

The Irish Catholic

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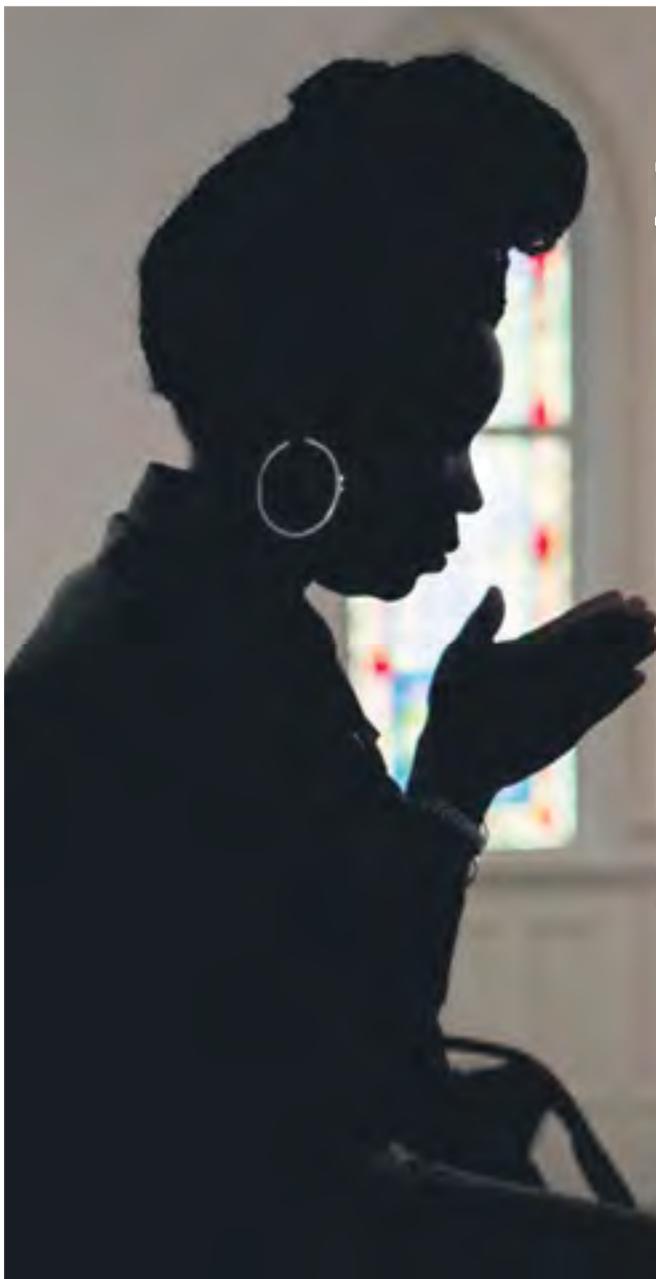
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Abandoned by the State

- Asylum seeker tells of her eight-year ordeal 'living in limbo'
- Priest calls on Pope Francis to visit direct provision centre in Ireland
- Mothers and babies are still being 'imprisoned' by the State

Mags Gargan

Pope Francis has been called on to visit a direct provision centre during his expected visit to Ireland next year, in order to highlight the treatment of asylum seekers.

Fr Paddy Byrne, a curate in Portlaoise parish who ministers to the residents of a local direct provision centre, said the system is a "scandal" but it is "not on the

mainstream political agenda because it is not popular".

"The culture in Ireland, that was so vociferous in relation to the scandals of the past and how we treated our citizens in mother and baby homes, seems to be taking absolutely no cognisance of the fact that this remains a reality in this Republic in 2017," said Fr Byrne, warning that there will be an inquiry and a regress scheme in the future.

"Is the Government waiting for us to die, so that they can forget about us?" asked one woman, who spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about her experience of being trapped in the direct provision system for eight years.

"Enda Kenny went to the US and spoke about Irish people needing citizen's status there, but what about the people back at home?"

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People quite like the Angelus on RTÉ
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Fixating on the past while ignoring the present

This week saw yet another damning report on the failure to protect vulnerable Irish children. Amongst the findings was the fact that children were left in foster homes despite credible evidence that they had been sexually abused in those same foster homes.

In other instances, children who were removed from their homes by gardaí over serious concerns for their safety were returned a short time later by the child and family agency Tusla. Gardaí were never informed.

The author of the report, Dr Geoffrey Shannon, described what he uncovered as "shocking beyond belief".

Dr Shannon describes how children were "treated as human trash".

It's a depressingly familiar picture. But, what's remarkable about this week's report is the fact that it deals not with 50 or 60 years ago, or even 20 years ago – the appalling cases dealt with in the report were from 2014 and 2015.

Findings

You'd be forgiven for being unaware of the findings of the report. It did receive some media coverage on the day it was released and RTÉ Investigations Unit has been like a dog with a bone on the issue. But, by the following morning, the report had been relegated to page eight of



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

the country's biggest-selling daily newspaper *The Irish Independent*.

Contrast this, for example, with the wall-to-wall coverage over the Religious Sisters of Charity and the proposed new National Maternity Hospital. Or the rush to judgement over the Tuam Mother and Baby Home.

Courage

No society can truly be healed unless it faces the past with courage. This is as true in Ireland as elsewhere, and it is vital that the past is excavated and that past abuses are exposed and those who were abused listened to. Victims and survivors deserve to have their voices heard, and their suffering acknowledged and commemorated.

But, in investigating the past, we must be careful not to fall in to the trap of missing what is going on today under our noses.

There's a danger that the same petty snobbery that saw Irish society turn a blind eye to those institutionalised in a past age is still present today and leads to a certain indifference to children in care today because we don't see them as part of us.

There's a real question too for people who take to the streets at the drop of a hat to protest against appalling abuses in the past but barely bat an eyelid when current abuses are exposed. It risks setting a double standard.

One must also be aware of the fact that some of the excessive focusing on the past is motivated by a belief or desire to paint the Catholic Church in as bad a light as possible. In some quarters, there's a push to embed a narrative that the Church's influence in Ireland has been entirely malevolent. In reality, the history of the Church in Ireland hasn't been always covered in glory, but it has also been far from all bad.

But, of course, fixating on the sins of some nuns and priests in the past is much easier than facing the reality that child protection is just not the priority for Irish society that we claim it is. If it was, the so-called 'people power' that commentators are hailing for forcing the nuns out of St Vincent's Hospital would be mobilised to advocate for the abused children of today.



Five Maynooth students ordained deacons

Five students from St Patrick's College, Maynooth – Kevin Connolly (Meath), Anthony McAleese, (Down & Connor), Gerard Quirke (Tuam), Dominic Binh Nguyen SDB (Salesian) and Paul Binh Tran SDB (Salesian) – were ordained deacons at the weekend in a ceremony led by Archbishop Michael Neary.

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Protestants used as excuse to axe Angelus

Chai Brady

An Irish senator has hit out at critics who use Protestants as an excuse to get rid of the Angelus.

David Norris spoke in a Seanad meeting last week saying that he strongly rejects claims that Protestants want to do away with the Angelus, dubbing it “political correctness gone mad”.

“Protestants are used as a cat’s paw by disaffected ex-Catholics to get rid of the Angelus,” he said.

The outspoken senator said that as a member of the Church of Ireland the majority of the Church like the tradition.

Mr Norris told *The Irish Catholic* that “the overwhelming membership of the Church of Ireland thinks the Angelus is a nice thing and a good idea, and something that is quintessentially Irish”.

Christian country

He added that Ireland is still an overwhelmingly Christian country, saying that “we have a tradition for 1,500 years, why should we apolo-

gise for it?”

“I believe in the separation of Church and State, but even the constitution makes it clear that it’s a Christian country.

“I think we are very open, I don’t think there is any discrimination, but I don’t think we should get rid of a tradition that is both cultural and religious. And if you don’t like the Angelus, it’s less than a minute, you go off and put the kettle on... and do whatever you have to do while you’re waiting for the news.”

Groups who are anti-Angelus have described it as discriminatory, saying that it is a Catholic call to prayer that is disrespectful to the philosophical conviction of many citizens.

However, the Angelus is said to be a moment which people of all faiths can use as a time to reflect.

A recent Amárach poll commissioned for *Claire Byrne Live* in March 2017 found that 62% of people agreed with the Angelus being broadcast, while 27% didn’t and 11% were unsure.

See also Page 32



Senator David Norris.

Senator lambastes Angelus broadcast, says Christian imagery needed

The Angelus aired in its current form has been described as “hogwash” and that it should be “more Christian”.

Senator David Norris blasted the Angelus broadcast, which was revamped in 2009, as being disaffected of any Christian meaning. He added that some of the images equated to “old fellas doodling”.

However Roger Childs, the Head of Religious Programmes on RTÉ, said that when he first took up the job in 2008 he wanted to create a version of the Angelus that served everyone.

He described the Angelus broadcast that he inherited as “not very well acted epiphanies, in which people stopped whatever they were

doing to look heavenward, as a Pavlovian reaction to the chimes”.

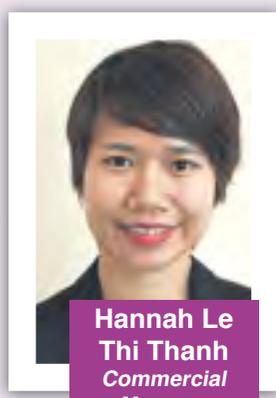
Mr Childs’ version of the Angelus was inspired by the shared belief in many traditions that it’s important to pause and take stock. The brief given for each of the short films is “a non-verbal minute, conducive to prayer or reflection for people of all faiths and none”.

In addition Mr Childs’ also wanted to showcase creativity, and every Friday RTÉ features ‘The People’s Angelus’, where aspiring filmmakers and students can submit their short films.

He added that he has received very few complaints about the broadcasts.

Recent appointments...

As part of its growth and development strategy, *The Irish Catholic* is delighted to announce the following recent appointments:



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Keilah Blohm
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Government has betrayed idealism of children's referendum – ACP leader

Greg Daly

Ireland's 2013 children's rights referendum looks in hindsight like an exercise in "making ourselves feel good", a leading priest has said.

Commenting on Dr Geoffrey Shannon's audit of child protection procedures in An Garda Síochána, which revealed grave shortcomings in child protection across State agencies, Redemptorist Fr Gerry O'Connor, a member of the Association of Catholic Priests' leadership team, said "We had a referendum in support of children's rights, but the Government has not resourced all of the idealism of that referendum."

Fr O'Connor pointed to how the report showed a lack of personnel, resources, and political will with regard to child protection, and told *The Irish Catholic*, "It looks now as though it was an exercise in making ourselves feel good without trying to turn the obligations of the referendum into a practical lived experience for children."

Cooperation

Dr Shannon's report, covering 2014 and 2015, criticised inter-agency cooperation as "overwhelmingly inadequate" and described as "scandalous" the refusal of private foster care services to organise placements for children with addictions or challenging behaviour.

The report noted how Gardaí told Dr Shannon that

the child and family agency Tusla does not provide feedback or updates to them following the handover of the child's care, describing this as "personally and professionally frustrating" for gardaí who had removed vulnerable children from their parents. It also described gardaí as highly critical of how out-of-hours social care services are often under-resourced, where they exist at all.

Consideration

While the report found that in the vast majority of cases, vulnerable children were only removed from their parents under Section 12 of the Child Care Act after careful consideration, it also found numerous gaps, flaws and variations in how gardaí recorded such instances of removal.

If any Church body had been as negligent as the State has been in recent years in its care for vulnerable children, Twitter would be "in overdrive calling for jailing", Fr O'Connor said.

"Those who are normally very critical of deficiencies in the care of children and vulnerable people are silent," he said, continuing of those who are often disparaging of voluntary, charitable, and faith-based initiatives, "They're slow to criticise the State because they propose the State as the solution to all problems and the source of all good."



Misericordia CEO, Heydi Foster and Chairperson, Lucy Franks (both centre) with some of the 60 representatives of member missionary organisations at the launch of the new strategy. Photo: Jenny Barker

New strategy to ensure future of Irish missionary approach

Mags Gargan

Misericordia, the charity that processes the funding for Irish missionary organisations, has launched a new strategy setting out the priorities to ensure the future of the Irish missionary approach to development.

The new five-year plan focuses on key areas of education, healthcare, sustainable development and

human rights. The strategy is based on a global consultation with over a thousand beneficiaries in more than 10 countries and highlights a particular concern for women and children, refugees or displaced people and the disabled.

Direction

"Never before has Misericordia so deeply engaged its members and wider stakeholders about its future

direction," said CEO Heydi Foster. "It is an ambitious renewal of Misericordia and what we stand for. It marks a steep change in the way we support and accompany our members; in the way we inculcate and promote a missionary approach to development; in the way we contribute to a rapidly increasing global movement for positive change; and in the way we proactively engage with human rights."

Northern Irish bishops call on 'alienated' citizens to vote in election

Chai Brady

Catholic bishops in Northern Ireland have called on citizens

to vote in the upcoming election, asking them not to feel "alienated and disheartened". Recent instability in

Stormont was cited as diminishing trust and confidence in the political process, especially among young people.

The bishops, including Archbishop Eamon Martin, Bishop John McArdagh and Bishop Noel Treanor [pictured], highlighted issues with child poverty, the financial pressure put on schools, Brexit and the need for a sustainable future.

Opportunities

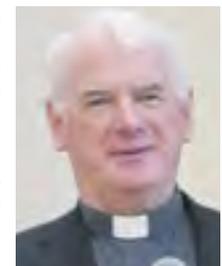
They recommended several questions each person should ask their candidates before voting on June 8. These included questions regarding what candidates would do concerning employment opportunities and better housing.

The issue of sustainable energy and what the parties should do to promote renewable energy and reduce food waste was another question.

They also touched on the abortion issue, as one of the questions reads: "How will you and your party protect and promote the value of every human life from conception until natural death?"

In relation to Brexit they said it "will have a profound impact on the social, economic and political future of this part of Ireland".

"It is vital that the government following the election is sensitive to the potentially destabilising impact of Brexit on so many aspects of the lives of our citizens here."



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Inheritance law change will empower older people



Mary Kenny

I don't imagine that most of us older people will be rushing off to our solicitors to alter our wills in the wake of the proposed legal change allowing parents not to have an automatic duty to bestow their worldly goods on offspring. Most of us, I think, will still want to leave whatever we happen to have in the bank or any property owned to our heirs and successors.

After all, the poor darlings will have to go through the huge amount of clutter, clothes, letters, ornaments, endless pieces of paper, general possessions and assorted bric-a-brac when we depart. They deserve some compensation for such a wearisome (and sometimes upsetting) task.

However, I think it's good that children should not automatically expect that their parents will leave them everything, much less considering the parental estate if they are dissatisfied with the will or legacy.

Offspring

Most children love their parents and most parents dote on their kids: but there are cases where parents genuinely feel that their offspring have not really earned the right to inherit their



estate. (There are also, no doubt, cases where children feel their parents have neglected them.)

But if an older person feels that their sons and daughters haven't been particularly caring, I think they should be entitled to distribute their worldly goods as they see fit. And if one daughter or son has been more involved with parental or familial care, then it's fair that they should be more rewarded.

And let's face it – the prospect of 'expectations' can also encourage younger people to be nice to some ageing relative. There are many episodes – often in comic novels – where a young nephew of the P.G. Wodehouse variety is anxious to please some dotty old aunt lest she "cut him off with a shilling" – i.e. leave him only a shilling in her will. The

parental threat that 'it could all be bequeathed to the dogs' home' has often acted as an incentive to considerate behaviour.

I've known elderly people whose annual hobby was poring over their will, and adjusting it according to the positive or negative behaviour of their younger relatives.

“The prospect of ‘expectations’ can also encourage younger people to be nice to some ageing relative”

And though it mightn't be very noble, such incentives and deterrents may well have some effect.

I wouldn't disinherit my offspring, to whom I have a responsibility, but revising or updating a will does make one reflect on who, in a wider context, is deserving of post-mortem gratitude.

This proposed law change empowers older people, and is an incentive to family members to show kindness and respect, and in that sense, it seems to me to conform to natural justice.



Rosa King, the zookeeper who was mauled to death this week.

We no longer fear power of nature

In an absolutely tragic mishap, a female zookeeper, Rosa King, aged 33, has been mauled to death by a tiger in a Cambridgeshire zoo. There have been many tributes to this young woman who was dedicated to the big cats at Hamerton Zoo and never wanted to do any other job, at which she was experienced.

I hope the tragedy will be given widespread attention, because it is important to get across to urban people that wild animals are fierce and can be deadly. They are not dear little pussycats for kissing and hugging.

Respect

Because most of us are so urban and town-bred these days, we don't always appreciate, respect – or fear – the power of nature.

I'm sure Ms King behaved sensibly, but the internet often gives the impression that wild animals are just so cute.

As Tennyson wrote, nature is "red in tooth and claw". We haven't changed its potential for ferocity.

Actions and choices have consequences

Conor McPherson [pictured] is my favourite contemporary Irish playwright. He has such a deep grasp of human psychology, and there is always an element of the spiritual – in the widest sense of the word, invoking the unknowing – in his writing. His drama *Paula*, which is going out on Wednesday nights on RTÉ (simultaneously transmitted on BBC TV) is compelling and significant.

Yes, the first episode certainly contained some sexually explicit

scenes which would not be to everyone's taste, but they were an integral part of illuminating the characters, and their flaws. Paula herself feels miserable after her reckless one-night encounter (as many women do) and we quickly have proof that James is a very shady character and a blatant liar.

The drama is fully in the Greek tradition of showing how we humans are so often the authors of our own emotional disasters, and

that the actions and choices we make have consequences, which can reach beyond ourselves. It is also a thrillingly told murder story. McPherson really is superb – far better than some Irish other writers so lavishly garlanded with awards.

i Mary will be in conversation with the author and journalist Kevin Myers at Listowel Writers' Week on Sunday, June 4.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Little support for abortion on demand

The Pro Life Campaign (PLC) has expressed optimism at the findings of the latest opinion poll which showed that a clear majority of voters are opposed to abortion on demand.

