

The Irish Catholic

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Bishops won't ask Pope to permit married priests

EXCLUSIVE
Greg Daly

The Irish hierarchy will not ask Pope Francis to consider permitting priests who left to get married to return to ministry at a meeting in Rome next week after failing to reach a consensus, *The Irish Catholic* can reveal.

However, Bishop Leo O'Reilly, who first brought the proposal for discussion with his fellow Irish bishops, said the issue may well come up during a series of meetings the Irish bishops are due to have with the Pontiff and senior Vatican officials in coming days.

The possibility of married men being ordained to the priesthood in Ireland may come up in next week's meeting between the bishops and Pope Francis, according to the bishop who in 2015 said the idea should be considered.

The bishop's observation comes against a background of rumours that the Pope is willing to allow married former priests to return to ministry in Brazil on a phased and experimental basis, and as Ireland's bishops are due to make their first *ad limina* visit to Rome in a decade.

In June 2015, Kilmore's Bishop Leo O'Reilly said he was liaising with other bishops about setting up a commission

» Continued on Page 2

Time to love them both



Members of the Pro Life Campaign pictured during a demonstration with the group's latest banner campaign to save the Eighth Amendment protection for the unborn, taking place during the gathering of the Citizens' Assembly on abortion. Photo courtesy of the Pro Life Campaign.

● Timeframe for abortion Assembly to consider submissions 'nonsensical', says PLC – see Page 10.

Ambassador extends welcome to Pope for 2018 visit

Ireland's Ambassador to the Holy See has revealed to *The Irish Catholic* that she offered the nation's welcome to Pope Francis for his intended visit next year, following the annual papal address to the Diplomatic Corps at the Vatican last Monday.

Afforded the opportunity to speak with the Pontiff from among some 180 ambassadors represented, Ambassador Emma Madigan recalled the November visit of Taoiseach Enda Kenny to the Vatican and "extended a warm welcome for the Pope's visit".

Ambassador Madigan further revealed that "the Irish Embassy has already been in touch with [World Meeting of Families organiser] Bishop Kevin Farrell on arrangements and to offer what help is needed towards a successful visit."

❶ Irish Ambassador attends 'inspiring' papal address, Page 10.

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Our bishops get ready to meet Pope Francis PAGE 9



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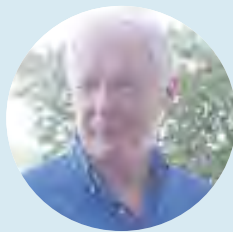


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The dialogue of the deaf



Editor's Comment

Michael Kelly

In a recent perceptive letter Jesuit theologian Fr Gerry O'Hanlon took up the issue of the so-called 'dialogue of the deaf' between secularists and religious believers in Ireland. "At a time," Fr O'Hanlon wrote, "when our society is crying out for a concerted approach to the deep problems of inequality and lack of meaning which surround us."

His trigger was the somewhat dismissive review in *The Irish Times* by Donald Clarke of Martin Scorsese's *Silence*. Mr Clarke concluded that while the film "may appeal to those for whom faith remains an everyday concern", it struck him "as a rigorous and sincere interrogation of a spiritual dilemma I couldn't care less about".

But, quite apart from the film, Fr O'Hanlon goes on to diagnose a wider problem: "It is easy enough to surf a superficial wave of 'negative tolerance', according to which believers and non-believers agree to 'live and let live' without any serious engagement, and thus without any possibility of concerted action."

“Much of what passes for debate about faith in Ireland is a mishmash of tired clichés and ignorant bombast”

"It would surely be much more productive for the project of human flourishing in Ireland if we took an interest in exploring and appreciating

one another's beliefs and non-beliefs, not with a view to conversion but rather towards a more constructive synergy in addressing difficult issues," he writes.

It's hard to disagree. Much of what passes for debate about faith in Ireland is a mishmash of tired clichés and ignorant bombast. Take RTÉ's *The Late Late Show*, for example.

Evidently producers decided it was a good idea to kick off the New Year by looking to the year ahead. Presenter Ryan Tubridy was joined by columnist Michael Harding, writer Stefanie Preissner and a curious man wearing a plastic bag over his head who I later discovered is a Limerick-based comedian who goes by the name 'Blindboy Boatclub'.

Error

I have to admit, it wasn't a promising start, but when the item was introduced as a chance to "philosophically reflect" on the year ahead, I decided to suspend my judgement. That turned out to be a schoolboy error.

We were subjected to observations from the man wearing the plastic bag on the recent feast of Christmas that most people who go to Midnight Mass are drunk and only do so because their grandmother forces them to do so.

The gentleman – remember wearing a plastic bag over his head on the most-watched programme on Irish television – went on to refer to the Eucharist as "haunted bread" (see

Page 8). Cue an intervention from Ms Preissner where she goes on to outline her belief that Catholics partaking of the Eucharist are indulging in a form of cannibalism. It elicited the mildest chuckles from a section of the audience, who, to be honest, appeared bored out of their minds by what RTÉ chooses to serve up as primetime viewing on a Friday night. Presenter Ryan Tubridy professed himself to be fascinated by the reference to cannibalism, claiming it was a novel idea to him. Which is strange, given it was a protest against Christ's teaching on the Eucharist almost from day one.

It wasn't so much that the item was offensive (which it was), it was more than the entire item was a triumph of mediocrity and a celebration of ignorant smart-alecky comments pretending to be insight.

In other countries, it seems to me, mainstream television programmes are able to have sensible discussions about matters of faith. RTÉ's religious department produces good programmes, and this deserved to be noted. But, the days when one could expect a searing discussion on faith are over.

For good or for ill, under veteran presenter Gay Byrne *The Late Late Show* became renowned for setting the national agenda. It's not what it used to be – and the national dialogue is the worse off for it.

Bishops won't ask Pope to permit married priests

» Continued from Page 1

to discuss the possibilities of ordaining married men and of appointing female bishops, saying that the Pope encouraged individual bishops and bishops' conferences to be creative in looking at ways to do ministry in the future, and that Ireland bishops must "consider all options".

However, Dr O'Reilly

told *The Irish Catholic*, no decision was made when he raised the matter with his fellow bishops in 2015.

"There was a discussion about it at the bishops' conference, and it was inconclusive – there was no decision taken at that point, and that's where it rested," he said.

"Where it came from originally was the diocesan pastoral plan," he said, highlighting

how it had arisen following an 18-month listening process in his Kilmore diocese which had led in turn to a diocesan assembly and a new diocesan pastoral plan to tackle such challenges facing the Church as the declining number of priests.

"The request of the plan was that I would bring it to the bishops' conference, which I have done," he con-

tinued. "I don't know whether there is anything more that I could do on it."

At the same time, he said, there was a chance that the proposal could be raised at next week's *ad limina* visit of the Irish bishops to Rome. "I'd say it's possible," he said, "because I would have sent in the pastoral plan as part of the submission of the report to the Vatican."



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Faithful footballers scoop major awards



Real Madrid striker Cristiano Ronaldo.

Two giants of the football world who relied on their Catholic faith for success in 2016 have received top honours at the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) inaugural Best Football Awards.

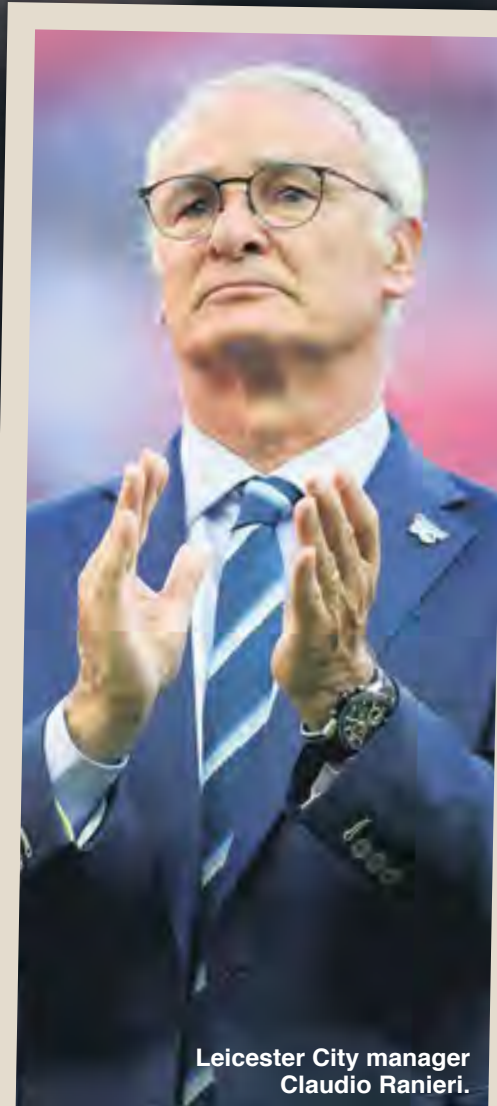
Portuguese legend Cristiano Ronaldo was named the world's leading player at a star-studded event in Zurich, Switzerland, last Monday night, while manager of Leicester City, Claudio Ranieri, who led his team to an astounding win in England's Premier League, was named Best Male Coach.

Having led his nation's team to victory at the Euro 2016 championships in France, Ronaldo said that, since the team's defeat in the 2004 competition, "I asked God to give me another chance...I've always said I wanted to win a trophy with the national team and make history. And I did it. Thank God, things went well for us."

Meanwhile, it was during Leicester's meteoric rise to an incredible 5,000/1 victory in 2016 that it was revealed how Ranieri was regularly praying to St Rita – the patron saint of impossible causes – to sustain his team through the competition.

For his part, after the League win, Ranieri said he is a devout Catholic who prays every night, often asking God, "if you can help me, thank you, if I don't deserve, okay, thank you the same".

He added he has thanked God many times since Leicester's win.



Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri.

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Concerns raised after accused priests allowed to say Masses

Greg Daly

Priests visiting parishes in other dioceses must show documentation proving they are allowed to minister publicly when saying Masses, the head of the Irish Church's child protection board has said.

Following reports that two priests out of ministry because of abuse allegations had celebrated public Masses, Teresa Devlin, CEO of the National Board for the Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church, wrote to all bishops and provincials urging that all priests carry appropriate documentation and that that this documentation be checked.

"As a minimum, a priest who is visiting within Ireland is required to show his celebret to demonstrate that he is a priest in good standing," she wrote.

A celebret is a license to celebrate Mass, issued on an annual basis, and renewed or withdrawn based on whether a priest is in good standing or not.

Guidance

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Ms Devlin said when preparing new child protection guidelines last year the board wanted to tighten up on guidance around visiting priests, with a simple sacristy notice advising that visiting priests should show their celebret and sign the sacristy register being an effective way of addressing this issue without causing difficulty or embarrassment.

"In one diocese's parishes there's even a sign that says 'no celebret, no celebration', which is a quirky and good way of doing it," she said,

adding that the regulations are more rigorous and laborious for priests visiting from abroad. "The days of just turning up from America or wherever and wanting to say Mass hopefully are long gone," she said.

During work on the national case management committee, Ms Devlin learned of the two cases where priests who were not in ministry had been allowed to celebrate Mass, and thought this would be a good opportunity

to emphasise good practice.

"It was good that this was brought to our attention," she said, continuing, "before there's a creep on this and it becomes bad practice across the country, I'm just saying get a notice up, make sure

that the celebrets are viewed and the sacristy register is signed – then everybody understands the process and we should be able to wipe out any bad practice before it even starts."

Being winter ready



Sisters Sky and Willow Shaw at the launch of the Under the Weather Campaign. Information on a wide range of common conditions like colds, flu and tummy bugs, is available at www.undertheweather.ie from the HSE and health professionals, for adults and children. Photo: Photocall Ireland

Oak jubilee for Glenstal monk

Glenstal Abbey's oldest monk has celebrated 80 years as a professed religious.

Fr Placid Murray, who is 98 years old and currently lives

in a nursing home in Newport, Co. Tipperary, returned to the Limerick monastery to celebrate the Oak Jubilee of his first profession, which

he made on the Feast of the Epiphany, 1937.

He and the monastic community were joined by many of his family and friends for

Mass, where he renewed his vows. During the homily, Abbot Brendan Coffey pointed out that he would have to live to 109 should he ever celebrate his own oak jubilee, and that the monastery was a growing but "fledgling community" just 10 years old when Fr Placid first made profession.

Fidelity

"It is a tremendous testimony to fidelity, all too seldom seen today in any walk of life, that someone faithfully carries out their work for 80 years," he said.

Green shoots top of bishops' agenda for papal meeting

Staff Reporter

Growth and decline are top of the agenda for the Irish bishops' meetings with the Pope and senior Vatican officials next week, according to Archbishop Eamon Martin.

This weekend sees Ireland's bishops travelling to Rome for their first formal collective visit to the Vatican in over 10 years, with fewer than half the hierarchy's members having taken part in the 2006 pilgrimage.

Writing in *The Irish Catholic* (see Page 11), Dr Martin says the highlight of the 2017 *ad limina* visit will be the hierarchy's meeting with Pope Francis, with the bishops expecting that Pope Francis and others in the Vatican will want to learn how the bishops are addressing declines both in Mass attendance and in numbers answering calls to priestly and religious vocations.

Resilience

"I, and my fellow bishops, will be able to share with them the resilience of our priests and religious under increased pressure and workload, as well as the tremendous generosity and kindness of the faithful towards us," he writes, continuing, "we will be able to discuss the seeds of renewal and new growth in catechesis, lay involvement, intentional discipleship and pastoral outreach that are emerging all over the country."

Other issues the bishops expect to discuss, he writes, include child protection, migration, economic hardship, secularism and the need to promote the dignity of all.

See Page 11.

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Shared values in a United Ireland

It's being suggested in a much-discussed new book by Kevin Meagher that one of the solutions to current political problems is – a united Ireland.

In *A United Ireland – Why Unification is Inevitable and How it Will Come About*, the author, English but with Irish roots, suggests that it's simply the most practical and sensible way to resolve headaches over Brexit, worries about “a hard border”, and the dysfunctional element in the Belfast administration which is giving all the appearance of falling apart right now.

The solution is staring us in the face. Make Ireland one country again.

Not new

It's not a new idea – why, none other than Sir Edward Carson believed that the whole island of Ireland would be better off as one nation (although, for him, a nation within the United Kingdom of nations).

And it is indeed entirely practical from the economic viewpoint. Northern Ireland voted to remain within the EU. Once reunited with the rest of the country, no more Brexit for the North!

And although this aspect



Mary Kenny



Brexit: There are options that could be considered by Northern Ireland.

is never discussed in political or economic debate, a North-South confederation – let's call it a confederation – would be a terrific boon for the strengthening of Christian values in Ireland.

Although Catholics and Protestants have certainly had political, historical and sacramental differences, in recent years they have drawn closer together on broader issues of “values”.

A strong injection of Northern influence over the administration of the whole island would be a real obstacle for those advancing an ever more secular Ireland.

'Atheist Ireland' would soon feel the thunder of the Bible against their agenda of removing faith from the public square.

What a fascinating prospect lies before us!

Mr Obama's record comes under the microscope

If President Obama (still president until January 20 – and he will always have the right to be addressed as 'Mr President') visits Ireland again, as he has apparently promised to do, I hope he will receive the C  ad M  le F  ilte for which this country is renowned. The visitor must always be welcomed.

But in terms of the Obama political record, Tim Stanley in the *Daily Telegraph* reported on an aspect which deserves highlighting: “To get his health reform bill passed in 2010, Obama said federal funds would never be used to finance abortions. But when the law was implemented, the government found a way around this: employers would pay for them instead.

Employers

“Catholic and other religious employers suddenly faced the prospect of providing insurance that would give their workers access to abortifacients, prescription contraceptives and surgical sterilisation.

“For refusing to comply, the Little Sisters of the Poor, which cares for



the elderly, faced up to \$70 million a year in federal fines – so its plucky nuns took their case to the Supreme Court and, thankfully, won. They beat a naked attempt to overrule the separation of Church and State and make society more liberal by decree.”

It will be remembered that this administration tried to subject an order of nuns caring for the elderly to compulsory compliance with abortion provision.

Adhering to a moral compass

In the midst of a horrible spate of knife murders in Dublin, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin took to the airwaves to suggest that some of the youths involved in these crimes suffered, essentially, from “anger issues”, and required a course in “anger management”.

A youth who plunges a knife into his victim and kills him certainly is angry. He may also suffer from ‘drug issues’, ‘drink issues’ or ‘family dysfunction issues’.

But whatever the problem, the victim ends up dead. The victim has been unjustly robbed of his life.

Of course there is a place for compassion and an intelligent understanding

of why a young person commits homicide. But leave therapy language to the therapists, the shrinks and the counsellors. The role of a pastor is to show moral leadership and to adhere to a moral compass.

First things first. Killing people is wrong. However angry you are, it's against the moral law, as it is against the civil law. (And last year, indeed, Dr Martin did condemn the “despicable” killings involved in gangland murders.)

Respect

But here's something that has stayed with me. I remember Maeve Binchy talking about the great respect she had for the

first editor who employed her, the legendary Douglas Gageby in the *Irish Times*. Gageby was encouraging, positive and amiable, but he also had a strong sense of standards.

If somebody made a mistake in the newspaper, he would hold up the error for all to see and say sternly: “This will not do.” It was, Maeve said, utterly mortifying. You desperately wanted to do your best and correct your ways.

And you respected Gageby for his exacting standards.

Compassion is of the essence, but we also need spiritual pastors to say, sometimes: “This will not do.” Whatever the reason.

Adoration chapel in Fermoy restored

St Patrick's Church, Fermoy, Co. Cork has unveiled its newly refurbished adoration chapel.

In a project aimed at reversing wear to support beams in the chapel, a full programme of work was undertaken to reverse the site's previous layout to offer better use of four stained glass windows. In addition to the new support beams, the chapel received

NEWS IN BRIEF

new furniture, a new entrance door, a new raised altar, and a fresh colour scheme together with lighting and new carpet. Photos of the refurbished chapel can be viewed at News from the Diocese at www.cloynediocese.ie

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Archdiocese of Armagh has announced that its ecumenical service for the

Week of Christians Unity will take place in St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral, Armagh on Wednesday January 18 at 7.30pm.

