

# The Irish Catholic

## A NUN'S CLOISTER ... A STRANGE ATTRACTION

Mary Kenny  
Page 5



## TOXIC MEN OR TOXIC MASCULINITY?

David Quinn  
Page 8



## BEWARE OF 'POLITICAL CHRISTIANITY'

Breda O'Brien  
Page 11



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# God is making a huge comeback with the young – PussyCat Doll Star

Exclusive

Renata Milán Morales

"God is making a huge comeback with the youth. It's so great... Catholics are coming back to the Catholic Church, like they've never done before. It's astounding. We have to go fishing because the youth are starting to see the truth. They don't know any different," said Kaya Jones in an interview with *The Irish Catholic*. Her message to the young is clear: embrace your inherent value, seek community, and don't be afraid to stand up for your beliefs.

Speaking to this paper before her appearance at the Rally for Life on July 6, former Pussycat Dolls singer, Kaya Jones, opened up about her dramatic life transformation from Hollywood stardom to becoming a vocal advocate for faith who has been awarded a grammy for her gospel album.

Reflecting on her time with The Pussycat Dolls, Kaya Jones talked about the group's image: "The band was very sexual. Our name was sex. We sang about sex. We looked like sex. It was like overkill." This experience shows her perspective on the entertainment industry and its impact on young people.

"The statistic for young women now is heartbreaking. With suicide rates, PTSD, depression, abortion has become a form of contraception," Mrs Jones emphasises

» Continued on Page 2

## From fame to faith



Kaya Jones pictured (left) during her time in the Pussycat Dolls. On the right: Kaya Jones pictured with a young boy supporting the pro-life cause during the Rally for life on July 6 in Dublin.

## THOUSANDS MOBILISE FOR LIFE

### Marching onward for justice

PAGES 12-15



## WHEN GOD AND POLITICS COLLIDE

Martina Purdy

PAGE 9



## GOVERNMENT INACTION AND GENDER IDENTITY ISSUES IN SCHOOLS

Dualta Roughneen

PAGE 10



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## God is making a huge comeback with the young – PussyCat Doll Star

» Continued from Page 1

the power of prayer and the importance of reading the Bible. She encourages young women to value themselves beyond their physical attributes and to seek a deeper understanding of their worth. "You're more than just being a beautiful girl... You are a beautiful creation in God, he has incredible plans for you to prosper."

Kaya Jones points out the importance of self-worth and faith in addressing mental health issues. "We're not meant to do life alone. So, find community," she advises, adding that spiritual healing played a crucial role in her own recovery. She believes that many mental health issues have spiritual roots:

"Once it's inside, you must do homework with God. God can do it, right? That's what He's in to, the business of saving lives and bringing those dead to life."

Ms Jones is currently working on new music that blends her dance-electronic background with spiritual themes. "I'm going back into dance electronic music, but this time adding Him. Because I think we have to go fishing. We have to go get them," she says, aiming to reach younger audiences who may not attend church.

**i** The full interview with Ms Kaya Jones will be available in next week's issue and the video will be available on [www.irishcatholic.com](http://www.irishcatholic.com)

# Dungarvan says farewell to Bon Secours nuns

Staff reporter

120 years of history came to an end at Carriglea outside Dungarvan on July 2, when the last nuns at the Bon Secours said their goodbyes to Dungarvan, the area that they had lived and worked in for 120 years.

It was reported that the sister chapel was packed to capacity for a farewell Mass where the chief celebrant was the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Alphonsus Cullinan, who was joined at the altar by Msgr Willie Ryan PP (Dungarvan), Msgr Paddy Osbourne, Canon Brendan Crowley PE, Fr Conor Kelly, Fr Matt Cooney OSA, Fr John McEaney

and Deacon Hugh Nugent.

Bishop Cullinan in his homily told the packed congregation that "we have come here to offer this Mass of thanksgiving, to express our sincere gratitude to the sisters for all they have done, for all that you have done and to recount all that the Lord has done through them and through you, all those years of service to countless people in need of care, specialist care".

Continuing, Bishop Cullinan said "but our celebration is marked with a drop of sadness because we are saying farewell to the sisters, who are so close to this community over the years. We are recounting the story of women with a vision who put their lives on the line in

their determination to make hope a concrete thing and to make a vision a reality.

In many ways, Bishop Cullinan said this encompassed the values and ethos of the sisters whose work was not lost in busy schedules and workloads, but in the daily care of each person before them.

In 2022 with the number of vocations to the religious life having severely dropped, the community with a heavy heart made the decision to leave Carriglea after 120 years and move to more suitable living facilities as the convent in Carriglea was deemed too big for them to run, but remained to have a presence in and around the town of Dungarvan until now with a small number of retired sisters.

## SVP launches budget proposals as requests for services rise

Brandon Scott

The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) has set out its recommendations for the forthcoming budget as it expects calls for help this year to exceed 250,000 for the first time. Last year SVP recorded a quarter of a million calls and from January to June this year the number of calls are 5% up on the same period in 2023.

SVP has now called on the Government to deliver an equal and inclusive Budget 2025. Dr Tricia Keilthy, SVP Head of Social Justice said "The cost-of-living crisis continues for people in poverty - low pay, lack of adequate income supports,

rising housing costs and homelessness, deprivation among refugees and asylum seekers, unaffordable childcare and lack of transport are just some of the challenges we are facing.

"While these are significant challenges, we know with the right policies Government can make a difference and SVP's voice and analysis can have an impact. Government must offer hope and show leadership based on the values of human dignity, social justice, equality and the collective good of society. These values must carry through beyond Budget 2025 and into the next Programme for

Government."

The SVP has 16 key recommendations for the forthcoming budget. Some measures they include are:

- Increasing core social welfare rates by €20.
- Improving access to childcare for low income families and support lone parents at work.
- Providing every child in homelessness access to a support worker.
- Extending free books to senior cycle and increase the capitation grant by 30%.
- Expanding the Fuel Allowance to low income working families.
- Investing in in-school therapy supports for children with additional needs.



Pictured at the launch of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP) Budget submission on July 9 are left to right: Nessan Vaughen, Chair SVP Social Justice Committee, Rose McGowan, SVP National President and Dr Tricia Keilthy, SVP Head of Social Justice.

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# Galway nuns celebrate 375 years of Nuns' Island



The Poor Clare sisters, Galway pictured with the Mayor of Galway Peter Keane at a commemoration of the 375th anniversary of the granting of the Nun's Island site by Galway Corporation.

## Chai Brady

The Poor Clares of Galway hailed the support they have received from the community during their anniversary commemoration this week marking 375 years since they received the iconic Nuns' Island site.

The then-called Galway Corporation handed over the site on July 10, 1649. This historic grant, made under the mayoralty of William Blake, has been pivotal in the enduring presence and mission of the Poor Clares in Galway. The nuns welcomed the current Mayor of Galway, Cllr Peter Keane, for a visit on Monday. The mayor had the unique opportunity to view the original deed of the land grant, which

is preserved in the archives of the Galway Poor Clares. Cllr Peter Keane expressed his admiration and respect for the longstanding dedication and contribution of the Poor Clares to the community saying: "It's an absolute honour and a privilege for me as Mayor of Galway to be in the presence of the Poor Clare Sisters on this historic occasion of the 375th anniversary of the granting of the petition of Mother Mary Bonaventure Browne to locate the order in what can only be described as a spiritual sanctuary in the heart of our city and I wish to extend my thanks and congratulations to the Poor Clares for all they contribute to our wonderful city." The petition to the Corpora-

tion of the third Abbess of Galway Mother Bonaventure Browne for the "Island adjoining the Bridge of Illaunaltanagh" in 1649 allowed the Poor Clares to establish a convent and continue their mission of prayer, contemplation, and service.

Sr Colette, Abbess of the Galway Poor Clares, reflected on the anniversary, saying, "This 375th anniversary is not only a celebration of our past but also an inspiration for our future. The original deed is a testament to the faith and commitment of our forebears and a reminder of our enduring relationship with the people of Galway. We are deeply grateful for the continued support of the community and the recognition from Mayor Keane."

# Faith-filled Mickey Harte steps down as Derry manager

## Staff reporter

GAA legend Mickey Harte (72) stepped down as Derry senior football manager after just under a year it was announced on Monday.

Mr Harte, who has long been open and outspoken about his Catholic Faith, was pictured just a few days before the announcement attending the Rally for Life in Dublin [pictured right].

While Derry won the McKenna Cup and the National League they were subsequently met with three successive championship defeats, to Donegal, Galway and Armagh.

He said: "I have decided to step down as manager of the Derry Senior Football team. I would like to thank the players for the huge commitment they gave to the Derry jersey during the 2024 season."

"I would also like to thank Gavin and the entire back-



room team for their hard work, dedication and expertise. Thanks too for the support of the County Board and

all those generous sponsors of the GAA in Derry. Finally, I wish the players every success in the years ahead."



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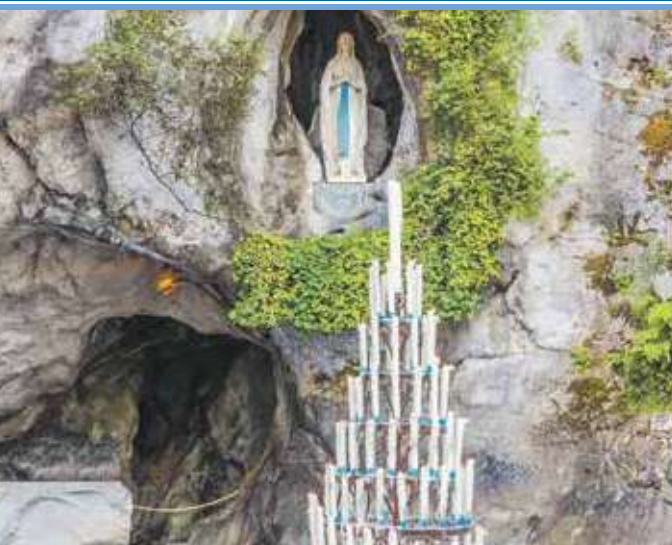
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# Cork Councillors oppose motion to remove prayer and crucifix from meetings

**Brandon Scott and Chai Brady**

Two Cork City Councillors have criticised a newly-elected Social Democrat Councillor's motion calling for the removal of the crucifix in the chamber and the discontinuation of the prayer said before meetings. One Councillor described it as an orchestrated plan to get the mainstream media "whipped up" and "attack the Church again".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Fianna Fáil Councillor Tony Fitzgerald, who has personally met the Pope, confirmed that he will vote to maintain the prayer and that he would also not be in favour of removing the crucifix in the chamber and said that he has never been subjected to complaints by members of the public about its presence during council meetings.

"This is not the first time it has been raised in coun-

cil," he said. "I will be voting to continue saying the prayer and having the silent reflection. I think it's an appropriate way of reflecting before we start the meeting. I would also not be in favour of removing the crucifix."

"It has not been raised by the public, and since this has been raised again a lot of people have contacted me to say they would prefer it to stay so I would be in favour of that. I don't hear

any major outcry from the public for its removal."

Cllr Ken O'Flynn of the Independent Ireland party slammed the motion as being an act of "posturing beyond posturing" when there are many other worthy issues that, in his opinion, merited recognition over this one.

"We had a Councillor who is newly elected who's only in a wet week. This is his first official meeting after the AGM that we had

last month. The Councilor doesn't know how procedures work in Cork City Council. He's put down a motion and I'd say before he even wrote the motion he wrote the press release and did all of the radio shows, both local and national."

Cllr O'Flynn is convinced that the underlying objective of the motion is to whip the media up into another Church and state debate – a debate that he believes was settled in 1972 with the removal of the "special position" the Church enjoyed in the Constitution.

"The entire motion is

built around Church and state – that question was answered in 1972 as far as I'm concerned. It's so farcical and bizarre that this is his first motion when there's such important issues in our city."

"If he's an atheist, all very well. Why do a piece of wood and a figurine upset him so much? This is posturing beyond posturing. It's about trying to get the mainstream media whipped up and attack the Church again," he said.

The motion will once again be debated in September.

## Iraq: 'ISIS tried to eradicate us, but failed'

**Chai Brady**

Ten years after being driven from their homelands by Islamic State (ISIS) militants thousands of Christians have returned to houses in the Nineveh Plains which have now been rebuilt, according to Aid to the Church in Need Ireland.

During an online conference organised by the Catholic charity, Nizar Semaan, the Syriac Catholic Archbishop of Adiabene in Northern Iraq, said: "Words cannot describe what we experienced 10 years ago, ISIS tried to

eradicate us, but they failed. The people here are like olive trees. You can cut them, burn them, but after 10 or 20 years they will continue to give fruit. They tried everything, but we remain, and as a Church we do everything to give a sign of hope."

Though outright violence has receded in Iraq, the Chaldean Archbishop of Erbil, Bashar Warda, who also took part in the conference, said that the current threat of a regional conflict involving Israel, Hamas, Lebanon and even Iran has Christians on edge, as they are aware that in these situations, they often become out-

right targets for fundamentalists or collateral targets in the wars of others. These divisions also continue to manifest in the political sphere. "The tension is high between certain parties, very high, and it gives you the impression that something might happen that you have to be careful about, and be well prepared, but right now we have not seen that conflict become violent," Archbishop Warda said.

The Syriac Catholic archbishop confirms that ISIS itself no longer poses a serious threat to the Christian community but tackling the mentality that gave rise to it is another question.

## Following St Patrick's steps

**Renata Milán Morales**

Hundreds of pilgrims will climb the 765 meters mountain, Croagh Patrick, to pray and participate in confessions and Mass on July 28.

In the beginning of July, weeks before the pilgrimage takes place, 'The Croagh Patrick Stakeholders' group launched the 'Friends of Croagh Patrick' initiative, which aims to maintain the work the group has completed on the reek over the past four years. A path that makes the climb "so much

safer", in the words of Mary Walsh, Mayo Mountain Rescue.

The pilgrimage is linked to Saint Patrick who spent forty days and nights fasting on the mountain in 441 AD, following the example of Christ and Moses. This year's pilgrimage theme is: 'To pray for and honour grandparents and the elderly', following Pope Francis' call.

Priests across the country are invited to minister on Croagh Patrick for Reek Sunday.

## From Kenya to Kerry with love



Bishop Henry Juma Odonya of Kitale diocese in Kenya is pictured during a pastoral visit to his two priests in Tralee at Our Lady and St Brendan's Church, on Sunday. Pictured before Mass are Fr Amos Ruto Surungai, Bishop Henry Juma Odonya, Fr Valitas Barasa, Fr Padraig Walsh PP Our Lady and St Brendan's Church and Brian O'Dowd. Photo: John Cleary.

## New Bill combats underage porn consumption

**Matt Letourneau**

This Thursday, Seanad Éireann will debate the new Protection of Children (Online Age Verification) Bill 2024, introduced by Senator Rónán Mullen last week. According to Mr Mullen, "this Bill would require online providers of pornographic material to carry out strict age verification to ensure that U-18s cannot access their material."

The proposed Bill is in response to the formulation of Coimisiún na Meán's Code and Rules on pornography, which is still open to consultation. Although the Code includes age verification requirements, it does not "make robust age veri-

fication procedures mandatory for online providers of pornography," according to Mr Mullen.

Therefore, the Bill combats this with seven points. The Bill would obligate internet service and app providers to ensure that minors can't access pornography, require age verification processes, require State ministers to create a list or class of documents that require age verification, allow third-party organisations to run age verification procedures, make service and app providers liable for failing to apply measures, allow legal defence for providers and require the secure storage of age verification data.



# The strange attraction of a nun's cloister

I've often wondered what it is like to experience a vocation as a cloistered nun, and now I think I understand what it's all about. Catherine Coldstream is an Englishwoman who grew up in a somewhat Bohemian household, and after her father died, she felt adrift in the world.

In her twenties, she became a Catholic and was then drawn to join a Carmelite order at Aken-side Priory in Northumberland. She was not only seeking God; but the "intensity of the cloister", and the "spirit and charisma" in the tradition of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross.

This was the 1990s and for twelve years, Catherine lived the Carmelite life, discarding all earthly concerns. She learned to practice the 'solitude, silence and intense prayer' of life behind the grille: she felt glad of that grille, and in her bare cell, Catherine found a sense of sanctuary. Clothed in white to be professed as a Bride of Christ was a ritual of great meaning.

**"Nuns were, even in the 1990s, adapting to the changes ordered by Vatican 2, and there were tensions between the old traditions and the new changes"**

I can see exactly what calls women (and of course men) to this monastic life: there is something serene, even reassuring, about the detachment from the hurly-burly of the world and submitting oneself to 'God's inscrutable will'.

I can see that the notion of effacing oneself, letting go, and following a discipline set down over the centuries, can almost be a relief from the ego-driven struggle of everyday life.

And yet the modern world did intrude into the monastic one, as Catherine tells it in her remarkable recent memoir, *Cloistered*. Nuns were, even in



**Mary Kenny**

the 1990s, adapting to the changes ordered by Vatican 2, and there were tensions between the old traditions and the new changes.

## Rules

The old rules had been very austere: the sisters had to have a chaperone even seeing visitors from behind the grille, and they were not permitted a cup of tea at breakfast – only sugared water. No news media penetrated the priory – until the death of Princess Diana in 1997, announced by the

Prioress to an astonished assembly of sisters.

**"We cannot but feel awe for anyone who has committed their time to the discipline of the cloister"**

There were also personality clashes within the monastery, and after those 12 years, Catherine literally

ran away. Other sisters left as well; some had psychological breakdowns; some came out as gay.

Catherine herself eventually married, contentedly. And yet, she feels that she's "still a Carmelite inside": it was such an intense experience that it will always be with her, as is her sense of the presence of God.

I'd never have made a nun – the vow of obedience is far too difficult, as Catherine Coldstream found. Yet I envy the experience of the cloister. It seems to have such a profound impact on the personality. It is such a contrast to the clamour of our everyday lifestyles, that we cannot but feel awe for anyone who has committed their time to the discipline of the cloister.



Picture caption: An American visitor greets cloistered Carmelites at the Church of St Joseph and St Teresa of Avila in Havana, Cuba. (CNS photo/Tom Tracy)

## A bishop's beautiful daughter

Dr Justin Welby, as Archbishop of Canterbury and head of the Anglican church, has sometimes been criticised for being too worldly – he was in business before getting ordained. Paul Morland, the British demographer, has even criticised the Church of England for not being sufficiently pro-natalist.

But now Dr Welby has made an affecting disclosure about how he and his wife had to resist pressure from doctors to encourage an abortion, when their unborn daughter was diagnosed with dyspraxia (difficulties with co-ordination).

He told the Synod that medics underlined how expensive – and undesirable – a disabled child would be. The Welbys defied the medical advice and now cherish their precious daughter Caroline. Dr Welby urged the new Labour government to ensure that this does not happen on the NHS, and to support disabled children and their parents. Good for him.



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There was a flowering of Ukrainian art in the 1920s when, after the tumult of the First World War and a brief period of Ukrainian independence, talented artists emerged, mixing national and peasant traditions with modernist trends like Cubism. Mykailo Boichuk, Oleksandr Bohomazov and Ivan Padalka were among the best-known of these artists, and Boichuk, gave his name to a Ukrainian school of painting.

Come the 1930s and Stalin embarked on a killing-spree of anyone he deemed 'nationalist', 'bourgeois', 'cosmopolitan' or any other label he gave to those

who deviated from his own Communist brand. Boichuk was executed along with Padalka and another gifted artist, Vasyl Sedliar. Some of their work was also deliberately destroyed.

With their stunning use of colour, fusing a rural past with 20th century abstracts, these art works are now recognised as a vital part of Ukraine's culture and history. An exhibition currently showing at London's Royal Academy in Piccadilly focuses on this Ukrainian art, and it would be great to see it brought to Ireland. Many young people in Irish education now have a Ukrainian heritage or connection with that country.

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# Lone parent women in limbo as Govt eviction deadline passes

**Renata Steffens**

The deadline for female lone-parent asylum seekers living in direct provision who received eviction letters was last Friday, July 5. Gráinne Kilcullen, Head of Programmes for ActionAid, told *The Irish Catholic* "there has been an *ad hoc* follow up approach by IPAS to the eviction notices."

She explained that some of the women being evicted received a second letter last week stating their cases are under review and they will be contacted again in a few weeks with updates.

The exception to the evictions was applied to those aged over 65 and those with significant medical or welfare needs. On June 26, the charity ActionAid released a statement urging for single

parents to be included in the exceptions.

For Ms Kilcullen the problem is that these women were told to integrate "as the Minister [Roderic O'Gorman] has said in parliamentary questions and that [the evictions] is undermining all the efforts that they have made to integrate".

Ms Kilcullen said that out of "over 5,000 people given the right to remain in Ireland in 2024", 3,004 people were sent letters of eviction. The number of women and children was not provided, but Ms Kilcullen believes they are "a substantial amount".

Some of the women the charity works with "got a phone call to say they will not be transferred at this time as there isn't any room in emergency accommodation", while another mother was told

she and her children would be reallocated to Co Cork, but received a letter a few days after that saying "the deadline for her to leave her current IPAS centre has been extended to July 18."

"She is in limbo again, does not know where she will be transferred to, making it very difficult for her to buy school materials", Ms Kilcullen said. "All the women we work with are lone parents and have gotten their status to remain. Some have been in Ireland ten years, seven years".

She also explained that these women "are also on the housing list and have been looking for help from their local councils in Wicklow, Cork and Mayo but have not received enough support to help them find independent accommodation."

## Antrim gang targets Catholics and migrants

**Staff reporter**

An LVF-linked gang responsible for a sectarian attack on the new home of a nine-year-old disabled boy in Antrim has also carried out a series of attacks on properties.