The PLC was responding to a poll in *The Irish Times* indicating that 72% of the public support abortion on 'mental health' grounds, but only 23% are in favour of abortion on request.

"The main players

pushing for change to the law here make no secret of their personal support for abortion on request without restrictions," said PLC spokesperson Cora Sherlock. "They fully get it however that the public is not on board for such radical change, so of course they'll try to come forward with a proposal that has the appearance of being restrictive but will be nothing of the sort."

Relics of St Oliver Plunkett to visit Cavan

For the fourth year in a row,

the relics of the 17th Century martyr St Oliver Plunkett will travel to the Kilmore Diocesan Pastoral Centre in Cavan town for veneration.

Organised by the Knights of St Columbanus in Cavan, the annual pilgrimage takes place on Tuesday, June 6. The relics will arrive at the Centre at 10am and will be available for veneration until 10pm that evening.

Bishop Leo O'Reilly of Kilmore will be the principal celebrant and homilist at the 8pm Mass, when music will be provided by the St Mary's Church Choir, Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim.

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Holy well day to promote water rights

Mags Gargan

The faithful are being encouraged to celebrate 'National Holy Wells Day' as an opportunity to pray for global access to clean water rights.

National Holy Wells Day is an initiative of Loving Sister Earth and Columba Community, Derry and will be celebrated on Sunday, June 18.

Appealing to Ireland's long and rich tradition of praying at Holy Wells, of which there are some 3,000 around the countryside, the present appeal aims to create a national network of appreciation and care for water.

Great gift

"Clean water is a great gift," the organisers said in a statement. "By drinking polluted water millions of people are becoming sick; without water living things are withering and dying; droughts are creating barren deserts."

The Columba Community of Prayer and Reconciliation will also be holding a novena starting on their patron's saints day, June 9 and continuing until June 18.

See www.loving-sister-earth.com for more information.

'Resources not religion' is key to school admissions

Greg Daly

Debate about the role of religion in school admissions processes continues to take place in the absence of data, heedless of how oversubscription and a lack of resources are the real problems on the ground, according to the body that represents Ireland's Catholic primary schools.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* following a forum in Croke Park to discuss ways of tackling problems related to the so-called 'baptism barrier', Hazel O'Connor of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association said, "There isn't actually a problem – it's created by the general

media".

The forum, she explained, had been called by Education Minister Richard Bruton in connection with four proposals the Department of Education had identified on how to legislate to address the perceived barrier. Submissions had been invited from interested parties, which were then asked to participate in the forum.

Vacuum

"We seem to almost be operating in a vacuum in that there are definitely issues with oversubscription in some areas," said Ms O'Connor, continuing, "but as for this perceived baptism barrier there's no actual evidence or data

that has been gathered in a substantial enough size to prove that there are any systemic problems, which is what this legislation seems to suggest."

Maintaining that "the bottom line is that there aren't enough school places for children", she observed that "Our work with schools would say it's resources not religion all of the time."

Ms O'Connor praised the department for engaging with interested parties through the forum, and noted that one interesting proposal that arose over the day was that schools could share admission and application processes.

"One of the larger issues in the area

of oversubscription – and this is no fault of parents who are just trying to ensure their child gets a place – is that they're applying for multiple schools so it's really hard to figure out how many children are not getting places or on what basis," she said.

Explaining that a common application process where parents applied for an area, prioritising the schools they'd most like their children to attend, would highlight where resources are needed or where multid denominational education is wanted, she said, "I think all of these problems could be resolved at local level with increased resources."

St Patrick's choir narrowly miss BGT finals



A primary school choir from Co. Down has narrowly lost getting to the final of *Britain's Got Talent*. St Patrick's Junior Choir from Drumgreenagh outside Rathfriland, had impressed the judges with their rendition of Katy Perry's *Roar* during Monday's semi-final. "You sounded amazing," said head judge Simon Cowell. "I love your personalities individually and that's what makes this choir special."

Belfast Catholic schools create more places due to demand

Chai Brady

In-demand Catholic primary schools in Belfast have created more places for pupils after a campaign drive by parents.

The extra 32 places were created after 80 children are believed to have missed out on P1 places in two schools, St Ita's and St Joseph's, in the Parish of Drumbo and Carryduff in the last three years.

Another 50 children were

turned away from St Bernard's PS in south Belfast in a three year period.

The two parish schools in Carryduff are reported to be oversubscribed every year, and parents formed a pressure group in an effort to highlight the situation.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) launched St Ita's in 2005 as St Joseph's couldn't meet demand in the area. However St Joseph's has now been

allowed to expand as well as St Bernard's in Rosetta, Belfast.

St Joseph's will admit an additional 24 pupils while St Bernard will take in eight more pupils this coming September.

CCMS said it was delighted with the outcome of the expansion, adding that it will work with trustees in the coming months to explore longer-term enrolment needs for the wider area.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Art is blooming at Trócaire's show garden

Trócaire's show garden at the Bloom festival in Dublin this weekend highlights its work with communities fighting for their land rights in Central America.

This will be Trócaire's first time at Bloom and its garden with a conscience will also feature a live art installation. The mural, designed by Wexford artist Yohan brings all the elements of the garden together and will be created and completed over the five days of Bloom, with input from school children from Milverton National School, Skerries, Co. Dublin.

Enable Ireland will also have a garden at the festival this year designed by members of Enable Ireland children's disability services and award-winning garden designer, Joan Mallon.

The 'No Limits' garden represents both the challenges that people with disabilities face but also the reality that you can live life with 'No Limits'.



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Vatican may yet veto St Vincent's transfer plans

Greg Daly

The proposed transfer of the St Vincent's Healthcare Group to a new company independent of the Religious Sisters of Charity is subject to Vatican approval, *The Irish Catholic* understands.

The sisters announced this week that they intend to end an involvement in healthcare that dates back to 1834. Although the now mostly elderly sisters no longer have a direct front-line role in the provision of healthcare services, they are the sole shareholders of the group, consisting of St Vincent's University Hospital, St Vincent's Private Hospital and St Michael's Hospital, Dun Laoghaire.

Controversially, the group is also expected to include the new €300m National Maternity Hospital which the Government wishes to site on St Vincent's Elm Park campus.

Shareholding

According to Sr Mary Christian, the sisters' congregational leader, the sisters have been "actively working" to relinquish their shareholding for the past two years and have decided to transfer their shares for a nominal price to a new company, 'St Vincent's', which would have charitable status and would not be bound by the sisters' Catholic ethos.

The sisters also intend to

sell the new company the land upon which St Vincent's Private Hospital is built, with this sale at commercial rates being expected to net the sisters several million euro.

The proposals are, however, subject to the implementation of regulatory, financial, and legal processes,

with the latter including canonical scrutiny.

Under canon law, Irish Church bodies cannot dispose of assets valued at more than €348,460 without a just cause and a written appraisal of the assets to be disposed of, and should not ordinarily be transferred for a price

less than indicated in the appraisal.

Perhaps more importantly, assets worth over €3,484,595 cannot be transferred without permission from the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Under normal circum-

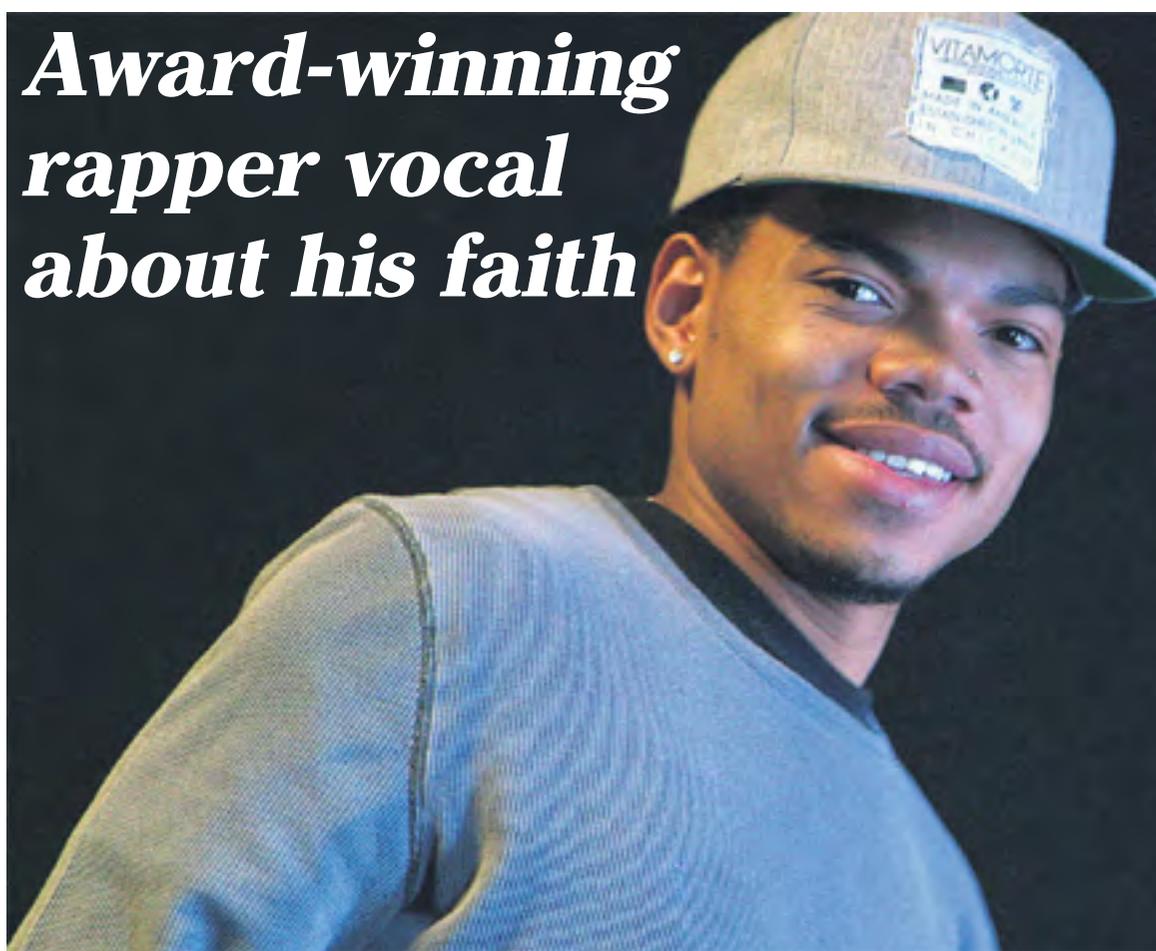
stances, the congregation would require at least confirmation from the local bishop – in this case Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin – that he has no objection to the plan.

So far, however, *The Irish Catholic* understands that the archdiocese has not been

consulted about the plan, with a diocesan spokesperson explaining that in such matters, "canonical requirements are examined only when due process is underway and they cannot be determined in advance".

See pages 14-15.

Award-winning rapper vocal about his faith



Staff Reporter

Chance the Rapper has revealed the influence of God in his life and how discernment has impacted his career.

The Grammy Award-winning rapper is the face of *Ebony* magazine's June issue in which explains that when he went to California to break his career he listened to God.

"There are a lot of spaces where you feel like God isn't around. I got some vibes," he said. "You have to listen and be aware of your discernment. You'll feel it...you just have to listen to God."

The 24-year-old – whose birth name is Chancellor Bennett – has spoken before about the importance of the role of God in his life.

"I still think that God means everything to everyone whether they understand it or not or can really see it for themselves or they find God," he said.

"I think the new generation and the forward is all about freedom and all about the ability to do what we want. We're not free unless we can talk about God."

New movement to promote evangelisation

Mags Gargan

A new lay-led initiative is aiming to put a structure for evangelisation in place in Ireland, modelled on a successful movement in the States.

A mission team from FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) has been invited to Ireland as part of The Summit '17, which takes place at Croke Park Conference Centre in Dublin in July.

"We had heard about FOCUS and went to their conferences in Dallas and San Antonio and saw the success of their work. We looked at their model for evangelisation and thought it would be a great thing to try to bring to Ireland," said Fr James Devine, one of two priests on the organising team.

"The idea is try to make

modern disciples and put a shape on evangelisation. A lot of people in Ireland know we need to evangelise, but they are not sure how to go about. FOCUS have been doing this for 20 years in the US and we are trying to learn from them," he said.

"We are hoping this will be the start of something that will grow and hopefully we can make it bigger and better next year."

Speakers include FOCUS founder Curtis Martin; Vice President of the Augustine Institute, Dr Edward Sri; director for Evangelisation for the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, Fr Michael Gaitely and a Focus Mission team.

The conference is limited to 250 people. See <http://thesummit17.com/>

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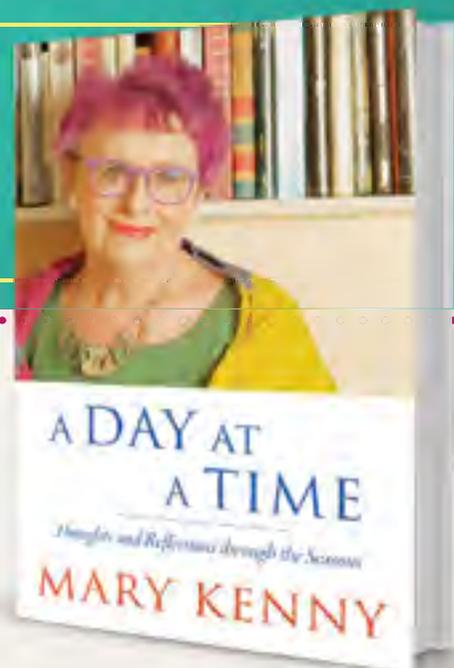
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Pope Francis called to visit direct provision centre

Woman tells of eight-year long ordeal

Pope Francis has been called on to visit a direct provision centre during his expected trip to Ireland next year, in order to highlight the treatment of asylum seekers.

Fr Paddy Byrne, a curate in Portlaoise parish who ministers to the residents of the Montague Hotel, a direct provision centre in Emo, said the system is a "scandal" but it is "not on the mainstream political agenda because it is not popular".

"The culture in Ireland, that was so vociferous in relation to the scandals of the past and how we treated our citizens in mother and baby homes, seems to be taking absolutely no cognisance of the fact that this remains a reality in this Republic in 2017.



Mags Gargan

There are mothers and babies imprisoned in horrific conditions, and in the parish where I minister, four miles out the road you have 140 people imprisoned up to 10 years by direct provision," he said.

"I call upon Pope Francis when he visits Ireland for the World Meeting of Families next year, to visit a direct provision centre. We have to challenge this with dramatic gestures and it would be in

keeping with tradition of the Church, our theology and our pastoral care – we need to be out there on the frontline."

Such dramatic gestures have been a hallmark of this papacy, since Pope Francis' first trip outside Rome saw him visit the island of Lampedusa to highlight the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean.

Direct provision was introduced by the Government 17 years ago as a means of meeting the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers while their claims for refugee status are being processed. It covers full board accommodation and personal allowances of €19.10 per adult and €15.60 per child per week. It was only supposed to be a short-term arrangement, for about six months, but was allowed to escalate into an inhumane situation with many asylum seekers spending seven, eight or even 10 years in the system.

"Is the Government waiting for us to die, so that they can forget about us?" asks Mary*, who has been living in a direct provision centre for eight years since escaping Robert Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe.

"Enda Kenny went to the US and spoke about Irish people needing citizen's status there, but what about the people back at home?"

"This hostel is not a healthy place – I need to get out of here. It is in an isolated area, a lonely place," Mary continued, explaining she volunteers in the local parish to keep occupied. "The food is not healthy. We have chips, burgers, wraps – everything is cooked in a lot of oil. You take food from the dining room and eat it in your room, wash the plates and then sit in your room again."

The centres, which include former hostels, hotels and a mobile home park, are run by private contractors who receive about €50 million in State funding annually.

Standards

Last month the State's Comptroller and Auditor General Seamus McCarthy said there was an increased risk that the lack of set standards for private contractors running the accommodation centres could lead to those living in direct provision receiving poor quality care or services.

"These hoteliers are receiving millions of taxpay-



Residents from direct provision centres protesting for an end to the institutionalised accommodation system for asylum seekers.

ers' money to run these operations," said Fr Byrne. "They are the big winners. We will be the losers, because in 30 years' time there will be an inquiry and a regress scheme and it will be the scandal of 2040 or 2050."

In the centres single residents share a room with several other adults of different ages, nationalities and religions. Depression, isolation and loneliness are common, with residents banned from employment which would give them a sense of identity and purpose.

"Invariably these people take Xanax and Valium because of their mental health. Locked up with no opportunity to contribute and all they can do is vegetate and regress," said Fr Byrne.

“The number of people living in direct provision...is trending upwards”

Back in 2012, Geoffrey Shannon, Special Rapporteur on Children, highlighted the "real risk" of child abuse in direct provision where single parent families are required to share with strangers and where families with teenage children of opposite gender are required to share one room.

According to Mary the residents have become institutionalised and "it not good

for children to grow up in that situation".

"They are born in the hostel, they grow up in the hostel – they know no other way of life. A friend of mine recently got her status and moved out to an apartment. After dinner her daughter went to wash the plates in the bathroom sink, because that is what she grew up with. She could not identify between the kitchen and the bathroom."

A Government working group chaired by retired High Court Judge Bryan McMahon and drawing from a range of interests in the international protection area, including two religious groups, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and Spirasi (the Spiritan organisation which supports survivors of torture) made 173 recommendations in 2015 to overhaul the direct provision system.

The three key priorities in the report requiring immediate action were: Those living in direct provision for five years or more should be granted protection status or leave to remain; The weekly direct provision allowance should be increased to €38.74 for adults and €29.80 for children; Communal catering should be introduced to direct provision centres.

The Government introduced a new International Protection Procedure at the start of 2017, which aims to streamline the asylum process and produce more speedy

decisions. Since the publication of the McMahon Report, there has been significant progress in resolving the situation of the more than 2,000 persons who were in the system continuously for five or more years. However, an estimated 200-300 cases remained outstanding at the end of 2016.