The guest preacher will be Bishop John McDowell, Church of Ireland Bishop of Clogher. All are welcome to attend. The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, this January 18-25 will be ‘Reconciliation – The love of Christ compels us’ (2 Cor 5: 14 – 20).



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Prelates have no plan to halt Mass by suspended priest

Greg Daly

Ireland's bishops are likely to ignore plans by 'silenced' priest Fr Tony Flannery to celebrate a public Mass on January 22.

Redemptorist Fr Flannery, who has been out of ministry since 2012, has announced on his website that he intends to disregard the ban and celebrate his 70th birthday, which will be on January 18, with a Mass in Killmordaly Community Centre in Kiltullagh, Co. Galway.

Fr Flannery was suspended from ministry after the publication of articles in *Reality* magazine, which questioned the origins of the priesthood and suggested that Christians other than priests can celebrate the Eucharist.

Asked to clarify his position by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, he balked at requests that he clarify that he accepts

Church teaching on the Eucharist, replying only that he has no difficulty in believing "that Jesus is really and truly present when we celebrate the Eucharist".

Canon law

Under canon law, bishops are "guardians of all liturgical life", responsible for regulating and safeguarding liturgy in their dioceses, where priests are only permitted to celebrate Mass if in good standing with the Church.

The centre is in Clonfert diocese, under the jurisdiction of Bishop John Kirby, who will be in Rome during the Irish hierarchy's *ad limina* visit when the Mass takes place. On being directed to the Catholic Communication Office by Dr Kirby's office, however, *The Irish Catholic* was told "the Redemptorist Congregation is the ecclesiastical authority for Father Flannery".

Bishop says asylum will get a warm local

Paul Keenan

The Bishop of Achonry, in whose diocese the parish of Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon is preparing to receive at least 80 Syrian refugees, has insisted people of the town will be "welcoming" of the new arrivals.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* this week, and amid widespread media coverage of rows centred on the choosing of Ballaghaderreen's Abbeyfield hotel to host the refugees without adequate consultation, Bishop Brendan Kelly said his own sense locally was that "the vast majority" are ready to greet the new arrivals, half of them children, and do what they can to assist them.

"People are extremely compassionate to the horrendous circumstances the refugees have gone through," Bishop Kelly said, stressing that "we will serve them as best we can."

Concerns

Aware of people's concerns at the lack of consultation from Government and similarly regarding pressures that might come to bear on schools and medical facilities, Bishop Kelly said, "I understand these anxieties. We rely on the support that must come to help with the refugees, and no doubt resources will come." He added his belief that many of the concerns he had heard would become "secondary" once the refugees arrived because "people come first".

"This is an opportunity for

us as a Catholic community and Christian people to display what we believe about every human being, beloved of God," he said, recalling that the announcement of the plan for Ballaghaderreen had come as he and his priests were delivering homilies for the celebration "of the visit of the Magi, the culmination of the journey of the visitors from the East. That contextualised everything for people from a Church perspective".

Homily

In his own homily for January 8, Bishop Kelly told the congregation at the Cathedral of The Annunciation and St Nathy, Ballaghaderreen: "Just as Jesus identified with the most impoverished and rejected people in being born in a shed, and with the condemned and criminals in dying on the cross, so he identifies with all refugees, and all endangered, innocent and helpless people. It is our faith that Jesus comes to us in them. And so must we reach out to help in whatever way we can...It's a big challenge, but we are up for it, please God."

Recalling this week that "we all have relatives who relied on the kindness of countries where they have gone, and even with that support, there was suffering and grief", Bishop Kelly pointed out, "the refugees have suffered this and more".

"We will do whatever we can in a parish context. We will do our best," he reiterated.



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Passing of former Mary Immaculate Registrar

The funeral has taken place in Limerick of former Mary Immaculate College Registrar Tony Bromell.

Mr Bromell, who was 84, died on January 3. Serving in his role as registrar for 30 years, Mr Bromell was also a senator and councillor and served as Mayor of Limerick from 1982-'83. He was intimately involved in the establishment of the University of Limerick.

Among the many voices paying tribute to a popular figure was Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick, who serves as Chair of the

Board of Trustees of Mary Immaculate. "Tony Bromell will always have a special place in the history of Mary Immaculate College," he said.

"As Registrar of the College from 1967 until his retirement in 1998 he was deeply committed to the advancement of Higher Education in Limerick," he continued, "a passionate enthusiast of the Irish language, Tony embodied the long-standing commitment to the national tongue at MIC and actively promoted the weaving of Irish into curriculum and conversation alike within the halls of the College."

Belfast 4 Corners Festival

The Belfast 4 Corners Festival will take place this year from February 3 to 12, under the theme 'Our Wounded & Wonderful City'.

The event comprises innovative events aimed at encouraging people to go beyond the 'corners' of their own neighbourhoods towards discovering new ideas and friends.

The 4 Corners Festival was established by a group of Christians wishing to promote unity and reconciliation in the midst

of Belfast's troubled past.

The idea for the festival grew out of conversations between Fr Martin Magill, parish priest at Sacred Heart Parish in north Belfast, and Rev. Steve Stockman of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church in south Belfast. Both had recently travelled to parts of Belfast with which they were unfamiliar, and had been surprised by what they discovered there.

For more details, visit www.4cornersfestival.com

Correction

In a review in the edition of January 5, 2017 of the book *Walter Carpenter: A Revolutionary Life* by Ellen Galvin RSC, it was incorrectly stated that Mr Carpenter was predeceased by his wife. In fact, Mrs Carpenter died on May 19, 1926 – three months after Mr Carpenter's death.

seekers welcome



“It is our faith that Jesus comes to us in them. And so must we reach out to help in whatever way we can...”

– Bishop Brendan Kelly

Refugees from Syria cross the border into Jordan in 2016. Photo: CNS

Pope criticises clericalist mind-sets in homily



Pope Francis addressing diplomats at the Vatican earlier this week. CNS

Pope Francis has criticised the ‘clericalist’ attitude as “hypocritical” and at odds with Jesus’ example of serving the people of God.

In a homily delivered in Casa Santa Marta on January 10, the Pontiff said the attitude communicated by Christ was that “of a servant, and this gave authority...Jesus did not have an allergy to the people: touching the lepers, the sick, didn’t make Him shudder...this is the authority that the people of God sense.”

On the other hand, however, the Pope went on, the clericalist “Pharisees... had a psychology of princes: ‘We are the masters, the princes, and we teach you. Not service: we command, you obey.’”

The Pope went on to stress that “One who considers himself a prince, who has a clericalist attitude, who is a hypocrite, doesn’t have authority! He speaks the truth, but without authority.”

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Broadcasting authority complaint likely after RTÉ Eucharist mockery

Greg Daly

The head of the Family and Media Association is "almost definitely" going to complain to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland after the Eucharist was ridiculed on RTÉ's flagship chat show.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Donal O'Sullivan-Latchford said that he was "very likely" to complain to the BAI after *The Late Late Show* broadcast on January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, featured a discussion in which the Eucharist was referred to as "haunted bread".

During a discussions about whether religious practice, long in decline, might be on the rise, comedian David Chambers, who performs as 'Blindboy Boatclub' in the comedy duo The Rubberbandits, said that young people attending midnight Mass at Christmas were "not going there for haunted bread", but were going because it was a family event.



Ryan Tubridy.

"Everybody at midnight Mass is half-cut anyway," he added.

Presenter Ryan Tubridy said he thought the phrase 'haunted bread' was "a great expression", and Mr Chambers said "that's what it is", arguing that the Church "does not want us to use critical thinking" and is "asking us to eat the ghost of a 2,000-year-old carpenter".

On hearing that fellow guest Michael Harding had been a priest, he murmured "sorry about the haunted bread stuff".

Cork writer and actor Ste-

fanie Pressner commented that she had never understood Church teaching on the Eucharist when growing up, saying that the notion of it being the Body of Christ was "a scary concept", and that she had thought of it as "cannibalism".

Standards

Under the BAI Code of Programme Standards, the BAI acknowledges that matters which can cause offence differ from person to person, and that there is no right not to be offended, but directs that responsible programming must take into account such issues as audience size and expectations.

While the critical scrutiny of religion is appropriate through information, drama and other programming, according to the BAI, the code requires broadcasters to "show due respect for religious views, images, practices and beliefs in programme material".

Death of one of Ireland's greatest servants



Former Irish economist and public servant TK Whittaker (left), who died this week aged 100, pictured with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and Seamus Mallon, former deputy leader of the SDLP, at a function in Mr Whittaker's honour last year.

Heroic priest play set for American debut

Staff Reporter

A play about the heroic Irish priest Msgr Hugh O'Flaherty is set for its first overseas performances

God Has No Country, by Kerry actor and playwright Donal Courtney [pictured as Msgr Hugh] about the Rome-based World War Two priest, will be performed in Rochester, New York and Penn State University, Pennsylvania in March and April. There have been proposals to host the play in Singapore and Hong Kong too.

First written in 2013, the play sold out when performed in Dublin's Smock Alley Theatre and Dundrum's Mill Theatre in November 2016, and is returning to both venues later this month before going abroad.

"People from the States had seen the play and thought it would resonate there," Mr Courtney told *The Irish Catholic*, saying they had appreciated the Irish storytelling approach in the play, and felt the story of Msgr O'Flaherty, famously played by Gregory Peck in 1983's *The Scarlet and the Black*, should be better known.

The Kerry priest, who worked in Rome during the Second World War, is thought to have been responsible for saving as many as 6,500 people, notably escaped allied POWs, during the conflict.

Commenting on how the play tells the story through Msgr O'Flaherty's eyes, Mr Courtney said, "He never would have talked about it in real life – never would have blown his own trumpet."



Pope Francis announces prayer intention for the homeless

Pope Francis has issued an 'urgent action' prayer intention for the month of January, naming the homeless during the continuing cold weather sweeping Europe.

"During these very cold days," he said, "I think of and I invite you to think of all the people who live on the streets, affected by the

cold and many times by indifference.

"Unfortunately some didn't make it. Let us pray for them, and let us ask the Lord to warm our hearts so as to be able to help them."

In an updating of the monthly prayer intentions, Pope Francis intends to offer a second, 'urgent action' intention each

month in response to issues. His original prayer intention for January is for Christian unity: "That all Christians may be faithful to the Lord's teaching by striving with prayer and fraternal charity to restore ecclesial communion and by collaborating to meet the challenges facing humanity."

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Our bishops get ready to meet Pope Francis

Times have changed since the last *ad limina*, writes **David Quinn**

It is 10 years since the Irish bishops made their last *ad limina* visit to Rome. It will take place from January 15-25.

Literally, an *ad limina apostolorum* means 'to the threshold of the Apostles'. It is a pilgrimage to the tombs of Sts Peter and Paul but it is also an opportunity to meet with the Pope and senior officials at the Vatican to discuss the issues facing the Church in Ireland.

When the last visit took place in 2006, St John Paul II had died the year before and Benedict XVI was Pope. Back in Ireland, Bertie Ahern was still Taoiseach and the economic crash had not yet happened. The make-up of the hierarchy was significantly different to what it is today. Leading the Irish bishops on that occasion was Archbishop Seán Brady (yet to be made a cardinal). This time it will be Archbishop Eamon Martin, his successor.

Scandals

In 2006, the scandals were already very well known and the reputation of the Church was extremely badly damaged. But the Dublin report (2009) had not yet been published and nor had the Cloyne report (2011) which led to Enda Kenny's famously denunciatory speech in the Dáil in which he thundered against the Vatican. A few days later we closed our embassy to the Holy See, since reopened.

A few months after that, Ireland had a new nuncio in the shape of Archbishop Charles Brown, sent here to improve relations with the Irish State and to help oversee the renewal of the Irish hierarchy.

The three big changes since the 2006 visit are that we have a new Pope in the shape of the popular Pope Francis. All of the big investigations into clerical sex abuse have taken place, and several of the bishops who will take part in the *ad limina* visit have been appointed under Archbishop Brown, including Eamon



The Bishops *Ad Limina* of 2006.

Martin.

Despite the fact that the big investigations into the abuse issue have taken place, the scandals will still feature in meetings at the Vatican. The bishops will be keen to report on continued efforts to ensure these scandals never happen again and the Vatican will be keen to hear about this, and learn from it.

When Pope Benedict addressed the Irish bishops in 2006, he brought up two very important topics; Catholic education and vocations. These issues could hardly be more crucial for the future of the Church in Ireland. How strong can Catholicism be in Ireland when many people, despite spending years in Catholic schools, know almost nothing about Catholicism? Indeed, in many cases what they have in the heads instead is a crude anti-Catholic caricature.

If we have few priests and religious the future is also bleak, despite all the talk of lay vocations, which are thinner on the ground than we like to admit in any case.

“If Boston and New England can bounce back like this why can't vocations in Dublin?”

It cannot be emphasised strongly enough that even by Western standards, Ireland is a vocations blackspot. In Britain, vocations are by no means where they should be, but they are about twice as plentiful as here despite the fact that the Church in England and Wales and Scotland is roughly the same size as on this island.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Catholic seminary in Boston has

bounced back after several years in the doldrums. Around the time Cardinal Bernard Law resigned as Archbishop of Boston because of the scandals there, about 30 men were in the seminary (which serves all of New England), and roughly a third of these were training for life in religious orders.

“Excessive centralisation complicates the life of the Church”

Today, there are about 100 men in formation at the seminary, with two-thirds bound for the diocesan priesthood and the other third for the religious life. If Boston and New England can bounce back like this why can't vocations in Dublin, and the Church in Ireland generally? What are we doing wrong? Hopefully the setting up by the Irish bishops of a National Vocations Office is a step in the right direction.

Everyone will be wondering what Pope Francis will have to say. He is hard to predict but it would be surprising if he doesn't mention vocations, Catholic education, and his favourite theme, mercy, at the very least.

He will surely have something to say about the family as well, given that the World Meeting of Families will be taking place here next year. What will he say? Again, it is hard to call. He might say something 'liberal' and crowd-pleasing, but equally he might condemn gender ideology and he might condemn the 'global war on families' as he has done before.

When the German bishops met him in 2015 he

was very on point about the German Church. The German Church receives a Church tax annually which is worth billions of euro and it is very bureaucratised.

He spoke to them about “sort of new Pelagianism, which puts its trust in administrative structures, in perfect organisations.

He said, “excessive centralisation, rather than helping, complicates the life of the Church and her missionary dynamics.” Maybe he will have something to say that is very specific to Ireland as well.

The Pope also called on the German bishops to defend the right to life. He

told them: “The Church must never get tired of being the advocate of life, and should never step back from proclaiming that human life must be protected unconditionally from conception to natural death.”

Surprising

It would be surprising if Pope Francis does not refer to the right to life in his address given that we appear to be facing into an abortion referendum here.

Ad limina visits are less necessary than they once were. Travel and communication are much easier now than in centuries past. The Church is much more interconnected than it was because of this. However, an *ad limina* visit is still an opportunity for a Pope to suggest priorities for the Church in a given region. We wait to see what priorities Pope Francis will set for the Church here in Ireland.

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Irish Ambassador attends ‘inspiring’ papal address

Paul Keenan

Ireland's Ambassador to the Holy See, Emma Madigan, has spoken of the “impressive and inspiring” address delivered by Pope Francis to the Diplomatic Corps on January 9.

Ambassador Madigan joined with representatives from over 180 missions with links to the Holy See to hear the annual address from the Pontiff, which touches on those key areas of concern for the Pontiff in 2017.

“He is a speaker who brings great sincerity to what he says,” Ambassador Madigan said, adding that the address had been “wide-ranging [and] touched on many serious issues. The Pope was very strong and direct on terrorism, and on the subject of migration.”

On these issues, Pope Francis

said during his address of terrorism: “We are dealing with a homicidal madness which misuses God's name in order to disseminate death, in a play for domination and power. Hence I appeal to all religious authorities to join in reaffirming unequivocally that one can never kill in God's name.”

“Fundamentalist terrorism is the fruit of a profound spiritual poverty, and often is linked to significant social poverty. It can only be fully defeated with the joint contribution of religious and political leaders.”

Immigration

On migration he stressed that “The issue of migration is not one that can leave some countries indifferent, while others are left with the burden of humanitarian assistance, often at the cost of notable

strain and great hardship, in the face of an apparently unending emergency...so I am grateful to the many countries which offer a generous welcome to those in need, beginning with various European nations, particularly Italy, Germany, Greece and Sweden.”

Ambassador Madigan pointed out, however, that the Pope was keen to end his address on a positive note, emphasising as he often does, the themes of hope and peace in commencing a new year.

Quoting from that passage which struck her most, Ambassador Madigan said the Pontiff had stressed that “Peace is gift, a challenge and a commitment [that] can only come about on the basis of a vision of human beings capable of promoting an integral development respectful of their transcendent dignity”.



A file photo shows Ambassador Emma Madigan with Pope Francis along her husband Laurence and son Conor. Photo: CNS

Grow in Love Programme proving a winner with schools

Staff Reporter

The new Religious Education programme for primary schools, Grow in Love, is proving a winner with teachers and parents, according to feedback offered to those rolling out the programme.

Fr Dan O'Connor, Episcopal Vicar for Education in the Dublin archdiocese, described as “very positive” the response to information in-service days for teachers tasked with engaging the new programme.

“There was a 96% attendance at the days across 2016,” Fr O'Connor added, “with 1,042 chaplains, pastoral workers and other teachers attending in this term [September to Christmas].” In addition, he said,

for those unable to attend sessions, organisers had met specific requests from teachers to travel to schools for informal information days.

Fr O'Connor went on to reveal that the attendance rates came despite the Department of Education providing no substitute cover for teachers joining the information days.

Literature

Meanwhile, Maura Hyland of Veritas, the body which has developed Grow in Love and its accompanying literature said there had been “an overwhelming response” on the part of teachers and parents already using the programme.