The gang, based in the Ballycraigie estate, has targeted several families in the area over recent days and weeks. It's believed their aim is to drive foreign workers from the area in order to force the reallocation of their homes to people from the area.

The latest incident comes amid rising tensions in Antrim in the run-up to the 12th.

In recent days Union, 'Ulster' and other flags were put up close to St Comgall's

Catholic Church, which is within view of the town's PSNI station.

Several homes in the Ballycraigie area have come under sectarian and racist attacks in recent days.

A family was forced to flee their Craig Hill home after windows and a parked car were smashed before midnight last week.

A poster has also been put up on a pole close to the property bearing the message: "Attention landlords, NIHE, landlords, we have had enough of undesirables and immigrants being placed in our community. The time has come for locals only.... no multiculturalism, no sex offenders. Action will be taken."

## High Court judge: only 'by the grace of God' are children in Tusla alive

**Matt Letourneau**

Amid a shortage of Tusla special care beds, the Child Law Project (CLP) published 70 reports this Monday, detailing cases of horrifying situations for vulnerable children in State care. In one report, a High Court judge stated that it was only "by the grace of God" that these children are still alive.

Special care orders are given to children who need protection or are at risk. However, there are only three special care facilities with just 15 of the 26 accommodations operational due to a

lack of trained staff. Therefore, minors are forced to wait weeks for a free bed.

The CLP reports many shocking situations arising from this waiting period. In one instance, a teenage girl with the cognitive ability of a 10-year-old was allegedly sexually trafficked and exploited while in State care. At one point, the girl called her guardian ad litem (GAL) - a court-appointed guardian - two hours away from her residence at 11 pm, saying she was "cold and hungry." The GAL reported that she believed the girl was being forced to make inappropriate videos for men, saying, "there were no words to describe the girl's plight and

despair."

A statement from The Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) outlines their concern for the children and calls for two possible actions to "halt this spiral of poor practice." They demand: "The urgent enactment and implementation of The Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023" and the establishment of an "interdepartmental working group working group to urgently address the needs of children in care."

A High Court judge said, "This is a tsunami about to reach shore, and nothing is being done."

## Bishop invites politicians to review abortion decision

**Staff reporter**

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* at the Rally for Life in Dublin, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan said politicians had opened the floodgates to abortion despite promising "repeatedly" that it would be "safe, legal and rare".

"Well I would say two things about that. They are not safe for the baby and they are certainly not rare. Have courage to face reality and to revisit that decision. It is over 10,000 now per year. This is a tragedy. This is so much pain and suffering that is being multiplied on women, on men, on fam-

ilies and the unborn themselves who are not getting the chance to live. That is an injustice. That is the first injustice to deprive somebody of their right to life."

He also challenged the media to publish the truth about abortion. "The number of abortions has increased by 250% since the floodgates opened on the first of January 2019 and it's in no media outlet apart from a tiny few like *The Irish Catholic* and *Gript* etc. The main media outlets are not taking up the story. Somebody has got to speak up for the unborn. People are just being kept in the dark."

## Bishop Crean's two-year exploration makes landfall



Twenty-four people from Cloyne Diocese, who graduated from a course in adult faith formation and ministry, are pictured in Mallow, Co. Cork. The Koinonia Programme is a two-year in-person course for adults in Cloyne diocese who wish to explore questions of theology, liturgy, spirituality and pastoral ministry. Also included in the photo are Bishop William Crean and Fr Gerard Condon, the programme director. A new enrolment for the programme will take place in September. For more information email: cloynemissionministry@gmail.com



# “Everything is connected”: changing future generations’ fate with today’s farming techniques

Rising temperatures, endless droughts and devastating floods – an unrelenting cycle of extreme weather is pushing communities in Malawi into deadly hunger. But thanks to innovative new climate-smart farming techniques, local farmers can protect their families and livelihoods from the catastrophic effects of the climate crisis for years to come.

In the Neno District of Malawi, farmer and father, Kosimasi has been struggling with the increasing consequences of climate change for many years. Unprecedented levels of rainfall have eroded the land and swept away his fishing ponds – the source of his family’s food, income and security for the future. Poverty and the growing risk of life-threatening hunger became a terrifying reality.

## Adapt, rebuild, thrive

Kosimasi knows that the rains will continue to come, and the land that generations of his family have relied on for their livelihood will continue to erode, with devastating impacts.

But with support, his whole community is now beginning to build resilience, and overcome the catastrophic effects of climate change. Kosimasi says, “We learned from Concern Worldwide that nature has changed and we should change our farms.”

Having worked in Malawi for 21 years, Concern’s climate-smart agriculture programmes have taught local farmers new irrigation methods and farming techniques, like how to dig swales and stabilise



Kosimasi, a fish farmer, stands in front of a pond in Samu village, Malawi, where he and his community are fighting the terrible effects of climate change. Photo: Chris Gagnon/Concern Worldwide

**“Everything is connected. We are using the fish pond to irrigate our crops on the land, and we are using the same crops to make the feed for the fish. We are not devastating the environment, we are busy taking care of the environment.”**

Kosimasi, Malawi

dams, to improve rainwater runoff. Essential tools, such as water drums and slashers, as well as solar panels, are helping to protect crops from soil erosion, increase harvest yields, and offer new opportunities for climate-resilient farming. By working with the environment, Kosimasi is building a positive, lasting connection between the land and the families that rely on it for food.

## A global connection

Unfortunately, Kosimasi’s story is an all too familiar one. Around the world, millions of people are being impacted by changes to the climate and environment. In Malawi, where the land supports 80% of the population’s livelihoods, climate shocks such as floods and droughts are pushing people to the brink of survival.

Here in Ireland, the effects of the climate crisis are starting to become more evident, with increased rainfall and flooding. But in Malawi, where farmers like Kosimasi are on the climate frontline, adverse changes in climate are severely disrupting the natural balance of seasons that farmers have relied on for generations. Consecutive harvests are being destroyed, giving families no time to recover and no relief from the devastation.

As experts warn that more intense and more frequent droughts, floods

## THE LASTING LEGACY OF TOOLS AND TRAINING

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### TECHNOLOGY

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### IRRIGATION

Through innovative irrigation training, such as how to dig swales to protect dams, farmers can continue to grow crops, even during droughts.



### TRAINING

With support, farmers are trained in organic fertiliser-making – a sustainable way to grow crops multiple times a year, with readily available products.

## A growing impact

“Everything is connected,” Kosimasi beams, as he explains how he was able to make fertiliser for the beds of his fishing ponds. His ponds keep the land irrigated with nutrient-packed water, which helps to grow maize used to make fish feed. These new techniques have also meant Kosimasi can sell his fish and harvests at market, raising an income to build a new house for his family, and send his daughters to school. And, most importantly, his family is no longer hungry thanks to their improved diets.

A powerful and sustainable way to support Malawi is with a gift in your Will.

Through support from Irish donors, almost 40 farmers are now dedicated to conserving the Sayamika river and surrounding land, which means Kosimasi’s whole community is no longer at risk of deadly hunger.

## A lasting legacy

For many of Ireland’s most compassionate people, playing a part in protecting the lives of future generations starts with leaving a gift in their Will. A crucial source of support, this life-saving gesture can give communities the training and tools they need to recover and adapt – and connect us all to a brighter future.

While climate change might be inevitable, through one act of kindness – choosing to leave a gift in your Will – you can make an extraordinary change. By leaving a legacy, you can help ensure every one has the tools and support they need to fight the effects of the climate crisis, so they can thrive in a world without hunger.

**Discover how you can support families to adapt and survive. Together, we can fight for a future without deadly hunger.**

**“That my support will help create incredible change, even when I’m gone, makes me so proud.”**

Eileen, Co. Limerick



In the past, the ponds Kosimasi and other farmers worked on would be swept away by flooding. Photo: Chris Gagnon/Concern Worldwide

## Learn how you can help to protect families against climate change

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# Some men are toxic but masculinity in general is not



David Quinn

**M**en ought to call out one another's misogyny, according to Taoiseach Simon Harris. Speaking in the Dail last week on the topic of male violence against women, he remarked: "It is incumbent on men to take leadership positions and not allow the worst of us to speak for the rest of us".

He added: "Every time we see or hear misogynistic behaviour or commentary, we need to call it out. Do not stay silent. Silence can be perceived as agreement."

The Taoiseach made his comments during a debate in the Dail prompted by recent

high-profile cases of violence against women.

These cases have brought back to the fore discussion of so-called 'toxic masculinity', that is, male behaviour that is bullying, entitled, sexist and sometimes violent. Everyone can agree that the foregoing list of behaviour is toxic by any reckoning.

But sometimes the discussion about 'toxic masculinity' goes much further afield to take in male behaviour, or expectations about male behaviour, that few could reasonably call 'toxic'.

For example, in 2021 in 'Psychology Today', one of the leading magazines in its field, a writer set out certain social norms that he believes are behind "toxic masculinity".

These include: "A man should suffer physical and emotional pain in silence; A man shouldn't seek warmth, comfort, or tenderness; A man should only have the emotions of bravery and anger. Any other emotions

are weaknesses. Weakness is unacceptable; a man shouldn't depend on anyone; asking for help is also weak; a man should always want to win, whether in sports, work, relationships, or sex."

## Behaviour

Some of the behaviours listed above are merely forms of stoicism, that is, the ability to accept life's challenges without complaint. There are also plenty of stoical women.

But the writer of that article seems to have in mind mainly what used to be called 'the strong, silent type', that is, the sort of man you could rely on in a crisis, a man able to control his emotions and make good decisions under pressure. Men like that would be slow to show weakness because then people might lose faith in them and in their ability to handle tough situations. There is nothing wrong with this and much that is commendable, and there is nothing wrong with a man

being competitive, so long as he is also fair in how he goes about winning.

There is a reason that so few romantic male heroes from the novels cry a lot, are bad under pressure and lack ambition; women are generally not attracted to such men.

So, we must be careful not to categorise all stereotypically male behaviour as "toxic" or else suspect. If men in general are naturally competitive, why would you tell them to act against their own natures?

**“We simply want these traits to be properly and constructively channelled, while also targeting behaviour that is genuinely toxic”**

We are in fairly deep waters here, admittedly, because nowadays it is controversial to say there is typically male or female behaviour. Instead, we are encouraged to believe that male and female behaviour is all learnt, and that there is no innately male or female nature as such. Therefore, the only reason men are often very competitive, or more drawn to physical risk-taking, or to working with objects like machines, as opposed to with people, is because of how we raised and shaped by social expectations.

But do we really want to live in a world where male competitiveness and risk-taking is discouraged? No, we simply want these traits to be properly and constructively channelled, while also targeting behaviour that is genuinely toxic, above all bullying of any kind, and especially anything involving violence.

By stigmatising stereotypically male behaviour, we will simply alienate men and especially young men, who are still finding their feet in society and are seeking positive male role models, who are often simply absent.

One reason why the Canadian psychologist and commentator Jordan Peterson is so popular with young men is because he tells them that typically male behaviour is not toxic in itself, but he also tells them that they need to grow up and take responsibility for their lives and to behave well towards other people.

The main reason he is so



Dr Jordan Peterson. Credit: Adam Jacobs

controversial in certain circles is because he attacks forms of feminism that do appear to stigmatise stereotypically male behaviour and stray into a reverse form of sexism.

It is also far better that young men looking for a bit of direction in life turn to the likes of Peterson than to someone like Andrew Tate, the social media influencer, who does encourage the worst and most sexist behaviour in men. (Tate is currently under investigation for human trafficking and rape).

## Relationships

But is male behaviour getting better or worse toward women, generally speaking? Are men more sexist or less so than in the past? Are they more likely to abuse a woman, sexually or physically, or less so?

It is probably the case that men are less sexist and more willing to treat women as equals than once upon a time.

But the rise of 'no-strings attached sex' from the 1960s on means that men are almost certainly more likely to see women in purely transactional terms from a sexual point of view because they don't have to be a relationship with a woman, much less married to her, in order to have sex with her. Women can also view sex in purely transactional terms (that is, detached from the emotions), but men appear more likely than women to approach sex in this way.

In turn, this helps explain why a lot of women feel dis-

respected after casual sex even where there is full and proper consent, and certainly the high number of abortions does not speak of a culture in which there are good relations across the board between the sexes.

**“Men and women must treat each other as equals. That ought to go without saying. They must respect each other and never regard another person as a means to an end”**

The sheer prevalence of hard-core porn can't be helping either. Has any man ever come away from watching porn with a greater sense of respect towards women afterwards?

Men and women must treat each other as equals. That ought to go without saying. They must respect each other and never regard another person as a means to an end. To put it even more simply, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'.

Simon Harris is correct to say that men should call out genuinely toxic behaviour in one another, but men in general should not be demonised and nor should most of the stereotypically male traits of the sort listed in that *Psychology Today* article.

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# When God and politics collide



## Martina Purdy

**A**s I crossed the Boyne Peace Bridge, en route to the pro-life rally in Dublin the other day, an old tale sprang to mind: King Billy, fresh from the battle, was crossing the river, when the boatman asked: "Who won?" And King Billy retorted: "Why do you care? You will still be a boatman". These days, I'm almost afraid to ask who won.

There's been a *battle royale* in France, with a surprise victory for the left, and predictable drama in Britain where voters took their bloodless revenge on the Conservative Party. In the north of Ireland, the biggest surprise was the toppling of Ian Paisley Jr by a former unionist ally and the near defeat of another DUP stalwart in East Derry by Sinn Féin.

I lost count of the number of times the word 'change' was spoken, ruefully by unionists, and enthusiastically by Labour ministers - full of promises after a loveless landslide.

Let's face it: the promise of change is not always welcome. Change can be very stressful. Even positive change - such as going on holiday - stresses us out.

## Change

It's one of the infuriating things about the Lord - He is always doing something new. But at least you can trust the Lord with your life. Can you say the same about our political masters?

The new British Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, is *personally* committed to a change in the law, allowing euthanasia. So brace yourself for a policy of assisted dying in the National Health Service (how will we tell some might say?). Even Rishi Sunak, his conservative predecessor, said he was not opposed to the idea of a new euthanasia law.

There was a time when pensioner's prime fear from government shifts was a demise in their pensions.

I do hope the great reset in Anglo-Irish relations is not a mutual embrace of death. Here in Ireland, the Joint Committee on Assisted Dying has recently recommended the Irish government legislate on assisted dying.



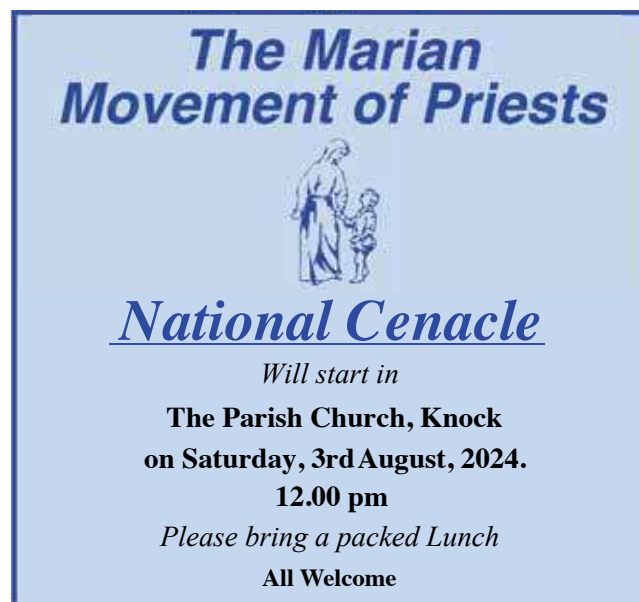
Counting begins at the UK general election count in the Titanic Exhibition Centre, Belfast (Image: Kelvin Boyes / Press Eye)

Of course, assisted dying would be limited to those who have between six and 12 months to live - but how long will the limits last? Abortion was supposed to be "rare" but a change in the law has opened the floodgates.

**“Mainstream politicians from across the political spectrum on both sides of the border - and the Irish sea - are embracing all kinds of strange doctrines”**

Bishop Kevin Doran, in his homily at the Right to Life Mass in St Saviour's Priory,

**“No bugle was sounded in this battle, and many of us are sleepwalking through this cultural war which is an assault on long-held values”**



## Values

A voter's world view and values can no longer be neatly tied to a party label, conservative or liberal, Fianna Fail or Fine Gael, left or right.

This was illustrated in a headline which appeared in *The Catholic Herald* on the eve of the July 4 Westminster poll. "You know British politics is out of kilter when George Galloway appears a feasible Catholic option."

Galloway - a political maverick (to put it mildly) - transitioned from Old Labour to the Workers Party of Britain. He now describes himself as "socialist and socially conservative". Galloway endorsed Catholic social teaching and declared his love for Jesus "with all my heart".

Galloway - who just lost a seat to Labour that he had only just taken in a by-election in February - has long been a controversialist. Perhaps embracing Jesus is what now passes for dissension in British politics, where a Labour spin-doctor once told former prime minister Tony Blair: "We don't do God".

They certainly don't,

based on their attitudes to life and death.

**“‘It’s the union, it’s the union, it’s the union,’ a Paisley stalwart declared at the DUP’s election launch. I’m afraid it’s much more serious than that”**

North of the border, we are distracted by sham fights over which flag is over the door, when the real battle is a cultural one. The issue now surely is what kind of society do we want to live in? "It's the union, it's the union, it's the union," a Paisley stalwart declared at the DUP's election launch. I'm afraid it's much more serious than that.

**“What is the point of safeguarding the union if citizens are not free from dangerous laws? Indeed what is the point of a united Ireland, a nation once again, if it does not cherish life?”**

## Safeguarding

What is the point of safeguarding the union if citizens are not free from dangerous laws? Indeed what is the point of a united Ireland, a nation once again, if it does not cherish life? There's a renewed call for a pan-unionist front - but surely safety lies in building bridges with those who share core values on life and liberty.

None of the Sinn Féin or SDLP MPs elected from the Catholic tradition in the north are pro-life. Of those who will take their seats, 64% are pro-life and all are unionists.

As the Battle of the Boyne is marked this Twelfth of July, there are indeed far more pressing questions than who won the battle.

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# Gender identity issues in schools and government inaction



Dualta Roughneen

**W**ith Enoch Burke after having spent over 400 days in jail for refusing to abide by a court order, related to his initial refusal to comply with a request/instruction to refer to a pupil by their preferred pronouns at Wilson's Hospital Secondary School, teachers and school administrators remain in the dark as to what is expected of them in relation to this sensitive and difficult topic.

Despite the reality that every secondary school and an increasing number of primary schools are being met with requests by pupils to be referred to by their preferred gender identity which does not align with their biological sex, the government remains silent in terms of any guidance on the matter.

From conversations with teachers, the decision across the board seems to be to that the chosen approach is to acquiesce and comply with such requests. Teachers and school patrons are placed in an invidious position and the chosen response is a logical one from the perspective of self-preservation and the path of least resistance.

## Guidelines

It is clear that any refusals are likely to bring unwelcome attention and attacks on both school and teachers in what inevitably becomes a social media pile-on with little sympathy or nuanced understanding from a media that takes little interest in the research on the issue to date.

Behind the decisions is also a desire to #bekind and to be supportive of children and young people who are going through what is undoubtedly a difficult time – whether suffering from genuine gender dysphoria or responding to the innate feeling that they simply do not fit in.

Teachers and schools cannot be blamed for taking such an approach however a year after the issue came to the fore with the Enoch Burke case, there has been no response and seemingly little interest from the government in addressing the challenge faced by parents, children and



A person holds a 'Trans' banner in this illustration photo. (OSV News photo/Sergio Perez, Reuters)

educators.

This is a serious dereliction of duty. It is a dereliction of duty to both students and teachers. In the UK, there is at least draft guidelines under consultation that provide some direction and understanding on the issue.

**“Better information is needed about the outcomes for children who undertake degrees of social transition”**

The guidelines note that “There is no general duty to allow a child to ‘social transition’”. In Ireland, you would be forgiven for thinking that there was a legal requirement and not just a duty to take a ‘gender affirming’ approach given the general tenor of the response to the Enoch Burke case.

The guidelines further note that:

“The Cass Review is clear that social transition is not a neutral act, and that better information is needed about the outcomes for children who undertake degrees of social transition. This means that schools and colleges should take a cautious approach and that decisions should never be taken in

haste or without the involvement of parents.”

The absence of engagement of the government on the issue is the opposite of a cautious approach. It may be wrapped up as caution, given that better information is needed, but no the uninterested and hands-off approach is not cautionary. Doing nothing is not a neutral act.

The guidance requires that no knee-jerk reaction should be taken. It recommends to allow for watchful waiting, make parents aware, consider the impact on the wider school and community, seek clinical information, get the parents views and consider both the long and the short-term impacts.

## Pronouns

The Guidelines further advise that:

“Members of staff should not unilaterally adopt any changes, including using a new name or new pronouns, unless or until this has been agreed by the school or college in accordance with the proper procedures and, in the vast majority of cases, parental consent, as set out in this guidance. If and where any change has been agreed,

the school or college should communicate this to other pupils and staff where it is necessary and proportionate to do so. This should be done sensitively, without implying contested views around gender identity are fact. Other pupils, parents and teachers may hold protected religious or other beliefs that conflict with the decision that the school or college has made, these are legitimate views that must be respected.”

**“It is expected that there will be very few occasions in which a school or college will be able to agree to a change of pronouns”**

Under no circumstances are ‘preferred pronouns’ to be used in primary school.

The guidance further advises:

“For older children, schools do not need to spec-

sition, a path they may otherwise have not taken. It is rare that ‘desistors’ (people who say they experience gender incongruence but do not transition) or ‘detransitioners’ (people transition either socially, hormonally or surgically but then seek to reverse to the extent possible) receive any public hearing and there is little public awareness of the impact of being ushered down the wrong path.

