

The Irish Catholic

MARY KENNY

The acquisition urge and the discarding necessity Page 5



SHIA LABEOUF

Falling in love with Christ to play Padre Pio Page 27



BREDA O'BRIEN

Urgent need to address children's smartphone use Page 7



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Warning political vacuum leaves young people 'cannon fodder' for paramilitaries

Ruadhán Jones

Paramilitary-style groups use the "romantic perspective" of past violence to "radicalise and divide society so people can stay in positions of powers," a Belfast youth worker has said.

However, Mr Stephan Hughes warned that it is not just paramilitaries who are the problem, saying it is also "politicians who cosy up to these people, get their pictures taken with them".

Things are going to get worse, he added, as politicians "keep taking services out of communities and keep making cuts".

The North is "failing its residents, failing the poorest especially", Mr Hughes warned, saying that Secretary for State Chris Heaton Harris' budget cuts shows that "he doesn't care about us, he doesn't really understand the damage he's doing".

"Even with all the baggage and legacy issues and problems they have with poverty and lack of education, lack of skills, the history of conflict and abuse – even with all those, we still have to treat people as valuable human beings," he said.

"All we can do is bring them to table and help them become more compassionate."

However, this is made difficult because "not many people want

» Continued on Page 2

A moveable feast...



Jack and Chloe Kinahan are pictured at the Presentation of Gifts on Pentecost Sunday, received by Bishop Emeritus Eamonn Walsh, in St Teresa's parish, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8. Anne Browne from the 35th Dublin Donore Avenue Scout Group and Garda Marta Radziul from Kevin Street Garda Station are in the background. Photo: Chai Brady

See pages 14-15

Just over half of Dubs now identify as Catholic

Staff reporter

Dublin now has the lowest percentage of Catholics in the Republic, according to census data released this week. The Central Statistics Office revealed that just over half – 53% – of Dubliners ticked the 'Catholic' box in the 2022 census of population.

Overall, the figures reveal that just 69% of Irish people now describe themselves as Catholic, down from 84.2% in just over a decade from the 2011 figures.

At the same time, the number of people describing themselves as having 'no religion' in the Republic increased by 284,269 and stood at 736,210. This means that 14% of Irish people now tick the 'no religion' box on the census form, up from 9.8% in 2011.

Some 3,515,861 Irish people now describe themselves as Catholic, with the total number of Catholics falling by 180,783 since the last census in 2016.

Mayo had the highest proportion of Catholics at 80% of the county's population, closely followed by Tipperary, Offaly, Roscommon and Galway County, all reporting 79%.

Dublin City recorded the lowest percentage of Catholics at 53%.

No religion was recorded for 24% of people living in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, but only for 7% of the people in Co. Monaghan.

Over the six-year period, the number of people who described themselves as Orthodox Christians increased from 60,000 to just over 100,000 people.

The Church of Ireland category showed little change but remained the second largest religious category with 124,749 people (2%).

Some 3,279 people described themselves as 'lapsed Catholics'.

DAVID QUINN

False view of 'gender' in new SPHE programme PAGE 12



CHURCH ATTACKS

Two churches suffer arson attack in Canada in same week PAGE 24



RUADHÁN JONES

Carers warn legalising euthanasia will harm vulnerable PAGE 11



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Inside this week

Alex O'Hara

Helping young people navigate sexuality

Page 10



Covid memorial

Commemorating loved ones lost during Covid

Page 14-15



Peter Costello

A Kerry man goes to war for the Empire

Page 36-37



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Warning political vacuum leaves young people 'cannon fodder' for paramilitaries

» **Continued from Page 1** that", Mr Hughes added. "For a Christian society and people, I feel we've become less compassionate and less understanding and less caring."

His comments come after a Queen's University Belfast study found up to 51% of people feel young people are "under too much influence from paramilitary groups".

The report shows that more than half of people surveyed in 10 areas with a history of paramilitary activity believe the groups contribute to crimes including drug dealing and antisocial behaviour.

The data has been compiled in a report that is part of the Communities in Transition project, which aims to help reduce the influence of paramilitary groups.

