILKENNY**

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

**LAOIS**

An Extraordinary form Latin Mass will take place at St. Joseph's Church, Mountmellick, at 2pm on Saturday, February 18.

**LIMERICK**

Eucharistic Adoration each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until 10pm, Crecora on Thursdays following morning Mass until 12pm and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret Church on Wednesdays, from 10am to 12noon.

**MAYO**

Extraordinary Form Latin Mass will be celebrated in Knock's parish church at 5.30pm on February 12.

**MEATH**

Trim Prayer Group meeting every Thursday evening, 8-9pm, in Trim Parish Centre. All welcome.

Enfield Parish Mission begins on Monday, February 13, 8pm, in Jordanstown church. All welcome to this four-week mission.

**OFFALY**

Eucharistic Adoration in the chapel of Tullamore General Hospital 24/7.

**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.

**TIPPERARY**

Vigil in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes will be held in the Pallotine Chapel, Thurles from 7:30pm until 10:30pm on Friday, February 10, with a Eucharistic hour, a Marian hour, and Mass, as well as anointing of the sick.

**WICKLOW**

Eucharistic adoration, St Mary & Peter Church, Arklow, every Tuesday & Friday 2-7pm and Sunday 2-5pm.

Holy Rosary for priests, Aras Lorcain, every Friday at 7.45pm.

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. You can also join us on the live stream: <http://www.churchservices.tv/stpatrick-schurchwicklow>



# World Report

## Cardinal Müller criticises 'local interpretations' of *Amoris Laetitia*

The head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has taken to task bishops who are choosing to interpret Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia* exhortation on the family in ways which are not in keeping with Church doctrine.

In an interview with Italian media, Cardinal Gerhard Müller referred to directives being issued from various bishops' conferences on communion for divorced-and-remarried Catholic which indicated local interpretations – on the topic of personal conscience – to a document he has previously insisted is clear in its message.

"I don't like it. It is not correct that many bishops are interpreting *Amoris Laetitia* according to their own way of understanding the teaching of the Pope. This is not in line with Catholic doctrine," Cardinal Müller said. Urging prelates

to "study first the doctrine on the papacy and the episcopate", the cardinal stressed: "The bishop, as teacher of the Word, must himself be the first to be well formed so as not to fall into the risk of the blind leading the blind."

Cardinal Müller further pointed out the impossibility of any contradiction between personal conscience and doctrine, insisting there are no circumstances under which "an act of adultery does not constitute a mortal sin."

Returning to the issue of "irregular situations" in terms of familial structures, Cardinal Müller said that Pope Francis' own teaching on the family was intended to be of help to people living in such unions. However, he stressed, on the issue of communion in this area, "we cannot make concessions" and the Church cannot accept those "irregular situations that are not in accordance with the divine will".

## 'Indefensible' scale of clerical abuse in Australia revealed

The shocking extent of alleged clerical sexual abuse in Australia has been revealed for the first time to the commission established to investigate such cases.

Undertaking its work since 2013, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse heard on Monday last, during a sitting in Sydney, that 7% of Catholic priests in Australia have faced allegations of abuse between 1950 and 2015. In a survey of Catholic institutions, investigators found that, between 1980 and 2015, 4,444 people had alleged abuse.

The average ages of those involved are reported to be 10 for girls and 11 for boys.

### Investigation

The investigation found that over 1,000 Catholic institutions across Australia were implicated in cases of abuse, and of 1,880 people identified as abusers within them, 572 were priests.

The commission was presented with numbers of



Gail Furness.

claims against 10 individual religious orders, including the St John of God Brothers which was alleged to have just over 40% of abusive members, the worst single figure. This was followed by the Christian Brothers, at 22%, the Salesians of Don Bosco, with just under 22% and the Marist Brothers at just over 20%.

Presenting the figures, lead lawyer Gail Furness described a pattern of behaviour accompanying abuse allegations.

"Children were ignored or

worse, punished," she said. "Allegations were not investigated. Priests and religious were moved. The parishes or communities to which they were moved knew nothing of their past." Further, she said: "Documents were not kept, or they were destroyed. Secrecy prevailed as did cover-ups."

At Vatican level, meanwhile, Furness revealed that requests for documentation as to the actions taken against abuse priests and religious were turned down, their

delivery being described as "neither possible nor appropriate".

The numerical revelations came as senior leaders from the Catholic Church in Australia prepared to face the Royal Commission. The Archbishops of Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra Colbourn, Melbourne and Perth were scheduled by the commission to attend in person.

Ahead of his appearance, Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane issued a video message to his parishes in which he warned there were "shocks [and] grim moments" ahead.

Meanwhile, reacting to the statistical findings, Francis Sullivan, head of the Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, which was established directly in response to the abuse scandal described the findings as "indefensible".

"It's a miserable tale, you can't put a coating on it, it speaks of so much damage, it's heartbreaking," he said. "As Catholics, we hang our heads in shame."

## Confraternities seek clarification on Exhortation

The Confraternities of Catholic Clergy in Ireland, Britain, Australia and the USA have issued a joint statement urging clarification on *Amoris Laetitia*.

Representing more than 1,000 priests, the confraternities' statement, arising from the ongoing question of Communion and divorced-and-remarried Catholics, contends that a

clear answer to this is "gravely needed to correct the misuse of the apostolic exhortation to undermine sacred tradition".

The priests add that their own pastoral work with people emerging from broken marriages is best assisted "when the Church expounds her teaching boldly and

clearly".

The statement goes on to praise the four cardinals who, last October, submitted a letter containing doubts – dubia – on *Amoris Laetitia* to the Pope, asserting that the prelates acted "out of love for the Church and concern for the salvation of souls".

## Christian leaders condemn Trump's refugee plan

Christian leaders in the Middle East have condemned as "divisive" moves by US President Donald Trump to prioritise Christian refugees while barring others from entry to America.

Responding to the president's executive order against seven Muslim-majority nations and his signalling of preferential treatment of Christian refugees, Bishop Antoine Audo of Aleppo in Syria said any measures to help those affected by conflict or humanitarian disaster in the Middle East "must be fair and must be applied equally to all, without discrimination".

### Communities

Speaking on behalf of those Christian communities still remaining, the prelate added: "We ask to be helped not to emigrate, but to have peace in our countries, in order to continue our life and our

witness in the land where we were born."

Bishop Audo's criticism of the US move was added to by Iraq's Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako who described the differing treatment of people as "a trap for Christians in the Middle East".

He warned that Mr Trump's actions would result in Christians being seen as "foreign bodies" supported and defended by Western powers.

Meanwhile, it has emerged that an Iraqi prelate's planned visit to New York has been scuppered by the US president's executive order. Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil was due to fly into the United States at the invitation of Republican Congressman Chris Smith in order to discuss persecution against his community with Cardinal Timothy Dolan.




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Edited by Paul Keenan  
paul@irishcatholic.ie

## Snow day for seminarians



Stephen Rooney tries to catch snowflakes on his tongue as he and fellow seminarians arrive for the installation Mass of Bishop John O. Barres as Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York. Photo: CNS

## Pakistani court dismisses all charges in anti-Christian riot case

Catholic leaders in Pakistan have reacted angrily to the acquittals of all 115 suspects charged in relation to the devastating 2013 attack on the Christian community of Joseph Colony in Lahore, north-west Pakistan.

The suspects had been identified as being part of a 3,000-strong mob which stormed through the district, torching at least 100 Christian homes and two churches following allegations that Christian Sawan Masih had made a blasphemous comment against the Prophet Mohammed. However, Judge Mohammad Azam of the Anti-Terrorism Court accepted defence claims that no solid evidence had been presented to link the suspects to the attack and ordered all released.

Following the dismissal of the cases,

Cecil S. Chaudhry, of the National Commission for Justice and Peace, an initiative of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Pakistan, told the *Crux* news agency: "It's strange that not even one person was found to be involved in the attack, especially when there was media present during the attack on Joseph Colony." He pointed out the ready availability of video footage taken during the attack.

"This verdict is increasing the fears and doubts in the community that the space for civil society is shrinking, and those raising a voice for seeking justice are being ignored," Chaudhry added.

Meanwhile, Fr James Channan of the Peace Centre in Lahore, Pakistan, said the outcome of the case had caused fear among Christians in the city.

## Hungary pledges coordinated action on Christian persecution

The government of Hungary has said it aims to make the country a hub for and supporter of organisations tackling Christian persecution worldwide.

In an address to a conference in Budapest attended by Christian advocacy groups, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Ministry for Human Resources, Bence Rétvári, pointed out that Hungary was the first nation to set up a government office dedicated to helping Christians who suffer for their faith, at a time when the European Union had not offered a unified response to this crisis in the Middle East. Secretary Rétvári said the need for concrete action comes as "more Christians are being persecuted today throughout the world than during the reign of Roman Emperor Nero".

Hungary is now planning an exhibition which will travel Europe to highlight both the persecution of Christians and Hungary's own call for unity.

## Anti-Semitic crimes in Britain at highest on record

Anti-Semitic crimes in Britain have surged to their highest levels on record, new figures from a monitoring group have revealed.

According to records compiled by the Community Security Trust (CST), there were 1,309 incidents of anti-Semitism across 2016,

a figure which surpassed the previous record of 1,182 recorded in 2014.

The majority of crimes against the Jewish community in Britain took place in just two cities, Greater London and Greater Manchester, homes to the country's two largest Jewish

communities.

Among incidents recorded were verbal abuse, hate mail and anti-Semitic graffiti; damage and desecration to Jewish property (which increased by 25%); 107 violent anti-Semitic assaults (the highest number since 2010), and

hundreds of anti-Semitic incidents involving social media.

The CST cited numerous reasons for the recent spike in incidents, including the Brexit referendum and recent rows within the Labour Party on the issue of anti-Semitism.

## Vatican roundup

### Religious orders 'haemorrhaging' members, cardinal reveals

The secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has sounded a warning on the "haemorrhaging" of people from religious life. Interviewed by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Cardinal José Rodríguez Carballo revealed that between 2015 and 2016, some 2,300 monks and nuns had left their orders. His use of the word 'haemorrhaging', the cardinal said, was a direct quote from Pope Francis when he had been made aware of the numbers involved.

"If the Pope speaks of haemorrhage it means the problem is worrying, not only for the high number but also the age at which it is occurring, mostly between 30 and 50," Cardinal Carballo said.

The cardinal went on to state that a recent plenary session of his congregation had made three possible conclusions for the crisis: "The high number of those leaving holy life to join a diocese, the not-insignificant number of the contemplatives who leave holy life and the number of those who say they never felt a vocation."