She said users were very positive about the “very clear” layout of the programme, with parents voicing

great satisfaction with its home sections where they were afforded the opportunity to fully engage with the faith formation their children are receiving.

“We're doing something right,” Ms Hyland said of the widespread positivity greeting Grow in Love.

Grow in Love has been developed as a new curriculum to ultimately replace the Alive-O series. To date, programmes for the Junior and Senior Infants cycles have been rolled out (September 2015), and the 1st and 2nd class cycles (September 2016). The programme extends to 3rd and 4th classes in September of this year, and the same time in 2018 for 5th and 6th classes.

McGuinness had to quit, says priest



Fr Joe McVeigh.

Greg Daly

Martin McGuinness had no real choice but to resign as the North's Deputy First Minister, according to a prominent northern priest.

Expressing regret about Mr McGuinness's poor health, Fermanagh's Fr Joe McVeigh told *The Irish Catholic*, “I also feel he had no real option but to resign given the entrapment he was facing from the DUP, not just on the RHI (Renewable Heat Incentive) issue, but a number of different issues.”

Fr McVeigh said he felt the Sinn Féin politician had been unhappy for some time, adding, “I don't think he got the respect he was entitled to as a Deputy First Minister, or

the parity of esteem that we are entitled to in the North as nationalists.”

Disenchantment with the executive has been growing among northern nationalists, he said, claiming that frustration over such issues as high child poverty rates in Derry and West Belfast has been aggravated by the DUP's failure to take responsibility for “millions being wasted” on the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

While describing the future as “uncertain”, Fr McVeigh nonetheless said he had faith in the people of the North. “We've come through a lot,” he said, “and I'm hopeful we'll come through this and bring about a new maturity in the politics here.”

Assembly timeframe for submissions ‘nonsensical’ – PLC

The Pro Life Campaign (PLC) has voiced concern regarding the timeframe involved for the Citizens' Assembly on abortion to consider the 13,000 submissions it received on the issue ahead of making recommendations to the Oireachtas on the Eighth Amendment. Pointing out that the body will have just three weekends in which to consider the massive volume of submissions, the PLC's spokesperson said: “With the

current time frame, there is no way the Assembly will have the time needed to take an exhaustive look at the issue, including looking at all that is positive about the Eighth Amendment and the lives it has unquestionably saved.”

Sympathising with the Assembly's members and chair on the issue of time, Ms Sherlock continued: “They were given an impossible task by the Government from the outset

and this was compounded by certain government ministers subsequently demanding and succeeding to have the work of the Assembly concluded even earlier.

“It is nonsensical to expect the Assembly to consider all 13,000 submissions over a weekend or two and then report back to the Oireachtas with well argued and carefully considered recommendations,” she said. “It simply won't happen.”



Cora Sherlock.

Charting the future of Irish Catholicism



Irish bishops travel to meet Pope Francis filled with hope and realism, writes
Archbishop Eamon Martin

This weekend the Irish bishops travel to Rome to begin a two-week pilgrimage "to the threshold of the apostles" (*ad limina apostolorum*).

It is 10 years now since the Irish bishops were last called to make their *ad limina* visit – on that occasion, the bishops met with Pope Benedict XVI. Much has changed for the Church in Ireland and in the world since then.

I am looking forward to spending this time with my fellow bishops – less than half of us have previously been on an *ad limina* visit so it will be an exciting experience.

During the pilgrimage we will have the opportunity to pray and celebrate Mass together at Rome's four major basilicas – St Peter, St Mary Major, St Paul outside the Walls and St John Lateran.

We also hope to meet with Irish priests, religious and members of the Irish community in Rome and to visit the Irish Dominicans at San Clemente and the Irish Augustinian Church of St Patrick.

Purpose

The central purpose of the *ad limina* visit is to celebrate and deepen our communion with the universal Church and with the Successor of St Peter, Pope Francis.

We look forward to reporting to the Holy Father and to the various offices of the Roman Curia about



Pope Francis greets bishops during his general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican in October. Photo: CNS

the pastoral situation of our dioceses and of the Church in Ireland. Knowing that we in Ireland are members of 'one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church', it will be also good to hear from them their hopes and wise counsel gained from regular encounters with our fellow bishops from every corner of the world.

The highlight of our visit will be our meeting and dialogue with Pope Francis himself.

I will bring him warm greetings of affection from the Catholic people of Ireland and thank him for the powerful witness and challenge he continues to present, particularly with regard to reaching out in a mission of mercy to those who are on the peripheries of Church and society.

“We will be able to discuss the seeds of renewal and new growth in catechesis, lay involvement”

It will be a chance to thank the Pope for the gift of the 'Year of Mercy' which we have just celebrated and for honouring Ireland with the privilege of hosting the World Meeting of Families in Dublin in August 2018.

Looking back over all that has happened since the last *ad limina* visit of the Irish bishops in 2006, we will be able to share the determined efforts we have been making to safeguard children and vulnerable persons in Church activities and our commitment to bringing healing to all those affected by the sinful and criminal

acts of abuse.

I will assure Pope Francis that it remains a major priority of the Church in Ireland to acknowledge and learn from the past, as Pope Benedict XVI exhorted us in his 2010 letter, "to reflect on the wounds inflicted on Christ's body", and "persevere in our efforts to bind those wounds and heal them".

No doubt Pope Francis and the other curial officials will be interested to learn how we are facing the current challenges of a decline in Mass attendance in Ireland and in the number of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.

I, and my fellow bishops, will be able to share with them the resilience of our priests and religious under increased pressure and workload, as well as the tremendous generosity and kindness of the faithful towards us.

We will be able to discuss the seeds of renewal and new growth in catechesis, lay involvement, intentional discipleship and pastoral outreach that are emerging all over the country.

The challenges facing the Church in Ireland are not unique to us so we will be anxious to learn about how bishops in other parts of Europe are confronting issues like migration, economic hardship, and sweeping secularism which can at times be dismissive of people of faith.

Committed

I will confirm to Pope Francis and the leaders of the various curial departments of the Holy

See that many Catholics in Ireland remain wholly committed to playing their part in Irish society and to witnessing to their faith in the public sphere.

With so much uncertainty around us – homelessness, economic hardship, violence on the streets, problems with mental health and the awful spectre of suicide, lack of hope and purpose in the lives of many of our gifted young people – the voice of faith needs to be heard in Ireland today more than ever.

“The message we are called by God to bring...is a message that still needs singing from the rooftops”

We must continue to promote respect for the dignity of every person, starting with the weakest and the most defenceless. People in Ireland yearn to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and to experience a living, loving encounter and relationship with God.

The future of the Catholic Church will perhaps be very unlike our past or even the present.

However, the message we are called by God to bring – a message of hope and positivity about conversion and starting over, about forgiveness and reconciliation, about the sacredness of all human life and the wonder of God's creation, about marriage, family and solidarity, about charity, truth and justice – is

a message that still needs singing from the rooftops. That remains our mission,

and, returning from our *ad limina* visit, we shall be determined to fulfil it.



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Death in contemporary Ireland is a complex matter

Most Irish people continue to believe in life after death but many don't see the Church as the only path to salvation, writes **Dr Kevin Myers**

Death be not proud, though some have called thee mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so." Penned by John Donne, this sonnet verse proclaims man's attempt to face the inevitability of death without fear. It is a cultural tool used to undercut death, a way to symbolically defend against the biological certainty contained in our mortal nature.

This theme of battling and rectifying fear of death is perhaps as old as man. We are mortal, we are aware that we are mortal and in the face of this, we look for meaning, guidance and answers to fundamental questions that permeate our mortal existence. One such question asks, what, if anything happens to us after we die?

Throughout history, man has tried many ways to answer this question. It is true to say that avoidance has been and still remains a chief weapon. Death for many is marginalised to the corner of one's mind.

Others talk of death only in those times when you simply cannot avoid it, with the passing of a loved one, family friend or even beloved family pet. Then we are reminded of an inalienable truth, we have only a limited time on this earth, we have at best a few decades on life's stage and one way or another, whatever way we do speak of death, it is death that will have the last word.

Facing the void: culture and religion

So with this in mind, how have people, both now and in the past coped with this knowledge of their inevitable demise? Where did and do they source meaning in the face of death and loss? In many ways here, culture becomes key and within that religious or spiritual belief offer answers.

Religion has historically, and for many, still continues to offer the greatest hope. We often find solace in the transcendent. A large variety of religious beliefs accomplish this by declaring to followers that they will survive death, they can in fact live on, although in another form, following biological demise.

“Christians... are told that if they live their lives in accordance with the teachings of their faith, Heaven awaits”

More than that, various forms of religious theology tell followers that they will be with God in the next life, and perhaps more importantly for some, they will also be reunited with those whom they love, those that have gone before us.

Christianity is one such religion. Often referred to as a 'salvatory religion', that



is to say a religious tradition that offers belief in life after death, Christians, particularly Catholics, are told that if they live their lives in accordance with the teachings of their faith, Heaven awaits.

This comes with a cautionary clause however. If they wander from the path of Church's ethical teaching and do not repent before death, then Hell awaits. For Catholics however, there is a middle ground: you may not have lived a perfect life, but Heaven can still be yours.

There is a pit-stop along the way. I'm referring of course to Purgatory, a place where the souls of the dead suffer until their life's transgressions are absolved. While Protestant theology has long abandoned belief in Purgatory, within Catholicism the living can work to move the dead forward.

By offering Masses for the dead and through prayer, followers can intercede for their departed loved ones and assist in their post-mortem salvation.

Here the Catholic Church has long been the essential gatekeeper between the living and their dead.

Let us look at Ireland

Many countries have strong religious traditions rooted in their cultural heritage. For Ireland, Catholicism has historically held pride of place within our societal and cultural lives.

From the Famine period onwards (1845-1849), the Catholic Church has dominated how the Irish see death, understand its meaning, its significance and most importantly, provides answers to this great mystery in life, what happens after we die?

The Church offers its followers a type of ethical guidebook, a road map if you will, instructing them how they can achieve salvation. Living a good life, and as such becoming a good Catholic, is the only path to hereafter.

Throughout the 20th Century, it would appear that the Catholic Church has dominated Irish belief in life after death. Studies, such as that carried out by a sociologist, Maire Nic Ghiolla Phadraig (1976) showed high levels of belief in God, Heaven and belief in life after death life.



Such findings also reflect a strong adherence to Church teachings on moral issues. The two seemed to be intrinsically-linked.

On the state level, Ireland is also interesting when we consider our constitutional provision, that any amendments made to our constitution must be put to the public vote.

In moral matters surrounding divorce and abortion, debated during the 20th Century, we see that from the results of related referendums, the Irish typically voted with a conservative conscience.

Although divorce was legalised in 1995, the motion was barely carried, and in doing so following a second referendum on the matter.

Secularisation

However, things are not as they were. And within Irish life, the Church is not what it was. But to understand the current position of the Church in relation to attitudes to mortality, we have to look at the position and decline of Church influence within Ireland from the 1980s onward.

Throughout much of the 20th Century, Ireland could be characterised as a traditional, agrarian and perhaps a closed-off society.

Within such a place, the Catholic Church was the moral, social and cultural orchestra through which ethical belief on many issues, often associated with the promise of salvation, were sung loud-est.

“What role does the Church play in shaping such belief, in guiding its followers to salvation?”

However, with the development and advance of the media within the late 20th Century, allied with the development of processes of individualism, globalisation and the related development of increasingly complex communication technologies, the Church has arguably lost its central position as the chief moral orchestra in relation to morality and mortality.

Where once it held pride

of place as a societal power, it now is but a voice in an increasingly multicultural choir.

Where does this leave the Irish in relation to contemporary attitudes towards death and salvation? Do the Irish believe in Heaven as much as they once did? If so, what role does the Church play in shaping such belief, in guiding its followers to salvation? Indeed, if belief remains high, how are Irish people to get there?

Recent studies have suggested that indeed Irish belief in life after death remains strong.

In a paper drawing on data from the European Social Survey Round Four, produced by the Bishops' Conference, that examined practice and belief among Catholic in the Republic, Eoin O'Mahony (2011) outlines how when questioned on belief in life after death, 43% of respondents reported 'yes, definitely', while a further 39% reported 'yes, probably'.

Combined, this figure suggests that belief in life after death for Irish Catholics, stands at approximately 82%. While these figures draw on data collected in 2009/2010,

the 2011 Census reported that 86% of Irish people identified as Catholic (although there may be significant variation in what the term Catholic means to respondents).

Yet moral beliefs seem to have shifted. To illustrate this we can look at the outcomes of Irish referendums on moral issues, particularly with reference to two constitutional changes relating to marriage. Returning to the 1995 divorce referendum, this was passed by the slightest of margins.

However, 20 years on, the once unimaginable issue of same-sex marriage passed comfortably with 62.1% of the popular vote. What can this tell us? Certainly the inevitability of death is as fundamental as ever, but seemingly popular belief in achieving life after death through enacting the moral teachings of the Church has gone into decline.

As Eoin O'Mahony outlines, a significant majority of Irish people believe in an afterlife. However, what seems to have occurred is that in large numbers, Irish people no longer link these two elements, personal mor-

ality and Catholic morality, the Church and personal salvation. The Irish seem to continue in large numbers to believe in Heaven, but, for many, the Church is no longer the only path to that salvation.

There seems to be many paths to Heaven or life after death. But so too are the methods of achieving it. While once Irish Catholics took it for granted that St Peter guarded the gates of Heaven, now he may have to cut several spare copies of his eschatological keys.

Individualism and the media

What has occurred in modern Ireland to bring about this shift and how do people in today's Ireland create meaning and source answers to these very same questions? After all the problem of death remains, we are here and we know our time is limited.

It would appear that two key elements, among others have changed both our understandings of death and more importantly perhaps for the Church, how we approach it. Ireland, once communal in character, has become more like our western neighbours, individualistic. The 'I' has come to dominate the 'we'.

“It would appear that traditional post-death practices and commemoration ceremonies remain popular”

The many consequences of this shift are for another piece, however it is enough to say here that Irish people are increasingly making up their own mind about death, and how to achieve and conceive of salvation. So where does the 'I' source this meaning?

It is true that the Irish find meaning from a variety of sources, old folklore heritage, pagan belief (even if they are not aware of their origins) and of course from the Church.

But we can say with a relative degree of certainty, it is fundamentally through the media that the Irish now source solace and meaning. The media has opened up Ireland to a world of choice.

It has fractured the once steel frame of Catholic understandings and offered people a way to see death anew.

What has occurred, as with many other nations, is that Irish people have begun to shop in the supermarket of religious, spiritual and secular beliefs, picking and choosing from the variety of cultural meanings on offer,

to create an understanding of death this is both personal and individualistic.

In generating understandings of death, if the Church was once the only shop in town, it is now just an aisle in a store.

This of course is a problematic matter. It is often said that there is no such thing as an atheist on a deathbed. Not true. It is people who are certain either way that lie comfortably before the abyss.

Whether a devout believer or a devout atheist, certainty alleviates anxiety. Perhaps it is the great many who occupy the centre ground, that mostly believe, but who are not sure, that fear the unknown with the greatest trepidation.

The future

So what of the future? What of death moving forward and what is the place of the Church in Ireland in relation to death? From my own personal research, it appears that the Church remains an important ingredient in understanding death.

After speaking with several hospital chaplains, both lay and religious, funeral service personnel and Catholic priests, it would seem that the majority of Irish people still resource Catholicism in bringing meaning to death.

After surveying a large sample of Irish people, it would appear that traditional post-death practices and commemoration ceremonies remain popular.

Catholic funeral services, although contested by those involved, remain extremely popular.

Whereas alternative secular Humanist wedding services have begun to increase massively in numbers, funeral services have not. In 2015 the Humanist Association of Ireland conducted 1,280 wedding services, however only 97 funeral services.

This was a decrease from 121 from the year previous. The Church as a source of moral guidance has arguably declined, but in relation to understandings of death, it continues to hold its own.

In an Ireland that has transformed rapidly in recent decades, the Church may have retreated to the periphery within many matters of social life, however with matters relating to death, it continues to hold pride of place, albeit not alone, at the centre of our understandings.

1 Dr Kevin Myers is a writer and a sociologist. His research interests include examining issues surrounding culture, religion, meaning, death, dying and bereavement.

Out&About

Rising to the challenge



◀ DONEGAL:

Youth workers from NET Ministries with Fr Maurice Colgan OP and Fr Joe Meade at a NET brainstorm session in Rosstown about the challenges facing youth evangelisation.

▼ Young musicians Bernadette (guitar), Gabh (drums), Andrinano (keyboard) and Isaac (bass) at the NET Ministries gathering at Rosstown.



TIPPERARY: Students of Clonmel High School Present Fr Michael Toomey with €1,345 from funds raised after decorating Clonmel's Church of SS Peter & Paul's with Christmas poinsettias.



CLARE: The choir who sang for Mass for the feast of the Baptism of the Lord in the Church of St John the Baptist, Ballyea. Since last Autumn, the choir has sung in Masses broadcast by RTE television, RTE Radio & Clare FM Masses. Pictured along with director Claire O'Dea, Fr Pat Malone and Bishop Fintan Monahan



CLARE: Lissycasey's Fr Joe Hourigan with Ennis's Fr John McGovern, Tom and Mary Connellan, Paul Connellan, 90-year old twin sisters Kathleen Murphy and Eileen Doohan, Clarecastle's Fr Pat Malone and Killaloe's Bishop Fintan Monahan at Lissycasey's roadside grotto.

Edited by Greg Daly
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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



SLIGO: Emma Terren Hogan, Godelieve As, Luke Silke, Niamh Palmer, Paddy Moloney and Ruth Hogan from Waterford's Holy Family Mission on a family day in Sligo.



SLIGO: Sr Aidan Beirne RSM with Elphin's Bishop Kevin Doran on the celebration of Sr Aidan's 105th birthday.



OFFALY: Kildare & Leighlin's Bishop Denis Nulty with Nuala Quinn, sacristan in Rhode parish for the last 60 years, who recently turned 90.