People with real concerns can't simply be dismissed as 'far right'

Pope Francis has been to the fore of leadership efforts around the world to highlight the Christian responsibility to reach out and look after those who are fleeing war and violent conflict.

For the first time in many years, the continent of Europe is seeing war raging following Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. Every day the radio brings news of a fresh Russian onslaught overnight on Ukraine's beleaguered towns and cities.

It's hard for us to imagine, but the people from Ukraine who have fled to Ireland – mostly women and children – just 18 months ago lived lives much like our own. They lived without fear for their safety, their children played freely in the streets and they had hopes and dreams that they had the ability to realise.

All of that has been cruelly taken by Russia's war, and Ukrainians have found themselves the subject of charity efforts in countries like Ireland, while their husbands and sons are at home fighting.

Efforts

The efforts that Irish parishes and communities have gone to in order to accommodate Ukrainians have been enormous. It has truly been a national effort to ensure that those fleeing Ukraine can have some semblance of a normal life here.

It is no small undertaking to accommodate over 80,000 people in such a short space of time, and our Catholic schools have also moved heaven and earth to ensure that children feel valued, welcomed and integrated.

All of this has happened whilst the Government grapples with an immense housing crisis with record numbers of Irish people homeless (more than 12,000) and many more believed to be suffering from 'hidden homelessness' in precarious situations either couch-surfing with friends or reliant on deeply inadequate casual arrangements.

Young families, even if they can afford a home, find themselves endlessly scrolling through property websites facing the reality that there are so few homes to purchase, never mind rent.

On top of this crisis comes a huge number of fresh applications for



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



Sudanese families fleeing the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, make their way through the desert after they crossed the border between Sudan and Chad to seek refuge in Goungour, Chad last month. Photo: OSV News

international protection. Of course, many people seeking international protection in Ireland are indeed fleeing war and armed conflict. But at the same time, many of the applicants are coming from so-called safe countries like Georgia, Albania and Algeria where officials admit there are few obvious reasons to need asylum.

Add to this the fact that many people claiming international protection arrive at Dublin Airport either evidently having lost or destroyed their passports or travel documents.

Many of those seeking international protection are then effectively warehoused where they enter a system of direct provision that is not fit for purpose, often languishing for years while their cases are heard.

There is also dismay that when many asylum applications are rejected and therefore the applicant is ordered to leave the State, no Garda action is usually undertaken to deport the failed asylum seeker.

Ireland needs a fair and just asylum process to deal with those genuinely seeking international protection. And, of course, no-one can fault anyone wanting to come for a better life – what we refer to as economic migrants – but nor can it be the responsibility of Ireland to provide opportunities for everyone who wants an opportunity from a poorer country.

The Government has

a responsibility to make Ireland a place where Irish people can live, own a home, earn an honest living and raise their families. By all of these measures, Government policy is a dismal failure.

Factors

All of these factors have to be considered while taking in to account the results of a poll at the weekend that found three out of four Irish people believe the country has taken too many refugees.

The Red C poll has given rise of fears from some commentators that Ireland is seeing a surge in support for the so-called 'far right'. But this is to miss the point that what people are saying is not that Ireland is full, but that on the current resources (houses, access to doctors, school places etc.,) Ireland cannot cope

with a huge number of new arrivals.

Politicians are playing a dangerous game if they want to dismiss all concerns about immigration as 'far right' or racist. Of course – depressingly – there are elements of racism, but the vast majority of Irish people are decent and honest people who are entitled to have genuine concerns.

Many parents look at surveys which indicate that one in three younger citizens is thinking of moving abroad because of the housing crisis and wonder what responsibility the Government has to ensure their child doesn't leave. It's an issue of fairness, they have a right to see their grandchildren grow up in the land of their birth, not be forced to flee for the lack of a place to call their own.

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New Angelus films to be unveiled by RTÉ

Chai Brady

The iconic Angelus bell will remain on RTÉ as the broadcaster gears up to unveil a new-look Angelus this week.

The launch of the new set of reflective films in RTÉ One's Angelus slots takes place today, June 1 at 6pm. The six films will run year-round except on Advent and Christmas when there will be two seasonal episodes.