### Cardinal Backis drops out

The retired Archbishop of Vilnius, Cardinal Audrys Backis reached his birthday on February 1, automatically removing him from the list of eligible voters for a papal conclave.

Archbishop Backis was elevated to the College of

Cardinals in 2001 by St John Paul II and retired in 2013.

There are now 226 living members of the College of Cardinals, of whom 119 are under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in a papal election.

### Pope sends condolences to Quebec mosque victims

Pope Francis has sent a message of condolence to the victims of a shooting at an Islamic cultural centre in Quebec, Canada. Communicated via Gerald Lacroix of Quebec, the Pontiff extended his "deepest sympathy to the injured and their families" and "once more strongly condemns violence that engenders such sufferings".

Separately, the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue said of the attack: "This meaningless gesture has violated the sanctity of human life, and the respect due to a community in prayer and their place of worship."

### Order of Malta chancellor thanks Pope Francis

The reappointed Grand Chancellor of the Sovereign Order of Malta has thanked Pope Francis for his "guidance" in ending the crisis that had beset the order.

Having been suspended from his post in early December amid claims he backed medical programmes involving the distribution of contraceptives, Albrecht von Boeselager regained his position following the resignation of the man who had ousted him, the order's Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing. That resignation came as the culmination of the order's attempts to defy Pope Francis' wish to establish a commission to fully investigate governance and practices within the Order of Malta.

"In all his decisions the Pontiff showed respect and regard for the Order of Malta, while at the same time acknowledging in all his actions, the sovereignty of the order," Boeselager said last weekend.

Seeking to put the crisis aside amid reports that it has suffered financially from it, the Order of Malta said in a statement: "The resignation of the Grand Master opens a new phase in the life of the order, and with renewed vigour, the order concentrates fully on the enormous challenges in humanitarian diplomacy and the work on the ground."

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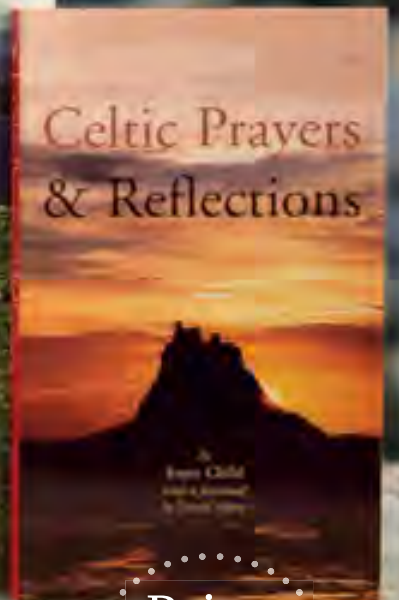
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# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

On Saturday morning, Rome woke up to discover its walls and sidewalks festooned with anti-Pope Francis posters asking, “Where’s your mercy?” Under a dour shot of the Pontiff, the poster cited crackdowns on groups and individuals perceived as conservative-to-traditionalist.

A few hours later, I got a phone call from a veteran Italian Vatican writer I’ve known for a long time.

“My editors wanted me to get a bishop to answer a few questions about the posters, but I couldn’t,” he said. “Then they wanted a theologian, and I couldn’t find one of those either. Finally, they said, ‘Get anybody with a name, and it’d be better if they’re outside of Rome,’” presumably so they wouldn’t show up in a competitor paper.

“So, will you do it?” he asked.

I replied: “Do you always start an interview by telling your subject they’re your 10th choice?”

We shared the kind of laugh that only people who’ve walked a long time in one another’s shoes can, and then got down to business.

The points he wanted to cover may be questions many people are asking, so I’ll summarise our conversation here.

**Q: What do you make of these posters?**

I don’t think we should be shocked. We already knew that Pope Francis is a polarising figure, with lots of people who love him and some who feel strongly he’s a disaster, and in an increasingly acrimonious climate, it was probably only a matter of time before something like this happened.

Equally, we shouldn’t exaggerate the dimensions of the opposition. Yes, it’s loud, yes, it has sympathy in some high places, including corners of the Catholic hierarchy, and yes, it often expresses concerns a not insignificant number of Catholics are feeling.

However, a St Leo University Polling Institute survey in December found Francis has an 85.8% approval rating among American Catholics, up slightly from the 84.2 support he had in September 2016. Similar numbers pop up wherever in the world these sorts of polls are taken, confirming a basic truth – no matter what, most Catholics will like the Pope, whoever he is.



People look at a poster expressing criticism of Pope Francis in Rome. The poster says in Roman dialect: “Ah Francis, you’ve taken over congregations, removed priests, decapitated the Order of Malta and the Franciscans of the Immaculate, ignored cardinals...but where’s your mercy?” Photo: CNS

## On Roman posters, papal blowback, and parallels with Trump

**Q: Can you think of anything like this that’s happened before?**

If you mean putting up posters on the streets of Rome openly critical of a sitting Pope, no. (I can remember posters, like these anonymous but unlike the Francis case possibly a spoof, which cropped up before the 2013 conclave trying to get Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana elected pope, but that’s not really on-point.)

On the other hand, there certainly are parallels.

I recall during the John Paul years being given handbills from Catholic traditionalists denouncing the Pontiff as a heretic for his ecumenical and interfaith outreach. I also remember what amounted to a series of ‘attackumentaries’ on Italian TV criticizing Pope Benedict XVI’s record on the clerical sexual abuse scandals.

More remand in time, terrible things were said about Pope Paul VI, and we could keep peeling back the onion all the way to its core. The bottom line is that Francis is the 266th Pontiff of the Roman

Catholic Church, and he’s also the 266th Pope to face blow-back from elements of his own flock, sometimes including his own bishops.

**Q: Do you think the opposition to Francis is more widespread or intense than other Popes?**

No, I don’t. I remember sitting with bishops both in the US and in Rome during the John Paul years, listening to them complain about various aspects of his papacy. I also know what was being written and said by liberal Catholic theologians, especially in North America and Western Europe, and much of it wasn’t pretty.

As for Benedict, he drew withering criticism on multiple fronts. Things got so out of hand during a row involving the rehabilitation of a Holocaust-denying traditionalist bishop in 2009 that Benedict actually wrote to the world’s bishops to apologise for mishandling the situation, the first time a Pontiff had ever done so.

However, there are two differences with Francis.

First, unlike John Paul II or Benedict, the loudest criticism of Francis comes from the right. The ‘maverick Pope takes on conservative old guard’ narrative is almost irresistible from a media point of view.

**“What each man means by ‘the people’ is vastly different, but the instinct is the same”**

Second, in a social media-dominated world, criticism of a prominent person by anyone, at any time, can go viral. The fact that a given complaint gets a lot of retweets, however, doesn’t make it any more serious than in the past, nor does it mean it has more traction either at the grassroots of the Church or the top.

(My colleague, who’s been covering the Vatican even longer than I have, said at this stage, “For those of us who’ve been doing this work for a while, that seems obvious and I share it completely, but maybe it’s not so obvious to everybody else.”)

**Q: Is there any comparison between how the right has reacted to Pope Francis and the way the left, in America especially, is reacting to Donald Trump?**

I do think there’s an interesting parallel between reactions to Francis and Trump, aside from the fact that they’re the two most riveting personalities on the global stage right now. Both are essentially populists, in the sense that they appeal directly to the people against an elite status quo. What each man means by ‘the people’ is vastly different, but the instinct is the same.

It’s the nature of populists to be divisive, because they upset systems and challenge business as usual. In fact, Francis’s political role model, Argentina’s Juan Peron, spent much of his life in exile for exactly that reason.

Of course the parallel is inexact, beginning with the fact that Trump is a politician and a celebrity while Francis is fundamentally a pastor. Further, Francis rarely personalises his rhetoric, while for Trump that’s almost a stock in trade.

Nevertheless, having these two figures on the job at the same time may help explain why the present moment seems so especially turbulent for the Church in the US – as Catholics we’ve been governed by one strong-willed populist for three and a half years, and now we’ve got another one as Americans.

Precisely because they have such different agendas, we may be in for a nasty case of whiplash!

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

Protestors in Pakistan demand the release of five human rights activists kidnapped in January.

# A dangerous precedent for Pakistan

If politics is the art of 'spin', a masterclass of the art was offered to the world this week from Pakistan.

Amid an angry row surrounding five abducted secular human rights activists, the nation's Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan intervened on the issue of Pakistan's blasphemy laws to deny that said legislation is misused to target the Christian community.

"The facts and figures reveal that in most blasphemy cases the accused were Muslims," Khan was quoted as stating at the end of January. Referring to a sample 129 cases brought under Clause 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, the minister revealed that 99 of the total were cases registered against other Muslims.

"These facts point toward the fact that religious minorities are not being embroiled in blasphemy cases more than Muslims," Khan contended. He went on to conclude: "In essence, religious minorities are not being targeted by the blasphemy laws."

If this deft sleight-of-statistics was intended to convince those with even a passing familiarity with how Clause 295-C is routinely enacted against Christians by those with agendas against them, it very quickly failed.

## Persecution

Quite aside from the immediate countering of Minister Khan's words by Wilson Chowdry of the British Pakistani Christian Association – "Sadly, Mr Khan's comments, even when taken at face value, suggest that minority persecution is way above the expected values for such a small percentile of Pakistan's population [at 1.6% of the population]" – any reading of the wealth of cases in which Christians have fallen foul of the unsubstantiated accusations

## The blasphemy law proves politically useful, writes Paul Keenan



of others gives cause enough to perceive chronic abuse of the law.

It is sufficient to look only at the case of Asia Bibi, still lingering on death row, to realise that the mere word of an accuser is enough to bring an unfortunate individual to such a fate in Pakistan. Despite zero substantiating evidence, Bibi's pursuit of justice can gain no fair hearing in the appeals court, and even if she could achieve that, the price placed on her head by a fundamentalist cleric means that her death warrant is signed, regardless of the outcome of any re-hearing of her case.

**“There are those willing to use all means to target the Christian community”**

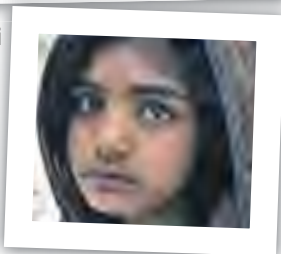
With a record of lynchings, immolations and the torching of entire Christian neighbourhoods by mobs driven by nothing more than allegations of blasphemy, Pakistan's legislators have sufficient reason to accept that there are those willing to use all means to target the Christian community, including allegations under law through which despised neighbours can be driven out by police action or Muslim rage. (Minister Khan's statistics are falsely reduced by non-inclusion of blasphemy cases that never make the police/court stage by instant 'justice' at the hands of the mob.)