Teachers and students deserve proper guidance on this issue. Teachers need to be able to safeguard children under their care and need to be aware that ‘gender affirmation’ in schools is not a neutral act. They may be, with the best of intentions, ushering a vulnerable child down a path where they undertake irreversible surgery, suffer infertility, brittle bones and further psychological distress.

People may disagree with the approach taken by Enoch Burke in response to being requested to use a youth’s preferred pronouns, people may not agree with his underlying reasons for doing this, but for the safety and protection of children, Guidance in the UK is much more aligned with his decision than that of his employers.

**“Teachers may have to come face to face with their grown-up students who will be asking them why the adults left the room”**

That we are a further year down the line and the Government – whether it is the Department of Education, the Department of Children, or the Department of Justice, leaves student vulnerable to making bad decisions, and educators at risk of future guilt of having helped a young person down a regrettable path. This is too much responsibility and potential guilt for individual teachers or schools to take without official guidance.

Even if it is just one child that looks back and asks “Why did nobody say stop?”, which adults, which legislators, will be held accountable? Most legislators will have moved on to either bigger things or will be enjoying their pensions. Teachers may have to come face to face with their grown-up students who will be asking them why the adults left the room.

## Guidance

The absence of official guidance in Ireland means that for any teacher or administrator left to figure things out for themselves will find guidance only from advocacy and lobby groups that provide no such recommendations around a cautionary approach.

Literature shows that a ‘gender affirming’ approach can ‘lock in’ a young person to a path that leads to puberty blockers, hormone and potentially surgical tran-



# Beware of 'political Christianity'



Breda O'Brien

**W**ay back in the early years of this century, God help us, Christians' major worry was the four horsemen of the apocalypse, as the new atheists were dubbed. Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens all wrote influential books although they also gained traction through the smartphone revolution that allowed easy mass access to the internet for the first time.

New Atheism has largely fizzled out. Christopher Hitchens died, with an admirable lack of self-pity, of oesophageal cancer in 2011. Daniel Dennett died just this year. Sam Harris is more concerned with the threat of AI and of Donald Trump than with new atheism.

Nowadays, he advocates a bespoke spirituality, embracing meditation and insights from neuroscience but devoid of God.

Most worryingly, Richard Dawkins has begun to say vaguely that he approves of cultural Christianity, without endorsing what he describes as the 'nonsense' of Christ as our resurrected saviour. Dawkins has said that he likes "to live in a culturally Christian country, although I do not believe a single word of the Christian faith".

He likes Anglican services, traditional hymns, cathedrals and the poetry of the King James Bible. But as atheist commentator Alex O'Connor has said, "Christianity is more than just an affinity for evensong, disappointment with secular architecture and suspicion of Islam".

## Dawkins

I met Dawkins once and in a breathtaking piece of bigotry, he declaimed: "At least the Anglican Church gave the world the King James Bible. What has Catholicism given except the Sacred Heart picture?"

Obviously, Mozart, Vivaldi or even Tolkien did not count. Nor, apparently, did Georges Lemaitre, the Jesuit who popularised what came to be known as the Big Bang theory of evolution.

A Christianity without Christ is the real nonsense. As Russell Moore, the Evangelical editor of *Christianity Today* says, "In this case, cultural Christian has a dis-

tinct meaning for Dawkins, which amounts to 'not Muslim'. It's a way of defining who we and they are based on national customs, not on any concern for who (or if) God is".

Christians of all denominations, including Catholics, have felt under siege in our culture. The danger is that they will turn to anyone claiming to be an ally.

Donald Trump's cynical manipulation of the Evangelical and to a lesser extent, the Catholic vote is a case in point. It is just about possible to see why a Christian could have voted for Trump in 2016, with the prospect of abolishing Roe v Wade.

There is not a single reason to vote for Trump today as we know in even more gruesome detail his cruel wit, his narcissism and his lack of connection to any standards of truth. Aside from late-term abortion, he is pro-choice. The fact that Trump is selling a Trump-endorsed bible makes Dawkins' embrace of cultural Christianity almost look benign.

I hope that at least some US Catholics will vote for Peter Sonski, of the American Solidarity Party, one of the few candidates with a platform compatible with Catholicism. We also need more Catholics to get involved in Irish politics and to be grateful to those who are already involved.

**“French Catholics have not been truly able to see their faith as a marker of national identity since the French Revolution but the cultural remnants linger”**

In April, a Pew Research poll showed that 55% of US Catholics intend to vote for Trump, compared to 43% for Biden. Not that Joe Biden, who was both confused and incoherent during the recent debate with Trump, is any prize, either.

However, it is not just in the US that Catholics are expressing frustration by embracing questionable ideologies and individuals.

For example, French Catholics have not been truly able to see their faith as a marker of national identity since the French Revolution but the cultural remnants linger. In a *La Croix* interview, a prominent French political



Then-President of the US, Donald Trump, addresses thousands of pro-life supporters during the 47th annual March for Life in Washington. Photo: OSV News/Leah Millis, Reuters

scientist and polling expert, Jérôme Fourquet, suggested that practising Catholics feel trapped between woke progressivism and identitarian Islamism.

As a result, they are attracted to Marine le Pen's National Rally, fronted by Jordan Bardella. The National Rally slogan, 'We are at home' resonates with them, according to Fourquet. It implies that French culture is correct and others have to adapt to it.

Yet Marine Le Pen has left Catholicism far behind. Her niece, Marion Marechal of Reconquest, is a practising Catholic but even further to the right on immigration than her aunt.

## Sojourners

But since Christians can never be truly at home in this world and we are all sojourners and strangers until we reach our home in heaven, it is another reason why we should be generous to newcomers forced to flee their countries.

Of course, we should be concerned with preserving Christian culture and heritage but only because it witnesses to Christ.

Endorsing politicians actively at odds with Catholic social teaching, or indeed, being pleased that Richard Dawkins now supports a nostalgic view of cultural Christianity, will just bring about the death of authentic Christian faith more quickly.

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# Thousands mobilise for pro-life cause

Brandon Scott

**T**housands attended a pro-life rally in Dublin city centre last Saturday which heard calls for the Government to establish a special task force to tackle the “spiralling abortion rate”, with speakers saying politicians must “wake up” to the fact that abortion numbers have more than tripled since 2018.

The Rally for Life also heard that there was a disconnect between the Government and the people on the abortion issue, and that ministers needed to stop relying on the “same NGOs—who advised them it was a good idea to ask the people to take the word ‘mother’ out of the Constitution”.

Sandra Parda of the Rally for Life Committee said that it was “simply not good enough for the government to stick its head in the sand year after year as the abortion rate continues to rise”.

Both Ms Parda and Independent TD, Carol Nolan, who also addressed the packed rally, said that women needed support and real choices, and that women were being “betrayed” by the lack of support for unexpected pregnancies.

Deputy Nolan also backed calls for the establishment of a special task force, saying that “thousands of women are being betrayed by the over-promotion of abortion as the only possible response to pregnancy in certain circumstances and the cruel under-promotion of life affirming alternatives”.

“I have stated previously that we are now confronting an epidemic of loss. That, coupled with the virtual certainty that the numbers of abortions will continue to escalate at an annual level, this should be treated as a health policy emergency,” the Independent TD said.

The Rally, which gathered at Parnell Square before marching to Custom House Quay where speeches were heard, also heard from Kaya Jones, Grammy winner, and former member of chart-topping group The Pussycat Dolls.

The songwriter and singer said she had a message for young women at the Rally in particular: “you are made to be loved and respected and cherished, not to be told that you must have a choice that no woman really wants - which is to end the life of her child”.

She said that her personal experience of the music industry - where as a 19 year old she had to perform on stage while still suffering the after-effects of abortion - had led her to the realisation that it was exploitative and demeaning to women. She said when she found she was pregnant she had been told to “get rid of it” by those she felt were in charge of her career and her life.

Ms Jones, who won a Grammy in 2019 after she had left The Pussycat Dolls, told the Rally “I have a Grammy, but none of it will bring my children back” as she opened up on her abortion regret.







# THE SYNODAL TIMES

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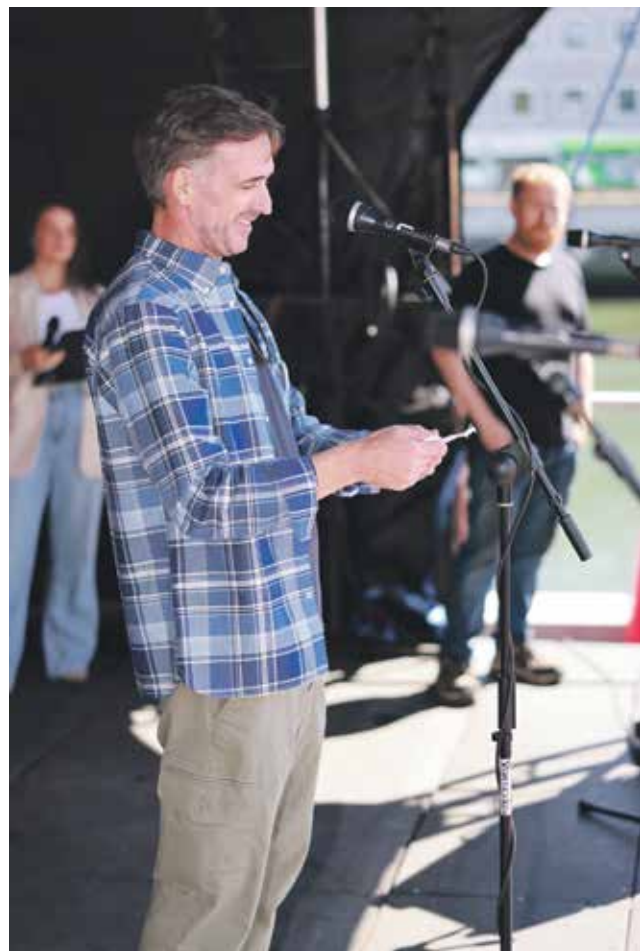
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# Bishop: 'Politicians must have the courage to revisit the abortion law in Ireland'



Martina Purdy

**S**peaking to *The Irish Catholic* at the Rally for Life in Dublin, Bishop Phonsie Cullinan said politicians had opened the floodgates to abortion despite promising "repeatedly" that it would be "safe, legal and rare".

"Well I would say two things about that. They are not safe for the baby and they are certainly not rare. Have courage to face reality and to revisit that decision".

"It is over 10,000 now per year. This is a tragedy. This is so much pain and suffering that is being multiplied on women, on men, on families and the unborn themselves who are not getting the chance to live. That is an injustice. That is the first injustice to deprive somebody of their right to life."

## Challenged

He also challenged the media to publish the truth about abortion.

"The number of abortions has increased by 250% since the first of January 2019 and it's in no media outlet apart from a

tiny few like *The Irish Catholic* and *Gript* etc. The main media outlets are not taking up the story. This is a tragedy beyond limits. It is horrendous what is happening. And somebody has got to speak up for the unborn. People are just being kept in the dark."

The Bishop of Elphin also accused politicians of failing in their role to promote the common good and shaking the foundations of society with abortion.

**"It is not always easy to see pregnancy as a gift, but could it be that our society is becoming conditioned to see pregnancy as a problem?"**

Bishop Kevin Doran told Catholics at the Rally for Life Mass on Saturday that they had a role to play in changing attitudes and empowering politicians.

In his homily in St Saviour's Priory, Bishop Kevin Doran said a more welcoming attitude was required towards new life - and questioned whether society was now conditioned to see a pregnancy as a burden rather than a blessing.

"Why is it that, in our society, we hesitate to rejoice in the gift of life. Of course, it is not always easy to see pregnancy as a

gift, but could it be that our society is becoming conditioned to see pregnancy as a problem?"

Reflecting on Luke's Gospel, where Mary and Elizabeth rejoice in their pregnancies, the bishop said:

"Perhaps, as we listen to God's Word, we need to ask ourselves how we might be able to contribute to the development of a more positive and welcoming attitude towards pregnancy and childbirth."

## Violence

"No matter how it is dressed up, abortion is an act of violence against women. It kills unborn babies; thirty-eight thousand of them here in Ireland since the present legislation was enacted. These are not just statistics; they are innocent human beings, each with his or her own unique identity. How could it be possible that all of this violence and taking of life would not fundamentally alter the character of our society."

"When the law no longer upholds the principle that one person may not freely take the life of another, then the very foundations of our civilisation are shaken."

The bishop spoke about the age old struggle between good and evil and said that the "political action" at the march was a "small but vital expression of our commitment to defend the common good of our whole society."

"This is what our poli-

ticians are elected to do, and they need the power of our witness. Women and babies need us to stand with them, and so do men. Doctors, nurses and pharmacists need our support and encouragement to stand for the truth and to act with integrity."

**"Our society is so focused on making abortion available that we have no formal process for even asking a woman why she feels she needs to make this choice"**

He said that Catholics must bring "more than just ourselves" to this political action - but also solidarity with the Lord Jesus. "Mary carried Jesus in her womb as she walked. It is important that as we walk, we carry him in our hearts."

He also spoke of the importance of offering sup-

port to pregnant women and finding out why they feel a woman feels she needs to "make this choice".

"For some women, pregnancy is a lonely time and we often hear that abortion is a lonely choice. There are people around them, but there is nobody with them. Let's face it, our society is so focused on making abortion available that we have no formal process for even asking a woman why she feels she needs to make this choice."

## Intrusive

"Is there some way in which we could be with women and walk with them from early pregnancy, through the birth of their child and into infancy, in a way which would not be intrusive, but which would reassure them that they are not on their own."

"So what I am saying is this: we certainly need to change the law and change the practice and change prevailing attitudes in society. But our prayer always has to

begin with a desire for our own hearts."

**"The primacy of personal autonomy and that fact that, once it is accepted in practice, it simply grows out of control"**

He also challenged Catholics to make the connection between abortion and euthanasia: "Of course there are differences in the human experience, but the ideology is the same, the absolute right to choose, the primacy of personal autonomy and that fact that, once it is accepted in practice, it simply grows out of control."

"We in the Council for Life of the Bishops Conference have recently produced a thirty-minute video called *Through the Valley* to encourage people to reflect on how we care for people in critical and terminal illness. It is on our own social media and also on the iCatholic platform. I encourage you to look at it and to share it widely. *Through the Valley!*"

**"We certainly need to change the law and change the practice and change prevailing attitudes in society. But our prayer always has to begin with a desire for our own hearts"**



Young attendees at the Rally for Life in Dublin last Saturday. Photos: The Life Institute.

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- Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe built in response to Our Lady's request to the visionary, St Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin.
- At Tepeyac Hill, kneel before the miraculous image of Our Lady.
- Explore Mexico City.
- Ruins of the Aztec city.
- Palacio Nacional
- Paseo de la Reforma. Teotihuacan
- a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the pyramid of the Sun and the Moon.
- Church of the Holy Family, where the remains of the martyred Miguel Pro are venerated.
- Floating Gardens of Mexico, Xochimilco.
- City of Angels.
- Old City of Puebla.
- Shrine of San Miguel del Milagro.
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- Tour of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Entrance fees to Teotihuacan (pre-Aztec Pyramids).
- Gondola boat trip of Xochimilco.
- Entrance to Anthropology Museum.
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# Msgr McGuinness connects science and scripture during ICMA Summer School



Renata Steffens

The Irish Church Music Association (ICMA) had their 54th Summer School with theme 'Water of Life' last week from July 2-4 in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth. The chief celebrant at the opening Mass in the College Chapel was

Msgr Joseph McGuinness. During his homily, Msgr McGuinness mentioned "the American chemist Stanley Miller's experiment in 1952", when Mr Miller demonstrated "how the extraordinary complexity of life on Earth might have begun to emerge from the waters of the oceans". Msgr McGuinness said that "it seems to me to be a striking example of science echoing scripture". He said that reminded him of the image of the "Spirit of God hovering over the chaos of the waters at the beginning of the world", when in Genesis one of the first acts of God was to impose order on

the water. "Throughout the Old and New testaments, water figures, both literally and metaphorically, as an eloquent sign and symbol of the power of God's Spirit", he continued. "It is no wonder then, that water figures so prominently in the liturgy of the Church, as a sign of cleansing, purification, healing, service, renewal and life." "What Stanley Miller's experiment gave us is a small insight into the ingenuity of the mind of the Creator", Msgr McGuinness concluded.



Msgr Joseph McGuinness celebrated the Eucharist during the opening Mass of the Irish Church Music Festival School 2024, in the Chapel of St Patrick's College, Maynooth.



The Irish Catholic

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# Out&About

## Faith lit in Knock



**MAYO:** Clones group participating in the 'Faith & Light National Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine', on June 29.



**MAYO:** Lisdoonvarna group had a special candle presented to them at The 'Faith & Light National Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine' on June 29 to celebrate their 25th Anniversary.



**CARLOW:** Fr Seamus Whelan is pictured on June 15 marking the Golden Jubilee of his Ordination with his brother Dan and wife Brid, their daughters Agnes and Kate, son Daniel, and Agnes's husband Pat Kealy, and their children Jack, Daniel, and Olivia.

## IN SHORT

### Bishop Gavin announces new diocesan appointments

Bishop Fintan Gavin announced new appointments throughout the Diocese of Cork and Ross last week, which will be effective from July 27. A number of priests are retiring while others are taking up appointments in the Diocese's 'Families of Parishes'.

The priests retiring are

- Fr Ted Collins AP in the Family of Parishes of Ardfield & Rathbarry, Barryroe, Clonakilty, Kilmeen & Castleventry, Rosscarbery and Timoleague.
- Fr Jeremiah Cremin Co-PP in the Family of Parishes of Bandon, Enniskeane & Desertserges, Innishannon/Knockavilla, Kilbrittain, Kilmurry, Murragh & Templemartin.
- Canon James O'Donovan AP in the Family of Parishes of Ballyphehane, The Lough and Togher.
- Fr Bertie O'Mahony AP in the Family of Parishes of Bandon, Enniskeane & Desertserges, Innishannon/Knockavilla, Kilbrittain, Kilmurry, Murragh & Templemartin.

The priests taking up appointments are

- Family of Parishes of Carrigaline, Crosshaven, The Harbour Parishes (Monkstown and Passage West) and Tracton Abbey  
Fr David O'Connell Co-PP resident in Monkstown.
- Family of Parishes of Aughdown, Castlehaven & Myross, Kilmacabea, Rath & The Islands and Skibbereen  
Fr Kevin O'Regan Co-PP and Moderator resident in Skibbereen.
- Family of Parishes of Ardfield & Rathbarry, Barryroe, Clonakilty, Kilmeen & Castleventry, Rosscarbery & Lisavaird and Timoleague.  
Canon Martin O'Driscoll Co-PP resident in Rosscarbery.  
Fr Fergus Ryan OP CC resident in Barryroe.
- Family of Parishes of Ballincollig, Ballinora, Ovens & Farran.  
Fr John McCarthy Co-PP resident in Ovens.
- Family of Parishes of Bandon, Enniskeane & Desertserges, Innishannon / Knockavilla, Kilbrittain, Kilmurry, Murragh & Templemartin  
Fr Pontianus Jafra CC resident in Kilbrittain.

- Family of Parishes of Bantry, Caheragh, Goleen, Muintir Bháire, Schull  
Fr Myles McSweeney Co-PP and Moderator to be resident in Bantry.  
Fr Chris O'Donovan Co-PP resident in Schull.
- Family of Parishes of Blackpool, The Glen & Ballyvolane, Ss Peter and Paul's, St Finbarr's South, St Patrick's, Sunday's Well and The Cathedral  
Fr Kieron O'Driscoll Co-PP resident in St Finbarr's South.
- Family of Parishes of St Joseph's Mayfield and Upper Mayfield. Pastoral Care of Holy Family Church, Military Hill  
Fr Liam Ó hlcí AP resident in St. Joseph's Parish, Mayfield.
- Family of Parishes of Clogheen & Kerry Pike, Farranree, Gurranabraher, Knocknaheeny & Hollyhill  
Fr Declan Mansfield to assist in this Family of Parishes while also fulfilling the role of part-time chaplain in Marymount University Hospice.

The bishop also extended his gratitude to Fr John Heinhold SPS Co-PP and Moderator in

the Family of Parishes of Aughdown, Castlehaven, Kilmacabea, Rath & The Islands and Skibbereen who is returning to St Patrick's Missionary Society.

### Lighting the faith with pilgrimage to Knock

Faith & Light groups from the island of Ireland gathered at Knock Shrine for their annual pilgrimage on June 29. Attendees met in the St John's Care Centre before moving to the parish church for the Mass at 2pm. The celebrant of the Mass was Fr Fergal Cunnane, who is the national chaplain of 'Faith & Light'.

Faith & Light is an international community made up of persons with intellectual disability, their families, carers and friends. They meet on a regular basis in a Christian spirit, to pray, celebrate life and share friendship.

The community was founded in Lourdes on Easter of 1971. Parents of children with disability experiences a sense of solidarity during the Lourdes pilgrimage and for the first time did not feel on their own. To keep that sense of connection they decided to gather each month in a parish setting to pray and support each other.



Edited by Renata Steffens  
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**LOURDES:** Silvermines Choir, Co Tipperary in Lourdes. The group accompanied the Killaloe Diocese's pilgrimage on a week of prayer and fellowship.



**MAYO:** Participants of the 'Faith & Light National Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine' that happened on June 29. The international Christian Community movement 'Faith & Light' brings together people with intellectual disabilities, their families, carers and friends.



**CAVAN:** Annette O'Rourke, Chairperson of Kingscourt Parish Pastoral Team with the organising committee of the local Indian community at a Mass of Welcome and parish reception at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, for the many Indian families now living in the parish, who are engaged in various healthcare settings.



