

The Irish Catholic

**THE HOSPITALS WERE
CLEANER WHEN THE
NUNS RAN THEM**

Theo McDonald
Pages 20-21

**MESSIANIC
APPEAL OF
TAYLOR SWIFT**

David Quinn
Page 10

**PILGRIMS
AND FAITH
VS FITNESS**

Ava Westendorf
Pages 12-13



Thursday, July 4, 2024

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

@IrishCathNews

www.irishcatholic.com

Cardinal says human slavery getting worse

Parishes asked to increase awareness of trafficking

Renata Milán Morales

Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster has told a top level summit of police chiefs, Irish bishops and justice personnel that the crime of human trafficking is getting worse.

The Senior Leadership Summit on collectively combatting human trafficking was held in UCC, Cork from June 26 to 27.

This event gathered high-ranking police from the USA, UK and Ireland, Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster, Kevin Hyland of the Santa Marta Group set up by Pope Francis, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee, Bishop Alan McGuckian of Down and Connor, Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross, and well-known Mercy sister Sr Liz Murphy, representing Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT).

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, president of Santa Marta Group, highlighted in his introduction the fact that "things are getting worse," with regards to the crime of human trafficking and that we must "encourage each other, deepen

» Continued on Page 2

Friars Film Falls Foul of The Force of OPW



Irish Friars were refused permission to film on Skellig Michael as part of a YouTube series on ancient religious sites yet the Star Wars franchise received extensive permission to film there with large film crews proving that the OPW truly has gone over to the Dark Side. See page 3

**FRANCE'S
WOES**

Mary Kenny

PAGE 5



**PRAYING WHEN IT
SEEMS USELESS**

Fr Rolheiser

PAGE 33



**A EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL
IS NEEDED**

Breda O'Brien

PAGE 7



The mission of *The Irish Catholic* to share the Gospel truth has never been more critical.



The Irish Catholic

One of the last few independent Catholic voices in the Irish media landscape, the weekly print and digital formats provide news and in-depth analyses of hot button issues from reputed contributors.

+353 (01) 687 4028 www.irishcatholic.com/shop

» Continued from Page 1

our relationships and deepen our sense of common purpose.”

The Cardinal distinguished between human rights parlance and human dignity which is innate in each of us. The conference heard from two victims of trafficking.

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee said “In Ireland, like elsewhere, these victims are often ‘hidden in plain sight’. She added: “We want Ireland as a society to be aware of this reality.”

Sr Liz Murphy, speaking to *The State of the Nation* podcast, said that trafficking is more than just putting people into prostitution. “It’s now spread into the movement of people...the slavery of people, whether it’s agriculture, domestic service, the sex trade, wherever, like

even the various service level industries.”

Prior to the Summit the Irish bishops called on parishes to be vigilant around vulnerable people who may have been trafficked and are being exploited locally. “Parishes, too, can play their part. By becoming more informed, by learning the tell-tale signs of trafficking, by increasing awareness of the available support services for victims in place and finding out what to do if you suspect someone in your local area has been trafficked here. We also ask people to pray for those suffering as a result of trafficking and to bring that prayer to action by becoming the eyes and ears—and the voice—that victims need in our midst. It is never too late to take action” the bishops said.

As Sr Liz said, “This is a crime against humanity”.

The number of abortions in Ireland increased 250% in the last year

Renata Milán Morales

The HSE 2023 annual report, ‘Notifications in accordance with Section 20 of the health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018,’ reveals that 10,033 abortions were performed in Ireland last year.

Pro Life Campaign spokesperson, Eilís Mulroy, commented on the figures, stating, “We have now reached a point that for every six babies born in Ireland today, one baby has his or her life ended by abortion. The sadness and scale of these numbers are hard to fathom.”

Mrs Mulroy noted that the 10,033 abortions in 2023 represent a 250% increase from the 2,879 abortions performed in 2018, the year before the law was changed.

The report also details the reason of the abortions carried out: 28 cases were due to a risk to life or health in an emergency, 129 were due to foetal abnormality, and 9,876 were medical abortions carried out in early pregnancy. These figures indicate that 98% of the total abortions were not due to medical reasons.

“Room at the decision-making table has to be made for voices other than strident pro-abortion voices. Providing women in unplanned pregnancies with information on alternatives to abortion and the support available needs to be encouraged and not scoffed at, like happens at present.”

Meanwhile, the biggest pro-life event is being organised in the heart of Dublin, where the highest number of abortions carried out in Ireland in 2023 (3,645) were notified. This event will take place on July 6, “Marching to demand the government acts as the heartbreaking rise in abortions continues... To demand they look at life-saving measures like support for women; extending the 3-day wait period; and a Heartbeat Bill,” said The Life Institute.

Hold your horses for the net nuns

Renata Steffens

The Carmelite Sisters New Ross, a congregation of cloistered nuns, are using social media to share their lives inside the convent walls with the world. They post biblical and spiritual sayings on Facebook accompanied by pictures of the sisters doing daily activities around the convent’s property.

Sr Gwen Collins, currently the responsible for sharing on social media, told *The Irish Catholic* they “can cover a wide range of subjects, like prayers, or nature or gardening or Carmelite spirituality, Carmelite Saints, Scripture,” she said they also “share celebrations like Jubilees and birthdays, so anything we find that we think that might help promote gospel values and help to bring peace to people”.

Posts picturing the daily life inside the convent are very popular amongst the followers, Sr Collins said. “Sisters working in the garden, planting roses or tending their vegetables is certainly something people really like.”

However, pictures showing the nuns in unusual



Carmelite sister with their horses. Photo, Sr Gwen Collins

activities are the ones that attract the most attention. “I personally like horses. I’m a horsey lady,” she said. Those posts would bring new curious followers to their Facebook page. “People say ‘God, imagine the nuns holding horses, that’s very unusual’,” the Sister said.

The idea for the posts can either start with the caption or the pictures, Sr Collins

explained. “In my own personal reading, I might come across some lovely poem” she said, “and it’s about a lovely meadow or something like and I say, ‘oh, gosh, let’s go out and get a photo in the meadow and we could use this poem.’”

Or the other way around, “I’d see a sister out planting her roses and I’d say, ‘oh, can I get a photo of that?’, and I

just put a little post up about the duty of the rose and how it blooms, and it’s not waiting for people to come and admire it or something like that,” the sister said.

The sister said the posts would “get people coming in, girls that would be maybe interested in the life too.” She said that “they’d read something and they might then make further connection”.

Women deacons should be included in the Synod 2024, We are Church said

Staff reporter

The international organisation We are Church (WAC) released an open letter to Pope Francis, requesting full equality of women, including ordination, to be included in the October 2024 Synod.

“You have rightly called the Church to walk together in communion, participation and mission”, the letter reads. WAC also said that women are being kept in an infantile position inside the Church. “Women can never hope to be part of a synodal Church where they are in

communion, participating equally in mission.”

The organisation mentions how the topic of ‘women deacons’ has been assigned to one of the ten study groups reporting in 2025, and they call for “transparency about the synod working groups, their mem-

bers and their mandates.”

“The role of women is key to the synodal process”, they said and added that women in the Church “should be discussed as a whole and not portioned out into women deacons, women in decision making, women needing care, etc.”

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists:

Renata Steffens, renata@irishcatholic.ie

Brandon Scott, brandon@irishcatholic.ie

Renata Milan, renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874027

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874095

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874024

General inquiries: info@irishcatholic.ie

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €199. Airmail €320. Six months €105.

ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Printed by Webprint, Cork.

Place an Advert

Phone 01 687 4027 or advertising@irishcatholic.ie

Capuchin Day Centre
for the Homeless People
29 Bow Street, Dublin 7

Every day The Capuchin Day Care Centre provides
1000 hot meals for people who are homeless and each
week 1400 Food Parcels for those on the poverty threshold.

Help Fr. Kevin Kiernan to continue
providing this caring service.

Fr. Kevin or Monica 01 8720770
www.capuchindaycentre.ie

Support our Catholic Journalism and help us evangelise

For less than a cup of coffee a week, you could support our journalism and faith development campaign while strengthening one of the last independent Catholic newspapers in Ireland and the UK.

When you become a ‘Friend’ of *The Irish Catholic* we give you exclusive access to our premium newsletters and podcasts interviewing a wide range of interesting Catholic leaders plus discounts on books and on upcoming events.

Email garry@irishcatholic.ie to sign up today, or call 01-6874028. We greatly appreciate your support. Thank you.

Dominicans find force isn't with them as OPW strikes back

Renata Steffens

Irish Dominican friars had a request for permission to film at Skellig Michael refused by the Office of Public Works (OPW). The Order is currently filming a series of videos for their YouTube channel to tell the story of Irish religious/historical places from the religious viewpoint.

Fr Conor McDonough OP wrote on X on June 27, "No permission from OPW to film on Skellig Michael. Such a shame. I'd been really looking forward

to it from the start of our series." Fr Conor said that these videos are "a case of the Church telling her own story".

The island has been a religious place for centuries and many martyrs have died there; in the year 823 Norse pirates raided the Skelligs and wiped out the whole community.

Controversially, the American production company Lucasfilm received permission to film scenes for both Star Wars films *The Force Awakens* and *The Last Jedi* which involve bringing large film crews to the island.

Martina Purdy, a journalist and pilgrim guide for St Patrick's Way in Co. Down said that "Skellig Michael was opened up for Star Wars which has really nothing to do with its authentic original meaning. These sites are sacred and they are actually famous for a reason - they were made famous by the religious."

"We should be able to reclaim the high places our Faith. To turn the Dominicans away is just really ridiculous and I find it hard to believe that in an entire summer schedule they can't

find some time for the Dominicans to go there, but of course it doesn't suit the new religion of the State."

Hugh MacMahon wrote in his book *Voices from the Desert* that "Skellig Michael itself was occupied by individual hermits during the medieval period and the Canons encouraged pilgrims to go there".

The Diocese of Kerry's website say that "even today with mass tourism bringing many visitors to the Skellig, there is always an element of pilgrimage about going to Skellig."

And the OPW's Heritage Services said "the monks left the island in the thirteenth century. It became a place of pilgrimage and, during the time of the Penal Laws, a haven for Catholics."

"I wonder if there was an application from Hollywood how it would be considered?", Ms Purdy asked. However, writing on X, Fr Conor has vowed not to give into hate which leads to the Dark Side and hopes that the OPW will have a cancellation on their schedule this summer.

Irish singer finds solace in daily Mass after loss

Brandon Scott

The lead singer of The Script, an Irish band that has encountered success in both the UK and the US, has turned to daily Mass and the sacraments after he suffered the untimely loss of the band's guitarist last April.

Danny O'Donoghue, who is 43, revealed in an emotional interview with *The Sun* that daily Mass has helped him battle back against his drinking habits after the death of guitarist Mark Sheehan and that he

"loves" attending and "never misses a day".

Speaking about the legacy of Mr Sheehan, Mr O'Donoghue said: "I'm still coming to terms with it, you know. I have good days and I have bad days. Anybody who's lost somebody I guess knows that you never really get rid of the grief, it's there and you just tend to try to grow around it."

The devastating death of his bandmate led him to question the existence of God but after some soul-searching, these

feelings were quelled and he started to actively practise his Faith for the first time in years.

"Questioning is there a God, is there not?", he said. "What am I doing in life? Can we continue on as The Script? All those questions that you ask yourself in those moments. I also then started going back to church and I'm in church every day. Catholic Mass, I go every day."

"I set the alarm, get up in the morning, I don't look at the phone, and go to church to

practice gratitude for the life I've been able to live so far, and offer up prayers.

"I go to the gym to work out. I go to the studio to make music. But where am I going to get, spiritually, what I need now?"

Mr O'Donoghue recalled that he used to serve as an altar boy in his local parish and that reconnecting with his Faith has been pivotal in remaining sober after the bereavement led to a challenging period in his life. "As



Lead singer of The Script, Danny O'Donoghue. Photo: FM 104.

a child I used to go to church, I was an altar boy years ago," he said.

"I haven't touched a drink in six months. I feel better than I've ever felt, considering

the circumstances, and I don't know what it is that's there — but I know there's something there. So, for me, I love it and I go every day. I don't miss a day."

Live-in Care Works with ALHomecare The Live-in Care Specialists



**Celebrating 10 Years of Enabling Seniors to
Continue Living at Home!**



Affordable Live-in Homecare
Night and/or Daytime Care available
For less than the Cost of a Nursing Home
or Private Visiting Care Service

Nationwide Enquiry Line
087 744 0729

Carer Duties:

Housekeeping, Meal Preparation.
Companionship, Personal Care (if required)
Night only care also available.
All our carers are Garda vetted and
provided with ongoing training and support.

Three week trial period
Nationwide Service

www.alhomecare.ie

Income of abuse survivor charity drops by half as referrals dip

Chai Brady

Fewer referrals to Towards Healing has led to a drop of income from €2m in 2017 to €900,000 in 2022, according to its chairman.

The charity was established in 2011 to reflect the commitment of the Church to support survivors of religious, institutional and clerical abuse and their families.

Speaking to The Irish Catholic, chairman of Towards Healing Greg Price said the "major reason" for the drop in funds is the "overall decrease in referrals to the charity over the past few years".

"As the number of referrals decreases, the budget requirements adjust accordingly to ensure that resources are allocated based on actual need. Following a review of Towards Healing services in 2021, the charity restructured to focus on its mission and the number of staff reduced," Mr Price said.

As a "demand led service" it remains

committed to its mission, values, and vision, ensuring that "the compassionate, empowering, and hopeful support provided to survivors and their families is maintained at the highest standard", the chairman said, adding the charity continues to adapt its budget annually to align with the changing needs of the survivors it serves.

Mr Price said that over the years Towards Healing has adapted its approach by integrating telehealth options for delivering counselling services – ensuring continued access to support during the pandemic.

"This change allowed the charity to stay accessible and responsive to survivors' needs despite physical restrictions. Additionally, Towards Healing adopted a 'Trauma-Informed Approach', reflecting a commitment to understanding and addressing the complex trauma experienced by survivors, emphasising a holistic method of rehabilitation," he said.

Looking to the future Mr Price said

the charity is committed to maintaining and enhancing its 'Trauma-Informed Approach', emphasising holistic rehabilitation to enable survivors to recover, heal, and rebuild their lives.

"This includes the introduction of group therapy sessions and a stronger focus on addressing psychosocial needs. Collaborating with other organisations to ensure comprehensive support for survivors is also a priority. Recognising the profound impact of complex trauma, Towards Healing aims to intensify its focus on monitoring and evaluation, regular reviews, and case management to ensure the highest standards of practice," he said.

"The overarching goal is to align these initiatives with the charity's mission of providing compassionate listening, support, and healing that empowers survivors and their families, and its vision of a world where every child and adult can thrive safely."

St Columbanus: the Irish monk who conquered Europe

Renata Steffens

The Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty recently said the 6th century Irish monk, St Columbanus, should be made patron of Europe and invited people to attend the 26th International Columban Day in Carlow in 2025.

People who are not very familiar with early Irish saints tend to confuse St Columba (Columbanus) with his contemporary of same name, St Columba (Cummille). The first sailed out from Bangor for the continent in about 590, while the second left Derry for Iona in 563.

In his book *Early Irish Saints*, John J. Ó Ríordáin said that St Columbanus was "probably" born "on the Carlow-Wexford border" in the 530s or early 540s. Information about the Saint's early life are slim, however, around the "year 560 he became a student at the relatively new monastery of St Sinell on the island of Cleenish in Lough Erne."

Going back to Bangor, St Columbanus entered the

"monastic life at St Comgall's foundation at Bangor in Co. Down," said Mr Ríordáin. The Saint spent many years there and was ordained to priesthood "and probably became head of the monastic school."

According to Mr Ríordáin, in the year 590, when St Columbanus was about 50 years of age, he and other twelve monks sailed from Belfast Lough to the continent of Europe. "In 591, after a considerable amount of travelling, they found themselves in Burgundy", there they made their first monastic settlement.

St Columbanus founded monasteries in France, Austria, Switzerland and Italy. In the last one, he founded Bobbio in 614 and died in November of the following year.

"The influence of Columbanus on the continent can hardly be exaggerated," wrote Mr Ríordáin. Robert Schuman, then French Foreign Minister said in July 1950 that "St Columbanus is the patron saint of those who seek a united Europe."

quality healthcare", "Over 1.4m people in 26 countries learned about their human rights and how to access them" and "32,783 people received assistance for sudden onset emergencies."

Prayer petition calls Virgin Mary to 'Put England out of the Euros'

Chai Brady

During the final day of Clonard Monastery's annual novena last week a Spanish priest read out the prayer calling for the Virgin Mary to thwart England's European Championship dreams.

The light-hearted prayer was read out in the west Belfast monastery in front of thousands of people, many of whom have attended since June 19 offering prayers to Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

Spanish priest Fr Carlos

Diego Gutierrez read out the petition which caused ripples of laughter.

"Dear Mother of Perpetual Help, put England out of the Euros," it said before referring to the England team's last major international tournament win at the 1966 World Cup.

"We are still getting over 1966, please, we would never hear the end of it."

The petition was signed "a loving daughter with a sense of humour".

It added "PS I have been praying to Pio as well".

Misean Cara's effect on 1.9 million people

Ava Westendorf

On June 27, the international missionary charity Misean Cara released their 2023 press release where they described the impact they made for 1.9 million people in 52 different countries. The report claimed that they allocated €13.6 million in funding to support 321 projects in these 52 different countries. Some of these projects included immediate help to support Turkey and Syria after the devasta-

tion brought by earthquakes within their countries. Misean Cara CEO John Moffett spoke at their Annual General Meeting (AGM) about this situation, saying that it was his favorite part of 2023 to see the "solidarity demonstrated to provide funding support to those members on the ground in Syria who were able to act as first responders and support the survivors of a truly devastating disaster." Misean Cara also supported many other projects, such as described in their 2023 highlights:

Giving Opus the time of Dei...



Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin was the principal celebrant and homilist at a Mass last week for the feast day of the founder of Opus Dei St Jose Maria Escriva in the Parish of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Merrion Road. Concelebrants included Msgr Julien Kabore, Charge d'Affaires Apostolic Nunciature, Fr Paul Coyle, Chancellor Archdiocese of Dublin, and priests from Hong Kong, USA and Uganda. Archbishop Farrell is pictured along with priests and altar servers before the beginning of Mass. Photo: John McElroy

France’s pessimistic philosophers...

I’ve been following developments in French politics – and culture – for some years, and I’m not at all surprised at the victory for Marine Le Pen’s National Rally (RN) in the first round of the parliamentary elections. It’s all been brewing for a long time.

As anyone who has read the writings of French literary eggheads and philosophers knows – there’s a lot of ‘alienation’ in French society. This is pinpointed by writers such as Michel Houellebecq and Michel Onfray, who stress the ‘decadence’ in which they depict the condition of France.

This ‘decadence’ is not measured, as with the reign of Louis XV, by extravagant aristocratic excess or hedonistic squandering of resources on the backs of the poor: but by the emptying of the French countryside in the process known as ‘desertification’, the ghettoisation of the suburbs, the burning of churches – over 600 churches were attacked in the space of one year recently – the rise in crime, the dominance of Islam, the decline in births, the resentment towards the ‘élites’, the increase in immi-



Mary Kenny

grants, the rule by Brussels, often depicted as haughty and directed by out-of-touch bureaucrats – ‘fonctionnaires’.

Culture

While popular books and TV churn out charming tales about idyllic life in a chateau in Provence, the gloomster French writers and philosophers have been telling a different story. The ‘wokeism’ imported from America is another source of savage criticism about how French culture is undermined – the Jewish-French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut has been a strong voice denouncing ‘le woke’ (he even hinted he might vote for Le Pen himself).

Obviously, the cost of living, of accommodation and of taxes are part of the bread-and-butter issues in an electoral debate. But there’s been a prevailing deeper malaise, focusing on the identity of France. In some quarters, Emmanuel Macron is loathed because he seems to represent the ‘globalism’, the

banking and managerial classes who have betrayed the ‘certain idea of France’ which De Gaulle embodied. That Macron calls himself ‘Jupiter’ is cited in evidence of his particular arrogance.

While I have heard Jordan Bardella of the RN praised because he didn’t attend the top ‘grandes écoles’ of France’s élite. His working-class roots make him nearer to the ‘alienated’.

Where is the Catholic church in all this? Treading carefully, it would seem – sensitivities about state secularism are borne in mind.

Yet there are certainly French Catholics who share the analysis of gloomster intellectuals like Onfray and Houellebecq – that France is entitled to reclaim her historic identity, which was French and Christian. Attacks on churches have been blamed on ‘satanic cults, anarchism, profanations’ which some might indeed call ‘decadent’.



An almost universal response to President Joe Biden’s calamitous recent TV debate was to blame Jill, his wife. From The New York Times and every other source I perused came the response “Jill should have stopped all this!” If Mrs Biden only had the sense and sensibility to have restrained her husband running for a second term, this *débauche* could have been avoided. She’s been described as selfish, pushy, a power-driven Lady Macbeth who manipulates her husband – perhaps even plotting to govern as a regent, herself, when

his frailty becomes too much.

This idea assumes that wives, basically, control their husbands and especially their elderly husbands. And it has often been the case in America that the wife of a prominent man is the real power. It is recalled that the wife of President Woodrow Wilson locked him up in a bedroom after he’d had a stroke, and proceeded to run the country herself.

In a way, it’s a kind of back-handed tribute to matrimony. And perhaps if Jill Biden’s finger were on the nuclear button instead of Joe’s, things would be none the worse!

I don’t know when I last heard ‘Faith of Our Fathers’ last played in an Irish church, but I heard it sung warmly at the Kentish parish church last weekend.

An increasing number of parishioners in this church are multi-ethnic, and it was interesting to note that the hymn was joined just as enthusiastically by those from Indian or Chinese heritage. “Our fathers, chained

in prisons dark/Were still in heart and conscience free,” everyone sang enthusiastically, even if the lyric specifically refers to English martyrs for the Catholic faith.

In the British version, that’s made plain: “...and from the truth that comes from God/England shall then indeed be free.” In the version that is sung in Ireland, I think the given words are: “We will strive/To win all nations unto

thee.”

This rousing hymn, written by Frederick William Faber, a Victorian convert from the Church of England to Rome, has fallen out of fashion for reasons of ‘patriarchy’ (what about faith of our mothers?), a perception of ultra-patriotism, and possibly, lack of ecumenism. But when it’s played, the congregation sings it!

Let Your Compassion Live On



A gift in your Will to the Mater Hospital Foundation is the promise of help, hope and healing for the next 100 years...



CHY: 9768 | RCN: 20024505

Want to learn about the history of the Mater Hospital and how you can consider leaving a gift in your Will?

For your FREE copy of ‘Saving Lives Since 1861...’ please contact James at jsullivan@materfoundation.ie, by phone at 01 830 3482 or fill out this slip and return by post to the address below.

YES! Please send me a FREE copy of ‘Saving Lives Since 1861...’ ☐

Name: _____

Address: _____

County: _____ Eircode: _____

Post to James Sullivan, 53-54 Eccles Street, Dublin 7, D07 KH4C, Ireland



Govt fail to clarify whether religious face coverings fall foul of protest law

Chai Brady

The Government has been unable to clarify whether a law change allowing gardaí to make protestors remove face coverings will include religious garb, such as a burka.

This comes following masks protestors demonstrating outside Taoiseach Simon Harris's home in Wicklow and other attacks on politicians.

However, it is not clear how far-

reaching the law will be. Asked whether the proposed change will include the ability for gardaí to direct a person to remove garb relating to their religion, the Department of Justice stated: "People's right to protest is fundamental to democracy and must be defended. However, it has to be done in a responsible and accountable way, respecting the rights of all involved."

"The wearing of face coverings in a manner designed to intimidate

under the false guise of protest is clearly unacceptable."

Minister for Justice Helen McEntee aims to progress the amended legislation as soon as possible following the Garda Commissioner seeking additional powers for gardaí.

Speaking at the passing out ceremony of 157 Garda from the college in Templemore last week, Garda Commissioner Drew Harris said that legislation to deal with so called protests and demonstrations may need

to be refreshed but must be balanced and proportionate.

The Department of Justice's statement to this paper concluded: "The Garda Commissioner has written to the Minister for Justice in relation to the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994. Department officials are examining the Commissioner's correspondence and the minister has written to the Attorney General to seek his advice on potential changes to the law."

NEWS IN BRIEF

NI bishops support drug decriminalisation

The bishops of Northern Ireland have recently posted in their Pastoral Reflection that they urge voters to press General Election candidates, ahead of their election on July 4, to support the decriminalisation of drugs, as well as the creation of residential facilities to help addicts.

They say that there is now an "urgent need" to begin to address drugs as a social issue instead of a criminal one, especially as Ireland's use of drugs continues to increase. In their Pastoral Reflection, the bishops say that "There is an urgent need to address the drugs crisis in our society in a well-resourced, multi-disciplinary way, primarily as a social and medical issue, rather than as a criminal issue to be dealt with as a revolving door phenomenon by the police and prisons".

They instead propose the decriminalisation of the taking of a small quantity of drugs. They urge voters to fight for this new rule because, instead of focusing on arresting the users of the drugs, more of an effort can be put into treating the person.

Organisation improving the health of prisoners

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO), an organisation begun by the Irish Catholics' Bishops Conference in 1985, says that their visits to prison inmates helps boost self-esteem and provide a sense of hope to the prisoners.

This company works to provide support and information to those in custody and the family of Irish prisoners. Orla Dick, a ICPO caseworker, said that the organization conducts "prison visits to provide both practical and emotional support, fostering a deeper connection to the diaspora, which can greatly enhance the well-being of those we visit... This connection can be a lifeline, offering emotional relief and a respite from the isolation and monotony of prison life".

This not only leaves the prisoner happier and healthier but also helps the volunteer find a "renewed sense of purpose and a deeper commitment to advocating for better conditions and support for those we assist".

Portlaoise Presentation Sisters lauded for 200 years of service

Chai Brady

As part of the Presentation Sisters' celebrations for their 200th year anniversary in Portlaoise, Co. Laois, there will be a tour of the place the community was founded, where construction has commenced on 52 homes.

Sophia Housing, who are delivering the housing are hosting the event set for July 2, 200 years after the community was founded on July

2, 1824.