The circumstances surrounding

the blasphemy accusation against teenager Rimsha Masih in 2012 should have offered evidence enough for the authorities in Pakistan to recognise the hair-trigger upon which the entire penal code around blasphemy rests.



Asia Bibi (above) and Rimsha Masih.



Made a hate figure for Muslims when accused of burning pages of the Koran, Rimsha Masih's case caused something of a sensation when it transpired that a number of witnesses could testify that her accuser, a cleric, had in fact been the one to damage the holy pages by which he sought to damn the girl. The case against him was quietly dropped while Masih was forced to flee abroad.

Yet, even then, legislators, while held in check by terror of a massive backlash against dropping the

Penal Code, did not even consider tightening up the law to prevent cases proceeding on mere word-of-mouth. (In this they would have the support of at least one cohort of clerics who, at the beginning of this month, participated in a televised discussion on the blasphemy law and were unanimous in the judgement that false allegations are sinful under Islamic law and all allegations should be substantiated.)

The roots of political fear lie in part in the fate of the late Salman Taseer, whose vocal demands in 2011 for reform of the blasphemy law led his bodyguard, Mumtaz Qadri, to turn his gun fatally on the politician, to outpourings of joy from thousands who agreed with the act and consider the executed Qadri as a martyr in Heaven.

**“The three Facebook pages have been accused of containing content blasphemous to Islam”**

Now Pakistan is set to be tested again in its application of law due to events in January around the aforementioned activist bloggers.

Well known for their human rights activities, there was uproar last month when Prof. Salman Haider, Waqas Goraya, Aasim Saeed, Ahmed Raza Naseer and Samar Abbas were individually snatched from the streets between January 4 and 7, reportedly by men in civilian clothes in pick-up trucks, leading to the belief that the abductors were, in fact, members of the military, so often the target of criticism by the activists.

The kidnapped men's websites were later shut down, leading to further speculation as to involvement by the security services.

Serious though the collective

kidnappings were, more serious was the subsequent wave of allegations on Facebook that the activists are linked to the Facebook pages Bhensa, Roshni and Mochi, known for their posts critical of the military and religious extremists.

## Belief

But herein lies the rub. The three Facebook pages have been accused of containing content blasphemous to Islam, thereby damning anyone who can be identified as controlling said pages. Despite any lack of hard evidence, the seeds of belief have been slowly sown to implicate the activists. The allegations have seeped into the television broadcasts of popular Islamic figures, one of whom has been taken off-air such as has been the scale of his vitriol against the activists.

Thus, when one of the disappeared, Prof. Salman Haider, turned up in Islamabad on January 27 and returned safely to his family, it was not long before an official investigation was announced on the grounds of blasphemy. The Federal Investigation Agency confirmed as much at the start of February and said legal opinion on the accusation is now being sought.

This conscientious pursuit of legal opinion will be cold comfort to the activists who must now exist with the 'guilty even if proved innocent' label that accompanies a blasphemy allegation.

Worse still, the doing down of the political opposition posed by the activists through blasphemy allegations is something political figures, already doubtful of the law's misuse, are unlikely to challenge.

In this they should exercise caution against an expediency that could all too easily rebound when the extremists look for new enemies.

# 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

### A blogger who knows her subject

**Dear Editor,** I found your 'Webwatch' section on January 26 challenging, to say the least. That a Catholic blogger like Simcha Fisher could so wholeheartedly embrace the 'women's march', an event with an openly pro-choice agenda, left me appalled.

Did the outspoken Mrs Fisher shun the March for Life a few days later? What of her claims about President Trump and his appointments? Had she researched these? Did she even know about how American nuns had been bullied by President Obama to provide for their staff's contraception and worse? Did she know anything about what it means to be needy in America, or about what kind of support needy people really need?

These and other questions

troubled me, so I decided to take your anonymous reviewer's advice and explore Mrs Fisher's blog and background for myself. Well, I could hardly have been more surprised!

Had she been to the March for Life? No, which she regretted, but three of her 10(!) children had, and she'd written proudly about the placards they made and called for prayers for all those involved in the march.

Had she researched the President's appointments, policies, statements and actions? Absolutely.

What about the nuns? Yes, she's talked about them in the past – and on contraception, it's worth noting that Simcha has written *The Sinner's Guide to Natural Family Planning*, which of course can be about

planning to have children as much as planning to prevent them!

As for neediness? Oh my. Look at her April 2015 piece for *Patheos* entitled 'The day I bought steak with my food stamps' and just read how difficult her life used to be, how hard she and her husband worked in dire circumstances simply to enable her family to scrape by.

I still find Mrs Simcha's arguments challenging, but I think I have to admit now that she knows far more about this stuff than I, or probably anybody else in Ireland, does.

Yours etc.,  
**Stewart Maher,**  
Swords, Co. Dublin.

### McGuinness article a bit hard to take

**Dear Editor,** I was disappointed to read Martin O'Brien's article on Martin McGuinness in your issue of January 26. While I appreciate Mr McGuinness's contribution to the Peace Process cannot be understated, neither should we downplay the fact that that contribution was only necessary because of the terrorist campaigns that had afflicted Northern Ireland for decades before the Peace Process, with Mr McGuinness having played a central role in that conflict.

Mr O'Brien's article does not ignore this fact, but

neither does it give it the weight that many would feel it is due. The Provisional IRA, after all, was a murderous organisation, and while Republicans rationalise away their violence the fact remains that the IRA's catalogue of carnage is immense.

Indeed, the IRA claimed that their actions were those of a legitimate army, and demanded the right to be treated as prisoners of war when in prison, famously engaging in hunger strikes to make this point. Perhaps so – though I find their case unpersuasive – but

if they were a legitimate army, entitled to the same treatment as legitimate soldiers, should they not also have fought in accordance with the rules of war outlined in the Geneva Conventions?

Has Mr McGuinness ever conceded that he and other IRA figures could conceivably have been held to account for war crimes?

At the very least, a significant number of the IRA's murders were undoubtedly mortal sins, such that they can hardly be explained away as

inevitable actions in a just war, and their actions were condemned by such Church leaders as St John Paul II and Cardinal Daly.

Even in peacetime, Mr McGuinness has held to Sinn Féin's party line on such issues as abortion and same-sex marriage. While his decision to share power with Ian Paisley was surely beneficial to Ireland as a whole, it is still galling to see him held up for admiration in a Catholic publication.

Yours etc.,  
**Lisa Fitzgerald,**  
Naas, Co. Kildare.

### 'Truth' in President Trump's world

**Dear Editor,** How right John Cleary is (Letters, IC/2/2/17) that, through the sudden adoption of new phraseologies to accommodate the world of President Donald Trump, we have "landed ourselves in the double-speak world of George Orwell's nightmarish vision in his novel *1984*". And how true that we now exist in an era wherein "truth is whatever I say it is".

This was brought home to me most forcefully within a day of reading Mr Cleary's letter when, in the wake of the attack on the Louvre in Paris, President Trump seized the impetus to bemoan France's position on refugees and its Muslim community and told the nation – via one of his Twitter 'midnight ramblings' – to "wake up". Mr

Trump's 'truth', i.e. his world view, was thus bolstered. Yet, it has subsequently emerged that the Louvre attacker was of Egyptian extraction, while Egypt has not been included on Mr Trump's list of seven countries whose citizens are banned from entry to America, surely putting the US leader's own words into the category of double-speak.

Meanwhile, in a deft construction with words, Mr Trump now insists that should a similar attack take place on US soil, the fault will lie not with him, but with the judge whose temporary stay on the ban so infuriated the Trump administration. This, then, is the 'truth' as Mr Trump decrees it.

As an interesting aside, while Orwell's *1984* has seen a spike in sales

with the rise of Donald Trump to the most powerful office in America, I note that a novel with more resonance to current events has been re-issued. The satirical *It Can't Happen Here*, penned by Sinclair Lewis in 1935 as fascism was on the rise in Europe, transposed Adolf Hitler's gains onto the fictional Buzz Windrip, whose populist expostulations on strong economic reform and promises to deal with threats to America see him become president, bringing totalitarianism and disaster in his wake as his promises foment bitter division.

This, I think, is far closer to the world we are gifted by Mr Trump.

Yours etc.,  
**Brian McManus,**  
Phibsborough, Dublin 8.

### Defy the Church and still be in good standing?

**Dear Editor,** Your coverage of Fr Tony Flannery's most recent shenanigans, whether in news pieces, your editor's comment or by columnists, will no doubt have irritated Ireland's noisiest 'silenced' priest, but deserves the thanks of ordinary Catholics.

RTÉ may allow Fr Flannery a national pulpit in which to present himself as someone hard done by, but as Fr Flannery's own book makes clear, his views are at odds with that of the Church. Fr Flannery may well have a right to hold these views, but he hardly

has a right to put himself forward as a priest in good standing while defying the Church.

To look at his own online account of the Mass he recently celebrated, it seems he did not merely reject the Church's authority by celebrating

Mass, but also invited anybody present to receive Communion as long as they had some sense of God's reality. Hardly the action of a faithful priest!

Yours etc.,  
**Caroline Murphy,**  
Tallaght, Dublin 24.

### State must build schools of its own

**Dear Editor,** According to Bunreacht na hÉireann Article 44, every faith community has the right to maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, the latter of course including educational purposes. It also provides that the property of any educational institution shall not be "diverted" save for "necessary works of public utility" and after payment of "compensation".

Whatever is meant by 'patronage' in this connection, it seems clear that there must be immense difficulties for the State if it is to 'take over' the property of Catholic schools, or indeed if the Catholic schools are to be handed over to the State by whoever is deemed to own them.

The short answer seems to be for the State to build its own schools from the land up.

And, while 'compensation' is being discussed, it should be recalled that Article 42 provides that the State shall provide for free primary education. Has the State ever met that requirement? I certainly had to pay to have my children educated.

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

### America's not finished yet!

**Dear Editor,** With all the bad news coming from America, your February 2 front page story, 'US Irish chaplains warn of border clampdown fears', was truly encouraging. While the Irish chaplains' immediate concerns were, of course, for their own flock, their determination to stand with communities currently in the firing line is laudable. As long as America has people like that, she still has a chance.

Yours etc.,  
**Laurence Kelly,**  
Tullamore, Co. Offaly.