**LOURDES:** Killaloe Youth Section in Lourdes during the diocese's pilgrimage.



**CARLOW:** Fr Seamus Whelan after concelebrating Mass in the Sacred Heart Church, Borris, on June 15 marking the Golden Jubilee of his Ordination in June 1974. Also in the photo - Fr Rory Nolan PP, Borris, and Fr Seamus's grand-nephew Daniel Kealy, who was a server at the Mass.



**CARLOW:** Brid Whelan (Fr Seamus's sister-in-law) with Fr Rory Nolan PP, Borris and Mary O'Sullivan (Fr Seamus's sister) on the occasion of Fr Seamus Whelan's Golden Jubilee celebration.

## ANTRIM

Eucharistic adoration every Friday from 2pm to 8.3pm in St Peter's Church, Lisburn. Every evening adoration and prayer from 6.3pm to 7.3pm.

## ARMAGH

Armagh Parish Holy Spirit Prayer Group welcome new people to join at the Synod Hall on Tuesday evenings. Gatherings with tea happen at 7.30pm, Rosary at 7.40pm, and Prayer meetings from 8-9.30pm. All welcome.

## CAVAN

Outdoor Mass at Mass Rock on Lough an Leagh to mark the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel will happen on July 13.

## DUBLIN

'Love and Responsibility' Videodivina discussion on St Pope John Paul II with Christopher West and Matt Fradd, on Mondays at 7pm. The event will happen online and in person at 23 Merrion Square North, D02 XE02. More information email info@pureinheart.ie

Pure in Heart with collaboration of Young Adults Rathmines are organising a talk by American theologian Bill Donaghy with theme 'The Way of Wonder.' The event will happen on July 26 at the Church of Mary Immaculate Refuge of Sinners in Rathmines. The doors open at 6.30pm, early bird tickets are €15 and more info on email info@pureinheart.ie.

## FERMANAGH

Blessed Sacrament (Adoration) takes place every Wednesday in St Ninnidh's Church. It begins after 10.00am Mass and will end at 11.30am.

## LAOIS

Rosary prayed in the Church of the Assumption, the Heath, Portlaoise parish, daily at 2pm and at 3pm on Sundays.

## LEITRIM

Blessing of the graves on Sunday, July 28 following 3pm Mass in Newbridge Cemetery, Ballinaglera.

## LOUTH

Divine Mercy Prayer Chaplet in Church of St James, Grange every Sunday evening from 7.30pm 8.00pm. Everyone welcome.

## MAYO

St Sharbel's Relic coming to Knock Shrine on July 27. A talk will happen at 1.30pm at St John's Centre, rosary will happen at 2pm and Mass at 3pm in the Basilica. After Mass there will be a blessing with the relic. For more information email saintsharbeldevotions@gmail.com.

'Light the Fire 2024' takes place on August 4, from 12 noon to 4pm at the Ballintubber Abbey, F12 W584. The event will be celebrated by Archbishop Francis Duffy DD along with Deacon John Taaffe. Eurovision's Dana Rosemary Scanlon will sing her new song for St Patrick. Everyone welcome to gather for prayer, rosary and healing.

## MEATH

Adoration of the Eucharist happens every Friday in Athboy Church, after the 9.30 Mass. New adorers are always welcome.

## ROSCOMMON

'Roscommon Men's Group' get together every Friday morning in The Cube, Lanesborough Road, F42 DX61 from 11am to 1pm. Everyone welcome for good conversation, outings, talks and friendship. For more information call 087 7516308.

'Elphin Diocese's Morning Pilgrim Walk' from Castlereagh to Knock will take place on Sunday, August 18. Gathering will start at 6.30am at St Patrick's Church and register at Church porch. For more information see elphindiocese.ie/walk2knock

## SLIGO

There is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in St Colmcille's Church, Rathcormack, every Sunday from 4-5pm. Everyone is welcome.

## WATERFORD

Healing service on July 13 at 3pm in Waterford City's Cathedral. Fr John Harris and Bishop Alphonsus 'Phonsie' Cullinan will be present. All are warmly welcome.

## WEXFORD

Farewell celebration for Fr James Cullen on July 18. Mass will be held at Rowe Street Church and refreshments will be served afterwards. All are welcome.



# What does it mean for St Mary's to become a cathedral?



Matt Letourneau

**M**y mom always told me that when you want to experience a city's culture, you should always start by visiting its cathedrals. When picturing a cathedral, you may imagine the skyscraping towers of Notre-Dame or the grandiose dome of St Paul's. Although these buildings are synonymous with resplendent architecture, jaw-dropping scale and profound histories, somewhat unassuming Churches, such as the Catholic St Mary's Pro Cathedral in the heart of Dublin, can still hold deep-seated influences in their respective communities. After St Mary's announced earlier this month that they were petitioning the Holy See to be raised to the dignity of a Cathedral, a position that no Catholic Church has held in Dublin for about 500 years, I knew I had to take my mom's advice and visit this nondescript church to determine why it's obtaining such a high distinction. Embarking on this adventure, I hoped to discover what makes a cathedral a cathedral and see if St Mary's is 'worthy' of becoming one. Even though you may not picture Churches like St Mary's when you think of a cathedral, it turns out that a storied past and bright future lies beyond its white, columned entrance.

Arriving in Dublin this summer after my first year of classes at Yale University (go bulldogs), I was confident to take this daunting task head on. However, after spending only



St Mary's Pro Cathedral, as viewed from Marlborough Street

a few weeks here, I soon realised that I am another clueless American tourist, stumbling through an unfamiliar city. Therefore, in order to learn more about Dublin's culture, what defines a cathedral and why St Mary's redesignation is significant, I decided to hop on the Luas, explore the two current Church of Ireland cathedrals in Dublin, St Patrick's and Christ Church, and see how they compare to St Mary's, attempting to not get lost along the way.

## Dual cathedrals

At the 1000-year-old Christ Church Cathedral, the first thing I noticed was the stunning facade,

composed of Romanesque arches and towers mixed with gothic and Victorian elements. However, I soon learned that its history is equally as rich as its architecture, with famous kings, such as King Richard II and the Norse king of Dublin Sitriuc, being associated with it. Moreover, the 16th century reformation led this previously Catholic cathedral to become a part of the Church of Ireland, and many separate rebuilding and restoration projects occurred over the centuries. Nonetheless, the interior stood out to me the most, particularly the crypt. The crypt houses a

menagerie of beautiful artefacts and manuscripts, such as a copy of the Magna Carta and a 17th century, elaborate gold plate the size of a fridge. In a sea of like-minded tourists flanking me on all sides, I felt like I was walking through a museum. There was even a gift-shop, selling any Ireland-themed nickname you can think of. But is there more to a cathedral than some historic antiques, a little history and an ancient, pretty building? As I would soon find out, it's much more complicated than that.

**“The first iteration of the church was a small wooden building built around 890, but in 1190, today's structure replaced it”**

Surprisingly, the 800-year-old St Patrick's Cathedral offered completely different insights into what a cathedral should be. As I approached, I felt like I had just arrived at Hogwarts. The gothic church's limestone tower and spires seemed to glow a yellow hue in the sun, and it was impos-

sible to miss its enormous scale, dwarfing the trees growing next to it. Even more so than Christ Church, a storied history is at the forefront of this cathedral's identity. The cathedral was built on an ancient well that, according to legend, was used by St Patrick himself to baptise the first Irish Christians in the 5th century. The first iteration of the church was a small wooden building built around 890, but in 1190, today's structure replaced it. Many historic events have occurred there, and it has been used as both a courthouse and a university. The inside was much grander than Christ Church, with colossal ceilings and colourful, ancient flags draped from the walls. But like Christ Church, there were artefacts and historical documents in cases and on pedestals, such as the 'Door of Reconciliation,' a 15th century door that tells a story of warfare. St Patrick's also has a crypt, beautiful stained-glass windows and, of course, another gift shop.

One of the first things that struck me inside the cathedral was how many interactive attractions there were. Visitors could wear headphones to listen to recordings of tolling church bells and choruses, feel samples of ancient fabric and draw depictions of religious icons using frottage techniques. It was now evident that there was another aspect of cathedrals than just history: attracting and keeping the attention of visitors.

## From 'pro' to permanent

Finally, it was time to traverse the place that inspired my adventure — St Mary's Pro Cathedral — and investigate how it compares to Dublin's current cathedrals to see why it is becoming one. Walking through Talbot Street to Marlborough Street, I immediately understood the peculiarity of the cathedral's location. Except for it being around the corner from two of Dublin's famous tourist attractions, the Spire of Dublin and the Dublin Portal, St Mary's is surrounded by run-down streets that tourists would usually avoid. The Pro Cathedral's white, Greek-Revival pediment and pillars stand out like a sore thumb amongst the bland red brick townhouses and apartment buildings surrounding it. For the area, you can't miss it, but unlike Christ Church or St Patrick's, it is tucked in an out-of-the-way area, so a tourist will probably



St Patrick's Cathedral, dwarfing the surrounding foliage

**“The cathedral was built on an ancient well that, according to legend, was used by St Patrick himself to baptise the first Irish Christians in the 5th century”**



not stumble upon it on a sightseeing stroll.

This strange location may seem like an oversight, but it was very intentional. I met with Fr Kieren McDermott, the pro cathedral's administrator. As we stood on the organ loft, overlooking the nave, lined by white doric columns and under a grand dome, he explained, "The great strength of the Pro cathedral is prayer, spirituality and connecting, particularly, with the poor, the area and those who are on the margins or feel that they're on the margins. I see my role as having a particular, strong social outreach as well." Even though St Andrew's on Westland Row was also considered for redesignation as a cathedral, it seems as if the opportunity for outreach in St Mary's location made it a better choice. Moreover, in a homily on June 3, 2024, Dublin Archbishop Dermot Farrell called for a revitalisation of the city centre through the pro cathedral, saying, "The centre of a city—its heart—needs people, and people need worthy spaces to live and to be—to be with each other, and to be with 'the Other'—our God who constantly creates us and re-creates us, who brings us to life." In other words, leadership in the Archdiocese of Dublin hopes that St Mary's recategorisation will revitalise the surrounding community with greater outreach and a higher influx of visitors.

Although St Andrew's was not chosen to be raised to the distinction of a cathedral, it is still part of a larger plan by the archbishop: the 'Twin Pillar Approach.' This means that throughout a long period of "consultation, reflection, discernment and prayer," according to Fr McDermott, the archbishop decided to have a point of pastoral outreach on either side of the River Liffey. Therefore, the archdiocese decided to make St Mary's a cathedral while also turning St Andrew's into a minor basilica. This will, in theory, allow the communities on either side of the river to receive the benefits and resources that a basilica and cathedral will bring to the area.

**“As I discovered with St Patrick's and Christ Church, a cathedral needs a deep history. It seems that after two centuries, St Mary's finally has enough 'experience' under its belt to step into the ring”**

However, location isn't the only reason for St Mary's new cathedral status. In fact, it seems as if this has been the plan since it was first built about 200 years ago. "The word pro cathedral comes from the Latin *pro tem* (meaning provisional). So, it was always envisaged that a Catholic cathedral would be established or reestablished," said Fr McDermott. With its bicentenary coming up next year, it was shocking to me that St Mary's wasn't made a cathedral earlier. However, as I discovered with St Patrick's and Christ Church, a cathedral needs a deep history. It



The nave, dome and altar of St Mary's Pro Cathedral

seems that after two centuries, St Mary's finally has enough 'experience' under its belt to step into the ring.

### History

One may be surprised at how much history St Mary's has, considering it has been around for far less time than St Patrick's and Christ Church. Although the pro cathedral was finished in 1825, its legacy goes back much further. Roughly 1000 years ago, a Benedictine monastery named St Mary's stood proud by the river. In the 12th Century, this monastery grew to a Cistercian abbey, encompassing a large part of Dublin, stretching "right along the north side of the Liffey, from the present Four Courts, the justice space, right down to Constitution Hill and east of the Tolka river," according to Fr McDermott. This was one of the wealthiest monasteries in Ireland until the English Reformation, where the English suppressed monasteries and stole artefacts. In 1539, Catholicism was penalised and underground in Ireland, the land was rented out to farmers and the monastery was dismantled. The destroyed monastery's stones now compose the Capel Street Bridge. In 1697, a St Mary's Parish was built for Protestants, but ten years later, the fugitive Archbishop of Dublin Edward Joseph Byrne secretly made the parish Catholic. Later, Pastor John Linegar began collecting for the Catholic St Mary's, and after 27 years of donations, he built a small chapel in 1729. By 1786 when Dr John Thomas Troy was appointed the Archbishop of Dublin. Thus, he decided to create a "dignified,

A collection of golden artefacts in the Christ Church crypt, including the King William III Royal Plate



spacious church", and he found a mansion on the corner of Marlborough Street that was a perfect location at the time. The house was torn down, and the cathedral began construction in 1814. During construction, Pope Pius VII shipped a custom gold chalice "for the new Cathedral being built in Dublin". The architect who designed the pro cathedral is a complete mystery, and only a signed 'P' found on the building refers to the pro cathedral's designer. Some believe this may refer to John Sweetman, a Dublin exile who lived in Paris, as the 'P' may have referred to his new city. Today, presidents, politicians, celebrities and foreign ambassadors alike visit the cathedral on national occasions. The Pro Cathedral has seen visitors every day

since it was built who honour its beauty, pray and find peace within its white walls.

### What is a cathedral?

As it turns out, the official definition of a cathedral is simple. "The term cathedral comes from the Latin word *Cathedra*," Fr McDermott told me, "It's the seat of the bishop, the place the bishop is at work, so a cathedral is the principal church in a diocese." However, a cathedral is so much more than just a powerful parish. "A cathedral really should be the focal point in a diocese. It should be busy with people coming and going throughout the day visiting clergy," Fr McDermott said, "Cathedrals, for the ages, have never failed to attract the attention and consume the energies of painters, poets, novelists and

artistry of every medium. This continues in our own day."

As I stumbled around the city, my adventure showed me that a cathedral is more than its location, its size or its architecture. A cathedral's identity is formed from the community surrounding it, the visitors who are inspired everyday by it and the history it contains. Although St Mary's had less artefacts than the other two cathedrals and (perhaps more importantly) no gift shop for Irish trinkets, you can still feel the history seeping through its walls, flowing into the nave and cascading to the altar. St Mary's may be old and in need of renovation, it may be in an unexpected location and it may not be as elaborate as Christ Church or St Patrick's. But, in my opinion, St Mary's is truly 'worthy' of becoming a cathedral.



# Empowering and inspiring Dundalk youth



**Renata Milán Morales**

**A**iming to inspire and empower youth through a week of interactive workshops and activities, Redemptorist Youth Ministry Ireland started their Rejuvenate Summer Camp 2024 last month.

Each day had a unique theme. The first focused on community, highlighted by an intergenerational workshop with a local senior citizens' group.

Day two helped participants find their voice, encouraging self-expression and stepping out of their comfort zones. On day three, the camp looked at the broader world with Trócaire facilitating sessions on social justice and environmental care. Campers were introduced to planting and growing their own food. The day ended with relaxation and yoga.

Day four saw junior leaders taking charge with a workshop on empowerment, addressing local youth issues and strategies for overcoming them. The camp concluded with a day trip to Bluebell Lane Glamping Mullagh-bawn, where the young people engaged in team building, orienteering and enjoyed a BBQ to wrap up the week.



Photo: Shanroe Photography



Photo: Shanroe Photography



Photo: Shanroe Photography





# Synod working document skips women, LGBTQ+, married priests



Elise Ann Allen

**A** working document for the final gathering of Pope Francis's controversial Synod of Bishops on synodality, presented Tuesday in a news conference, may strike most observers as more notable for what it didn't say than what it did.

The official working document, called an *Instrumentum Laboris*, for the second Rome-based session of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality, marking an official end to the three-year process, was published July 9.

At the close of last year's initial session, a synthesis document summarising the month-long discussion was also widely considered to be a disappointment for those hoping the synod would urge action on issues such as married priests, women's ordination and the welcome of LGBTQ+ individuals, which were among the most emotional and contested discussion topics.

## Nonplussed

Those unhappy with the synthesis document will also likely be nonplussed by the working document for this year's gathering, which makes no mention of priestly celibacy or the married priesthood and which is also absent of references to the LGBTQ+ community.

The document does not include any mention of 'homosexual,' 'orientation' or 'gay' but offers a general acknowledgement of a desire from all continents "concerning people who, for different reasons, are or feel excluded or on the margins of the ecclesial community or who struggle to find full recognition of their dignity and gifts within it".

"This lack of welcome leaves them feeling rejected, hinders their journey of faith and encounter with the Lord,



Pope Francis speaks to participants in a conference of moderators of associations of the faithful, ecclesial movements and new movements in the New Synod Hall at the Vatican June 13, 2024. Photo: CNS photo/Vatican Media

and deprives the Church of their contribution to mission," the document says.

On women, like the synthesis document, the *Instrumentum Laboris* recognises a widespread desire to see women in roles of leadership and governance more often and to foster a greater inclusion of women, but without offering any specifics in terms of women's priestly ordination or the female diaconate.

**“Bishops' conferences, the document said, suggested a broader participation of women 'in the processes of ecclesial discernment and all stages of decision-making processes'”**

It reported what it said was a general call from bishops' conferences to acknowledge what women already do, and to further develop these roles, while also calling for greater "exploration of ministerial and pastoral modalities that better express the charisms and gifts the Spirit pours out on women in response to the pastoral needs of our time."

Bishops' conferences, the document said, suggested a broader participation of women "in the processes of ecclesial discernment and all stages of decision-making processes," and wider access "to positions of responsibility in dioceses and ecclesiastical institutions, in line with existing provisions".

## Recognition

Requests were also made for a "greater recognition and support for the life and charisms of consecrated women and their employment in positions of responsibility," and for access for women "to positions of responsibility in seminaries, institutes and theological faculties," as well as an increased number of women judges in all canonical processes.

On the women's diaconate, the document noted that some bishops' conferences called for access to it, while others voiced opposition, saying only that "On this issue, which will not be the subject of the work of the second session, it is good that theological reflection should continue, on an appropriate timescale and in the appropriate ways."

Pope Francis has been studying ways to include women with his top advisory body, the Council of Cardinals advising him on church

governance and reform. Since last December, that group has heard several presentations from women on how to better include women in the life and leadership of the Church, including proposals for the diaconate.

**“On the abuse issue, the document faulted clericalism as a cause of abuse and acknowledged calls for greater transparency and accountability”**

However, Pope Francis said earlier this year, when asked in an interview with CBS that if women would ever be ordained priests or deacons, that this would not happen. The synod's working document noted that some theological and canonical questions regarding specific forms of ecclesial ministry for women, as well as their participation in the life and leadership of the Church, "have been entrusted to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), in dialogue with the General Secretariat of the Synod," and are being discussed.

Another topic addressed was the clerical abuse scandals, as the Church continues to reel from high-profile cases such as that of Slovenian former Jesuit Father Marko Rupnik, accused of abusing over 30 adult women over several decades, and whose case is currently being investigated by the DDF. On the abuse issue, the document faulted clericalism as a cause of abuse and acknowledged calls for greater transparency and

accountability.

"In our time, the demand for transparency and accountability in and by the Church has come about as a result of the loss of credibility due to financial scandals and, even more so, sexual abuse and other abuses of minors and vulnerable persons," the document said.

For the Church to be more synodal, and thus more welcoming, the document said, "then accountability and transparency must be at the core of its action at all levels, not only at the level of authority."

"However, those in positions of authority have a greater responsibility in this regard," it said, saying transparency and accountability must be taken into greater consideration in the drafting of pastoral plans, methods of evangelisation, and in contemplating "how the Church respects the dignity of the human person, for example, regarding the working conditions within its institutions".

The document said the practice of accountability to superiors has been a common practice in the Church, while "the dimension of accountability of authority to the community must be recovered".

## Transparency

"Transparency must be a feature of the exercise of authority in the Church. Today, structures and forms of regular evaluation of how ministerial responsibilities of all kinds are exercised emerge as necessary," it said.

Members of the synod's Ordinary Council include Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg; Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops Maltese Cardinal Mario Grech; Undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops. Spanish Bishop Luis Marín de San Martín and French Sister Nathalie Becquart, who is also an undersecretary to the synod office.

An initial version of the working document was sent to around 70 people representing various ecclesial ranks – including priests, consecrated persons, laypeople, theologians, and pastoral workers – whom the Vatican said represented different "ecclesial sensitivities" and "theological schools".

After some modifications, the document was then sent back to the Ordinary Council, which made further adjustments before sending it to Pope Francis for approval. The *Instrumentum Laboris* is divided into five sections, beginning with an introduction that is followed by a section dedicated to the foundations of understanding synodality.

Three "closely interwoven" parts follow that focus on the "missionary synodal life" of the Church from three different perspectives, the first of which is the perspective of relationships: with God, with others and between churches.

The fourth session focuses on paths that concretely support and nourish the dynamic of the relationships explored in the previous section, and the fifth section is dedicated to concrete places in which these relationships are and can be formed, as well as differences and interconnected nature of these relationships, as rooted in the faith.

**“It is expected that this October's concluding synod session will produce a final document to be submitted to the Pope for reflection and a potential apostolic exhortation”**

The document also offers what it refers to as 'theological subsidies', which according to the informational note offer canonical and theological insights into the various themes presented in the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

This subsidy, the note says, is meant to help synod participants understand the root of what's in the working document and it points to references from scripture, Church tradition, the Second Vatican Council, and Pope Francis's magisterial documents.

It is expected that this October's concluding synod session will produce a final document to be submitted to the Pope for reflection and a potential apostolic exhortation, as has been the case in the past.

With the lack of mention on concrete issues such as the women's diaconate, some observers see the move as Pope Francis taking potentially inflammatory issues off the table so as not to sidetrack the discussion with hot-button issues that lack consensus from the outset.