Solutions

"Although there exists complications in many of these cases it is important that solutions are found to bring an end to their long stay in direct provision, with all its associated human costs," said Eugene Quinn, JRS Ireland National Director

He also warned that the number of people living in direct provision, which fell in 2016, is trending upwards this year as the new International Protection system takes time to bed in.

The number of people in direct provision in November, 2016 was 4,279. By April of this year that figure had risen to 4,617. The system is at 90% capacity, with the population in direct provision continuing to grow.

"A failure to proactively resolve longer duration cases and to adequately resource decision making bodies, will inevitably lead to the re-emergence of lengthy delays that characterised the Irish protection process for over a decade," said Mr Quinn.

*Not her real name



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Communion of love

From the time of St Patrick right up to today, experiencing this communion of love at the heart of God has a particular resonance for pilgrims to Lough Derg, leaving the island as they often do with a deep, deep sense of God's presence, closeness and love. It is as if they have been taken into the communion of love that is Father, Son and Spirit.

If you have thought about coming to Lough Derg but never managed to get here or if you have been here in the past and thought you will come back some day – let that some-day be this year.

It is our hope that you will say yes and come as you are, come home to the love of God's family and connect with your family prayer here on Lough Derg.

Lough Derg has a special place in the hearts of the MacAllister family from Belfast. Paul shares his family story: "Earlier today, the family travelled from Belfast for the One Day Retreat and I asked Mum when did she first do the pilgrimage on Lough Derg – her teens was as near as she could put it and this year is her 92nd birthday, so it was a long time ago.

“Experiencing this communion of love at the heart of God has a particular resonance for pilgrims to Lough Derg”

"I started to come here when I was in my mid-teens with the school and then twice in succession in 1994 when my father passed away. Since then I've done it around seven times and then we started to come on the One Day Retreats, primarily to bring Mum back to the island as she wasn't able for the challenge of the three days anymore.

"Mum did the pilgrimage some 15-20 times from memory and I do know that my father did it 26 times, God rest him. It was a tradition with him right at the start of June to be on Lough Derg. So there is a history of my fam-



The MacAllister family from Belfast are regular pilgrims to Lough Derg.

ily coming to the island and it was always my father's wish that all of us, six children, would do pilgrimage together but sadly that didn't happen.

"However, I know that he did it with my three sisters.

"What brings me here today... first of all we have come as family with some



friends and a work colleague from Scotland – an opportunity for us all to be together. Personally for me it's the only place I have ever found on God's Earth where time doesn't necessarily stand still but it slows down and that is a very precious thing for me in an otherwise very busy working life.

Pilgrim reflection after their first pilgrimage...

To hear the whisper of the Lord, you must turn down the volume of the world. Find time to disconnect from everything around you and be still in His presence.

"Another reason I make a point of being on Lough Derg is to give thanks – I am happily married, lovely children and all in good health and finally the third reason, it just seems like the right thing to

do – hard to sum up in a few words this place, but it's a place I will continue to come back to.

"Being here with Mum today and listening to her remembering her experience of her time on the island – she remembers every little thing about the pilgrimage even now in her twilight years. To spend a whole day with her in this connected place, is a very precious thing."

Unbroken link

As Ireland gets ready to host the World Meeting of Families, Lough Derg extends an invitation to family groups, the parish family and the diocesan family to come and prepare for this occasion, to be part of the unbroken link of Lough Derg as a place of continuous prayer for families over the generations.

📞 The Lough Derg team can be contacted for more information on 071 9861518 daily from 8.00am until 9.00pm during June, July and August. Full season details on lough-derg.org

Sr Stan warns of the overuse of technology and the need to 'be present'



Chai Brady

People dread the thought of being without their iPad or smartphone for even a few minutes, and with constant stimulation it's rare anyone takes time to reflect.

Or so one nun thinks, as she takes action to stop people becoming "overcrowded

and overwhelmed" by offering a place where Facebook and Twitter are not allowed.

Sr Stanislaus Kennedy (Sr Stan) has expressed her concern about the role technology has in today's society, as people find it harder to just "be present".

"You see it all the time, every minute, you see it on the street, people bumping into you because they're on their phones, people on the Luas and on buses all the time checking their phones," she said.

"There's no space in their heads or in their lives for anything else, we all have a stillness within, and a place

of beauty, and we need to be able to connect to that."

Sr Stan began helping people in need decades ago, and continues to do so up to this day. After first establishing the homeless charity Focus Ireland she created the mindfulness and meditation centre The Sanctuary in 1988 – a place where people can find peace in Ireland's hectic capital city.

"I had a dream that there was a place in the city where you could open a door to a place that was beautiful, a place that was quiet, peaceful and still. And I found the site, and I built a sanctuary," said the Kerry woman.

The practice of mindfulness is becoming increasingly popular, especially in Irish schools with many, such as John Scottus School in Dublin, asking children to pause in between classes and meditate in the morning.

Sr Stan told *The Irish Catholic* she has used meditation for many years as a means to find stillness, and to go on an inner journey, ultimately helping her to understand her relationship with God.

Ashram

Several years ago she travelled into the depths of the South-East of India for three weeks. During her time there she attended an ashram called Dhyavanam, run by a Jesuit priest called Fr Korko Moses who she described as a man of prayer and a man of silence.

Ashrams originate in India, and are places of spiritual retreat, much like monasteries.

While the majority of ashrams in India are Hindu-based, many are Christian or interfaith and welcome people of all faiths and beliefs.

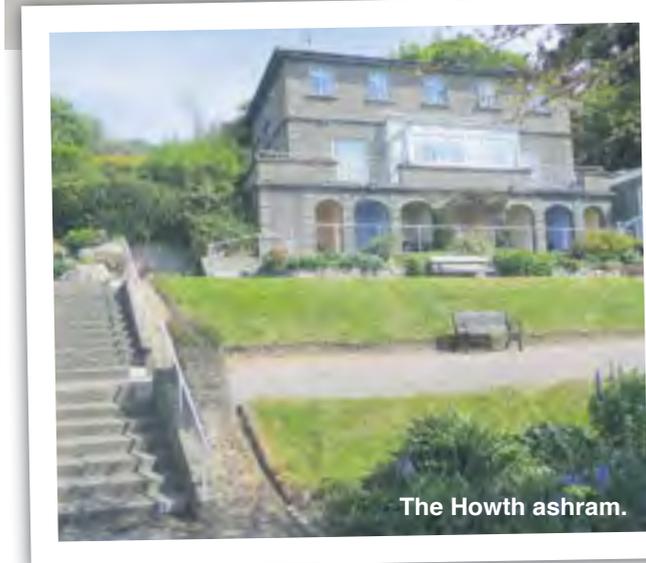
“If I experience, and I find something good, I want to share it with others”

The Indian holy places were brought to prominence in the western world when The Beatles visited an ashram in Rishikesh in northern India in 1968.

They are places of solitude, where many go to meditate, enliven their faith and to experience a simple life



Korko Moses plays the tin whistle at the Howth ashram.



The Howth ashram.

of the important things in life today is people learning to stop and to step back and just be present."

Sr Stan admitted that although some of the advancements in technology are "marvellous" people need time away from it, therefore nothing is permitted in the ashram. Phones are allowed to be brought but aren't supposed to be used, and iPads and even books are off the menu. This is to make sure people are being fully present.

Meditation

The Christian ashram will open again this year from Friday June 30 to Sunday July 30, and although the majority of people who visit the ashram are from a Christian background people of all faiths, genders and nationalities are invited to take part.

Attendants will be guided in meditation and peaceful activities by Fr Moses who is inspired by Christian and Eastern tradition.

With a capacity of two dozen people there will be a mix of yoga and meditation with vegetarian food starting from 6.30am, and each day ends with participants sharing how the day went for them.

Overnight residential costs are €85 per night, and €80 per night if the booking is for five nights or more. It is €500 for seven nights residential while a limited number of one day places are available for €55.

Sr Stan added: "Most of us live on the surface of life, we're always going and doing things and we spend very little time reflecting on who we are, and reflecting on our inner journey. This is the chance to do it, and do it with help and with direction so it's a wonderful experience."

away from external distractions.

Sr Stan was so taken by the experience she decided to bring it back to Ireland, along with Fr Moses, and for the last six years Fr Moses has returned to Ireland to help guide an ashram in the Stella Maris Retreat Centre, which overlooks Dublin Bay in Howth.

"If I experience, and I find something good, I want to share it with others and that's the way I've worked," Sr Stan

said.

"I found it very good, and I said this would be fantastic for people who really want to go on an inner journey, who really want to understand their humanity and their relationship with God whatever they call God, and the meaning of that.

“It's a way of reconnecting with yourself and your spirituality”

"When you experience stopping, and taking time to take stock, and really just being with yourself, and discover yourself in a new way, and learning then to meditate to enter into your inner life and inner journey, it's a new experience and something that stays with you.

"It's a way of reconnecting with yourself and your spirituality, and when you leave you take it with you. One



Sr Stan.

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Out&About

Edited by Mags Gargan
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Friary Folk Group celebrates 30th anniversary



KERRY: The Folk Group at the Franciscan Friary in Killarney after a Mass to celebrate their 30th anniversary. Photo: Michelle Cooper Galvin



CAVAN: Bishop Michael Smith of Meath at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt and the altar serving team prior to the recent celebration of Confirmation for 70 young people.



ARMAGH: Lord Mayor of Armagh, Garath Keating welcomes Fr Kevin Donaghy to a reception to mark Fr Donaghy's retirement after 17 years as principal of St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh. Photo: Liam McArdle



DUBLIN: Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council presented Fr Shay Cullen with a recognition award for his humanitarian work at a civic reception held in the council chamber last week. L to R: Mrs Jennifer Devlin, Ms Grainne Kenny, Preda Ireland, Cathaoirleach Cormac Devlin, and Fr Shay Cullen SSC.



GALWAY: Fr Paddy Mooney PP Glenamaddy with some of the youth and TY students from Glenamaddy Community School with their teacher Niamh O'Flanagan who participated in the liturgy and singing in a Mass for exam students, pictured beside the 'Parish Exam Tree'.



DUBLIN: Students from the 10th year of the Howth/Sutton TY programme with leaders Siobhán Tighe and Michelle Manley.

Out&About

First Holy Communion preparation in Bellaghey



DERRY: Bellaghey pupils and teachers with Fr Andrew Dolan, PP outside the parish church as they are prepared for their First Holy Communion at Bellaghey. Photo: Pádraig Ó Flannabhra, Photoart



CLARE: Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe with the NET Youth Ministry team at a farewell gathering thanking the young people for their work in the Imeal Boirne Cluster.



▲ TYRONE: Trócaire representative Mrs Pat McQuaid receives a cheque for £3,134stg from Dean Maguirc College, Carrickmore, which was raised during the school's annual Lenten Campaign. Included are: Principal, Mr J. Warnock, Mr P. Toner (Trócaire co-ordinator) and students from the college.



ROSCOMMON: At a Mass to mark the establishment of the new community of Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother in Sacred Heart Church in Roscommon Town are (Standing l-r): Sr Karen (from Tuam), Sr Anne (from Kiltimagh), Bishop Kevin Doran, Mother Ana (Superior General), Fr Rafael Reymundo (Founder), Sr Therese (from Monaghan), Sr Michelle (Minnesota). Kneeling: Sr Ruth (Dublin), Sr Bernadette (Cork), Sr Karen (Florida).

WEXFORD: Bishop of Ferns, Dr Denis Brennan extends a word of gratitude to the Sisters of the Holy Rosary (l-r) Srs Nuala Lahart, Theresa Walsh and Rose Twomley after 10 years of service in Terrerath and New Ross. Also in the photo are Frs Roger O Neill, Paddy Cushen, Sean Devereux, Tomás Kehoe and Msgr Joseph McGrath.

Edited by Mags Gargan
mags@irishcatholic.ie



GALWAY: Participants at a Mass to mark a pilgrim walk, celebrating the centenary of the apparition of Our Lady in Fatima and organised by the Knights of St Columbanus, from St Michael's Church, Ballinasloe to Our Lady of Clonfert Church. Photo: Michael Cregg



MEATH: Silverstream Priory in Stamullen now counts four novices: (l-r) Bro. Ignatius Rahbek-Pedersen (Denmark); Bro. Cassian Aylward (Australia); Bro. Hildebrand Houser (Missouri); and Bro. John Baptist DeCant (Ohio).

◀ **CORK:** Brothers John Hickey, Mike Burgess and Dermot Lynch at rehearsals with the choir who sing at 11am Mass in Holy Trinity Capuchin Church, Cork each Sunday.



CORK: Members of the Wilton Justice group, attached to the SMA parish, on completion of the course 'Caring About a Small Blue Planet'.



WESTMEATH: Pictured with Pope Tawadros II on a recent visit to bless and dedicate the new chapel at St George Abbey in Delvin are Fr William Coleman, Diocesan Director of Ecumenism, representing Bishop Michael Smith and Fr Paul Crosbie.



MONAGHAN: Msgr Larry Duffy with the children who received their Confirmation in St Patrick's Church, Bawn.

CAVAN

The Relics of St Oliver Plunkett will visit the Diocesan Pastoral Centre in Cavan on Tuesday, June 6 from 10am-10pm.

CLARE

Ennis parish walk on Sunday, June 18 at 2:30pm commencing at the Old Jail Road- outside Madden's Furniture shop. Mass for exam students in Church of Our Lady, Roslevan, Ennis on Saturday, June 3 at 6pm.

CORK

Annual novena in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Sacred Heart Church, Mogeely from June 15- 23 with Rosary, novena prayer and benediction at 8pm. Mass on final night. The Alliance of the Two Hearts First Friday & First Saturday Vigil of Reparation and Adoration, Church of the Real Presence, Curraheen Road, Bishopstown. Rosary 8pm. Mass 9.30pm. First Saturday Mass at midnight Friday. Vigil ends 3.30am. Come for all or part of the night.

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

DUBLIN

Divine Mercy Devotions in the Church of Three Patrons, Rathgar every First Friday at 7pm. Mass, Benediction, chaplet & blessing with relic of St Faustina. Confessions available.

Agape Charismatic prayer meeting in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, Tuesdays, 8pm (Mass last Tues of the month), Disciples of the Divine Master Oratory, Junction of Newtownpark Av/Stillorgan Rd. Bus: 46A/C/D or 58C. Tel: 087-6509465.

Life to the Full Book Club for young adults (20's & 30's) each week to reflect and discuss a chosen spiritual book over a few weeks. Every Thursday from 7-8.30pm in St Paul's Church Arran Quay (Smithfield). Email: michelle.manley@dublindiocese

Want to get fit? Embrace God in nature and build true friendships? Join other young adults (20's & 30's) for reflective hikes around Dublin area. Monthly event. Contact: siobhan.tighe@dublindiocese.ie

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Wednesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7.30pm. www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

Divine Mercy Devotions every Monday night in St Nailes Church, Kinawley beginning with Mass at 7pm, Divine Mercy holy hour 7.30-8.30pm, followed by blessing with first class relic of St Faustina.

GALWAY

Emmanuel House, Clonfert. First Saturday Day of Prayer, led by Eddie Stones June 3 at 10.30am. Please bring packed lunch.

KERRY

The Alliance of the Two Hearts First Friday and First Saturday vigil of adoration and reparation in Caherciveen parish church at 3pm: Divine Mercy chaplet, adoration, rosaries. Ends with Mass at 7.30pm.

KILDARE

Carbury Parish - Adoration in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Derrinturn takes place each Monday from 10.30am until 12 midnight. Adoration for priestly vocations takes place every Thursday at 8.45pm. www.CarburyParish.ie

KILKENNY

First Saturday Devotions, Adoration, Rosary, Divine Mercy and Prayer for Healing from 7-9pm in St Fiacre's Church, Loughboy.

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

LIMERICK

Novena in honour of St Anthony in St John's Cathedral, Limerick from June 5-13 conducted by Fr Brian Allen OFM. Masses each day at 10am & 5.45pm (Saturday 10am & 6pm, Sunday 10.30am & 7pm). With novena prayers, homily and blessing with relic.

LOUTH

St Anthony's annual novena will take place in St Peter's Church, West Street, Drogheda, starting Monday, June 5 and concluding Tuesday, June 13. Two sessions daily at 10.30am and 7.30pm except Saturday evening. Mass at 6.15pm. Preacher: Fr David Collins OFM, Killarney Friary.

A Holy Hour with music and reflections to be held in St Mary's Church, James Street, Drogheda on Wednesday, June 14 at 8pm.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass in the Old (Tridentine) Rite will take place on Sunday, June 11, in the Old Church Knock at 5.30pm.

MEATH

Trim Prayer Group, Thursdays 8-9pm, Trim Parish Centre. Christ the King Prayer Group, Enfield, meeting every Monday evening, 7.30-8.30pm, Enfield Parish Centre.

TIPPERARY

'Intercession for Priests' prayer meeting (as established by Sr Briege McKenna) at 8pm every Tuesday at 4 Nash Place, Cahir. Enquiries to 086-3002951.

TYRONE

Life in the Spirit Seminars in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher concludes on Thursday, June 1 at 7.30pm with Fr Kevin McElhennon.

WICKLOW

The Glencree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glencree on the first Saturday of every month. St Patrick's Prayer Meeting on Tuesday evenings at 8pm in the Scout Hall, South Quay, Wicklow.



A proposal – not a promise

Plans to give away the St Vincent's Healthcare Group may need Vatican approval, writes **Greg Daly**

According to the Religious Sisters of Charity, their planned cessation of involvement in the St Vincent's Healthcare Group has been in the works for two years.

For all that their plan has been widely praised as a noble, elegant and surprising solution to the conundrum of how to site a new National Maternity Hospital on St Vincent's campus in Elm Park, the most important lines in the statement by Sr Mary Christian, the sisters' congregational leader, may be the closing paragraph.

"This proposal has the full support of the Board of SVHG," it reads, continuing, "it is subject to implementation of all necessary legal, financial and regulatory matters."