In a statement, Sophia Housing said the community in Portlaoise "has been a beacon of faith, education, and social service in Portlaoise for two centuries, spreading its core values of compassion, charity and community".

Michael McCarthy, Chairperson of Sophia Housing, said: "We are deeply honoured to celebrate this significant milestone... This bicentennial event is not just a reflection

on past achievements, but a reaffirmation of the dedication by Sophia Housing and the sisters in Portlaoise to continue a commitment of social justice and community service for many more years to come."

Tony O'Riordan, the CEO of Sophia, said: "It is inspirational that after 200 Years of service the Presentation Sisters have discerned that they want to continue to serve the local community and meet one of the current pressing needs of soci-

ety which is the need for housing and by working with Sophia the site where their community was founded... will now be the location of much needed homes."

Mr O'Riordan added that Sophia has begun construction of 52 new homes on the former site of the Presentation Sisters, and with the support of Laois County Council and the Department of Housing, these homes will be completed by the end of 2025.

Diocesan pilgrims



Dublin diocese Youth Group is pictured after having finished the 'Camino de Santiago' in front of the Santiago Cathedral in Galicia, Spain, on July 1, 2024. The journey took 5 days and 115km. The diocesan group walked from Sarria to Santiago. Photo: Natalie Doherty, Diocesan faith development coordinator for youth and young adult ministry for Dublin archdiocese

Cork to witness 'Veritas' wind-down

Staff reporter

Veritas has announced "with regret" the closure of their store located in Cork. Out of the company's 8 branches, Cork is the third

one to close since their announcement at the beginning of February this year.

The branch is the second busiest county in Ireland, which moved to a more transited destination in the same city in 2023, will be

shutting its doors on July 19, 2024. The company has shared their "sincere gratitude for your support" to all the customers and staff members of this century-long business.

Counsellor of the Apostolic Nunciature in Ireland appointed as Papal Nuncio to Ghana

Renata Steffens

Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan congratulated Msgr Julien Kaboré for his appointment as Apostolic Nuncio to Ghana and Titular Archbishop of Milevum. Msgr Kaboré worked as Counsellor of the Apostolic Nunciature in Ireland since 2022.

"Archbishop-Elect Kaboré has had a long association with Mullingar parish in the Diocese of Meath which goes back to the time when he was a student for the Diplomatic service and spent time in Mullingar to

learn English", Bishop Deenihan said.

The Bishop continued: "The friendships made here endured and were rekindled when he was appointed to serve as Counsellor in the Nunciature in Ireland in August 2022."

Msgr Kaboré's service to the Holy See has taken him to places like Korea, Mongolia, Costa Rica, the Philippines and Ireland. "I am delighted that Archbishop Kaboré's first appointment as Nuncio is to Ghana, a neighbouring country of his native Burkino Fasso", Bishop Deenihan concluded.

Cardinals approve canonisation of Carlo Acutis

Renata Milán Morales

Blessed Carlo Acutis will be proclaimed a Saint during the 2025 Jubilee, possibly along with other canonisations.

Pope Francis and the Consistory of Cardinals have voted to approve the canonisation of the first Saint from Generation Y, those born between 1981 and 1996 commonly known as millennials, on July 1.

This event happens after Pope Francis recognised last month a second miracle attributed to the millennial's inter-

cession. Pope Francis said that the date for the canonisation Mass of the computer-coding teenager will be announced at a later time.

Carlo Acutis, beatified in 2020 in the Italian town of Assisi, was born in 1991 and died in 2006. He was one of the patrons of the most recent World Youth Day. Acutis's story is seen as beneficial for the Catholic Church's efforts to engage with younger generations in the digital age, making him popular among Catholic youth groups.

A Eucharistic revival is urgently needed



Breda O'Brien

The United States is in the midst of a three-year Eucharistic Revival from 2022 to 2025, with four pilgrimage routes from right across the country culminating in a National Eucharistic Congress in mid-July.

One of the inspirations for the Eucharistic Revival was a dispiriting 2019 poll from the highly regarded Pew Research Centre, which found that only about a third of Catholics believed in the real presence of Jesus under the appearance of bread and wine in the Eucharist.

Evidence

Some took it as evidence of the abject failure of the Church to teach one of its most central truths. Some quibbled with the wording of the survey, which used the word 'actually' present rather than the real presence. The latter critics suggested that the results

might have been less stark if the two survey questions had been worded differently.

Two subsequent surveys, both by Catholic organisations, found better results, but even still, they were interspersed with other disturbing findings

“In the post-Covid US Church, only 17% of people attended Mass every week, with a further five per cent watching online”

For example, a report by the Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University in 2023 asked Catholics a mixture of open-ended and multiple choice questions but also one final question: “Just to clarify, do you personally believe that after the Consecration during a Catholic Mass, that Jesus Christ is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine upon the altar?” 57% said that they believe Jesus is truly present under the appearance

of bread and wine.

This is still pretty bad but regular Mass-goers had much higher levels of belief. Not surprisingly, the authors of the report say that there is considerable confusion among Catholics about the Eucharist.

Some statistics were somewhat lost in the media coverage, such as that in the post-Covid US Church, only 17% of people attended mass every week, with a further five% watching online. Another 18% attended Mass at least once a month.

Presence

The obvious question is if 57% believe in the real presence at Mass, why do they attend so rarely?

In recent times another survey emerged, this time from Vivea, a Baltimore-based company. They reran the Pew questions but also added questions which were phrased in more Catholic-friendly ways. They found that 69% of Catholics believed in Church teaching.

Ironically, their more Catholic-friendly phrasing, that is, asking people to agree or disagree with the statement: “Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist”, is closer to consubstantia-

tion, the doctrine associated with Martin Luther, than transubstantiation, the Thomist understanding of the Eucharist.

Catholics believe, in the words of the Catechism, that “the signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ; they continue also to signify the goodness of creation”.

So the Vivea question should probably have read something like: ‘Jesus Christ is truly present under the appearance of the bread and wine of the Eucharist’.

“An Iona Institute/Amarach poll in March 2023 found that only 59% of those who used to attend regularly had returned to Mass”

Nit-picking aside, once again, faithful Mass-goers were much more likely to understand the doctrine.

Mass attendance has fallen dramatically in Ireland, particularly since

Covid-19. An Iona Institute/Amarach poll in March 2023 found that only 59% of those who used to attend regularly had returned to Mass.

As someone who taught religious education for more than three decades, I can confirm that at least among the middle classes in Dublin, knowledge of the Eucharist is abysmally low. Students come into first year of secondary school having never heard that Jesus is truly present on the altar. Instead, they are told that the Eucharist is holy bread.

Interest

There are a number of related but separate problems here, including a lack of interest, faith and knowledge among parents and teachers alike.

But it fascinates me that among young Irish converts (or reverts, in some cases, as they were reared nominally Catholic but had no real experience of faith) devotion to the Eucharist is central to their lives.

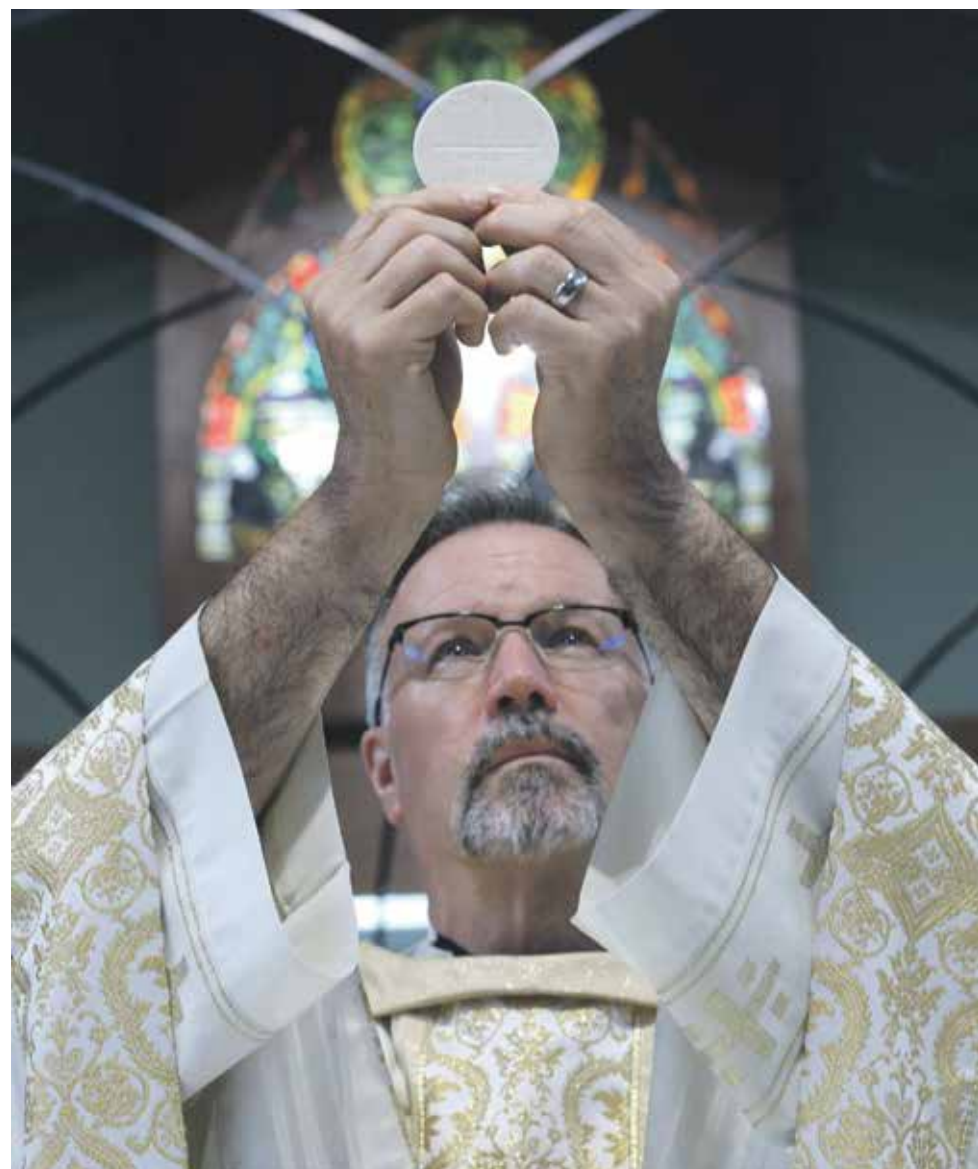
They attend Adoration of the Blessed Eucharist and many try to attend Mass daily. They are a tiny minority, but they understand and

appreciate the cosmic significance of what happens at mass.

“Perhaps one of the unforeseen effects will be a rising appreciation of what we now complacently take for granted”

Irish people used to risk their lives to attend Mass. So did people in the Soviet Union. For example, US-born Fr Walter Cizek volunteered to minister behind the Iron Curtain in 1939 and ended up spending 23 years in notorious prisons like Lubianka Prison in Moscow, followed by 15 years hard labour in a Siberian Gulag. He and fellow priests made enormous sacrifices to celebrate the Eucharist.

His courage, and that of our own ancestors, puts our lukewarm faith to shame. As the numbers of priestly vocations continue to fall, perhaps one of the unforeseen effects will be a rising appreciation of what we now complacently take for granted.



A priest raises the Eucharist in this illustration. Photo: OSV News photo/CNS file, Bob Roller

**YOUR LAST GIFT
MEANS WE ARE
ALWAYS FIRST THERE**

GOAL



**A GIFT IN YOUR WILL TO GOAL
MEANS WE CAN BE FIRST THERE
WHEN CONFLICT AND CRISIS HAPPEN**

goal.ie/GiftInWill

email: cpollard@goal.ie or Phone: 01-2809779

Our duty to minister with dignity



Renata Milán Morales

On June 11, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland implemented a new policy titled 'A Safe and Welcoming Church – Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland'. Mr Aidan Gordon, who has been the CEO of the National Board since April 2024, shared the priorities, goals, and challenges associated with these changes in an interview with *The Irish Catholic*.

What led you to take on the role of head of safeguarding?

AG: I'm a qualified social worker. That's my profession, and I've worked in the safeguarding arena for over 30 years. I worked in England, in the Republic of

Ireland, and in Northern Ireland, both in children's services and in adult services, and then prior to being appointed to this role, I was the Director of safeguarding for the Archbishop of Armagh from 2015. Nine years. I view this as an opportunity for me to use the skills and the knowledge that I've built up during my career to make sure that the Church is a safe place for children and for families.

With this purpose in mind, what would be your main priorities?

AG: As I start in the new position, my number one priority would have to be to make sure that our new policy and procedural guidance is embedded in all Church bodies across Ireland. There's an element of unfamiliarity and getting used to that. I'll take some time to get used to the new position. I really want to make sure that there's continuity from my predecessor, Theresa Devlin, so that the work of safeguarding children and ensuring that they are safe continues uninterrupted in the Catholic Church in Ireland.



Aidan Gordon

How have you previously built the trust with the clergy, staff and lay people and how are you going to apply it in this new role?

AG: I've begun that in the sense that we, for our new policy, over 500 people attended 13 induction events held across the country. This demonstrates the level of

commitment in the Church to ensuring our activities with children are safe. Bishops, congregational leaders, clergy, laypeople, volunteers, paid staff, have begun the process of engaging with. I've managed to do some of that in my previous role in the Archdiocese of Armagh. We publish our annual report every year and the details of all our activities, including the number of allegations that have been reported to us.

I believe that there was not a big difference between last year's report and this year's. What challenge do you think that these numbers bring with them?

AG: Last year there were 251 allegations notified to the National Board and this year there were 252. And I suppose that would demonstrate that safeguarding is still a concern. We certainly need to guard against complacency in the Church because you will see from the 252 allegations that were reported to us last year, 248 of them were related to incidents which occurred prior to the year 2000. Still, 4 incidents were reported to us which have occurred or allegedly occurred since the year 2000. Safeguarding concerns are still alive in the Church in the country. The second challenge is making sure that we engage with victims and survivors and ensure that their voice is heard in everything we do. This would also lead me to

say that my other priority in the first number of months is that I hope to establish a steering group. Next year we will have a national conference on transitional justice approaches to engaging with victims and survivors in the Church.

And regarding the safeguard policy, how long has it been since the previous one?

AG: The previous policy was from 2016 until now. There have been several changes. There were seven standards in the old policy. There are now three. Our policy is supposed to reflect any updates in civil law, in criminal law, and updates in Canon law and in Church law. That's the biggest difference. This is part of our normal process of reviewing and updating our policy in line with developments in legislation, developments in Church, Church guidance and developments in policy and practise with our statutory partners. We have also provided updated guidance in terms of how that cooperation will take place, in line with the current law in both Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. Clergy are treated in the same way as any other citizen, and it is a requirement. **I can imagine that maybe for victims, especially the most recent ones, it could be hard to speak out loud about it. How do you engage with the community, so they feel comfortable to approach you?**

AG: Each Church body, diocese and congregation have professional staff employed, ranked to assist them in responding appropriately to any complaints that is made in relation to abuse of children. We have two separate independent bodies which are fully funded by the Church in Ireland, free to people who are victims or survivors. 'Towards healing' (info@towardshealing.ie), which provides a free, confidential counselling service to victims of abuse in the Church, and 'towards peace' (towardspeace@iecon.ie), which provides spiritual accompaniment to those who have been hurt by the Church, but who wish still to engage. Those two services are completely free and available to every complainant. As well as the ones that are available locally in each Church body.

Which way do you catechise people to truly integrate the idea of dignity?

AG: If somebody is beginning a ministry in the Church across Ireland, we require them to have made an application to provide the names of two referees and anybody who will be involved in ministry with children is required to go through the vetting process, as well as going through those recruitment procedures. They are also required to attend training. **Is there anything you would like to add?**

AG: Our new policy is based in Gospel which shows us very clearly that safeguarding is not just a matter of having to follow the law, but a matter of following the Gospel. There is no conflict between Gospel values and safeguarding practise. It's on all of us to minister to people with dignity, integrity and to make sure that children are welcomed and cherished and protected in our Church and that is everybody's role. We will continue to review and to revise our policies and our procedures to make sure that we are keeping up to date with the law.

The introduction of this new policy marks a significant step forward, with Mr Gordon leading the Church in maintaining the highest standards of child safeguarding. By focusing on embedding the new guidelines, preventing complacency and ensuring the voices of victims and survivors are heard, Mr Gordon aims to encourage a culture of accountability and protection within the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The Irish Catholic

FREE HOME DELIVERY

*geographical restrictions apply

Don't miss breaking news delivered directly to your home each week



With the closure of religious shops around the country, signing up for free home delivery of *The Irish Catholic* will ensure seamless arrival of the newspaper to your doorstep every Thursday.

Stay up to date with analyses that represent your voice on the national stage.

Regular contributors provide commentary to hot button issues of the day.

Local voices highlight the ongoing work of parishes and communities throughout the country.

News Delivery brought to you by **THE IRISH TIMES**

For further details

Ph: 01 920 3901 | Email: info@newsdelivery.ie | www.newsdelivery.ie

“It's on all of us to Minister to people with dignity, integrity and to make sure that children are welcomed and cherished and protected in our Church and that is everybody's role”

Being Catholic and young: youth life in the Church



Renata Steffens

Many young adults and teenagers are leaving the Catholic Faith in the background of their lives. Some still consider themselves as Catholics, they go to Mass on Christmas and Easter and engage sporadically with the Church, while others have left the Faith life completely and consider themselves as 'non-religious'.

Daniela Proano told *The Irish Catholic* she used to go to Mass and pray with her grandparents regularly, but today she is not a religious person. "When they passed away, we stopped going to Church and practicing Catholicism."

"Young people would be more religious if they had a role model," said Ms Proano. "As an example, my brother and his wife are educating their children within the Catholic religion, even though as children we didn't have that strong influence, my sister in law kept it and has become a role model to their kids."

Another reason given to this paper as to why the youth is leaving the Church relates to how Mass is kept very traditional and strict. Miran Fronza, who used to be very active at the Church and volunteer in her parish, today only participates in Mass occasionally she said that she found that "priests were impersonal, and Mass was not attractive."

She also mentioned how priests would always remind people about their debt to God, instead of saying words of comfort and support. She does not openly declare her Catholic faith anymore.

Pressure

Layperson Peter Kasko, member of the Living Water organising team, commented on how peer pressure can influence how comfortable teenagers are to admit their Faith and life as practicing Catholics. Especially because at that stage in life "every single problem can be kind of disproportionately blown up," he said.

"And combine this with the rather negative view that the general public has about the Catholic Church. Not just here in Ireland, but around



the world," adds to why younger generations would feel reluctant to openly say they are practicing Catholics," explained the layman.

“Being Catholic is living a life of Faith and being true and honest. But it certainly starts from your parents, maybe grandparents, that they bring you up, explain to you what and why”

For Mr Kasko, it comes down to the family environment. The family needs to create "an environment where it is spoken about, where you're brought up with the knowledge that being Catholic is not a fashion statement."

"Being Catholic is living a life of Faith and being true and honest. But it certainly starts from your parents, maybe grandparents, that they bring you up, explain to you what and why," he said. "They should not be afraid of saying when they do not have some answers, and go after them for their children."

As laypeople, "we probably start with being a witness to the faith," believes Mr Kasko. "As Saint Francis famously, according to some, said 'evangelise and use words if necessary.' So like, be a true witness and evangelise through your life."

Evan Cawley, a layperson from Sligo, believes "the real authentic, the Orthodox faith" would attract more people to Church. More traditional Masses would make attendees "feel like you're taking a force off the Earth and you're going somewhere more heavenly, more divine and a special place."

Mr Cawley also mentioned the importance of new people feeling welcome in the

Church. "Sometimes when I'm trying to convert people and stuff like that, trying to do some straight evangelisation, I tell them, call them to come to the church, and they might go to some Catholic Church."

"But when they go in, no one talks to them at all, and then they're gone. And you know what? If they go to a Protestant church, everyone is shaking their hands, trying to chat and everything."

A way of keeping these new people in the Church is to host activities. "I think a great thing for after Mass would be tea and biscuits, or a wee talk, Sunday school, I think. And Sunday school not just for teenagers, but also for adults," said Mr Cawley.

Catechism

He said "the bishops have trained so many catechists and I don't see any catechism studies anywhere." Mr Cawley believes it is important to provide activities and events to gather people of faith. However, there are catechism courses offered in Ireland by a number of different outlets.

Peter Kasko also considers "more activities for teenage groups" to be a helpful way "to rope them [youth] in." A good example of such groups is the 'Youth 2000', an organisation founded by Englishman Ernest Williams after he was inspired by Pope John Paul II's speech at the World Youth Day celebration in 1989.

Dominic Fillion, Youth 2000 Regional Leader for Leinster, told *The Irish Catholic* about his experience organising retreats for young people in Ireland. He organised the last retreat the group had. It was "a weekend retreat for people aged 16 to 35 with time for adoration," these kind of retreats also have "different speakers giving talks on the Eucharist or reconciliation, kinds of different sacraments."

Mr Fillion also explained



that these events also have "time for community and fellowship. Time to chat and have meals together." The last retreat happened at the end of April and gathered 160 young people over the weekend.

Promoting these youth events are key to bring new young people to the Church, it seems. Mr Fillion explained they use social media and hand flyers about all the programmes and events they have organised, "But for the large part that always seems to reach the people who are already kind of in the Catholic circles."

So the youth that are already inserted in the Catholic faith need to "spread the word", to give their testimony and "bring people they know who are not yet part of the Church." The next Youth 2000 event will be a festival happening in August, in Kildare.

Youth 2000 is a donation only organisation, so there is no charge to participate in these events, "you can just show up, bring a sleeping bag."

There is a suggested donation to participate, but it is not required, as "you don't want to have a 17 year-old who's like, here's this weekend retreat, but it's €150, and I don't want to spend that money on something that may or may not be fun."

Overall, the best way to bring more young people to the Church, and to keep those who are in engaged, is to provide opportunities for evangelisation that are also fun and attractive to younger generations.

FATIMA & LISBON COAST



PILGRIMAGES TO FATIMA FROM DUBLIN

5 SEPTEMBER | 7 NIGHTS | €899pps

10 SEPTEMBER | 7 NIGHTS | €899pps



FATIMA & LISBON COAST FROM DUBLIN

29 AUGUST | 7 NIGHTS | €989pps

26 SEPTEMBER | 7 NIGHTS | €989pps

TO BOOK VISIT JOEWALSHTOURS.IE

info@joewalshtours.ie | 01 241 0800 | 89 Harcourt St, D02 WY88

Tours are operated by Petriwa Limited t/a Joe Walsh Tours who are licensed by the Irish Aviation Authority TA 0804 TO 273.



The messianic appeal of Taylor Swift



David Quinn

Walking though the centre of Dublin last Friday, fans of Taylor Swift were much in evidence hours before the first of her three concerts in the Aviva stadium even started. They were mostly teenage girls, sometimes with their mothers along for the experience. A lot of the fans (both the teenagers and their mothers) were dressed up like they were going to last year's smash hit movie, *Barbie*. Pink was the predominant colour.

Fans of the American pop star are known as 'Swifties', and there are so many of them that she is now a billionaire. They buy her records (or rather listen to them on streaming services like Spotify) in enormous numbers, and her current concert tour seems to be the most successful by any singer ever. She causes a huge emotional reaction in her fans, the way the Beatles used to, or Elvis Presley. It's not simply that she is gigantically popular, she inspires devotion and awe.

Appeal

A big part of her appeal is obviously that her songs are extremely catchy. Another is that she is a great entertainer. A third one, which explains why both she and the *Barbie* movie have so many fans among teenage girls, is that she seems to represent a version of femininity which resonates hugely with them.

A fourth is that many of her songs are about failed relationships (she has had quite a few) and seemingly she writes about these



Taylor Swift pictured at one of her recent concerts in Dublin. Photo: Liam McBurney/PA

failed relationships in a way that particularly connects with her teenage fan base.

“The fandom that follows the icon [note the word] has been jokingly called a cult or a religion but I’m not kidding when I say the whole thing felt like a religious experience”

She is clearly tapping into deep parts of human nature and doing so extremely well. The awe and devotion she inspires is almost religious in nature. No, wait, it is actually religious in nature.

One Irish fan who travelled over to Scotland for one of her

concerts in early June wrote afterwards: “The fandom that follows the icon [note the word] has been jokingly called a cult or a religion, but I’m not kidding when I say the whole thing felt like a religious experience.”

She added: “I’ve always loved Taylor for her ability to articulate in song what I’m feeling at various points in my life, so hearing it all live was overwhelming. I’m not ashamed to say I cried multiple times.”

Ethos

She mentions the friendship bracelets everyone was wearing and how these “embody the larger ethos of the show. This is not a concert for a casual fan; it’s an outpouring of love from Taylor to Swifties.”

What is the religion of Swift herself? She says she is a Christian and there are

Christian references in some of her songs, but like an awful lot of her fans she seems content to draw on whatever version of religion or spirituality works for her, including the New Age and even the occult. (She no doubt knows all about the popularity of phenomena like #WitchTok on the social media platform TikTok where there are literally millions of videos, viewed billions of times, of young people, usually teenagers, casting ‘spells’).

“Organised religion as such hardly gets a look-in. It wouldn’t even occur to the vast majority of her young fans to look in that direction”

In one of Swift’s songs, ‘The Prophecy’, she sings about the numerous paths she has taken to break out of her cycle of doomed relationships, including being “Gathered with a coven ‘round a sorceress’ table”.

I suppose we are not meant to take this kind of thing too seriously, but it does show the extremely eclectic approach people have towards religion and spirituality today. Organised religion as such hardly gets a look-in. It wouldn’t even occur to the vast majority of her young fans to look in that direction.

Natures

But on the other hand, the evident sense of awe they feel in her presence does point towards religion and how deeply embedded a religious sense is in our natures. A Taylor Swift concert induces a sort of religious ecstasy in many of those who attend them. They lose themselves in a sort of collective consciousness where all boundaries dissolve in the presence of something that approaches transcendence for them. It becomes a sort of heavenly experience. What is this if not a form of religion?

Taylor Swift, for lots of her fans, seems to be a sort of messianic figure offering them salvation from the normal woes of life. The only thing is, I’m not

sure what that salvation ultimately looks like for her. Is Swift, who is now 34, ultimately going to marry, or will she instead remain single and go from one relationship to another, indicating to her fans that this is the way to go? If she does marry, will it be long-lasting? What is she really telling them is the meaning of life? Maybe she needs to do an interview with Jordan Peterson.