Francis made a similar move when ahead of the synod's opening, Francis published responses to a set of *dubia*, or doubts, posed by five conservative cardinals about these issues in which he reaffirmed the ban on women's priestly ordination while saying it could be studied, and opened a cautious door to the blessing of same-sex unions on a case-by-case basis, with certain caveats.

**“Transparency must be a feature of the exercise of authority in the Church. Today, structures and forms of regular evaluation of how ministerial responsibilities of all kinds are exercised emerge as necessary”**





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Christian woman brutally murdered in India

● A woman was hacked to death in India in the latest attack on Christians in the country. Bindu Sodhi was killed in the village of Toylanka in Chhattisgarh, a state in Central India on June 24.

Ms Sodhi, who was just 22, and her family were preparing their field to plant rice when they were assaulted by a group of Hindu radical nationalists that included members of her extended family. Sodhi's mother, brother and younger sister managed to escape the attackers.

Hindus make up over 93% of the population of the state, and Christians are just under 2% of the population. The state is ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has strong links to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a militant Hindu nationalist organisation.

### Nicaragua blocks indigenous priest from returning to the country

● An indigenous Nicaraguan priest who was in the United States for missionary activities has been prevented from returning to his country by the government of President Daniel Ortega, according to reports.

Fr Rodolfo French Naar, a member of the Miskito Indigenous people who is the vicar of a community in the city of Waspán, on the border with Honduras, tried to take a plane back to Nicaragua after

spending some time in the US and was prevented from doing so, lawyer Martha Patricia Molina told the press.

According to the version of events presented by Ms Molina, Fr French received a message from the airline telling him that Nicaraguan immigration authorities had said he was not allowed to get into the country, so he would not be able to take his flight. No further explanations were given to the priest.

### UK cardinal congratulates new British Prime Minister

● New British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's previous comments about wanting a government which works with churches and faith communities have been "most welcome" by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the President of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Mr Starmer heads the Labour Party, which won a landslide general election victory on July 4, defeating the Conservative Party, which led the country for the past 14 years.

"On behalf of the Catholic community in England and Wales I should like to congratulate you on your victory in yesterday's general election," Cardinal Nichols wrote the new prime minister. "I assure you of my good wishes as you take up your new responsibilities in forming and leading a government."

### Eritrea arrests over 200 Christians in one year

● Eritrea, located in Eastern Africa, ranked among the top ten countries in the world where following Jesus is an extremely dangerous enterprise. A July 3 report by the UK-based Release International which covers the persecuted Church worldwide, states that at least 218 Christians had been arrested in Eritrea within the past 12 months, many of them women and children.

"This latest crackdown means that around 400 Christians are currently imprisoned – indefinitely, without trial or charge – because of their faith," the report states. It says between January and May, 110 Christians were seized.

"In the last round of arrests some children have been arrested with their parents, and in some cases the whole family is in prison," said Dr Berhane Asmelash, a former prisoner of faith, and local partner for Release International.

### US judge says attempt to close Catholic shelter 'outrageous'

● An El Paso judge has denied Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's attempt to shut down a Catholic migrant shelter that operates in the city – a decision that the local bishop is calling "an important moment for religious freedom".

In a pair of rulings issued on July 2, Judge Francisco Dominguez, a judge of the Texas 205th District Court ruled on July 2 that the state failed to establish probable grounds to close Annunciation House, and that the state violated the shelter's constitutional rights in its attempts to enforce a subpoena for records of migrants who the shelter has served.

In the ruling, Justice Dominguez called Mr Paxton's conduct "outrageous".

## Nigerian priest kidnapped goes free

Nigerian priest Fr Mikah Suleiman was released last Sunday after more than two weeks in captivity.

The parish priest of St Raymond's Catholic Church, in Damba, Zamfara State, had been abducted from his presbytery in Sokoto diocese, north-west Nigeria, in the early hours of Saturday, June 22.

In the days that followed, fears for his safety grew, especially after a video was released, in which the captive priest warned of threats to kill him.

Announcing his release, Bishop Matthew Kukah of Sokoto thanked Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) for praying for Fr Suleiman's safety: "Thank you so much [to] the entire ACN family. Your love and support mean so much".

Speaking in a video message shared on Facebook this week, Fr Suleiman stated he was in good health adding: "I want to thank you for your prayers and your support towards my rescue. By the grace of God, I am out of the hands of the bandits. Thank you very much".

Sokoto diocese communications director Fr Pascal Salifu said: "We extend our heartfelt gratitude to God for his protection and to everyone who offered prayers and support during this challenging time".

He added: "Our thanks also go to the authorities and all involved in securing Fr Mikah's release".



A Boko Haram militant carries the Nigerian flag. Picture: ACN UK.

About 10 days ago, a video message was released in which Fr Suleiman stated: "[The bandits] told me that killing a person is not difficult for them".

He added: "Please save my life in the name of God. Look at my head, look at my legs. I was tied to a [rope] and I am the only one in this place. Normally, if they kidnap somebody they don't waste time".

The recent abductions tell

the larger story of Christian persecution in Nigeria – a country of over 230 million people, nearly evenly divided between Christians and Muslims.

Figures from a consortium of civil society organisations known as the Civil Society Joint Action Group reveal that 17,469 Nigerians – most of them Christians – have been abducted since 2019.

Nigeria ranks sixth globally on the 2024 World Watch List, which identifies countries

where Christians experience severe persecution. The list is compiled by Open Doors, an NGO dedicated to supporting Christians worldwide.

Last year, Intersociety issued a chilling report that revealed that at least 52,250 Christians had been killed in Nigeria since 2009 when the Islamist group Boko Haram began its murderous campaign to create a caliphate. Those numbers have since increased considerably.

## 11 Christians jailed in Vietnam are missing, US NGO says

Five Catholics and six Protestants who were jailed in Vietnam for a range of offenses related to religious activities dating back to 2011 have gone missing, highlighting a larger problem within the communist country's judicial system, International Christian Concern (ICC) has said.

It said nine of the Christians had been jailed for "undermining national unity policy" due to their involvement in Degar Protestantism and the Ha Mon Catholic Church, noting that both sects were not approved by the Vietnamese government.

"Eleven Vietnamese Montagnard Christians who were imprisoned for religious activity and religious identity in the South-east Asian nation are missing, prompting concerns over the treatment of jailed Christ followers in Vietnam," the US-based NGO said in a statement.

"The 11 men, consisting of six Protestants and five Catholics, were sentenced, at different times, to a combined total of 90 years and eight months in prison dating back as far as 2011 and as recently as 2016. Now, their whereabouts are a mystery."

Montagnards fought alongside the US and allied troops during the Vietnam War. Many converted to Christianity and have complained of the Vietnamese government's repressive policies, like religious persecution and expropriation of land by local officials.

In January, a Vietnamese court jailed almost 100 Montagnards after they were convicted of terrorism-related charges following attacks in June last year on a remote police station in the country's Central Highlands that left nine people dead.

## Christians face 'devastating' persecution under Pakistani blasphemy laws

A Catholic leader has called for an end to Pakistan's blasphemy laws, telling *EWTN* last week that the accused in such cases are "guilty before even [having] an opportunity to prove themselves".

A court in Punjab recently sentenced Ehsan Shan to death for sharing "hateful content" against Muslims on

social media.

Last year, when locals said that two Christian men desecrated the Quran, groups of Muslim men burned dozens of homes and churches in Jaranwala in the region of Punjab in one of the worst mob attacks against Christians in the country.

Ed Clancy, the director of outreach at the charity group

Aid to the Church in Need, told *'EWTN News Nightly'* anchor Tracy Sabol that after the attacks, Mr Shan "posted some of the content of what was available on social media" regarding the allegations, including allegedly an image of a defaced Quran.

"Because he posted derogatory material that was alleged to be part of this

uprising or the attacks on Christians last year – where 20 some odd buildings were burned and hundreds of people and families had to flee their homes because of it – all he did was post something about this and therefore was considered causing violence [and] was convicted of blasphemy," Mr Clancy told Ms Sabol.





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## Lifting up hearts in the community



Clergymen prepare to celebrate a Mass in the villa 21-24 neighbourhood in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (OSV News photo/Agustin Marcarian, Reuters)

## British lords, celebrities call on Vatican to preserve 'treasure' of Latin Mass

A distinguished cadre of British public figures is calling upon the Holy See to preserve what they describe as the "magnificent" cultural artifact of the Catholic Church's Traditional Latin Mass.

In 2021 Pope Francis placed sweeping restrictions on the celebration of Mass using the 1962 Roman Missal, known also as the extraordinary form of the Roman rite and the Tridentine Mass. Rumours have circulated in recent months that the Vatican is preparing to clamp down further on the celebration of that ancient liturgy.

No new directives on the Latin Mass have yet been promulgated amid

the rumours. In a letter last week to the London newspaper *The Times*, meanwhile, a wide cross-section of English cultural fixtures openly implored the Vatican to refrain from restricting the rite further.

"Recently there have been worrying reports from Rome that the Latin Mass is to be banished from nearly every Catholic church," the letter said. "This is a painful and confusing prospect, especially for the growing number of young Catholics whose faith has been nurtured by it."

The signatories, which included actress and human rights advocate Bianca Jagger, author Tom Holland, musical eminence Julian

Lloyd Webber, and media executive Sir Nicholas Coleridge, described the Latin Mass as a "cathedral" of "text and gesture" that developed over many centuries.

"Not everyone appreciates its value and that is fine," the writers said, "but to destroy it seems an unnecessary and insensitive act in a world where history can all too easily slip away forgotten".

"The old rite's ability to encourage silence and contemplation is a treasure not easily replicated, and, when gone, impossible to reconstruct," they said.

The writers in their letter pointed to a 1971 petition from a similar cross-section of prominent Britons that

had also asked the Vatican to preserve the Latin Mass in England.

That petition led to the "Agatha Christie indult" allowing the extraordinary form to continue there; the indult was named after the famous author who was among the signatories.

In their letter this week the British celebrities said their petition, like the 1971 request, was "entirely ecumenical and nonpolitical".

"The signatories include Catholics and non-Catholics, believers and nonbelievers," they wrote. "We implore the Holy See to reconsider any further restriction of access to this magnificent spiritual and cultural heritage."

## Lourdes bishop faces resistance on removal of Rupnik art

The Catholic leader responsible for a world-famous and much beloved Marian healing shrine in France has ordered measures to lower the visibility of mosaic artwork by an accused serial rapist, but has stopped short - for the time being - of ordering the removal of the art. Fr Marko Rupnik is accused of abusing dozens

of victims - most of them women religious - over several decades, much of which he spent in Rome at the Centro Aletti art institute he founded in the early 1990s.

Last Tuesday, Bishop Jean-Marc Micas of Tarbes and Lourdes, France, issued a press release saying his "personal preference" is for the removal of the Rupnik

mosaics at present adorning the healing shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, but also noted there is still resistance from some quarters and consensus is not reached. Bishop Micas announced he is suspending the illumination of the Fr Rupnik mosaics during evening processions at the shrine, calling this a "first

step" and promising both to continue working toward consensus around his view of the matter.

"My role is to ensure that the Sanctuary welcomes everyone, and especially those who suffer," Bishop Micas said, "among them, victims of abuse and sexual assault, children and adults.

## Vatican roundup

### Cardinal: 'The concept of just war needs to be reviewed'

● Even if sometimes diplomatic efforts seem to produce small results, "we must never get tired or give in to the temptation of resignation", Cardinal Pietro Parolin said last week. "Peace is the duty of everyone" and begins "in our daily lives, in our cities, in our countries, in the world", he remarked. The Vatican Secretary of State was speaking at the Italian Embassy to the Holy See in Rome on the occasion of the award ceremony of the Ambassadors' Literary Prize.

Before the ceremony, Cardinal Parolin spoke with some journalists. Asked about the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, he emphasised that war is never a just war. Commenting on the Holy Land Commission for Justice and Peace statement on this issue, he stated: "We know that there is a lot of discussion today on the concept of 'just war' as a war of defence.

However, with the weapons that are available today this concept has become very difficult, and I believe that there is not a definitive position, and this this concept is being reviewed".

### Vatican official to testify in London property trial

● Over 8 months after the conclusion of the trial in the Vatican Tribunal regarding the purchase and sale of the London property, which saw the conviction of ten defendants for various crimes including fraud and corruption, the issue of the Sloane Avenue property has returned to the forefront in another judicial proceeding, this time at His Majesty's High Court of Justice in England.

The trial began on June 24 following a civil complaint filed in 2020 in England by Raffaele Mincione, the financier among the ten defendants in the Vatican trial. The Vatican Tribunal sentenced him to 5 years

and 6 months imprisonment, plus an €8,000 fine and permanent disqualification from public office, for money laundering, embezzlement, and corruption.

Mr Mincione initiated this civil proceeding, aiming to obtain around thirty declarations from the High Court affirming that he "acted in good faith" in the transactions with the Holy See for the purchase and sale of the London property.

The Secretariat of State, however, has always contested the inflated price of the property and the special powers Mr Mincione acquired in the various transactions beyond the contracts.

### At Windsor Castle, the Pope's cricket team clashes with the King's

● Last Wednesday, the Vatican cricket team travelled to Windsor Castle, home to King Charles and various members of the British Royal Family.

There, they faced off against the King's XI, a cricket team composed of members of the monarch's household.

The match was the culmination of the Vatican side's 'Light of Faith' UK tour - its tenth foreign trip since its foundation in 2014 - which has also seen it face off against the England Seniors team and St Mary's University.

### Holy See calls for global action against human trafficking

● Human trafficking, which so often goes unseen, is a grave violation of human dignity and creates deep scars in the victims, who frequently are women and children.

This was reaffirmed in the statement of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva at the 56th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council on 'Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children Geneva' on June 17, 2024.

The Holy See, the text reiterated, firmly holds that "human trafficking must be counted among the grave violations of human dignity".

On land and at sea, human trafficking in persons, the delegation decried, often goes unseen.

"We must not remain apathetic in the face of this tragic and global scourge," is the appeal and the request that "It is time to reject such a culture of indifference, which desensitises us to these realities and effaces the humanity and inalienable dignity of those who are exploited".





# Letter from Rome

## Vatican declares former US envoy excommunicated



Elise Ann Allen

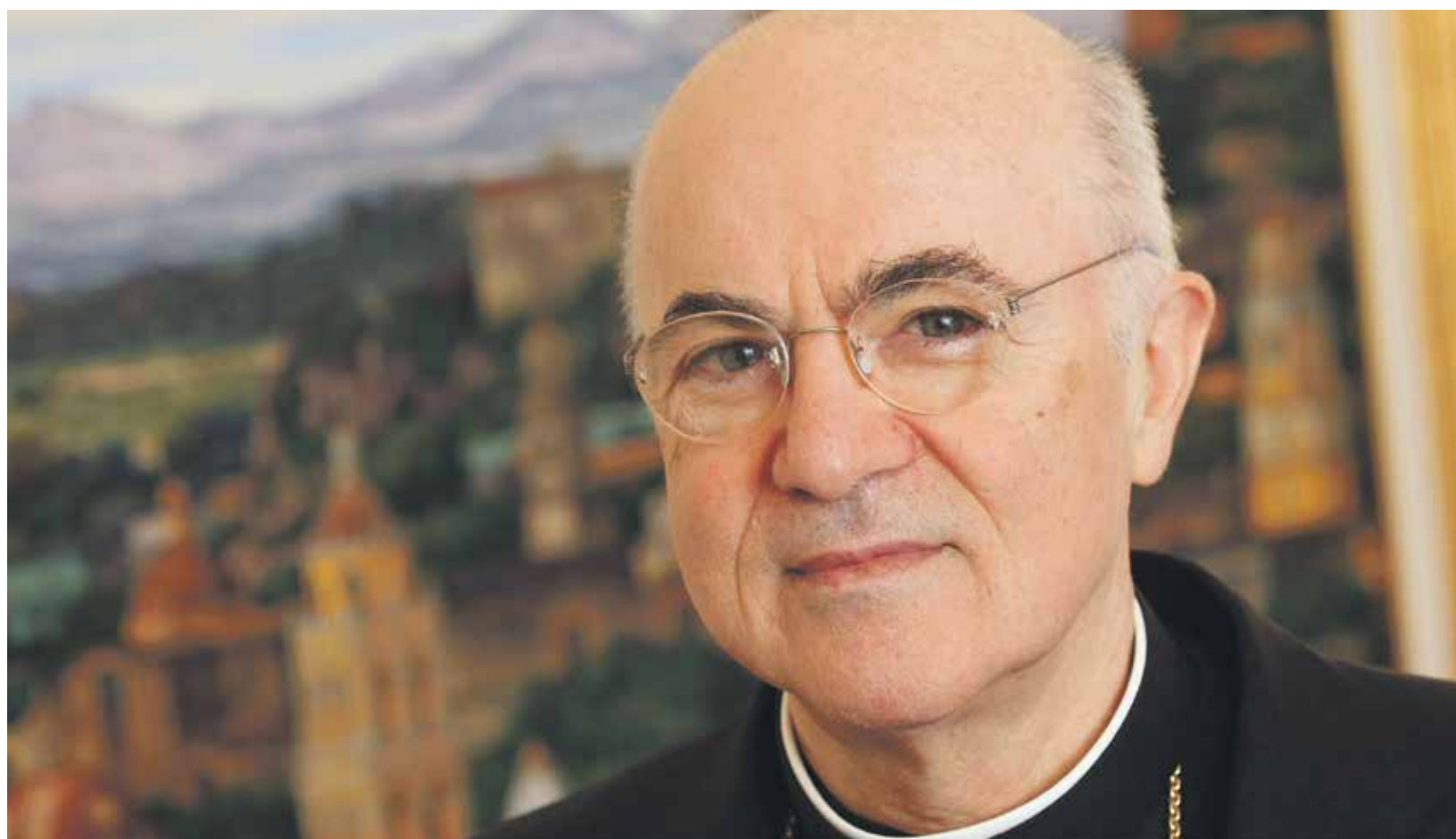
In a stroke of irony, the Vatican's doctrinal office on Thursday, which marked the United States' Independence Day, convened and formally declared that a former US envoy charged with schism was excommunicated.

In a July 5 statement, the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) announced that nearly six years after calling on Pope Francis to resign, Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, who served as nuncio to the United States from 2011-2016 and who has accused Pope Francis of abuse coverup, was excommunicated.

Previously, Archbishop Viganò had been summoned by a DDF decree to appear at the Vatican for a June 20 audience to answer to charges of schism based on "public statements which show the denial of the elements necessary to maintain communion with the Catholic Church: denial of the legitimacy of Pope Francis, breaking communion with him and rejection of the Second Vatican Council". Archbishop Viganò, who did not show up for his summons, published the decree on social media, saying the charges against him were an "honour".

### Excommunication

In their statement Friday, the DDF said that during a meeting convened the day before, the extrajudicial process against Archbishop Viganò, meaning it was an administrative procedure rather than a canonical trial, for schism had concluded. "His public statements manifesting his refusal to recognise and submit to the Supreme Pontiff, his rejection of communion with the members of the Church subject to him, and of the legitimacy and magisterial authority of the Second Vatican Council are well known," the statement said.



Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the former apostolic nuncio to the United States, is pictured at his residence at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

At the close of the penal process, Archbishop Viganò, it said, "was found guilty of the reserved delict of schism," and the DDF thus declared a *latae sententiae* excommunication against him, meaning he incurred the excommunication himself through his own schismatic acts. The DDF stated that the lifting of the excommunication is reserved to the Vatican, and that Archbishop Viganò was informed of the declaration on July 5.

**Archbishop Viganò published an 11-page "testimony" in which he accused Pope Francis of covering up for former cardinal and priest, Theodore McCarrick"**

A longtime official at the Vatican, Archbishop Viganò first shot to global notoriety during the August 2018 World Meeting of Families in Dublin. On the last day of the Pope's visit, carefully choreographed to navigate endur-

**“Archbishop Viganò, who did not show up for his summons, published the decree on social media, saying the charges against him were an ‘honour’”**

ing suspicion of the Catholic Church related to the country's clerical abuse scandals, Archbishop Viganò published an 11-page "testimony" in which he accused Pope Francis of covering up for former cardinal and priest, Theodore McCarrick, who was charged with sexually abusing minors and the sexual harassment of adult seminarians.

Archbishop Viganò in the letter called on Pope Francis to resign, claiming Francis knew about allegations against McCarrick yet eased restrictions on his ministry and travel, and he also alleged a broad homosexual culture inside of the Vatican. Since then, he has consistently published open letters questioning Pope Francis for alleged doctrinal heresies and abuses of authority.

### Whistleblower

He has also rejected many of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, and was critical of the Pope's decision to restrict the Traditional Latin Mass. Prior to his appointment to the United States, Archbishop Viganò caused waves in Rome when, while serving as the secretary, or number two official, in the Government of the Vatican City State, he attempted to expose alleged overspending and mismanagement, and earned a reputation as a whistleblower.

On the other hand, he was also seen by many Vatican insiders as a prickly personality who could be difficult to work with. Shortly after his summons for his June 20 audience, the breakaway traditionalist Society of St Pius X

(SSPX), distanced itself from Archbishop Viganò, despite rumours that he had been reconsecrated as a member of the group, on grounds that public statements made by Archbishop Viganò after his summons went beyond the acts that got their own founder excommunicated.

**“He accepted the pontifical office without fully consenting, and this error resulted in the nullity of his acceptance”**

Referring to one statement in which Archbishop Viganò said Pope Francis had

a "defect of consent" when accepting his election to the papacy, the SSPX in a June 24 statement that the reference to a "defect of consent" meant that "according to Archbishop Viganò, Cardinal Bergoglio considered the papacy as something other than what it really is. He accepted the pontifical office without fully consenting, and this error resulted in the nullity of his acceptance. His pontificate would therefore be that of a placeholder."