“These are simply proposals or declarations of intent; there is no guarantee that any of these things will happen”

Everything in the statement, in other words, is aspirational. Claims that the sisters will end their involvement in the group, that they will not be involved in the ownership or management of the new hospital, that the SVHG will replace its obligation to act in accord with the sisters' philosophy and code of ethics, that the group will act in accord with the values of the congregation's founder, that the sisters' shares in the group will be transferred for a nominal 'peppercorn' consideration: all these are simply proposals or declarations of intent; there is no guarantee that any of these things will happen.



An artist's impression of the new National Maternity Hospital on St Vincent's campus.

The legal issues surrounding such a transfer are, after all, far from simple, and need to be considered in the light both of civil and canon law; legal requirements will need to be satisfied in both areas, as well as financial and regulatory respects, before the sisters' plan can be realised.

* * * * *

Readers of *The Irish Catholic* may remember how last month the Vatican began an investigation of a decision by a group of Belgian psychiatric care centres owned by a religious order to perform 'euthanasia' on mentally ill patients, in line with increasingly common practice in Belgium since the passage of euthanasia legislation in 2002.

Bro. Rene Stockman, Superior General of the Brothers of Charity, had requested that the Holy See step in when the Brothers of Charity Group rejected his request that they reverse the new policy.

Religious orders or healthcare bodies associated with them, in other words, cannot simply act in ways that are contrary to Catholic teaching, regardless of whether or not their actions are in accord with local civil law, and indeed can be held accountable for doing so.

It is, therefore, crucial to bear in mind that a key reason for the recent controversy about the ownership and running of the new National Maternity Hospital has related to 2013's Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act, which legalises abortion in situations where there is no other way of saving a mother's life – something pro-life doctors and campaigners have consistently said is never the case.

Cooperation

Might it be the case that abortions could be performed at the new hospital? If so, should the sisters really be looking to relinquish ownership and control of their hospital? Might this not constitute material cooperation with evil?

The answer, of course, is yes, but the sisters surely believe that the degree of cooperation is quite remote: they would be surrendering the healthcare group not so that abortions could be performed but so that legitimate and necessary healthcare could be provided in the best possible way.

Against this, though, is the reality that the prospect of the sisters owning the new National Maternity Hospital met with outcry largely

because the sisters, it was thought, would be opposed to allowing a hospital they own perform, for example, abortions and some sterilisation operations. Nothing as things stand, after all, stops the sisters from providing legitimate and necessary healthcare in the best possible way.

One could argue, then, that it is – in effect – really only to enable procedures that Catholic teaching forbids that the sisters are handing over the group, with the likelihood of such procedures taking place in coming years being all the more likely considering current pressure to abolish Ireland's constitutional protections for unborn children.

While the sisters claim that the new company will act in line with the values of their founder, it is hard to see that the Venerable Mary Aikenhead would have been particularly comfortable with abortions being performed. It is difficult to see how such a serious form of material cooperation will not pose a grave and even insurmountable challenge to the proposal getting canonical approval.

* * * * *

In addition, the Church has strict rules on what is termed the 'alienation of temporal goods', by which is simply meant the transfer of the ownership of property by sale or by gift from one person to another; for the purposes of canon law, the sisters would constitute a 'public juridical person'.

Under canon law, the Church – and Church bodies, such as congregations and parishes – have a right to acquire, hold, run and alienate temporal goods in pursuit of such 'proper objectives' as carrying out apostolic works including education and healthcare, and the charitable care of the needy.

When alienating temporal goods – and the ownership of a healthcare group that consists of three hospitals and will include a fourth is surely such – one general principle is that goods being disposed of should be valued at market rates.

It is, of course, theoretically possible that the St Vincent's Healthcare Group is so burdened by debt that its value is indeed a nominal or 'peppercorn' amount, but superficially at least this seems

unlikely. There is also the fact that the land at the Elm Park campus, the site of the former St Vincent's private hospital, is to be sold to the group on commercial terms that have yet to be agreed. Assuming, then, that the group and land together have a real and significant value, this raises the question of whether the sisters can execute their proposal or whether they might be barred from doing so.

Canons 638, 1291, 1292, 1293 and 1294 jointly map out how the alienation should take place, with a view to certain 'minimum' and 'maximum' values decided by the local Bishops' Conference – in the late 1980s the Irish hierarchy decided that the two relevant figures should be st£100,000 and st£1,000,000, with a view to these figures being modified over time in line with inflation and changing living costs.

If alienation takes place of property valued below the minimum figure, equivalent to €348,460, no particular permission is needed, but things change above that, with alienations between the minimum and maximum sum needing a just reason: facilitating the building of a new maternity hospital could well constitute that, but given the issues surrounding material cooperation above, this may not pass muster.

“The Church has strict rules on what is termed the 'alienation of temporal goods'”

Most strikingly, however, things change again for temporal goods valued above the maximum figure, now reckoned at €3,484,595. "The additional permission of the Holy See is required for the valid alienation of goods whose value exceeds the maximum sum," according to the Code of Canon Law.

In other words, the question of whether the Religious Sisters of Charity can relinquish ownership of the St Vincent's Healthcare Group may not be able to go ahead without approval from the Vatican – more particularly from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, often referred to simply as the 'Congregation for Religious'.

The practice of the congregation, when faced with cases such as this, has been to require at the very least a *nihil obstat* from the diocesan bishop where the property is located – a statement that he has no objection to the deal.

It appears that the ball is in Archbishop Diarmuid Martin's court.

Sisters of Charity were caught between a rock and a hard place



Society has to decide what the governing ethos of its hospitals should be, writes **David Quinn**

News that the Sisters of Charity are ending their involvement with the St Vincent's Healthcare Group (SVHG), and therefore with the three hospitals that come under the group, is very sad. In retrospect, the sisters should never have let the group (the board is lay-dominated) agree to the new national maternity hospital being built on their land, but they were between a rock and hard place.

It is clear that both the State and the board of the current National Maternity Hospital on Holles Street wanted the new hospital to be built on the southside Dublin campus on which St Vincent's public and private hospitals are located.

Pressure appears to have been put on St Vincent's to this end. Only two nuns sit on the 14-person board of the SVHG (the rest are doctors and accountants for the most part), and the nuns probably went along with whatever decision was made.

Control

The deal was originally announced last November. It was clear then that the planned hospital would be owned by the SVHG and therefore by the Sisters of Charity who control it, but there was no uproar then. Uproar only ensued in April when *The Irish Times* ran a story to the effect that the Sisters of Charity had, apparently, not yet paid the full amount they promised to the redress scheme established to compensate victims of abuse. They were €2 million



Kay Connolly, Chief Operating Officer of St Vincent's University Hospital with Minister for Health, Simon Harris and Dr Rhona Mahony, Master at Holles Street, looking at the plans for the new National Maternity Hospital.

short of the €5 million they promised, according to a report of the Dail's Public Accounts Committee.

It subsequently emerged, although it was barely reported, that the nuns have in fact met their promise by waiving the millions in legal fees owed to them by the redress board. This fact made no difference, they still found themselves thoroughly demonised. They had run some of the country's Magdalene laundries, and the public was endlessly reminded of this fact. This made them completely unfit to have anything to do with women's health, ran the narrative.

By this reckoning, the State is also unfit to have anything to do with the nation's health because its failings are also many, including its running of the country's mental hospitals in the last century where many abuses took place.

“By this reckoning, the State is also unfit to have anything to do with the nation's health”

Forgotten was all the good the Sisters of Charity did and do. These were ably laid out by Victoria White in a recent column in *The Irish Examiner*. Ms White is a member of the Church of Ireland but among other things reminded readers that the sisters, when they set up in 1834, risked their own lives to help cholera victims when almost no-one else would.

In subsequent decades, they provided healthcare to

countless numbers of poor people who otherwise would have received no healthcare at all. They are still doing that. But in the current mood of anti-Catholicism few wanted to hear this, and even if they did, they weren't given a chance to hear it. Demonisation was the name of the game.

The uproar over the nuns and the maternity hospital happened as the same time as the deliberations of the Citizens' Assembly concerning abortion. The real fear on the part of those who want Ireland to change its pro-life law is that abortions could not take place in the new maternity hospital if the nuns owned it. This explained much of the fury and outrage.

It didn't pacify them that the St Vincent's Healthcare Group said hospitals on its campus would carry out any procedures lawful in the land. Nor did it pacify them that the current Master of the National Maternity, Dr Rhona Mahony said the new maternity hospital would have full clinical independence.

The SVHG itself said it would carry out any procedure lawful in the land. It said the same back in 2013 when our first abortion law was passed.

This policy is doubly clear from the Sisters of Charity statement announcing their decision to quit the SVHG. It says when they do so, the hospitals under it will no longer have a Catholic ethos.

The key paragraph of the statement says: “Upon completion of this proposed transaction, the requirement set out in the SVHG Constitution, to conduct and

maintain the SVHG facilities in accordance with The Religious Sisters of Charity Health Service Philosophy and Ethical Code, will be amended and replaced to reflect compliance with

national and international best practice guidelines on medical ethics and the laws of the Republic of Ireland.”

What will the law be in the future? If the law permits abortion, then the clear implication of this statement is that all three of the current SVHG hospitals will perform abortions, as well as the National Maternity Hospital. And if the law in the future permits assisted suicide, then the current three hospitals will do that as well.

“It is essential that the remaining Catholic hospitals in the country take strong steps to protect their ethos”

This is obviously absolutely unacceptable from a Catholic point of view, and from a pro-life point of view. No hospital should ever

set out to deliberately kill a patient, whether the patient be unborn, old or infirm. Anything else is a corruption of medicine.

This is why it is essential that the remaining Catholic hospitals in the country (which account for about one in six hospital beds) take strong steps to protect their ethos. In turn this means ensuring board members understand and believe in a pro-life ethos that firmly rejecting killing patients in the name of 'choice'.

Society itself has to decide what the governing ethos of its hospitals should be, pro-life or pro-choice? Only the former is in keeping with good medicine. The latter is a terrible negation of good medicine. This should be obvious to anyone and the only reason it isn't is that even doctors have begun to place 'choice' above life itself, a disastrous moral development of the first rank.

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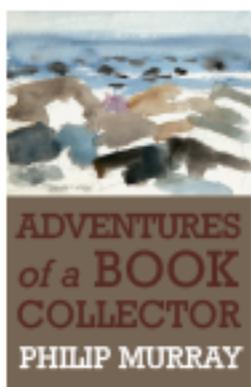
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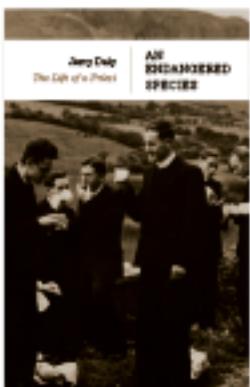
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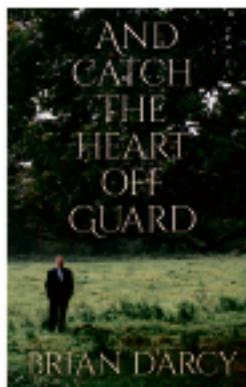
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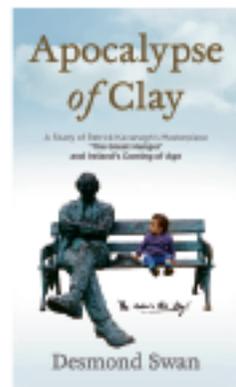
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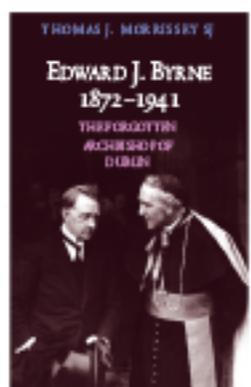
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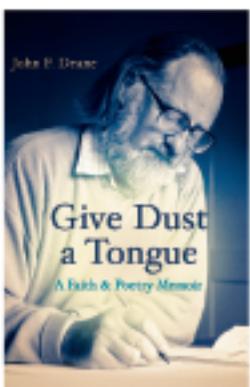
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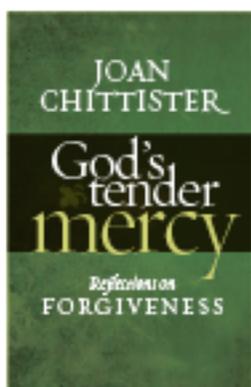


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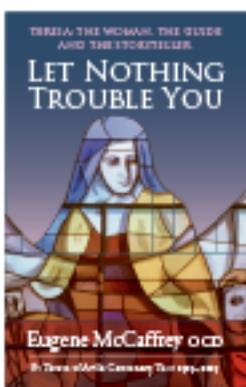
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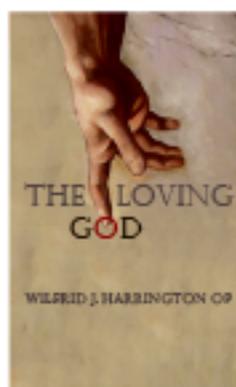
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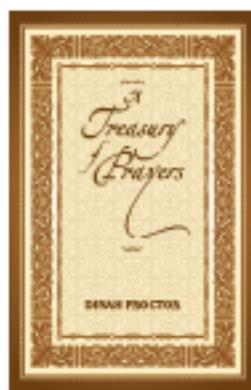
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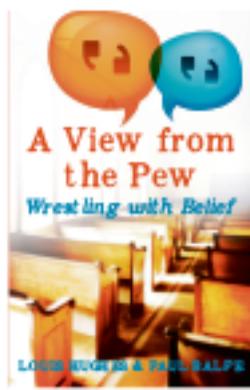
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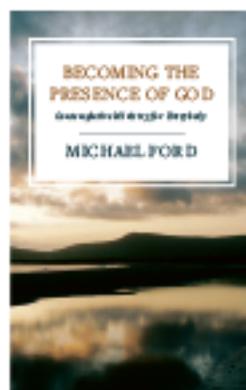
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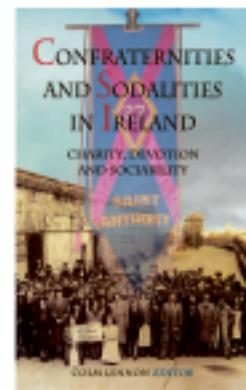
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Confraternities and Solalities in Ireland – Editor Colm Lennon



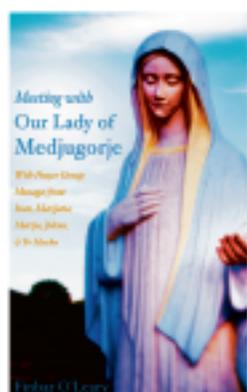
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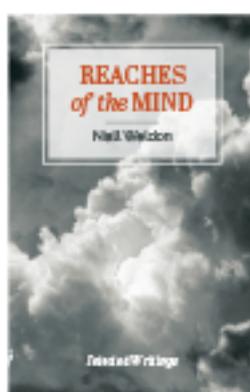
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IN BRIEF

Romanian parliament votes against gay marriage

● The Romanian parliament has approved a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as being between one woman and one man. The vast majority of Romania's lower house of parliament passed the measure by 232-22, with 13 abstentions.

If the amendment is approved, paragraph 1 of Article 28 of the constitution will read: "The family is founded on the freely consented marriage between one man and one woman, on their equality and on the right and duty of parents to assure the growth, education and training of their children."

The measure was approved by the Romanian constitutional court as satisfying the requirements for a constitutional amendment. It will now go to the senate.

Iraqi priests help re-build towns

Priests in Iraq have weighed in to help with the reconstruction of about 13,000 homes in an area that has been ravaged by the war.

Certain areas of the Nineveh Plains were occupied by the Islamic State, who have been accused of the damage and destruction of the civilians' homes.

The priests are working as surveyors, and obtain electrical service and materials for the reconstruction of homes.

Fr Georges Jahola, a Syrian Catholic priest said that "here in Iraq if the Church doesn't do these things, who's going to do them? We have the capacity to act and do the talking, and also the contacts".

Another priest, Fr Salar Boudagh, said that almost 80% of homes in one of the region's villages, Badnaya, were destroyed. He added: "For these families, the first condition to return to their villages is security."

African archbishop calls for peace during Kenyan elections

● A Ugandan archbishop has called on Kenyans to maintain peace during the upcoming general elections on August 8.

Historically similar elections in Kenya have been punctuated by violence, but Archbishop John Baptist Odama of the Catholic Archdiocese of Gulu has called for people to remain peaceful.

He told a crowd in the Nairobi: "I am appealing to all the presidential aspirants in this country, there is only one chair there. Not everyone can win it. If you lose, accept that it is the voice of the people. The voice of the people is the voice of God. We must move forward ever for peace and sustainability of security in Africa," he added.

Archbishop Odama is the chairman of a peace initiative which saw the end of a 20-year-long war in northern Uganda.

Caritas appeals for help after Sri Lanka flooding and landslides

Catholic charity Caritas is said to be struggling to help those affected by flooding and mudslides in Sri Lanka, which have killed at least 164 people and left many missing.

Heavy rain since May 26 has flooded more than 15 districts, with the southern district of Kalutara being one of the worst affected with 50

casualties.

The floods are thought to be the worst to have hit the country in 14 years. The army is involved, with a dozen aircraft delivering food and carrying out evacuations.

The government has appealed for supplies such as clothes, bottled water and dry rations for the people who have been displaced.

Holy Cross priest named bishop for Florida diocese

● Pope Francis named the Holy Cross priest Fr William A. Wack, who is a pastor in Texas, to be the bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee in Florida. Bishop-designate Wack, 49, has been pastor of St Ignatius Martyr Parish in Austin, Texas, since 2009 and was ordained a priest in 1994.

Among several of his achievements, from 2002 to 2008 he ran a soup kitchen in downtown Phoenix which serves 200,000 meals a year and provides a small transition centre for men and women. It also provides clothing and blankets as well as showers and lockers for its clients.

Canadian Prime Minister calls for Pope apology

An apology from the Pope would help the reconciliation process between the Catholic Church and indigenous people, according to the Canadian Prime Minister.

In a meeting between the prime minister, Justin Trudeau, and the Pontiff the issue of residential schools was discussed.