And I’m not sure what she is telling her fans about men. Is she telling them that men are essentially ‘toxic’ (as she does in one of her songs) or essentially good? I’m not sure. I wonder if she does, or if fans really know either? The messaging seems mixed.

“No one can live in a state of ecstasy their whole lives and if you go chasing it, you are probably going to be very disappointed in the end”

What is ‘organised religion’ supposed to make of this? Can it compete on the level of emotion? Pentecostalism tries to do this, often very successfully, and so does the Charismatic movement to a certain extent. But Catholicism has traditionally been a bit suspicious of religious emotionalism because it thinks it can be too fleeting and superficial (like romantic love if it doesn’t go any deeper). No one can live in a state of ecstasy their whole lives and if you go chasing it, you are probably going to be very disappointed in the end. Even the mystics only experience religious ecstasy briefly. Heaven ultimately has to wait for Heaven.

What the Church can do its best to offer through its liturgies is beauty. Christianity has inspired some of the best art and music ever created, so it has a very rich tradition to draw on.

What it also offers is a sure path to salvation in Jesus Christ and nothing on offer anywhere exceeds his teachings as a guide to how to live. Not even the songs of Taylor Swift.

“Taylor Swift, for lots of her fans, seems to be a sort of messianic figure offering them salvation from the normal woes of life. The only thing is, I’m not sure what that salvation ultimately looks like for her”

The media, truth and consequences



Martina Purdy

In the 1950s, Americans would tune in to a popular game show called *Truth or Consequences*. Contestants were required to answer an almost impossible question accurately or perform a silly stunt.

Answering truthfully often led to even more complicated questions, so contestants often skipped the truth part and opted for the consequences, however ridiculous, even if they knew the answer.

The host would complement them for being such “good sports” and would always end the show with the words, “Hope your consequences are happy ones”.

There was a lesson in this show which ran for years, and that lesson was ingloriously played out on US television days ago during the US Presidential Debate. The consequences however for skipping over the truth were not happy ones for the country.

Minutes into the debate, President Joe Biden, aged 81, gave one of several incomprehensible answers before his opponent, former President Donald Trump, declared: “I really don’t know what he said at the end of that sentence. I don’t think he knows what he said either”.

How was it that the moment of truth was given to Trump, a politician with a notorious reputation for breaking the ninth commandment (thou shalt not bear false witness)?

Trump’s comment ended the pretence: the emperor had no clothes, as the story goes.

Media

The blame for this lies mainly with the Democrats and the White House staff but the media – those charged with informing and relaying the truth – are not without culpability. While there are many excellent and trustworthy journal-



US President Joe Biden reiterates his administration’s commitment to restoring Roe v. Wade during a campaign stop at Hillsborough Community College’s Dale Mabry campus in Tampa, Florida, April 23, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Kevin Lamarque, Reuters

ists, there is something seriously wrong with the system.

The White House Press Corps is an incestuous pack, who have inherited a system in which access is denied when journalists do not play nicely with the political elite. This erosion of journalistic integrity goes back decades and will only be broken when the extremely competitive press pack unites against it for the common good.

The problem now is there has been a significant erosion of confidence in public trust not just in politics but the media also.

Trump’s ‘fake news’ mantra too often has a ring of truth about it not just in America but here in Ireland where readers are turning to less traditional news sources.

“It is not their job to manipulate the facts. Their job is to report and inform and let the people decide”

The White House press corps, it could be argued, should have been more tenacious in confronting the truth about Joe Biden’s competency well before this debate. It does seem though that besides wanting to stay in favour with the White House, they viewed Trump as a much greater threat.

That may be true, but it is not their job to manipulate the facts. Their job is to report and inform and let the people decide.

Back in February, the *Hur* report concluded that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute President Biden over his handling of classified documents. The report also suggested however that the President was not fit to stand trial, stating he would present himself in court as a “well-meaning elderly man with a poor memory”.

At the time the *New York Times* highlighted “disparaging remarks” made by *Hur* about the President’s memory. The same *New York Times* just published an editorial urging Biden to drop out of the race.

Back in February, *The National Review* reported much soul-searching in the White House Press Corps post-*Hur* about their own role in reporting Biden’s competency to run the country.

We know politicians and their spin doctors lie. In fact one wonders if the psalm ‘artists in perfidy’ was not written for them. Remember the old joke. How can you tell when a politician is lying? His lips are moving.

Vital

That is why the role of the media is so vital for a healthy society and a healthy democracy.

It may sound cynical but one of the guiding principles I was taught in journalism school was this: “When

Although dismissed in some quarters, this helps shift the narrative.

Remember the film *Argo*, when the Hollywood producer declared cynically: “If you want to tell a lie, get the media to tell it for you”.

There is also a lesson in Sunday’s gospel about the woman with the chronic haemorrhage who reached out to Christ, the Truth incarnate. Pressing up against the truth takes courage and is risky but it brings healing and freedom. Either we live in the light of truth or perish in the darkness of error.

“The BBC also broke its own rules for accuracy about a week ago when it gave the misleading impression that trans women’s milk was as good for babies as breastmilk”

A BBC documentary series, *The Rise of Nazi Germany*, reveals how the truth is essential for freedom and

democracy. It poses the question “Who cares about the truth?” and reveals how Nazis came to power through a variety of means, not least controlling news and newspapers.

Maybe the *BBC* should recall these lessons when it comes to reporting facts. A recent headline: “Transgender woman guilty of rape after night out.” The story repeatedly called this rapist a ‘she’. Huh? The *BBC* also broke its own rules for accuracy about a week ago when it gave the misleading impression that trans women’s milk was as good for babies as breastmilk.

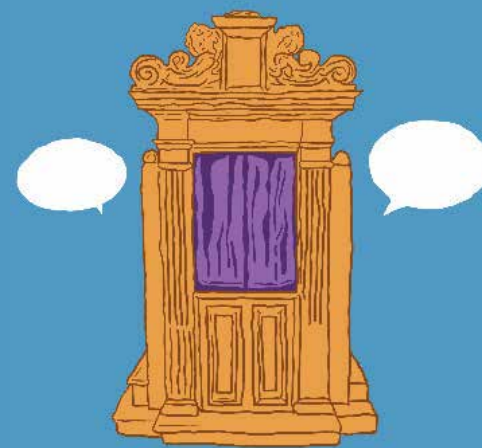
Truth

Russian writer and Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn left us some sage advice on truth and the protection of freedom: “Let us refuse to say what we do not think.”

The United States celebrates its liberty on this Fourth of July. And, as voters ponder who to elect to safeguard that liberty, they might also consider who is actually running the country. One thing is sure: it is not Joe Biden.

The Confession Box

Presented by
Wendy Grace and Brandon Scott



As freedom of speech and expression become more and more restricted in our world, a new podcast aptly titled ‘*The Confession Box*’ provides a safe space where no subject is taboo and every voice gets a hearing.

Join regulars Wendy Grace and Brandon Scott as they are joined by a variety of guests to discuss the latest news in Ireland, and the Catholic world at large. Streaming on all major platforms now!

amazon music

APPLE PODCASTS

Spotify

Google Podcasts

<https://rss.com/podcasts/theconfessionboxpodcast/>

“The United States celebrates its liberty on this Fourth of July. And, as voters ponder who to elect to safeguard that liberty, they might also consider who is actually running the country”

Faith vs fitness



Ava Westendorf

According to a survey that the magazine *National Geographic* conducted, in 2023, over half a million people went on the pilgrimage of Camino de Santiago in Galicia, Spain. However, only 40% of these walkers were using this route for religious reasons. Due to an influx of fitness trends and people's increased love for traveling, these spiritual paths are gaining popularity from people who are not using them for their originally intended purposes. However, lacking the religious context, the people using these paths for physical activity are both looking for the same end goal: an improvement of health.

Author of 'Journeys of Faith', PhD student and researcher of medieval pilgrimages, Louise Nugent, told *The Irish Catholic* about the original meaning of pilgrimages. There are three key reasons that Dr Nugent listed: belief in the power of Saints, imposition as a tenant and indulgences.

Power of Saints

One of the initial reasons for pilgrimages was said to be people's beliefs in the Saint's to "intercede with God" and heal the believer or one of their family members. Dr Nugent said that this reason is "central to most pilgrimages" and people would travel to "either the grave of the Saints or the relics of the Saints" to pray in the hope of healing or creating a cure. Dr Nugent said that in some cases, she has traveled to pilgrimages and seen images or relics, such as a picture of a baby in an incubator or an inhaler that people left behind at the site of the Saints, in hopes that these issues would soon be cured. This is still a common pilgrimage reason that is still used today.

“During medieval pilgrimages, people were also sent on these long paths because “they would be atoning for sins and they would be given a set number of places to visit,” before they could be pay off their debts”

Imposition as a Tenant

During medieval pilgrimages, people were also sent on these long paths because “they would be atoning for sins and they would be given a set number of places to visit” before they could be pay off their debts. Depending on the sin that needed to be forgiven, the walker may have multiple sites to visit or just a small amount. Dr Nugent gave an example of this type of reasoning. “There is one Irishman in the mid 16th century who was given a pilgrimage of almost 20 sites all around Ireland that he had to visit, and he was sent to his home for the end of it. He basically murdered his sons, so this was a kind of a means for him to atone in some way.” This man, whose name was Heneas Mac Nichaill, atoned for his sins along nineteen pilgrimage sites around Ireland in 1543. Although this reason for pilgrimages was popular with many, it is not as commonly used in modern times.

Indulgences

The final reason given for medieval pilgrimages was indulgences. Dr Nugent says that “because there is social aspects as well in the pilgrimage,” people will often have gone on these pilgrimages to indulge in their own personal desires. They could take the time during the long journey to speak to friends or family instead of focusing on the destination ahead. Many others would go on these pilgrimages in need of a break from their lives, so they would use this walk for peace and quiet. This aspect of medieval pilgrimages, although religious, seems to correlate with many of the reasons people are going on modern pilgrimages with a secular mindset.

Kimberley Davis, a 35-year-old marathon runner from Toronto, told *National Geographic* that these pilgrimages are “this bubble of peace. No obligations, no planning, no looking for hotels or restaurants, and I loved being outside for six weeks, which I think is really healthy.” These six weeks were spent walking “the 480-mile-long Camino



Early medieval leacht at Caher Island Co. Mayo, used as an altar during the patron day Mass in 2016.

Frances from Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port through the French Pyrenees to the city of Santiago de Compostela in Spain.” As well as with the reasoning of indulgences in medieval pilgrimages, Kimberly Davis was pursuing her journey to find peace from her stressful life.

Meaning of the Path

No matter why people take these journeys, it does not change what the ending of the pilgrimage means to them. In a medieval pilgrimage, it was more likely that, especially for health reasons as Dr Nugent said, the believers were more interested in the shrines or religious graves they would see at the end of their journey. For many taking these more modernised pilgrimages where religion is not the sole factor, they are more interested in the physical exertion and destination of the journey.

Nicole Hu, a 27-year-old from Chicago, told *National Geographic* that her 75 miles walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain was “hard on

“The people that once used this virtual fitness challenge to complete these pilgrimages, without religious reasons, are now going to these sites in person”

the body, but it is a really good discipline. I think I'd do it again, but for longer, just because I think you would get more out of it.” Although exhausting, it was a rewarding experience for her since she was able to get physical strength out of this journey as well as be in a beautiful place.

“You can exercise anyplace, but it's very special to do it in a place as unique as Japan while participating in a curated cultural journey”

In terms of partaking in these journeys for beauty, many people also like to immerse themselves in a certain culture without being a part of that religious lifestyle themselves. Rick Walsh, a 63-year-old from San Francisco walked the six-day Shikoku Wayfarer Tour in Japan and told *National Geographic* that “you can exercise anyplace, but it's very special to do it in a place as unique as

Japan while participating in a curated cultural journey.” Mr Walsh found this pilgrimage to be special because he got to do it in a foreign place while also immersing himself with the beauty of Japanese temples and history. He is obtaining second-hand experiences with the religion that leads many to take this path to visit the 88-temples that line this pilgrimage.

Gaining Popularity

This idea to hike the pilgrimages without a religious intent began to increase in popularity when the Covid-19 virus kept people from around the world in quarantine. During this time, people were struggling with the fact that they could not gain physical activity by going outside like they used to. Without this ability to get fresh air whenever they wanted, they looked for other ways to retrieve an adventure from inside of the safety of their home. This is when the popular trend and website ‘The Conqueror Virtual Challenges’ began to immerge.

The company's CEO Adam El-Agne, began his adult career as a Physical Educa-

tion Teacher in New Zealand. From this job he learned that he enjoyed helping people build on their fitness goals, seeing them grow happy and healthy. Through this, he started ‘The Conqueror Virtual Challenges’ in 2013 so he could help inspire those of all ages, virtually. Although it was created before the Covid-19 virus, this epidemic helped it gain popularity. People, stuck inside their houses, now had the ability to walk through fictional worlds and abroad adventures online. As a reward for working out within their home, users of this website were sent a medal, such as one given at the end of a marathon.

“People were not seeing the true religious side of this journey, instead just seeing the fitness goal”

When this website was started, the hikes were spots that were based on journeys in fantasy novels or very popular places that people dreamt of going. After a few months, the website began adding in pilgrimages, their most popular being the Camino de Santiago in Spain. Through this virtual trail, people were not seeing

“Whether people agree with it or not, it seems that fitness and faith are beginning to work together in both pilgrimages and at common events in someone’s parish”

the true religious side of this journey, instead just seeing the fitness goals that, in the end, led to a reward. Now that the Covid-19 pandemic is mostly in the past, the people that once used this virtual fitness challenge to complete these pilgrimages, without religious reasons, are now going to these sites in person.

Health

While this trend does not include religion as one of its main purposes, it does hold the same overall reason: health. For people allowing faith to lead their journey, they are normally looking for the healing of a family member or themselves. In comparison, people who are using these paths with secular intent, are using them to better their own physical and mental health. Marc Mas-sad, a personal trainer based in the U.K. told *National Geographic* that “walking boosts cardiovascular health, promotes weight loss, improves balance and coordination, and enhances muscle endurance with minimal joint strain,” and that it “also has profound mental health benefits. It’s a natural stress reliever releasing endorphins that can decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety.” The use of walking these paths in making people happier and healthier, one of the key goals that walking pilgrimages for religious reasons also obtain.

The question of faith vs fitness is a difficult question to answer since there is not a definite definition of a pilgrimage. Dr Nugent told *The Irish Catholic* that a “pilgrimage is quite broad, and it covers a big spectrum of types of pilgrimage and types of sites”. They often range in mileage and the number of landmarks that can be seen during the journey, both factors of which can deter a person’s reasoning

for going on such a pilgrimage. Dr Nugent directly mentioned the Knock Pilgrimage when describing the different types of pilgrimages that one can embark since it is so short and often changes the purpose of the journey.

Dr Nugent also said the purposes of pilgrimages can be quite complex to figure out. Some people may embark on a journey without having any religious reason, but they still hold a spiritual reason for going along the path. In another article that *National Geographic* wrote in 2021 called ‘Could pilgrimages be the next post-pandemic trend’, photographer Tim Bird said that his journey was “meditative and spiritual, but not in a prescribed religious way”. In 2019 Mr Bird cycled St Olav Waterway, a pilgrim trail linking Finland and Sweden. He enjoyed the peace that seeing the earth and animals gave him without having a religious connection to the path he was taking.

“If you are gaining health from your journey, then you can embark on a pilgrimage”

Guy Howard, co-founder of the company British Pilgrimage Trust as well as the co-author of ‘Britain’s Pilgrim Places’, says that it is okay to embark on a pilgrimage without religious intent. He claims that “there’s nothing intrinsically religious or secular about connecting with your deepest needs,” and that “the word ‘holy’ comes from the Old English ‘halig’, meaning ‘bringing health’.” Therefore,

if you are gaining health from your journey, then you can embark on a pilgrimage. In fact, the British Pilgrimage Trust reported that when their customers were asked about what motivates them to go on these journeys, only 13% of the quotes mentioned a religious observation, while everyone else wrote about their mental health, connecting with nature and learning about their spiritual and cultural heritage.

Compatibility

So, are fitness and faith able to work side by side? Many dioceses around Ireland such as the Diocese of Achonry seem to think so. On June 9, 2024, the diocese held an Achonry Reek Challenge where they used the idea of a hike to create a gathering at their diocese. They are using the idea of getting physically fit and mentally healthy through a hike to draw people to their faith.

The Christ Church Parish also had this same idea with their ‘Fitness and Faith’ event on the 3, 7 and 17 of June. For these events, they invite all the parish ladies to join them on a walk or run followed by a dinner. Whether people agree with it or not, it seems that fitness and faith are beginning to work together in both pilgrimages and at common events in someone’s parish.

So, was *National Geographic* wrong to say that people are using pilgrimages without faith and are these two features able to work together? Guy Heyward thinks that this new popularity for pilgrimages is a positive but that some people are not as accepting of this secular viewpoint, “there are obviously hardcore people who believe there is only one way of doing a pilgrimage, and it has to be highly devotional.” Although there are these views, he hopes that people will realise that pilgrimages can become a sort of side door for people to encounter deeper aspects of themselves,” and that health needs to be prioritised over religion in these experiences.

Pilgrims wading in stream as part of the pilgrimage rounds in 2016, at St Cuan and Brogan’s holy well Mothel, Co. Waterford.



“He hopes that people will realise that pilgrimages can become a sort of side door for people to encounter deeper aspects of themselves,” and that health needs to be prioritised over religion in these experiences”

THIS SUMMER, EXPLORE IRELAND’S RICH MYTHOLOGY!

Connemara-native Mark Joyce’s best-selling Mythical Irish series is now back in stock – including the new edition of *Mythical Irish Beasts*!



Recommended by author Rick Riordan (Percy Jackson series) and by Ryan Tubridy on The Late Late Toy Show, delve into these beautiful books and set sail on an adventure across magical Ireland!



SALE PRICE: €65 + 5 P&P
Gift wrapping available

 CURRACHBOOKS

01-6874025 | Sales@columba.ie



Modern pilgrims walking in bare feet mayo



Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan

A Church tackling one of the 'greatest scourges of our time'

Brandon Scott

A 2022 report published by the Freedom House organisation, a body that evaluates the health of human rights in respective countries, declared that Ireland ranked 39/40 in the political rights category and 58/60 in the civil liberties category, concluding that Ireland ranked 97/100 when overall freedom was closely scrutinised.

On the surface all looks well and it probably would be if our attention hadn't been drawn to an area that we have repeatedly failed to address as a nation until very recently - that being the abhorrence of human trafficking - an issue Pope Francis characterises as being "one of the most terrible scourges of our time" and an industry where human beings and their inherent dignity are devalued in favour of profit and greed.

But as Ireland struggles to deal with the totality of the issue, the Church on the other hand has acquired a tremendous body of expertise in identifying the traits of this deplorable movement and actively seeking solutions to try and arrest its presence in societies where it has been allowed to flourish.

Trafficking

Sr Liz Murphy, a Sister of Mercy, knows all too acutely how the issue of human trafficking is manifesting itself in our society. Sr Liz, as a longstanding activist, has been involved with an Act to Prevent Trafficking (APT), and she was a guest of the Garda Commissioner at the Santa Marta Conference on Human trafficking last week in University College Cork, an event which saw 80 delegates from 20 international police forces attend, along with other representatives of the Church, including Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Vincent Nichols. The event resulted in Minister for Justice Helen McEntee vowing to enact new laws to formally recognise victims of human trafficking in the upcoming weeks.

"The event resulted in Minister for Justice Helen McEntee vowing to enact new laws to formally recognise victims of human trafficking in the upcoming weeks"

"Although there were very harrowing personal accounts described in vivid detail at the event, the atmosphere was 'cordial' and everybody sensed the gravity of the situation they were dealing with"

weeks.

Reflecting on the event to the *State of the Nation* podcast, Sr Liz said it was the fruit of Pope Francis' relationship with the global police networks. "It was a gathering of the many people involved in the networks that the Church is involved with," she said. "Let me say that the word human trafficking really is the modern word for slavery. So this conference followed on from the similar one last year in Lithuania to which I was also invited. And it is based on the relationship between Pope Francis and the police networks, not just in Europe, but extending to something like now, 52 countries.

"One of the key moments in the two days was when the woman Mia gave her personal story, which was about over half an hour, and she got a standing ovation"

Asked how she would define human trafficking, Sr Liz bluntly described it as the "slavery of people" and reminded that it is not just confined to certain sectors or industries and has become a widespread problem encompassing a variety of areas such as "agriculture, domestic service and the sex trade".

"I think maybe instead of thinking of this [human trafficking] in terms of prostitution, which is I think how many people would think in terms of anti-trafficking, it's

now spread into the movement of people," she said. "Let me say again, it's the slavery of people into agriculture, domestic service, the sex trade, wherever, like even the various service level industries".

With the delegates tasked with not only addressing but providing solutions to what many see as a longstanding and moreover, worsening problem, Sr Liz said that although there were very harrowing personal accounts described in vivid detail at the event, the atmosphere was "cordial" and everybody sensed the gravity of the situation they were dealing with.

"One of the key moments in the two days was when a woman Mia gave her personal story, which was about over half an hour, and she got a standing ovation. On the second day Alan Lynch gave the story of an Indonesian man who was trafficked into Ireland and ended up in a cannabis grow place in Galway."

"One man thought that by his family paying money from the village where he came, he thought he was coming for the good life into Europe and into Ireland," she said. "It turned out that the money that was paid was actually to a criminal gang. And then he owed \$200,000 for all of his life. I'm talking about years now, not just months. Years were spent trying to pay back that money."

Potential

Although Ireland has been accused of being complacent in tackling the scourge of human trafficking, the Church has amassed decades of experience in identifying, managing and solving the problem and the Church-led anti-trafficking initiatives Sr Liz speaks of proves that the Church has the potential to be at the forefront of this movement, offering humane and pastoral care to those who have been subjected to it and education to those who are removed from its horrors but are conscientious and still have the power to make a societal change.

"There is a faith based,



Sr Liz Murphy with Bishops Alan McGuickian and Fintan Gavin and Cardinal Vincent Nichols.



Sr Liz Murphy with Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee.

group which had done a number of projects from the time it was founded in the 1980s," she said. "That group meets on the second Monday of every month. And so our current major programme is a programme called Captors, which is for senior students at post-primary level and adapted for parishes. That is a series of videos.

"Sr Liz also pointed out that the same problems continue to persist due to the lack of coordinated strategic plan from the bishops"

In those videos it shows how people are trafficked from, say, China, Indonesia, basically from Asia, right across through, say, Romania. That's another whole piece in itself. And then how somebody could land in Ireland and where we would find them. So for girls say in secondary school, it's the nail bars. It could be the person serving you the coffee or even working at the car washes."

Sr Liz emphasised that events, like the one in Cork, are vital in exercising people to champion for the cause

"‘How is their emotional life in any way recognised?’ she said. ‘I dread to think of how this will unfold in the next five years. Living in a tent is in itself degrading’"

she has devoted a considerable portion of her ministry to and with the Irish Bishops collectively denouncing human trafficking as "a form of modern slavery in Ireland" in the immediate aftermath of the event, the conference ultimately bore fruit for Sr Liz and Catholics concerned about our country's management of the problem. But Sr Liz also pointed out that the same problems continue to persist due to the lack of coordinated strategic plan from the bishops.

"Well, I think the fact that we had two bishops present was helpful," she said. "The Bishop of Cork was there, naturally, because it was in his home territory. And I think it may have been an eye opener because I know the bishops did refer to it in their own statement and we would link with them, but there hasn't been any significant plan of action within the hierarchical Church, if I may say so."

Awareness

With many in Ireland oblivious to the scale of human traf-

ficking in the country and how sophisticated and lucrative the industry is, Sr Liz believes that the key word when mentioning human trafficking in Ireland is "awareness" and it's something we all need to develop if we have any chance of decisively overcoming the problem.

"And I'm just thinking of, the increased number of migrants coming here. So maybe it's getting harder to identify"

"I think the word 'awareness' is the key word because how aware are we of what's happening?" she said. "I wasn't aware of certain situations described at the conference. But I think the main kind of energy needs to go into awareness raising now. And there is a new national plan that was launched by the Minister for justice, in November, and in fact this

week going through the Dail is the legislation that's going on a statutory basis called the National Referral Mechanism, whereby there will be more opportunities for people to pick up a phone to ring if you see something, if you are suspicious of something.

"So a word on the street with someone. I have a memory of a place I lived some years back and I could look in the kitchen window as I was going into where I was, and I could see four Asian girls and when I came back and I saw a man smoking a cigarette outside at night, I am still haunted by that. Should I have done something about it now? I'm more aware now than I was back then. But even the suspicion of something, and that's where the Gardaí working with the Santa Marta group is vital now. I think maybe, the training that we talked about, whether it's through act, whether it's through rumour, I think every parish needs to know these resources are readily available.

"And I'm just thinking

of the increased number of migrants coming here. So maybe it's getting harder to identify."

Commenting on the seemingly endless number of tents being erected in Dublin's city centre, Sr Liz "dreads" to see how the situation will evolve in the next 5 years and that she believes the act of living in a tent is "degrading".

"Well, when I look at us and hear on the news and see all of the tents, whether it's down by the canal or wherever, and I don't want to base it just in Dublin, just because I happen to live in Dublin, but how is their emotional life in any way recognised?" she said. "I dread to think of how this will unfold in the next five years. Living in a tent is in itself degrading."

Reflection

Reflecting on the future role of the Church in anti-trafficking endeavours, Sr Liz insisted that it is essential we coordinate our efforts in the Church and that we all stand up and take collective responsibility

"Sr Liz insisted that it is essential that we coordinate our efforts in the Church and that we all stand up and take collective responsibility as Christians to highlight an issue that she firmly believes is 'a crime against humanity'"

as Christians to highlight an issue that she firmly believes is "a crime against humanity".

"We are all in this together as a Church and this is a crime against humanity"

"It's something that we need to be alert to and that it's not just the provision of physical care," she said. "It's so much more. Cardinal Nichols was talking about human rights and what comes from the heart. I suppose it's a real rallying call to all of us. We are all in this together as a Church and this is a crime against humanity.