In one of the films, *'The Island At The Edge'*, we see three generations of the the Mulkerrin and Heaney families preparing a curragh for the journey from Cé na Mhaise to Oileán Mhic Dara, 3km off the Galway coast. Every year on July 16, people gather to honour St MacDara, a monk who lived on the island in the 6th Century. Máirtín Mulkerrins and Róisín Heaney led a small family pilgrimage to the island, in the wake of their ancestors. *'Set In Stone By*

The Masons Hand' focuses on Roscommon-based Mark Feeley's stone artwork on the theme of peace, while in *'The Artist And The Abbey'*, artist Aideen Connolly is drawn to the ancient ruin of Ballindoon Abbey. The Dominican Abbey was built in the early 1500s. It was suppressed like many other monasteries in the 16th Century.

'Taking Time To Think About The Time We Have' looks at the precious nature of time. This Angelus follows clockmaker Maurice Keenan based in Carrick-on-Shannon.

An environmentally themed Angelus film focuses on Down Syndrome Cork and is called *'Care For Creation In The Field Of Dreams'*. In Curraheen, the Field of Dreams is a market garden where students with Down Syndrome learn to cultivate fruit, vegetables and farm produce as part of their adult education programme.

In *'Hope And Beauty In*



A Connemara family prepare the curragh for the trip to MacDara Island in one of the new Angelus films set to be released by RTÉ.

Torn Threads And Broken Beads' Karen Pleass, a textile artist from Listowel, creates artwork using recycled materials.

31,000 lives lost...



Pro-life supporters gather for a candlelit vigil outside the Dáil to commemorate the estimated 31,000 babies who have lost their lives since abortion was legalised, on May 25. HSE data has revealed that 8,876 abortions took place in 2022. Photo: The Life Institute.



The
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"One of the few things in life that cannot possibly do any harm in the end is the honest pursuit of Truth."

- Peter Kreeft

Union leaders to keep raising staff concerns at Mary Immaculate

Ruadhán Jones

Leaders of a university teachers' union are to raise concerns with Mary Immaculate College (MIC) authorities after this newspaper revealed that staff feel they are being kept "in the dark" over a historic alignment process with another college.

A spokesperson for the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) said the body "intend to discuss the matter further with MIC" at the end of June, adding that they couldn't comment further at this stage.

The move comes after *The Irish Catholic* revealed on May 18 that

MIC staff were concerned about the lack of transparency surrounding ongoing negotiations between MIC and University of Limerick (UL) for "closer structural alignment".

Staff said they remained "very much in the dark" over the negotiations and hoped to learn more by the end of May. It is unclear now if they were updated on the MIC-UL linkage.

Strategic developments

The linkage has been described as potentially "one of the most important strategic developments" in the colleges' 125-year history by the governing authority, including chairman Bishop Brendan Leahy.

Negotiations between the two

institutions are ongoing but "there is no formal record" as the negotiating teams agreed their meetings should not be minuted, according to correspondence from MIC's IFUT branch, seen by *The Irish Catholic*.

This paper has repeatedly sought a response to staff concerns from MIC's president Prof. Eugene Wall and Bishop Leahy, but so far neither has responded to our press queries.

Previously, we have been able to reach Bishop Leahy for comment on MIC's structural alignment through the diocesan communications officer Eugene Hogan.

However, Mr Hogan told the paper that he couldn't facilitate our press query as he "doesn't represent the bishop personally. I

am communications officer for the diocese".

This is despite the fact that the bishop is the personal representative of the diocese under canon law.

To contact him in his role as chair of MIC's governing authority – a position he holds due to his role as Bishop of Limerick – this newspaper was told to go through MIC's press office.

Press office

Despite continual attempts up to the time of print, the press office has failed to return any response to our queries to Prof. Wall and Bishop Leahy over a number of weeks.

Irish missionary pleads for Govt help in Lebanon

Chai Brady

An Irish missionary who educates Syrian refugees in his school in Tyre has described the failure of Lebanese officials to renew his residency permit for months as "cruel" and called on the Irish Government to intervene.

The process requires Rosminian

priest Fr William Stuart to submit his passport to 'General Security', which means he can't leave the country to continue fundraising work in Ireland.