CLARE: Tom and Mairéad Connellan, with Mr & Mrs Al Hayes from Portumna and Bishop Fintan Monahan at Lissycasey's High Street Grotto.



CLARE: Michael Byrne, Michael Earls, Mary Maloney, Michael Neylon and Tom Carey at the presentation on January 6 of a cheque for over €12,000 to Cahercalla Community Hospital, Ennis, following the 'Yellow Ribbon' event to commemorate deceased loved ones, in which ribbons were placed on the Christmas tree in Ennis' market square over the Christmas.



SILIGURI: Fr Eamonn Conway from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, with newly baptised children, who had also made their First Holy Communion, at the Flame of Hope Home for children with disabilities, Siliguri West Bengal, India.

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.

CLARE

A Mass for the 103rd World Day of Migrants and Refugees will be celebrated at 12pm Mass in the Cathedral, Ennis on January 15th, in memory of those who have left our shores and those who have come.

A service for 2017's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will take place in St Columba's, Bindon Street, Ennis at 7:30pm on January 24.

CORK

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

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

The papal nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown, will launch a visitors' guide to St Patrick's Cathedral, the former episcopal seat of the diocese of Ross, in Skibbereen at 12:30pm on Sunday 22 January, with refreshments to follow.

DERRY

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

DUBLIN

Divine Mercy Mass 7:30pm every Tuesday night 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.

Join other young adults (20's & 30's) for a night of music, reflective prayer, and a talk on life, faith and purpose, followed by a social with refreshments at The Encounter, St Paul's Church, Arran Quay at 8pm on Friday, January 20.

Life to the Full (Jn 10:10) book club for young adults meets every Thursday from 7-8:30pm in St Paul's Church, Arran Quay (Smithfield) to meditate, share and discuss life & faith. Refreshments provided. www.facebook.com/lifetothefull-bookclub

Embrace God in nature while building true friendships and getting fit with Ewe Thina: We Walk God's Way, joining other young adults (20s & 30s) for reflective monthly hikes around Dublin area. <https://www.facebook.com/wewalkgodsway> - contact siobhan.tighe@dublindiocese.ie

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Wednesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at

7.30pm. All welcome. www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

KILDARE

A centring/contemplative prayer group continues to meet in the Old Baptistry of St Michael's parish church in Athy every Thursday at 8pm. Everyone welcome. For more ring Do-lores at 086-3474679.

Suncroft parish church: Eucharistic Adoration each Wed in the sacristy 10am to 6pm.

KILKENNY

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

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.

MEATH

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

Christ the King Prayer Group, Enfield, meeting every Monday evening, 7.30-8.30pm, Enfield Parish Centre. All welcome.

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.

WATERFORD

Monthly intercession for Marriages and Families will be held between 6 and 7pm on Friday January 13 in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, in the Edmund Rice Heritage Centre, Waterford.

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. All welcome. You can also join us on the live stream: <http://www.churchservices.tv/stpatrickschurchwicklow>



World Report

IN BRIEF

First US prelate to face abuse charges dies

The first US Catholic bishop to be indicted on sexual abuse allegations has died. The Diocese of Springfield in Massachusetts confirmed the passing of former Bishop Thomas Dupre, who was 83, but did not offer a cause of death.

Having been made a prelate of Springfield in the 1990s, Dupre retired in 2004 on the grounds of ill health just a day after allegations surfaced that he had abused altar boys in the 1970s. Though indicted, the cases against him were not pursued as prosecutors ruled the statute of limitations had expired. Dupre was later sued in a civil action which was settled in 2012.

Meanwhile, in 2009 it was alleged that in the 1980s, Dupre and then Bishop of Springfield Joseph Maguire did not act appropriately to prevent a priest they knew to be an abuser from targeting youngsters in a parish of the diocese. Dupre repeatedly invoked his right to silence in this case. He was laicised by the Vatican in 2006.

Myanmar Catholics pray for missing parishioners

Catholics in Myanmar are praying for the safe return of two members of their community who disappeared after helping journalists investigate a church bombing in December.

No word has been received from Gam Seng and Dumdaw Nawng Lat since they vanished on Christmas Eve. Both were parishioners of the St Francis Xavier church in Mongkoe, Shan

state which was bombed during an army raid on December 3 as part of an ongoing campaign against ethnic militias. The pair are believed to have given details of the bombing to journalists working in the area at the time.

The last sighting of Seng and Lat was reportedly at a spot near an army base called Byuha Gon in Mongkoe.

Pakistani Christian man arrested for blasphemy

A Christian man in Pakistan has become the latest person to fall foul of the country's blasphemy laws.

Reports indicate that 41-year-old Shahbaz Babu of Kamahan village, near Lahore, was arrested on December 30 as a result of a formal complaint to police. The Muslim complainant, Haji Nadeem, alleged that he had found torn pages of the Koran in the street bearing Babu's name. Despite such

tenuous 'evidence', and the lack of an eyewitness, police moved to launch an official investigation against Babu and detained him under the penal code covering blasphemy.

Supporters of the detained man have been quick to point out that Babu is illiterate, undermining the signature aspect of the crime, while the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS), an NGO well versed in

blasphemy actions in Pakistan, has stated that Haji Nadeem may have lodged his complaint arising from a desire to directly affect a rival grocery shop, owned and operated by Babu's brother. An additional consideration for investigators is that Babu has become deeply unpopular with a local imam as he regularly runs Christian prayer services at his home, making him a target for militant Islamists.

Threat of 'fraternal correction' of Pope Francis is dismissed

The head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has dismissed a threat of 'fraternal correction' of Pope Francis in connection with the ongoing *Amoris Laetitia* row.

In an interview with Italian TV last weekend, Cardinal Gerhard Muller responded to the earlier threat issued by Cardinal Raymond Burke that a formal correction of the Pontiff would be necessary after Christmas if Pope Francis continued in his refusal to answer directly the letter containing questions – *dubia* – submitted by him and three fellow cardinals on the papal exhortation on marriage and the family.

Describing such a correction as "very remote", Cardinal Muller said, "it's not possible in this moment, because it doesn't concern a danger for the faith as St Thomas said".

The row over *Amoris Laetitia* has rumbled since last October when Cardinals Burke, Joachim Meisner, Walter Brandmüller and



Cardinal Gerhard Muller.

Carlo Caffarra released to the media the text of the letter they had submitted a month earlier to Pope Francis seeking clarification on the issue of communion for divorced-and-remarried Catholics.

Prelates

Since then, various prelates have spoken up variously to condemn or support the four cardinals. Cardinal Burke has since stated that there is "a very serious division in the Church which has to be mended [or it] could develop

into a formal schism".

In early December, the head of the Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota, Msgr Vito Pinto, rebuked the cardinals, pointing out that the issues raised by them had the effect of questioning not only the Pope but two synods on the family.

"The action of the Holy Spirit cannot be doubted," he says. "[The cardinals] question not one synod but two!... Which Church do these cardinals defend? The Pope is faithful to the doctrine of

Christ."

This, however, did little to dissuade Cardinal Burke from issuing his threat of formal correction just before the Christmas period.

The latest prelate to enter the row is South Africa's Cardinal Wilfrid Napier who, in a January 6 tweet, asked if *Amoris Laetitia* allows polygamists to receive communion.

"If Westerners in irregular situations can receive communion, are we to tell our polygamists and other 'misfits' that they too are allowed?" he asked.

Appearing to address this during his own interview, Cardinal Muller insisted that *Amoris Laetitia* "is very clear in its doctrine and we can interpret the whole teaching of Jesus on matrimony, the whole teaching of the Church in 2,000 years of history."

Cardinal Muller added on the wider row, "I am amazed that this became public, essentially constraining the Pope to say 'yes' or 'no'. I don't like this."w

Twenty-eight pastoral workers killed in 2016

The year 2016 saw 28 Catholic pastoral care workers die by violence worldwide.

In its annual report on those religious and lay killed in the course of their work, the Church's news body, Agenzia Fides, reveals that "in 2016 14 priests, nine religious women, one seminarian and four lay people died violently".

The Americas were again – for the eighth consecutive year – the deadliest place for pastoral workers. Across the year, nine priests and three religious sisters were killed. This compares with eight workers in Africa – three priests, two nuns, one seminarian and two lay people – and Asia where one priest, four nuns and two lay people died by violence.

Europe was the location of one murder, and perhaps the most high profile of 2016 in the figure of

84-year-old Fr Jacques Hamel who was murdered by two Islamic extremists as he celebrated Mass at his church of Saint Etienne du Rouvray, Normandy, France on July 27.

Recalling the priest's death, Pope Francis said of his in September: "Amidst the difficult moment he was living, amidst the tragedy that he saw coming, this humble, good man, who worked for fraternity, did not lose the lucidity to accuse and clearly named his assassin. He said clearly: 'Satan, go!'"

Among those remembered who died tragically, but not at the hands of others, are American seminarian Brian Bergkamp who drowned on July 9 while saving a woman in the Arkansas River, and Ireland's Sister Clare Crocket, missionary to Ecuador who died in an earthquake on April 16.

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Edited by Paul Keenan
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Sub-zero selfie



Icicles hang from a fountain in St Peter's Square at the Vatican. Rome has not been immune to a blast of icy weather across the European continent. Photo: CNS

Outpourings of solidarity as Iraqi Christians, Muslims unite at Christmas

Iraq's Chaldean Patriarch has spoken of an outpouring of solidarity for Christians in Baghdad over the Christmas period by Muslims eager to reject the ideology and divisiveness of so-called Islamic State (ISIS).

In a New Year's interview with *AsiaNews*, Patriarch Raphael Louis Sako described how young Muslims travelled from the city of Najaf to attend Christmas Mass in the city and the sight of Christians and Muslims celebrating the New Year together in a vocal rejection of ISIS.

"[The young people] took part in the church service and then we posed for photographs with a flag of Iraq and banners for peace," the patriarch revealed. Adding that the group later shared a

meal with him and other members of the Christian community, Patriarch Sako said: "I explained to them our faith, in the one God, the Trinity concept. I explained the basics of our faith, the common descent from Abraham, the figure of Jesus. I invited them to combat ignorance of Christianity, we are not infidels."

Patriarch Sako extended that appeal to local media outlets which had sent journalists to cover the event.

Continuing his recollections, the

patriarch said: "New Year's Eve, I went out to go to a square in the Mansour neighbourhood of Baghdad. We celebrated with a lot of people, nearly a million people took to the streets. We talked with them, we exchanged greetings."

The prelate described the festive greetings as "small [but] important things to reject the Daesh [ISIS] ideology of terror".

● **Slovenian bishops lament chapel desecration:** The Bishops' Conference of Slovenia has voiced its regret at reports of a targeted graffiti attack on a remote chapel in the country. On January 2, persons unknown spray-painted 'Allahu Akhbar' (Allah is great) on the exterior walls of the chapel near Ljubljana. A spokesman for the bishops said the attack had been "directed against the peaceful coexistence between religious communities in Slovenia" and he welcomed a statement from the nation's Muslim community calling for the arrest of those responsible.

Kidnapped priest appears in video appeal

The Salesian Order has confirmed that a video loaded to the Youtube site on Christmas Eve shows Fr Tom Uzhunnalil, the priest of that congregation kidnapped in Yemen last March.

Visibly thin and wearing a long beard, the priest appears in the five-minute video to urge Pope Francis as well as the government of his native

India and other Western leaders to secure his release.

"Dear Pope Francis, dear Holy Father, as a father, please take care of my life," he appeals. "I am very much depressed. My health is deteriorating. I am in need of hospitalisation soon. Please come to my help quickly."

Fr Uzhunnalil goes on to allege that his captors have

made repeated attempts to negotiate his release with the Indian authorities, but without result.

"If I were a European priest, I would have been taken more seriously by authorities and people and would have got me released," he states. "I am from India and perhaps am not considered of as much value. I am sad about this."

Fr Uzhunnalil is believed to be in the hands of rebels affiliated to the so-called Islamic State group (ISIS), which has begun operating in Yemen amid the chaos of the ongoing civil conflict there. The priest was seized during a raid by the group on a Catholic nursing home which saw the murders of four nuns as well as local volunteers.

Vatican roundup

Pope urges prison reform in wake of Brazilian riot

Pope Francis has prayed for the victims of the January 1 prison riot in Manaus, Brazil, and voiced again his appeal that prisons be reformed to better rehabilitate people with real dignity.

During his general audience of January 4, the Pontiff lamented the loss of life in "an extremely violent clash between rival gangs". He said: "I express my sorrow and concern over what happened. I invite prayer for the deceased, for their families, for all the detainees in the prison, and for those who work there. And I renew my appeal for penal institutions to be places of re-education and social reintegration, and for the conditions of life for inmates to be worthy of human persons."

"I invite you to pray for these detainees, dead and alive, and also for all detainees in the world, that prisons may be for reintegration and are not overcrowded; may they be places of reintegration."

The riot at the Anisio Jobim Penitentiary Complex led to 56 deaths in a period of savage violence that saw victims beheaded and thrown from the prison walls. Numerous inmates escaped and remain at large.

Pope meets and prays with Italian earthquake victims

On January 5, Pope Francis met and prayed with hundreds of people affected by earthquakes in the Archdiocese of Spoleto-Norcia over the last six months.

Led by Bishop Renato Boccardo [pictured], some 800 people who lost family members or their homes in the series of quakes that devastated Norcia and surrounding areas in August and twice



in October gathered at the Pope Paul VI hall to share their stories with the Pontiff and hear him stress the importance of solidarity in rebuilding their communities.

The meeting came as work continues to stabilise the famed Benedictine church of Norcia, but also just days after reports of fresh tremors in the area.

English diocese granted Blessed Oscar Romero honour

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has granted permission for Blessed Oscar Romero to be added to the liturgical calendar of England's Diocese of Southwark, following an official submission from the diocese. Believed to be the only such application granted outside Central America, the move allows for a liturgical commemoration to be celebrated in St George's Cathedral, Southwark, every March 24, the anniversary of the Blessed Romero's martyrdom.

In approving the submission, the Divine Worship Congregation recognised that "the Cathedral is home to a national shrine...and contains a number of [Blessed Romero's] relics". The cathedral houses a painted Salvadoran cross which contains a fragment of Archbishop Romero's blood-stained alb and his zucchetto.

Reacting to news of the decision, Archbishop Peter Smith of Southwark said: "I am delighted that the Holy See has approved this request, and hope that the example and prayers of Blessed Romero will prove a blessing to the diocese and to all who visit the cathedral."

Bishop Patrick Lynch, Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark will celebrate the 12.30pm Mass in St George's Cathedral on Friday March 24 in honour of the memory of Blessed Oscar Romero.

Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

Pope Francis says after visiting Lampedusa, he knew he had to travel

In a new interview published on January 8, Pope Francis says he came into the papacy not wanting to travel very much, but after his initial outing to the Italian island of Lampedusa in early July 2013, which is a major point of arrival for refugees trying to enter Europe, he understood he had to hit the road.

"It was important to go there," he said, referring to the brief visit to Lampedusa he made on July 8, 2013.

"There was no programme, no official invitations," he said. "I felt I had to go, I was touched by the news of migrants who had died at sea, who had drowned."

After that, Francis said, his reluctance to travel dissolved in the face of the importance of his physical presence in such spaces.

The Pope made the comments in an interview with veteran Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli of the newspaper *La Stampa* and the online outlet *Vatican Insider*, who's published a new book chronicling the Pope's trips.

"I never liked traveling much," Francis tells Tornielli.

"When I was the bishop in Buenos Aires, I would come to Rome only if it was necessary and if I could avoid going, I would. It was always hard on me being away from my diocese, which for us bishops is our 'spouse,'" he said.

"Beyond that, I'm mostly a creature of habit," he said. "For me, a vacation is having more time to pray and to read, but to relax I don't need to change the air or the atmosphere."

Still, Francis said, his 17 overseas trips so far have left indelible memories.

Obligated to go

His first overseas trip was to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in July 2013 for World Youth Day, and since that trip was already on the books before his election, he said he felt obligated to go.

"The trip was never in question, I had to go, and for me it was also my first return to the Latin American continent," he said.

After that, Francis said, invitations kept coming, and he felt obliged to accept them.

The Pontiff said, however, he's always a bit leery of the sometimes wild enthusiasm his presence in a foreign country generates.

"My first reaction is that of somebody who knows that when they shout, 'Hosanna!', as we read in the Gospels, that can end with, 'Crucify



Pope Francis greets the crowd as he arrives to celebrate Mass in Lampedusa, Italy, July 8, 2013.

him!'," he said. He then quoted Pope Paul VI to explain what he sees as the heart of every papal trip.

"I believe that of all the dignities of a Pope, the most enviable is paternity," Pope Paul said. "Paternity is an emotion that invades the spirit and the heart, that stays every hour of the day, that can't diminish, but that grows so the number of children grows. It's a feeling that doesn't tire one out or cause fatigue, but it gives rest from every cause of exhaustion."

"Never, not for one minute, did I ever feel tired when I raised my hand to give a blessing," Pope Paul

said. "No, I'll never get tired of blessing or forgiving."

Francis said: "I believe those words explain why Popes in the contemporary era have decided to travel."

In terms of specific trips still alive in his memory, Francis cited his outings to Brazil, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, especially his visit to the Filipino island of Tacloban in January 2015, which had been devastated by a hurricane and where another tropical storm was bearing down the day of his stop, and the Pontiff was forced to don a plastic

yellow rain poncho.

"After the Mass, one of the organisers told me he was struck and also impressed because the people taking part, despite the rain, never lost their smiles," he said. "There were smiles too on the faces of the young, of the fathers and mothers."

"There was real joy, despite the pain and the suffering of those who had lost their homes and some of their loved ones," he said.

"I understand the need for security...but there can't be too many barriers between him and the people"

The Pontiff did not specifically mention his September 2015 outing to the US, which brought him to Washington, New York and Philadelphia.

Francis acknowledged that to date he hasn't made an official state visit to any Western European nation, saying he prefers to give priority to smaller and more "peripheral" locales that may benefit more from a papal trip, and it also reflects his belief that European values, not European structures or bureaucracies, are the key to solving problems.