"And so I'm glad as a religious sister, the only sister that was at the conference and as a Church person to at least know what is happening now and to be part of something where some sense of awareness raising is happening."

The Irish Catholic

The mission of The Irish Catholic to share the Gospel truth has never been more critical.

The Irish Catholic features news and analyses that represent the Catholic voice on a national stage, regular contributors who provide commentary on hot button issues, and highlights the ongoing work of parishes and communities throughout the country.

PRINT SUBSCRIPTION ROI + NI

3 months €55
6 months €95
1 year €185

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION

1 month €7
3 months €20
1 year €60

WWW.IRISHCATHOLIC.COM/SHOP
INFO@IRISHCATHOLIC.IE
+353 (01) 687 4028



SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEW DIGITAL SUBSCRIBERS
FIRST MONTH FOR ONLY €1*
*RENEWS AT €7/MONTH

Your daily mass and prayer companion

MAGNIFICAT

Celebrate the Word of God daily with the Magnificat, delivered right to your home.



SUBSCRIPTION

Six months €35
One year €62
Two years €124

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTS

Black Leather cover €25.00
Brown Semi-leather cover €15.00
Plastic cover €8.50
€5.00 for P&P

Block 3B, Bracken Business Park
Bracken Road, Sandyford
Dublin 18, D18 K277

+353 (01) 687 4024
WWW.IRISHCATHOLIC.COM
MAGNIFICAT@IRISHCATHOLIC.IE

Each edition of this monthly prayer book aims to develop your spiritual journey. Engage your personal devotion with daily mass readings, morning and evening prayers, art analysis and saints' biographies. Continue your faith filled journey, while also uncovering new treasures.

Subscribe now to get Magnificat delivered to your door.

Synodality will not survive without decisions



Fr Gerry O'Hanlon SJ

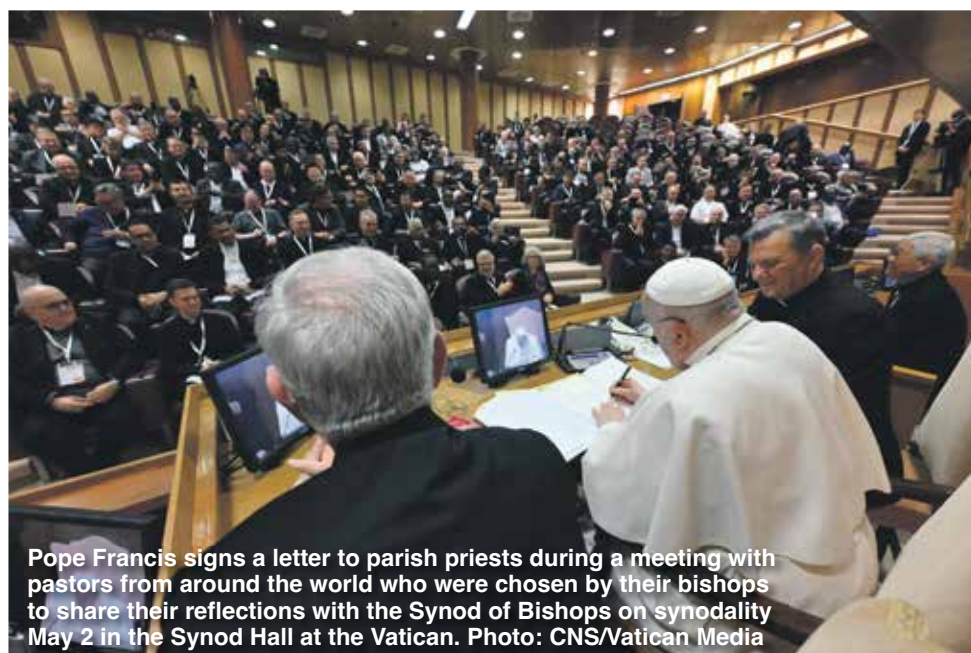
The second (and final) session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality convenes in Rome next October. Where are we at?

Judging by the Irish response to the 2023 synthesis report, 'Towards October 2024' (May 2024), we are very much on track. In that response – garnered from consultations in dioceses and ecclesial groups as part of the characteristic circularity of synodality – there is strong endorsement of the synodal process as the appropriate way to exercise mission in Ireland. There is also an honest and realistic recognition of traces of apathy, hesitation and fear of the process – change is not easy. There is, in addition, a sharper appreciation of the canonical changes that will be required in order to make 'differentiated co-responsibility' a reality at all levels of the Church. For example, "There is a strong perception that real differentiated co-responsibility is only going to be possible when the unique authority given to the parish priest in Canon Law is balanced with some definition of the authority of the faithful".

Particularly striking in the Irish response is the appendix, offering a rich compilation of synodal good practices at diocesan and parish level, most of them using some form of the 'conversation in the Spirit' discernment methodology.

Themes

Interestingly, while the consultation focused on the co-responsibility intrinsic to recreating Church as the People of God, other themes familiar since the National Synthesis of 2022 resurfaced. These included the primacy of baptism, the role of women (with mention of the totemic issue of ordination), young people, welcome and inclusion of those on the margins, formation, and the role of clergy. As to the latter, it is worth noting that there was some evidence of a more positive response among priests, hopefully given added momentum by the meeting in Rome in April-May of over 200 parish priests from



Pope Francis signs a letter to parish priests during a meeting with pastors from around the world who were chosen by their bishops to share their reflections with the Synod of Bishops on synodality May 2 in the Synod Hall at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

all over the world. The bishops have rolled out a leadership training course in different parts of Ireland as part of a strategic drive towards formation, which has been availed of by a mixed cohort of laity, priests and religious.

“In response to last October's synod the Pope identified 10 themes for synod study groups”

In the meantime, while other countries have been similarly engaged in a consultation process, the fruits of which will become apparent in a new Working Paper (*Instrumentum Laboris*) for the October Synod, several other relevant developments at global level have occurred. In response to last October's synod the Pope identified 10 themes for synod study groups (among them the diaconate and the possibility of female deacons, and the theological criteria and synodal methodologies “for shared discernment of controversial doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues”). The study groups are not due to report till 2025 but may be asked for an interim account of progress at the Synod next October.

These study groups, faithful to last October's findings that “conversation in the Spirit” needed to include a better integration of the intellectual with the emotional/spiritual, have become even more relevant in the light of certain other global developments which have involved the Pope himself. There was the controversy over same-sex blessings with the publication of *Fiducia*

Supplicants; the remarks from Cardinal Hollerich (reported in *Synodal Times*, May 23, 2024) which seemed to open the possibility of female ordination, while counselling patience as a way of proceeding, and then, around the same time, the Pope was quoted in an interview with CBS as apparently saying “no” to even women deacons; and then, a week later, there was what I heard the BBC call an “almost apology” on behalf of the Pope for a derogatory, homophobic term he used in a closed meeting with Italian bishops, when questioned on the issues of the admission of gay men to seminaries. This was interpreted by many within and outside the Church as a slur on gay people.

Knots

How do we as Catholics manage to tie ourselves up in such knots over issues of sex and gender? And to what extent does this become an obstacle to mission?

All this opens up two related fields of enquiry which the synodal process will have to tackle at some point down the road. The first has to do with the limits of a purely pastoral approach, and the need at some stage to also tackle the issue of doctrine, of Church teaching. A careful reading of what the Pope had to say in that CBS interview gives pause to any quick interpretation

of a simple ‘no’ to the female diaconate. He makes it clear he is speaking of diaconate understood within the context of ‘Holy Orders’, presumably a short-hand for the transitional diaconate which had become common in the Church as a step towards priesthood.

“Pope Francis has been brave, in the spirit of synodality, in attempting to articulate the reasons for various teachings, and has advanced the notion of ‘complementarity’”

However, as the 2023 synthesis document makes clear, we are now in an era where increasingly we are aware of the ‘permanent diaconate’ as distinct from the transitional one, and the full ramifications of this have yet to be realised. Hence the ongoing study around the female diaconate.

However, the question of priestly ordination still keeps being posed, and there were developments around this as well. Pope Francis has been brave, in the spirit of synodality, in attempting to articulate the reasons for various teach-

ings, and has advanced the notion of ‘complementarity’, in particular the Petrine and Marian typology so beloved of the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, as a reason why women may not be ordained as priests. However, in dialogue with theologian Sr Linda Pocher and two colleagues, the Pope and his Council of Cardinals were confronted by the theological weaknesses of Balthasar's hypothesis, and it's far from theologically normative status.

Testing

This is precisely the kind of role theology should be playing in testing the basis of Church teaching which the ‘sense of faith of the faithful’ finds unpersuasive. It is at the heart of synodality. And so, whatever about reasons of prudence and practical judgement (to maintain unity in the Church, for example), it's clear that such questions of ordination cannot be declared ‘off the table’ until such time as the faithful are at peace. This requires the kind of consensual reception of teaching that was found at Antioch in Acts 15, when the community there received with joy the new teaching about how Gentiles were to be treated.

The second issue that arises is the role of the papacy itself. Pope Francis, in line with Pope John Paul II and stretching all the way back to Paul VI, has been prominent in acknowledging the need for its reform, and has spoken about the need to “decentralise” the Church. At the same time, it is very clear that the Synod of Bishops – as intended by Paul VI – still remains, in its purely consultative nature, an instrument of papal primacy. This is instead of being a truly deliberative body which might in creative tension offer a “better balance of vital forces” (*Ladislav Orsy*) in marrying primacy and collegiality. Popes, as Francis is the first to admit, are fallible: he himself only ever uses the term ‘infallible’ to describe the consensual ‘sense of faith of the faithful’, and even Vatican I limits papal infallibility to very rare instances.

Have we allowed what the late historian John W. O'Malley called the ‘papalisa-

tion’ of the Catholic Church in the second millennium too much space? Is synodality a time to recalibrate, and to explore a more shared governance model, while continuing to rejoice in the ongoing ‘soft power’ of papacy as a focus of unity, and indeed a service not just to all Catholics but to all Christians? Might an eventual move towards a recognition of the deliberative power of the Synod of Bishops, with lay and other participation, be the way forward, with the Pope retaining powers of veto?

“To simply allow diverse practices and teaching in different parts of the universal Church may be to open up the floodgates to other kinds of local, culturally acceptable ways of proceeding which are clearly not in accord with Gospel values”

There is no silver bullet solution to any of these issues. Many of the hot-button issues mentioned above have not attained a consensus across the rest of the Church, and, absent this consensus, it is not so clear how to proceed just now. To simply allow diverse practices and teaching in different parts of the universal Church may be to open up the floodgates to other kinds of local, culturally acceptable ways of proceeding which are clearly not in accord with Gospel values. But gradually decisions will need to be taken – synodality will not survive without decisions, and already there are rumblings of ‘consultation fatigue’.

Synodality, however, by its provision of safe spaces for open speaking and listening, for debate and discussion, is a wise way of tackling the relevant issues, guided by the Spirit. We need to pray for guidance on the way forward, combining patience with persistence. All this will become even more concrete and urgent for those of us in Ireland after next October's Synod, when our own bishops will come back to us with an invitation to wider and deeper consultation, in preparation for a series of national synodal assemblies which will address issues with a particular bearing on our Irish situation. These are exciting times to be a Catholic.

“Popes, as Francis is the first to admit, are fallible: he himself only ever uses the term ‘infallible’ to describe the consensual ‘sense of faith of the faithful’, and even Vatican I limits papal infallibility to very rare instances”

GUADALUPE, MEXICO

OCTOBER 3 – 12, 2024

PRICE
PPS €2,345



ITINERARY HIGHLIGHTS

- Plaza of three cultures in Tlatelolco to see the Church of St James where St. Juan Diego presented the 'tilma' of Our Lady to the Bishop as proof of her apparitions.
- 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 National
- 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.
- See the image of Our Lady of Ocotlan burnt into a tree trunk after she appeared to Diego Bernardino in 1531.

INCLUDES

- Return flights from Dublin to Mexico City via Amsterdam with 23kg checked bag.
- 5 nights in the Hotel Casa Blanca, Mexico City with breakfast.
- 2 nights in the NH Hotel Puebla, Puebla with breakfast.
- 1 night in the Hotel Fontan, Mexico City with breakfast.
- 5 lunches in local restaurants and 2 dinners in hotel.
- Modern coach with professional guide throughout.
- Mass at the Basilica of our Lady of Guadalupe
- 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.
- Tour earpiece system "whispers"
- All taxes and surcharges
- Tips for driver and guides

NOT INCLUDED

- Single supplement: €450
- Travel Insurance – €40 up to 85 years of age.

FLIGHTS

DUB - AMS 03-10-2024 KL1136
Departure 08:55 DUBLIN
Arrival 11:35 AMSTERDAM
Operated by KLM

AMS - MEX 03-10-2024 KL685
Departure 14:30 AMSTERDAM
Arrival 17:59 MEXICO CITY
Operated by KLM

MEX - AMS 11-10-2024 KL686
Departure 20:05 MEXICO CITY
Arrival 14:45 +1 AMSTERDAM
Operated by KLM

AMS - DUB 12-10-2024 KL1141
Departure 16:00 AMSTERDAM
Arrival 16:40 DUBLIN
Operated by KLM

To reserve your place:
Call Dublin (01) 878 8159 or Belfast
(028) 95680005 or email info@marian.ie



MARIAN PILGRIMAGES
RENEW OUR SPIRIT OF LOVE, FORGIVENESS & PEACE

The Irish Catholic

Marian Pilgrimages is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator TO142 - ATOL 10206
Group: Irish Catholic GQ-1061-1

Out&About

Not even Covid could keep those kids down



DONEGAL: Scoil Mhuire Creeslough's 6th class completed their primary education. This class had their Holy Communion cancelled during Covid and were a very resilient class.



DUBLIN: Fr Mullan stands with Sr Rose Nuval and the Sisters of St Paul during the mass on Friday, June 21 at the Three Patrons Church, Rathgar, celebrating Sr Rose's 60th anniversary in the order. A Mass and reception will be held on July 21 to celebrate Sr Rose as she prepares to return to the Philippines to join her class group for the Diamond Jubilee reunion.



OSLO: The joint Nordic and Baltic Investiture of Dames and Knights of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem took place in St Olav's Cathedral, Oslo on June 21-22. Pictured are Thomas Kilduff (Cavan), Valencia Camp (Maryland), Huan Ngoc Nguyen (Oslo), Jane Lowe (Westminster) and Jānis Smelters (Riga).

IN SHORT

Beloved Irish priest died in Co. Offaly

On June 25 Fr Noel Daly died in his nursing home. Born on December 25, 1940, in Tullamore, Co. Offaly, Fr Daly led a rewarding and influential life up until his stroke in January 2023, although his inability to walk or talk did not stop him from being kind to his visitors, always smiling at them when they came to see him.

He was also a hard-working part of the Catholic community. Becoming an ordained priest on December 21, 1964, he was assigned to work in Korea and served there for 19 years. After 9 of those years, he finished his language studies and moved across multiple positions in parishes in the Diocese of Wexford.

By the end of those 19 years, Fr Daly returned to Ireland to work for the office of Dalgan in Co. Meath as their Central Education Coordinator.

In 1994, after around 11 years in his past position, he became manager of the far east offices in Dalgan.

He worked in this position until his stroke in 2023. Between the places he travelled and the jobs he had, Fr Daly was a commendable person in the Catholic community and will be deeply missed by all.

Sr Rose Nuval send-off celebration in Rathgar

On July 21, a Mass and reception will be held to honour the legacy of Sr Rose Nuval. Sr Nuval recently celebrated at the Three Patrons Church, Rathgar her 60-year anniversary as a member of the Sisters of Paul on June 21.

She has led an amazing career as a member of her order. With the Sisters of Paul, she helped run the Queen of Peace nursing home, a place

that was the housing of popular names such as Fr Alec Reid, a champion of the peace process, as well as a popular visitation spot for President Mary McAleese.

The celebration being held on July 21 will be a commemoration as well as a goodbye for Sr Rose, as she prepares to depart to the Philippines, her past home, in July so that she can join her class group and get ready for the Diamond Jubilee reunion.

Sr Rose will be joined on that day by her sisters from the Ireland and UK provinces as they prepare to celebrate with her before she leaves in the end of July.

Principal Rory Darcy announces retirement

After working at the Catholic Primary School Management Association since 2021, beloved

Principal Rory Darcy returned to St Oliver's National School in Ballycasheen to celebrate officially announcing his retirement earlier this week.

St Oliver's holds a special place for the principal due to his lasting role there for 19 years. In this role, he helped watch his children grow and learn in school as well as advocate for those without a voice.

His love for education helped him decide to change the modernised definition of retirement and instead is going to work towards getting his PhD in education at University College Cork (UCC).

The beloved principal says he is grateful for kindness shown to him through his years of working in the school and the people who helped him celebrate his official retirement. He remains optimistic about his new future, saying "an end is always followed by a beginning".

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DONEGAL: Celebrating finishing their primary education, Scoil Mhuire Creeslough's 6th class recently visited Aras an Uchtaran, Dail Eireann and Croke Park.



MEATH: Fr. Michael Cahill (centre) preparing to leave his parish of Johnstown. Pictured with him at the parish farewell function is Bro. John O'Brien (Camillian Community, Killucan) and Fr William Coleman (Rochfortbridge).



LIMERICK: Knights of St Columbanus pictured at Glenstal Abbey at the reception of two new Knights into the Order of St Columbanus, Larry Power and Pdraig Slattery.



KILKENNY: The Ossory Taizé Pilgrimage youth group pictured before their trip to Taizé this month, included in the picture are Bishop Niall Coll Bishop of Ossory, and Ossory Youth Taizé chaplain Fr Willie Purcell.



OSLO: Chevalier Thomas Kilduff (Cavan) with His Eminence Fernando Cardinal Filoni, Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem at the joint Nordic and Baltic Investiture of Dames and Knights in St Olav's Cathedral, Oslo.



DONEGAL: Scoil Mhuire Creeslough's 6th class pictured with their class teacher Ms Claire Gallagher. They completed their primary education and attended a farewell Mass of thanksgiving on Friday, June 21.

ANTRIM

Eucharistic adoration every Friday from 2pm to 8.30pm in St Peter's Church, Lisburn. Every evening adoration and prayer from 6.30pm to 7.30pm.

ARMAGH

Confessions in St Malachy's Church happen every Saturday at 12 noon.

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.

DONEGAL

Fr Michael McKeever Silver Jubilee Ordination will be celebrated on July 5 at 7pm at St Colmcille's Church, Glendowan. Refreshments will be served in Radisson Hotel, Letterkenny at 9pm. All are welcome.

DUBLIN

All aged between 16 and 35 are welcome to Pro-life Youth Evening happening on July 5, from 6.30pm to 9.30pm. The event will count with guest speaker Kaya Jones, Grammy winner and former singer from Pussycat Dolls, who will talk about the dark side of music industry and abortion regret. To register for free text 087 167 4656.

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.

KILDARE

'Spirituality Day' organised by the Leinster Pioneers Provincial Activities Committee happening on Sunday, July 7, at 10.30am in Cuan Mhuire, Athy. Admission is free but donations are appreciated. Please, confirm attendance with Eileen on 086 166 4471.

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.

MAYO

National Grandparents Pilgrimage 2024 will happen on July 28 in Knock Shrine. Celebrating the world day for grandparents and the elderly, it will have as leader of the celebration Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Papal Nuncio of Ireland, and the event will start at 2.30pm in the Basilica. Transport needs to be organised with your local parish.

'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.

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.

The decline of religious-run hospitals and hygiene standards



Theo McDonald

Since their foundation, the Irish State hospitals were under the supervision and operation of Church orders which provided care grounded in an ethos dictated by Catholic social teaching.

Throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries, many of Ireland's hospitals were established by religious orders, specifically orders of nuns.

But as the issue of hospital ownership becomes the focus of culture wars, with certain medical practitioners and politicians warning that the remnants of religiously held ownership of hospitals constrains the ability to provide care, it calls that more secularisation has grown rampant.

Yet, as the religious orders withdraw themselves from the operation of healthcare, many problems related to duty of care, or lack thereof, within Irish hospitals persist with warnings of religious ownership, appearing to act as a red herring.

Infections

A recent study highlighted the preponderance of healthcare-associated-infections (HAIs) within the Irish health system.

According to the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC), over 40,000 patients pick up infections annually at Irish hospitals, with over 900 affected each day.

The report highlights how Ireland has one of the lowest levels of masking in Europe, with only 20% of hospitals continuing to wear medical masks, however hospital hygiene, or lack thereof, is a perennial problem in Irish hospitals.

While masking may contribute to infections as it relates to Covid-19, the

“Over 40,000 patients pick up infections annually at Irish hospitals with over 900 affected each day”



A statue of Our Lady at St Vincent's Hospital in Dublin.

basics of hygiene are not being adhered to in Irish hospitals.

From as far back as 2008, the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) was encouraging patients and visitors to inform hospital staff to wash their hands. The report highlighted how 20% of Irish hospitals studied received a poor hygiene rating, with only 11 hospitals obtaining a positive rating.

Indeed, a similar report carried out in 2013 found that poor hand-washing practices in several hospitals was putting patients at risk of acquiring a HAI.

A HIQA inspection in 2014 of 49 hospitals, found over 20% presented serious risks to infection related to hand hygiene.

A recent inquest into the tragic death of 16-year-old Aoife Johnston in December 2022, who died in Univer-

sity Hospital Limerick (UHL) due to overcrowding and a bacterial infection, encapsulates the contemporary neglect of patients in modern healthcare settings.

That inquest found that neglect was a major factor in her passing, including failure to provide Johnston with antibiotics.

“Almost 15,000 people contact sepsis every year, with almost 3,000 deaths recorded as a result with 60% of overall hospitals deaths related to sepsis”

This isn't the first time a patient died in care due to tragic circumstances related to hospital malpractice.

When Savita Halappanavar tragically died in 2013, an inquest concluded that her cause of death was due to “septic shock from E. coli bacteraemia” and medical malpractice.

In response to her tragic death, Ireland repealed the

Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution, which guaranteed the equal right to life of both mother and child, yet sepsis continues to kill patients in Irish hospitals every year.

According to the Royal College of Surgeons (RCSI), almost 15,000 people contact sepsis every year, with almost 3,000 deaths recorded as a result with 60% of overall hospitals deaths related to sepsis.

Nurses

Some have argued that the transition away from the cleanliness exhibited by the nuns might help to contextualise the issue of patient neglect further with an understanding of the duty of care offered by nuns gaining renewed impetus and analysis.

According to Dr Therese C. Meehan, who has formed generations of nurses in University College Dublin (UCD), “medical nuns are really the founders of modern nursing.”

“The nuns were intelligent and most well educated. Their deep Christian faith inspired them to love the Holy Trinity and all human beings as Jesus

“Primarily, nurses run hospitals, despite career managers ongoing efforts to change this”

loved them. They were predisposed to respond immediately to the desperate human need that existed in Ireland at the turn of the 19th century. They were astute, had great initiative and determination and lived Caritas in its original meaning.”

“Nurses today find themselves powerless to implement their professional values in some healthcare settings”

Dr Meehan, who runs a website called Careful Nursing which aims to inform the medical community of 19th Century Irish nurs-

ing practices to provide a relevant foundation for contemporary nursing practice, fears that nurses today find themselves powerless to implement their professional values in some healthcare settings.

“There is not by any means a complete lack of care in Irish hospitals,” she says, however, “Many hospitals – besides Careful Nursing hospitals – provide very good care... but they are controlled by Department of Health and Health Service Executive (HSE) structures that even the best historical nuns would have trouble facing down.”

“Primarily, nurses run hospitals, despite career managers ongoing efforts to change this.”

Citing the UK Mid Staffordshire Public Inquiry, which exposed the neglect of patients at Stafford Hospital in which patients were

left in their own urine by nurses, she mentions that, "Career managers running hospitals leads to widespread death of patients."

"There have been similar scandals and inquiries in Ireland in hospitals where nun-like nurses were not employed".

According to Dr Angelo Bottone, "Nuns have played a foundational role in the history of nursing, dating back to early Christianity."

"Their tradition of 'careful nursing' began with figures like Phoebe, mentioned by Saint Paul. Throughout history, religious sisters provided organised healthcare within monasteries and later established some of the first hospitals."

Nuns

Dr Bottone, who lectures in philosophy at UCD and Dublin Business School, mentions that, "During the Crimean War, nuns such as the Sisters of Mercy were pivotal, working alongside Florence Nightingale. This tradition influenced the professionalisation of nursing, underscoring the significant contributions of religious sisters to modern healthcare practices."

When a cholera epidemic hit Dublin in the 19th Century nurse Mary Clare Moore worked with Catherine McAuley, the founder of The Sisters of Mercy, in caring for the sick in impoverished tenements.

The munificence of Irish nuns transcends even the borders of Ireland, with US President Abraham Lincoln commenting that The Sisters of Mercy showed a "benevolence seen in the crowded wards" of a "most efficient" kind during the US Civil War.

The Irish Sisters of Charity led by Mary Aikenhead established the first hospital run by nuns in 1834, St Vincent's hospital originally located in St Stephen's Green.

The hierarchy of importance placed on cleanliness was evident in the early days of Irish healthcare.

In 1873 nursing was described as the 'employment of the strictest decency, cleanliness and morality' and in 1883 the Board of Superintendence of Dublin Hospitals described nursing as the 'preservation of cleanliness.'

Even when there was no

“There must be absolute, cast-iron guarantees, in black and white, that all legally permissible services will be available to those who want them”

facility for hand washing in the Rotunda hospital prior to 1877, a doctor, midwife or pupil would lubricate their fingers with a napkin before examining a woman.

Yet, in recent months, hand washing compliance has dipped.

A recent report from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) found that national compliance of hand washing in hospitals last year dropped from 93.2% to 92.6%.

Yet, as hospital hygiene dips with a resultant rise in infections, public figures have sought to scapegoat the work of religious orders with the health issues within present day healthcare going largely ignored.

Recently, plans to transition the new National Maternity Hospital (NMH) from Holles Street to the grounds of St Vincent's Hospital was met with outrage from politicians and medical figures fearful that a Catholic ethos would dictate the service of care.

“It is clearly not possible for the Government to make any commitment or promise that Catholic ethos will not govern”

In 2017, protestors took to the streets demanding secularised care free of religious dictation.