### 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



**CHINA:** Chinese dancers celebrate the Year of the Rooster during a spring celebration in Beijing.



**CANADA:** A young woman prays during a solidarity Mass at the Notre-Dame-de-Foy church in Quebec City for the six victims who were killed by a lone gunman at the mosque belonging to the Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre. All Photos: CNS



**IRAQ:** Fr Emanuel Youkhana of the Assyrian Church of the East looks through the rubble of a Syrian Catholic Church in Qaraqosh, Iraq. The mannequin and poster were used as target practice.



**VATICAN:** Children wave bandanas as Pope Francis leads his general audience in Paul VI hall at the Vatican.



◀ **AMERICA:**

A woman holds a sign during protest at Washington Dulles International Airport. The group was protesting President Donald Trump's executive memorandum suspending admission of any refugees and entry of people from seven predominantly Muslim nations.



**HONDURAS:** A woman walks on her knees after arriving at the at the Basilica of Suyapa in Tegucigalpa for celebration in honour of Our Lady of Suyapa. Hundreds of Catholics commemorated the 270th anniversary of the discovery of the the patron saint of Honduras.

# Embittered Moralising

The Return of the Prodigal Son, 1667-1670, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo.



One of the dangers inherent in trying to live out a life of Christian fidelity is that we are prone to become embittered moralisers, older brothers of the prodigal son, angry and jealous at God's over-generous mercy, bitter because persons who wander and stray can so easily access the heavenly banquet table.

But this isn't unique to faithful church-goers. It's part of the universal struggle to age without bitterness and anger.

We spend the first-half of our lives wrestling with the sixth commandment and spend the last-half of our lives wrestling with the fifth commandment: Thou shalt not kill! Long before anyone is shot by a gun, he is shot by a word, and before he is shot by a word, he is shot by a thought.

We all think murderous thoughts: who does he think he is! And it becomes harder and harder not to think them as we age.

## Bitterness

Aging without bitterness and anger is in fact our final struggle, psychologically and spiritually.

The great Swiss psychologist, Alice Miller, suggests that the primary task of the second-half of life is that of mourning, mourning our wounds so as not to become bitter and angry. We have to mourn, she says, until our very foundations shake otherwise



## Fr Rolheiser

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

our un-grieved wounds will forever leave us prone to bitterness, anger, and cold judgments.

At the end of the day, there is only one remaining spiritual imperative: we are not meant to die in anger and bitterness.

**“The older brother is angry and bitter that the father has not withheld his mercy”**

And so, as we age, we can progressively slim our spiritual vocabulary down to one word: Forgive, forgive, forgive. Only forgiveness can save us from bitterness and anger.

Indeed, there are few Gospel texts as sobering as the Gospel story of the Prodigal Son. As good commentaries on this text are quick to point out, the central character of this story is not the prodigal son, but the father, and the central message of the text is his over-generous mercy.

He is a father who is trying to get his two sons into his house (his house being an image for Heaven).

But the younger son is, for a long time, out of the house through weakness, while the older son is just as effectively outside the house through a bitterness and an anger that have soured his fidelity.

Unlike the father who is grateful and joyous because his wayward son has come home, the older brother is angry and bitter that the father has not withheld his mercy and that his errant brother was not first punished and made to meet certain conditions before he was

welcomed back home.

Now there's an older brother of this sort in all of us. We see it, for instance, in the fierce resistance many, wonderfully faithful, church-going, Christians express apposite certain people receiving communion at the Eucharist. Granted, there are legitimate ecclesial issues here, to do with public forum and scandal, which need to be sorted out, as the recent synod on family life tried to do.

But that synod also highlighted the resistance that many feel towards persons that they deem unworthy to receive communion at the Eucharist.

**“Am I not akin to the older brother... bitter that someone who seems undeserving is receiving the Father's love and blessing?”**

Independent of the ecclesial issues colouring this, those of us who struggle with certain others going to Communion should still ask ourselves: Why is this bothering me? Why am I angry about someone else going to Communion? What's really the basis for my resistance? What might this be saying about me? Is my heart wide and mellow enough right now to go to heaven, to sit down at the banquet table with everyone? Do I have the courage

and humility to ask myself this question: am I not akin to the older brother standing outside the house, bitter that someone who seems undeserving is receiving the Father's love and blessing?

But we need to ask ourselves that with sympathy. We aren't bad persons; it's just that a certain bitter moralising is an occupational hazard for us. Still we need to ask ourselves these hard questions, for our own sake, lest, blind to ourselves, we become the older brother of the prodigal son.

Paradoxical, ironic, strange, but we can be faithful, upright-morally, duty-bound, church-going Christians, preaching the Gospel to others and, at the same time, carry inside of ourselves an anger, a bitterness, and an unconscious envy of the amoral which has us standing outside the house of celebration, blocked from entry because we are angry at how wide and indiscriminating is our own God's embrace.

But that weakness and bi-polarity have already been taken into account. The story of the Prodigal Son ends, not with the father's joy at the return of his sinful son, but with the father at the door of the house, gently pleading with his older son to give up his bitterness and enter the dance.

We don't know how that story ends, but, given God's jealous love and infinite patience, there's little reason to doubt that eventually the older brother entered the house and sat down at table with his prodigal brother.



Alice Taylor.

# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, February 9, 2017

## Personal Profile

A weekend of rediscovery

Page 26



# Learning to stand in the wind



**R**esilience is a key factor in life, and something which we can all work to develop and enhance, according to Bríd O'Meara, Director of Services with Aware. "Resilience can be considered an ongoing process in life, rather than something you have or don't have. It is about being able to balance upset and difficulty with opportunity and taking helpful actions."

While some people may appear to have a greater tendency to resilience than others, it is important to understand that resilience is something we can work on throughout our life, she says.

"Resilience can be a key defining factor in how a person



## Bríd O'Meara from Aware talks about how to build emotional resilience

will face and recover from a challenge; and resilience in many cases comes from having faced challenges and survived them," she explains, continuing: "There is a lovely quote from Napoleon Hill which is worth keeping in mind: 'The strongest oak tree of the forest is not the one that is protected from the storm and hidden from the sun. It's the one that stands in the open where it is compelled to struggle for its

existence against the winds and rains and the scorching sun.'

"We sometimes talk about resilience as that 'grit' that enables a person to bounce back after a difficult or challenging experience," she says.

"Quite often, two people can have a very similar experience, for example a relationship breakdown or job loss. One person might 'bounce back' quite quickly while someone else

might take years or more to get over that loss."

Action is key in terms of resilience, as well as the wider area of mental wellbeing, she says: "If you can look at whatever situation you are in and see the opportunity in the challenge, and also really look at what helpful actions you can take, this will not only likely yield a better outcome for you; you will also be working your resilience 'muscle'.

### Practice

"That ongoing practice is really important in laying a strong foundation of resilience for the next challenge that comes along in life," she says.

So, how can we each work on improving our own resilience?

- Good relationships with friends and family where one is receiving support is vital to resilience.

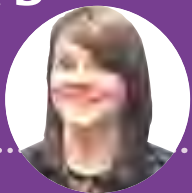
Assisting others during their difficult times can also help the helper. Staying connected and making plans to keep in touch with friends and relatives is important. It is a good idea, when one occasion has passed, to plan the next one and put it in the diary – so that the full value of looking ahead to it can be had.

- Acknowledging what is going well is vital. Even on a bad day, or during a 'bad' experience, there will be good moments and 'good' learnings to take away from it. It can be very helpful to get into the habit of recording three

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## Children's Corner

ERIN FOX



### Put your heart into making a wreath for Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is right around the corner, and it's not just an occasion for sending cards 'sealed with a loving kiss'. It's just another opportunity to get your finger out and make some seasonal crafts.

Because heart prints and heart designs are so popular, you can make almost any Valentine craft at any time of the year.

So, this weekend – whether you're celebrating the feast with a special someone in mind or not – put your heart into making a wreath to mark the day.

For the wreath, you will need a polystyrene ring – or if you don't have one you will need an old metal hanger, old newspapers and masking tape, glue, pink and red card, thick ribbon, and scissors.



If using a polystyrene ring, then tie a piece of ribbon around it so you can hang up the wreath when it's finished.

If you're using the metal hanger follow the next steps: First, pull the metal hanger out of shape, and bend it into a circle. Don't worry if it's a little bumpy because this will be hidden later when you decorate it. Next, scrunch up old newspapers, and tape them around the metal ring using the masking tape. Be generous with the masking tape for a smoother looking wreath.

Wrap the ribbon all around the ring, securing in place with the glue each time you fold the ribbon over. Leave to dry for a few hours or overnight.

#### Template

Next cut out a heart template from some cereal box card and trace around this on the pink, red and white card. Cut out as many hearts as you need to cover the wreath.

Glue the hearts to the wreath and leave to dry. When you're finished, hang up the wreath just in time for Valentine's Day.

You can make the wreath entirely out of single-coloured hearts if you wish. Or, use pastel blues, pinks, yellows, and white to make a 'love hearts' wreath. Whip out your colouring pencils and write the messages you would get from the sweets onto the individual hearts.

Instead of a wreath decorated with hearts, decorate a wreath with roses made from tissue paper.

Think of other motifs situated with Valentine's Day such as love bugs or cupids and arrows, and use these to accessorise your wreath. You can even make hearts in a few different sizes for decoration.



## Dine WITHOUT wine

When I was a child, both my parents were in the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association. Thirty or 40 years ago, almost everyone in Ireland knew about the Pioneers and a fair few were members. I'd guess that if you mentioned the Association to a group of young people today, there'd be a few blank expressions.

My 28-year-old son and his wife are both Pioneers and there's been quite a bit of curiosity from others about their Pioneer pins and what being a Pioneer involves. People are genuinely interested in why someone would make a decision not to drink alcohol. When they hear that it's a lifelong commitment, they can be gobsmacked.

The mission and vision of the Pioneers is to address the problems in society caused by excess alcohol consumption and drug usage. This is achieved through faith and prayer, self-denial, example, advocacy and activities based on presenting alternatives to people, especially young people.

**“For those who are trying to cut down, it's the social occasions which can be most challenging”**

One of the key events coming up in April is the 21st National Ball which also involves a full week-end of activities. There are other social occasions scattered throughout the year. For those who don't drink or who are trying to cut down, it's the social occasions, concerts, weddings and festivals which can be most challenging especially if

### A parent's perspective



Maria Byrne

deciding not to drink alcohol is a recent decision.

I used to quite enjoy a drink myself until just over a year ago when, because of a brush with cancer and the necessity to take regular medication, I decided to part ways with my old friend.