"Archbishop Lefebvre and the Society he founded have not ventured down that perilous road," they said, referring to their founder Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who was himself declared to have incurred excommunication for schism in 1988.

**“Archbishop Viganò caused waves in Rome when, while serving as the secretary, or number two official, in the Government of the Vatican City State, he attempted to expose alleged overspending and mismanagement, and earned a reputation as a whistleblower”**



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Human trafficking: a crime against humanity

**Dear Editor,** I was deeply moved by the recent article discussing the escalating issue of human trafficking and the call for increased parish involvement in combating this grave injustice. Cardinal Vincent Nichols' stark observation that "things are getting worse" underlines the urgent need for action within our communities [*The Irish Catholic* – July 4, 2024].

The Senior Leadership Summit on combatting human trafficking, held at UCC in Cork, highlighted the critical role that each of us, particularly our parishes, must play in addressing this heinous crime. The presence of high-ranking officials from the USA, UK and Ireland, along with influential religious leaders and advocates, underscores the global and local dimensions of this issue.

It is alarming to hear that victims of trafficking are "hidden in plain sight," as

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee noted. This reality demands that our parishes become more vigilant and proactive. Human trafficking is not just an issue of forced prostitution but extends to various forms of exploitation, including agriculture, domestic service, and other industries, as Sr Liz Murphy aptly pointed out.

Our parishes must become sanctuaries of awareness and action. By educating ourselves about the signs of trafficking and the resources available for victims, we can become powerful advocates for those who are often voiceless. Practical steps, such as attending training sessions on identifying trafficking indicators, distributing informative materials and establishing support networks, are essential.

Moreover, we must embody the Christian call to uphold human dignity in every

aspect of our parish life. This includes being the "eyes and ears—and the voice" for the vulnerable in our communities, as the bishops urged. Prayer, while powerful, must be coupled with concrete actions. Reporting suspicious activities, supporting local anti-trafficking initiatives and providing aid to survivors are ways we can translate our faith into impactful deeds.

Human trafficking is indeed a crime against humanity, and it is a moral imperative for us, as Catholics, to respond with compassion and determination. Let us heed the bishops' call to action and work collectively to end this modern-day slavery.

*Yours etc.,  
Sarah Doherty  
Dundrum, Dublin 16*

## Pilgrimages as fulfilling spiritual transformations

**Dear Editor,** I found your article on the rising popularity of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, as reported by National Geographic, to be very interesting [*The Irish Catholic* – July 4, 2024]. It is fascinating to see how these ancient spiritual paths are being utilised by people for various reasons, particularly fitness and health.

However, I believe it is essential to emphasise that many individuals discover and deepen their faith while on pilgrimage. The spiritual healing that these journeys offer is profound and transformative. Pilgrimages have long been a means for believers to seek physical healing, as well as spiritual renewal, through the intercession of saints and the grace of God.

Dr Louise Nugent's insights into the historical motivations for pilgrimages, such as belief in the power of saints, atonement for sins, and indulgences, highlight the deep spiritual roots of these journeys. Even today, countless pilgrims embark on these paths with the hope of experiencing spiritual growth and healing. While some may start their journey for fitness or adventure, many find that the act of walking these sacred paths opens their hearts to deeper spiritual experiences.

The Camino de Santiago, in particular, has a long tradition



of leading people to profound personal and spiritual revelations. The physical challenges of the pilgrimage often mirror the inner journey of the soul, allowing pilgrims to confront and reflect on their lives in meaningful ways. As Kimberly Davis mentioned, the pilgrimage provides a "bubble of peace", which can be a fertile ground for spiritual awakening.

Moreover, the communal

aspect of pilgrimage, where individuals from diverse backgrounds walk together, often fosters a sense of shared humanity and divine presence. This can lead to unexpected encounters with faith, as people support and connect with one another along the way.

While the contemporary trend of using pilgrimages for fitness is indeed interesting, it is crucial to recognise the

enduring spiritual significance of these journeys. Pilgrimages can be a powerful means of encountering God, finding inner peace and experiencing profound healing. Encouraging people to explore these paths with an open heart can lead to unexpected and deeply fulfilling spiritual transformations.

*Yours etc.,  
Phil Moynihan  
Blanchardstown, Dublin*

## Synodality and future decisions...

**Dear Editor,** The Irish Bishops have delivered to Rome their excellent report on the Irish synodality programme. This will be an important document for the Synod to be held in October at Rome.

Fr Gerry O'Hanlon [*The Irish Catholic* – July 4, 2024] has pointed out that "Syno-

dality will not survive without decisions". Referring to the involvement of the laity in the Church he points out that "co-responsibility is only going to be possible when the unique authority given to the parish priest in Canon Law is balanced with a definition of the authority of the laity".

To date, synodality has been a process of Catholics speaking freely and listening with respect to each other and who are now looking forward to hearing what decisions will be made for the future.

*Yours etc.,  
Daithi O'Muirneachain  
Drumcondra, Dublin 9*

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.

## A fair wind for Prime Minister Starmer

**I**t was a curious feature of the erstwhile British government that, despite the ruling party being officially named the 'Conservative and Unionist Party', the higher-ups in London showed very little interest in the part of the United Kingdom on the northeast of this island.

The role of Secretary of State for the North has never particularly been a coveted position in the British Cabinet, but the Tories brought that to a new level, having a staggering eight incumbents during their 14-year reign – seven of them serving for less than two years in a region that desperately needs stability.

When then Secretary of State Karen Bradley told journalists in 2018 that it was news to her that in elections in the North, "people who are nationalists don't vote for unionist parties and vice versa," it crystallised the hands-off approach that now typified a narcissistic political elite obsessed with infighting and jockeying for positions rather than governing.

Privately, Church leaders admitted that they were stunned not only by the lack of interest in northern affairs from the former government, but also the cavalier attitude adopted to issues like legacy legislation dealing with what we euphemistically call 'the Troubles'.

Despite the opposition of every single political party, civil society organisation and faith community, officials in London were adamant that what a post-conflict society needed was an end to prosecutions for heinous crimes, and a scolding to victims and survivors to get on with their lives.

Baroness Nuala O'Loan, a columnist with this newspaper, deserves huge credit for exposing the recklessness of the Conservatives' Legacy Act, which ended all criminal and civil cases connected to the 1968-1998 civil conflict.

The incoming prime minister Keir Starmer has vowed to scrap the law. Baroness O'Loan and others will hold his feet to the fire on this in Westminster.

Officials in both Dublin and Belfast will also be keen for a wider reset on Anglo-Irish relations. Whatever frictions will continue because of Britain's decision to leave the European Union (EU), we can likely rest assured that no incoming cabinet minister will threaten to cut off food

supplies to Ireland as Tory minister Priti Patel did just six years ago.

The Irish Government should react generously to the new mood music coming from London and be Britain's best ally at a European level and dampen the Brussels tendency to punish Britain for leaving.

The election was a good night for Sinn Féin and a rather poor night for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). This is likely to lead to more pressure for a wider discussion of Irish reunification. Former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar is among those calling for the debate to intensify. He is right, of course, but it is a debate that needs to proceed with prudence and parity of esteem.

More widely, at the heart of Keir Starmer's agenda – both domestically and how his administration affects the island of Ireland – appears to be a campaign to make politics normal again and end the psychodrama delivered by the previous administration on an almost daily basis.

Of course, for people of faith the new administration also brings understandable anxiety. Mr Starmer is a strong supporter of euthanasia and has promised to make time for legislators to vote on the issue.

How Labour approaches the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) will also be a key watch for people who value human life at all stages. There is a campaign by biotech firms to expand the already common experimentation that takes place on human embryos. One of the goals is to remove the 14-day limit, so scientists can experiment on unborn babies up to four weeks' gestation.

On the educational front, recent British governments have adopted a progressive and pluralist approach that has allowed faith schools to flourish. This has irked the hardline elements within the Labour Party who favour a one-size-fits-all approach. Mr Starmer has so far sidelined these elements, let us hope that will continue.

For Catholics, politics is always the art of the possible – we should challenge the new administration where it falls short, and work in partnership for the common good. Overall, we should wish Mr Starmer and his colleagues a fair wind – for all of our sakes.

## 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



# The Daughters of St Paul: from remembrance to innovation



Luca Attanasio

**T**he Daughters of St Paul, often known as the Pauline Sisters, celebrate the charism and genius of Sr Thecla Merlo, who collaborated with Fr James Alberione in the founding of their order. She was a unique person in the history of the universal Church, as well as in the world of communication and publishing. And this celebration took place in a way that would be pleasing to Sr Thecla: launching an innovative and up-to-date communication project.

Sr Thecla, born Teresa Merlo (1894-1964), after having been a respected seamstress, dedicated all her energies to communication.

With a strong organisational sense, she contributed to the creation of numerous magazines such as *La Valsusa*, *il Giornalino*, *Via*, *Verità e Vita*, as well as that, which over the years has gained a prominent place among Italian weekly readers – for Catholics and non-Catholics – until it became the most read in the country: *Famiglia Cristiana*.

She promoted the publication of books, radio broadcasts and films, the production of short films and catechetical records. A generous, modern and innovative Sister.

## Evangelisation

She had evangelisation and the diffusion of the Word at heart and understood, over the years, how crucial the promotion of culture and information was to promote not only faith but also the integral development of the person, in both human and spiritual growth. She thirsted for peace and justice. At the time, there were

few religious women so committed to such an apostolate, much less dedicated to the complex world of publishing and journalism. Hers was a life from another period of time which, however, also has a lot to say to us today. In this contemporary period, she would have not hesitated to address issues of faith and current events on TikTok or to create stories on Instagram.

**“The Daughters of St Paul are engaged throughout the world in the publication of books and newspapers; they produce music, videos, films, radio broadcasts”**

Her earthly existence, which ended on February 5, 1964, at the culmination of a full life spent to communicate the Gospel and spread knowledge and culture, left an indelible mark on the world. She would often repeat: “I would love to have a thousand lives to dedicate them all to this apostolate”.

On January 22, 1991 Sr Thecla Merlo was proclaimed Venerable by St John Paul II. Today the Daughters of St Paul number around 2000 members with 205 communities, present in 50 countries. The activities desired by Sr Thecla continue to expand year after year and, faithful to the charism of ‘being communicators’ like this modern woman and religious sister, the Daughters of St Paul are engaged throughout the world in the publication of books and newspapers; they produce music, videos, films, radio broadcasts; they manage publishing houses and bookstores; they manage websites and social media networks; they carry out professional New Media Education courses and online biblical courses.

**“The Daughters of St Paul wanted to celebrate the figure of Sr Thecla and their journey in this century of history, as underlined by the Superior General Sr Anna Caiazza”**



Sr Anna

Exactly 60 years after her death and on the threshold of the 110th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation, the Daughters of St Paul wanted to celebrate the figure of Sr Thecla and their journey in this century of history, as underlined by the Superior General Sr Anna Caiazza. To do this, they have chosen an original way, in line with the communication style of the co-foundress: scrollytelling, “an innovative tool that allows us to preserve together the safeguarding of our roots and to project towards the future of our mission in the world of communication.” “This project was a dream,” she added “that we in the general government nurtured from the very first days of our mandate, and it is a loving tribute to this mother who was an incredible communicator. We felt it was important to make known this innovative woman capable of penetrating the complex world of communication towards which, especially in Sr Thecla’s time, there was much suspicion within the Church. If today the Church can also boast of many means of expression, it is also due to this woman.”

## Launching

The launching of this project and its presentation to the public and the press took place, Sunday, June 16, in a packed lecture hall at



the Pauline Sisters’ house in Rome.

**“It is a beautiful example of communion between those who conceived it, those who use it and, in this case, Sr Thecla”**

One of the speakers at the launch of the scrollytelling project was Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Holy See’s Dicastery for Communication. “Scrollytelling,” he said, “has this special feature; you cannot do it alone and it helps us to understand that

digital is not only for dividing but for uniting, bringing together languages, people, memories, and involving in an active way not just passive. It is a beautiful example of communion between those who conceived it, those who use it and, in this case, Sr Thecla, and it shows that communication and communion are intrinsically linked.”

## Congregation

Scrollytelling, still little used in Europe, is a new method of telling the story of a congregation, of its founders, as well as of any other context. An extraordinary tool that makes the most of the potential of technology and aims to put

those who use it in direct contact with the subject of the story, in an immersive and interactive experience

“This project,” says Paolo Pellegrini, CEO of Mediacor, the communications agency that created the project “is not a point of arrival but a starting point. We trust that it will be a tool for good communication all over the world. We wanted to tell the story in an original and effective way and we thought of an innovative language that is still little used. A tool that allows a user to scroll and get involved in an intuitive narrative. Something that can convey information and emotions at the same time.”



# Catholic Youth Groups Collaborate to bring the 'Way of Wonder' to Dublin



Bill Donaghy on a conversation with Pure in Heart



Eoin McCormack

In a world of information-overload, where every influencer, media company, and big-business is clamouring for our attention, effective evangelisation can feel like a daunting task. One of the questions that subsequently arises in for the Church in the modern age, is how exactly we can be heard amid a world that is already filled with so many distractions. Or perhaps, more practically, with what method can the Good News be preached in an already noisy world?

## Beauty

One way, which may sound surprisingly simple, that the Church has used for millennia and may be the perfect fit for today's culture, is the use of beauty. The Way of Beauty or the *Via Pulchritudinis*, is a successfully tried and tested method of evangelisation in the history of the Church. In an age where high-quality video, image, and sound is but a click

of a button away, our historical association with beauty and the arts may just be the best thing we have going for us in our attempt to reach out to the wider culture in contemporary times.

A 2006 plenary assembly of Bishops examining the *Via Pulchritudinis* maintained that using beauty as a means of evangelisation can be the most effective way to "get in touch with many of those who face great difficulties in receiving the Church's teachings".

## Transcendentals

But what is it about beauty that makes for good evangelisation?

Theological tradition maintains that all reality can be explained through the three transcendentals. Namely, that which is True, Good, and Beautiful. The three transcendentals, therefore, are the means through which we interact with the world as human beings and fundamentally the means through which we interact with the source of life itself - God.

Reading the 'signs of the times' in the post-modern context that we live in today which Pope Benedict XVI once styled "a dictatorship of relativism", people are very often suspicious of any truth claims and perhaps even more suspicious of any moral ones. Out of fear of offending the other, young people

are told by the culture that objective truth doesn't exist, and subsequently that moral values are completely subjective. 'Live your own truth' is the common cultural mantra.

**Interaction with beauty develops in us intuition for something much deeper - the natural inkling for the Divine whose image we were created in"**

This leaves us with one transcendental that is difficult to argue with, namely 'beauty'. Beauty is a non-confrontational way to express the inexpressible. Take something like Mozart's *Great Mass* for example, or Michelangelo's *Pieta*. The powerful emotions that these pieces of art stir up inside of us cannot be fully explained away by rational science. Interaction with beauty develops in us intuition for something

much deeper - the natural inkling for the Divine whose image we were created in. You cannot help but be 'drawn in' to the objectivity of beauty, thus pointing us back to the true and the good.

## Faith journey

Recently in fact, a member of our young adult ministry in the parish presented to the group her personal faith testimony which began with a trip to the Vatican. Coming from a protestant culture which emphasised bare-walled church interiors, the young lady was awe-struck entering the Vatican to see such beautiful art and architecture all created for the purposes of praising God.

It was this encounter with beauty that led her to consider not only what exactly could inspire people to create such beauty, but what is its fundamental purpose and illumination. Subsequently, this experience led her to consider the bigger questions of life and embark on an inner journey to

the source and light of life itself and just two months ago she was received into the Catholic Church.

## 'The Way of Wonder'

Considering the suitability and power of beauty for evangelisation in the modern age, two Catholic young adult groups in Dublin - Young Adults Rathmines & Pure in Heart - are collaborating to host an immersive experience of beauty, art, music and spirituality, led by internationally acclaimed speaker and author Bill Donaghy.

Content Specialist with the Theology of the Body Institute in the USA, Bill Donaghy, will lead a night of music and reflection opening hearts and minds to the source and light of life - the one true God.

This very special one-time event organised in conjunction with the Theology of the Body Institute's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, will see Senior Lecturer Bill Donaghy host a 'night of wonder' under the iconic

dome of Mary Immaculate Refuge of Sinners, Rathmines on Friday July 26 at 7pm.

**"It is aimed to recapture the imagination of the secular age and point us back to the source of that natural yearning for God"**

Rathmines Church is built in the model of a Greek cross which includes a magnificent four-pillar portico. As well as it's Orthodox styled dome, it contains a rich interior with an array of paintings recently installed (having been moved from Conliffe College Seminary) making it an appropriate venue for the beauty-immersive event.

The Way of Wonder is timely event to reach out to the culture and evangelise with this non-confrontational invitation to God through beauty. It is aimed to recapture the imagination of the secular age and point us back to the source of that natural yearning for God which as the Catechism says, is written on every human heart.

**i** Tickets are available on [www.eventbrite.ie](http://www.eventbrite.ie) and at the doors from 6.30pm.

**"The Way of Wonder is timely event to reach out to the culture and evangelise with this non-confrontational invitation to God through beauty"**



# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, July 11, 2024

What does  
'Ordinary  
Time' mean in  
the Church's  
calendar?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Page 32



## The five parts of praying with Scripture



Stephen J. Binz

Even though the Bible was written ages ago, its pages always have meanings and messages for us today. Our challenge is to find connections between the text of yesterday and the 'today' of our lives. There are five parts to *lectio divina* - holy reading - which is an ancient way of praying with Scripture. Those parts are listening, understanding, reflecting, praying and acting.

### Grasping

1. Listening: Reading a sacred text with expectancy, trusting that God will speak his word to us through the page, is best described as a deep listening. In his monastic Rule, St Benedict described this kind of reading as hearing "with the ear of our heart": God speaks and we listen.

The key to this deep listening is reading the biblical text with as little prejudgment as possible - as if we were hearing it for the first time. We can't listen fully to God if we think we already know what the text is going to tell us. Rather, this expectant reading requires that we create a space within ourselves for the new insight and wisdom God wants to give us through the sacred page.

This deep listening requires careful, fully attentive reading, engaging our mind, our imagination, our emotions and our will. It can be helpful to read aloud, so that we see the words with our eyes, form them with our lips and hear them with our ears. We savour the words of the sacred literature, appreciating the images, envisioning the scene, feeling the sentiments and allowing the words to move from our



heads to our hearts.

2. Understanding: The Church's early theologians show us that there is no clear distinction between studying Scripture and reading it prayerfully. The more we come to understand the text with our minds, the more we are capable of being changed by it.

**"Bible studies and biblical commentaries can be a great help to increasing our understanding"**

Grasping the full meaning of the text is easier and more meaningful when we know something of the Scripture's original context - historical, cultural, literary and religious. When, where and why was the author writing? Most importantly, how did the writer's faith manifest itself in the text, and what

kind of faith response does the writer expect from the reader? Seeking to understand the faith dimension of the text helps us transcend the original circumstances in which it was written and allows us to see the lasting significance and validity it has for all of us.

Bible studies and biblical commentaries can be a great help to increasing our understanding - as can reading the Bible with companion guides, studying the forewords of the books being read or paying careful attention to the footnotes used in the Bible to explain key themes and references.

Listening to the text with the understanding of the Church and some basic insights of biblical scholarship can assure us that we're getting a true, accurate and faithful understanding of the text. This listening to the text for understanding, with its multiple layers of meaning and rich history of interpretation, forms the foundation on which we can begin to experience its transforming potential.

### Reflection

3. Reflecting: Even though the Bible was written ages ago, its pages always have meanings and messages for us today. Our challenge is to find connections between the text of yesterday and the 'today' of our lives. By reflecting on the sacred texts, we link the biblical truth of scriptural passages to the experience of faith in the world in which we live.

Because biblical literature is the word of God, it holds meaning for people in every age and culture. Its personal message can be received by every reader who listens to the word in the context of his or her daily experiences. We should read the text until it becomes like a mirror, reflecting some of our own thoughts, questions, challenges and experiences.

Mary of Nazareth is the best model for this type of reflecting on God's word: "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). 'Pondering' suggests that the word being reflected upon has enough gravity to

shape and expand the understanding of our hearts. The word of God can form our hearts when we allow it to rest within us and gradually mold our desires, insights and judgments.

**"Our prayerful response to God flows directly from our biblical reading, understanding and reflecting"**

4. Praying: After listening carefully and reflectively to God's word in Scripture, we naturally reach a point where we want to respond. Prayer is our heartfelt response to God's word. In this way, *lectio divina* becomes a dialogue with God: We listen to God, then we respond to God in prayer.

Our prayerful response to God flows directly from our biblical reading, under-

standing and reflecting. Our prayer is enriched through the vocabulary, images and sentiments of the biblical text as it is joined with our own thoughts, needs and desires. As a grace-filled and Spirit-led response to God, our prayer becomes increasingly personal and intimate.

After responding to God with word-filled prayer, words gradually become less helpful and unnecessary. We are then often led by God into a wordless silence, an effortless resting in God's presence. This type of prayer is traditionally called contemplation. We simply end our prayer by receiving and accepting the transforming embrace of the One who has led us to the quiet moment.

### Action

5. Acting: After prayerfully listening to God through a passage of Scripture, we are challenged and moved to make a difference in the way we live. In addition to drawing us inward to reflection and prayer, the word of God impels us outward to those people and situations in need of God's light and compassionate presence. By acting on Scripture we become, as James says, "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jas 1:22).

Active change in our lives is the fruit of *lectio divina*. Occasionally, the changes are remarkable; more often, they are subtle. As we open ourselves to encountering Christ through revealed spiritual practices such as *lectio divina*, we gradually become aware that the fruit of studying the Bible is the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (and) self-control" (Gal 5:22-23).