At the time Dr Peter Boylan, a former master of the NMH on Holles Street and campaigner for repealing the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution, mentioned that, "It is clearly not possible for the Government to make any commitment or promise that Catholic ethos will not govern" the new hospital given the Sisters of Charity then owned

the land where it was to be located.

Sinn Féin's health spokesperson David Cullinane said: "There must be absolute, cast-iron guarantees, in black and white, that all legally permissible services will be available to those who want them."

Eventually, the Sisters of Charity transferred its shareholding in St Vincent's Healthcare Group to a trust which will lease the land on which the new hospital will be built for close to 300 years.

The gifting of the land to the State received Vatican approval.

At time of writing, the hospital has yet to build, with an initial price tag of €300 million increased to €800 million.

Scapegoats

The culture war stoked by opponents of care offered by religious orders has managed to foment a perception that such care was detrimental to overall healthcare but in particular healthcare for women.

However, for Dr Eugene Jordan the scapegoating of nuns speaks to a wider weaponising of history by bad faith actors seeking to exploit the past.

He says that, "Not all religious institutions were well managed, at times, the same as the hospitals of today... but their failings are today blown out of all proportion."

"The nuns of the past mainly looked after patients in the highest risk categories with predestined poor health outcomes", he says before adding that, "What little statistics were recorded has provided a fertile ground for present day bad actors to exploit for their own ends."

Dr Jordan, who is an expert in the field of historical medicine and science, says that there has been a huge decline in hygiene standards in hospitals that coincided with the decline in the number of nuns managing hospitals.

He mentions that nuns were highly cognisant of the risks associated with infections in hospitals: "The nuns managed their staff in regimented fashion, where hygiene standards were applied meticulously. This is noted in several government inspectors' reports."



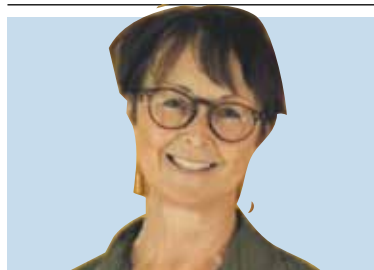
Mother Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Religious Sisters of Mercy.



Portiuncula Hospital opening in 1945 with Mothers Francis and Margaret of the The Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood with Bishop Dignan.

“There has been a huge decline in hygiene standards in hospitals that coincided with the decline in the number of nuns managing hospitals”

‘Love is all you need’



Penelope Middelboe

Today, two people close to me (one, an adult, the other, a young child) had operations under general anaesthetic. Of course, what mattered most was the skill of the medical team (and thinking of the ongoing torture in Gaza, the existence of a bed, a hospital and drugs). But most important after that was the love they received.

The adult got his love via WhatsApp with wife, kids, mother, siblings and friends checking in from early morning to late evening. The 8-year old was ‘held’ by the constant physical presence of both his parents whose reassurance began weeks before and will need to continue as he copes with post-operative pain. “We’re quite exhausted” said his mother. Both are lucky to have people to love them. And this is why loneliness is such a torment.

Miraculous

Words of love have miraculous powers on us all. They also work on mammals and birds. Some say they work on trees and plants, and perhaps even water. If you’ve never heard of Dr Masaru Emoto’s ‘Rice experiment’ then look it up. Dr Emoto concluded that water (in three bowls of rice) was affected by the emotions deliberately hurled at it verbally during the experiment. One bowl received words of love, one of hate and the third was plain ignored. The water, in turn, appeared to affect the rice with which it was in contact. The ‘hated’ and ‘ignored’ rice went bad; the ‘loved’ rice did not. Dr Emoto went on to ask, “if this can happen to rice, then what affect do words have on our own bodies which are

mainly made up of water?” It’s why we should all be very careful about what we say; particularly if you’re the head of a Church - whether it’s about female deacons or gay seminarians or any other group.

Jesus makes it easy for us. He affirms this singular power of love in: “Love the Lord your God”, and “Love your Neighbour”. So, don’t we go to Mass to ‘Love the Lord’ and to ‘Love our Neighbour’? Isn’t Corinthians 13 what we’re all working towards? Surely it sets the bar for anyone calling themselves a spiritual leader? ‘If I... do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.’ The pandemic brought us in contact with a priest who clears the bar with ease.

We found him when our local parish emailed us the names of the only churches in Oxford that would be doing live-streaming. Choice ‘A’ took us to a priest’s back, facing away from us to the altar; Choice ‘B’ to a priest who started by telling everyone how much he missed them. He then ended the Mass by waving animatedly before walking out of shot, then coming back again for one last wave. He was seeing his family off for the week.

“Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”

We still travel more than half an hour to go to Mass on Sundays at Church ‘B’ and other parish activities. The priest’s sermons nourish us. I’ve never heard him say anything that made me feel uncomfortable. And he holds a large, diverse, multi-ethnic community together in an extraordinary way. He does this by making each one of us feel seen and heard without having any favourites. He knows the names of almost everyone in a parish of over 2000.

“There was something about this man that radiated the love of Christ. They went back to the airfield taking with them something of the healing power of the love of Jesus”



Before Pentecost, we were in Andalusia where we have a house shared by the extended family. Mass is in the village Church, which is a beautiful example of Spanish-Islamic architecture from the 16th Century. The young priest has the congregation eating out of his hands; his simple humanity contrasting humorously with the altar which is high baroque - gold paint from floor to ceiling (over three storeys high). Every now and then, throughout the Mass, he chats quietly to his young altar servers, making sure they feel part of the important work they’re doing together.

For his sermon, he jumps down from the ornate, high altar; his altar servers skip down with him. So that we can hear him from the top of the aisle, he borrows the microphone from the impressive female guitar-trio. His altar servers rush to sit nearby and join in the fun. And fun it is. We don’t catch everything, but we can read his body language.

Questions

He looks into the eyes of the families in the front rows. He asks questions and looks up to the ceiling for inspiration for his answers. He laughs and laughs. Soon everyone is laughing. When you tune in to what he is saying, it is deep and accessible and peppered with anecdotes of how he messes up and his mother puts him right. He is very young. My husband Jon understands much less of the Spanish. But he says he doesn’t actually need to translate Fr Jaime’s words. He is simply lifted by the man’s love. Jaime is giving us what we came for - a physical representation of the Beatitudinal Church we all crave.

The first Sunday the readings too collude. We have Acts 10: ‘Whoever does not love does not know God...’ Followed by Peter saying to the Roman centurion, ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism.’ Finally, the Gos-



San Juan Bautista Church.

pel, with Jesus summing up for his disciples: ‘Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’

“In the Second World War, he was a member of an RAF bomber crew and they used to fly over Rome. ‘We could tell we were nearing Rome because of the smell of roast chestnuts,’ he said”

It set us thinking about the separation of the goats and the sheep. There, too, Jesus knows he’s running out of time. He has to be absolutely certain that his disciples have got his singular message. Have you fed the hungry? Provided drink for the thirsty? Welcomed the stranger? Clothed the naked? Tended to the sick? Visited the prisoner? Have you? For Jesus, the division between sheep and goats has nothing to do with gender, race, sexuality or dietary habits. It is simply between those who have loved and those who have not.

Having a beer after church, Jon tells me a story he’s treasured for almost 50 years. As a 16-year old, going to Rome on a school trip, he asked the local Anglican priest

to sign his passport photo. Unexpectedly the priest shared young Jon’s excitement at seeing Rome for the first time. He sat Jon down and told him a story. Long before he became a priest, he said, in the Second World War, he was a member of an RAF bomber crew and they used to fly over Rome. “We could tell we were nearing Rome because of the smell of roast chestnuts,” he said.

Traumatised

Shortly after the war, he and his equally traumatised but outwardly ebullient aircrew ended up in Rome as ‘tourists’. They wandered into the Basilica of San Clemente (*al Laterano*), near the Colosseum. The Irish Dominicans, who’d been gifted San Clemente as a refuge by Pope Urban VIII back in 1667, had recently begun to uncover Roman archaeological remains two levels below, and an excited friar took the RAF boys round.

At the end of the tour, his agnostic crew mates, who like him had both faced and delivered death daily during the war, rushed to buy guidebooks they didn’t really want. “You see they knew - and cared - nothing about Christianity. But they wanted the ‘monk’ to sign them”, he told Jon. “There was something about this man that radiated the love of Christ. They went back to the airfield taking with them something of the healing power of the love of Jesus.”

Pope's safeguarding czar urges Vatican to take down Rupnik artwork



Elise Ann Allen

On Friday, American Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston issued a statement saying he has asked the heads of all offices in the Roman Curia to take down the artwork of a famed priest and artist accused of abusing dozens of adult women.

The statement came from the Pontifical Commission for Protecting Minors (PCPM), for which O'Malley serves as President, and said in that capacity, the cardinal has written to the heads of all Vatican departments asking that "pastoral prudence would prevent displaying artwork in a way that could imply either exoneration or a subtle defence" of alleged abusers "or indicate indifference to the pain and suffering of so many victims of abuse".

In his letter to Vatican prefects, dated June 26, Cardinal O'Malley said, "We must avoid sending a message that the Holy See is oblivious to the psychological distress that so many are suffering." The statement comes after the head of the Vatican Dicastery for Communications, Italian layman Paolo Ruffini, recently sparked controversy for defending his office's continued use of the artwork of former Jesuit Slovene Fr Marko Rupnik on its website.

Fr Rupnik, 69, whose famed murals adorn chapels and cathedrals around the world, including inside the Vatican and at the Marian shrine of Lourdes, is accused of sexually abusing at least 30 adult women, many of them nuns belonging to the Loyola Community he helped found in his native Slovenia in the 1980s.

Nataša Govekar, who leads the department for Theology and Pastoral activity in the Vatican's communications dicastery, is a former member of the Loyola Community, which was dissolved by the Vatican last year. His case is currently being investigated by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), after authorities initially refused to lift a statute of limitations allowing an inquiry to take place, before reversing course at the Pope's request last fall.

Expelled

Last summer, he was expelled from his Jesuit order, the same order to which Pope Francis belongs, after Jesuit authorities found the allegations to be "highly credible" and after Rupnik refused to collaborate with an internal inquiry.

During a June 21 question-and-answer session as part of his keynote speech at the Catholic Media Conference in Atlanta, Mr Ruffini was asked why his office continued to



Pope Francis greets Fr Marko Rupnik, then a Jesuit, during a private audience at the Vatican in January 3, 2022. Photo: OSV News photo/Vatican Media

use Fr Rupnik's artwork on its website, despite the various allegations against Fr Rupnik and the DDF's ongoing investigation.

In response, Mr Ruffini said the investigation into Fr Rupnik had not yet been completed, saying, "who am I to judge the Fr Rupnik stories?" He also said that "we're not talking about minors", and said that as Christians, "we are asked not to judge".

He also suggested that taking down the artwork would not signal any further closeness to victims and, when challenged by the audience on this, said, "I think you're wrong". Mr Ruffini's remarks were met with a wave of immediate backlash, with many observers and survivors of clerical abuse calling them insensitive and a sign that the Church has learned nothing since the abuse scandals first exploded.

“The offices of the Holy See must ‘exercise wise pastoral prudence and compassion toward those harmed by clerical sexual abuse’”

In their statement, the PCPM said they have been contacted by numerous victims and survivors of sexual abuse and abuses of power and spirituality who have voiced "increasing frustration and concern at the continued use of artwork by Fr Marko Rupnik by several Vatican offices, including the Dicastery for

Communications".

Cardinal O'Malley in his letter said the presumption of innocence while the DDF's inquiry is still active ought to be respected, but insisted that the offices of the Holy See must "exercise wise pastoral prudence and compassion toward those harmed by clerical sexual abuse".

"Pope Francis has urged us to be sensitive to and walk in solidarity with those harmed by all forms of abuse," he said in the letter, asking the prefects "to bear this in mind when choosing images to accompany the publication of messages, articles, and reflections through the various communication channels available to us".

Observer

A longtime observer of the Vatican and its engagement in child protection agreed to speak to *Crux* about Mr Ruffini's remarks on the condition of anonymity, taking a critical edge. The very least that victims and survivors of clerical abuse expect, they said, is that "the Vatican and any Church communication don't

continue to use images of Rupnik's works, at least as long as the investigation against Rupnik goes on".

“There are many who believe that Ruffini is strongly influenced by Ms Govekar, who has remained loyal to Fr Rupnik throughout the scandal over the allegations against him”

"Survivors and their supporters have made it very clear in their statements that they are outraged, as it shows them precisely this: empty words of closeness and understanding while doing just the opposite, all the more as he is the head of the Holy See communication office," the observer said. Mr Ruffini, they said, is right that one ought to wait until the final verdict before passing judgement, and that until then, there are only allegations.

However, the observer said that at this point, the allegations

appear to be "pretty substantial," and that the overwhelming reaction to Ruffini's remarks illustrates that "there are other aspects in it, not only legal or canonical ones".

"Prudence would suggest that the use of these images is suspended for the time being," the observer said, saying there are many who believe that Ruffini is strongly influenced by Ms Govekar, who has remained loyal to Fr Rupnik throughout the scandal over the allegations against him.

Dismissal

The observer also took issue with Fr Ruffini's apparent dismissal of the allegations since they involve adults, rather than minors, saying, "Abuse doesn't know age". "Any distinctions about whether this or that type of abuse is hurting more, are offensive," they said, saying Ruffini's statement "is precisely the type of language that hurts many adult survivors of abuse of power and of sexual abuse in the Church."

"It is astonishing how deeply seated this type of attitude is," the observer said, saying more "can and needs to be done" in taking the abuse of adults in the Church seriously, "especially in the area of implementation of what the Church has in its own law and in view of the many declarations of apology and reparation".

“Ruffini's statement ‘is precisely the type of language that hurts many adult survivors of abuse of power and of sexual abuse in the Church’”



World Report

IN BRIEF

Archbishop Gänswein appointed to diplomatic role in Baltic states

● Pope Francis has appointed Archbishop Georg Gänswein, the former private secretary to the late Pope Benedict XVI, to a diplomatic role in the Baltic states.

The Vatican announced last week that Archbishop Gänswein will serve as the apostolic nuncio, or papal ambassador, to Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia.

The month comes after months of speculation and rumour across Rome and the Church in Germany as to Archbishop Gänswein's future after the death of Benedict XVI.

The relationship between Archbishop Gänswein and the current Pope has been notably strained. In a recent Spanish-language interview book, *El Sucesor*, Pope Francis went so far as to say Benedict was "being used" by Archbishop Gänswein in the context of the publication of a "tell-all" book.

US state backs single-sex bathrooms in schools

● The Ohio House of Representatives has passed a bill that would require schools and colleges to designate male-only and female-only bathrooms and locker rooms.

"No school shall permit a member of the male biological sex to use a student restroom, locker room, changing room, or

shower room that has been designated by the school for the exclusive use of the female biological sex," the measure states, with similar language prohibiting females from using male facilities.

The proposed legislation would also prohibit males and females from sharing overnight accommodations.

Ex-Missionaries of Charity allege culture of abuse and neglect

● Almost three decades after her death, St Teresa of Kolkata, commonly and affectionately referred to as 'Mother Teresa', remains an international icon of charity and among the most beloved figures in the world, probably the Catholic Church's most celebrated 20th century personality who wasn't a pope.

Mother Teresa founded a religious order, the Missionaries of Charity, which has become one of the Catholic Church's most celebrated institutions, almost universally hailed for its service to the "poorest of the poor".

Yet despite the society's international fame, some former members have recounted a murky side. They describe an internal culture at times marked by abuse and neglect, characterised by what they call a personalistic and pre-Vatican II style of leadership.

Former members, claim they were routinely bullied, exploited and abused by authorities, while the only strategy when difficulties arose was to stay silent.

Brazil congressman censures archbishop for defending indigenous land claims

● After a Brazilian archbishop criticised a legal argument aiming to limit land claims by indigenous groups, a Brazilian congressman introduced a motion to censure the prelate for allegedly promoting a leftist political agenda during a celebration of faith.

Congressman Evair Vieira de Melo, one of the leaders of the opposition to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government and the head of the Chamber of Deputies' agriculture committee, introduced his petition on June 10, one day after a Mass marking the 10th anniversary of the canonisation of Saint Joseph of Anchieta.

Archbishop João Justino de Medeiros Silva of Goiânia, one of the vice presidents of the Brazilian bishops' conference, co-celebrated the Mass, which was a major event at the Sanctuary of Saint Joseph of Anchieta, located in Espírito Santo state.

The ceremony, which was broadcasted by the sanctuary's TV station, began with a presentation of traditional dance and music by members of the indigenous Guarani people, who came from the Nova Esperança village for the event.

Churches in Holy Land denounce 'coordinated attack' against Christians by Israeli authorities

In the midst of the Hamas-Israel war in Gaza, the patriarchs and leaders of ancient Christian churches in Jerusalem have signed a joint document in which they denounce that four Israeli municipalities have sought to levy municipal taxes on church properties in violation of "centuries" of historical agreements.

The Church leaders, including Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Catholic patriarch of Jerusalem and Franciscan Fr Francesco Patton, custos of the Holy Land, accuse local authorities of launching a "coordinated attack" against the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

"We believe these efforts represent a coordinated attack on the Christian presence in the Holy Land. At this time when the entire world, and in particular the Christian world, is constantly following the events in Israel, we find ourselves once again faced with an attempt by the authorities to expel the Christian presence from the Holy Land," the leaders stated in a letter addressed to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which has been quoted in various media such as *The Times of Israel*, *Asia News*, and *UCA News*.

In the June 23 letter, the Church leaders expressed concern after receiving warning letters or notice of legal proceedings from four municipalities in Israel (Tel



Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, patriarch of Jerusalem, looks over the ruins of buildings in Gaza City. He visited northern Gaza Strip May 16-19, 2024, during Pentecost. Photo: OSV News/courtesy Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Aviv, Ramla, Nazareth, and Jerusalem) for alleged tax debts.

However, the leaders pointed out that "for centuries" church properties have had exemptions from municipal taxes according to the established status quo and that the churches have used this exemption to invest in services that benefit the state such as "schools, hospitals, nursing homes and facilities for the disadvantaged".

The leaders pointed out that the municipal actions

are "tendentious" and contrary to the historical position of the churches and their relationship with the government, "violating the existing agreements and international commitments that ensure the rights of the churches".

"It is an outrage that, specifically during such sensitive and complicated times when patience, compassion, unity in prayer and hope should prevail, municipalities are opening cases against churches in courts and making threats. This

constitutes contempt of our customs and that which is dear to us, while trampling the mutual respect that existed between us until this time," the letter stated.

In an interview with the Associated Press, the Jerusalem Municipality stated that church authorities have not submitted the necessary applications for tax exemption in recent years.

They also said that, currently, "a dialogue is underway to collect debts" in connection with "commercial properties".

Vatican demands changes to new Church body in Germany

As part of an ongoing tug of war with the German bishops over the country's controversial reform path, the Vatican has asked that several changes be made to a new national ecclesial body which curial officials have said has no foundation in Church law.

In a June 28 statement after a day-long workday with representatives of the German Episcopal Conference (DBK), the Vatican said the discussion lasted the entire day and "was again characterised by a positive, open and constructive atmosphere".

It followed a similar meeting held March 22, which was part of a broader dialogue that began in 2022 amid a national consultation of German Catholics known as the 'Synodal Way', and after officials in the DBK ignored Vatican warnings to cease and desist with certain projects.

During the March meeting, the Vatican drew a hard line in the sand, demanding the German bishops pledge to respect canon law and to give the Holy See a final say over any proposed reforms.

According to the statement, curial officials Friday asked the German bishops for "a change in the name and in several aspects of the previously formulated proposal for a possible national synodal body".

"As regards the position of this body, there is agreement that on the fact that it is neither above nor at the same level as the national episcopal conference," the statement said, clarifying that whatever nature this body holds, it would not be able to overrule the bishops' conference.

Priest celebrates 'Pride Mass' with LGBT flag on altar

A New York City Catholic church, previously caught up in LGBT controversy, hosted a 'Pride Mass' last week evening using an altar shrouded with a gay and transgender 'pride' flag at a local federal monument with sculptures

of two same-sex couples and decorated by dozens of LGBT rainbow flags.

Speaking to roughly 175 attendees and wearing a rainbow stole, Fr Andrews said: "We come here because this is our place".

Joe Zwilling, spokesman for the Archdiocese of New York, told the Catholic Register Friday, "We were unaware of the Mass" and recommended questions be asked to the president of the Paulists, Fr René Constanza.

The Paulists told the Register Friday that the Fathers "have no comment on this" and referred questions to Fr Andrews.

Fr Andrews did not respond for comment last Friday.



Edited by Brandon Scott
brandon@irishcatholic.ie

Pointing the way to a second term?



Former US President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden participate in their first US presidential campaign debate in Atlanta June 27, 2024. Photo: OSV News photo/Brian Snyder, Reuters

Court fines Belgian cardinal, archbishop for denying woman admission to diaconate

A Belgian civil court has fined two Catholic prelates after they denied a woman entry into a diaconate formation program.

According to the Belgian newspaper *De Morgen*, the woman, Veer Dusauchoit, asked the Archdiocese of Mechelen-Brussels to register for training as a deacon in June 2023 and again in October 2023.

Ms Dusauchoit made her first request to Cardinal Jozef De Kesel and her second to Archbishop Luc Terlinden after De Kesel's 2023 resignation at age 76. Both times, her request to join the four-year diaconal training program was denied. The two prelates will have to pay €1,500 euro each, the court ordered.

The court in Mechelen ruled that the archbishops made a mistake when refusing Ms Dusauchoit entry to the program but did not address the question of actually ordaining Ms Dusauchoit. According to *De Morgen*, the court cannot overturn the archbishop's refusal or decide in his place who will be admitted to deacon training.

"We received the verdict yesterday afternoon, are now studying it, and will then decide how to proceed," a spokesman for the archdiocese said in response to a request from the website *katholisch.de* last week.

The Catholic Church teaches that holy orders - of which there are three

degrees of diaconate, priesthood, and episcopate - is the sacrament of apostolic ministry and is reserved to baptized men.

Pope Francis has reiterated numerous times that holy orders are "reserved to men". Ms Dusauchoit, 62, has served at her parish church in a Flemish part of Belgium for years, according to *De Morgen*. As her parish no longer has a priest, Ms Dusauchoit got involved with arranging funerals and scriptural readings, *katholisch.de* reported.

In an April 22 op-ed, Ms Dusauchoit described herself as a "religious, socially committed, feminist, and ecologically inspired woman". She claimed that as late as the

1970s in Belgium, wives of deacons were required to attend deacon training together with their husbands.

"Women in the Church are still not fully appreciated and given their equal place," she wrote. "Out of that frustration, from the conviction that training as a deacon can help the Church grow further and at the same time from the determination not to break with the Church, I decided to register for training as a deacon," she wrote.

The bishops of Belgium, since the 2023 refusals to admit Ms Dusauchoit, have since expressed support for the ordination of women to the diaconate.

Former Anglican priest ordained a Catholic bishop

In a first, a former Anglican priest has been consecrated as a bishop in the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. Located in Great Britain, the ordinariate was created to give Anglicans a pathway to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Bishop David Waller received his episcopal ordination in Westminster

Cathedral in London on June 22, which is the feast day of the English saints John Fisher and Thomas More.

Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez, prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, imparted the episcopal blessing. Also presiding over the Mass was Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster and Bishops Stephen Lopes and

Anthony Randazzo, heads of the Anglican-Catholic ordinariates in the US-Canada and Pacific-Australia.

During the Mass Fernandez spoke on the "treasure" of the Church's apostolic succession, beginning with St Peter and the apostles and continuing to this day, saying: "What I have received from the Church, I now pass onto you".

Vatican roundup

Disability shouldn't be a 'boutique interest' for the Church, experts say

● A widespread and bizarre controversy in Italy has finally come to an end after the Vatican announced Thursday that a notorious Marian statue that allegedly shed tears of blood was deemed to be false. The story is a fantastical tale which for over a year has captivated the Italian imagination, involving charges of fraud, an apparent miraculous multiplication of gnocchi, and priests conducting secret investigation into the alleged supernatural events.

The drama is centred in the small Italian town of Trevignano Romano near the shore of Lake Bracciano, about 40 minutes north of Rome, and which is home to roughly 6,000 people. There, a Sicilian woman named Gisella Cardia has a statue of the Madonna she bought in Medjugorje several years ago, and which has claims has been bleeding from the eyes since 2016. Ms Cardia has also claimed the Madonna has been giving her private revelations since then.

Pope Francis meets with leaders of Institute of Christ the King, a Latin Mass group

● Pope Francis last week met with three leaders of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest (ICKSP) — an institute whose priests celebrate the Traditional Latin Mass and live according to the spirituality of St Francis de Sales.

The June 24 meeting comes at a time when celebrations of the Traditional Latin Mass are restricted by the pontiff's *motu proprio* *Traditionis Custodes*.

Although the ICKSP's news release following the meeting did not reference any discussion of the Traditional Latin Mass, the institute said "the Pope insisted that we continue to serve the Church according to our own, proper charism, in the spirit of unity and communion which the harmony and balance of the Salesian spirituality allow".

Pope meets with Russian ambassador to the Vatican

● Pope Francis last week met with Ivan Soltanovsky, Russia's ambassador to the Holy See, in their first meeting since Mr Soltanovsky presented his diplomatic letters to the pontiff last September.

Mr Soltanovsky, a 69-year-old career diplomat, was appointed to his current role in May 2023. No details of the pair's most recent meeting have yet been released.

Mr Soltanovsky told Russia's official Tass News Agency earlier this month that the Holy See remains one of the few global players who favour diplomacy, peace, and dialogue based on mutual respect and consideration of interests.

"In a situation where traditional methods of building peace no longer work, the Vatican has tirelessly been looking for new ways and opportunities and is willing, as Pope Francis said, to 'think out of the box,'" the Russian diplomat told Tass.

Disability shouldn't be a 'boutique interest' for the Church, experts say

● Experts who participated in a recent conference on Safeguarding and Disability have said that a broader inclusion and recognition of the belonging of disabled individuals in church life would make abuse prevention easier and is something all faithful must work towards.

Speaking to *Crux*, Anne Masters, who holds a doctorate in disability theology and who gave a presentation during the conference, said "what was interesting was, by bringing in folks with the experience on disability and practice and theology, it opened their eyes".