Mr Trudeau said he asked Pope Francis to "move forward on a real reconciliation" with the country's indigenous people "by issuing an apology".

Historically residential schools were boarding schools for indigenous Canadian people, which were supposed to teach them how to assimilate into Canadian culture.

However the children were subjected to several and severe forms of abuse and many of them died while attending the schools. Although they were run by several different religious denominations, the Catholic Church operated around half of them over the years.

It is believed Mr Trudeau said the Pope seemed open



Pope Francis pictured with Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife Sophie Gregoire Trudeau. Photo: CNS

to the proposal, adding that Pope Francis told him "his entire life has been dedicated to supporting marginalised people in the world, fighting for them".

Recommendation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Canada seeks reconciliation for the Aboriginal people of Canada, and has issued a recommendation that the Pope visits the country to publicly apologise on

behalf of the Catholic Church.

During the 30-minute meeting Mr Trudeau discussed climate change, religious diversity and indigenous people.

Mr Trudeau, who is a Catholic, says he invited the Pope to Canada and gifted him with a set of Jesuit Relations books which help detail Canada's beginnings. He also gave him a Montagnais-French dictionary written by a French Jesuit in the 17th Century.

However, there was also vast differences in opinion when it came to the issues surrounding abortion and the family.

In March Mr Trudeau's government committed to investing \$650m (€430m) over three years to provide abortion and other services to the developing world.

A statement released by the Vatican said: "In the cordial discussions the good bilateral relations between the Holy See and Canada were evoked, along with the contribution of the Catholic Church to the social life of the country."

"The parties then focused on the themes of integration and reconciliation, as well as religious freedom and current ethical issues."

"Finally, in the light of the results of the recent G7 summit, attention turned to various matters of an international nature, with special attention to the Middle East and areas of conflict," the statement read.

Pope Francis condemns brutal attack on Egyptian Christians

The Pope has dubbed the latest attack on Coptic Christians in Egypt as "another act of ferocious violence".

The most recent religious terror attack in the country left 29 dead and about 25 wounded when a bus taking the Christians to a remote monastery was fired upon.

The so-called Islamic State claimed responsibility for the massacre, which has followed a string of similarly brutal attacks targeting Coptic Christians.

Pope Francis said: "The victims, amongst which were also children, were killed after having refused to renounce their Christian faith."

He prayed the Lord "may welcome

these courageous witnesses, these martyrs, in his peace and convert the hearts of the terrorists".

The masked assailants arrived in three cars at about 10.30am last Friday, in Minya – an area known as a stronghold for Egypt's Christian community.

The government have given assurances that security measures for the Catholic community in the country will be increased.

President Michael D. Higgins [pictured] released a statement shortly afterwards saying the attacks in Egypt were an issue he had discussed with

Pope Tawadros II last month.

"At our meeting we discussed the importance of freedom of belief and expression – a fundamental freedom which has been threatened by these recent attacks," he said

He added: "On behalf of the people of Ireland, may I express my deepest sympathies to the people of Egypt, and in particular to the relatives of the victims, following the brutal attack on a group of Coptic Christians travelling to the holy site of Saint Samuel."



Military trial for 50 Coptic Catholic bombers in Egypt

Almost 50 people have been referred for military trial in Egypt for recent bombings that killed and injured over 100 Coptic Catholics.

The suspects are thought to be behind the attacks on Cairo's Coptic Church in December 2016 which killed 25 people, and two further bombings that killed over 45 people

in April 2017 in Alexandria and Tanta. ISIS later took responsibility for the gruesome bombing.

The Egyptian public prosecutor said that of the 48 suspects, 31 are in custody while 17 are still at large. It is thought they are currently being trained by ISIS in military camps in Libya and Syria.

It is also believed some of the suspects are behind the deaths of eight police officers at a checkpoint on January 2016.

The Pope, when he visited Cairo in April 2017, said: "Let us say once more a firm and clear no to every form of violence, vengeance and hatred carried out by in the name

of religion or in the name of God. It is our duty to unmask the peddlers of illusions about afterlife, those who preach hatred in order to rob simple people of their present life."

Christians have been increasingly targeted by ISIS in Egypt, with a large amount of horrific attacks occurring in the last year.

Letter from Rome



Muted reactions to statements from Cardinal Gerhard Müller are highly revealing, writes **John L. Allen Jr.**

There's an old philosophical head-scratcher about whether, if a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a noise? In similar fashion, one might ask if an alleged Vatican heavyweight makes a stir and no one reacts, is he really that much of a heavyweight?

The question presents itself in light of a fascinating interview conducted on May 12 with German Cardinal Gerhard Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, by Raymond Arroyo of EWTN and released last week.

There are many interesting points in the conversation, but probably of most immediate news value are Müller's comments on *Amoris Laetitia*, the Pope's document on the family that seemed to open a cautious door to Communion for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, and on female deacons, which is relevant given Pope Francis's decision to create a commission to ponder the idea.

Interpretations

On *Amoris*, Müller expressed frustration that some bishops and bishops' conferences have put out contradictory interpretations of its provisions on Communion for the divorced and remarried.

"It is not good that the bishops' conferences are making official interpretations of the Pope," Müller said. "That is not Catholic. We have this document of the Pope, and it must be read in the context of the complete Catholic tradition."

"We don't have two magisteria, one of the pope and another one of the bishops," Müller said. "I think it is a misunderstanding, a bad misunderstanding which causes damage, could cause damage for the Catholic Church."

In general, the thrust of Müller's commentary is to suggest that read in light of tradition, *Amoris Laetitia* does not actually authorise opening



Cardinal Gerhard standing outside the Vatican and, inset, Archbishop Victor Fernandez, on whose theological advice Pope Francis relies, with Fr Antonio Spadaro SJ. Photos: CNS

Silence around Vatican watchdog speaks volumes

the sacrament to divorced and civilly remarried believers.

On the issue of female deacons, Müller didn't "suggest" anything – he was about as blunt as humanly possible.

"No. Impossible. It will not come," he said.

"Pope Francis denied the possibility of female deacons, but he said we could study the old documents for having some inspiration, so to promote the engagement of women in the Church of today," he said.

“Everybody inside and outside of the Church has to respect that the Church is not a political or man-made organisation”

"People outside of the Church don't understand the mission of the Church. They are thinking the Church is an organisation like others, and we have to promote in a generally abstract sense the emancipation of women, but this has nothing to do with it," Müller said. "Everybody inside and outside of the Church has to respect that

the Church is not a political or man-made organisation, but is the Body of Christ."

Here's the thing: almost no one has reacted to the interview. There's no hubbub, no ferment, no rattle and hum of conflicting interpretations and analyses. For all intents and purposes, it's as if it hadn't happened.

Granted, some of that lack of response may be because Müller has made his positions clear already in a variety of venues, and some of it may be, too, because people are simply weary of the seemingly never-ending tussles unleashed by *Amoris*.

Nonetheless, the deafening silence also illustrates how much things have changed in the Pope Francis era.

Once upon a time, the earth shook when prefects of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith spoke. Historically, the congregation has been known as *la suprema*, the 'supreme' department within the Vatican, because it had the final word on issues involving doctrine – and since there's little the Catholic Church does that doesn't involve doctrine in some form, that's an awfully broad mandate.

When Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger ran the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from 1981 to 2005 prior to becoming Pope Benedict XVI, for instance, his every utterance was perceived to carry enormous weight. Theological careers could rise or fall based on a mention by Ratzinger, and the universal sense was that when he spoke, the full weight of the Vatican and the papacy stood behind his words.

“Müller and his most recent interview are exhibit A for a key insight about the Francis papacy”

That's simply not the case under Francis, who perhaps has not quite 'sidelined' the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, but who certainly does not rely on it as his primary touchstone for assessing the doctrinal implications of his decisions.

When Francis wants a theological assessment of something, it's clear that he'll rely more on informal advisers such as Argentine Archbishop Victor Fernandez than on Müller, part

of this Pope's general strategy of preferring to work around people who aren't quite in sync with his agenda than to formally replace them.

As a result, seasoned Vatican-watchers no longer assume that when the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith speaks, it's a hint of looming papal policy. Instead, Müller has become another voice in the conversation, someone to be respected for his senior position and theological credentials, but certainly not a pipeline to what the Pope may be thinking or planning.

Whether that's good or bad lies in the eye of the beholder, but in any event, Müller and his most recent interview are exhibit A for a key insight about the Francis papacy: Looking at Vatican organisational charts and knowing who's theoretically supposed to be in charge of something, coupled with a Euro coin, may buy you a cappuccino at a Roman bar, but it certainly won't tell you much about who's actually making decisions.

John L. Allen Jr is editor of CruxNow.com

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2,
or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Blasphemy is not about insults, but bullying

Dear Editor, I believe your paper's coverage of the blasphemy question – most recently in your Book Editor's comments – misses the point (IC 25/05/2017).

Blasphemy is not about passing comments on God, or the beliefs people hold about God; these are already explicitly allowed for in our Constitution and the law itself.

Rather blasphemy is about bullying, denigrating, vilifying,

defaming people because of their religion, thus excluding them from participation in society and taking from their enjoyment. It is not covered by incitement to hatred and hate speech as these may not be involved.

To be found guilty of it, one must according to the Act, not only cause widespread offence amongst a religious grouping, but be found to have had this intention, and

persecution depends upon the DPP. Hence comparisons with Pakistan are totally spurious.

The recent failure, at the first hurdle, of a disingenuous complaint against Stephen Fry and RTÉ, shows that the Act works as intended.

*Yours etc.,
Gearóid Duffy,
Lee Road,
Cork.*

Notion of a 'good name'

Dear Editor, Your books editor, in 'Aspects of Libel' (IC 25/05/2017), suggests that "the notion of a 'good name' needs to be reconsidered". Just to clarify, the 2009 Defamation Act, which currently governs all libel cases in this country, says a defamatory statement is "one which tends to injure a person's reputation in the eyes of reasonable members of society".

While lowering a person's reputation "in the minds of right-thinking people" and holding a person up to "hatred, ridicule and contempt" are still cited by some lay litigants (see www.irishbarrister.com/defamation.html), this has been superseded by the 2009 Act.

As for Mr Costello's suggestion that "The people who most commonly sue for libel now are journalists and politicians", all I can say is that, when compiling my webpage on the law of defamation, I seldom encountered either of these species!

Yours etc.,

Kieron Wood BL, Rathfarnham, Dublin



Disagree with Fr Hederman on sexuality issue

Dear Editor, I am writing in response to the publication of the new book from Mark Hederman. The book has received general acclaim in the media and is popular enough to make it into the bestsellers list in Ireland recently.

I have to say that I fundamentally disagree with his argument for a more open sexuality and a more diverse expression of sexuality in human relationships. I recognise that the relationship between men and women can be problematic, and even dysfunctional at

times, especially in the intimacy of marriage and in the challenges of raising children, nevertheless it still remains the beautiful design for human relationships.

I would argue that God created that design for all creation and human beings. There exists in all creation complementary relationships between masculine elements and feminine elements, which are manifested as plus and negative in the minutest elements of creation. God is showing his design in all of creation so that we humans can emulate this harmony

and beauty.

Even though there are anomalies in creation and there are examples of sexual fluidity, it does not mean that human beings should copy those aspects. It is intrinsic within human beings to keep the highest standard of fidelity and sexual monogamy. Within this monogamous relationship we are called to express uniqueness and creativity, as well as cultivating unchanging and eternal qualities.

Mark Hederman also makes the point that religion should follow culture. As if

culture is higher and more evolved than religious philosophy which tends to advocate for traditional marriage and family. Culture and art never led human civilisation, but emanated from a spiritual rebirth or enlightenment. I mean to say that not all art is beautiful, edifying and value driven, but is often dragging human beings down to a lower level that is not spirit centered but body centered.

*Yours etc.,
John Kennedy,
Balbriggan,
Co. Dublin.*

Abortion legislation would betray 1916 patriots

Dear Editor, In our 'enlightened' 21st Century of rapid technological advances and increased expertise, maybe we feel empowered to control many areas/situations where we have no entitlement. Together with the temptation to copy blindly the decadent legislation elsewhere, this may lead to the unwitting dismantling of our moral compass.

The Oireachtas is due to review the work of the Citizens' Assembly which advocated legislation of abortion for various reasons and none. Our legislators have no authority to introduce the proposed measures

contrary as they are to the spirit of the Irish Constitution. The Constitution itself and the very establishment of our Irish Republic are a consequence of the 1916 Rising, the anniversary of which was celebrated so spectacularly in April last year.

With all our tributes and obligations are we really remembering the ideals that our 1916 patriots – and indeed all our patriots down through the centuries – fought and died for?

If we attempt to introduce the legislation referred to we may well be accused of paying lip service only and

betraying those whom we purport to be honouring.

At this critical juncture in the history of our country we have the unique opportunity of fulfilling the aspirations of our honoured patriots who stated in the Proclamation "We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God whose blessing we invoke upon our arms".

*Yours etc.,
Gertrude M. Searson,
Rathfarnham,
Dublin 14.*

Foreign priests are not the answer

Dear Editor, Frs Michael McCabe SMA and Maurice Hogan SSC argue in "African priests take up call to revitalise Irish Church (IC 25/05/2017) that priests from Africa will renew the Catholic Church in Ireland today. I respectively disagree for the following reasons.

Foreign priests arriving here would have to learn our language and adjust to a very different culture before they could be effective in their priestly ministry. They would need to have the wisdom and humility to listen and to learn, before they could partner local priests and lay people in a new evangelisation of Ireland.

Re-evangelisation is a much more challenging process than the primary evangelisation of places like Africa, and simply importing foreign priests to provide a largely sacramental ministry will not resolve our current crisis.

I see our present crisis of faith as an opportunity, rather than a problem. An old model of Church is dying, and a new one is being born.

Like all births, this is painful, but trying to avoid the pain by re-clericalising the Irish Church with foreign priests is not the way forward. Any serious attempt at renewal must begin by addressing the root causes of our crisis, or it is doomed to failure. We need to confront the realities of our society and Church, and ask a few searching questions. What is happening and why is it happening? What should be happening, and how can we design practical programmes of pastoral action, involving bishops, priests and lay people, to build a new Church? This Sunday is Pentecost – we have only to ask the help of the Holy Spirit and trust Him completely.

A final thought. Why not accept Pope Francis' invitation to consider ordaining suitable local married men? This would allow African priests to remain where they are most needed – in Africa!

*Yours etc.,
Peter Boucher,
Derry city.*

A title by any other name

Dear Editor, I am grateful to you and to Mr Larkin for the review of Liam de Paor's republished book on the 1916 Proclamation (IC 12/05/2017). In modifying the title, the editor aimed for greater transparency; he thinks 'comparative analysis' is nothing less than accurate. Hardly specious, hardly anodyne, though it clearly is infelicitous.

*Yours etc.,
W. J. Mc Cormack, Wicklow.*

Enda Kenny's abortion legacy

Dear Editor, In last week's issue of *The Irish Catholic* (Letters 25/05/2017) your correspondent, Gerry Glennon, wrote on Enda Kenny's legacy and I would like to add: Pilate "washed his hands" and said "I am innocent of this man's blood" and 2,000 years later, we are still saying "suffered under Pontius Pilate". And in the same way, Enda's name will go down in history as stated in Gerry's letter.

*Yours etc.,
Anna Brady,
Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan.*

Letters to the Editor

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

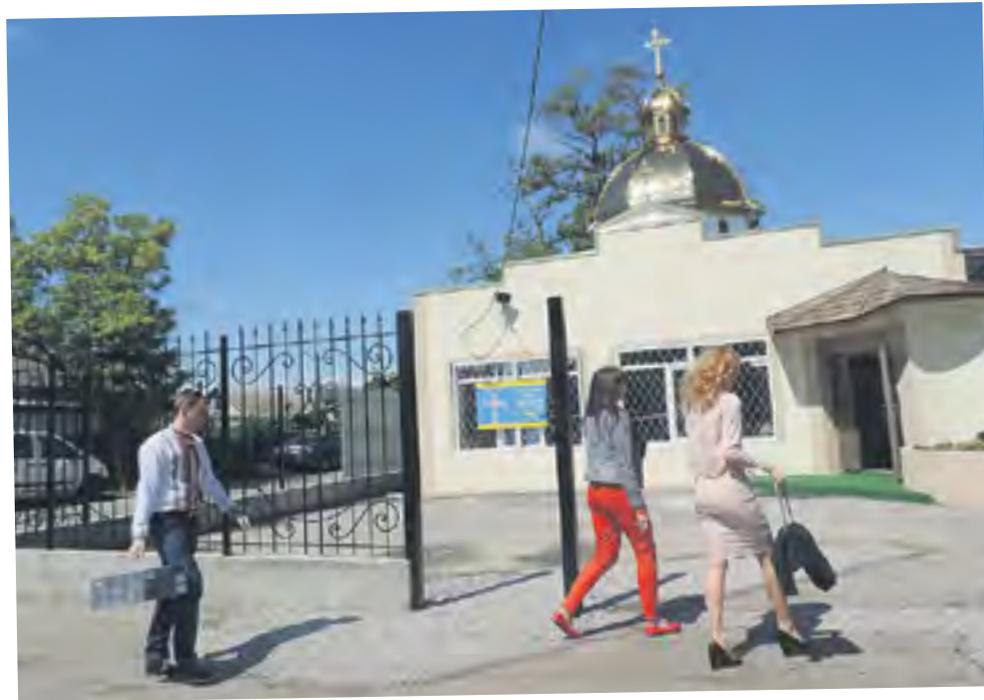
We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication date, acknowledge unpublished letters or discuss the

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

📷 Around the world



INDIA: Sunita Prajapati, right, an accredited social health activist, counsels village women on maternal health at her village in Uttar Pradesh, India. Prajapati owns an Android phone with two specific apps, part of the ReMIND programme, in which she maintains the record of all the pregnant and lactating mothers in her vicinity.