#### Part and parcel

I wasn't someone who drank much but, like many Irish people, I viewed alcohol as part and parcel of every social occasion. Whether it was a cold bottle of cider on a hot summer's day, a mulled wine at Christmas or just a relaxing glass of a good red on a quiet night at home, alcohol was part of the deal.

When I decided that I was going to give it a miss completely, there was a period of adjustment.

The first thing I noticed was a totally different mindset about what a good night involved.

The local pub, even if there were a few musicians playing, just didn't hold the same appeal anymore, and a concert, film or show seemed more exciting than a rowdy session.

I can't say that I wasn't tempted when offered a slim flute of *prosecco*, which I love, or when holidaying in Portugal last August where the range of scrumptious-looking cocktails was eye-popping.

However, now that I've had no alcohol at all for a year, I don't find it too difficult. In many ways it's been a very positive experience.

One very beneficial thing about not drinking alcohol is the fact that you might have to put a little bit more effort into your social life and what you do with your time.

When you're married, you often pick up a DVD and a bottle of your favourite wine and that's your night sorted.

If you have small children, a drink might be viewed as a sign that your stressful day is over and it's time to relax and put your feet up. Having a glass or two every night can easily become a habit.

**“I used to find that, even after one drink in the evening, I was a lot more groggy and lethargic the next day”**

Once you give up, you're inclined to seek out natural highs; I joined the gym and my energy levels increased dramatically as well as my general sense of well-being and mood. I'm not sure if it's an age thing but I used to find that, even after one drink in the evening, I was a lot more groggy and lethargic the next day.

When you have several children and a busy home to run any renewed energy and vigour is always a bonus. Surprisingly though, or maybe not surprisingly, the main positive consequence has to do with my children.

Having a parent, older sibling or grandparent who abstains from alcohol sends out a very important message, a message

that says that drinking alcohol is not a necessity. My eldest daughter is 17 and is often mistaken for being older. From the age of 15, there's been a presumption that she probably takes a drink. Instead of “Do you drink?”, the question has frequently been “Red or white?”

Strangely enough, even though my husband and I were drinkers, none of my children drink. In our present-day society, that's quite unusual.

#### Adolescents

There are very good reasons why young people shouldn't drink. Research shows that the adolescent brain responds differently to alcohol compared to an adult brain.

Because the brain isn't fully developed until around 25 years old, adolescents are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour and binge drinking. In a worst-case scenario, binge drinking slows, and can actually stop the operation of key components of the brain that control things like breathing.

When parents lecture children about the dangers of drinking, it's going to ring hollow if the parents' own relationship with alcohol proves that it really is something we can't live without.

Not every young person will join the Pioneers or take up the interesting challenge I found on Facebook of ‘One Year, No Beer’ which supports people in going a full year or less without alcohol, but following a parent's example they might re-evaluate the place alcohol has in their lives and whether their relationship with drink is a positive contributor to their overall health and happiness.



» Continued from Page 23



**“Planning something to look forward to each day can be very helpful in helping us get through the things that we aren’t looking forward to”**

good moments from each day in a notebook before bedtime. It helps us to see that there are good moments, and it also helps us in the future to more naturally see these good moments rather than to have to go seeking them.

- Try to accept the things you cannot change – this will help you to focus on the things that you can change and work towards changing.
- Fresh air and exercise every day, even for 10 minutes during lunch break if pushed for time, brings a combination of natural light and exercise which is hugely beneficial to mental wellbeing. A break away from the desk/crying children/cycles of washing and cooking can give us a different perspective that helps us to face the rest of whatever task we have.

**“A balanced diet is essential to keep our body and mind in good health, and to keep us strong and resilient”**

- Planning something to look forward to each day, no matter how small it is, can be very helpful in helping us get through the things that we aren’t looking forward to so much. For instance, if you have to call a service provider to make a complaint but you are feeling anxious about it, knowing that you are catching up with a friend for a cup of tea later, can help you get through it. Make sure your plans are realistic and achievable; even an extra five minutes in the morning to sit down and savour the warmth of that first cup of tea.
- A good night’s sleep is essential to set us up for the next day. Preparing for bedtime, leaving electrical devices out of the room, and avoiding stimulating programmes such as horror movies or serious documentaries are all helpful. Avoid tea and coffee in the evening, as both are stimulants and can disrupt sleep.
- A balanced diet is essential to keep our body and mind in good health, and to keep us strong and resilient.

Fresh, nutritious meals, eating regularly and keeping hydrated all help us to withstand all that the daily routine asks of us.

**How Aware helps**

The Aware Resilience Series aims to highlight the important role of resilience in everyone’s life, through both good times and bad. Defined as the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape and the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, resilience is something which can be constantly developed and enhanced throughout life.



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin will be the special guest contributor at the first event in the Aware Resilience Series 2017, which will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday February 16 in St Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin 8.

In ‘The Reality of Resilience: A special evening with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin’, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin will be interviewed by Patsy McGarry, Religious Affairs Correspondent with *The Irish Times*, and will discuss the role resilience has had throughout his own life,

**BOOK NOW: For more information on Aware Support Groups see [aware.ie](http://aware.ie), or email [supportmail@aware.ie](mailto:supportmail@aware.ie), or call 1800 80 48 48 at any time between 10am and 10pm. Further information about all of Aware’s services, as well as the organisation’s governance standards, can be found on the organisation’s website.**

**To book your tickets for the February 16 Resilience Talk with Archbishop Martin, see [aware.ie](http://aware.ie) now. Light refreshments will be available before the talk from 7pm with the talk starting at 7.30pm sharp.**

including at the most testing of times.

Tickets for the event, which is a fundraising event for Aware, are available online now through aware.ie priced at €25 each. In 2015, 85% of Aware’s funding came from fundraising events, public and corporate donations.

With such funding, Aware is able to provide a range of services for individuals and families impacted by depression or bipolar disorder.

**“Free secondary schools programmes are delivered to thousands of senior-cycle students each year”**

The organisation offers free life skills programmes, based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), as well as a support and education programme for relatives and friends of people who are experiencing depression or bipolar disorder.

These are available online and in locations nationwide, offered in phases throughout the year and can be helpful in helping participants learn new ways to deal with their life challenges.

The organisation also provides a range of mental health education programmes for adults, secondary school students, and managers/employees in workplaces nationwide. Free secondary schools programmes are delivered to thousands of senior-cycle students each year, including a 70-minute class talk and a six session Life Skills programme, aimed at equipping young people with vital skills which are often overlooked.

# Dad’s Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



I recently overheard a woman saying she withdrew her child from the school choir, on the basis that there were “too many churchy songs”. Yet there was no animosity in this slightly eccentric criticism, it was simply that her child preferred musicals.

Here in England, faith is a personal matter – to each their own – and no great animosity attaches to the question of religion. There are no media-led campaigns to bring all schools under the secular patronage of the state, as in Ireland, for example. Polite indifference is the order of the day.

Despite – or perhaps because of – having been a more secular society for much longer, in England the cultural relics of Christianity are generally treated with respect and interest, like an old antique clock that has been long in the family.

**“Evensong has even developed a cult following amongst university students”**

Like an old antique clock, Christianity is usually regarded as inaccurate and unreliable, but quite nice nonetheless.

Despite no longer being seen as serving a particularly useful purpose by the majority, Christianity serves as an ornamental backdrop to weddings, and Christmas Day. Visits to England’s medieval Cathedrals are at an all time high. Evensong has even developed a cult following amongst university students, as a contemplative respite from their busy, digitally-connected world.

However, just 1.4% of members of the Church of England regularly attend services. England’s Catholics are far more diligent on a Sunday morning, but Ireland’s figures of 40% regular

attendance are but a distant dream for both of England’s main denominations.

In Ireland, the majority have also now turned from religion, yet there is no polite respect for the place of Faith in society. Instead, there remains an astonishing level of animosity around the question of religion.

Many influential people seem keen to re-educate that large 40% minority of the population who still practice their faith. Ireland’s elite certainly sees little of value in a Christian education, where faith is part of the daily



routine and where choirs sing, “churchy songs”, of all things.

Both of my children love singing in their school choir. I remember the first day I took Sean along to try it. He emerged with a slightly otherworldly look in his eyes, saying: “I can’t believe we made that beautiful sound.” I always knew he was a good singer, but not how good. He has even been given solos at services and in the school play.

I think that participating in any sort of music is a beautiful thing, but for them to sing sacred songs in an ancient medieval church must be deep a form of prayer. The experience of being part of such a beautiful thing must stay with a child. Music offers us a sense of the mysterious, a glimpse of the divine which cannot be dialectically argued into a person’s consciousness.

Perhaps this is why those secular university students find themselves drawn to choral evensong, with its strange and ancient plainchant. Music, being more devious than logic, can catch people unawares and reveal to them an unexpected glimpse of what cannot be proven.

# A weekend of rediscovery

**Tom and Madeline McCully** describe their marriage encounter weekend

**W**e've been married for 46 years, and 39 years ago our lives were transformed when we made a Marriage Encounter Weekend.

We were seven years married and like many a happily married couple found ourselves in a bit of a rut. While still very much in love we knew that our marriage could do with an overhaul. We prayed about this and God answered our prayers.

Firstly, we moved to California, confident that a change of lifestyle would give our marriage the boost that it needed. However, the move did not fulfil that hope. Just before we decided to return to Ireland we read an announcement in our church inviting couples to attend a Marriage Encounter Weekend. We had prayed for a boost and this weekend for married couples sounded exactly that.

## Testimony

The weekend was presented by three couples and a priest. Each presenting couple shared the testimony of their own lived experience on different aspects of married life.

The priest universalised what the presenting couple shared and revealed that he too was on a journey of relationship, namely with the people that he was called to serve.

For us participants it remained a deeply private experience in that whatever we talked about with each other remained private to us.

The weekend highlighted the benefits of making romance and



Tom and Madeline McCully.

conversation our priorities. Looking back to our early marriage, these were the things that we had gradually neglected but now we are very much aware of their importance.

**“We often buried our differences and didn't always share how we really felt”**

We heard that our feelings often dictate our actions. We learnt how important it was to encounter oneself and recognise how, despite our best intentions, our pattern of behaviour often interferes with our communication as a couple. Each of us comes to marriage from different backgrounds.

Madeline had often heard “Least said; soonest mended”, so, therefore, her way of dealing with anything that annoyed Tom

was to remain silent until things were back on an even keel again, whereas Tom's way was to forgive, forget and move on.