"I'm convinced that it won't be the bureaucracies, the instruments

of high finance, to save us from the current crisis and resolve the problem of immigration, which for the countries of Europe is the greatest emergency since the end of the Second World War," he said.

Pope Francis also acknowledged that his style on the road, insisting on as much direct contact with people as possible, sometimes gives his security personnel fits.

"I can't move around in armoured cars, or in the Popemobile behind bulletproof glass," he said.

"I understand very well the need for security, and I'm grateful to those dedicated people who stay close to me and watch things," he said. "But a bishop is a shepherd, a father, and there can't be too many barriers between him and the people."

There are always risks, Francis said, "but there's also always the Lord."

So far in 2017, the Vatican has only confirmed two foreign trips for Pope Francis, one to the Marian shrine of Fatima in Portugal in May, and another to India and Bangladesh later in the year. However, it's widely expected the Pope will also visit Africa, perhaps the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, as well as Latin America, beginning with Colombia.

John Allen is Editor of Cruxnow.com



Pope Francis arrives in the rain at the cathedral in Palo, Philippines, in January of last year. Photos: CNS



Antoni Guterres promises a revived United Nations, writes Paul Keenan

How long, if at all, one wonders, do staff at the United Nations pause to wish one another “Happy New Year”?

The question is posed from a knowledge that the multitudinous issues with which the international body concerns itself do not ebb and flow with the seasons or any man-made calendar, and, taken in isolation, some enduring conflicts hardly allow for a belief that the new year will be any better than the old.

A handful of examples suffice.

On December 23 – with swathes of society gearing down for the Christmas break – the UN experienced something of an historic first in a Security Council vote when, in seeking to condemn Israeli settlements, the path to a 14-0 result was achieved when the United States abstained from the ballot.

Not unexpectedly, the other result has been an almighty row between nation states in and beyond the UN chamber. Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered his nation’s Foreign Ministry to limit working links to those UN Security Council nations which supported the settlements resolution (Angola, Britain, China, Egypt, France, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine and Uruguay).

Great potential

A further knock-on has been the outrage felt within political circles in the United States, notably that of incoming President Donald Trump who made his feelings known in a Tweet: “The United Nations has such great potential but right now it is just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time. So sad!”

He had previously tweeted on the decision: “As to the UN, things will be different after January 20”, a reference to his inauguration date.

Other voices, meanwhile, called for tangible sanctions against the UN for its actions.

Later, and from South America, came video footage of two UN peace monitors marking New Year’s Eve by joining female members of the FARC guerrilla group in a dance. Innocuous enough on one level, the video nevertheless incensed some Colombian legislators who questioned the UN’s ability to

A man of faith and vision

The new UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres.



Migrants waded across a river near the Greece-Macedonia border in March 2016. Photo: CNS

remain impartial in overseeing the long-sought but divisive peace accord with the fighters.

Meanwhile, amid mild winter conditions, the flood of migrants undertaking the treacherous Mediterranean crossing between North Africa and Europe showed no signs of abating, with rescues continuing through the Christmas period and keeping up the pressure on the UN and others in providing for the tide of humanity displaced for one reason or another worldwide.

“Antonio Guterres has been, from the earliest, a figure to surprise and to swim against the current of expectation”

These are but a smattering of the ‘in-box’ matters to greet Mr Antonio Guterres on his first day as Secretary General of the UN. Having risen steadily through the ranks, the 67-year-old Portuguese politician ascended to the diplomatic top-slot on January 1, replacing South Korea’s Ban Ki-moon (departing after 10 years).

Now faced with – literally – a world of troubles, the inevitable question must be why, at an age when most others would be slipping into welcome retirement, Mr Guterres would choose to have entered a race for the seemingly impossible role of being all things to all men – or at least to the 193 member nations of the UN. And yet, a trawl through the life and career of this leading diplomat provides evidence enough of a man not built for quiet retirement and in many ways the very best man for the UN job.

Born into a devout Catholic family 1949, Antonio Guterres has been, from the earliest, a figure to surprise and to swim against the current of expectation. Educated as an engineer, this career path was to reach a crossroads in 1974 with Portugal’s Carnation Revolution, when the nation shed its dictatorship and promised free and fair elections for the first time.

Aged 25, Guterres was drawn to politics, but in a move seemingly at odds with his faith credentials (which endure), he opted to join the Socialist party.

Fortunes waned

Frequently at odds with a rank and file comprised of secularist Marxists, Guterres nevertheless displayed talents sufficient to lead him to become the party’s secretary general in 1992 and, ultimately, the country’s prime minister by 1995, a post he held until 2002 when the party’s fortunes waned amid an economic downturn. (His departure from his post led subsequently to the revelation that Guterres was no less busy with a project that had long engaged him, that of visiting poorer districts in Lisbon to read with children and teach them mathematics – a personal outreach he had quietly undertaken for many years.)

By 2002, Guterres and his persuasive diplomacy had already come to the attention of the UN, specifically in relation to the crisis in Portugal’s former colony of Timor-Leste in 1999, when violence accompanied that nation’s referendum to seek independence from Indonesia.

Guterres led diplomatic lobbying at the UN to have the body intervene directly in the

crisis. (Ireland would subsequently send peacekeeping troops as part of a UN multinational force to Timor-Leste)

Clearly identified as a diplomatic talent, Guterres would subsequently be offered his first UN role, that of High Commissioner for Refugees, a post he held for the next 10 years and one which demonstrated his dedication to issues of social justice with a ready ability to oversee what was to become the busiest area of responsibility for the UN.

During his tenure, Guterres insisted his office expand to include not just conflict refugees, but also those fleeing climate change and natural disasters.

“His vision, he says, is a UN that is an ‘honest broker, bridge-builder and messenger for peace’”

Now, in 2017, all has changed again for Antonio Guterres, but he has vowed already that he will not be alone in this, stating publicly his intention to vastly overhaul a maligned UN with a focus on preventing crises rather than forever reacting to them as they erupt.

His vision, he says, is a UN that is an “honest broker, bridge-builder and messenger for peace” with a commitment to an increased diplomacy in gaining that peace.

Guterres has a five-year term (with a maximum five years additional) in which to prove his mettle on all fronts, but as shown, he already has enough to contend with in this early part of 2017.

On this, he clearly showed himself undaunted when, in his inaugural address he declared: “Let us make 2017 a year in which we all, citizens, governments, leaders, strive to overcome our differences.”

For good measure he shared his own New Year’s resolution: “Let us resolve to put peace first.”

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

Trump should be given a chance

Dear Editor, I have to disagree with Danny Cusack's reference to "squandering the pro-life movement for a tawdry triumph" in the election of Donald Trump as US President (Letters, IC 15/12/2016)

I also left Amnesty over its campaigning for abortion, the destruction of the most vulnerable and helpless of all, but, if Hillary Clinton had been elected, with her complete backing of the biggest abortion provider of all, International Planned Parenthood (IPP), to which the Irish Family Planning Association is affiliated, there would have

been no hope of preventing the continuing aggressive campaign for abortion worldwide. She is on record as supporting abortion up to and including birth for any reason and would have ensured that IPP would have continued to receive billions of dollars for this purpose. I definitely think that after 59 million abortions in the US since Roe-v-Wade it is time to call a halt.

It is hard to know how Donald Trump's presidency will go but we were very well aware of how a Clinton one would turn out. It should be noted that the media here have continued

to lambast Mr. Trump while lionising Hillary Clinton. Therefore, surely it is only right to give the President-elect a chance and I certainly am happy that he will not pursue the promotion of abortion as has been the case till now. I am not that happy with some of his proposals and hope that he does not pursue them but I am convinced that the most pressing issue is to stop the slaughter of the innocents through abortion.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Stewart,
Donegal Town,
Co. Donegal.*

Cardinal Burke deserves answers

Dear Editor, Catholics must always seek to be faithful to the Pope. But irrespective of the teaching in *Amoris Laetitia*, the Vatican response to Cardinal Burke *et al.* is a source of scandal.

The four simply said "we the undersigned, but also many bishops and priests, have received numerous requests from the faithful of various social strata on the correct interpretation to give to Chapter VIII of the Exhortation" and asked the Holy Father "as supreme teacher of the faith, called

by the Risen One to confirm his brothers in the faith, to resolve the uncertainties and bring clarity..."

The uncertainties and confusion clearly exist as evidenced in the diametrically different ways various Bishops are interpreting *Amoris Laetitia*.

The Belgian Christian weekly *Tertio* quotes the Pope saying that as successor of Peter he "accompanies the Church, he lets her grow, he listens to her, he learns from this reality and goes about harmonising it".

Eliminating and neutralising those seeking clarity are hardly the Pope's way of accompaniment, listening and harmonising.

Many senior defenders of *Amoris Laetitia* in the Vatican and elsewhere never address the substance of the Cardinals' questions.

They resort to scandalous abuse, mockery, and threats, scandalously impugning the integrity of anyone who disagrees, while simultaneously championing mercy and dialogue.

The Pope's own public

unseemly comments and his claim to Tertio that "everything in *Amoris Laetitia*...received a two-thirds majority in [the synod]" nurture division.

As with every Pope Catholics have to pray for "you [Peter] that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" for nurturing their resolve to honour him as Holy Father.

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

Thoughts on a much-loved Church

Dear Editor, We have a Pope, a Holy Father who is continuing the process of renewing the Catholic Church and caring for us his Children. In time the intransigent oldies in the hierarchy will, with God's help be overcome. There are of course many intransigent minds among us lay folk also.

So many thoughts run through my mind, some heretical by the old mind but maybe worthy of thought by others. Change could mean larger congregations and more cash in the collection box; not a sufficient reason for change but a consideration nevertheless.

Take the Sacrament of Confession: "go show yourself to a priest" we learned and we practised, but not any more for a number of reasons. The good Lord knows our minds and our

sins ; to confess to our sins in, and as a congregation, and do so in a meditative situation expressing sorrow, remorse and proper intention, could very well be sufficient to clear many, many minds of the burden of sin. Would, could the Church agree to such? I could suggest radical changes in the Sacrament of Matrimony. Enough said for the day.

A less problematic area might be the area of the Mass where the congregation has to be quiet and be entertained as it were by the celebrant's reading of long passages, especially leading to the *Pater Noster*. Could not the congregation be invited to join with the celebrant in these important prayers?

Huge cathedrals were built over the centuries for purposes of power, pomp and ceremony, with high-ranking

executives of the Church suitably dressed in multi-coloured robes parading to the altar, in buildings not at all conducive to prayer. We can't do much about the church buildings, but could sell off the robes straightaway.

The refusal by Catholic Church authorities in Ireland to include prayers in Irish, the language in which we spoke to God for hundreds of years and thereby imbedded belief in God in the Irish mind, was a retrograde step, to be deplored.

Just some thoughts from one who attends Sunday Mass, in Irish, diligently and weekday Mass as occasion arises. A sinner? Yes. A believer in the Catholic Church? Yes.

*Yours etc.,
Barra Ó Caoimh,
Blackrock, Cork.*

A 'veto' that smacks of a patriarchally-structured Church

Dear Editor, Your recent report inviting applications for the post of Maynooth president concludes: "Applicants to include written permission from bishop or religious superior". It strikes me that this condition rather narrows down the pool of eligibles, amounting to a virtual veto on some potential contenders. Surely the crisis in our national Church and in Maynooth itself calls for

innovative – if not radical – leaders in our key institutions.

One could say that, generally speaking, our current Church leaders, bishops and religious superiors alike, are safe, compliant, traditional-minded men – and thus liable to weed out those contenders who think outside the box or question the old assumptions and

practices. So predictably their nominees will also be safe, compliant, traditional-minded men and women.

The inclusion of women in this statement might be considered to imply a criticism of our patriarchally-structured Church, and would obviously rule me out of consideration – even if I had the right qualities and qualifications (and if were

45 years younger). Others would be ruled out on even flimsier grounds.

My suggestion is: why not drop the pre-emptive clause and open up the field to those who might dare to question the old assumptions and try new approaches?

*Yours etc.,
Matt Carpenter,
Rathgar, Dublin 6.*

Amnesty's awful silence

Dear Editor, Recently I wrote to you about *The Ray D'Arcy Show* on radio and an interview with Rónán Mullen. I made the point that it was evident where D'Arcy's sympathies lay on the subject of abortion. Rónán Mullen was simply superb in answering Ray D'Arcy's points and it was all too clear that Mr D'Arcy was not too pleased with Rónán's criticism. It now turns out that the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) has issued a formal warning to RTE about *The Ray D'Arcy Show's* coverage of the abortion issue.

This is the third complaint upheld by the BAI against D'Arcy's treatment of the issue. This should tell us all we need to know about RTE and Ray D'Arcy's approach to this important moral issue.

You'll notice that Amnesty International Ireland and Colm O'Gorman have rushed to Ray D'Arcy's defence; this doesn't surprise me. Is Amnesty International truly concerned about human rights? Does it defend the rights of unborn children?

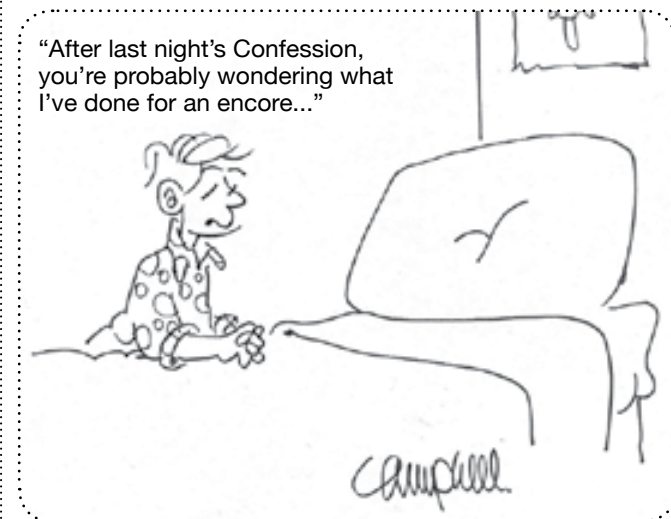
Let us be very clear about one thing. If the Eighth Amendment is scrapped, the unborn child will have no legal right to life. We will be faced with the dire situation that pertains to Britain where babies can be killed up to 24 weeks of pregnancy and even later. Babies who have survived an abortion there are sometimes simply left to die unaided. It is nothing short of a moral outrage. Why isn't Amnesty International condemning such cruel barbarity?

*Yours etc.,
Anthony Redmond,
Drimnagh, Dublin 12.*

Church-run? Church-owned!

Dear Editor, So the head of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association is defending the core role of religion in schools (IC 5/1/2016). But why is this even necessary? Despite the common phrase 'Church-run', most Irish schools are in fact 'Church-owned', built by parishes on their land. If people want to push the Faith out of the Church's schools, would they be willing to pay more taxes so the State can buy them first?

*Yours etc.,
Lorraine Quinlan,
Drogheda, Co. Louth.*



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



CANADA: A woman walks her dog on a snow-covered path beside the Rideau Canal in Ottawa, Ontario.



UNITED STATES: Canon Jean-Baptiste Commins, a member of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest at Saint Francis de Sales Oratory in St Louis skates in Forest Park with members of his parish.



BRAZIL: A woman is seen crying outside the Medical Legal Institute in Manaus, after receiving the information that her brother was one of the inmates who died during a prison riot at the Manaus detention facility. Photos: CNS



GAZA: Displaced Palestinian men and children warm up in front of a fire at the Khan Younis camp in the Gaza Strip.



MEXICO: A man throws water on burning tyres during a protest against the rising price of gasoline in San Miguel Totolcingo.



NETHERLANDS: Bottles consumed during Christmas and New Year's celebrations await recycling in Gameren.

Orthodoxy, sin & heresy

Recently, while on the road giving a workshop, I took the opportunity to go the cathedral in a city for a Sunday Eucharist. I was taken aback by the homily. The priest used the Gospel text where Jesus says "I am the vine and you are the branches" to tell the congregation that what Jesus is teaching here is that the Roman Catholic Church constitutes what is referred to as the branches, and the way we link to those branches is through the Mass and if we miss Mass on a Sunday we are committing a mortal sin and should we die in that state we will go to Hell.

Then, aware that what he was saying would be unpopular, he protested that the truth is often unpopular, but that what he just said is orthodox Catholic teaching and that anyone denying this is in heresy. It's sad that this kind of thing is still being said in our churches.

Does the Catholic Church really teach that missing Mass is a mortal sin and that if you die in that state you will go to Hell? No, that's not Catholic orthodoxy, though popular preaching and catechesis often suppose that it is, even as neither accepts the full consequences.

Here's an example: Some years ago, I presided at the funeral of a young man, in his 20s, who had been killed in a car accident. In the months before his death he had for all practical purposes ceased practising his Catholicism: He had stopped going to church, was living with his girlfriend outside of marriage, and had not been sober when he died.

Carelessness

However, his family and the congregation who surrounded him at his burial knew him, and they knew that, despite his ecclesial and moral carelessness, he had a good heart, that he brought sunshine into a room and that was a generous young man.

At the reception after the funeral one of his aunts, who believed that missing Mass was a mortal sin that could condemn you to Hell, approached me and said: "He had such a great heart and such a wonderful energy; if I were running the gates of Heaven, I would let him in."

"She knew that God reads the heart, understands human carelessness, welcomes sinners into his bosom"

Her comment wonderfully betrayed something deeper inside of her, namely, her belief that a good heart will trump ecclesial rules in terms of who gets to go to heaven and the belief that God has wider criteria



The Last Judgment
by Michelangelo.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

for judgment than those formulated in external church rules.

She believed that it was a mortal sin to miss Mass on Sunday but,

for all the right reasons, could not accept the full consequences of that, namely, that her nephew was going to Hell. Deep down, she knew that



God reads the heart, understands human carelessness, welcomes sinners into his bosom and does not exclude goodness from Heaven.

But that still leaves the question: Is it orthodox Roman Catholic teaching to say that it is a mortal sin to not go to church on a Sunday and that such an ecclesial lapse can send you to hell? No, to teach that categorically would itself be bordering on heresy.