UKRAINE: People arrive for a liturgy at the new Ukrainian Catholic parish in Odessa, Ukraine. "We dreamed of a golden-domed church," said Bishop Mykhaylo Bubniy of Odessa, whose parishioners waited decades for the new building.



BRITAIN: Queen Elizabeth II speaks to 12-year-old Amy Barlow and her mother, Kathy, during a visit to the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital. Amy was wounded after an explosion the evening of May 22 at the Manchester Arena concert venue. Photos: CNS



VATICAN: US President Donald Trump and his wife Melania visit the Sistine Chapel after meeting Pope Francis at the Vatican May 24.



USA: Second-grader Kaitlyn Surozenski, wearing her First Communion dress, places a floral wreath on a statue of Mary during the annual May crowning and rosary prayer service at Our Lady of the Hamptons School in Southampton, New York.



PHILIPPINES: Government soldiers walk past a mosque before their May 25 assault on Maute insurgents, who have taken over large parts of the town of Marawi. Residents started to evacuate Marawi after President Rodrigo Duterte imposed martial law across the entire Muslim-majority region of Mindanao.

Going on, ahead...



I go on ahead to prepare a place for you!" Jesus speaks those words to his disciples on the eve of his death as he sits at table with them and senses their sadness as they grapple with his dying, his going away. His words are meant to console them and give them the assurance that they aren't being abandoned. It's just that he is going on ahead to prepare a place for them to come and join him later.

That story speaks to me very personally because of how one of my sisters died. She was young, the mother of a large family, and seemingly too young to leave her young children behind. She was dying of a cancer that, while relentlessly doing its deadly work, mercifully left her relatively pain-free and clear in mind and heart to the very end.

The cancer eventually took her to a point where she could no longer eat, but could still be nourished for a time by intravenous transfusions. But these too eventually no longer worked and, once unhooked from the intravenous needles, she was told that she had roughly a week still to live.

Hospital

She chose to spend those last days in a hospital rather than at home, with her family having easy, 24-hour, access to her hospice bed.

The days leading up to her death were a sacred time. I



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

took her communion several days before she died and, with her head still very clear, she told me what I should say at her funeral liturgy.

She had chosen that exact text where Jesus, on the night before he dies, tells his heavy-hearted disciples that he is going ahead, to prepare a place for them. She shared how, before every one of her children was born, before she went to the hospital to give birth, she had carefully prepared everything at

home for the new arrival, the crib, the diapers, the clothing, the room.

“Our task as ‘elders’... is to live in such a way so as to create a place where the young can follow”

She brought each of her children home to a place she had carefully prepared. And now she was going on ahead of them again, to prepare

another place for them.

I preached those words at her funeral and despite our grief and despite the fact that in moments like these there is nothing really that can be said that takes away the pain, her raw testimony of faith left us with an image that placed us all, not least her husband and children, inside a bigger story, a faith-narrative, that highlighted two things.

First, the image of her going on ahead of her children awakened our grieving faith to the truth that a mother can go on ahead to prepare a place for her children in much deeper ways than simply bringing a new-born home from a hospital.

Second, her 'going ahead' was also showing her children, and the rest of us, how to die, how to do that act that we all someday must do. After you watch a good person die, you become less afraid to die yourself because you see how it can be done in an ordinary way, by an ordinary person, in a way that you can also do. In her dying, she prepared a place for us.

But this isn't a lesson only about dying. This image, I go on ahead to prepare a place for you, is a metaphor which defines the essential task of our adult, mature years.

Our task as 'elders', whether that be as a mother or father, an older brother or older sister, an uncle or an aunt, a teacher, a clergyman, a nurse, a worker, a colleague, or a friend, is to live in such a way so as to create a place where the young can follow.

Our task as adults is to show the young how to live at a place where they've never been as yet.

And it is both a noble and humble task. Most of us cannot live up to the lofty ideals we see lived out in the lives of the great saints, though their lives have created an ideal place for us.

“Most of us cannot live up to the lofty ideals we see lived out in the lives of the great saints”

However, while not everyone can live as Mother Teresa did, perhaps they can live like you do and your life can be their exemplar for meaning, wholeness, anonymous sanctity, and dying without unnecessary fear.

I've been graced to be at the deathbed of a goodly number of ordinary people who died very ordinary looking deaths, with no choirs of angels silently chanting in the background, no alleluias on their lips, with pain and thirst dominating their concerns, with their hands being tightly grasped by loved ones, and their hearts still very much focused on the pain of leaving this world. And that's not a bad way to die.

In how they managed their deaths they prepared a place for me. Looking at how they died, I am far less fearful and can more readily say: I can do this!

What a grace to have someone go on ahead to prepare a place for you!



Mother Teresa – not everyone can live as she did.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, June 1, 2017

Youth Space
Youth ministry
outside traditional
boundaries

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Aiding **WITH** Aging



As a child, the love of my life was my grandfather. From infancy, along with my father and brother, I had lived with extended family which included grandparents, uncles and an aunt. My mother had died shortly after I was born. Granda and I were besotted with one another; this was my first experience of unconditional love, which has stood me in good stead spiritually. I could do nothing wrong, and he was faultless in my eyes. This was a good model for, and introduction to, our Heavenly Father and the concept of divine compassion.

Granda was left an orphan in 1870. His parents died in an epidemic – either flu or



cholera. They were buried in 'the cabbage plot' which was an emergency graveyard with no headstones. We never found their burial spot. He was fostered to distant relatives and grew up in Glenasmole, Dublin where the seeds of the faith must have been sown.

The Granda that I knew in the 1940s and 1950s was a man of deep faith. He used a prayer book to pray early each morning. He

Sr Mary Threadgold **RSC explores ways** **of coping with the** **challenges in later life**

sauntered down every day to the parish church in Dalkey for 10am Mass, arriving in time to make the Stations of the Cross before Mass commenced. In the evening time, when the Angelus was rung by the parish church, he would find my brother and I wherever we were playing and call us to come with him to the bedroom where there was a picture of the Sacred Heart. There we would say the Angelus with him. After

tea, we all knelt and he led us in the Rosary. He was a regular attendee at sodality meetings. He didn't smoke and he rarely drank anything stronger than cider (which was his Christmas Day treat).

Loving example

He never preached religion and he never read spiritual books, except perhaps an odd CTS booklet or missionary magazine, but he was a man of God. Granda was the embodiment of the Faith. It may be comforting for grandparents to realise that the loving example they give to their grandchildren does rub off and, although the seeds of faith may not blossom immediately, indeed they may take a long time to

bear fruit, our hope is that in due course they will.

For older people, nothing is really simple. Those activities which younger generations take for granted, at some point become enormous in the risks they can pose to us.

Physical challenges like arthritis, or other causes of reduced mobility, often have an emotional or psychological overlay too (which can accentuate the physical challenges) as we experience the loss of the agility that we once took for granted. Social issues like loneliness are closely related to physical limitations when we are not able to leave the house to meet old friends or

» Continued on Page 25

Children's Corner

ERIN FOX



An octopus friend for a seaside trip

The summer holidays are nearly here which means days spent at the beach scavenging for buried treasure and sea creatures such as octopus, whales, dolphins and seahorses. If only we were so lucky to find such majestic animals on Irish beaches.

But you might just spot seals, dolphins and even basking shark in certain parts of Ireland.

Don't be disappointed if you don't get to see any of these during your days out at the seaside. You can always make your own octopus friends to take with you on an outing to the beach.

For the octopus you will need: one ball of aquamarine yarn, scissors, googly eyes, buttons and beads.

Take a ball of yarn and wrap it several times around an A5 notebook until it's thickly coated with the wool.



Take a separate piece of yarn and tie it underneath the wraps on one end of the notebook. Tie this quite tightly.

Slide the yarn off the notebook and move the knot underneath the wraps so the octopus' head is smooth.

Cut another piece of yarn and three inches down from the top of the head, tie this around the handful of yarn. This is how you create the head.

Next snip the ends of the yarn at the bottom and divide all the strands into eight sections. Secure each section with a clothes peg so that you don't get the strands muddled up when you start binding each piece together for the legs.

“Use different shades of blue or go for different colours”

Twist the pieces together or plait them, and then secure by tying more yarn around the ends. Remove the pegs when you are finished, and trim the ends.

Stick some googly eyes or buttons onto the head to complete the octopus.

You can use any size notebook for making the octopus.

For a whole family of octopus, make two parents by wrapping the wool around an A3 notebook, and make several more using a mixture of A4, A5, and A6 notebooks as a guide for making the octopus children.

Use different shades of blue or go for different colours completely such as pink, orange or purple.

You can always try a multicoloured octopus by alternating the colours of the wool.

Take them with you on a day out to the beach, or hang them up as decorations at home.

At times of crisis, give children hope



Last week my family and I attended the fifth session of the annual Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Every week, there's a different guest speaker and, on this evening, it was Kathleen Chada, the mother of Eoghan and Ruairi Chada, whose husband received two life sentences for the murder of the boys in 2013. Kathleen spoke bravely of her own faith journey in trying to cope with the dreadful tragedy and loss in her life.

Speaking to a hushed church, she explained how she made the conscious decision not to let bitterness and anger eat her up.

I wasn't long home from the novena when the sad news about the bombing in Manchester started to filter through. As our family sat there in shock, taking in the horror of what had happened, the words of Kathleen Chada came back to me.

It was tough to look at my own little 10-year-old daughter and to think of all the children who headed out excitedly to see Ariana Grande and never came home. My daughter's a pretty resilient child but I noticed her shocked pale face as she hurried off to bed.

Panic

The scenes coming from the Manchester Arena were just too overwhelming with young children like herself running and screaming in total panic. One of the saddest images from that night was the abandoned pink balloons scattered all around the arena, a symbol of carefree childhood years and lost innocence.

People react very differently at times of crisis. Social media exploded, some immediately focusing on providing solidarity and assistance while others

A parent's perspective



Maria Byrne

viewed the terrible news as a chance to vent or threaten vengeance.

Children are very tuned into what's going on and, even from a young age, will be listening intently to what we're saying. In this age of smart phones, tablets and instant news, children are going to hear what's going on.

If it's just across the water, the news will definitely filter through. Rather than just trying to pretend that nothing happened, we need to talk to our children.

“It was heartening to read of how people rushed to help”

Child Bereavement UK offer tips to parents who find that they are struggling to support their children after such a frightening occurrence. They tell parents to look out for some common reactions to frightening events.

These may include children having nightmares, getting angry or upset more easily and being clingy or overly nervous about leaving a parent's side.

After hearing about what happened in Manchester, my youngest daughter kept asking me how far away it was and wanted me to show her the location on a map.

The close proximity of such senseless killing can suddenly

make the world seem like a very scary, dangerous place.

There's an inspirational post that always reappears when yet another traumatic event hits our headlines. It's attributed to kids' show host Fred Rogers and says that when he was a boy and saw scary things in the news, his mother would say to him: “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” Even into adulthood, he was comforted by his mother's words and by the realisation that, even in the midst of calamitous events, there are so many helpers, so many caring people in the world. Tell your children about these people.

Comfort

In the wake of the Manchester attack, it was heartening to read of how people rushed to help. As well of stories of great courage where people ignored their own safety to help and comfort the injured and dying, there are great examples from the ordinary people.

The sight of long queues forming outside Manchester's blood donor centres demonstrated how people wanted to respond positively. Sam Arshad, who owns a taxi company, asked his fleet of drivers to turn off their meters and provide free taxi rides to the families and children who were trying to escape the chaos.

Many city residents offered food and a bed for the night to stranded concert goers: the Twitter hashtag #roomsforManchester was trending.

The hashtag #prayfortheWorld also trended as people of all faiths and religious traditions gathered in Albert Square for a prayer vigil. At the vigil, members of the

Manchester Sikh Community provided free refreshments. On social media, thousands shared their messages of hope sharing the message #westandtogether.

“The close proximity of such senseless killing can suddenly make the world seem like a very scary, dangerous place”

Children need to know that, even at the worst of times, there is hope and love. One of the best things to do with children, after we've let them talk about their worries and fears, is to pray.

Help them to use their own words to pray for all the people who died and for the grieving families.

At a time when the temptation is to respond with harsh words or to point the finger, prayers should focus on a renewed determination to share the love and mercy of God.

On the same day as the Manchester terror attack, Kathleen Chada ended her testimony with a reflection from Abigail Van Buren. One line says: “Just for today, I will gather the courage to do what is right and take responsibility for my own actions.”

In a time of such sadness and loss, we can gather our families and communities together and give children the message that, in the words of Martin Luther King: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

» Continued from Page 23



mix in social circles like day centres or active retirement groups. Further to this, for many of us, spiritual and emotional issues often overlap to create multiple levels of risk to our well-being.

Before moving on I would like you, the reader, to think about the issues that bother you. Then you can see how these can be helped by the suggestions contained herein.

Many older people experience loneliness or have relationship issues, either with some family members or other unresolved relationships.

There can be separate family issues to do with finance, property or wills and testaments. These all detract from the peace of mind that is so essential to your well-being, especially in later life. Another issue can be due to the fact that one's social circle is shrinking as a result of death or incapacity of friends and acquaintances.

“Older people can frequently feel that they are not being treated with respect. In its worst form this can constitute elder abuse”

Positive relationships with adult children, and grandchildren, are a joy to many older people but that can be tempered somewhat by the number of grandparents who are asked to provide babysitting or childminding services for their families. A little is welcomed, but older people tire easily and sometimes too much is expected of them.

At another level, older people can frequently feel that they are not being treated with respect. In its worst form this can constitute elder abuse. Often there is nobody to give them time, to listen to them or share memories with them. There can be a lack of humour and laughter in their lives.

For some, it causes distress if they are addressed inappropriately, such as someone using their first name

when they would prefer a more formal form of address or vice-versa.

It is very important to recognise that, as an older person, they need help. Some are unwilling to accept help either from family or acquaintances despite the fact that it is readily available to them, either informally or through the public health or social welfare systems.

This might include refusing to accept meal delivery services or attendance at a day or health centre. They might also refuse the services of home help or other types of domestic care.

It is so helpful and invigorating when you find a friendly person to have a conversation with, somebody who has time to listen and is interested in you as a person. Quality interaction, and engagement from all involved, is the key to satisfactory conversation(s).

In some nursing homes reminiscence sessions are held by the activity organiser. These bring back memories at a social level, but the opportunity to share old family photographs and memories with an interested family member or close friend can be even more comforting. Some, though not all, like to take part in the sing-songs and parties available. All the better if these involve younger people, as inter-generational sessions can offer a special dimension and energy to the occasion.

Companions

Finally, pets should be considered seriously. They are great companions. Dogs and cats have different qualities to offer a would-be owner. Dogs may be more expensive to maintain whether it is the cost of dog food, vet visits or grooming.

They also need regular exercise, sometimes intensive, which can be a problem if the older person has limited mobility, unless alternatives can be found for dog walking. However, they are such loyal and loving companions and have reduced loneliness in many lives. I recently read in a daily paper that



older people are happier if they have “something to do, someone to love and something to look forward to”. Animals, especially dogs, are there to love and be loved, especially for people living on their own.

“Dogs are such loyal and loving companions and have reduced loneliness in many lives”

Cats on the other hand require lower maintenance. There will still be vet bills and cat food bills but they are very self-sufficient creatures, while at the same time offering company and affection to the housebound person. Cats have their own way of taking exercise, so therefore they require less rigorous attention.

Some older people have a liking for birds. They can be attractive both for their colour and their song. Parrots can be amusing if taught particular phrases. A fish tank is also an option, although help may be required in the maintenance of it as it can be an arduous task depending on its size.

i Extract from *Challenges in Later Life*, a booklet published by Messenger Publications.

Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



After the Manchester terror attack, our screens had an endless loop of images of panic, followed by heartrending images of parents frantically searching for their children. Some will never see them again.

Even though some of the children killed are a similar age to ours, our children have no idea the attack happened. We are careful never to leave the news on in the background, nor to discuss such things in front of them. They deserve to have their innocence protected at their age. Their school is similarly sensitive.

If we slip out of the media driven mindset, where the greatest threats to children are terrorists and paedophiles, we find the reality is different. Research shows that the greatest risks to children are car crashes, drowning, suffocation, burns and poisoning – in that order.

Not using the phone when driving, teaching kids to swim, putting the dishwasher tablets out of reach and making blind cords safe would be far more effective actions than worrying too much about the thankfully statistically small risk of terrorism. Yet there is something uniquely horrible about such murder, directed at children.

“We live longer, safer, more prosperous, healthier lives than ever before”

There is also something profoundly disgusting about the insidious behaviour of paedophiles, who often befriend children before they abuse them, preying perversely on their innocence and trust. It is right that adults are vigilant about these threats, as well as doing more mundane things, like putting medicine out of reach.

What if we cast aside our adult minds entirely, and ask children what they find most

terrifying about the world? I asked our kids this recently when they were considering their first walk to the shop alone, “What scares you most about being on the street without an adult?” The answer was simple: “dogs”. They aren't afraid of dogs per se, but an unhealthy culture has developed where we live for dogs to be left off the lead and out of control. They then run up to children, who cannot know whether the dog is about to attack or wants to play. Owners just brush this off as the dog “saying hello” but the fear for children is real.

Offence

It is actually a criminal offence to have a dog out of control which causes a person to fear they might be bitten, but few owners seem to realise the fear dogs can instill in small children. Yet the children's fear of dogs is actually more rational than the adults' fear of terrorism: 13 children



were killed by dogs in the UK from 2006 to 2016. No children were killed by terrorists in that period.

Ours is an age of anxiety,

where tragedies are writ large, yet the reality that we live longer, safer, more prosperous, healthier lives than ever before in human history is largely ignored. The media has much to answer for in creating this climate of fear. However, stories such as “millions of people have perfectly safe car journeys” aren't news, whereas tragic stories are. The terrorists need the media to disseminate their terror for them, which it does all too enthusiastically at times.

It's a beautiful day today. After school. I'm going to take the kids to the beach. This summer, I'm going to write my own, personal news headlines: Kids enjoy splashing in the sea. Happy Bank Holiday had by all. Fun had at barbeque with friends. Kids declare summer holidays “best ever”.