"That was a real gift because quite frankly, this work often is in the boutique interest," she said. The conference, titled 'Safeguarding and Disability', was organised by the Pontifical Gregorian University's Institute of Anthropology: Human Dignity and Care from June 18-21.

Letter from Germany

400,000 Germans quit Catholic Church as talks between Vatican and Synodal Way continue



AC Wimmer

Just one day after the news that hundreds of thousands of Catholics left the Church in Germany in 2023, the Vatican met with representatives of the German Synodal Way to discuss the controversial plans for a permanent synodal council.

The meeting on Friday resulted in Rome demanding the Germans change the name of the body and agree it cannot have authority over – or be equal to – the bishops' conference, reported CNA Deutsch, CNA's German-language news partner.

The gathering came at a critical time: according to the official statistics released by the German Bishops' Conference on Thursday, more than 400,000 people officially left the Church in 2023.

While this represents a decrease from the 522,000 departures in 2022, the trend remains alarming for Church leaders and Catholics alike.

Decline

Currently, there are 20,345,872 Catholics registered in Germany. If trends persist, the number could drop below 20 million in 2024.

Moreover, only 6.2% of Catholics regularly attend Mass: This translates to approximately 1.27 million practicing Catholics in a country of over 80 million, CNA Deutsch noted.

The new official numbers also reveal significant disparities in Mass attendance across Germany.

The Diocese of Görlitz, bordering Poland, leads with a 13.9% attendance rate despite



Pope Francis poses for a photo with Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne, Germany, and young people from his archdiocese during the general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican October 5, 2022. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

being the smallest diocese with fewer than 30,000 Catholics.

In contrast, the Diocese of Aachen, on the Rhine in Western Germany, reports only 4.2% of Catholics practicing their faith regularly.

“Leaving the Church results in automatic excommunication, a regulation that has sparked controversy”

A 20-year comparison, released by the bishops' conference, paints a bleak picture of the Church's decline. Since 2003, the number of Catholics has decreased by almost 6 million, while Sunday Mass attendance has

plummeted from 15.2% to 6.2%.

The number of active priests has also declined, with 7,593 in pastoral ministry in 2023, down from 7,720 in the previous year. Priestly ordinations have dropped significantly, from 45 in 2022 to 28 in 2023.

A 2021 report by CNA Deutsch noted that 1 in 3 Catholics in Germany were considering leaving the Church. The reasons for leaving vary, with older people citing the Church's handling of the abuse crisis and younger people pointing to the obligation of paying church tax, according to one earlier study.

The German Bishops' Conference currently stipulates that leaving the Church results in automatic excommunication, a regulation that has sparked controversy among theologians and canon lawyers.

Scientists at the University of Freiburg predicted in 2019 that the number of Christians paying church tax in Germany will halve by 2060.

Vatican

Warning of a threat of a new schism from Germany, the Vatican intervened as early as July 2022 against plans for a German synodal council.

Against the backdrop of ongoing dramatic decline and internal division, the Vatican engaged in yet another round of discussions with representatives of the German Synodal Way last Friday.

As CNA Deutsch reported, the meeting on June 28 involved high-ranking Vatican officials and representatives from the German Bishops' Conference.

“Both sides want to ‘change the name and various aspects of the previous draft’ for the controversial body”

On the Vatican side, secretary of state Cardinal Pietro Parolin and four prefects attended: Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith; Cardinal Kurt Koch, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity; Cardinal Robert Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops; and Cardinal Arthur Roche, prefect of the

Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

The cardinals were joined by Archbishop Filippo Innone, prefect of the Dicastery for Legislative Texts.

On the German side, bishops Georg Bätzing, Stephan Ackermann, Bertram Meier and Franz-Josef Overbeck represented the Synodal Way. They were joined by the bishops' conference general secretary Beate Gilles and communications director Matthias Kopp.

The talks centred on the proposed synodal council, which initially was intended to oversee the Church in Germany permanently but was rejected by the Vatican.

According to a joint press release, both sides want to “change the name and various aspects of the previous draft” for the controversial body. Both sides also agreed that the synodal council would not be “above or equal to the bishops' conference”.

Development

The meeting had a “positive, open, and constructive atmosphere”, the statement said, adding discussions focused on balancing episcopal ministry with the co-responsibility of all faithful, emphasising canonical aspects of estab-

lishing a “concrete form of synodality”.

The ongoing dialogue may mark a significant step in the negotiations between the Vatican and the organisers of the German Synodal Way, following previous repeated interventions by Pope Francis and the Vatican.

Both parties have agreed to continue talks after the conclusion of the world Synod on Synodality in October, with plans to address further anthropological, ecclesiological and liturgical topics.

“He also cautioned German Catholics to avoid the ‘sin of secularisation and a secular mindset against the Gospel’”

This is a significant development. Amid the ongoing exodus of the faithful, the news that the German process will not simply dovetail with the Synod on Synodality in Rome raises the question of the overall purpose of what has proven to be an expensive German exercise.

In a video message released Saturday, Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne urged German Catholics to take the Vatican's concerns seriously. The archbishop reminded the faithful that Pope Francis said “everything he had to say” in a historic letter to German Catholics five years ago.

Pope Francis warned of disunity in the 5,700-word letter. He also cautioned German Catholics to avoid the “sin of secularisation and a secular mindset against the Gospel”.

Cardinal Woelki pulled no punches in his video. “Let's be honest: Who has actually read this letter?” the German prelate asked pointedly.

Noting the Pope had called on German Catholics to evangelise, Cardinal Woelki said: “We should fulfil his so urgently expressed wish – for our own sake, but also the sake of the Church in Germany, because only then will she have a future [here]”.

“The ongoing dialogue may mark a significant step in the negotiations between the Vatican and the organizers of the German Synodal Way, following previous repeated interventions by Pope Francis and the Vatican”

Letters

Letter of the week

The legacies left behind

Dear Editor, Fr Rolheiser wrote (*The Irish Catholic* 20/6/2024): "How we die leaves behind a legacy, a particular spirit, which either nurtures or haunts those left behind".

Reading that I thought of Charlie Bird and Rob Burrow. They suffered and died from Motor Neuron Disease which is a debilitating condition that is very demeaning, horrifying and terminal. With the courage and support of their families and friends, these two men bore their condition with great dignity.

They embraced their illness and devoted their remaining days to increasing our awareness of MND and raising funds for research to benefit future victims of this disease. This was a very dignified approach to an indescribably

horrific disease.

They did not seek refuge from their misfortune. Their example challenges our approach to such situations. Rather than ask what we can do to bring an end to their suffering, we should appreciate that terminally ill people have much to offer us through their suffering. Mortality is a significant aspect of life. After all, our life is a journey leading to this final moment.

Proponents of assisted dying speak of compassion to allow terminally ill people to die with dignity. The Catholic Bishops of Ireland opposed the introduction of legislation on Assisted Dying and Euthanasia. (*The Irish Catholic*, 27/6/2024) 2024).

They pointed to evidence from

other countries where assisted dying was legalised, and to our weakening restrictions limiting legalised abortion in Ireland, to show that safe-guarding restrictions can be readily overturned.

Maybe we overestimate our moral resources when challenged by populist liberal opinion. Can we protect our traditional respect for the sanctity of life, and uphold our Christian understanding of compassion? The legacy of Charlie and Rob confronts our attitudes towards suffering and death. Can we, like them, leave a legacy that can be a source of inspiration for those we leave behind?

Your etc.,
Brendan Kennedy,
Belfast

Our Lady of Kibeho

Dear Editor, The apparitions in Kibeho, Rwanda happened over forty years ago yet remain largely unknown. These have special significance for Ireland, as Mary speaks of the Legion of Mary, which was founded in Ireland.

In 2001 Our Lady of Kibeho became the first and only Vatican approved Marian apparition site in Africa. The first visionary Alphonsine was asked by Mary to join the Legion of Mary. The second visionary Anathalie was a member of the Legion of Mary. The third visionary was given a mission to promote the Seven Sorrows Rosary. Frank Duff, founder of the Legion, had a well-worn rosary beads of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.

One message was that humans time on earth is nearing the end and that many of God's children have fallen into sin. Mary said she was here to convert hearts back to Jesus and encourage people to say the Rosary because it is the most powerful tool of prayer and conversion we have to fight evil and receive God's love. Mary said that her messages were for the whole world.

Your etc.,
Philip Fleming
Ferrybank, Waterford



Two rich legacies left behind

Dear Editor, The deaths of two giants of broadcasting and journalism, Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh and Tommie Gorman, leaves us with a rich legacy in their wake.

Their respective autobiographies, from Dún Sion to Croke Park and Never Better are collector's items.

One very important facet of Micheál's life was his commitment to the Pioneer Association. We Pioneers were very conscious of Micheál's wearing of the Pioneer Pin or the 'biorán' as he referred to it on televi-

sion. This was obviously an integral part of his devotion to The Sacred Heart and to the importance of prayer in the promotion of moderation towards alcohol in the wider society.

As a nation, we are richer for the contributions of Micheál and Tommie who now imithe uainn ar Shlí Na Fírinne.

Yours etc.,
Frank Burke
Terenure, Dublin

Abortions becoming common

Dear Editor, The HSE has reported that there were 10,033 abortions in Ireland in 2023, equivalent to the entire population of Skerries, Co. Dublin.

Abortion may be safe and legal, but it is certainly not rare anymore.

Yours etc.,
PJ Mathews,
Dublin Road, Drogheda

A cardinal rebukes the Vatican...again

The Vatican's Dicastery for Communications are digesting a robust rebuke by the Pope's key point-man on clerical sexual abuse, the steely Irish American Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley OFM Cap.

Last week, the head of the Vatican's communications department Paolo Ruffini strongly defended the continued use by his office of the art work of Jesuit artist Marko Rupnik who has been accused of appalling crimes of abuse against adult females. His case is being investigated by the Vatican's DDF. The use of the art is highly contentious given victims say it's a continuation of the abuse and a reminder of it.

In what seasoned PR professionals could only describe as a car crash intervention, Mr Ruffini told journalists that discontinuing the use of Fr Rupnik's art of the Holy See's website "is not a Christian response".

"As Christian[s], we are asked not to judge," he said, asking the journalists: "Do you think that if I put away a photo of an art [away] from...our website, I will be more close to the victims? Do you think so?" When given an answer in the affirmative, Mr Ruffini responded: "I think you're wrong."

Well, it turns our Cardinal O'Malley thinks it is the hapless Mr Ruffini who is wrong. [Ruffini was also responsible for the disastrous press conferences around the Synod last year where right-wing Catholic media were allowed run amok]. In a note to all Vatican departments a few days later, the president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors asked for the art not to be used.

"We must avoid sending a message that the Holy See is oblivious to the psychological distress that so many are suffering," he wrote. "Pastoral prudence would prevent displaying artwork in a way that could imply either exoneration or a subtle defence" of alleged abuse perpetrators "or indicate indifference to the pain and suffering of so many victims of abuse," he wrote.

It is not the first time that the 80-year-old Cardinal O'Malley has had to remind the Vatican about pastoral

prudence on the issue of abuse.

In January 2018, Pope Francis visited Chile and celebrated Mass with Bishop Juan Barros, who had been credibly accused of covering up abuse. The Pope denounced the critics of Bishop Barros, accusing them of slander.

"The day someone brings me proof against Bishop Barros, then I will talk. But there is not one single piece of evidence. It is all slander. Is that clear?" he said.

The Pope's remarks were sharply criticised by Cardinal O'Malley. "Words that convey the message 'if you cannot prove your claims then you will not be believed', abandon those who have suffered reprehensible criminal violations of their human dignity and relegate survivors to discredited exile," the cardinal said. He told the Pope his words had caused, "great pain".

Almost five years later – and five years after he was due to retire – the cardinal must be weary correcting the Vatican and wondering when those hand-picked by the Pope to handle his communications will 'get it'.

Knowing when to let go

If there were to be a papal conclave tomorrow, Cardinal O'Malley would be too old to vote. And yet, his latest intervention shows the value of experience and the wisdom of age.

But this shouldn't blind us to the fact that true wisdom comes in knowing when it is time to let go. Benedict XVI showed remarkable humility when, in 2013, he acknowledged before God and the entire Church that he no longer had the capacity to remain on the Throne of St Peter. He continued to gently serve the Church through his prayer and witness.

There might be a lesson here that US president Joe Biden might heed in Benedict's humility. It is not so much that age is a factor, but capacity to lead – particularly at a time when the world is engulfed in crises and may be on the brink of all-out war in the Middle East.

Knowing when it is time to go is often the supreme act of leadership.

Letters to the Editor

All letters should include the writer's full name, postal address and telephone numbers (day and evening). Letter writers may receive a subsequent telephone call from *The Irish Catholic* as part of our authentication process which does not amount to a commitment to publish.

We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication

date, acknowledge unpublished letters or discuss the merits of letters. We do not publish pseudonyms or other formulae to conceal the writer's identity, such as "name and address with editor". We do not print letters addressed to someone else, open letters, or verse. Letters to the Editor should only be sent to *The Irish Catholic*, and not other publications. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be shortened for space requirements.



CURRACHBOOKS



columbaBOOKS

SALE

PAPERBACKS

60% off



€5.99
was €14.99

How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice

Michael Kelly & Austen Ivereigh

Answering some of the most common criticisms of the church, this book aims to help people understand why the Church teaches what it does and defend it in a calm and rational way.



€5.99
was €14.99

Tomorrow's Parish

Donal Harrington

Written for anyone who has an interest in the future of the Church, the author lays out a new vision, to bring a revitalised energy and hope to the parish moving forward through the Synod and beyond.



€5.99
was €14.99

Setting God Free in Minds and Hearts

Paul Robbins

An eye-opening read, the call for reform and a conversion to the true mandate of God will ring true as Paul Robbins takes us on a journey of clarity and understanding.



€9.19
was €22.99

Fears, Phobias & Fantasies

Prof Patricia Casey

A handy reference guide full of tips on how family and friends can best help those suffering from mental health problems, this book is accessible to the non-medical reader.



€5.20
was €12.99

The Death of Jesus the Jew

Peter Keenan

Our 'Gospel truths' are largely sourced and redacted from the Hebrew Bible. 'The Death of Jesus the Jew' demonstrates how the Passion Narratives have little to do with 'Gospel truth'.



€5.99
was €14.99

Rainbows & Windmills

Peter Tarleton Stewart

Rainbows & Windmills offers an introduction to personal spirituality. Framed through Peter Tarleton Stewart's personal childhood experiences, he advises how to strengthen faith in the 21st century.



€5.99
was €14.99

Voices From the Desert

Hugh MacMahon

Interviewing the Desert Fathers and Mothers on their ideals and practices formed this guidebook to the monastic movement. Essential reading for monks everywhere, including the Skelligs.

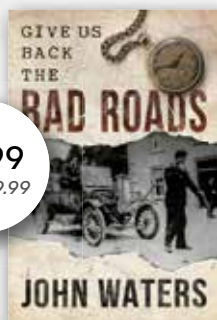


€6.79
was €16.99

Holistic Healing

Fr Pat Collins

This timely book describes how the gift of healing has been rediscovered in recent years and sheds light on the therapeutic power of the Eucharist.



€7.99
was €19.99

Give Us Back the Bad Roads

John Waters

With his departure from Irish journalism, the author finds himself writing to his father as he looks back over the arc of his life and his escape from the ideological cesspit of Dublin.



€5.99
was €14.99

The Birth of Jesus the Jew

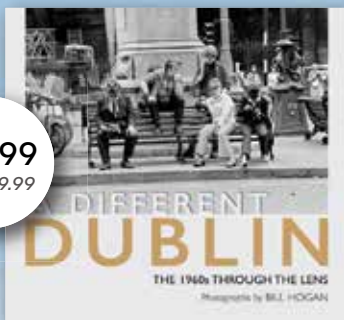
Peter Keenan

The Birth of Jesus the Jew is a short introduction to how the Jewish literary genre of 'Midrash' has shaped the infancy stories in the two canonical Gospels and some apocryphal works.

HARDBACKS

30% off

€13.99
was €19.99



A Different Dublin: The 1960s Through the Lens
Bill Hogan

This collection of breathtaking photographs shows a Dublin that is familiar despite the five decades that separate the creation of these photos from today.

€13.99
was €19.99



A Dangerous Visionary
Eddie O'Connor

Irish energy industry leader Eddie O'Connor's autobiography comes at the opportune time and is sure to inspire the next generation of environmentally conscious business leaders.

€10.49
was €14.99



Flight of the Earls
Liam Swords

A detailed but highly readable account of the event that saw the Earls embark to Spain which paved the way for the Plantation of Ulster, and led to 400 years of sectarian.

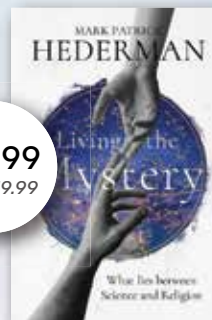
€9.09
was €12.99



Sending Positive Vibes
Fr Bryan Shortall

Fr Bryan's memories and reflections are interspersed with prayers, stories of Saints, and gives a rare insight into the lives of the priests and religious who work so tirelessly about us.

€13.99
was €19.99



Living the Mystery
Mark Patrick Hederman

Life is a mystery beyond the comprehension of our normal understanding. A Benedictine monk explains how to engage with this mystery and bring a new sense of the sacred into it.

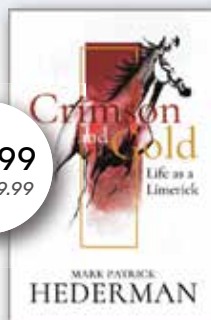
€6.99
was €9.99



Vicka Her Story
Finbar O'Leary

This is the fullest account given by the eldest visionary Vicka of her story and experiences with Our Lady. Here, Vicka relays many of the Messages which the 'Queen of Peace' has given to her.

€13.99
was €19.99



Crimson & Gold
Mark Patrick Hederman

A Benedictine Monk of Glenstal Abbey, Fr Hederman continues to explore how we as Irish Roman Catholics can hone in on the most precious aspects of our faith and cancel the surrounding noise.

€11.89
was €16.99



The 17 Irish Martyrs
Mary McAleese

An historical account detailing the inspiring stories of the 17 Irish martyrs beatified by Pope John Paul II and what made their causes for martyrdom stand apart from others.

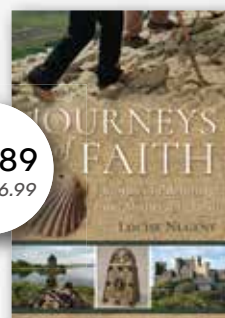
€13.99
was €19.99



Horizons of Hope
Daniel O'Leary

A celebration of Daniel O'Leary's unrelenting conviction that life itself is God's love eternally unfolding before us.

€18.89
was €26.99



Journeys of Faith
Louise Nugent

A complete guide to the world of pilgrimage in medieval Ireland, this book brings the reader on a tour of how Christianity was celebrated in medieval times.

To order, please fill in the form below and send it to **Columba Books, Block 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277.**

You can phone us on **01 687 4025** or email sales@columba.ie

Discover more titles at www.columbabooks.com and www.currachbooks.com

MY DETAILS

Name _____

Address _____

County _____

Eircode _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

MY ORDER (Please put the quantity before each book)

HARDBACK – 30% OFF

- ____ Horizons of Hope €13.99
- ____ Sending Positive Vibes €9.09
- ____ Vicka Her Story €6.99
- ____ Flight of the Earls €10.49
- ____ Living the Mystery €13.99
- ____ Crimson & Gold €13.99
- ____ A Dangerous Visionary €13.99
- ____ The 17 Irish Martyrs €11.89
- ____ Journeys of Faith €18.89
- ____ A Different Dublin: The 1960s Through the Lens €13.99

PAPERBACK – 60% OFF

- ____ Give Us Back the Bad Roads €7.99
- ____ Holistic Healing €6.79
- ____ Voices From the Desert €5.99
- ____ Setting God Free in Minds and Hearts €5.99
- ____ Rainbows & Windmills €5.99
- ____ Fears, Phobias & Fantasies €9.19
- ____ The Birth of Jesus the Jew €5.99
- ____ The Death of Jesus the Jew €5.20
- ____ Tomorrow's Parish €5.99
- ____ How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice €5.99

METHOD OF PAYMENT (Remember to add €5.00 P&P)

☐ PAY BY: Cheque/Postal order

for € _____ payable to: **Columba Books**

☐ PAY BY CREDIT CARD: ____ Visa ____ Master Card ____ Debit

Card No: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ Exp date: ____ / ____ CVV No: _____

€5.00
FLAT RATE
P&P

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, July 4, 2024

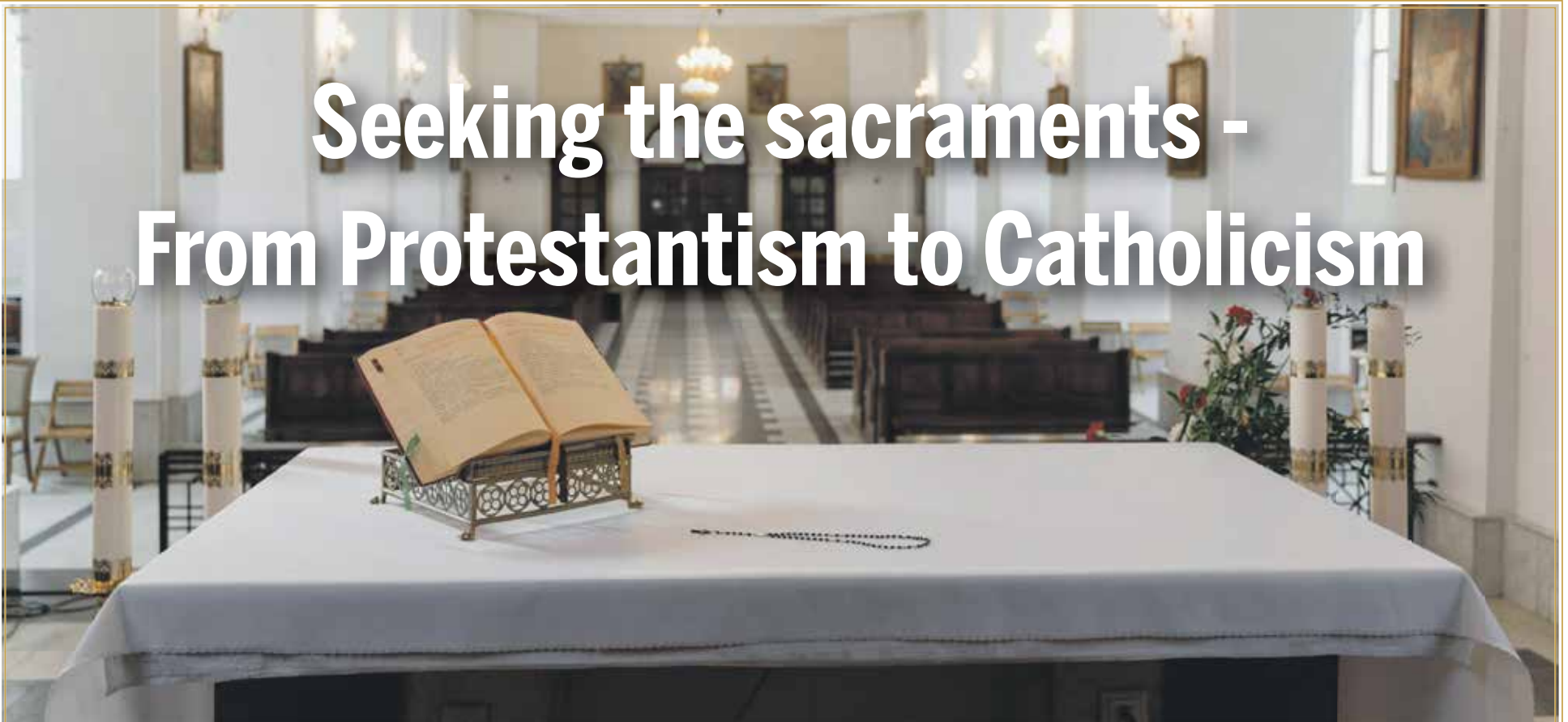
Can a marriage be declared invalid due to severe mental illness?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Page 32



Seeking the sacraments - From Protestantism to Catholicism



Ashley Roberts

Born and raised as an evangelical Christian in the South of England, I grew up immersed in Protestant Christianity. My father was one of the three leaders of the congregation I attended. Every Sunday, I was brought to church and participated in youth groups throughout my childhood. Christianity was a significant part of my upbringing.

I was a kid who asked a lot of questions. I questioned how we knew the Bible was true and how it should be interpreted. As I grew, I attended different congregations, each with slightly different teachings, which made me think deeply about my faith. The real change came when I was 16. A friend of mine, who was a junior youth leader, began exploring Catholicism. We started discussing topics like the Eucharist, the papacy, and Our Lady- concepts I had never considered before. I respected

him greatly, so I was immediately intrigued.

Journey

This curiosity set me on a year-long journey of research and prayer. My friend's practical example made a significant difference to me. When I started contemplating doctrines like the Eucharist, I remember deeply hoping they were true. My journey was influenced by three levels: the reason of the Faith, the witness of my friend, and the beauty of the Faith. The true, the good, and the beautiful.

A pivotal moment was when this same friend told me he was becoming Catholic. This revelation made me consider Scripture's vastness and the differing interpretations among Protestants. It was clear that on salvation issues, Protestants disagreed significantly. This struck me deeply. I struggled with the idea of personal interpretation of Scripture, as it required each person to be a theologian, which seemed impractical. This struggle stayed with me and kept me pondering the teachings of Catholicism.

When I began studying the doctrines like the Eucharist seriously, I realised the significance of Christ's presence in the Church. The belief in transubstantiation, that Christ is sacramentally present in the Eucharist, was a game changer. It transformed my spirituality from just believing that God hears prayers to believing

that He is physically present with us.

The sacrament of confession also played a crucial role in my conversion. The idea that Christ is present in the priest and that I could hear the words 'I absolve you' was profound. It made Christ very real to me. The maternal affection I found in Mary added to my spiritual life, and praying the rosary became an integral part of my routine.

Discovering the Church Fathers was another key aspect of my journey. In conversations with my friend, he mentioned early Christian writings that did not align with Protestant views on the Eucharist and baptism. Reading the works of Ignatius of Antioch and Augustine opened my eyes. It became apparent that if Protestantism were true, something must have gone wrong very early in Church history, which seemed implausible.