This meant that we often buried our differences and didn't always share how we really felt. The weekend gave us the chance to reflect on different areas of our life and how we could enrich our experience of them by expressing our thoughts and feelings to one another.

We were reminded on the weekend that everything that we had wanted for our marriage was what God wanted for us too. We also realised how much our Church honoured and respected us and other married couples as living examples of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and that we had an important calling to help make Christ's love for his Church real and visible in particular to our children and grandchildren.



That our family was a ‘Domestic Church’ became clearer and challenged us to become more open to reach out to others. We discovered too after the weekend that support from other couples was an important aspect of our continuing to strengthen our relationship.

The whole experience made us realise that every day is a new day in our marriage that we can choose to live in the best possible way.

**“Meeting with other couples on a similar journey helps us to re-energise our love for one another”**

After the weekend, we found it important to meet with other couples and we have become part of a support group that meets monthly, shares a light meal and explores different areas of relationship, such as family, spirituality, work, romance, health and many other topics.

Meeting with other couples on a similar journey helps us to re-energise our love for one another. We've also come to appreciate the support that we receive from our priests and bishops over the years.

Tom and Madeline McCully live in Derry and are members of the Council for Marriage and the Family of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

They are past leaders of Marriage Encounter in Ireland and have been missionaries for the movement to Africa and Europe.

Marriage Encounter also offers couples preparing for sacramental marriage the Engaged Encounter experience which is designed to enrich communication in all aspects of their relationship. Details of both weekends can be viewed at [www.marriageencounter.ie](http://www.marriageencounter.ie) or phone 087-784 0408.



**Green Fingers**  
Paul Gargan

## Make the most of February to prepare for Spring

**S**ome people find February a slow month in the garden, but it shouldn't be. Spring will arrive before you know and everything will need doing at once. So make the most of February as it is your last chance to finish winter-work and get a head start on Spring.

Clear your beds and borders of weeds now and you will find it easy to keep them close for the coming year. Let them grow and set seed and you face a large-scale, time-consuming job later in the year.

Weeds are capable of growth during mild spells in Winter and early Spring and it is amazing how much growth they can achieve during supposedly dormant months.

Clear your beds and borders of established weeds now and it will be just a matter of running a hoe through them to them weed-free for the year.

Dig out self-sown Ash and Sycamore seedlings, ivy and brambles whose seeds have been spread by birds.

They are usually growing in hard-to-see places like the middle of shrubs where the foliage has been hiding them – it's easier to see them now that your shrubs may have bare stems.

For many people mowing their lawn becomes a chore. This may be because in rural areas gardens tend to be bigger with more grass to cut or because it is a job that must be finished once you start – you can't come back to it another day. Why? Reduce the size of your lawn or replace it altogether. Plant a woodland. It is said that as few as three trees make a woodland and it's true that even the smallest is a valuable natural habitat.

There is no garden that will not be improved by the addition of a tree or trees.

Even those with restricted space should not forfeit the pleasure of enjoying trees in their garden. There are many small-scale trees both deciduous and evergreen which are suitable for small gardens. By incorporating them into the design you are in effect contributing a sense of scale, as well as giving height in what might otherwise prove to be a flat site and one lacking in interest.

### Small gardens

A small group of trees is more valuable both naturally and visually than a single tree, even if the single one is bigger than the group put together.

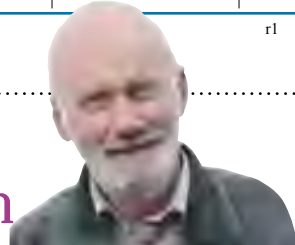
For small gardens, Malus 'Red Sentinel' (Crab Apple) or Sorbus Aucuparia (Mountain Ash) are examples of suitable trees. They give long seasons of interest as they have flowers in Spring, leaf in Summer, and both fruit and leaf colour in Autumn.

For larger gardens there are really no limits to what you can plant. It need not be expensive as you can plant small 'whips' or transplants which are cheap to buy bare root.



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## An era of living in a world of walls

With so much negative stuff in the news these days, it was good to hear an upbeat item on the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk), last Friday. It was part of a series on the North Inner City of Dublin, a place full of history, characters and subject to what Kenny called "one of the worst deprivations in the entire country".

Councillor Gary Gannon grew up there, had seen the value of education and worked his way to an Arts Degree in Trinity College.

Some residents reminisced about the older, safer days, but one lady insisted that she still left her door open from morning until night and seemed proud of it.

Another woman who served the community had a story of hope and achievement – she had got herself off drug dependency, met her husband in rehab, and now had created quite a stable family. A community worker said the local Church used to be a focus for the community, but that was no longer the case. I'd like to have heard more about why.

Other contributors, including Minister Paschal Donoghue, praised recovery services that help people with drug addiction, especially the After Care Recovery Group (ARCG). A staff member, explaining why people in misery took drugs in the first



Cardinal Vincent Nichols featured on *Sunday Sequence* (BBC Radio Ulster).

place, described "a solution that became a problem".

The contrast between the areas of social deprivation and the financial district (the IFSC) was stark, with even a 20-foot wall between them – walls are in the news big-time!

### Huge stir

On another social justice issue, the fallout from President Trump's Executive Order on immigration caused a huge stir last week. At least protests are more defensible when people are protesting against the policy rather than against the person democratically elected.

**Leap of Faith** (RTÉ Radio 1)

last Friday had an interesting angle on the matter. Michael Comyn interviewed Mark Hetfield of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in the USA. He thought Trump's measure was a "vile executive order" and "the most offensive thing he could have done", especially as it coincided with Holocaust Memorial Day.

Funny how Nazi comparisons have become politically correct of late.

He found that ever since the 9/11 attacks, security concerns had dominated US procedures. However, though critical of governments from Reagan to Obama he found he was always able to partner with them. In Trump's case,

however, he feared retribution.

Similar points of view were featured on **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster) last week-end. Róisín McAuley interviewed Michael Wear, former staffer in the Obama White House, who had worked on faith-based initiatives, feeding into policy making.

He accepted that didn't always work out as there were divisions, e.g. with the Catholic bishops over matters of religious freedom. He criticised Trump policies as "crass", "shallow" and even "Machiavellian", but also criticised the Democratic Party on their "ineptitude" on religion in the 2016 elections.

More broadly, he thought politics in the USA had now taken up "emotional space" it was never meant to take up – it could never meet emotional needs.

On the same show we heard a clip of Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster



Sally Yates.

expressing concerns about the immigration measures, suggesting that safety couldn't be secured by fear, but by relationships.

Different perspectives were scarce, but some were offered on various programmes last week by Seth Barrett Tillman, law lecturer in Maynooth University. He appeared on RTÉ's **Six-One News** on Tuesday of last week in a robust interview with Bryan Dobson.

He thought it was fair for Acting Attorney General Sally Yates not to defend Trump's order, but also fair for Trump to let her go, and he pointed out that she hadn't provided a public rationale for her position.

He said that the vast majority of journalists were Democrat supporters and never scrutinised Democrat Party policies in the same way they were taking on those of Trump.

Hard to know what to believe in media these days but I find it useful is to experience original events rather than getting them filtered through media commentators.

Last Wednesday on **NBC News** I watched in full the nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch, Trump's pick for the Supreme Court, a nomination that if successful, and if it leads to restrictions on abortion, will save lives. It was actually a moving ceremony,

### PICK OF THE WEEK

**UNDERCOVER: BRITAIN'S HOMELESS SCANDAL: CHANNEL 4 DISPATCHES**

**Channel 4, Monday, February 13, 8pm**

The government has pledged more money to councils to help the homeless but Dispatches asks whether this will be enough to solve this growing crisis.

**CATHOLICS COME HOME**

**EWTN Monday, February 13, 8.30pm, Tuesday 2.30pm**

Paul and Celia Donlon, share how their search for meaning and purpose in life led them into the Catholic Church.

**EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND**

**Channel 4 Thurs Feb 16, 8 am**

Debra gets Ray to confront his reluctance to join her and the family at Sunday Mass.

with Gorsuch managing to be what Trump rarely is – gracious, articulate, reasoned and even humbled by his impending elevation.

[boregan@hotmail.com](mailto:boregan@hotmail.com)



Aubrey Malone

# Film

## Conscientious objector joins war effort without weapon

### Hacksaw Ridge (16)

There are so many Christological echoes in this blistering World War II tale, by the end you expect messianic doctor Desmond Dos (Andrew Garfield) to say something like, "I am who I am" as he's being stretchered off the battlefield.

A pacifist from the outset, he enlists in the army on an 'I refuse to bear arms' basis. This seems anomalous to his superior officers. He turns the other cheek whenever violence is used against him by his fellow soldiers in his unit and is roundly branded a coward by them. Eventually he faces court martial.

Dos doesn't see himself as a 'conscientious objector' but

rather a 'conscientious collaborator'. He wants to be in the thick of the action but to save lives rather than end them – even those of the enemy. He treasures his Bible, refuses to fight on the Sabbath – Saturday in his native Virginia – and holds fast to the Sixth Commandment, even when war condones killing.

They say Errol Flynn won the war single-handedly for America on screen. Dos performs similar Superman-style deeds here, rescuing soldiers from situations others have given up on. He saves the supposedly unsaveable, dispensing morphine in jabs from his kitbag to those writhing in agony after being shot or bombed.



Andrew Garfield is Desmond Dos in *Hacksaw Ridge*.

Very good  
★★★★

Is he too good to be true? It appears so at times. But Dos was a real man. If we have any doubts about that they're banished when we see him speaking about his experiences in the film's epilogue.

It's directed by Mel Gibson. He's taken the stereotypes of the standard war film – the tough drill sergeant (Vince Vaughn), the sweetheart from home (Teresa Palmer) – and adjusted them. Vaughn's

toughness is leavened by some slowly-developing empathy for Dos' convictions. Palmer is made of sterner stuff than the average war wife in 1940s melodramas.

### Faults

The film isn't without its faults. The Japanese are portrayed in a cruel, even kamikaze-like fashion. (They're also referred to as 'nips', something I haven't heard in a film for about 40 years.) And we don't see Dos studying to be a doctor – surely at least one scene could have been devoted to this.

The violence is excessive. Bodies are blown to smithereens as limb is torn from limb in a manner that's self-indul-

gent on Gibson's part. If you thought *Saving Private Ryan* was something, this makes it look like a tea party. Add up all the blood he spills here, in *Braveheart* and *The Passion* and you could probably set up your own blood bank.