Subjective

Simply stated, Catholic moral theology has always taught that sin is a subjective thing that can never be read from the outside. We can never look at an action from the outside and say: "That's a sin!"

We can look at an action from the outside and say: "That's wrong!" But that's a different judgment.

From the outside we can judge an action as objectively wrong, but we can never make the judgment that it's a sin. Moreover this isn't new, liberal teaching, it is already found in our traditional Catechisms.

Nobody can look at the action of someone else and say: "That's a sin!" To teach that we can make such a judgment goes against Catholic orthodoxy. We can, and must, affirm that certain things are wrong, objectively wrong, but sin is something else.

Probably the most quoted line from Pope Francis is his famous response to a moral question where he simply responded: "Who am I to judge?" He's in good company. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says: "You judge by appearances; I judge no one."

"It is God's love, life, truth and light against which we weigh ourselves"

That, of course, does not mean that there isn't any judgment. There is, it's real, and it can condemn someone to Hell. But it works this way: God's love, life, truth and light come into the world and we judge ourselves apposite them. God condemns no one, but we can condemn ourselves. It is God's love, life, truth and light against which we weigh ourselves and these determine who goes where, already here on earth and in eternity.

In our catechesis and our popular preaching we must be more careful in our use of the term 'mortal sin' and in our judgments as to who goes to Heaven and who goes to Hell, fully aware that there wasn't any group that Jesus was harsher on than on those who were making those kinds of judgments.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, January 12, 2017

Personal Profile

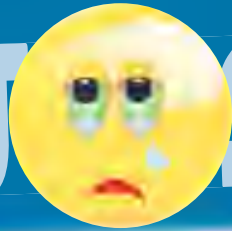
Justice
not just
charity

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Beating the

JANUARY BLUES



Wendy Grace gives some pointers on how to ward off seasonal sorrows

Often, at this time of year, even though we may have just spent our days counting our blessings with family and friends we can find ourselves feeling down with the 'January blues'. Sometimes it can be referred to as SAD – Seasonal Affective Disorder. Luckily there are lots of steps you can take to get the 'spring in your step' once again.

One of the first things you can do is start to eat well again. Christmas and New Year is full of fat, sugar and alcohol. This combination can leave you feeling sluggish and has a huge impact on your mood.

Start to make sure you are eating enough green vegetables and fruit, after your sugar detox of a few days you will start to feel much better.

There are also a lot of foods that research suggests will boost your mood.

Low mood

For example, Omega-3 fatty acids block chemicals called cytokines that can make you feel low. Multiple studies have shown that people who have insufficient Omega-3 in their diets are much more susceptible to suffer with a low mood.

So try to include in your diet oily fish several times a week (salmon, sardines, mackerel, tuna). If you don't eat fish, chia

seeds, flaxseeds or flaxseed oil are all good sources and can be added to soups, smoothies or porridge.

Some studies also link diets low in Folate to low mood. Cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts and spinach are good sources of folate.

This is a B vitamin that our bodies need for producing mood-boosting chemicals serotonin and dopamine. You need to eat two portions a day, and if you serve these vegetables with a squeeze of lemon juice the added vitamin C will help your body absorb their iron.

“Analyse what you are looking at on TV and listening to on your iPod. Is it uplifting and positive?”

Here is some good news – so you might have thrown out all the empty boxes of Roses, but that isn't the end of chocolate. Dark chocolate, which is made up of at least 75% cocoa solids, stimulates the production of endorphins. It can also boost levels of serotonin, known as the 'happy hormone' or nature's anti-depressant.

Analyse what you are looking at on TV and listening to on your iPod. Is it uplifting

» Continued on Page 25



Children's Corner

ERIN FOX



Keeping track in the new year

It's nearly the middle of the month and with the new year breaking in, it's time for a fresh new notebook for storing all of your daily to-do lists. Keeping all of your to-do lists in the one notebook is a great way of looking back on everything you have achieved at the end of the year.

Every new book – whether it's for reading or writing in – needs a bookmark so make your own out of a trusty paper clip.

You can make several of these and customise them to complement the current book you're reading.

For example, if your favourite character from *Harry Potter* is Hagrid, use lots of black wool to recreate his big beard. The more of these book marks you make, the more books you will want to read, so you have a special book mark for each story.



But to get you started, try making a few simple book marks and then delve deep into your imagination to design some more detailed ones.

For the bookmark all you need is a large paper clip and materials of your choice.

For the one with ribbons, cut a short piece of ribbon and loop this around the paper clip.

Bundle of wool

For the tassels, cut a long piece of wool and then cut this up into equal-sized strips. Bundle the strips together and then fold them over one side of the paper clip. Take another piece of wool and tie this around the bundle of wool, closest to the paper clip. Use different coloured wool to make a mutli-coloured tassel if you like.

For the button book mark, use some strong glue to secure the button to the paper clip.

You can slide these paper clip bookmarks onto a piece of card and pin this to your noticeboard

These little bookmarks also make great presents for a friend or a member of your family. If you are gifting them a book for their birthday, then make a bookmark to go with it.

They are also very useful for doing homework: if you have one workbook, where you keep all of your assignments in, categorise each subject with a labelled book mark at the top of the page.

Or, you can use them for marking your favourite recipes to cook and bake.

You can slide these paper clip bookmarks onto a piece of card and pin this to your noticeboard so you can easily grab one whenever you're ready to start a new book.



Science of life

Prof. William Reville

What's the most important thing in life? Happiness, right?

Wrong. The most important thing in your life is meaning. Once you find meaning, happiness will follow.

Emily Esfahani Smith has just written a book called *The Power of Meaning: Crafting a Life that Matters* (Crown, January 2017) explaining the importance of meaning and how to find it in your life. A good synopsis of the book was published by Eric Barker on time.com on October 11, 2016 (<http://time.com/4524909/4-ways-to-find-more-meaning-in-life/?xid=newsletter-brief>).

The widespread preoccupation of our times is the pursuit of personal happiness and the acquisition of ever more personal freedoms, rights and choices, with little or no emphasis on the duties, obligations and responsibilities inevitably associated with these freedoms, rights and choices.

This is not conducive to building meaningful lives. People who lead meaningful lives tend to be 'givers' while people who pursue happiness tend to be 'takers'. Many things that bring meaning to life can be burdensome and do not produce happiness in the short term, e.g. having children.

If you pursue happiness directly, the resulting good feelings tend to be temporary

Parenthood is an extreme form of giving - getting little sleep in the first year of your baby's life doesn't make you happy, but it does bring huge meaning to your life. And, in most cases, lasting happiness will come later. On the other hand, if you pursue happiness directly, the resulting good feelings tend to be temporary. Lasting happiness is a by-product of living a meaningful life. How do we achieve meaningful lives? Smith recommends four evidence-based steps to get there.

1. Belonging: A surprising finding about suicide illustrates the importance of belonging. Unhappiness does not predict suicide but lack of a sense of meaning in life does. Early research on suicide threw up seemingly contradictory results: war reduces suicide rates; educated people are more prone to suicide; Jews are well-educated but less prone to suicide. The common factor that explains these findings is

belonging. War bonds people together. Education often means leaving hometown and friend and family ties to go to college. Jews tend to live in strong communities.

It is important to feel part of a community. Friends and companions are a wonderful asset. You should be a member of a group that meets regularly. If you are not in a group, join one. If there are no groups, start a group yourself.

2. Purpose: Smith explains that purpose has more to do with how you see what you do and less about what you actually do. She tells the story of President J.F. Kennedy visiting NASA in 1962. He met a janitor and asked him what he did. The janitor replied, "helping put a man on the moon".

The janitor might have said "emptying dustbins" but instead he described his work as contributing to a stable and far-reaching goal and as contributing to the lives of other people. If you are a teacher or practise medicine, and so on for example, it is easy to see how your life has purpose and helps others. If not, you can do like the janitor and redefine your work to find more meaning.

3. Storytelling: Our brains are structured to make sense of the word through stories. Research has shown that many people with meaningful lives tell themselves a 'redemption story' about their lives where they move from suffering to salvation, i.e. a negative event in their lives is followed by a positive event that resulted from the negative event and that gives their suffering meaning.

For example, harsh early childhood conditions could

motivate a child to make the most of educational opportunities to rise above poor circumstances and attain a satisfying adult life.

Appreciation

On the other hand, people who lack meaning in their lives tend to tell 'contamination stories'. In these stories, tragedies and hard times don't produce growth and no good comes from the bad. So, tell yourself good stories.

4. Transcendence: This means cultivating an appreciation of how big and wonderful life is, causing you to look on the totality of existence with a feeling of awe. Astronauts report having this feeling when they look back on planet Earth from space.

Most of us will never fly in space crafts but we can still cultivate awe by simply contemplating the majesty of the natural world - rivers, oceans, mountains, deserts, frozen polar regions, the myriad animals and plants that live in these environments, the variety of races in the human family, the vastness of the universe and the smallness of Earth, the evolutionary history of life on Earth, the evolution of the universe starting out with the 'big bang', etc.

This feeling of awe diminishes your feelings of self-importance, encourages you to become more generous and helps you to step outside yourself and connect with others.

You are not the center of the world but you are a part of a marvelous unfolding universe. The world is big - your problems are small.

It is certainly not necessary to be religious to create

meaning in your life but practicing Christianity should help greatly. Christianity is a belief system practiced in a community and carries an automatic sense of belonging. Christians are givers, with obligations to fulfil as well as benefits to enjoy, eg. the peace of mind of believing you are pleasing your God who loves you.

Ireland is suffering from a suicide epidemic because many see little or no meaning in their lives

Christians are obliged to have concern for their neighbour, to help the less fortunate and to live honest, modest and industrious lives. Christians are obliged to transcend themselves by acknowledging that they are only a small part of God's vast and marvelous universe. The Christian purpose in life is to grow in wisdom and love.

Ireland is suffering from a suicide epidemic, particularly amongst young men, because many see little or no meaning in their lives. Many more Irish people commit suicide annually than die on our roads (166 people died on Irish roads in 2015, but 451 people committed suicide).

We are forever talking about road deaths and taking measures to prevent them. But where are the programmes to train young people on how to find meaning in life?

1 William Reville is an Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry at UCC <http://understandingscience.ucc.ie>



» Continued from Page 23



and positive? Because this is what you need right now. Music stimulates your emotions and can have a huge impact on your mood. Why not create your own 'happy' play-list of the songs that always make you feel good?

Getting as much daylight as possible is really important. So many of us leave for work when it is dark and come home when it is dark. Get out at lunchtime and for a 10-minute break in the afternoon, even if it is just walking around the block. Is it bright by the time you get off at your bus stop? Why not get off at an earlier stop? You will get exercise and some extra daylight as well.

There doesn't need to be sunshine or heat for us to absorb Vitamin D and getting daylight on your face and hands will make a difference.

Exercise is proven to release endorphins, the 'happy hormones' that make us feel good. So while it might seem like a real challenge to get up and moving, getting out for exercise every day will make you feel good.

It's important to get outdoors also so try to plan to go for a hike or cycle at the weekend. It might be hard to motivate yourself off the couch in the first instance but once you do this you won't regret it and you will feel so much better.

“Payday feels very far away, and you still haven't managed to get the house back in order”

Perhaps you have found yourself feeling overwhelmed this month, your credit card bill is due, payday feels very far away, and you still haven't managed to get the house back in order after putting the Christmas decorations away. Sit down and write a 'to do' list of all you need to do to get things running smoothly again.

Now is also a very good time to review your budget for the year. Look at all your outgoings and see what areas need to be reviewed, especially things like car or house insurance, electricity/gas, phone bills, etc. Little savings in these areas will all add up.

Your Christmas might have been very busy looking after everyone else but yourself, so make sure to have some 'me' time. It could be as simple as having a nice relaxing bath, taking the time out to read, or maybe you can find time to fit in that new hobby that you have been wanting to try for years.

Start the year as you mean to go on. If you don't look after yourself, physically, spiritually and mentally you won't be able to look after others either.

Plan time off

January is the busiest time of year for people to book holidays. Myself and my husband usually sit down in January and plan our time off for the year ahead.

This really helps us to break the year down and we can see where we will get rest and time together. Even having a short weekend away in a B&B is something to look forward to.

Starting to daydream about your break in the sun, or looking forward to a holiday or short break can do you the world of good.

Sit down and ask yourself what is making you feel down? Many of us just feel down but we don't really know why. So we trundle on without addressing underlying issues. It is better to acknowledge how you feel so that you can then do something about it. Take a look at all the various elements in your life; your health, your faith, your family, your money, your work and your friends, then give each area a mark out of 10.

In the areas where you score low, analyse it and see what things you

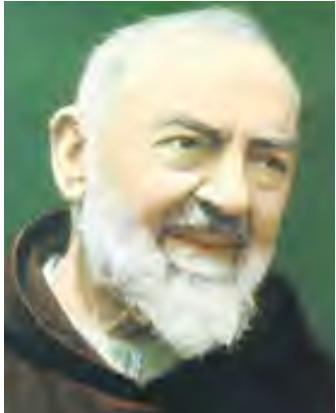
would like to change. Perhaps when it comes to family you score it low, the reason being because you want more time with them. Now figure out the best ways to get more time together.

“The most effective way of ensuring that your situation changes for the better is to set a goal”

The most effective way of ensuring that your situation changes for the better is to set a goal. So, in the case of more family time, you might decide you're all going to, at least once a week, do a family activity together, such as going for a walk or playing a game – and not just at the weekend.

Please note though, if there are things on this list that are making you anxious or worried you need to talk to someone about them. A problem shared is a problem halved. It's OK to not feel OK, and it's absolutely OK to not feel OK and to ask for help be it with a friend or through organisations like Pieta House or The Samaritans. Aware also run a great life skills programme to help you deal with life's everyday challenges.

It is so important to nourish our souls. Using the time and space to pray and hand over our worries and stresses to God is probably the best form of mindfulness there is! Perhaps there is a saint, or piece of Scripture, that always brings your peace? Remember them.



St Padre Pio is unofficially the patron saint of stress relief and the 'January blues'. An initiative of the UK's Catholic Bishops' Conference declared St Pio the patron saint of the 'January blues'. When research carried out by Cardiff University identified the

third Monday in January as the most depressing day of the year, the bishops re-designated it as the 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' Day in honour of St Pio's famous advice, "Pray, hope, and don't worry", which is pretty good advice to keep in mind on those days you're feeling low.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



I was speaking to my heating system the other day, when I realised that we are currently living in the future. It's now 2017, after all, which is yet another year straight from the realms of science fiction.

Our house has become increasingly like an episode of *Star Trek* since Alexa arrived. Alexa is a toy I got for Christmas. She is a voice-activated speaker. At first, it all seems fairly unremarkable: You can ask her the weather, and she will tell you. You can ask her to play Van Morrison, or whatever you fancy, and she will.

It gets really interesting, however, when you start connecting Alexa to devices that control things like your lights or your heating system. Without getting up, or searching for "that blasted remote", you can turn on light outside, adjust the thermostat, turn on the radio on or turn the volume up. I haven't gone this far just yet, but you can even say "Alexa, vacuum the sitting room" and she will send your robot Hoover to the task.

The kids are fascinated and their favourite new word is 'technology'. They want to know more about robots, self-driving cars and automatic lawnmowers. These are the things that will define their lives as they witness what is already being called the next industrial revolution: automation.

“Text messages, as it were, were delivered by boys on bikes”

They speak to Alexa and ask her the temperature outside, to help with sums or to read a story to them. They have strictly limited screen time, since too much can wreck sleep, development and imaginative play. But they have enough exposure to technology to become adept at using it. They can competently call their grandparents overseas on Skype, play learning games, do art or take photos.

Technology can enhance kids' lives, but parents need to be wise. The key task for parents is to ensure children

are competent with all these new gadgets, but that they remain peripheral in their daily lives. Their childhoods must remain focused on family, nature, peace, play, reading and imagination. All these things fall away when children are given too much access to screens, and other distracting technologies, as so many are.

Effects

The long-term effects of technology on our minds and indeed our souls are not yet known, since even now ubiquitous devices like smartphones are less than a decade old. Yet just as children's skulls are thinner and more sensitive to electromagnetic radiation



from phones, their minds must be also more sensitive to the barrage of images and sounds modern media generates. If we think back to even a generation or two and the cold houses of the past where clothes and dishwashing, were done manually, the benefits are clear. We can live, work, travel and communicate with greater ease than ever before.

Ireland is at the centre of this new revolution. In the 1950s when my father grew up in Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, there was no mains electricity and most of the houses were thatched. Text messages, as it were, were delivered by boys on bikes. Nobody had yet been to space. The kids love to hear the stories of his childhood, and they listen rapt to tales from another world, which is what it was. Yet the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Seán solemnly announced the other day: "Dad, at last! I know exactly what I want to do when I grow up. First I'm going to invent a spaceship with a warp drive and then I'm going to become a Cork hurler."

I'm not sure which would make me more proud.



Greg Daly talks to Trócaire's Eamonn Meehan about his work leading the Irish Church's overseas aid agency

The whole concept of charity, and Catholic social teaching, is about love," says Trócaire's Executive Director Eamonn Meehan, "That's what drives us."

Originally from Clare, Eamonn went to school in Ennis before training as a primary school teacher in Limerick's Mary Immaculate College, after which he spent four years teaching in Clane, Co. Kildare. During that period he was a frequent visitor to friends at the St Patrick's Missionary Society in Kiltegan, Co. Wicklow, eventually spending two years teaching English in a secondary school run by them in northern Kenya, where he saw first-hand the kind of pastoral, development and humanitarian work the Kiltegens were doing alongside the Medical Missionaries of Mary.

"I learned a lot, and I felt that there was something I wanted to do with my life in terms of working for vulnerable people, who were clearly less well off than we were ourselves at home in Ireland," he says.