When we begin to notice this fruit in the way we live each day, we will know that the word of God is working within us. We become more effective members of the body of Christ in the world and witnesses to God's kingdom.



# Wedding bells muse



Greg Erlandson

I must have skipped the chapter in my 'how to parent' instruction manual where it talked about weddings. Not my wedding, of course, but all the weddings of my kids, the friends of my kids and the kids of my friends.

For me, the year 2024 is turning into a banner year for nuptials, including the wedding of one of my sons. Yet we have been invited to at least five other weddings this year as well. We are swamped by the logistics of attending. We get save-the-date cards with a photo of the couple, then the actual wedding invitations. We negotiate wedding websites to R.S.V.P. and to send gifts. In case you didn't know, department store gift registries are now as old fashioned as department stores. It is far busier for some of our children, who have even more weddings to attend, bridesmaid dresses to buy, bachelor parties to throw, and travel and hotel expenses to cover.

I can't complain, however. My wife and I are cheered by this nuptial rush, for the statistics about young people getting married have been falling for years. Marriage has been in something approaching freefall since the 1960s. Catholic marriage rates have been dropping precipitously as well.

## Freefall

Some of this freefall is due to a rampant distrust of institutions that harkens back to Mae West ("Marriage is a great institution, but I'm not ready for an institution yet"). Some of it reflects a distrust of the Church itself. Some of it is cautiousness about commitment in an era of divorce. And some of it is the result of a crisis in dating.

We are hearing far too many stories of young men and young women (and some not-so-young men and women) who want marriage but are not

finding suitable partners. Even worse are the stories of young men and women who don't know how, or are afraid, to ask someone out on a date. Colleges are even offering dating instruction courses, for which there appears to be a real need. Young men tell me they are afraid that any expression of interest may be interpreted as harassment, and young women tell me of men who seem to be mired in perpetual adolescence.

And for parents who worry about their single children, it is usually made absolutely clear to them that they are not allowed to play matchmaker. Meanwhile, their (quite wonderful) children wait and wait for lightning to strike. But I digress.

What I want to tell all the couples that are getting married this year is that they should not focus on the wedding day. It is just one day, after all. It is not worth going into debt for or causing all your friends to go into debt for. The destination, the trappings, the dress - these are all irrelevant when compared to what this day signifies the start of: a shared life together.

**“Marriage is an ongoing seminar in selflessness. It's not always easy”**

After 41 years of marriage, I can testify that (a) marriage is great, (b) marriage does take work (on oneself), and (c) all the effort is worth it.

For Catholics, the challenge and the joy of 'becoming one flesh' is that the couple is committing to helping each other become more like Jesus, that is to grow in life-giving and generous love. That is why we get married, why we hope to have children, why we make a lifelong commitment. Marriage is an ongoing seminar in selflessness. It's not always easy. We even fail at times. But after 41 years of marriage, I can testify that the rewards are greater than anything those young couples can imagine right now.

So raise a glass and toast the beginning of one of life's most rewarding adventures.

**“For Catholics, the challenge and the joy of 'becoming one flesh' is that the couple is committing to helping each other become more like Jesus, that is to grow in life-giving and generous love”**





# A reflection on time's fleeting nature and our relationship with God



Sr Nancy Usselmann

**A**s I'm sitting in the chapel, I hear the clock in the sacristy ticking in the silence. The tick of every second is the ever-fleeting present leading to the next moment - the future St Teresa of Kolkata's words come to mind, "Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin."

Filmmaker Christopher Nolan uses the reality of time effectively in his storytelling. Hans Zimmer's soundtrack in Dunkirk creates suspense and urgency with a ticking clock underlying his score. The movie relays the rescue of the beach-stranded soldiers surrounded by the enemy as a race against time. In his sci-fi thriller Inception, the spinning top symbolises time and reality. If it falls over Leonardo DiCaprio's character Cobb is awake in the real world, but if it remains spinning, he is immersed in a dream. Nolan tells a group of Princeton graduates his reason for the film's unresolved ending, "Reality matters... I want you to chase your reality." In other words, live in the present.

## Fleeting

Time reminds us that it is fleeting. It never stops. Like in the story of Cinderella when the clock strikes midnight all the beautiful fantasy

fades away. What remains is the reality of the present. We can't stop growing older. We can't stop family and friends from the reality of death. We can't hold back time to relish the good times. We can only keep moving forward. We can live in the present.

**“Relish the moments: Let go of the past with its mistakes and disappointments. Be grateful for what you have right now and thank God for these blessings”**

God exists in the 'eternal now', that is, outside of time that moves from moment to moment. But he waits for us to discover him in the fleeting moments of beauty before us in a redwood-lined, mountainous trail, the smile of a friend or the gift of grace in prayer. We recognise him in the generosity of strangers, the meaning of our lives and the hope for life with him forever in heaven. Sometimes we may become a slave of time anxiously planning the next thing. We want to live in the present, but it moves on so quickly. Cherishing the time we have now helps us focus on what matters.

So, how can we live in the present? Here are five ways:

-Relish the moments: Let go of the past with its mistakes and disappointments. Be grateful for what you have right now and

thank God for these blessings.

-Don't worry: Jesus says, "Do not worry about tomorrow... Today's trouble is enough for today" (Mt 6:34). Surrender all your cares to the Lord.

-Choose the good: Discern the best next step in self-giving love and do that. Choose what will bring you peace.

-Lighten the baggage: Divest yourself of excess possessions.

-Be optimistic: Smile and share a word of joy with others.

## Experiences

I bring these tips into my daily prayer and experiences. My family all live in different areas of the country. I am grateful to God for the opportunity each time we come together. And so, I decide before each visit that I will relish the moments we have as a family. It gets harder and harder to say goodbye when it's time to leave. How much longer will we have together? Only God knows! It's futile to bring up past hurts or be anxious about future concerns. When I live in the present, I find joy in the moment.

Time marches on, like Pink Floyd sings in the song 'Time'. Before we know it, we question if we've really lived. Instead, the present holds the reality of life in view of eternity. We live well when we focus on the now with a grateful heart. When we do, we find God. For God is in the present moment waiting for us to recognise that we have today to live and to love. So, let's begin.

**i** Sister Nancy Usselmann, a Daughter of St Paul, is director of the Pauline Centre for Media Studies in Los Angeles and a media literacy education specialist.



## Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

## What does 'Ordinary Time' mean in the Church's calendar?

**Q: I once heard a priest talk about Ordinary Time and that it didn't mean 'plain' or that other times were more important. Of course, I can't remember how he explained it. Can you explain some more?**

**A:** I personally was not there when your priest was giving his talk, so I can't comment specifically on what he said. But my guess is that your priest noted that we use the word 'ordinary' in our English term 'Ordinary Time' because it refers to 'ordinal numbers', i.e. numbers that denote a rank or sequence.

Depending on how the days of the week fall in a given year, Ordinary Time is 33-34 weeks long, and the days in Ordinary Time are generally identified by their number. For instance, on the second Sunday of July 2024, we will be celebrating the fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Latin term for Ordinary Time is similarly straightforward and practical: 'tempus per annum' roughly translates into 'time during the year'.

But although the 'ordinary' in 'Ordinary Time' does not come from the same source as our word for 'unremarkable', in my own opinion the double meaning of the word 'ordinary' is a linguistic happy accident. In a certain sense, Ordinary Time is indeed 'ordinary' in this way.

Ordinary Time begins after the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which marks the closing of the Christmas season. The first few weeks of Ordinary Time occur during the winter, until it is interrupted by Lent and the Easter season. After the Easter season closes with Pentecost, Ordinary Time resumes and carries on through late spring until early winter with the beginning of Advent.

Not only does Ordinary Time represent a quieter period between the Church's major solemnities and more 'intense' seasons, but the proper liturgy for a particular day in Ordinary Time is often replaced by various other feasts and commemorations.

Still, just because Ordinary Time might be 'ordinary' in more ways than one, this does not mean that we should see it

as boring or unimportant. Like all liturgical seasons, Ordinary Time calls us to reflect on particular mysteries of the faith in a more focused way than we would in other seasons. As the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops notes: "The Sundays and weeks of Ordinary Time, on the other hand, take us through the life of Christ. This is the time of conversion. This is living the life of Christ. Ordinary Time is a time for growth and maturation, a time in which the mystery of Christ is called to penetrate ever more deeply into history until all things are finally caught up in Christ."

During the brief period of Ordinary Time between Christmas and Lent, we can remember the hidden years of Jesus with his family in Nazareth prior to the beginning of his public ministry - a ministry that began with his forty days of testing in the desert, which we recall during the season of Lent that immediately follows.

Pentecost calls to mind the birth of the Church and the commission of the Apostles to go out to the whole world to spread the Gospel; and the subsequent return to Ordinary Time reminds us to 'get to work' in the normal, daily task of evangelising in the course of our everyday lives. The green vestments used in Ordinary Time further remind us of life and fruitfulness during the long summer growing season.

During the autumn, when the days grow shorter, the readings of Ordinary Time take on a more apocalyptic tone, reminding us of Christ's second coming at the end of all time. Ordinary Time thereby appropriately culminates in the feast of Christ the King. Then the Church's reflection on Christ's second coming as Judge flows seamlessly into a sense of joy at his first coming as a humble infant during the Advent season. And so, the whole cycle begins again.

**i** Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.



# Sacred permission to be in agony



Christ in Gethsemane by  
Carl Heinrich Bloch, 1880

**W**e live this life “mourning and weeping in a valley of tears.” This was part of a prayer my parents prayed every day of their adult lives, as did many others in their generation. In the light of contemporary sensitivities (and one-sided spiritualities), this might sound morbid. Are we to understand our lives as time of grieving in a world that cannot deliver happiness? Is this really what God wants of us?

Taken without nuance, this can indeed be morbid. God didn’t put us into this world to suffer in order to go to Heaven. No. God is a good parent. Good parents bring children into this world with the intent that they should flourish and find happiness. So why might our Christian faith ask us to understand ourselves as mourning and weeping in a valley of tears?

## Consolation

For my parents, that phrase brought a certain consolation, namely, that their lives didn’t have to deliver the full symphony, Heaven right now. It gave them sacred permission to accept that in life there will be disappointments, suffering, poverty, sickness, loss, frustrated dreams, heartbreak, misunderstanding and death. They never over-expected and understood that it is normal to experience pain and disappointment. Paradoxically, by accepting this limita-



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

tion, they were able to give themselves permission to thoroughly enjoy life’s good moments without guilt.

**“For the most part spiritualities today do not leave sufficient space for grieving, a lacuna shared by most of the secular world”**

My fear is that we are not equipping ourselves nor the next generation with the tools needed to undergo frustration, disappointment and heartbreak without breaking down in faith (and sometimes too in psyche and body). Today, for the most part, our normal expectation is that we shouldn’t be finding ourselves mourning and weeping, but rather that life should be delivering a full symphony. We no longer feel that we have sacred permission to be weeping.

The spirituality we breathe in

today from our churches, theologians and spiritual writers has many strong points (just as the one my parents breathed in had its weaknesses). However, to my mind, for the most part spiritualities today do not leave sufficient space for grieving, a lacuna shared by most of the secular world.

We are not making enough space for grief, either in our churches or in our lives. We are not giving people the tools they need to handle frustration, loss, and heartbreak, nor how to grieve when they are beset by them. Outside of our funeral rituals, we make very little room for grief. Worse still, we tend to give the impression that there is something wrong in our lives if there are tears. What’s the place and value of grieving?

## Accepting

First, as Karl Rahner poetically explains, it is a way of “accepting that in the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable we ultimately learn that here in this life there is no finished symphony”. Grieving is also, as Rachel

Naomi Remen writes, a critical way of self-care. Not to grieve, she submits, is a denial of our own wholeness. “People burn out because they don’t grieve”. British novelist Anita Brookner repeats a particular refrain in several of her books. Commenting on marriage, she suggests that “the first task in a marriage is for the couple to console each other for the fact that they cannot not disappoint each other.”

My parents had not read Karl Rahner, Rachel Naomi Remen or Anita Brookner, but in their daily prayer they reminded themselves that in this life there is no finished symphony, that grieving is healthy self-care and that it’s consoling to accept that neither of them could ever be quite enough for the other since only God can provide that.

**“If Jesus wept, so must we. The disciple is never superior to the master”**

What do we need to grieve? Our human condition and all that comes with it, namely, impermanence, the loss of our youth, the loss of a youthful body, wounds, betrayals, frustrated dreams, heartbreaks, the loss of loved ones, the death of our honeymoons, the perennial flow

through our lives of people, places, and institutions and then disappearing, our incapacity to not be disappointing to others, the loss of our health and our eventual deaths. That’s what we need to grieve.

## Grieve

And how do we grieve? Jesus left us a template for this when he grieved in the garden of Gethsemane. What did he do when, as the Gospels say, he was reduced to “sweating blood” as he faced his own imminent death? He prayed, prayed a prayer that openly and honestly expressed his agony, that recognised his distance from others inside his suffering, which acknowledged his own helplessness to do anything to change the situation, that repeatedly begged God to alter things, but that expressed a trust in God despite the present darkness. That’s the way Jesus wept.

If Jesus wept, so must we. The disciple is never superior to the master. Moreover, we can learn from Jesus that mourning and weeping in our lives do not necessarily mean that there is something wrong. It might well mean that this is where are meant to be.

We have sacred permission to sometimes be in agony.



# Trusting along the journey



Nicolas Poussin. Photo: Public Domain

Am 7:12-15  
Ps 85:9-10, 11-12,  
13-14  
Eph 1:3-14 or 1:3-10  
Mk 6:7-13

In the second book of his Dialogues, Pope Gregory the Great tells of the holiness of St Benedict, whose memorial is celebrated on the 11th day of July. We learn that Benedict lived for three years in Subiaco, some 40 miles outside of Rome. He fled the ancient city that was self-destructing in its moral decay and chose instead a life of detachment from worldly goods. Benedict lived a life of prayer, solitude and poverty focused on God that served as the spiritual foundation of monastic communities dedicated to “ora et

## The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



labora,” prayer and work.

### Civilisation

Overtime, Benedictine monasteries, described by their founder as “a school for the Lord’s service,” would transform Western civilisation with the light of the Gospel lived in prayer, manual labour, learning and

detachment from the world. The Rule of St Benedict laid the foundations for the evangelisation of Europe and the flowering of medieval Christianity.

**“To serve Jesus required complete detachment from the world”**

In this Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus calls the Twelve Apostles and begins to send them out two by two. This was a key moment for the

disciples, as their life with Jesus is transformed into their vocation. It is the moment when the disciples become apostles, sent by Jesus to continue his ministry of teaching, healing and self-giving love. To serve Jesus required complete detachment from the world.

### Reflecting

As Jesus sent his disciples out, he gave them instructions that are worth reflecting on as we ponder the word of God today. Jesus tells his disciples to take nothing for the journey, except a walking

stick and sandals. They were not to take food, sack, money or even a second tunic!

**“To serve the Lord as his missionary disciple demands complete dependence on God”**

Jesus’ words must have surprised his disciples. To take nothing on a journey is counterintuitive. But the radical poverty that Jesus asks of his disciples makes sense only in light of the great mission he is calling them to. To serve the Lord as his missionary disciple demands complete dependence on God.

A disciple is called to trust that God’s providential love provides for the journey. Rather than being concerned with and distracted by the demands of material

possessions, a disciple of Jesus fixes his or her gaze on the mission of sharing the life-giving message of the Gospel with those in physical and spiritual need.

The saints of the Christian tradition show that it is possible to live for union with God, in radical detachment from the cares and possessions of this world. Like the disciples, we too are called to forms of detachment, suited to our state in life, as we depend on God to whom we pray, “Speak to me, Lord.”

Question: What are you called to be detached from as a disciple of Jesus?

**Jem Sullivan** holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

**“The radical poverty that Jesus asks of his disciples makes sense only in light of the great mission he is calling them to. To serve the Lord as his missionary disciple demands complete dependence on God”**



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## What are we doing to our children?

**H**ow we treat our children is something of a conundrum, but doing it well is surely a mark of how caring and genuine our society is. I observe how much we love our children, how most parents would do anything for them, even give their own lives if required. We see the unbearable grief when a child is lost. And yet some parents abuse their children and some institutions, including Church, State and sports bodies have fallen far short in the care they give to our children.

These thoughts were prompted by several stories in the media. Early this week on **Morning Ireland** (RTÉ Radio 1, Monday July 8), we heard from Dr Maria Corbett of the Child Law Project, with disturbing stories of state bodies failing children on a distressing scale. A High Court judge said there was "a tsunami about to reach shore and nothing is being done". There were stories of child trafficking, sexual abuse and "instability in care placements". A judge described some children as "effectively homeless," though in the care of the State. There are obviously huge failures in oversight and no doubt some of the problem is resource related, but that doesn't excuse the failings. Recently it was also reported that the majority of a fund intended for the relief of scoliosis in children was used,

Mary Aiken, cyber psychologist.  
Photo: Diarmuid Greene



according to the Minister for Health – "more broadly across Child Health Ireland".

Sometimes it's a matter of skewed priorities – millions can be found for the prevention of children (free contraception) and the destruction of children (free abortions). Children and pregnancies are not diseases and yet those children who have real medical problems often have trouble accessing the necessary help.

How social media and modern communications technology damages children has been discussed frequently, but action is very slow. On **Sunday Sequence** (BBC Radio Ulster) cyber psychologist Mary Aiken, once again highlighted the dan-

gers. She found some sign the tide was turning in the recent suggestion by the US Surgeon General Vivek Murphy that cigarette-like health warnings be attached to social media websites, drawing attention to the "significant mental health harms". She also drew attention to his game-changing statement that "unleashing powerful technology which has never been proven safe has contributed to a mental health emergency amongst teenagers". She saw "increasing levels of anxiety and depression" in young people, with increasing self-harm and suicidal ideation. I'd suspect there are other contributing factors, like climate anxiety, relationship confusion or the lack of

religious faith giving direction and meaning.

Lawyer Paul Tweed feared there was "a generation of young people addicted to screens". In his efforts to effect change, he found it very difficult dealing with the tech giants. In fact, with the development of Artificial Intelligence, he suspected he was dealing with AI generated responses when engaging with them. It was only when lawyers got involved that you got to communicate with an actual human. He saw a battlefield opening up, including the possibility of class actions, and much of the action might centre on Ireland where many of the big tech companies have their European headquarters. He thought we

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### NATIONAL DAY OF COMMEMORATION

RTÉ One Sunday July 14, 10.55am

Annual ceremony of remembrance for all Irish people who died in wars or on service with the United Nations.

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC Two Sunday July 14, 1.15pm

Aled Jones explores fascinating hidden gem churches in London with historian and tour guide Joanna Bogle.

#### ST THERESE - DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

EWTN Sunday July 14, 9pm

Looking at the life and world of St Therese of Lisieux, her writings and an examination of their relevance to Catholics today.

needed a strong regulatory framework but one that was enforced. Indeed, I thought, we are far better in Ireland in making rules (the easy bit) than in enforcing them (the tricky bit).

### Interview

Not unrelated was the interview with pop singer and Grammy winner Kaya Jones on **Mornings with Kieran** (Spirit Radio, Friday). Jones had several abortions, which she regretted, and was in Dublin to speak at last weekend's Rally for Life. She was critical of the exploitation of young women in the music industry. She once had to perform while a medical abortion was in progress, and seeing young girls looking up to her on stage she felt she

had a responsibility to do better. She thanked God for saving her life, for steering her away from the secular world towards the Gospel world where she could sing for Him. She engaged in detailed study of Scripture and now wanted to educate young people, to help them make better decisions – she said, "when we know better, we do better".

We can virtue signal, tick boxes, engage in pious platitudes, pass a children's rights referendum and then take away their right to be born, but the practical approaches of Kaya Jones, as with the efforts of Mary Aiken, Paul Tweed and the Children's Law Project, give real hope.

# Film

Aubrey Malone



## Thrills and spills by the Bucketload on Netflix

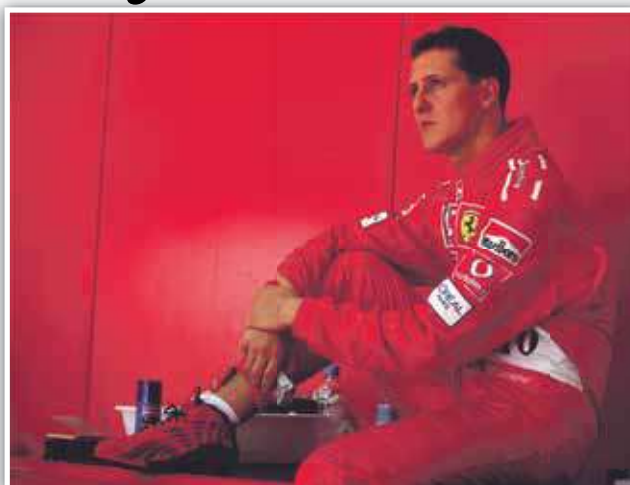
**T**here are more twists and turns in *The Weekend Away* than the road from Dublin to Ballyjamesduff. It's about a young woman who goes missing after a night out with her best friend in Croatia. Who's responsible? At one stage I suspected four different people. It was none of them! Okay so it's popcorn entertainment but it will keep you guessing right up to the last few minutes.

Leighton Meester, the heroine, is one of those actresses who can look different in almost every shot. No matter who else is in the frame you find yourself watching her. I saw her as a psychotic character in *The Roommate* some years ago and she was equally

compelling.

*Schumacher* is a documentary about the famous racing driver Michael Schumacher. He was involved in a freakish accident in 2013 that changed his life irrevocably. It happened when he was on a skiing holiday. He hit his head off a rock while careering down a slope, suffering profound brain injuries as a result.