We know war is ugly. By upping the ante to this extent it becomes difficult to imagine Dos did what he did. Watching him tying tourniquets as the Japanese breathe down on him is like watching someone doing needlepoint during a hurricane – or trying to nail custard to the wall.

One's credibility is strained at such moments, but that isn't to deter from the film's undeniable potency.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## The signs of silence

**The Silent Books: A Deaf Family and the Disappearing Australian-Irish Sign Language**

by Bernadette T. Wallis (Missionary Sisters of Service; available on Amazon.co.uk at £17.86 / Aus\$30.00; www.missionarysisters.org.au)

Séan Ryan

A hearing child of parents who were both profoundly deaf, Sr Wallis has written an insightful history of her parents' childhood, education and family life, and then broadened her story to record the history of Catholic Deaf education.

Over her 300 pages, we meet many heroes and heroines, and many of them are Catholic priests, nuns and brothers – quite a few of them Irish – and the wonder, to this reader, is that none of them have been canonised for the great work they did for the deaf community.

Perhaps that only goes to

emphasise the silence that accompanies this community throughout life.

For instance, it comes as a shock to read that the French priest, Abbé Charles-Michel de L'Épée – who is regarded as the 'liberator of the soul of deaf people' – was born in 1712. Prior to that, the author tells of two Spanish Catholic priests, who were pioneers of deaf education, Pedro Ponce de Leon, born in 1560, and Dom Juan Pablo de Bonet, who lived in the 17th Century and published a book with a system of speech, including pictures of a one-hand signed alphabet.

The latter influenced the French and ultimately the Irish, American and Australian sign language.

### Description

Bernadette's parents, Don and Kathleen, are the principal heroes of this book, starting with her description of Don swimming across the Murray river from Victoria State to New South Wales for his first meeting with Kathleen.



L'abbé de L'Épée, né en 1712; mort en 1789, créa le Langage figuré pour les Sourds-Muets.

He swam that treacherous river one-handed, keeping his other hand aloft to protect his suit, which he needed to make a good impression on Kathleen.

The meeting came about through Don's match-making mother, Emma, attending a deaf school reunion and spotting Kathleen. A year later, Don, who was working as a tailor in Melbourne, made that fateful journey to Kathleen's home, the spark was there from the start, and they

married five years later.

In their home, the Australian-Irish sign language was the family's means of communication, so this book is Sr Wallis's way of re-claiming her deaf heritage, and exploring its origin.

### Invitation

The language came about through the Vincentian fathers and Dominican sisters beginning the Church's role in deaf education in Ireland, and the invitation in 1872 of an

Irish Bishop James Murray to the Dominican sisters to teach in his diocese (Maitland).

The great Irish heroes of Deaf education then take over – Sr Gabriel Hogan, Sr Columba Dwyer, and later the Christian Brothers, who are invited by another Irish Archbishop, Michael Kelly, to open a school for deaf boys in Sydney in the 1920s. Foremost among the brothers were Joseph O'Farrell, Damian Allen, Henry Esmonde and Dominic O'Shea. Their great

work for the deaf community in Australia is recorded here.

Sr Wallis also writes about the controversy over the imposition of Oralism (where lip reading and word formation education took over from sign language), and how its proponents eventually had to admit that signing was better.

Sadly, the Australian-Irish Sign Language was no longer taught after 1953, but Sr Wallis's fine book ensures that its place in the history of deaf education is secure.

## The truth, the whole 'truth' or the partial truth?

**A Field Guide to Lies and Statistics: A Neuroscientist on How to Make Sense of a Complex World**

by Daniel Levitin (Viking. £12.99 / €17)

Peter Hegarty

Exposure to misinformation is part of the human condition. Some – Levitin calls them 'lying weasels' – will bend the truth in order to persuade us to buy something or believe in something; others simply don't check their facts but don't intentionally mislead.

In the age of the internet and social media we are exposed to more information – and therefore misinformation – than ever before. At the same time we are increasingly 'time-poor', too busy to question what we see, hear and read. Levitin urges us to find the time, to identify the source of a claim, to question its veracity.

### Attention

He devotes much attention to graphs, handy means of representing year-on-year trends such as sales figures, the crime



"There are lies, damn lies, and statistics. We're looking for someone who can make all three of these work for us."

rate, deaths on the roads, but also easily manipulated: by fiddling around with the x or y axis, or both, you can make a trend seem more or less pronounced than it really is.

A graph tracking the unemployment figures in the US would indicate that the current rate of unemployment is low, tickling 5%. But some, Trump

supporters in particular, would argue that the graph is inaccurate as it does not measure the numbers who have simply given up looking for work.

We visit a fictitious company that manufactures products called 'frabezoids', at a difficult time, with quarterly sales down by 12%. But all is not lost. The company devises a clever way of dressing up



Author Daniel Levitin.

these poor figures, by presenting them in 'a cumulative sales graph'.

This simply registers raw sales, but does not compare one quarter with another. The curve starts when frabezoids first went on the market and just goes on upward. It would rise even if the company only sold one unit a year.

### Reliable technique

This is a reliable technique for burying bad news, one to which Apple has resorted when sales of the iPhone dipped.

Not everyone who misinforms us is a 'lying weasel'. Respected organisations such as cancer charities also make claims that we can usefully question. When they

tell us that doctors are gradually getting on top of cancer they are giving us accurate information; but when they tell us that more and more of us will develop cancer in our lifetimes they are saying something that is also accurate, but a little misleading, for some forms of cancer are much less dangerous than others.

Melanomas, for example, are easily treated, while pancreatic cancer is difficult to diagnose, and almost always fatal. Cancer largely being a disease of the old, its increasing incidence proves that we are living longer lives, something which in turn reflects medical progress.

We are swimming in a sea of misinformation. But technology has made it easy for us to access the information that allows us to refute spurious claims. An online archive can quickly help us establish whether something is true or false. In times past the same task might have required hours in a library.

We may be swimming in a sea of misinformation, but we don't have to drown in it.

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 funeral of Countess Markievicz.

## The Republic's rebel countess

**Markievicz: A Most Outrageous Rebel** by Lindie Naughton (Merrion Press, €19.99 pb / €65hb)

**J. Anthony Gaughan**

This is a comprehensive account of the many lives of Constance Gore-Booth also known as Countess Markievicz, the defiant aristocratic hero of the poor of Dublin.

She was born in London on February 4, 1868. Her father Sir Henry Gore-Booth of Lissadell, Co Sligo, was an Anglo-Irish landlord. She and her two sisters were educated in their home and had a social life which reflected their class.

The potato harvest failed in 1879. As elsewhere, the tenants on the Lissadell estate faced starvation. As conscientious landlords the Gore-Booths were actively involved in the distribution of relief. Constance's mother set up a food distribution centre at Lissadell.

Her father delivered assistance to the impoverished and semi-starving tenants in their hovels. In so doing he was accompanied by his daughters. The experience caused them to have a life-long concern for the poor and to be committed to working for social justice and equality.

### Art

Constance went to Paris to study art in 1898. There she met Count Casimir Markievicz, a Pole, whose family held land in the Ukraine. He was a painter

of some merit and they married in 1900. Together they organised exhibitions of their paintings and were involved in drama productions wherein they frequently featured in the casts.

Back in Ireland in 1908, Constance joined Sinn Féin and helped to found *Bean na hÉireann*, the first women's nationalist journal, in which she was an influential advocate for women's suffrage.

With Bulmer Hobson she co-founded *Fianna Éireann* (the Republican Boy Scouts) in 1909. A supporter of the striking workers during the lock-out of 1913, she organised soup kitchens in the Dublin slums and at Liberty Hall. She was actively involved in the military training of the Irish Citizen Army and Na Fianna in 1914.

As second in command to Michael Mallin, she was with the insurgents in St Stephen's Green and the College of Surgeons during Easter week 1916.

### Surrender

Following the surrender she was condemned to death for her part in the rebellion but this was commuted to a life sentence, because of her sex.

On her release from prison in 1917, Constance re-doubled her support for Sinn Féin and in the interests of the party was elected to Westminster in 1918.

Like the other Sinn Féin MP's she refused to take her seat in the House of Commons. She



was appointed minister for labour in the first Dáil Éireann in 1919. She conducted her ministry, while 'on the run' throughout the War of Independence in 1919-1921.

Constance opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921. Re-elected president of *Cumann Na mBan* and chief of *Fianna Éireann* in 1922, she strongly influenced those organisations to oppose the Treaty.

### Civil war

The outbreak of the Civil War saw her once again 'on the run'. She was elected to the Dáil for Dublin South in August 1923, but refused to take the oath of allegiance to the king, and like the other elected republicans / members of Sinn Féin was disqualified from sitting in Dáil Éireann.

Realising that it was pointless to continue boycotting Dáil Éireann, she left Sinn Féin and joined the newly established *Fianna Fáil* Party in 1926. She was elected to the Dáil in the *Fianna Fáil* interest in June 1927, but died soon afterwards on 17 July.

Socialite, artist, writer, feminist with impeccable credentials (first woman to be elected to House of Commons, first woman to serve in an Irish cabinet), patriot, revered icon of republicanism but above all an outrageous rebel, Constance Markievicz was a most controversial figure.

Yet in this fine biography Lindie Naughton succeeds in exploring her many lives in an exemplary balanced and sensitive manner.

## Web Watch

# A most convenient opportunity to shake the Rosaries

Without a doubt, one of the key challenges of the Church in the modern world is to reach out to those who are outside it – whether those might be people who have fallen away from the Church, or never been part of the Church, or simply people opposed to whatever social role they see the Church as playing.

It's encouraging, then, to see how Catholics and those outside the Church can engage with each other in creative and constructive ways, even at times as combative as the present day.

Over at [domicanajournal.org](http://domicanajournal.org), a post entitled 'St Agnes and the Women's March' tells of a remarkable episode during the huge protest rally that followed the inauguration of Donald Trump as President of the United States.

"There were not enough restrooms set up for the Women's March that took place in Washington, DC, the day after the presidential inauguration," Bro. Martin Davis OP writes. "I found this out while visiting the Dominican priory on the southern side of the National Mall, where I saw many people from the March looking around for a restroom.

### Desperation

"Observing the desperation of those outside, some friars kindly offered to let a dozen marchers use the public restrooms in the priory. But, unexpectedly, hundreds of people quickly formed a line seeking relief."

This small act of mercy quickly became a source of anxiety, he continues, noting that some of those who sought to use the friary's facilities were carrying signs or wearing clothes that bore messages that were anti-Catholic, pro-abortion, vulgar, or even pornographic.