For the world is more beautiful than we are led to believe. Terrorists want us to live in terror. We must cheerfully refuse their offer of fear.

Youth ministry outside traditional boundaries



Working outside the school and parish model is a challenge and an opportunity, writes **Jemma Halpin**

Presentation Brothers Youth Ministry (PBYM) is situated in what was previously the Edmund Rice Heritage Centre at Mardyke House, Cork. The centre is now used solely for youth ministry, in line with the Presentation Brothers' mission of forming Christ in the young.

PBYM is not a parish-based ministry. And since the brothers no longer teach within schools, PBYM is independent of both traditional modes of ministering to young people. Therefore, as PBYM Coordinator, I am in quite a unique position when it comes to youth ministry. This comes with its own demands, but also presents fantastic opportunities. The Province Leadership Team's vision for youth ministry is dynamic and exciting, envisaging it growing from strength to strength without limitations. Inevitably, this passion brings some challenges.

I rely on the kindness and competence of volunteers, who often can be in short supply. I decided to concentrate on growing disciples through our links to Presentation Brothers Schools' Trust students. At first, I ran First Year retreats. Straight away I learned an important lesson: never run four day-long retreats back-to-back on your own! They were exhausting and something needed to change.

Small groups

Fortunately, I had begun an Alpha Youth course with 25 Transition Year students from Coláiste an Spioraid Naoimh. Their teacher suggested that we bring a few of

the Alpha lads to come and assist on the next First Year retreat. This was the best thing we could have done. The young TY leaders offered hot chocolate and biscuits, and facilitated small groups of the First Year students.

The younger teens then talked about their expectations verses reality when it came to starting secondary school. The older students offered advice and

support for the years to come. Without even realising it, the TY students were ministering to the first years. This was not only a highlight of the day for the first years, but also a fantastic opportunity for me to see the talents and leadership skills from the TYs.

I learned how important it is to ask for help – especially if it is young people who you are asking.



First years enjoying a Presentation Brothers Youth Ministry school retreat.



Many times we can think of young people as not being old enough, or equipped enough to deal with responsibility, but this is our first mistake.

High expectations are a must. Young people will not only step up, they will exceed these expectations. It is also vital that when we give our young people these responsibilities, we don't just take their energy and their time.

We must show our appreciation, tell the teens what qualities we have seen in them, nurture them and most importantly, minister to them.

“We must show our appreciation, tell the teens what qualities we have seen in them”

Half of my Alpha Youth group volunteered to help lead the first year retreats. So when it came to their Holy Spirit retreat day, during their own Youth Alpha course, they were open to engaging with the prayer activity stations and every

single one of them happily received prayer ministry.

I have no doubt that the TY students felt safe and willing to try something that they had never experienced before because of the relationships we had developed. They trusted me and what we were trying to do. They knew that their input counted, and that the ministry valued them. I hope to involve them further in PBYM's progression. This will obviously also help PBYM. A key factor is listening to young people and spending time with them, not with an ulterior motive, but purely because this is what ministry is meant to be. From this then, I can discover what they are interested in and how to connect with them, rather than merely going out on a limb and doing what I think they will respond to.

When I started working for the Presentation Brothers I experienced first-hand how important it is to be welcomed exactly as I am, and shown instantly that I belong. To ensure young people experience this will be PBYM's goal first and foremost. The second most important thing is the importance of looking after volunteers, having learned how vital it is to nurture them and minister to them, so that they can then minister to others.

PBYM might well be operating outside of the traditional boundaries of youth ministry, and this has allowed us to try new things. However, what I have realised is that the core of youth ministry is not where it is done, but why it is done. We are called to make disciples, and that can only be done by walking with and ministering to young people. The teens I work with have amazing God-given gifts and talents – and experiencing relational youth ministry is often the only way that they can uncover this fact.

Your hard work will now pay dividends

The month of June is when all the hard work you put in earlier in the year starts to pay dividends. Shrubs and perennial beds are full of lush new growth - their colour looking more vibrant in the bright sunshine.

As the weather gets warmer and drier, grass growth will slow down, but the lawn still needs to be cut. If you cut it every week (twice in 10 days is best) it will make the job a lot easier then leaving it until it becomes a hated chore. Cut in a different direction each time. This prevents the grass from lying down in the direction of the cut and becoming long. Always remove the cut grass from the lawn and compost it. That is unless you are using a mulch mower but these don't perform very well in Irish weather conditions.

If you have daffodils naturalised in your lawn, as long as the required six weeks have gone by

since they finished flowering, you can cut the foliage or just run the mower over them with the blades set high, for the first cut, rake off and compost the leaves, then cut to your normal height.

Some spring bulbs such as daffodils, snowdrops and bluebells are left in the ground but others such as tulips and hyacinths should be dug up, dried off and stored in a cool shed for the summer.

Weeds

Keep weeding your beds, little and often is best. Annual weeds are less of a problem now as they become shaded out by plant growth, but perennial weeds can get out of hand if you let them. Bindweed can quickly take over a bed if you let go. If you have it and don't

want to use chemicals, you must dig it out making sure to get every piece of root, as even the tiniest piece will regrow and take over.

If you don't want to dig, then train the bindweed up a bamboo cane. When there is enough of it take out the cane and put the bindweed in a plastic bag and spray it with a glyphosate-based herbicide, taking care not to get any spray on any nearby plants. Tie the top of the bag and leave it. It will take approx. 14 days for it to work. Glyphosate kills from the root up. Use it very carefully, following all the instructions on the bottle to the letter.

Plant out summer bedding now, when the frosts have finished. If they are in hanging baskets, they may need watering every day. Check all baskets, tubs, containers and windowboxes every day to make sure. If they feel dry or light, water them and feed them weekly. Also deadhead them weekly. They will flower until the first frost if you water, feed and deadhead regularly.



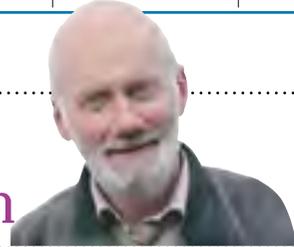
Green Fingers

Paul Gargan



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Home truths on racism and religion

Last week I wrote about a drama (*Little Boy Blue*) that told the true story of a murdered young boy. I wasn't expecting another such story to come along so soon, but it was worth it.

Damilola, Our Loved Boy (BBC One, last Sunday night) told the tragic story of Nigerian schoolboy Damilola Taylor, stabbed to death in London in 2000, and the efforts of his parents to come to terms with his loss and seek justice. I was glad it avoided sentimentality and didn't gloss over the family conflicts caused by the death. Guilt, blame, regret and anger provided for a totally credible emotional landscape.

The murder was heart-breaking, but the emotional fallout in the family was also painful, and communication deteriorated, often to the point of stony silence.

The mother, Gloria, was played by Wunmi Mosaku, who deservedly won the BAFTA Best Supporting Actress award for the role, and was adept conveying the spectrum of emotions from joy to shock. She was the rock of sense and strength in the family and the one most committed to her Christian faith.

She was the focus of the many impressive prayer scenes – especially praying for the strength to cope. In one scene, before the court case, she stresses to her other



Sammy Kamara and Wunmi Mosaku star in *Damilola, Our Loved Boy*. Photo: BBC

son: "God did not give us a spirit of fear." Her husband, Charles Taylor, played by Babou Ceesay in an equally impressive performance, is loving but authoritarian, inclined to blame and subject to dark moods.

He finds some relief in helping troubled juveniles, but as he genuinely stresses the need for father figures, discipline and respect, he seems often oblivious to the needs of his own family. Eventually, in a particularly poignant scene, Gloria has to confront him with some home truths.

Also on BBC One, **The Big Questions** (BBC 1 Sunday mornings), hosted by Nicky Campbell, is nearing the end of its current run. Last Sunday's show included the rather intriguing question 'Can white people be the victims of racism?' Personally

I would have thought a 'yes' answer was a no-brainer, but not all agreed.

Some defined racism as "prejudice plus power", and it was usually white people who had the power. Others disagreed, and at one stage Campbell suggested that maybe the Irish in the UK had suffered from racism. Useful distinctions were made between out and out racism and discriminatory practices, often carried out on the basis of religion and national identity rather than race *per se*.

Ideology

One contributor asked "What do we mean by white?", another talked of people "re-racialising", but I couldn't get a good sense of what that meant. Something to do with identity politics and ideology I guessed.

Another big question was

whether morality came from religion or evolution – fair enough it was just a starting point but, as one impressive contributor, Megan Loumagne from Oxford University, suggested, it created a dichotomy where it didn't need to be – the two viewpoints were "mutually enriching discourses", and the hostility between them was overblown.



Nicky Campbell.

Faced with the idea that people in general have moral instincts and that even primates seem to show altruism she said that that as God created the world it made sense that these patterns were built in.

One researcher thought religion had a useful role to play in codifying and formalising morality, and also in forming moral communities. Campbell reminded us that "some of the world's greatest evolutionary biologists were very devout Christians".

The discussion was mostly polite and respectful, with quite a bit of agreement between the 'sides', but one man lambasted the doctrine of original sin (which, I think, he woefully caricatured) and complained of 'Catholic guilt'. Sometimes I think that people who complain of that may actually have something in their lives they need to deal with, that they may have misdiagnosed a justified guilt that's deep rooted. Just sayin'!

Finally, a few other items worth catching up with – last Monday morning there was quite a heated but instructive debate on Newstalk's **Breakfast Show** between Michael Nugent of Atheist Ireland and Seamus Mulconry of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association on the question of denominational education.

And also worth following is **Arena: American Epic** (BBC

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE
BBC 1, Sunday, June 4, 5pm

Celebrating the golden jubilee of Liverpool's iconic Metropolitan Cathedral, plus music to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost.

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST REFUGEE CAMP
TV3, Monday, June 5, 8pm

News anchor Colette Fitzpatrick and actor Liam Cunningham travel to the world's largest refugee camp in Uganda.

MY COUNTRY, MY FAITH: IRELAND
EWTN, Wednesday, June 7, 7pm

Fr Brian Lawless and Michael Murphy share with Fr Owen Gorman the inspiring life and witness of Venerable Matt Talbot.

4 Sunday nights) Robert Redford's look at American roots music. Last Sunday's episode featured a fascinating look at early gospel music from the Deep South – historical, inspirational and hugely influential.

1 boregan@hotmail.com



Aubrey Malone

Film

Life's a beach for these suntanned posers

Baywatch (15A)

"I don't mind being called a dumb blonde," Dolly Parton likes to say, "because I'm not dumb – and I'm not a blonde."

Pamela Anderson has parlayed a similar trajectory in her career, playing into the sexist stereotypes that proliferate around her. One joke goes: "The longest anything stayed in Pam's head was a week – and that was just a cold."

No doubt she's aware such gags have fed into her earning power, which would explain why she tends to go along with them, as she did on a recent *Ray D'Arcy Show*, after which he was hauled over the coals by viewers about the

way he disparaged her. (Liberace used to say, "Every time they lambast me I cry my way to the bank.")

Most people realise that the hugely successful *Baywatch* series was really just an excuse for a bevy of bathing belles – chiefly Anderson – to parade their wares on golden sands under the auspices of a daft storyline. (It should really have been called Pamwatch.)

Such people won't be surprised to see more of the same here in a film that's vulgar both visually and verbally. On such counts it's decidedly unsuitable for younger viewers – as its certificate indicates.

Anderson's career has passed its peak by now of



A scene from *Baywatch*.

course so other chocolate box beauties have stepped in to take her place in the voyeuristic display of red bikinis and nudge-wink pseudo-humour.

It has eight producers, this in itself an indication of the lack of continuity it might otherwise have possessed.

The action sequences attempt (unsuccessfully) to make up for the absence of any cogent plot or credible characterisation.

Dwayne Johnson plays Mitch Buchannon, a lifeguard who clashes with former Olympian athlete Matt Brody

(Zac Efron) but when a dead body is found on the beach and a drug trafficking link is established they join forces to break it down. Indian actress Priyanka Chopra stars as Victoria Leeds, a businesswoman who uses her real estate operation as a front for the drug trade.

Female interests

Apart from Chopra, the main female interests (or should I say disinterests) are Alessandro Daddario and Kelly Rohrbach. Jon Bass plays a disco dancer who falls for Rohrbach.

There are lots of maritime thrills and spills but this is really one where you'd be advised to put your brain in

neutral and reminisce on the days when the TV series on which it's based – and which it exploits unapologetically – actually had something going for it as a family show and wasn't just an excuse for an exposition of the lowest common denominator of bad taste.

The film's deification of the surfboard culture epitomises what one might dub the Kardashianisation of America.

As well as the offensive prurience, it evidences another immutable law of the world of film-making today – i.e. if Dwayne Johnson is in it, its collective IQ is probably going to be significantly below room temperature.

Poor





BookReviews



Peter Costello

A remarkable woman's witness to faith

A Radical Faith: The Assassination of Sister Maura

by Eileen Markey
(Nation Books, \$US 26.99 / £21.00)

Valerie Roche

It is difficult in this era of global communications to imagine what it must have been like for Sr Maura Clarke to leave behind the familiar, stable life in the convent in Ossining, New York and set out for Central America in 1959.

It is true that when Maura joined the Maryknoll Sisters she was well aware that she would be heading into the unknown, and that her visits back to the United States would be infrequent. However, as she set out, she would have had no idea that she would live, and die, deeply committed to her new life alongside the communities she had chosen to serve.

The Maryknoll Sisters were, and still are, known for their down-to-earth ministry, working in remote areas of the globe, working with poor people and not just for poor people, concerned with the totality of people's lives and not just their spiritual



wellbeing.

Maura Clarke was no exception. Her first assignment was in the remote mining town of Siuna in Northern Nicaragua, and

then after the devastating earthquake in 1972, in 'Open 3' squatter camp in Managua. Her final months were spent helping those who had got caught up in the violence of

the civil war in El Salvador. Here she worked fearlessly ferrying injured people to hospital, medicines to rebel areas, and standing up against the brutal repression of the National Guard.

“Her Irish roots helped her to understand the social conflicts she encountered”

She was well aware of the dangers, but did not hesitate to help the people whose fears and hopes she now shared unreservedly.

A Radical Faith is an insightful account of the life and adventures of this intrepid woman, at a time when the Catholic Church was undergoing profound changes in Latin America, when Vatican II was expanding the vision of ministry, and where lay Catholics were taking an increasingly active role in the emerging Christian Base Communities.

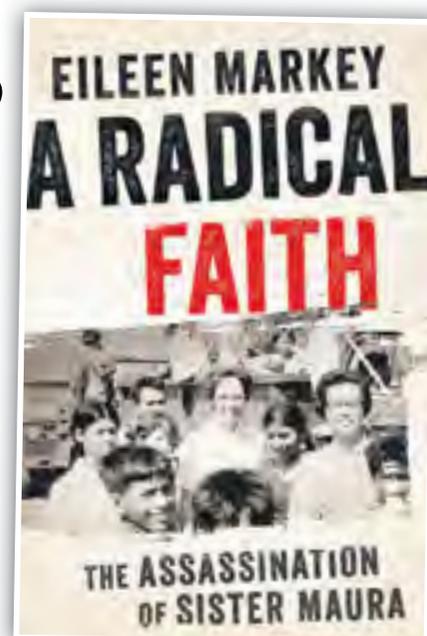
The life of Maura is emblematic of these changes. Her initial 17 years as a missionary in Nicaragua saw her deepen her understanding of

the social injustices which were at the root of the abhorrent poverty of the people she had come to serve, and led her to identify increasingly with those who stood up against the authorities who strove to maintain the status quo.

Sr Maura's Christian faith led her to take a radical stand. Her Irish roots helped her to understand the social conflicts she encountered and her deep engagement with the individuals she worked with came from her commitment to people and a desire to lessen their suffering.

“The author chooses to pass with great sensitivity over the circumstances of their death”

If I have one small issue with this book, it is the subtitle: "The assassination of Sister Maura". We imagine from this that we will read



extensively of the circumstances of her shocking murder; that we will be exposed to the gruesome details of the rape and murder of Sr Maura and her companions Ita Ford, Jean Donovan and Dorothy Kazel on that terrible night in December 1980.

However, author Eileen Markey chooses to pass swiftly and with great sensitivity over the circumstances of their death, and the speculations which surrounded that horrifying occurrence. Instead she focuses almost the entire book on the wonderful life and work of these most remarkable women whose exemplary life should inspire those who espouse the Christian faith to live their beliefs in deeds and actions, and not just in words and prayer.

Outspoken but well informed views on Ireland

Women Writing War: Ireland 1880 – 1922

edited by Tina O'Toole, Gillian McIntosh, Muireann Ó Cinnéide
(University College Dublin Press, €30)

J. A. Gaughan

This is a collection of essays about war written from a feminist perspective. In the opening essay Diane Urquhart focuses on Anna Parnell, an archetypal feminist firebrand. Born in 1852, Anna was a sister of Charles Stewart Parnell.

With others she founded the Ladies' Land League in 1881. Its aim was the same as that of the Land League, namely to protect tenants and abolish landlordism. More than five hundred branches were established in Ireland and among the Irish diaspora.

A formidable public speaker, in addressing "Protest Meetings" she was most intemperate in her language, abusing and fiercely attacking the British prime minister and other leading politicians, never taming her anti-Englishness even for British audiences. Her rhetoric was at its most intense after a disappointing Land Act in August 1881 and the widespread arrest of Land Leaguers.

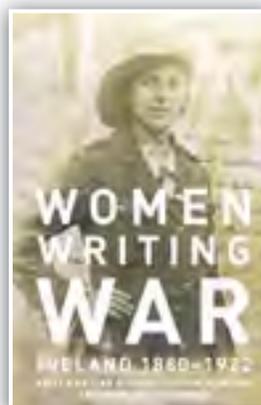
Parnell was alarmed by the militancy of his sister and her colleagues, and effectively

closed down the Ladies' Land League in August 1882. As a result, Anna became permanently estranged from her brother, left Ireland and settled in the south of England, where she died in a drowning accident at Ilfracombe in 1911. Before she died she had been living in the area alone, anonymously and forgotten.