“It gave me a sense of peace and relief that I hadn't experienced before”

Catholic theology, particularly the Eucharist, confession, and the role of Mary, drew me closer to the Faith. The sacrament of confession was especially transformative. Being able to confess and hear the words of absolution was incredibly liberating. It gave me a sense of peace and relief

that I hadn't experienced before.

Contrast

My parents were initially concerned about my decision to convert, but they saw that it was genuine. My grandparents, who were more traditional Protestants, needed an explanation, so I wrote an 18-page letter to my grandfather. He didn't take it well, but at least they knew my decision was sincere. This was one of the most challenging aspects of my conversion, but I knew it was the right path for me.

One of the major differences I noticed between Protestantism and Catholicism is the depth of spirituality. As a Protestant, I was always questioning everything, which made it difficult to go deeper in faith. Catholicism provided a richer spiritual experience, allowing me to rely on the traditions of the Church and the saints. This depth of spirituality made me feel closer to God.

Apostolic succession was another comforting aspect of Catholicism. It made the Church visible and real, unlike the scattered and divided nature of Protestantism. Knowing that the Church had a structure allowed me to focus on becoming holier rather than constantly determining what was true.

Ecumenism is important, but it requires well-formed individuals who understand their faith deeply. Engaging in ecumenism without a

solid foundation can lead to confusion. Many things done in the name of ecumenism don't impress me, but I believe in respectful dialogue between different Christian traditions.

For those considering Catholicism, my advice is to follow your conscience and not be afraid. God understands your situation and doesn't expect you to make a quick decision. If you think the Catholic Church might be true, take your time to research and pray. Reading the Church Fathers, particularly Ignatius of Antioch, can provide valuable insights into early Christian beliefs.

“Becoming Catholic has been the best decision for me, enriching my faith and bringing me closer to God”

Converting to Catholicism is a process that takes time. It's important to approach it with grace and gentleness, respecting those who don't share your beliefs. Developing a strong prayer life, seeking the sacraments, and living with integrity are crucial aspects of this journey. Becoming Catholic has been the best decision for me, enriching my faith and bringing me closer to God.

'Totality': A sci-fi thriller grounded in the theology of the body



Cecilia Cicone

In the 21st century, a sense of spiritualism has taken over. This is the sense that people are really made up only of their souls - their bodies do not matter. This is an attractive philosophy because it says that all that really matters is that someone is a good person 'on the inside', and that what they do with their body, or their sexuality, does not matter in the end.

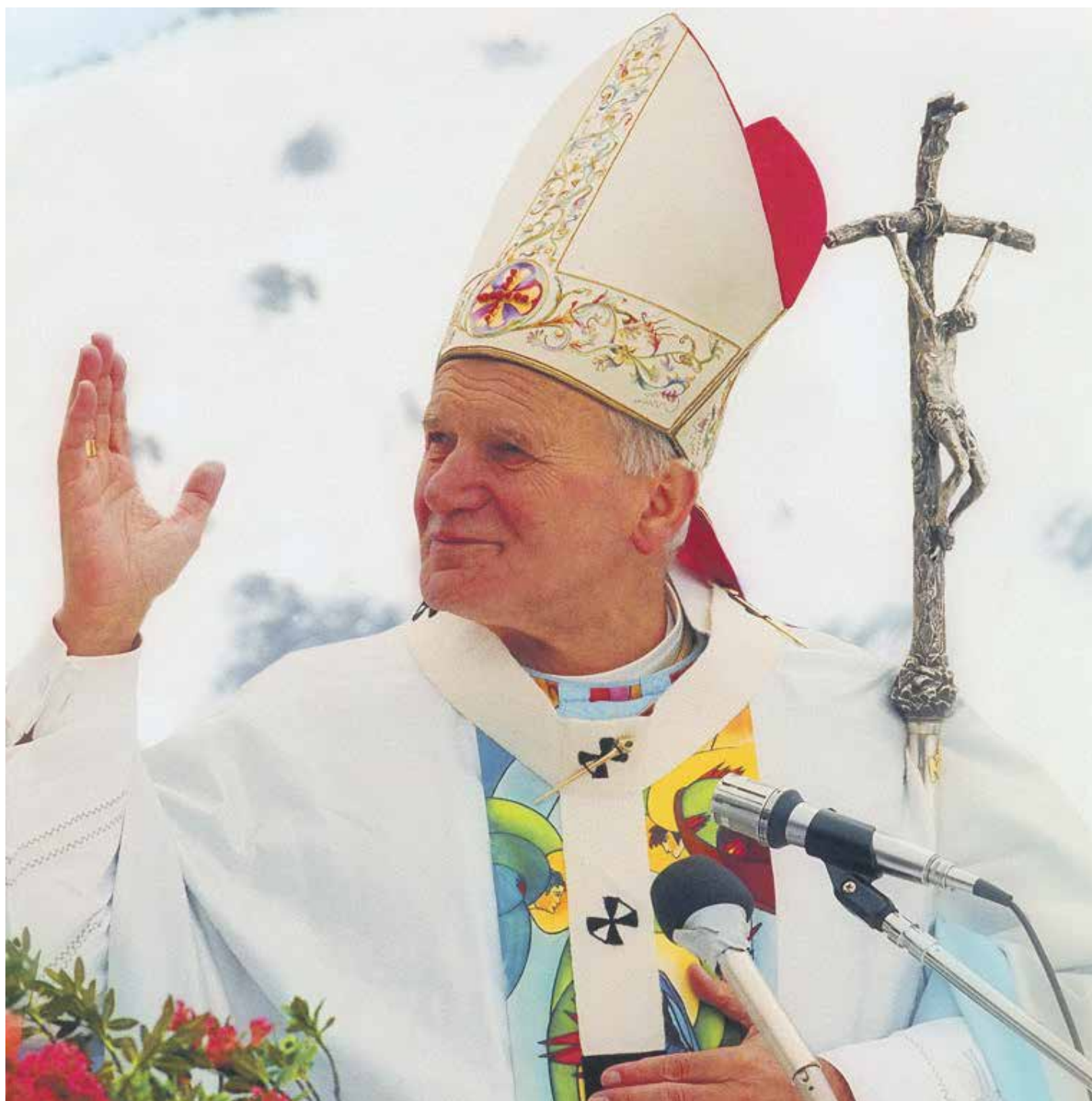
This is not what the Catholic Church teaches, however. No, humans are embodied souls, a union of soul and body, and if they are to be saved, they will be saved body and soul. On the last day, according to Catholic teaching, humans will be reunited with their resurrected bodies to live forever.

In his newest book, *Totality*, Brendan Lyons imagines a dystopian future where people are given the opportunity to receive a brand new, genetically modified, 'perfect' body. This process, called a 'switchover' takes place by implanting the person's brain into the new body. While this opens a plethora of questions that philosophers and theologians would discuss late into the night, in the book, the average person goes through the process without a second thought.

“What are the real effects of taking someone's brain and putting it into a perfected body?”

Totality follows several characters, but one of the standouts is Hannah, an actress who is being pressured to undergo a switchover in order to receive the role of a lifetime. She has three children and is pregnant with twins when she approaches a non-Catholic cleric for advice. After questioning whether or not having five children is a wise decision, the cleric advises her that what is most important is that she takes care of her soul, so taking

“In September 1979, St John Paul II began a series of teachings that addressed the issues surrounding spiritualism, which are the same issues that plague the dystopian world in *Totality*”



on a new body would be of no consequence.

Phenomenon

Meanwhile, there is a new phenomenon that arises where people who have undergone the switchover are able to travel back in time and prevent their previous selves from entering the new bodies. The rea-

sons why these characters understand the switchover to be so horrific that they need to kill their past selves are unclear, but the ominous question remains: "What are the real effects of taking someone's brain and putting it into a perfected body?"

Elsewhere, religious figures who have chosen to

stand up against the practice of the switchover have been shunned by society and had their access to electricity and running water shut off because they are enemies of progress. Father Mason lives in the basement of a former Catholic Church, running a book club with a small group of followers. His followers come to discover that they encounter each other, and a real sense of communion, most deeply by experiencing each other's imperfections. This is the antithesis of what is practiced through the switchover process, that

society's sense of perfection is possible, attainable and desirable.

Teachings

In September 1979, St John Paul II began a series of teachings that addressed the issues surrounding spiritualism, which are the same issues that plague the dystopian world in *Totality*. The holy pope wrote about many remedies - understanding the body and soul as dependent on each other, looking at other people as ends in themselves rather than objects to be used and looking at how God created us before the

Fall - to serve as safeguards against tempting lies.

Unlike many Catholic novels that attempt to project what the world will look like in the future if humanity continues down the slippery slope of playing God, Lyons respects the reader's ability to draw his or her own conclusions. This makes *Totality* an enjoyable, but relatively easy read, especially for those who are familiar with St John Paul II's theology of the body.

i Cecilia Cicone is an author and communicator who works in diocesan ministry in Northwest Indiana.

The family's call to change - and sway



Laura Kelly Fanucci

Watch what parents do when they pick up a baby. Whether a swaddled newborn, a smiling infant or a squirmy toddler, parents start to sway when they hold their child.

Swaying is our primal rhythm, the instinct to move to calm and comfort. Slow, steady rocking can soothe a baby, relax their body, soften their cries and even lull them to sleep.

Watch what happens when parents add another child to the family. You'll see both parents swaying, sometimes bumping into each other. The metaphor is made plain before your eyes: jostling up against each other is part of change.

To sway is to move to meet the needs of others. Isn't this the heart of family life?

But we don't just sway with the wee ones. Teenagers and young adults ask us to move in different ways: to loosen our grip, to contract and then relax. Growing together requires that everyone in the family lean on each other as we lean into the arms of God, the back and forth of love's rhythms.

Sway

Look around the church the next time you are in Mass. See how people sway even when they stand

alone? Scientists call this movement 'postural sway' - part of the body's unconscious efforts to stay balanced. These micro-movements that adjust our posture are rhythmic and regulating for our nervous systems. The simple motion reminds our bodies of the months we spent in our mother's womb, gently jostled by her every movement.

“When she looked around the church during the funeral Mass, she saw so many adults swaying gently as they stood and prayed, as if rocking in solidarity with the grieving parents, working through their own waves of sorrow”

Our first rhythms stay with us.

This year I got to visit my own mother on Mother's Day. While my kids ran circles around us, she and I hugged and held each other. Then as if by instinct, we both started to sway. I thought of how she had once held me within her, how she must still long to hold me the way I long to hold my own growing children.

We learn this rhythm from God. The book of Deuteronomy reminds us how God has carried us throughout our entire lives like a loving parent: "... the Lord, your God, carried you, as one carries his own child, all along your journey until you arrived at this place" (Dt 1:31). Even when we struggle or turn away, God is always waiting to take us back and lift us up again.

A friend shared a poignant story

after attending a funeral for a baby who had died shortly after birth. When she looked around the church during the funeral Mass, she saw so many adults swaying gently as they stood and prayed, as if rocking in solidarity with the grieving parents, working through their own waves of sorrow.

Swaying, like prayer, is one of our core movements, our way of being in the world.

Relationships call us to move and change at every age. We learn the flexibility and compromise required for marriage. We develop the adaptability called forth from growing children or aging parents. Whenever we find ourselves becoming stiff and rigid in our interactions with family, this may bring a nudge to pray for greater agility, to ask God for the wisdom to adapt to each other's needs.

Transition

Summer is a time of transition for families, with weddings, graduations, reunions and the shift from one school year to the next. This is a season for swaying: a time to return to simpler rhythms of family life or to adjust our ways of being with each other.

Children will not always be small enough to pick up and sway, but the adults in their lives will always carry them as they grow. Whenever we pick each other up, physically or emotionally, we can pray for the strength to sway and change together.

How might God be calling you to sway in new ways, to soften your rhythms or change how you carry the ones you love?

Laura Kelly Fanucci is an author, speaker, and founder of Mothering Spirit, an online gathering place on parenting and spirituality.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Can a marriage be declared invalid due to severe mental illness?

Q: If a Catholic couple gets married in the Church but later it emerges that one of them is suffering from a severe mental illness with psychotic episodes, can that marriage be declared invalid due to mental health issues?

A: Yes, in principle severe mental illness can be a reason why a marriage might be declared null. However, every situation is unique and the question of whether a particular marriage might be invalid depends on a number of specific and nuanced details. This is why, if a marriage is suspected to be invalid due to the psychiatric illness of one of the spouses, the case must be evaluated by a marriage tribunal in a formal nullity process.

Canon 1095 in the Code of Canon Law addresses the question of psychological issues impacting the validity of a marriage. As the canon states:

"The following are incapable of contracting marriage:

- 1 those who lack sufficient use of reason
- 2 those who suffer from a grave lack of discretionary judgment concerning the essential matrimonial rights and obligations to be mutually given and accepted.
- 3 those who, because of causes of a psychological nature, are unable to assume the essential obligations of marriage."

Canon 1095, 1 covers situations where a potential spouse is not fully in touch with reality, such as a dementia patient or someone in active psychosis.

Canon 1095, 2 deals with situations where a potential spouse may be fundamentally lucid, but is still unable to evaluate the choice of marriage in a rational way. For example, a person recovering from a recent traumatic experience might not be psychologically capable of making a major life decision from a place of emotional clarity and adequate interior freedom.

Canon 1095, 3 covers situations where a potential spouse might indeed be able to rationally evaluate the choice of marriage, but where a psychological issue would prevent them from actually doing the things necessary to be married - or by the same token, where a psychological condition compels them to

do things incompatible with marriage. For instance, certain kinds of compulsive disorders might render a person incapable of marital fidelity or incapable of making any kind of permanent commitment.

Keep in mind that in canon law, a formal psychiatric diagnosis is not as important as the way in which a condition manifests itself. Many disorders have a range of severity and can affect different individuals differently. The same disorder might leave one person capable of marital consent (even if it negatively impacts their life in other serious ways) but might make another person totally incapacitated in this regard. Additionally, there are some psychic states, like intoxication, which are not psychiatric disorders, but which might still leave someone unable to consent to marriage.

And while some mental illnesses are chronic and ongoing, others are time-limited or situational, or only arise later in life. In order for a marriage to be considered invalid due to psychological reasons, the mental issue in question must have been present in at least some form at the time of the wedding. Because marriage is meant to perdure 'in sickness and in health,' a mental illness that only came about years into the marriage would not make the original consent invalid.

With all this in mind, your example of 'severe mental illness with psychotic episodes' is certainly something that could prompt a marriage nullity process. In such a case, a tribunal judge would probably ask about the onset of this illness; how functional the person was between episodes; and whether the person was in the midst of an episode at the time of consent.

However, at the beginning of a nullity process no tribunal can ever guarantee that a particular marriage will or will not be declared null. Even in what might look like a very strong case for nullity, the marriage bond must always be presumed valid until proven otherwise.

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.

Praying when it seems useless



Prayer is most needed just when it seems most useless. Michael J. Buckley, one of the major spiritual mentors in my life, wrote those words. What does he mean by them?

In the face of so many problems we can get the feeling that praying about them is useless. For example, in the face of the discouragement and helplessness we feel before some of the mega problems in our world, it is easy to feel that praying about them is useless. What will my prayer do vis-à-vis the wars raging in different parts of the world? What's the value of my prayer in the face of injustice, famine, racism and sexism? What will my prayer do vis-à-vis the divisions and hatred now dividing our communities? It is easy to feel that praying about these situations is useless.

The same holds true about how we often feel about the value of prayer when serious illnesses beset us. Will prayer bring about a cure for someone with terminal cancer? Do we really expect a miraculous cure? Mostly, we don't, but we continue to pray despite the feeling that our prayer won't in fact change the situation. Why?

Perspective

Why pray when it seems useless to do so? Theologians and spiritual writers have given us various perspectives on this which are helpful, though not adequate. Prayer, they say, is not meant to change the mind of God, but to change the mind of the person who is praying.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

“Prayer, they say, is not meant to change the mind of God, but to change the mind of the person who is praying. We don't pray to put God on our side; we pray to put ourselves on God's side”

We don't pray to put God on our side; we pray to put ourselves on God's side. As well, we have been taught that the reason it might seem that God doesn't answer our prayers is that God, like a loving parent, knows what is good for us and answers our prayers by giving us what we really need rather than what we naively want. C.S. Lewis once said that we will spend a lot of time in eternity thanking God for those prayers that God didn't answer.

“Prayer doesn't just change the person who is praying, it also changes the situation”

All of this is true and important. God's ways are not our ways. Faith asks us to give God the space and time to be God, without having to conform to our very limited

expectations and habitual impatience. We can indeed be grateful that God doesn't answer many of our prayers according to our expectations.

But still, still ... when Jesus invited us to pray, he didn't do so with a caveat: but you need to ask for the right things if you expect me to answer your prayer. No, he simply said: Ask and you will receive. He also said that some demons are only cast out by prayer and fasting.

Depth

So, how might the demons of violence, division, hatred, war, hunger, global warming, famine, racism, sexism, cancer, heart disease and the like be cast out by prayer? How is prayer useful in any practical way in the face of these issues?

In brief, prayer doesn't just change the person who is pray-

ing, it also changes the situation. When you pray you are in fact part of the situation about which you are praying. Sincere prayer helps you become the change you are praying to bring about. For example, praying for peace helps you to calm your own heart and bring a more peaceful heart into the world.

While this is true, there is also a deeper reality at play. More deeply, when we pray there is something happening that goes beyond how we normally imagine the simple interplay between cause and effect. By changing ourselves, we are changing the situation; yes, but in a deeper way than we normally imagine.

“While on the surface prayer can sometimes feel useless, it is doing something vital underneath”

As Christians, we believe that we are part of a body, the Body of Christ, and that our union there with each other is more than some idealised corporate community.

“As Christians, we believe that we are part of a body, the Body of Christ, and that our union there with each other is more than some idealised corporate community”

Rather, we are part of a living organism in which every part affects every other part, just as in a physical body. Because of this, for us, there is no such a thing as a private act – good or bad. I hesitate to suggest that this is analogous to the immune system inside the human body because this is more than an analogy. It's real, organic. Just as in a human body there is an immune system which protects the health of the overall body by killing off cells and viruses that are endangering its health, so too inside the Body of Christ. At all times, we are either healthy cells bringing strength to the immune system inside the Body of Christ or we are a virus or cancerous cell threatening its health. Praying about an issue makes a difference because it helps strengthen the immune system inside the Body of Christ – precisely as it is dealing with the issue about which we are praying.

While on the surface prayer can sometimes feel useless, it is doing something vital underneath – something most needed precisely when we feel that our prayer is useless.

Prepare to be astonished



Christ healing the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. National Gallery, London

*Ps 123:1-2, 2, 3-4
2 Cor 12:7-10
Mk 6:1-6*

The Messiah, it turns out, isn't quite who people expected.

In Mark's Gospel this Sunday, Jesus returns to his 'native place', his hometown of Nazareth, and when people hear him teaching in the synagogue, they can't believe it. "Astonished" is the adjective Mark uses - and not in a good way.

As the evangelist writes: "They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary...?' And they took offense at him."

Prejudice

The Biblical commentator, William Barclay, once described this encounter as a story about class prejudice - speculating that the

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



people who knew Jesus as a carpenter, a simple tradesman who worked with his hands, looked down on him and couldn't fathom that someone like that could heal the sick, perform miracles or preach with such penetrating wisdom.

Perhaps. But this passage in the Gospel is about more than just class, and it concerns much more than what someone does for a living. There's more going on here. Jesus' return to Nazareth asks each of us to examine our own biases and prejudices about God. It challenges all of us to look at our assumptions about just how God works in our world - and whether we can recognise him when he enters our lives.

Mother Teresa famously

said that Jesus sometimes comes to us in the "distressing disguise of the poor". The fact is, he often comes to us in ways we never expected, through people we might not have imagined - not just in the poor or the unschooled or in someone who sands wood and builds furniture.

Unnoticed

Are we willing and able to look for him in others who go unnoticed or unappreciated?

Do we have faith to believe God might make himself known to us through the homeless, the outcast, the marginalised, the addicted, the imprisoned?

Do we look for Jesus in them?

Christ himself said,

“Ours is a God of endless creativity and possibility. For that reason alone, we should strive to have the faith they lacked - and prepare to be even more astonished”

“Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me.” We need to give attention to those who are often dismissed because in them we may indeed find Christ. Take no one for granted. Let no one be brushed aside. God often announces himself in people and events we find insignificant or unsubstantial.

“‘When I am weak,’ Paul writes, ‘then I am strong’”

Even now, the God who entered our world as an infant in a manger in a stable continues to make himself present under the appearance of something as small

and ordinary as a sliver of bread.

In the second reading, we hear St Paul's words to the Corinthians about humility, fragility and suffering - and out of that he realises God's grace is enough.

“When I am weak,” Paul writes, “then I am strong.”

Counterpoint

His words are a perfect counterpoint to this Gospel account of Jesus' own rejection by his family and friends in Nazareth - a story that carries its own kind of insults and hardships, suffering and disrespect. Paul discovered strength in weakness and grace in being small. That is the story of the Incarnation, which tells us that God can

come to us as a child in a stable. A carpenter sawing wood can be the Messiah. God confounds our expectations.

This Gospel reminds us not only of the Messiah's humble beginnings, but also that far too many people were unwilling or unable to accept this fact: God can come to us in ways we never imagined.

Are we ourselves open to that possibility?

The people of Jesus' native place encountered him and were 'astonished' because they didn't have the faith to believe the way God was working in their world.

What about us?

Ours is a God of endless creativity and possibility. For that reason alone, we should strive to have the faith they lacked - and prepare to be even more astonished.

i Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog "The Deacon's Bench."

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



The madness of our times

Well, I think *Mad World* has to be my theme song this week. Maybe there's nothing new under the sun, but previous generations would surely be mystified by some of last week's goings on.

One of the high-profile events of the week was a US presidential debate where an oldish guy, a convicted felon, debated with an even older and frequently confused gentleman about the respective merits of their golfing skills; a general election in the UK featured debates on the definition of a woman and umpteen genders; a man in jail because after a row over pronouns was released for the school holidays.

Debate

As regards that **Presidential Debate** (BBC News/CNN, June 27 night), I watched it all in the line of duty – useful, as clips usually give a less than faithful impression. It was by times sad, embarrassing, puzzling, depressing, infuriating and cringeworthy. Many outside commentators have been exasperated – are these candidates the best the USA can produce? Scott Lucas of UCD was certainly depressed – “Pray for America today” he pleaded on **Today with**



Douglas is cancelled

Claire Byrne (RTE Radio 1, June 28). I found both candidates unimpressive and worrying. Biden wasn't quite as bad as the clips suggested – after an embarrassing and incoherent start, he rallied somewhat while Trump was his usual hyperbolic and bombastic self. The debate was hosted by CNN, usually very partisan, but after the event they fact checked both Trump and Biden – both had errors, inaccuracies or falsehoods, whether intentional, accidental or delusional, though Trump had more.

Funny enough, in most media commentary Trump was more likely to be accused of ‘lies’. Media in Ireland throw all pretence of impartiality to the wind when it comes to US politics and there were several discussions that just featured several shades of anti-Trump, but the approach of covering for Biden was over, with several pro-Democrats wanting him to quit the race.

They weren't asked about their religious beliefs, but needless to say, abortion was raised. Trump was glad he was instrumental in get-

ting Roe v Wade overturned and getting decision making back to the individual states, but he was in favour of ‘the exceptions’ – incest, rape, life of the mother. Biden said he'd restore Roe v. Wade but rambled quite a bit on this topic.

The strange thing was, by June 28 night's **Sky News**, I was looking at Biden back out in fighting mode – fiery, coherent and articulate, but it was pointed out he was among supporters and using a teleprompter. That didn't fully explain the overnight transformation.

Cancelled

The proceedings might be described as having ‘net zero cognitive content’, a zinger from **Douglas is Cancelled** (ITV, June 27), a new drama series that skewers the madness of our times. Hugh Bonneville is perfectly cast as a respected newsreader who feels the ire of the X/Twitter crowd after someone tweets that he made a sexist joke at a wedding. He says he can't even remember the joke. The tweet goes viral and he's in trouble at work and at home, where his activist and micro-aggression-sensitive daughter Claudia (Madeleine Power) says she hopes she won't have to cancel him. The comedy is alternatively broad and sub-

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE SIMPSONS

Channel 4 Sunday, July 7, 8.30am

Bart feels an unexpected emptiness when he ‘sells’ his soul to Millhouse for some ALF pogs. (S7 Ep4/25)

FILM: MOTHER CABRINI

EWTN Sunday, July 7, 9pm

An EWTN original movie on the life of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, who founded the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and established missions around the world.

FILM: HIDDEN FIGURES

Film 4 Wednesday, July 10, 6.25pm

(2016) Three African American women work on the space race for NASA in the 1960's and meet prejudice of all kinds. Positive outlook on religion.

tle and the satire as sharp as a knife with some great one-liners. His cynical studio boss Toby (Ben Miles) has the best lines: ‘truth is useful, yes, but I'd prefer something a little more balanced’; ‘truth is only one side of the story’; ‘we can move in the direction of honesty once we've decided on the facts’. The anti-woke crowd shouldn't get too excited yet about the send up of the excesses of political correctness. There are a few clues already suggesting that the hapless Douglas might not be such an innocent victim of the Twitter pile-on. Fast-paced and wickedly funny, the show can be crude and profane at times which

doesn't add anything useful to the proceedings.

Unlike Toby, I try not to be cynical, but media bias by omission is one thing that bugs me. I can't find any trace of coverage by RTE or Newstalk of the latest dramatic increase in the abortion figures released last Friday. In what universe is the deaths of over 10,000 babies unborn but living, not worthy of note? How de-sensitised do you have to be?

I did find one RTE headline – ‘Health Minister concerned at rise in abortion figures’ and I thought, finally, the penny is dropping. Sadly, it was from 2001.

Music

Pat O'Kelly



Evergreen sounds in a world of trends

The 2023/24 NSO subscription series drew to a close recently with a particularly satisfying performance at the National Concert Hall of Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*. The occasion, with highly agreeable soloists Miah Persson, soprano, Jennifer Johnston, mezzo, Valentyn Dytiuk, tenor and Evgeny Stavin-sky, bass, also involved the National Symphony Chorus under Jaime Martín.