Wars

Once back in Ireland he did a master's degree and taught again briefly, before getting a job with APSO, the state Agency for Personal Service Overseas, in charge of the regional programme for southern Africa. Over four

Personal
PROFILE



Eamonn Meehan with Ibrahim Kamara of Action for Advocacy and Development and Trócaire's Ella Syl Mac Foy in Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak.

years there, between 1987 and 1991, he learned a lot about the region at a time when there were wars in Mozambique and Angola, while South Africa – which was attempting to destabilise Zimbabwe – was in the final stages of its apartheid era.

"I was in Harare the day Mandela was released, and I remember the intense joy and celebrations there," he says, describing how he had known such prominent opponents of apartheid as Durban's Archbishop Denis Hurley and the Irish Dominican Sr Margaret Kelly.

On returning to Ireland, Eamonn applied to become Trócaire's new programme officer for South Africa, his four years in the role, expanding his understanding of good development and how best to support people and communities faced with "the gravest injustice because of their race and their colour".

Since then, he says, he has served as Trócaire's head of

international programmes and head of Ireland functions, which includes fundraising, schools work, and education, and in 2013 took on his new role as executive director where he heads the organisation as it faces challenges in a changing world.

“There is a lot of questioning about what is development”

In recent years, the biggest challenges have entailed responding effectively to humanitarian disasters caused by war, with Syria being a perfect example of that – although staff are sent in and local Church organisations are funded there, it is very difficult and dangerous to operate there.

Another challenge, he says, is that Ireland is now a highly competitive environment for charities, with many other charities being highly professional in their

fundraising. Admitting that it helps to be an agency of the bishops' conference, with the Lenten campaign being a mainstay of Trócaire's funding, he nonetheless says it's important to keep getting the message out, explaining what Trócaire does and why it does it.

"The world is changing and changing rapidly – there is a lot of questioning about what is development and how to best practice it and where we should be putting our money," he says, maintaining that Trócaire has a real advantage in terms of responding to these questions. He points to its roots in the Gospels and in Catholic social teaching, with its emphasis on the common good and the human dignity of each and every individual, he says.

When Ireland's bishops founded Trócaire in 1973, he says, they were adamant that we have responsibilities towards the poorest people on the planet, not simply out of charity, but out of justice.

"We feel our mission is to

work with those, to support the local Church, to support local organisations that are working to respond to people's basic needs, but also to look fundamentally at the causes of poverty and equality and respond to those."

The emphasis on local organisations and the local Church is key to Trócaire's identity, he says. "Trócaire's a partnership organisation, which means we provide grant assistance to local organisations, local diocesan development offices, local Caritas organisations, Justice and Peace, and others," he says, noting that this shows that "it's not a colonial or neo-colonial enterprise, it's not white Irish people coming to show others how to do things properly".

Local people

"It is a partnership," he continues, "It's about supporting local people to do the things they regard as important. What we do is try to build the capacity of these organisations, so they can better do what they want to do. They know their own context and the culture, and we believe firmly that they know best what is right for local communities and local societies. We're there to help, and to give them a voice with our government or with the European Union or internationally."

Admitting that the fact that Trócaire brings money to the table might be seen as skewing relationships with partners, he is adamant that "it is not about the money" and that Trócaire has a lot to learn from its partners.

Those who work in Trócaire, he concludes, find it an invaluable way of expressing their Faith, adding that "It offers huge opportunities for young people." Commenting on how the advertising of positions always meet with huge interest, he says. "It's a great way for young people to learn about their Church and Faith, and to find a very practical way of working that out."



Eco Eye

Sr Mary Fagan

Understanding the roots of our environmental vocation

The beautiful story of creation is recounted to us in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, not as a detailed and accurate description of how God made the world, but to advise humankind of the consequences and the responsibilities of God's first revelation.

The wonder and beauty of God's creation has been celebrated throughout history, from the Psalms (Ps.8; Ps.19; Ps.139) through the 13th-Century Canticle of Creation by St Francis right up to today and the awesome *Planet Earth* television series which commands a greater audience than any 'reality TV' programme.

The symbiotic nature of our relationship with the Earth was observed by Thomas Berry CP (1914-2009) the Passionist eco-theologian who claimed that "as humans we are born of the Earth, nourished by the Earth, healed by the Earth" and that the "Earth belongs to itself and to all and to all the members of the community".

There is little doubt now that the Earth is a

living, breathing organism that communicates to us through a wordless language but a language nonetheless.



This language was clearly understood by many generations who treated nature with respect and for whom the very thought of reducing the earth to an object simply for humankind's use or possession was anathema.

Beneficial

These 'primitive' people experienced a relationship with the environment which was mutually beneficial and generative. They realised that care for the environment is a matter of intergenerational solidarity and justice as Pope Francis termed it in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* (159). We were given stewardship of the Earth and we have a responsibility to all future generations to take care of this precious gift and to bequeath to them the

opportunity to "admire its loveliness and taste its delicious fruits".

For many centuries we have been deaf to the Earth's voice, but we urgently need to begin to listen with a willingness to understand and respond. The time has come for us to resist the impulse to control and dominate the cycles of nature purely for our own financial gain.

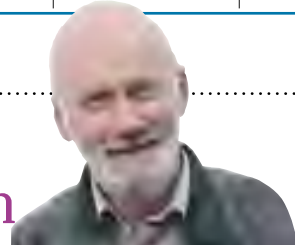
Scientists estimate we are losing up to 0.1% of all species every year, primarily due to human activity.

These species all have inherent value and are not merely objects for humans to exploit; this is not what was meant by God when granting 'dominion' over everything on the earth. Dominion, in this instance, is the same protective relationship that God had over humankind, a protective responsibility to facilitate growth and development.

Pope Francis has called for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of the planet, calling for an ecological conversion. In coming issues, I hope to be able to suggest ways we and our parishes can all play our part in this great conversation.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Lively debates and a touch of emotional drama

I spent way too much time last Saturday glued to my screens watching the proceedings of the **Citizens' Assembly**, streaming on the RTÉ News Now channel and online. It was a lot to take in.

First off, I found it rather disconcerting to find an unrepresentative bunch of citizens (100 to represent four million?) meeting in a comfortable civilised setting, effectively sitting in judgement on the right to life of a vulnerable group of human beings. If it was even suggested for another vulnerable group can you imagine the outrage?

I was impressed by the contribution of Dr Peter McParland of The National Maternity Hospital in Holles Street. He said stuff to please and displease both sides, but he did draw attention to what actually happens to the baby in an abortion, and to the way Down Syndrome babies are routinely screened and aborted in Iceland and Denmark.

He gave disturbing figures on why Irish women get abortions in England – in 2015 40 babies were aborted for Down Syndrome, and some also for Spina Bifida and even Cystic Fibrosis – conditions that weren't really in the 'life-limiting' category at all.

He flagged the increasing ethical issues caused by easier pre-natal screening, but also made it clear also that pre-natal diagnoses can



Amy Huberman stars in RTÉ's *Striking Out*.

sometimes be wrong, and that doctors can't be certain how long a baby with 'life limiting' conditions will live outside the womb.

In the afternoon, on the pro-life side, Dr Helen Watt played a blinder, giving a pro-life masterclass that was well informed, compassionate and clear thinking. She was well able to field difficult questions in the Q&A session at the end of the day – check out her contributions on You-

Tube.

Basically I think her point was that your rights as a human being didn't depend on or vary with your state of health, the length of time you were likely to live, or whether you were inside the womb or out.

Approach

On Sunday's **Six-One News** on RTÉ 1, Joe Little reported on that Iceland reference, describing that country's

approach as "doing away with" the birth of Downs children. Just then his lights went out and the outside broadcast ended!

By that Sunday night, RTÉ was reporting the news that there were: 'Indications Citizens' Assembly favours less restrictive laws on abortion' – predictable, but surprising for it to come out at this stage... a downbeat note to end the weekend's deliberations.

The Big Questions returned to BBC One last Sunday morning and got off to a lively start with a discussion on the morality of huge salaries, especially in relation to the CEOs of large private companies.

It was good to see an issue like that being regarded in moral terms. Likewise the second topic – as to whether industrial action should target only employers and not customers or users of a service.

This was in the context of



Joe Little

ongoing and upcoming rail strikes in England, and one contributor suggested the ploy of having the workers refusing to collect fares and letting the customers use the service for free, thus hitting the employers where it hurts but letting the travellers go about their business without disruption. More moral?

In the context of the Epiphany, the third question was whether the 'wise men' today would believe in God. As usual, there was a variety of views and I found it reasonably well balanced. I was impressed by the gentle contribution of Russell Cowburn, a Cambridge professor in experimental physics, a Christian who believed in angels and who lived what he called the 'wonderful tension' between science and faith.

Also defending a rational and well balanced approach to religious faith was author Dr Vince Vitale who was confident and cheerful in his contributions.

Finally, I've now seen the first two episodes of RTÉ 1's new Sunday night drama **Striking Out**. Amy Huberman is the best thing about it, sympathetic in the lead role of a solicitor whose fiancé is unfaithful to her shortly before the wedding.

The emotional impact of the betrayal was substantially lessened as we hadn't come to know these characters very well before the discovery.

Apart from Huberman's

PICK OF THE WEEK

FILM: ON THE WATERFRONT

BBC 2 Saturday, January 14, 10.40 pm

(1954) Multi-Oscar-winning story of conflict among dockers and gangsters. Karl Malden plays a priest passionate about social justice. Director: Elia Kazan.

WHERE GOD WEEPS

EWTN Saturday, January 14, 7 pm

With Peter Sefton-Williams, Chief-Editor of *The Religious Freedom Report* published by Aid to the Church in Need.

BALLYKISSANGEL

be3 Sunday, January 15, 6 pm

Starting a re-run of the popular series. Fr Clifford arrives from England, to the remote Irish village of Ballykissangel.

Tara, most other characters are self-obsessed, pampered and off-putting. Predictably there was a sex scene at the start (to up the rating?) but apart from a few unnecessary profanities the language so far is thankfully restrained.

1 boregan@hotmail.com



Aubrey Malone

Film

Old-style musical ramps up the sentiment

La La Land (PG)

If you told me last year that Ryan Gosling would be playing the romantic lead in a musical, I'd probably have called for the men in the white coats to take you away.

On second thoughts, though, this actor has been nothing if not diverse in his career thus far. Why not a song-and-dance man to boot? He even plays the piano and makes a fine job of it too. (I only detected a small bit of trick photography helping him along).

It's an entrancing film that brings us back to the 'big sound' musicals of the for-

ties. Gosling's leading lady is Emma Stone. She stumps up brilliantly, singing like an angel. She has music in her feet as well. In the dancing scenes I felt she was like one of those mentors putting Ryan through his paces on *Strictly*. She looked much more assured than he, though he does have that Gene Kelly ability to glide.

The film kicks off – literally – with some street dancing that's right up there with *West Side Story*. This is in a pre-credit sequence. At this stage we have no idea what to expect from *La La Land*: no characters have been established. When they are, the quirky direction of Damien Chazelle throws some stac-



Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling stepping it out in *La La Land*.

Excellent
★★★★★

cato set-pieces at us before settling down to tell the story of the romance between the two leads.

Stone is Mia, a struggling LA actress-cum-playwright. Gosling plays Sebastian, a

man who loves jazz played 'the old way'. He has a dream of opening his own club but to make ends meet he has to take a job in a band that dumbs down his talent. Both of them long for success on

their terms but are handcuffed by their esoteric talents: market forces rule OK.

Scope

The film – structured according to the seasons – is entrancing in its spell and scope. People break into song at the drop of a hat. Reality blends with illusion, with mime, with moody silhouette. We're back in the era of Fred Astaire, Judy Garland and Cyd Charisse.

Well, almost. Chazelle is only 80% retrospective. The other 20% is revisionist. This gives a slightly clunky feel to the film. It looks over its shoulder at what it's doing. I was reminded of the way Woody Allen approaches

nostalgia, i.e. with wilful contrivance.

For some this will diminish it. For others – who may be too young to enjoy the inset references to vintage movies like *Casablanca* and *Rebel Without a Cause* – it will enhance it.

Either way it's a superb *soufflé*. I'm sure you'll find yourself humming some of the (very catchy) lyrics as you leave the cinema. I can't wait to get the CD.

Gosling and Stone, together for the third time, play off each other with empathetic chemistry right up to the last moment. I'll wager this will bring a tear to your eye.

A definite Oscar contender on any number of scores.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The heady heights of the Irish law



The Supreme Court. The judges, the decisions, the rifts and the rivalries that have shaped Ireland
by Ruadhán Mac Cormaic (Penguin Ireland, €27.99)

Joe Carroll

We are the Supreme Court and under God we can do anything," a judge of the court, Cecil Lavery, rebuked a young barrister who had the nerve to tell the court it did not have jurisdiction to decide a certain point. That barrister, Tom Finlay, later became a Chief Justice and so could see for himself just how far the court could go.

For the non-legal professional, this book is revelatory about how the justice system works in its upper reaches. At times it reads like a thriller as the author shows how various ground-breaking cases on abortion, contraception, homosexuality, extradition, neutrality and other

important issues were weighed by the judges on the Supreme Court before reaching a decision.

The highest court was not always such an exciting place. Set up under the 1922 Constitution, the court dealt largely with technical points of law in its early decades but that would change with the fluoridation case in 1963.

Judgement

A Drumcondra housewife, Gladys Ryan, challenged the new law that allowed local authorities to add fluoride to the water supply to combat dental cavities in children. Eventually she lost the case in the Supreme Court, but significantly the judgement upheld the assertion by Mr Justice Kenny in the High Court that Article 40 of the Constitution on personal rights included an unspecified right to "personal integrity", citing the papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.

The author sums up the consequences. "It was a watershed moment. The Constitution contained rights that didn't actually appear

in the text. And that meant the only people with the authority to identify them – the judges of the Supreme Court – had just made themselves immeasurably more powerful."

It was this power which led to the campaign to insert the right to life of the unborn child into the Constitution in 1983, the famous 'Eighth Amendment' which is now under challenge by the pro-choice movement. The lawyers behind the pro-life movement of the early 1980s, such as William Binchy, feared that a future Supreme Court would follow the US Supreme Court in finding a right to privacy and thus to have an abortion as was ruled in the *Roe vs Wade* case in 1973.

“By the early 2000s a reaction was setting in against this ‘judicial activism’”

It was later that year that the Irish Supreme Court heard the appeal by May McGee against the 1935 criminal law preventing her from

Some members of the Supreme Court.



importing contraceptives and ruled in her favour, clearly influenced by the right to privacy as decided in the US. Hence the fears of the pro-life movement.

But when David Norris challenged the 19th-Century law criminalising homosexual acts, the Supreme Court referred to the Christian nature of the Preamble to the Constitution and on this basis refused Norris a right to privacy on this issue. The European Court of Human Rights later upheld Norris's claim and obliged the then Government to amend the law.

While the Supreme Court continued to discover up to 20 personal rights not spelled out in the Constitution, the author writes that by the early 2000s a reaction was setting in against this "judicial activism" and there were no longer appeals to "natural law" and papal encyclicals.

One of the most outspoken opponents of judicial activism became Mr Justice

Adrian Hardiman, who died earlier this year (2016). He was especially scathing in rejecting the case where the Equality Authority challenged Portmarnock golf club's ban on female membership.

Influence

It is very interesting to follow how the Supreme Court changed according to the judges on it. The author attributes a huge influence to the liberal approach of Cearbhaile O Dalaigh and Brian Walsh from the 1960s. It is also pointed out how judges reputed to be conservative on lower courts, became advocates of unenumerated rights when appointed to the top court such as Seamus Henchy. The US influence was catching.

The author using inside sources also describes how controversy has raged over the appointment of judges – a very topical subject now – and governments' attempts to impose pay cuts although

forbidden by the Constitution. A referendum was needed.

It is an education in itself to follow the reasoning of judges since independence in 1922. The natural law basis of judgments with appeals to papal encyclicals and Christian tenets has been abandoned as too vague. "What is natural law?" asked one judge.

The highly-respected Niall McCarthy, who died tragically with his wife in a car accident in Spain, argued in the Norris case that the source of the Constitution was not God but "the human personality" itself.

The Preamble still begins: "In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity from Whom is all authority and to Whom as our final end, all actions both of men and States must be referred."

But the Preamble is not part of the Constitution proper. So is God in it or not?

Ireland's offshore assets

Dirty Secrets: What To Do About Tax Havens
by Richard Murphy (Verso, £12.99)

Peter Hegarty

Tax avoidance is one of the greatest difficulties besetting the world economy. Accountant and tax campaigner Richard Murphy estimates that 10% – maybe more – of the world's wealth is hidden away in tax havens. Taxed, the secreted trillions would provide more roads, more schools, more hospitals, everywhere.

Tax havens put a permanent brake on the economic progress of developing countries, which must compensate for lost revenue by accepting more development aid. Aid comes with conditions that often diminish national sovereignty.

Tax avoidance by corporations and the wealthy angers voters and coarsens politics. Populist politicians, most recently Donald Trump, seek to broaden their appeal by inveighing against the rich elite that refuses

to share its increasing gains.

The defenders of tax havens are typically also advocates of privatisation and believers in chimeras such as free trade and free markets. They do not believe that the state should have an important role in the economy.

Free markets

Tax havens, indeed anything which shrinks the state, are fine by them. But a belief in free markets is incompatible with defence of tax havens. Companies which operate in secret and do not disclose their true financial position to competitors and potential investors enjoy an unfair advantage, and are in effect skewing the market.

The secrecy and opacity tax havens offer is their great attraction to tax avoiders. Murphy is not greatly exercised about

rates of corporation tax: it is the state's prerogative to set the rate it deems appropriate.

What to do about tax havens? Murphy calls for 'country by country reporting': corporations should provide accurate information on the taxes they pay – and where they pay them – on the profits they make in their operations across the world.

The prospect of having to present a true picture of their finances might nudge corporations towards tax compliance.

None would want to suffer the reputational damage that followed the announcement by Barclay's Bank in 2013 that it was losing roughly £25,000 per employee in the UK but that its 'mysteriously productive' 14 employees in

Luxembourg were each generating a profit of almost £99 million.