The Parnell Society revived her memory by unveiling a plaque on her headstone in 2002 which saluted her as a true Irish patriot. Regrettably, this is not adverted to by Diana Urquhart.

Interest

Róna Nic Congáil traces the life of the academic Agnes O'Farrelly, a champion of equal opportunity in university education. Born in Co. Cavan in 1874, she had an interest in Irish from her early years. After teaching it at Alexandra and Loreto colleges she was appointed lecturer in modern Irish at UCD in 1909. When Douglas Hyde retired she succeeded him as professor until 1947. She was president



of the Irish Federation of University Women and the National University Women Graduates Association.

“NicCongáil rather oddly describes Peig Sayers, who attended a primary school, as illiterate!”

O'Farrelly was an influential member of the Gaelic League, where she was a close friend of Hyde, Eoin MacNeill and P.H. Pearse. She presided at the inaugural meeting of Cumann na mBan. A friend of Roger Casement, she gathered signatures to a petition for

The cover of *Women Writing War: Ireland 1880-1922* and, left, the grave of Anna Parnell.

the reprieve of his death sentence.

In discussing her work and that of other Irish-language women writers in the 1930s and 1940s, NicCongáil rather oddly describes Peig Sayers, who attended a primary school, as illiterate!

Heidi Hansson discusses Emily Lawless' *A Garden Diary*, disentangling from it her responses to the 'good and bad news' coming from South Africa during the Boer War, which reveal Lawless as a British imperialist. Lucy Collins examines the war poetry of Winifred Letts and in a splendid piece of literary criticism shows how she sheds new light on the moral ambiguities of violent conflict. Tina O'Toole introduces lesser known women from the Glens of Antrim who were both writers and revolutionaries.

In the concluding essay Lia Mills describes her shock when she learned the extent of the violence of the Easter Rising: 485 people (more civilians than combatants) were killed, almost 1,500 severely wounded, and 100,000 had to go on relief having lost everything in the fires. She is severely critical of the heroic and romanticised version of the Easter Rising.

This is a view that would be welcomed by the other contributors to this collection of thought-provoking essays.

Thank God for Day light

Dorothy Day: The world will be saved by beauty, an intimate portrait of my grandmother

by Kate Hennessy
(Scribner, \$27.99)

Thérèse

by Dorothy Day, foreword by Robert Ellsberg
(Christian Classics, Ave Maria Press, £12.99)

Frank Litton

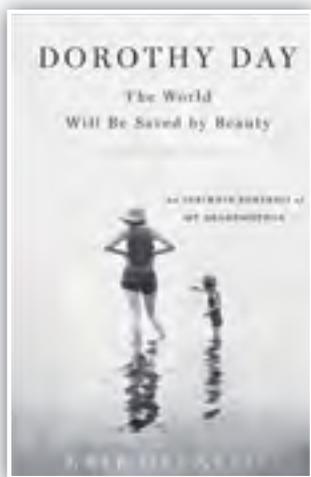
Cardinal Spellman (1889-1967) and Dorothy Day (1897-1980) were both important figures in the history of north American Catholicism in the 20th Century.

Both were based in New York. Spellman presided over the archdiocese from his residence on 5th Avenue; Day's 'House of Hospitality' in Lower East Side gave shelter to the homeless and food to the hungry.

Spellman built up the infrastructure of the archdiocese. Just as importantly he established good relationships with the social, political and economic elite and brought the Church into the mainstream. His churches and schools promoted the Faith and taught charity and by winning the respect of the 'great and the good' he gave Catholics hope and confidence. He admired the military and was proud to serve as their 'Head Chaplain'. He was a vigorous anti-Communist and supported the war in Vietnam.

“Thérèse left the world for an enclosed Carmelite Convent at the age of 15. She belongs to the 19th Century; Day belongs to the 20th”

Day and her colleagues saw a world profoundly marked by inequality and exploitation and in need of transformation. Catholic social teaching pointed to the direction. The first step was to give witness to the Gospels in the practice of charity. She was an unswerving pacifist



throughout the Second World War and the Cold War. While Day had her admirers, and her followers, for much of her life she was a marginal figure working on the outside.

Canonisation

When Pope Francis addressed the joint meeting of the US Congress in 2015, he singled out two North American Catholics. One was Dorothy Day. In 1997 Spellman's successor Cardinal O'Connor started the process for her canonisation. Thanks to her grand-daughter, Kate Hennessy, we now have an account of her life that will convince many that this is justified.

Day began writing a biography of St Thérèse of Lisieux in the early 1950s; it was published in 1960 and has just been reissued. As Day acknowledges in her introduction, it appears a strange choice of subject.

The worlds' of Day and Thérèse could hardly be further apart. Day's family were indifferent to religion, Thérèse's were exceptionally pious. Day was reared in Chicago and lived most of her life in New York. Thérèse was reared in provincial France. Thérèse left the world for an enclosed Carmelite Convent at the age of 15. She belongs to the 19th Century; Day belongs to the 20th. She was engaged with the world as writer, editor and social activist.

The bohemian circles in which Day moved as a young adult had little or no time for religion. Yet Day had a religious instinct. This came strongly to the fore when her daughter Tamar was born. The transcendent became

vivid in the wonder of new life. She insisted that Tamar be baptised in a Catholic Church. (She had observed that this was a church preferred by the poor.) This led to a break-up with Tamar's father that she tried hard to avoid. But he was implacable in his opposition to any and all religion.

She continued to write, publishing a novel and working, briefly, as scriptwriter in Hollywood. She returned to New York and while working for a radical socialist paper, she met Peter Maurin. His revolutionary version of Catholic Humanism showed her how her new-found faith could nourish and sustain her radical politics. She started the paper *The Catholic Worker* to promote Catholic social teaching and established the first "House of Hospitality" to demonstrate what it meant in practice.

“St Thérèse encountered the divine...in the particulars of daily life with their frustrations”

Day's biography of Thérèse introduces us to a saint with a succinct account of her family and life. When we read Hennessy it becomes quite clear why Day was attracted to her. St Thérèse encountered the divine, not in mighty deeds or profound thoughts, but in the particulars of daily life with their frustrations and promises. She lived in the presence of God.

Day brought the airy abstractions that faith, hope and charity often remain to many down to earth, back to the rough ground. She sought and found a transcendence few of us can find and from which all can learn.

She found it in the challenges of being a single mother while running a House of Hospitality whose residents were not vetted for character, personality or healthy habits. Funding was always a problem. Ambitions to establish



A stained glass image of Dorothy Day.

farming communities were continuously frustrated and had to be abandoned. Articulating a position and finding a practice that did justice to her Gospel inspired vision of a just society was difficult.

Hennessy gives us a moving picture of the strengths and associated weaknesses of her personality and that of her daughter. She describes the force of circumstances that had to be overcome and

the resources, religious and secular, she deployed. And all the time, we can discern the pull of grace and growth in faith, hope and charity. As with Thérèse, we learn where we should look to find our God.

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 Say this prayer for three days.
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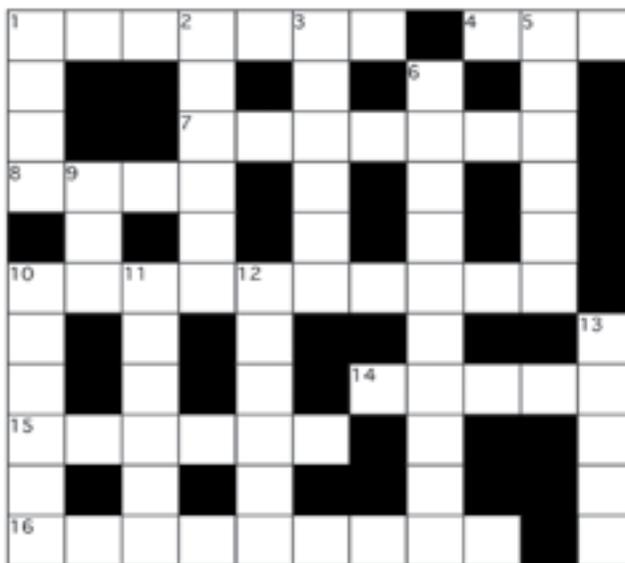
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 184



ACROSS

- 1. Small house. (7)
- 4. Jam container. (3)
- 7. One, seventeen and ninety-four are all _____. (7)
- 8. Tiny branch. (4)
- 10. Scientific test. (10)
- 14. It rises from a fire. (5)
- 15. Messy, not neat. (6)
- 16. A magician might say this phrase. (3,6)

also called 'The Twins'. (6)

- 5. Not at school. (6)
- 6. This sweet makes your breath fresher. (10)
- 9. A crayon or a candle might be made of this. (3)
- 10. As much as is needed. (6)
- 11. Writing that is in verse. (6)
- 12. You use it to steer a boat. (6)
- 13. Start. (5)

DOWN

- 1. Wagon. (4)
- 2. You use it to lick a stamp, for example. (6)
- 3. This sign of the Zodiac is

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.300

Across – 1 Pub 3 Communicate 8 Truman Capote 9 Napoleon 10 Nifty 11 Steam 13 Diver 15 Ingests 16 Plummet 20 Dried 21 Trait 23 Jihad 24 Criminal 26 Bag of tricks 27 Mud

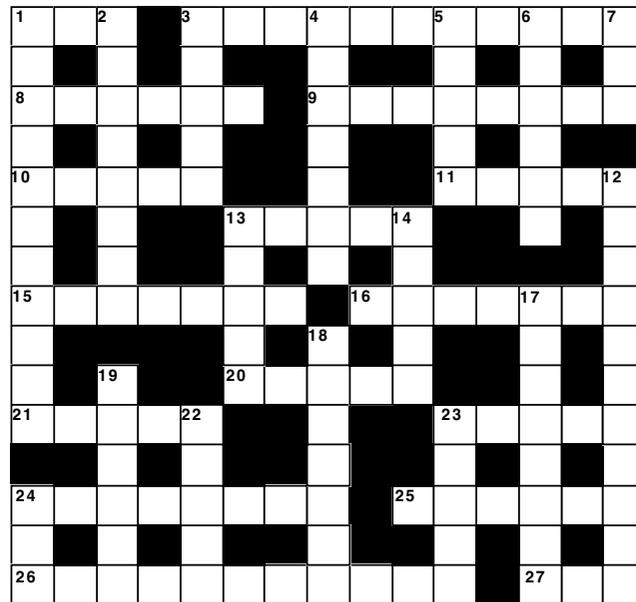
Down – 1 Put on weight 2 Blue flag 3 Crazy paving 4 Minerva 5 Irons 6 Abeles 7 Eon 12 Mustard seed 13 Dated 14 Ruled 17 Mushroom 18 Vivaldi 22 Thief 23 Jeans 24 Cob

CHILDREN'S No.183

Across – 1 Afternoon 7 Tusks 8 Enter 9 Operation 11 Altar 13 Grape 15 Training 17 Ink 18 Whistle
Down – 1 Astronaut 2 Taste 3 Restaurants 4 Opening 5 Nut 6 Horse 10 Spring 12 Teach 14 Rug 16 Nil

Crossword

Gordius 301



ACROSS

- 1 Golfers' average (3)
- 3 Relish fewer spins on this fairground attraction? (6,5)
- 8 Raptor interested only in large victims? (6)
- 9 How is one not aping what's so emotionally distressing? (8)
- 10 Went out like the tide (5)
- 11 Velocity (5)
- 13 Cooked in a pan (5)
- 15 About that lid - get it back! (7)
- 16 What a fanfare accompanied the Fall of the Wall here! (7)
- 20 Parts of the body found in Irish and Scottish regions (5)
- 21 As run on by trains - or athletes (5)
- 23 Wooden hut; simple dwelling (5)
- 24 Blackleg Shakespeare provides a sword-holder (8)
- 25 The bird repeats 1 across? Rubbish! (6)
- 26 Noah's adopted career looks a bit laboured (disorganized) (11)
- 27 Military term of address to a superior (3)

DOWN

- 1 According to Marx, this group of people is in need of total repair (11)
- 2 See 19 down
- 3 Devil (5)
- 4 Persuaded to volunteer by use of cord noise (5,2)
- 5 Earnings (5)
- 6 The material that coats a tooth (6)
- 7 Allow, permit (3)
- 12 This number is fractionally lower! (11)
- 13 Meat (5)
- 14 Deadly fights led us astray (5)
- 17 Make the seer curb movement of that infernal dog! (8)
- 18 Unbeliever (7)
- 19 & 2d The fruit of a slip-up in the democratic process? (6,8)
- 22 East Mediterranean lamb dish (5)
- 23 Seat (5)
- 24 Replacement player, in short (3)



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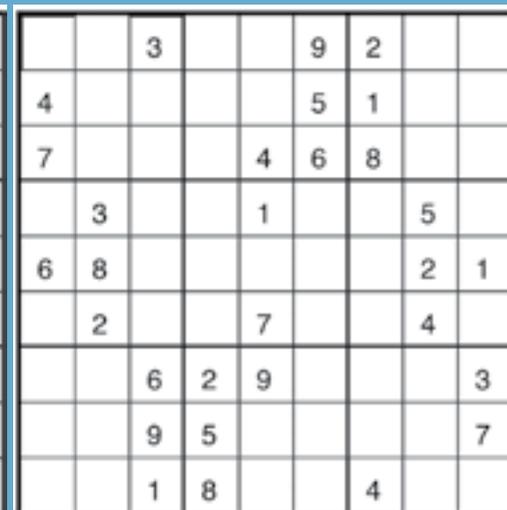
Sudoku Corner

184

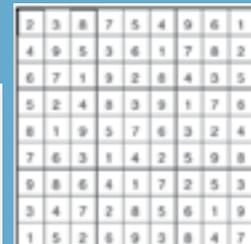
Easy



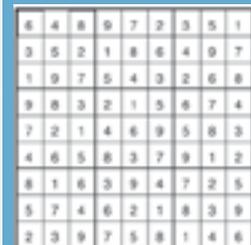
Hard



Last week's Easy 183



Last week's Hard 183





Roger Childs

Notebook

Irish people value the Angelus

DURING THE nine years I have been in my present role as Genre Head of RTÉ Religious Programmes, the continued broadcasting of Angelus chimes on RTÉ Radio One and RTÉ One television, has been debated a number of times in a number of different settings, from the letters pages of newspapers, to local and national radio and television debates and discussions.

While these are more straw polls than scientific surveys, I have noticed, on each occasion, that a clear majority seems to remain in favour of retaining the tradition.

Most recently, in March 2017, an Amárach poll commissioned for Claire Byrne Live on RTÉ One reported that “62% of a representative sample agreed with the Angelus being broadcast, while 27% didn’t and 11% were unsure”.

On that evidence, if RTÉ were to axe the Angelus, it would apparently be going against the wishes of the majority of Irish people, who still seem to value this unique broadcasting tradition of pausing for a minute for prayer or reflection during the schedules of one of RTÉ’s two TV channels and one of its 10 digital radio platforms.

Of course, that may change. As

the recent census demonstrated, there are significant shifts going on in the religious demographics of Ireland, although not perhaps as significant as some people might think.

Feedback

I have had quite a number of letters from people, who wrongly assume that there is a clamour from minority faith communities and leaders to scrap

the Angelus. The feedback I have received from many different minority faith communities and leaders, including Muslims, is that RTÉ shouldn’t feel pressure to axe the Angelus on their behalf. They usually tell me that they like the fact that the national broadcaster still makes space for prayer or reflection.

I have certainly received one or two complaints about the continued broadcasting of this

reflective pause, claiming that it is inappropriate for a national broadcaster in a society made up of people of many faiths and none to maintain this ‘Catholic’ tradition. Significantly, they seem to write on behalf of minorities to which they apparently don’t themselves belong.

More frequently, however, people argue not for fairer treatment of Protestants, or any other minority, but for secularisation. The point I usually make in response is that Ireland is not a secular society. Fewer than 10% described themselves as having ‘no religion’ in the 2016 census. In fact, you may be surprised by how few complaints RTÉ receives on this subject at all, and I understand that only four have been pursued with the BAI, the Irish broadcasting regulator, in the last 20 years. None of them was upheld.

1 Roger Childs is Genre Head of Religious Programmes at RTÉ. This piece was written in response to a request from The Irish Catholic, following comments made in the Seanad and elsewhere in recent weeks.

SERVING DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES: Senator David Norris’ recent comments on the Angelus (see page 3) were actually made in the context of a vigorous defence of RTÉ, reminding people of the excellent value for money our services represent to the licence payer. It would therefore be churlish to take offence at his glancing comment about the Angelus.

What I would say is that, at the heart of some of the very few complaints I receive about the Angelus broadcasts, there is one very legitimate point. Since licence payers of all faiths and none fund the national broadcaster, people ask me, why would RTÉ maintain a tradition that serves the religious needs of one community, albeit the majority Catholic community, above all others?

When I took up my job in 2008, a blow-in from the island next door, my response to that question was to ask whether, in fact, the Angelus broadcasts were exclusively Catholic, and if so, did they need to be. It had been a long time since those slots had featured Marian iconography.

Since people of all traditions and beliefs seem to share the view that it is valuable and important to pause and take stock occasionally, it struck me that it ought to be possible to find ways of doing so authentically, which were also inclusive of, and acceptable to, all.

● The short films I have commissioned for the 6pm television slots since 2009 have had a clear brief to create “a non-verbal minute, conducive to prayer or reflection for people of all faiths and none”. I also wanted to use the Angelus slots to create a showcase for creativity, and so, every Friday, we now feature ‘The People’s Angelus’ in which aspiring filmmakers, artists and students are invited to submit short films for the slot.

Should those films be “more Christian,” as some have suggested? I leave that to the filmmakers. Responses have varied from highly-sophisticated 3D animation to aerial photography; some have storyboarded narratives, some are more statically reflective. Is that “hogwash” or “bland”, as Senator Norris remarked? He’s entitled to his opinion but I would hesitate to write them all off with such a pejorative sweep of the hand.



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