The performance was not without a tinge of sadness, as it brought Maestro Martín's five-year tenure as NSO principal conductor to an end. This began on October 11, 2019, with a single work – Mahler's Third Symphony – and now it concluded with another significant ‘stand

alone’ piece.

There have been criticisms of Verdi's *Requiem* over the years mainly on the grounds that it is too operatic for a religious setting but listening to it again I said to myself, “Does it matter whether it is one or the other, this is magnificent music”. The stirring performance brought Jaime Martín's time in charge of the NSO to a fitting conclusion. He will return as guest conductor on December 13 when his main work will be Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake Suite*.

Tribute

Needless to remark, the programme booklet for his farewell event included fitting tributes from NCH chairperson, Maura McGrath and Robert Read, the hall's CEO.



Jaime Martín. Photo: Eddie Jim.

I quote some of their compliments. “Throughout his time with us, Jaime Martín has demonstrated immense artistic passion and dedication to the orchestra, soloists and audiences”.

“He has been a loyal constant in a time of great change that included the challeng-

ing period of the Covid-19 pandemic and the National Concert Hall's embracing of the orchestra following its transfer from RTÉ in January 2022. Never was Jaime's commitment more evident than during lockdown and beyond. We remember, with deep gratitude, the great lengths

he went to, both personally and professionally, in order to ensure that the orchestra continued to perform and that audiences continued to enjoy a rich range of repertoire.”

“Jaime makes music to share it. For him, the audience has always been front and centre. On and off stage, Jaime's warmth, knowledge, ease and quick wit have won hearts and minds. We thank him for his time with the orchestra and with audiences at the National Concert Hall and further afield. With gratitude and with thanks, we say, ‘mile buiochas ó chroí, a Jaime, agus gach rath ort’.”

Upcoming

The National Symphony Orchestra presents music by Limerick-man, Bill Whelan, at

the NCH July 5 evening. The composer, who holds a Bachelor of Civil Law Degree from UCD and is also an honorary Freeman of Limerick city, came to musical prominence in 1994 through his *Riverdance* performed during the interval of that year's Eurovision Song Contest. Its music became the genesis of a globally successful stage show.

Under English conductor John Rigby, songs by French chanteuse Edith Piaf and Belgian singer Jacques Brel brought Camille O'Sullivan centre stage at the NCH with the NSO on Friday July 12. The orchestra has resumed its summer Tuesday lunchtime concerts at the NCH with July 16 having Liszt's *Totentanz* – piano soloist Pawel Waleski as its dominant feature.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The Loveable John Moriarty

John Moriarty: Grounded in Story,
Edited by Amanda Carmody and Mary McGillicuddy
(The Lilliput Press, €25.00 / £21.50)

J. Anthony Gaughan

The mystic John Moriarty is one of modern Ireland's unique writers, but he achieved this position through a life of varied and equally unique experiences.

John Moriarty was born in Moyvane, near Listowel, Co. Kerry, on February 2 1938. He attended the local national school, St Michael's College, Listowel, and University College Dublin. After a number of teaching appointments he emigrated to Canada in 1965, where he taught English literature in the University of Manitoba until 1971 when he returned to Ireland.

He resided mainly in the west of Ireland and worked at various jobs before becoming a gardener. He eventually settled near Killarney and he died on June 1 2007.

Journey

John was a prolific author. His books – all published by the Lilliput Press – include *Dreamtime* (1994); the trilogy *Turtle was Gone a Long Time: Crossing the Kedron* (1996), *Horsehead Nebula Neighing* (1997) and *Anaconda Canoe* (1998); *Nostos, An Autobiography* (2001); *Invoking Ireland, Ailiu Iath n-hErend* (2005); *Night Journey to Buddha Gaia* (2006); *Urbi et Orbi* (2006); *Slí na Firinne* (2006); *Serious Sounds* (2007) and *What the Curlew Said: Nostos Continued* (2007).

John was a philosopher in the Socratic tradition. He was ever posing questions. His life-long quest for the meaning of life took him from the strong Catholic Faith of his early years through a life-time of agnosticism and ultimately to a belief in Pantheism.

His journey 'to a God he

“His life-long quest for the meaning of life took him from the strong Catholic Faith of his early years through a life-time of agnosticism and ultimately to a belief in Pantheism”



Fr J. Anthony Gaughan Kerry, historian and critic

could once again believe in' led him on a tortuous voyage of discovery into eastern and western philosophy and all the great world's religions, into the mythologies and literature of ancient civilisations, into the eye of the Enlightenment, into modern science and the literature of the present-day.

“In my own case it was what I experienced in church, not what I experienced in school, that became destiny to me”

After all his reading, thinking and ruminating John did not find answers to all the questions, but what he did find and which he embraced was a world that cannot be explained by science alone, a world that is a manifestation of a deep divine presence which he called 'Divine Ground' from which all living things emanate and to which they return.

In this remarkable book Amanda Carmody and Mary McGillicuddy select passages from John's writings to highlight the seminal stages in his intellectual life.

For instance, in *Turtle was Gone a Long Time: Crossing the Kedron* John describes how he

lost his Catholic Faith: "I had been reading the geological chapters in Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Long before I came to the end of them. I was man overboard. As a man might fall out of a boat, I had quite literally fallen out of my story, the biblical story....I experienced vertigo, hanging as I was somewhere, maybe nowhere, in infinite Godlessness".

John had travelled far and wide from Moyvane, but he never really left it. He carried it everywhere with him. In the background of his thoughts there was always Jimmy and Mary, his parents; Mary Hegarty, his friend; his working in the bog and the hayfield; his early experiences in school and in the church, especially in the church.

In *What the Curlew Said: Nostos Continued* he wrote: "In my own case it was what I experienced in church, not what I experienced in school, that became destiny to me and I remember the day that Tom Callaghan, our teacher in primary school, sent Jim Stack and myself down to the parish church, not to clean it or any such thing, but to kneel in silent adoration of the most precious thing that mortal eyes could look upon.... Again and again I would go back to it in my mind and even when I had ceased to be a Christian I would re-enter that church. I would kneel where I had knelt hoping for irradiation by it".

This beautifully illustrated study of a most interesting man will be a most useful – indeed essential – *vade mecum* for those who wish to fully appreciate the writings and thinking of that formidable intellectual and loveable person that was John Moriarty.

Tales of past times in the County of Mayo

Caribbean Slave Owners & Other Lesser-Known Histories from County Mayo,

by Dr M. M. O'Connor
(Published by the author at The Murrigan, Murrisk, Westport, Co. Mayo, €25.00)

Peter Costello

This is a book which only recently came to my notice, for it was not sent to us for review. Certainly the title captures your attention at once, for the whole question of slavery, slave owning and profit-

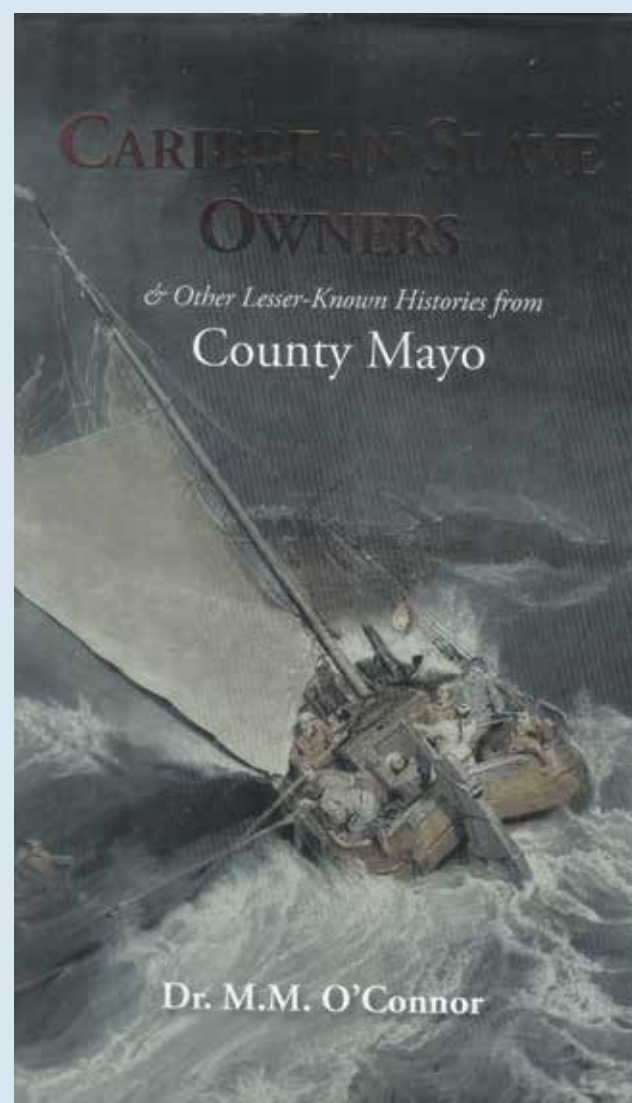
ing from slavery, is under closer examination than ever before. The long essay on Mayo's slavery connections runs to 57 pages – and would have made a book in itself, which would have interested many readers.

But in this mighty tome, which runs to over 500 closely printed pages, it is united with nineteen other essays, some also of a good length.

Content

The essays are all excellent, some indeed groundbreaking, and all worth reading. The real problem is with their cumbersome presentation.

“The careful design and typography of Fr Gaughan's book by consultant Susan Waine shows that stylish and easy to engage with books of classical elegance can still be created in Ireland”



This reviewer feels that it would have been far more effective to have broken up the material into at least three much shorter books, which could have been given a more unified scope. A model, taken down from my own shelves, might have been Kenneth Connell's *Irish Peasant Society*, for instance, which contained only four inter-related essays, which in its treatment made a huge impact on the way Irish history might be written. Or again *The White Hind and other Discoveries* by the Scottish historian Sir James Fergusson of Kilkerran, which contains a dozen essays of more closely written scope.

Books are expensive to publish and the price of this book alone suggests the author's generosity of spirit to his readers in subsidising it himself. But many readers will find a book as large as bible to be uncomfortable to hold and to read. In many ways it is 'over produced'.

“Dr Connell's excellent essays truly deserve that kind of presentation”

Dr O'Connell's earlier book *Anatomy of a County Gaol*, was more closely focused. He promises yet another book entitled *Criminal Conversations with My Wife* chronicling more tales from Co. Mayo. Again the title catches the eye and one suspects it too deals with that often clouded area of inter-religious marriage.

Yet one hope it might be presented in a smaller, more accessible volume of a more attractive design. The careful design and typography of Fr Gaughan's book by consultant Susan Waine shows that stylish and easy to engage with books of classical elegance can still be created in Ireland. Dr Connell's excellent essays truly deserve that kind of presentation. In literature as in life less is often more.

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

The saintly Oliver Plunkett, Ireland's last martyr

The Captain and the Saint: The Story of St Oliver Plunkett,
by Fintan Tracey
(Published by Fintan Tracey, Drogheda, €10.00 plus €2.50 postage, direct from fintansfineart@gmail.com)

Peter Costello

Next year marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of St Oliver Plunkett. This little book by Drogheda-based artist Fintan Tracey is the first small droplet of what will undoubtedly be a stream of books that will appear nearer the actual anniversary of his birth, which was on November 1 1625.

Fintan Tracey is an artist, and this is very much an artist's book. Though he draws on standard books, and has he says made effort to have the facts right, his series of paintings that illustrate the book are the heart of his vision of the saint, he realises the man and his times in broad brush images.

Plunkett

Indeed the best chapter in the book is an account of Oliver Plunkett sitting to have his own portrait made, a portrait for posterity, for he is imprisoned in London for treason.

The artist, one Garrett Morphy, had been commissioned by the archbishop's friend and confessor Fr Maurus Corker, a Benedictine. The episodes of his life are related by Oliver Plunkett himself, in

some seven brief chapters.

The book is aimed at those who want a simple accessible account of what is, all in all a complicated tale of courage, perseverance and betrayal. Not everyone, as I have said before, wishes to plunge at once into an overly scholarly book. As in life, there are horses for courses. This book will happily meet the needs of many who flock to the national shrine in Drogheda.

“The story of the persecution, betrayal and death of Oliver Plunkett is a grim one”

The shine in Downside in Somerset, however, where the saint's body is preserved is unmentioned and the role of the Benedictines in Oliver Plunkett last years passed over. This is a pity, as his martyrdom, brought about by the lies of Titus Oates, is as much an English story as it is an Irish one.

I have been looking back to see what was done on 300th anniversary of his birth and find it was little enough. Firstly the actual date of the saint's birth was

still being disputed at that time; but more importantly, Oliver Plunkett had been beatified in 1920, a time of national struggle. This had been enough. It was not until 1981 that he was finally canonised, with great ceremonies in Rome, Ireland and England.

The story of the persecution, betrayal and death of Oliver Plunkett is a grim one. But next year, instead of picking over yet again the ancient quarrels, Catholics should keep constantly in mind that in 1997 Plunkett was made a patron saint for peace and reconciliation in Ireland. He was adopted by the prayer group campaigning for peace in Ireland, St Oliver Plunkett for Peace and Reconciliation.

Divisions

This should still be the theme for the 400th anniversary as Ireland remains as much in need of the reconciliation and the promotion of accord and peace as it ever it did in the past.

The old divisions which brought about the martyr's death have faded, but others are now coming to the fore, some of them alas being promoted as 'national causes'. Everyone living on this island, no matter what their culture or religion, will support the cause of reconciliation and increased interpersonal understating. Fintan Tracey's little book is a first effort in that direction.



The shrine of St Oliver Plunkett at Downside

Chronicles of an Irish bookman

Some Occasional Writings 2003-2024,
by J. Anthony Gaughan
(Kingdom Books, €25.00 / £21.50)

Peter Costello

Reviews and occasional writings are exactly that, articles written to meet a specific occasion. And yet since the 18th century such pieces have provided some of the finest and most entertaining writing available.

I relish and reread such collections as Graham Greene's collected essays and the collected reviews of Anthony Burgess, which are both a constant delight, as are Edmund

Wilson's *Classics and Commercials*.

But on my shelves, I have two other books of the same kind, *Adventures in Criticism* by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch from 1896, *A London Bookman* by Frank Swinerton from 1928, books from "my period" as academics would say, as I have long been a student of Victorian and early 20th century English literature.

The Quiller-Couch book contain an essay which I

found is quite unknown to Irish literati, "A Case of Book Stall Censorship" a critique of our famous firm of Eason's, from March 1895, about the founder Catholic businessman Charles Eason refusing to lend or sell the notorious novel of the day, "The Woman who Did", to the general public, but was prepared to put aside "under the counter" a copy for the favour of His Highness Prince Francis of Teck, a disreputable member of the Royal family, then on duty in

Ireland. A case of censorship Irish style.

These remarks are, I think, a necessary preliminary to persuaded people in Ireland who can see the value of current book reviews but hesitate to read them in volume form.

Ireland

What Fr Gaughan's book provides, and it is an important provision, are insights into the intellectual, even moral, culture of Ireland in the 21 century.

Here in Ireland we are obsessed by political history, but the history of ideas, of moral reflection unattached to denunciations of 'sin', even the very idea the very idea that

Ireland could have a history of ideas at all, does not attract us.

But this collection of pieces ranges far and wide over time and space - he writes on Mount Sinai, for instance, on Oberammergau and on a visit to the Palace of Westminster. His reviews for a variety of publications aside from *The Irish Catholic* where he appears regularly. These pieces are arranged in some eighteen categories, and like the reviews, are rich in insights concerning previous decades, centuries, and even millennia.

I can't think of another writer, here in Ireland who provided such a long continued chronicle of books and people. If a reader enjoys this

book, there is a back catalogue of earlier books to take up and read in turn.

“Bookmen like Quiller-Couch to Fr Gaughan are the true literary history of a country”

In a sense the labours by bookmen like Quiller-Couch to Fr Gaughan are the true literary history of a country, and not those briefly celebrated novelists who flourish for a season or two and then are heard of no more.

“The very idea that Ireland could have a history of ideas at all, does not attract us”

Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4027 or email advertising@irishcatholic.ie

The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188



www.hospicefoundation.ie

Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.
Tel: 021-4545704 Email: info@mscmisions.ie

www.mscmissions.ie

MQI

Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services



A gift in your Will to Merchants Quay Ireland can be lifesaving.

Hundreds of men and women at their darkest hour, come to Merchants Quay Ireland for food, showers and support when there's nowhere else to turn.

A gift in your Will in any amount, will change lives. And we'll always remember your kindness.

You can decide a specific amount or give a percentage after taking care of your loved ones. Even 1% is enough to help.

All your solicitor will need is this:

- Merchants Quay Ireland of 24 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8
- Revenue CHY Number: 10311
- Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20026240

Just ring 01 5240139 if you'd like more information, or to let us know about your legacy. Thank you for the good you leave behind.

Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

Your Lasting Legacy

Many people are choosing to include a loving gift in their Will to support families, children and young people experiencing homelessness. You can make a real difference by helping future generations find a place called home.

For more information, please contact Assia:
086 103 3130 assia.buono@focusireland.ie
Focus Ireland, 9 - 12 High Street, Christchurch, D08 E1W0
Focusireland.ie

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Celebrate the Word of God daily with the

MAGNIFICAT prayer companion

Six months €35

One year €62

Subscribe now to get Magnificat delivered to your door.

+353 (01) 687 4024 - magnificat@irishcatholic.ie
www.irishcatholic.com

Classifieds: 01 687 4028

The Irish Catholic

PREPAID CLASSIFIED AD COUPON

Please print your advertisement in the coupon, placing ONE word in each space. Below, please print your name and address. Do you require a Box Number? YES ☐ NO ☐ (Please tick ✓) Box Number €6 extra.

1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					€29.99
7					€34.91
					€39.83

Name and contact detail form MUST be filled out

Name
Address
Landline Mobile

I enclose Cheque/PO: €..... I wish to pay by Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Laser ☐

My Visa/Mastercard/Lasercard number is:

.....

Expiry Date: Signature

The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Phone: 01 687 4028

LOOKING TO BUY

LOOKING TO BUY ACCOMMODATION please. 2-bed apartment/house in Dublin central. Contact dt@topmail.ie / 0858519670

SERVICES

ALL UNWANTED home waste removed. Cookers, fridges, beds, suites, wardrobes, carpets etc. Removed and disposed of in a proper manner. No job too small or big. Contact Tommy, 087 6406015.

WORK SEARCHING

LOOKING FOR WORK, disciplined hard working man, safe pass available. Contact Marius 0851985833

SEEKING CONNECTION

LADY, LATE FORTIES, DONEGAL – SLIGO area, looking for nice, kind man with interests – walks, cinema, going out for dinner. Practicing Roman-Catholic. non-drinker. non-smoker. Box No. 364

Leisure time



Midweek Specials 2 Nights B&B & 1 Dinner
June 2024 from €190pps / €250 Single

NEW HOLIDAY - Great House Getaways of the West
4 Nights DBB + Historical House Tours
25-29 August 2024 €520pps / €560 Single

NEW HOLIDAY - Pre-Christmas Extravaganza
4 Nights DBB + Lots of Fun & Entertainment
17-21 Nov / 24-28 Nov €319pps / €339 Single

NEW HOLIDAY - Residential Retreat
4 Nights DBB + Retreat with Spiritual Directors from Knock Shrine. 9-13 Dec €390pp / No Single Supplement Charge

Tel 094 9388088 • www.knockhousehotel.ie
email: reservations@knockhousehotel.ie



We will pass on the flame of faith.

For over 130 years, The Irish Catholic has been a voice of hope and inspiration for Catholics in Ireland.

Find out more by scanning the QR code below



Phone: 01 6874028
The Irish Catholic

Crossword

Gordius 670

- Across**
1 Campanologist (4,6)
6 Movable parts of the skull (4)
10 Chaplain in a cathedral (5)
11 Cosmetic product (4,5)
12 Make damp (7)
15 Item of mountaineering equipment (5)
17 Prepare work for publication (4)
18 Dip a biscuit into a drink, or score a basket from above (4)
19 Detection equipment (5)
21 Someone who is not Jewish (7)
23 Deposit money (5)
24 Killer-whale (4)
25 Midday (4)
26 Black fur (5)
28 Perfume; distinctive nature (7)
33 A promenade, usually by the sea (9)
34 French river which joins with the Saone at Lyon (5)
35 Neat (4)
36 Sibyl (10)

- Down**
1 Male rabbit or a dollar (4)
2 Sleepy state (4,2,3)

1		2		3		4		5			6	7		8
										9				
10						11								
	12				13		14			15				
16						17								
18										19		20		
				21					22					
23											24			
				25										
26		27					28	29		30				
						31								32
33										34				
35					36									

- 3 Jewellery for the fingers (5)
4 Nook, shelf (5)
5 Slippery creatures (4)
7 Ward off (5)
8 One studying for the priesthood (10)
9 Piece of regalia (7)
13 Story (4)
14 Roman god of the sea (7)
16 A youth (10)
20 Phone book (9)
21 High-ranking officer (7)
22 South East Asian country, capital Vientiane (4)
27 Two-legged creature (5)
29 Bonbon (5)
30 Merits (5)
31 City in Portugal (4)
32 Pick up sound (4)

SOLUTIONS, JUNE 27

GORDIUS No. 669

Across

- 1 Decoration 6 Sore 10 Camel 11 Avalanche 12 Sultana 15 Treat 17 Nazi 18 Avid 19 Molar 21 Cyclone 23 Ninth 24 Gnat 25 Over 26 Diver 28 Sarcasm 33 Very light 34 Avail 35 Dish 36 Bench press

Down

- 1 Duck 2 Communion 3 Relit 4 Train 5 Oval 7 On cue 8 Electorate 9 Pastime 13 Army 14 Antlers 16 Saint David 20 Landscape 21 Chorale 22 Near 27 Virus 29 Attic 30 Clamp 31 Ogle 32 Alps

Sudoku Corner

540

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 539

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

Last week's Hard 539

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

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Schools have become a symbol of our island's changes

Every so often I am made more acutely aware of how I live in a very changing Ireland. Our country is increasingly viewed across the world as a modern progressive republic which has shaken off the destructive influence and interference of institutional religion, particularly the Catholic Church.

Sometimes this change happens in very public ways as a result of national debates and referendum campaigns leading to constitutional change. Sometimes the change happens in more discreet and subtle ways which nevertheless can have a significant impact on the lives of individuals and communities. An example of this change has occurred recently in my local community.

Vocational

Like many small towns we have a vocational secondary school which serves students from about five surrounding parishes. Originally known as the tech it evolved into a vocational school and later a college. Ironically it was named for one of our local saints.

Many vocational schools in Ireland also bear the name of a saint or some other religious figure. While not being specifically Catholic or other denomination in ethos these schools reflected the predominant culture of



A teacher converses with a pupil.

the local community including religious affiliation. Local clergy from different denominations were members of the boards of management.

The governing bodies of the vocational schools were the local VEC (Vocational Education Committee) which in recent years has become ETB (Educational Training Board).

I'm not sure if the change from VEC to ETB has been the catalyst for the subtle change in ethos but let me outline what has happened in my local ETB vocational school. Before Covid 19 I celebrated an opening of the year Mass with first year students and their parents.

In November on the Feast of the Patron Saint of the school the entire school community came to our parish church for a Mass. At Christmas the school community gathered in the local Church of Ireland church for a carol service.

At the end of the school year there was a Mass and graduation ceremony

for Leaving Cert students and their families. In May every year the school supported an initiative to send students as helpers on our diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes.

I'm not sure what part Covid 19 played if any, but since school life returned to 'normal' after the pandemic none of the above liturgical celebrations have taken place. Another significant change is that religious education lessons are no longer provided in the school for at least four of the years the students spend in the school.

Lourdes

In a sense, things came to head in recent months when the school authorities informed the diocese that it would no longer be appropriate to support the sending of students to Lourdes on the pilgrimage as it would be seen as favouring a particular religious denomination in the school. (This decision was later altered, and some students did travel on the pilgrimage)

The development regarding the school's participation in the pilgrimage prompted me to write to the board of management to ask what exactly the current situation regarding the ethos of the school is and whether it is now multi denomi-

national or non-denominational in character.

I also asked why the various liturgical celebrations mentioned earlier and the religious education lessons are no longer part of the school. I asked if parents had been informed of these changes. I suggested that perhaps it was time to consider changing the name of the school as it seems a little disingenuous or at least misleading to continue calling a school after a saint when the religious ethos and practice of the school does not reflect the name on the door.

Almost four months on I have received no written response from the board of management. I was invited by the principal to meet him, and we had a very cordial discussion about the matters I raised in the letter.

However, he confirmed to me that the changes regarding the religious rituals and religious education classes were in line with current ETB policy on ethos. He also told me that the board of management has no role in deciding the ethos of the school. This is determined by ETB alone.

I raise this issue here because I don't believe that removing religious ritual and education from our vocational schools actually reflects the views of the vast majority of families

who send their children to such schools. These changes are happening without any consultation with the parents or indeed the students.

Hierarchy

In the past the Catholic hierarchy was perceived to have too much say and control over key areas of our lives particularly when it came to education and healthcare. There may well have been some truth in that, but most objective analysts will also acknowledge the immense positive contribution Church personnel made in these areas as our country developed.

I cannot help but think that in our modern Ireland there are secular forces and 'hierarchies' intent on destroying and denying us the positive role that a religious faith can and does play in all our lives.



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

LITTLE WAY THERESIAN CENTRES AT OUR LADY'S NATIONAL SHRINES OFFERING ACCOMMODATION TO PILGRIMS

WALSINGHAM (UK)
For reservations please contact Maggie on 00 44 1328 820 222
KNOCK (Ireland)
Tel: (0) 94 9388406

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

The Little Way Association regularly receives appeals from bishops and religious superiors on the Missions for Mass stipends and intentions for their poor priests. Such payments help them to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Your stipends are gratefully received and your intentions are faithfully honoured at Holy Mass.

We like to send a minimum of €7 or more for each Mass



The Little Way Association



Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.w.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **FOOD AND WATER - INDIA**

€..... **NEEDY CHILDREN**

€..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**

€..... **MASSSES** (please state number of Masses)

We ask for a minimum of €7 or more for each Mass

€..... **LITTLEWAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

To donate online go to
www.littlewaysassociation.com

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

IC/7/4