Still, he says, those with such messages had the courtesy to cover them, observing that "the fervour that may have animated the large crowd did not go so deep as to make people oblivious or rude to flesh-and-blood humans".



People participating in an anti-Trump march in Washington.

Realising that a range of concerns had brought people out to march, with some marchers simply not wanting their daughters to grow up in a world that would objectify or otherwise mistreat them, he found that common ground could be found in other areas too.

"While many admittedly were on the opposite side of the Church's teaching on abortion, I was able to engage in discussions of the Church's teachings on the dignity of women, of labourers and of the poor, as well as the importance of the environment," he said.

**“I was able to engage in discussions of the Church's teachings on the dignity of women”**

Describing how "the peculiar situation of some people wearing 'get your rosaries off my ovaries' next to men actually wearing rosaries on their belts did not stop many from inquiring into what brings us to live lives dedicated to Christ," Bro. Martin noted how he spoke to those present about St Agnes, whose feast day it was, leaving many chilled to hear of the courage of a young girl who stood up to the Roman authorities.

In the short term an obvious gain came from how a few marchers spontaneously began passing round a hat to collect money for

the friary, with hundreds of dollars being collected over a couple of hours, but in the long term, Bro Martin writes, there's reason to hope that some seeds have been planted that may in time bring people to Christ.

Less dramatically, but no less importantly, Brandon Vogt, at [brandonvogt.com](http://brandonvogt.com), describes the reactions to an interview with Los Angeles' Bishop Robert Barron conducted by pro-choice, pro-gay atheist Dave Rubin, who Brandon admits "sincerely tries to understand the guest's point of view, giving them free rein to articulate it".

Bishop Barron did the interview, he says, aware that this might confuse some Catholics but that it would "put the Catholic faith on the radar of thousands of people – especially young people – who would otherwise never consider God or religion".

**“He has 'never seen a such a stream of genuine respect for a Catholic cleric”**

With the video now online and having been viewed over 100,000 times, he says, he has "never seen a such a stream of genuine respect and appreciation for a Catholic cleric".

He gives 24 examples of comments from atheists who'd been impressed, showing the value, yet again, of planting seeds.

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## Crossword Junior

Gordius 168



### ACROSS

- 1 Use these to steer bikes (10)
- 5 You wear a scarf around it (4)
- 7 How many holes in a full round of golf? (8)
- 8 You bake bread in this (4)
- 9 A person who uses a bow and arrow (6)
- 10 Creature which makes a web (6)
- 13 Snooker stick (3)
- 14 A door swings on this (5)
- 15 Permitted (7)

### DOWN

- 1 Good-looking (8)
- 2 Pleasant (4)
- 3 '\_\_\_\_\_ not included' (9)
- 4 Use this tool to turn a nut (7)
- 6 Snatch and hold for a ransom (6)
- 10 You can build a castle with it on the beach (4)
- 11 A thought (4)
- 12 You don't want this plant in your garden! (4)
- 13 Creature that goes 'Moo' (3)

## LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

### GORDIUS No.284

**Across** – 1 Tap 3 Glitterball 8 Saddle 9 Outburst  
10 Ideas 11 Lewis Carroll 13 Cries 15 Noodles 16 Well off 20 Phase 21 Leapt 23 Skull 24 Gazpacho 25 Salami 26 Dunfermline 27 Eke

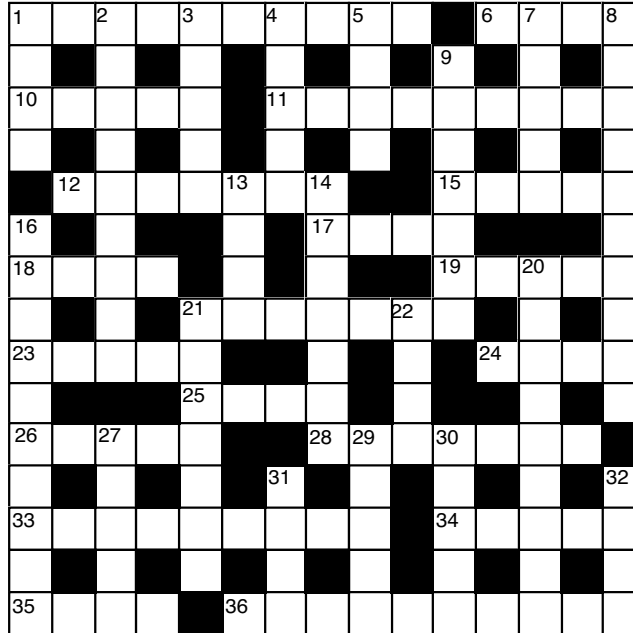
**Down** – 1 Testimonial 2 Padre Pio 3 Gills 4 Tool kit 5 Rebel 6 Arrows 7 Lot 12 Scafell Pike 13 Cheap 14 Siege 17 Obdurate 19 Tarzan 22 Trade 23 Snare 24 God

### CHILDREN'S No.167

**Across** – 1 Trunk 4 Table 6 Radiator 7 Add 9 Reached 11 Steer 12 Trio 14 Ache 15 Wand 16 Axe 17 Win 18 Four  
**Down** – 1 Throne 2 Understand 3 Koala 4 Tooth 5 Lead 7 Adore 8 Dinosaur 10 Caravan 12 Thief 13 Swan

## Crossword

Gordius 285



### ACROSS

- 1 Do the police drive them around to upset the Altar Corps? (6,4)
- 6 Fragrant powder (4)
- 10 & 32d Might the eater brag about Ursa Major? (5,4)
- 11 Island in New York (9)
- 12 Quite a few (7)
- 15 Either way, give it a mention (5)
- 17 Historic Peruvian native (4)
- 18 Walk lamely with many a little devil (4)
- 19 See 2 down
- 21 Salad vegetable (7)
- 23 Begin to break up a drinking spree (5)
- 24 Beach associated with Venice (4)
- 25 It's good for the French to accept love as a blessing (4)
- 26 The Lady of the Manor? (5)
- 28 Medicinal plant found in Elgin's English Garden (7)
- 33 Scientist specialising in rocks (9)
- 34 Make a speech (5)
- 35 Get a character to request a chore (4)

36 Early bicycle that broke the heron's beak (4,6)

### DOWN

- 1 The courtier is in the book (4)
- 2, 3d & 19a Homily Jesus delivered on horseback? (3,6,2,3,5)
- 4 Punctuation mark (5)
- 5 Part of a ladder (4)
- 7 & 8 A sorry excuse for a prayer, this! (3,2,10)
- 9 Craftwork involving knots (7)
- 13 Part in a play or movie (4)
- 14 Hoisting (7)
- 16 Descriptive of an unreliable business - or of an owl, perhaps (3-2-5)
- 20 Flag of the United Kingdom (5,4)
- 21 The French prohibition on a Middle-Eastern country (7)
- 22 Piece of money (4)
- 27 Chambers (5)
- 29 Tiles can be made of this fabric (5)
- 30 Three-toed, deadly sin (5)
- 31 Alcoholic down-and-out (4)
- 32 See 10 across

## Sudoku Corner

168

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 167

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

### Last week's Hard 167

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



Michael Kelly

Notebook

# Beware the 'risen people'



Marine Le Pen, leader of the Front National in France and a candidate for the French presidency.

**FRANCE IS FACING** arguably its most unpredictable election in decades. The hugely-unpopular Socialist President François Hollande has declined to run for a second term after his approval rating with the electorate slumped to just 4%.

France, it seems, is eager for change. And in the turbulent world that gave us Britain's exit from the European Union and the election of Donald Trump as US President, anything is possible.

In a speech at the weekend, Marine Le Pen – leader of the Front National – launched her presidential campaign promising to put France first by freeing it from what she described as the “tyrannies” of globalisation, Islamic fundamentalism and the EU.

Madame Le Pen's brand of populist nationalism tinged with xenophobia is appealing to many French people. Her party currently controls 358 of the country's 1,758 regional councils.

**Shockwaves**

Her popularity – and the real possibility that she might become France's next president – is causing ructions in the political establishment and sending shockwaves through the bourgeois. France, not unlike Great Britain

and the United States, is deeply divided between those who see parties like the Front National as the only hope for regeneration and those who vehemently reject the worldview espoused by people like Madame Le Pen, UKIP's Nigel Farage and President Trump.

But shouting at their voters and calling them 'fascists' or 'Nazis' is unlikely to change their mind.

The disaffection in France which the Front National is

tapping in to is real. Novelist Édouard Louis gives a vivid account of his upbringing in the part of France that is left behind in his 2015 book *En Finir Avec Eddy Bellegueule* (released in English this week as *The End of Eddy*).

**Poverty**

Louis, born in 1992, grew up in Hallencourt, a village in the north of France where many now find themselves living below the

poverty line. He describes how the village declined as one-by-one industrial and factory jobs disappeared until there was no opportunity for the working class to...work.

Louis said he wrote the book to “give a voice to these people, to fight for them and with them, because they seem to have disappeared from the public eye”.

He describes growing up with “the language of the excluded classes, which is completely absent from the public arena.

“When you make a language disappear you make the people who speak it disappear. My family would vote for Marine Le Pen, saying, ‘we do it because she's the only one who talk about us, the little people’. That wasn't true, but it reveals the sentiment of invisibility that strikes the dispossessed.”

That sentiment of invisibility is something that the political elite needs to urgently address rather than castigating those who are left behind for their political choices. The powers that be should heed Pearse's warning: “Beware of the thing that is coming, beware of the risen people who shall take what ye would not give”.

**Exaggeration robs words of power**

It's become popular in some sections of the media to compare President Trump to fascist dictator Benito Mussolini or leader of Nazi Germany Adolf Hitler. It reminds me of 'Godwin's law', the internet adage which asserts that “as an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Hitler approaches 1 – that is, if an online discussion (regardless of topic or scope) goes on long enough, sooner or later someone will compare someone else to Hitler.

When overused, comparisons with Nazism and Hitler tend to lose their power and effect. Mr Trump is no Mussolini or Hitler, he's more akin to the one-time Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi: a dangerous populist with an inflated sense of his own ability.

It's been reported that Dublin City Council is to spend €30,000 of taxpayers' hard-earned cash commemorating the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution. It seems an odd use of money given the fact that the local authority is always claiming to be cash-strapped. But, money aside, it'll be interesting to see how the events that created the Soviet Union will be commemorated. Will, for example, focus be given to the tens of millions of people killed under communist rule? Let's hope it doesn't descend into an historical nostalgia exercise lauding the Bolsheviks 'ideals'.



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