Some people felt he might have been better off to have died. He was placed in an induced coma. He's been home for some years now. His family are tight-lipped about his present condition. Last year they took a legal action against a German magazine that published an 'interview' with him which turned out to be AI-generated: a worry-



Schumacher

ing sign of our times.

*Schumacher* examines his life as one of the greatest Formula 1 drivers of all

time rather than dwelling on his current predicament. How weird that a man who appeared to have the proverb-

ial nine lives on the track could be brought so low by a seemingly innocuous incident.

### Films

*Despite the Falling Snow* is a fairly decent Russian spy thriller. I'm not a fan of films that have two constantly juxtaposing time frames, but Rebecca Ferguson is always watchable, and the cinematography is excellent. I just wish there was more of a story. It's like a beautiful box of chocolates you can't eat.

*Deadly Switch* is one of those films that would have been fine if it wasn't for the spoiler in the title. Why do filmmakers do things like this? If they didn't, we would have been more intrigued

about who was stalking the young girl at its centre – and why. It becomes a bit ridiculous towards the end, but it has an intriguing premise. The plot twists – like in *The Weekend Away* – will keep you from hitting that remote.

I binge-watched all six episodes of *Lies and Deceit* in one day. That's five hours of a fairly ordinary story about a girl who claims she was sexually abused by a surgeon.

There's bad Spanish dubbing. It isn't too surprising where the lies and deceit are coming from but that's the thing about mini-series: they get in on you like any other addiction. It's difficult not to click "Next Episode" after the last one ends.

Try to fight it.





# BookReviews

Peter Costello



# Philosophy in post-imperial worlds

**Journeys of the Mind: A Life in History,**  
by Peter Brown  
(Princeton University Press,  
£38.00)

Dr Patricia Rumsey

**P**eter Brown, a Dubliner, is probably the most famous historian of early Christianity alive today. This is his autobiography (although thus to pigeon-hole it, is to do this magnificent book a grave disservice, for it is far more than just an autobiography) and it will be eagerly welcomed by the world of academe, especially by historians of late antiquity, who have been indebted to his research since the 1960s.

It will also be read with pleasure, amusement and great enjoyment not only by academics but by all those for whom he wrote – the equivalent of the “aunts” to whom he refers several times as his intended ‘reading public’ (p. 66 “persons who ... had received a good high school education but had not continued to the university”).

## Aspects

There are so many aspects of this large (699 pp.) volume that one could explore and comment on, but perhaps it is this sheer human interest at all levels which make it such a fascinating read. The characters, both known and unknown, both famous but also obscure and unsung, come alive in the pen portraits in these pages. We are treated to vignettes from the Brown household: Rory, Aunt Mai’s dog “the result of an amorous encounter between a pedigree spaniel and a Labrador” (p. 68); little Peter donating his Mickey Mouse handkerchief to the hippopotamus; and then very much later the moving description of his father’s last illness and the sobering account of his widowed mother’s last years.

But there are excursions into events and places much more serious, perceptively analysed by Brown, and showing the various threads which make up the tapestry of this rich life, the “new landscapes” which “fed the imagination” (p.293), but still with his characteristically



St Augustine, as conceived by the painter Vittore Carpaccio, pausing for enlightenment (painted circa 1504)

gentle and non-judgemental observations: Irish religion and society of the mid-twentieth century; the colonial system of his father’s involvement in the Sudan; the bewildering English public school system; life in the Oxford colleges in the 1950s; the very different life of the American universities; lecturing in European universities and his lengthy travels in Iran and the Near East, all brilliantly and vividly described

and documented from letters and diaries.

## Engrossing

He recounts in engrossing detail the conception and birth of all his great works, each one of them a massive contribution to that period of history which he has done so much to reappraise and identify: the world of “Late Antiquity”, of the Christian Roman aristocracy, of Augustine, of the desert ascetics; in

the process introducing us to the trials and tribulations of an author and researcher.

**“The humility and the humour of this great academic historian shine out on every page of this monumental book”**

He explains for us his inten-

tion: “As a historian, I felt that my first duty was to listen carefully to the ancient Christian writers to make their views ... intelligible to modern readers. I wanted to catch those voices from a distant age ...” (p. 646). This is what he has been doing for more than sixty years and all today’s students of the late Classical world are deeply in his debt for bringing that era alive.

The humility and the humour of this great academic historian shine out on every page of this monumental book (in his sorrow at hearing in Rome of the death of his mother he helped “an old lady by carrying her shopping bag up the hill” [p. 685]).

It will be read with enor-

mous interest by all those who have been touched by his work as an historian, a lecturer, a writer, a friend, a colleague and perhaps most of all, as someone whose sheer humanity has enabled him to rise above the sectarianism and conflict which he so often saw around him. Now, still indefatigable though in his late eighties, he is reading texts in Ge’ez, the classic language of Ethiopia, because there is still “room for many such journeys of the mind” (p. 699).

**▶ A historian and theologian, Dr Patricia Rumsey, a Poor Clare of the of the community at Arkley, is an Hon. Associate Professor at the University of Nottingham.**

**“As a historian, I felt that my first duty was to listen carefully to the ancient Christian writers to make their views ... intelligible to modern readers. I wanted to catch those voices from a distant age”**



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.

## Down the Chandleresque “mean streets” of darkest Dublin



The Bogart raincoat look

### Dane Jeross: The Irish Private Eye who Operates Hollywood Noir Style,

by Cyril McHale  
(Available from Amazon Media Eu: kindle edition, £9.99; paperback, £11.00.)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Every classic Hollywood film is essentially a story and all of human life is to be found in those stories. They range from stories about the ‘Wild West’ to accounts of the struggle between the police and hoodlums for control of the streets of the mega cities of the US.

Most are based on the work of well-known novelists. Historical fiction and, in recent years, the presentation of historical events have had the highest viewing figures. However, the crime story and the detective story remain the staple offering of the film industry.

From his earliest years Cyril McHale has been a Hollywood film-buff with a particular interest in films on crime and the adventures of various ‘private eyes’.

### Fixated

He tells us “I got fixated with the gangster genre at an early age. I loved to see the likes of Bogart, Cagney, Edward G. Robinson and Bob Mitchum taking on the low-life hoods of their world”. It seems his favourite ‘private eyes’ were Sam

Spade and Philip Marlowe, the creations of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler respectively.

**“Cyril’s fondness for Hollywood films also prompts him to give the female lead in his tale the name Marilyn Hayworth – recalling two of Hollywood’s legendary actresses”**

His attachment to them and the culture surrounding them is obvious in the manner in which he sets out his novel on Dane Jeross, a Dublin private eye. Dane models himself on those tough, wise-cracking private eyes who protected the beautiful blonde heroines. He even wears a fedora and trench coat and inevitably ‘picks’ a pistol. All is brought to life on the screen by Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall.

Cyril’s fondness for Hollywood films also prompts him to give the female lead in his tale the name Marilyn Hayworth – recalling two of Hollywood’s legendary actresses.

Paddy Connors, an Irish-American, is at the centre of the plot of Cyril’s private-eye story which unfolds Hollywood noir style. Connors married Kate and after

she was in receipt of a sizeable inheritance, absconded with it.

As the story begins, she is now Dane’s assistant and both are tireless in their search for Connors. Then a client seeks Dane’s assistance to discover whether or not her fiancé is two-timing her. It turns out he is none other than Connors, having physically changed his appearance and adopted a new persona.

### Twists

There are many turns and twists in the tale, but eventually Connors is brought to book. Before that is achieved, however, while out on bail Connors disappears and attempts to escape to the United States.

He is tracked down by Dane and his assistant in a restaurant. Connors grabs Kate and holds a fork to her throat. This ruse to escape and kidnap Kate is thwarted as, when he leaves the restaurant, he discovers that the ‘parking police’ had taken possession of his car.

McHale’s story is deftly developed. His description of the characters is convincing and the dialogue is lively. An entertaining homage to a golden era of crime and detection, it is a tale of Dublin’s ‘mean streets’ for a sunny summer holiday reading treat.

❶ J. Anthony Gaughan is a historian and critic

# A poet’s thoughts on life and faith



Gabriel Fitzmaurice making his point of view clear

**The Best Loved Poems of Gabriel Fitzmaurice,** with an introduction by Declan Kiberd (Mercier Press, €12.99)

Thomas McCarthy

Those of us who remember Listowel Writers’ Week in its earliest days will never forget the singing and cajoling presence of a whipper-snapper young poet called Gabriel Fitzmaurice – there he would be in the foyer of the Listowel Arms, handing a pint to a wavering Michael Hartnett or a sheaf of new poems to Brendan Kennelly or Bryan MacMahon.

He belonged to the tumult of that North Kerry life, and there is still a tumultuous, life-affirming atmosphere about the poems selected for this very portable new book. The poems offered here, every one of them, contain all of the assertions and grandeur of that world. Fitzmaurice’s brilliant poem on a Munster Football Final held during the Civil War probably sums up the ethics of such a life:

‘There’s something more important here than war.

John Joe Sheehy, centre forward, Republican, Con Brosnan, Free State captain, centrefield;

For what they love, they both put down the gun –

On Con’s safe conduct, Sheehy takes the field.

In an hour the Kerry team will win.

Sheehy will vanish, on Brosnan’s bond, again.’

To those Kerry values, one could add story-telling, religion, family, music. These

are the Kerry essentials and Fitzmaurice is the Poet Laureate of every element: if you think such things are unimportant, then you’re a fool. Or you’ve never been to Kerry. His celebration of the singer Con Greaney, not just a poem but a recitation in print, is sustained and astonishing: ‘Born on the mountain/ These eighty years and more,/ Not born so much as quarried;/ The mountain life was poor.’ His memory of the drunk who brings two bottles of Guinness Extra Stout to the altar rails at Midnight Mass is both effective and poignant:

‘But the Christ who thirsts on Calvary

Has waited all these years For the fellow cursed with the cross of thirst

To stand him these few beers.’

The gesture is everything in such a life, the human gesture contains immensities and this is what Fitzmaurice has always captured in his work. From his throne in Moyvane, like a benign wise Pope, he casts a holy, accepting glance upon exhausted humanity. And most of the fine gestures in these poems arise from attachment, all kinds of attachments, from fathers to sons, from singer to audience, from husband to wife. His poem ‘Dad’ is the magnificent celebration of a good father:

‘A man before his time, he cooked and sewed, Took care of me – and Mammy in her bed... Now when the New man poses with his kid, I think of all the things my father did’

‘Every art-work is possible only to one person at one time and in one place; and Fitzmaurice remains always true to the colour of his own locality: Moyvane, Knockanure, Listowel’ writes Declan Kiberd in his very fine Introduction. But, lest we miss the sophistication and deliberateness of Fitzmaurice’s life in poetry, Kiberd reminds us of the artistic richness of those North Kerry/West Limerick townlands, the townlands of Thomas MacCreevy, Harry Clarke and Michael Hartnett. In this book a great deal of what is sophisticated and knowing is distilled into a kind of direct story-telling, a ‘dán díreach’ out of the tumult of so much thought:

‘The bird Too hurt to feed Falls in the valley Of the coat, And as I help It claws And perches on my finger Bridging the great divide Of man and bird.’

The cover art of this book, a clever arrangement of eighty-one lighthouses by Brenda Fitzmaurice, serves perfectly as a metaphor of what occurs within. This Best-Loved Poems is a neat arrangement of votive candles, candles of both light and hope. All the imperfections of human nature, all the goodness within, all humility in the face of heaven’s grandeur: it is all here, compressed into this beautiful book, a true traveller’s companion.

❶ Thomas McCarthy is a Cork-based poet and critic

## The Hopkins Summer School 2024

Peter Costello

The full finalised programme of the annual Gerard Manley Hopkins International Literary Festival in the theatre at Newbridge College, Co. Kildare, is now available to book online. This year’s programme is as usual, very full and varied with many interesting lectures and attractive events.

One lecture that especially stands out is one

on Monday 22 July at 11.45 by Brendan Staunton SJ on ‘Hopkins as Jesuit Priest’. People often speak carelessly of Hopkins’ “vocation” as a poet; but Hopkins himself knew he had a primary calling as a priest that was more essential to him. This surely goes to the heart of all things for Hopkins and his admirers.

Visit the G. M. Hopkins International Literary Festival site online, or email [abbottviv@gmail.com](mailto:abbottviv@gmail.com) for further details about the programme and bookings.







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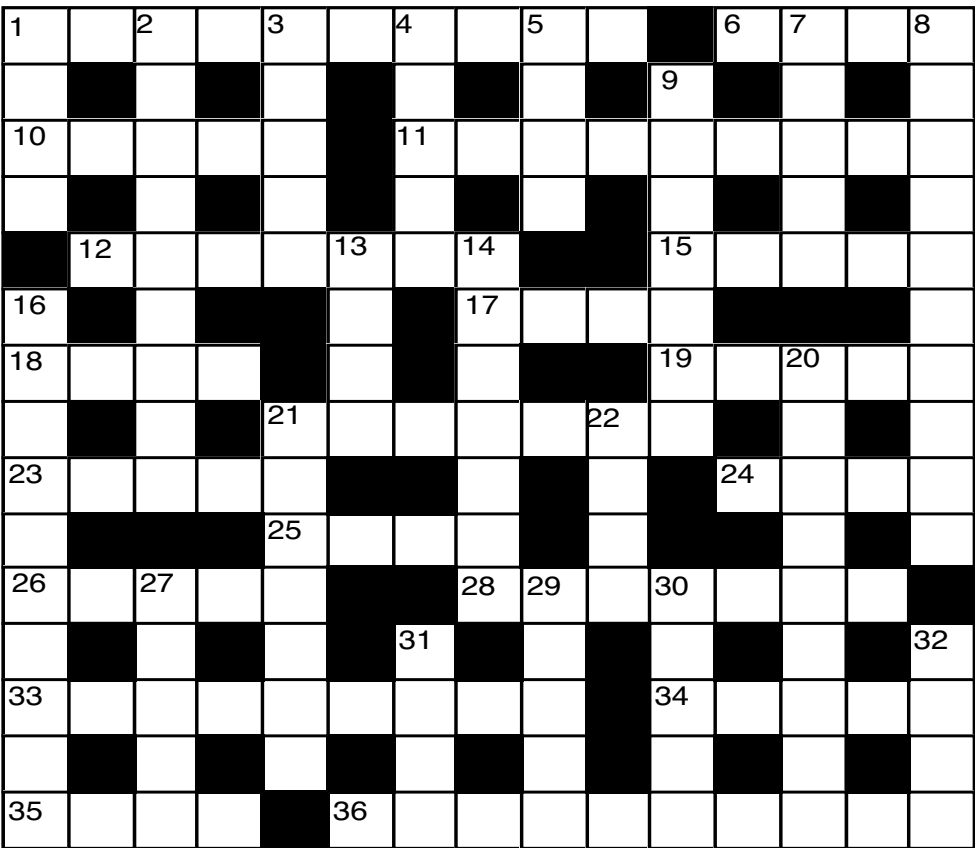


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Crossword

Gordius 671

- Across**  
1 Ailment affecting the nose and throat (6,4)  
6 Market (4)  
10 The bone that protects the brain (5)  
11 Classical music-makers under a conductor (9)  
12 Garment worn by gymnasts and dancers (7)  
15 Big (5)  
17 Book of the Old Testament or 'Budapest' singer George (4)  
18 Golfer McIlroy, perhaps (4)  
19 Automaton (5)  
21 Take for granted (7)  
23 It can be measured in fathoms (5)  
24 Notice something; alternatively a blemish (4)  
25 Desert poet Khayyam, perhaps (4)  
26 Felony (5)  
28 One size of newspaper (7)  
33 Started, got under way (9)  
34 Piece of jewellery or fleeting appearance on film (5)  
35 Almonds, perhaps (4)  
36 Separate accommodation within a family dwelling, perhaps for an older member of the family (6,4)



- 7 Change (5)  
8 Property (4,6)  
9 State formally (7)  
13 In the distance (4)  
14 Sweet course of a meal (7)  
16 Forecast (10)  
20 & 32d Feature in a church associated with christenings (9,4)  
21 Mythical bird which was said to rise from its own ashes (7)  
22 Ancient kingdom where Moses died (4)  
27 Fool (5)  
29 Shakespearean forest, the setting for 'As You Like It' (5)  
30 Fortunate (5)  
31 Famous film actor (4)  
32 See 20 down

SOLUTIONS, JULY 4

GORDIUS No. 670

Across

1 Bell ringer 6 Jaws 10 Canon 11 Cold cream 12 Moisten 15 Piton 17 Edit 18 Dunk 19 Radar 21 Gentile 23 Lodge 24 Orca 25 Noon 26 Sable 28 Essence 33 Esplanade 34 Rhone 35 Tidy 36 Soothsayer

Down

1 Buck 2 Land of Nod 3 Rings 4 Niche 5 Eels 7 Avert 8 Seminarian 9 Sceptre 13 Tale 14 Neptune 16 Adolescent 20 Directory 21 General 22 Laos 27 Biped 29 Sweet 30 Earns 31 Faro 32 Hear

Sudoku Corner 541

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 540

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

Last week's Hard 540

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



Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



# Tears and broken hearts when a parish church closes

I grew up listening to Frankie Byrne. She was the star of the sponsored programme hosted by Jacobs on RTE Radio and had the title of Ireland's agony aunt. The problems she was dealing with "might not be yours today", she insisted – "but they could be some day". That's how I feel about the closure of a church; it's not our issue today, but how far off is it?

Last month I attended the final Mass at St Bernadette Church in Chicagoland's Evergreen Park. The event was well-flagged in advance, so it attracted an overflow congregation, all presided over by Fr Benedykt, their Polish-born but Chicago-ordained pastor.

## Parting

This Mass, like most American celebrations, featured the full participation of the faithful – singing, reading and praying. I contributed a little to the homily, adding an Irish perspective for a congregation many of whom had Irish roots. The pastor spoke powerfully of the primacy of faith on this Sunday at which the Gospel of the raising of Jairus' daughter was read: new life in the midst of death.

After Communion came the most poignant words. Lay parish-



The taking down of the altar cross at the end of the last Mass in St Bernadette Church, Evergreen Park, Illinois, USA.

ioners gave their parting reflections, revealing both heartbreak and resignation. Then began the ceremony of what was called 'Religiation' (as opposed to deconsecration, its equivalent). The pastor prayed in thanksgiving at seven significant stations in the church: the baptismal font, the Holy Oils' receptacle, confessional, shrine of St Joseph, then at Our Lady's image, the ambo and finally the altar. Once

that prayer was over, the liturgy took on a Holy Thursday feel, as the altar was stripped, the candles quenched, the portable furniture removed.

## Goodbyes

As Pastor Benedykt is chaplain to Evergreen Park Fire Dept, he thought it wise to involve them in what happened next. As the congregation watched with reverence, a gurney was brought to the altar and the tabernacle placed on it, clothed in white sheets as might an ailing patient be. Once this was wheeled out, attention shifted to the fifteen-foot high crucifix dominating the altar, which was then removed and carried shoulder-high from the church to a waiting fire-truck. Then came the most poignant ceremony of all, as the whole congregation came forward as for

Communion, but this time to each kiss the altar and say 'goodbye' to it, and thus to their church.

Outside a procession of cars formed up and, led by the crucifix and tabernacle, all drove along the blocked-off streets to their new parish church. Entering there, each received a long-stemmed white rose for welcome, then all gasped as the tabernacle was enthroned, and the large crucifix carried through the church to its new home.

How long was Mass, you might ask? It began at the customary time of 10.30 am and had its final hymn about 2.30 pm. That's how long it took to close a parish church in Chicagoland on a June Sunday in 2024. How long will it take to wipe away the tears and heal the broken hearts of those who attended? Only God knows.

## Words at the closure of a church...

"Most rural parishes in Ireland have a Mass rock or a site where Mass was celebrated in Penal Times. What these places have in common is that they have no walls and no roof, just a holy space

for holy people. That experience taught Irish people that buildings don't matter, they can be taken from us when the powers-that-be decide. Buildings don't last, only faith does. We have not here a lasting city; at the end, we leave every dwelling behind. Faith sustains us on the journey of life and into new life."

## A bleak winter's evening

● One Mass-rock celebration that I experienced came to mind recently. I was in Uibh Laoire Parish, near Macroom, when a report on abuses on Church-run reformatories came out. Parishioners felt anger, but also sadness that locals had been abandoned to such places. A Mass of Atonement followed at our Mass rock, on a bleak winter's evening, followed by a procession to the church, in rain and wind, for solemn prayers. My deepest memory was of candles lit for the Mass and carried back to the church, in the rain, never going out – as hope never does, for those who believe.



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## Franciscan Sisters urgently appeal to The Little Way for funds for food and water for more than 1,000 people suffering from a terrible heatwave in India

Forty districts in the western Indian state of Rajasthan are experiencing a severe drinking water crisis. Extreme temperatures have already killed many people and the current level of heat is due to last for at least another month.

The Franciscan Sisters of St Joseph are working to reduce the impact of the heatwave and sandstorms. They have sent us an urgent appeal for funds to do the following:

- pay for a water tanker to supply water to 300 families for each of 60 days,
- provide oral rehydration packets for 500 families,
- give small air coolers to 70 of the most needy families
- pay for food for 400 families.

The target area is 10 villages in the Jaipur District. Dear Irish Catholic readers, please send a donation today, no matter how small, and help relieve the suffering of the people.

**The Little Way Association makes no deduction from donations sent for the Missions, so every euro is utilized fully for the purpose for which it is sent.**



*"My life is but an instant, a passing hour. My life is but a day that escapes and flies away. O my God! You know that to love you on this earth I only have today."* – St Therese

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