“Its ‘mysteriously productive’ 14 employees in Luxembourg were each generating a profit of almost £99 million”

EU pressure forced the bank into disclosing details of its operations. Professional facilitators of tax avoidance (Murphy has spoken to many of them off the record) acknowledge that reform is inevitable.

The next recession may jolt governments into co-ordinated action. In years to come places that have grown dependent on finance for employment and prosperity – Jersey, the Cayman Islands and others – may undergo wrenching economic changes.



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.

A book title that is not exaggerated

He was Galway: Máirtín Mór McDonogh, 1860-1934, by Jackie Uí Chionna (Open Air/Four Courts Press, €19.95).

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is a valuable biography of a truly remarkable person. The book's title does not exaggerate. Máirtín Mór McDonogh (1860-1934) was a central figure in the civic life of Galway city and county for most of his life.

Máirtín Mór was born on the island of Lettermullan in one of the remotest parts of Connemara to parents who had a general grocery store. His father moved his family and business in the early 1860s to Galway city, where he took up a position as foreman in a saw-mill.

Máirtín was educated at the Jesuits' St Ignatius College and later at the order's St Stanislaus College in Tullabeg in Co Offaly.

On completing his secondary education he registered as a law student at the Queen's College, Galway. Within a year, however, he had abandoned his intention to be a lawyer and had joined his father in the family business.

“He organised a meeting at which Special Constables were appointed to assist the RIC and the army to maintain order”

Decisive and with a unique talent for business, he established a number of extraordinary successful commercial and industrial enterprises during the following three decades.

These included an export and import company at Galway docks, a fertiliser factory, a flour-mill, a saw-mill, a fleet of fishing trawlers and a string of thriving shops. In addition he had farms in Galway, Meath, Dublin and

Limerick.

Although Mártín's hand was never far from any of his business undertakings, he did not neglect his civic responsibilities.

He was a member of the Galway Chamber of Commerce, Galway County Council, Board of the Galway Harbour Commissioners, and Galway Urban District Council. And by virtue of his dominant personality and commercial reach across the city he exercised



considerable influence on the decisions taken at these meetings.

Máirtín was as pragmatic with regard to politics as he was in his business dealings. He supported Parnell, but after the fall of the revered leader he withdrew that support.

With other nationalists in Galway he joined the Volunteers in 1913. At the outbreak of the The Great War he joined John Redmond in urging recruitment to the British army.

Like the overwhelming majority of the citizens of Galway he was taken unawares by the Easter Rising in 1916. With some of the other leading citizens of Galway he organised a meeting at which Special Constables were appointed to assist the RIC and the army to maintain order.

Subsequently Máirtín followed Redmond's lead in condemning the Rising and appealed for clemency for all but significantly not for the 'ringleaders'.

Uncharacteristically, he remained in the background during the War of Independence and contented himself with merely condemning the atrocities committed in the city by the IRA and the crown forces.

Máirtín supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the Provisional Government, the nascent Irish Free State and to that end joined the Cumannann Gaedheal Party.

His intervention was regarded by observers as having significant influence in gaining support for the Treaty Party across Connacht. Máirtín successfully stood in Galway for election to Dáil Éireann in June 1927, was re-elected in September 1927, lost his seat in 1932 but was re-elected in 1933.

Lynch-pin

Máirtín found attendance in Dáil Éireann time-consuming and tiresome. It was the opposite with regard to horse-racing. For most of his life he was the lynch-pin of the Galway Races festival, serving as chairman of the stewards from 1967 until he died in 1934.

He had his own stable, owned several winning race horses and was appointed by the Irish Racecourse Executives Association to represent that organisation on the board of the Tote.

Máirtín was a friend of many members of the racing fraternity but his closest friend was the unconventional Fr John Flatley. Curiously the obituaries of both of them listed their outstanding qualities as a tendency to be outspoken and a genuine and practical concern for the poor and those in distress.

Máirtín's obituary in the Connacht Sentinel in 1934 concluded 'for half a century he was Galway'!

Apart from the comprehensive account of the 'larger than life Máirtín Mór McDonogh, in this study Jackie Uí Chionna's provides fascinating asides on the Galway of his time.

WebWatch

Only time can tell as blogger looks for rescue

Among the most consistently interesting religious blogs over recent years have been those on the Catholic channel of patheos.com, with Eve Tushnet's being a fine example of this. Tushnet, who converted to Catholicism in 1998, describes herself as an "openly lesbian and celibate Catholic", and writes often on themes of religion of sexuality.

In a recent post, she moves from a discussion of Shakespeare to a reflection on Jerusalem, a 600,000-word novel by English writer Alan Moore on 1,000 years of his native Northampton.

Free will

Observing that the book insists time is "more or less fake", with everything somehow preserved in eternity even when superficially destroyed, she comments, "on one level this vision is pretty attractive to me and there are ways in which I do believe it. I do think God holds all the moments of our lives in his attention, so that nothing is wasted."

"The Mass, certainly, is the penetration of time by something beyond time: every Mass is the sacrifice on Calvary."

However, she says, the implication of this in the



Eve Tushnet.

text is that if time is unreal then so is free will. Moore, she notes, sees this as consoling.

"I disagree, my friend, and I suspect a lot of people in recovery will agree with me," she counters, continuing, "having had a full cup of bondage of the will I would prefer to order a round of something else. I would like the right to my guilt and therefore my repentance."

"I would like to let myself be rescued: *Fiat voluntas tua*, the story is

actually sort of horrible if she doesn't choose to say that."

Pointing out she would like to be changed, even if loss is part of the equation, she says: "Purgatory is radical and real change, in which things we thought we could keep will be lost. Maybe transformed, and maybe once we see the transformation we will not count it a loss, but we would count it loss if we could see it with the unhallowed eyes we have today."

● Another frequently intriguing blog is 'All Along The Watchtower' at jessicahof.wordpress.com, where the pseudonymous 'Chalcedon451' last week, for instance, in a post about a curious but unsubstantiated report from the Vatican, warns against believing uncritically stories that suggest the Pope is committed to a 'spirit of Vatican II' agenda.

"We are told by Leonardo Boff that the Pope is on his side and soon intends to give permission to the Brazilian bishops to have married priests," he says. "Commentators who would give no credence to Boff on anything else, report his words as though they are Gospel truth, not, of course, because they have suddenly decided that Boff is a reliable source, but because what he says fits with their picture of Francis."

Responding to a comment on this post taking issue with his observation that many of those attacking the Pontiff had

their knives out for him from the start, he maintains that many did.

"What concerns me is that one side of the picture and the argument are presented by such people, and they dismiss, too often, those who disagree with them as though their motives are simply self-seeking," he says, continuing, "this concerns me."

"The Church has always had places for quite a wide variety of beliefs, and the difficulty with the 'culture wars' template is that it puts a halo around one's own views and a pair of horns on those who hold other views. Its effect on our politics has been, to coin a word, deplorable, and I see it happening in the Church."

"He is the Pope," he continues, and unless one subscribes to the view that the vast majority of the bishops and cardinals are some kind of scoundrel, then it seems to me unwise to go beyond where most of them are."

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Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

M.D.

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Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

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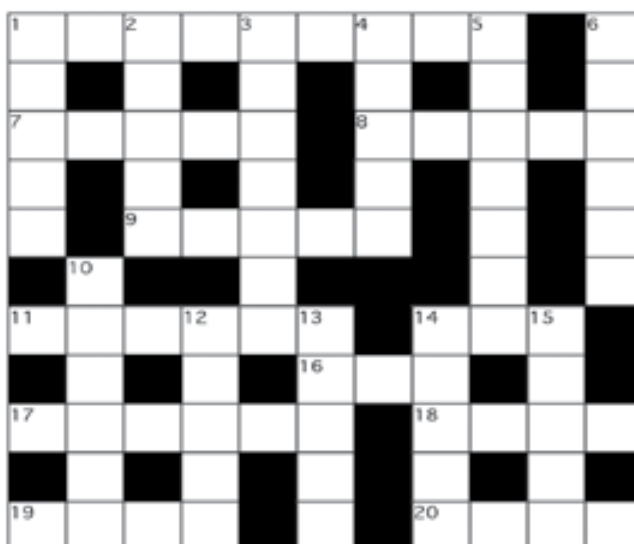
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 164



ACROSS

- 1 Storm with very strong wind (9)
 7 Turn these when you read a book (5)
 8 Month of St Patrick's Day (5)
 9 Sail this for pleasure (5)
 11 Most pleasant (6)
 14 A hen lays it (3)
 16 Sing without using words (3)
 17 This sign of the Zodiac is also called 'The Twins' (6)
 18 Points a gun at a target (4)
 19 You go to church to attend this (4)
 20 When you do this to something, you can't find it (4)

DOWN

- 1 The short name of a big animal that likes to wallow in mud (5)
 2 Sport with an oval ball (5)
 3 Creepy-crawlies (6)
 4 Own up (5)
 5 This piece of jewellery is usually part of a pair (7)
 6 Where pupils and teachers learn together (6)
 10 Movies are shown here (6)
 12 Ways out (5)
 13 Use your brain (5)
 14 A message sent on the internet (1-4)
 15 They're fun to play (5)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.280

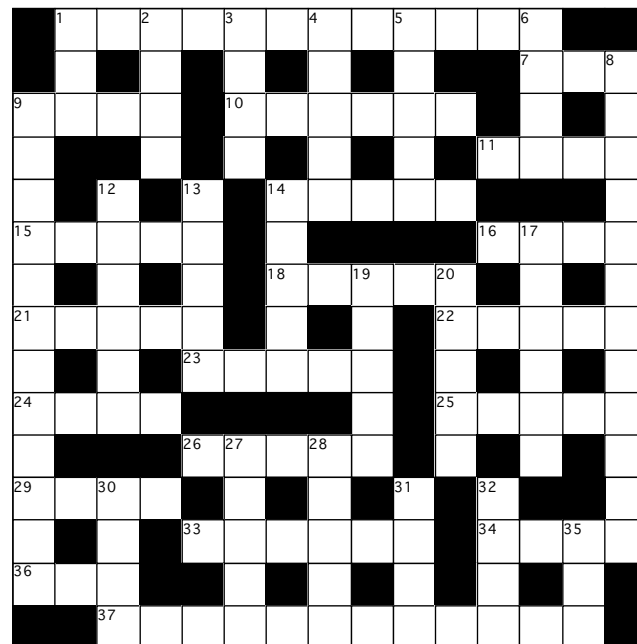
- Across** – 1 Postal vote 6 Cash 10 Plaid 11 Waterfall
 12 Old salt 15 Shelf 17 Wasp 18 Roll 19 Epsom
 21 Waltzed 23 Wider 24 Jail 25 Isle 26 Saint Bernadette
 28 Rallied 33 Graceland 34 Chose 35 Rook
Down – 1 Pope 2 Stable lad 3 Andes 4 Vowel 5 Tote
 7 Awake 8 Holy Family 9 Grasped 13 Area 14 Twitter
 16 Brown sugar 20 Scapegoat 21 Written 22 Evil
 27 Imago 29 Aidan 30 Laced 31 Wave 32 Here

CHILDREN'S No.163

- Across** – 1 Hurricane 7 Pages 8 March 9 Yacht
 11 Nicest 14 Egg 16 Hum 17 Gemini 18 Aims 19 Mass
 20 Lose
Down – 1 Hippo 2 Rugby 3 Insects 4 Admit 5 Earring
 6 School 10 Cinema 12 Exits 13 Think 14 E-mail 15 Games

Crossword

Gordius 281



ACROSS

- 1 What a wonderful voice, coming from the zoo's pram zone! (5-7)
 7 Cut fifty at work (3)
 9 Sound like a wolf (4)
 10 Be quiet, a tiny adjustment has been made to a Scottish game (6)
 11 Light around a saint's head (4)
 14 Repairs (5)
 15 Blow it, that may contain champagne! (5)
 16 Broad (4)
 18 Elevators (5)
 21 The cap is tossed into jelly (5)
 22 Hides potassium in the service (5)
 23 Great push (5)
 24 Injured, right in the cabin (4)
 25 Wireless (5)
 26 Adhered (5)
 29 The Soviet Union, as it was initially! (1.1.1.1.)
 33 Ship's kitchen (6)
 34 Court a novice in this material (4)
 36 The hour when a plane is expected to touch down, for example (1.1.1.)
 37 Use it to write a redraft of the inept Poll Ban (8,4)

DOWN

- 1 Bovine sound (3)
 2 Émile, writer of "Nana", "J'accuse", etc (4)
 3 English river found at the end of 9 down (4)
 4 Oily fruit (5)
 5 How one judged Edward, the artist (5)
 6 Lady - perhaps Russian - breaks out of gaol (4)
 8 & 31d "Cornmeal Hypnosis" (new arrangement) - a musical start to the service! (12,4)
 9 Ayahs who fuel with difficulty may stop here midway through the journey (7,5)
 12 Sweater (6)
 13 & 14 Dessert named for an opera singer (5,5)
 17 Having made the team, in jail? (6)
 19 A dappling of spots of colour (5)
 20 Insolent smile (5)
 27 Catch fish with a bag-net (5)
 28 Large stringed instrument (5)
 30 With this, one should clean up in theatre! (4)
 31 See 8 down
 32 Exchange an unusual wasp (4)
 35 Possess (3)

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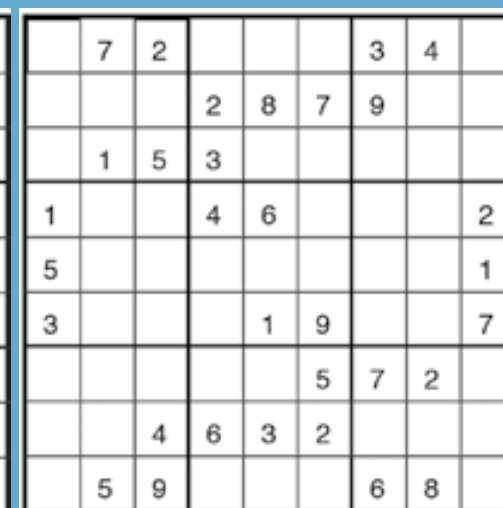
Sudoku Corner

164

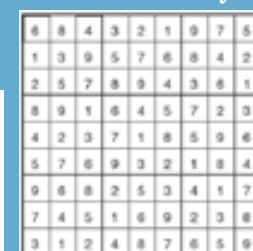
Easy



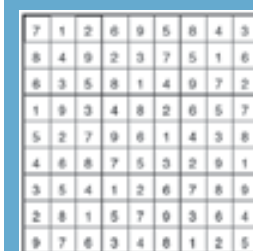
Hard



Last week's Easy 163



Last week's Hard 163



Notebook

Michael Kelly



The real origin of our post-truth politics

NEXT WEEK will see the inauguration of Donald J. Trump as the 45th president of the United States of America. Few could have predicted, even six months ago, that Mr Trump would defeat the Democrat candidate Hillary Clinton.

In fact, I spent election results night at a party hosted by the wonderful US Ambassador to Ireland Kevin O'Malley. As the first results started to pour in, seasoned political analysts and veteran campaigners who were on hand to help us understand the process were cracking jokes about how ungracious Mr Trump was likely to be in defeat. Within a couple of hours, however, they stared in disbelief as Clinton staffers sent home the thousands of supporters at her victory rally.

Mrs Clinton was so inconsolable, we are led to believe, that she was unable to make a concession speech to those who had worked so hard to get her elected.

I can't judge individual consciences – that's for God. But Mr Trump appears to be a deeply flawed man. Anyone who jokes – even claiming it to be no more than banter – about sexual assault



Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

is a loathsome individual. Truth be told, many voters saw Mrs Clinton as a deeply-flawed candidate too and opted for what they saw as the lesser of two evils.

Much of the post-election analysis has concentrated on what has been described as our 'post-

truth' world. Commentators and pundits point to the phenomenon of 'fake news' (if it's fake it's not news and if it's news it's not fake) as being a decisive factor in the campaign. But, many of these self-same experts can't point to the origins of the post-truth worldview.

Relativism

In April 2005, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger offered some reflections on contemporary society when he said that "relativism, that is, letting oneself be tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine, seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times.

"We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not

recognise anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires," the soon-to-be Pope Benedict XVI said.

So, in fact, post-truth is really just another term for what philosophers call relativism: the belief that there is no absolute truth, that all truth is relative and one 'truth' is as good as the next. In short, since all 'truths' are valid and deserve to be treated equally, there is, ultimately, no truth – nothing that is absolutely true.

The ironic thing is that some of those shouting the loudest in protest at the post-truth worldview have spent most of their lives pushing a relativist approach to morality and the ultimate truth about the human person.

Some things are just not possible

Speaking of post-truth, the London-based online newspaper *The Independent* ran an article this week with the headline: 'First man in UK to give birth finds sperm donor on Facebook after pausing transition to become father'.

But men can't become pregnant, can they? At first, I thought it was a typo. Then I read the article and realised it was a woman suffering from gender dysphoria who believed that she is, in fact, a man who had become pregnant.

Gender dysphoria is a real thing and should be taken seriously. But, a more honest reporting of the story might be 'Woman who believes she is a man gets pregnant'. It's biologically impossible for men to get pregnant: that's just a fact.

MERYL STREEP AT THE GOLDEN GLOBES:

The veteran actress Meryl Streep used her speech at the Golden Globe ceremony at the weekend to launch a thinly-veiled attack on Mr Trump. She lamented the fact that she saw in Mr Trump a powerful person using his power to bully others.

Violence, she said, begets more violence. Ms Streep is correct, but likely fails to see that the surge in support for Mr Trump is the opposite side of the same coin. Many of the people – particularly blue collar workers – who voted for Mr Trump feel that they have

spent years being bullied by powerful liberal elites for holding opinions that just a few years ago were not remotely controversial.

Take, for example, the case of Christian bakers in the US state of Colorado (like the McArthur family in Belfast) who were sued after they said they would not bake a cake for a same-sex wedding. The full force of law was brought to bear on them.

Bullying is a two-way street: until we all realise this, there will be little room for dialogue and common ground.



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