After engaging with the Irish consul in Lebanon and the Irish embassy in Cairo, Egypt, he says neither were able to assist or provide more information about his application.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* Fr

Stuart called for any assistance he could be given, saying "What can Irish officials do? I don't know, but on my own I can do absolutely nothing".

He said the Department of Foreign Affairs and "surely he [Tánaiste Micheál Martin] could make an inquiry, in the absence diplomatic representation in Beirut".

Fr Stuart added: "My residency

permit is A: a reflection of the breakdown of the system, and B: it definitely has a bearing on people who work with Syrian refugees. It's almost like being under house arrest."

Among his 300 pupils, 65% are forced to work on the streets or in agriculture, starting as young as six years old.

Grammy-nominated Christian artist launches debut album

Staff reporter

Award-winning Christian artist Victoria Johnston launched her debut album in Golden Discs, Dundrum, with Minister for State Neale Richmond in attendance.

Minister Richmond praised the Grammy-nominated singer at the launch, saying its "super to have such amazing talent in our area" and describing her album as "beautiful".

The album, 'Where the Lights Glow', includes Ms Johnston's debut 2020 single 'Tar Liom', which was short-listed for Song of the Year at

the 2021 Grammy Awards.

Ms Johnston was "thrilled" to launch her new album, saying she hopes "the songs are an encouragement in remembering that you are a unique light in this world, so shine brightly".

"Dreaming big" is one of the themes reflected in her songs on the album, she added.

Ms Johnston teamed up with producers Denis Woods – who previously produced Clannad – and Kevin Corcoran to put her own spin on Irish folk and pop music, combining her classical training with pop influences.



Grammy-nominated Irish artist Victoria Johnston.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Department in dialogue with Dublin diocese on new Finglas church

The Minister for Health has confirmed the department is engaging with the Archdiocese of Dublin in relation to the new church and pastoral centre earmarked for a site in Finglas.

Minister Stephen Donnelly said in the Dáil that the former site of the Church of the Annunciation will also be used for a new primary care centre, housing and new sporting facilities for the City of Dublin Education and Training Board and local school.

The stakeholders involved include the Archdiocese of Dublin, Dublin City Council, the HSE, the City of Dublin Education and Training Board, the local schools and the public.

NI awareness campaign launched for abuse survivors

Every household in the North of Ireland will receive a leaflet outlining the support, services and compensation available for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse, the Executive Office announced on Tuesday.

The leaflet will be distributed this week and is the latest phase of an awareness campaign which started in March aimed at raising awareness of the help available for victims and survivors.

It explains the roles of the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA), the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) and the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board (HIARB) and provides contact details for those seeking support.

Denis McMahon, Permanent Secretary at the Executive Office, explained: "Since its establishment on March 31, 2020, the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board (HIARB) has received over 3,700 applications and made award determinations totalling some £68.8 (€78.8) million. But there may be some HIA victims and survivors or their families who are unaware of the help and support that is now available to them, and it is hoped this leaflet drop will provide them with the information they need to get in touch should they wish to do so."

The acquisition urge – and the discarding necessity...

We spend so much of our active adult lives acquiring things: and then, in the senior years, we start to realise the need to discard so much of the stuff we have accumulated. Honestly, it's taken me more than six months to clear out my Dublin flat (to move to a smaller abode). By the end of the endeavour, I concluded that St Francis of Assisi had the right idea – own nothing, live in a cave!

Possessions

Possessions are the architecture of our normal way of life: we need them, want them and are relentlessly urged to buy them. But then, I reflected, things end up by owning us. You can become a prisoner of the things you own and to which you have developed such an attachment.

I had an aunt who used to exclaim “something else to dust” when she was given a new ornament: yes, every possession needs servicing.

I came to realise that I could scarcely count the number of handbags that I had: big roomy totes, and smaller, cuter little cross-body bags: handbags for soirées, and handbags for travel: handbags chosen



Mary Kenny

for elegance, and handbags purchased for practical use. I could indeed be called a ‘bag lady’. Finally, I selected half a dozen for the charity shop, but I almost had to say goodbye to each of them.

Why am I agonising over parting with an ornament, a piece of china, a curio, or items of clothing I'll never again fit into? The drum-beat of eternity is already reminding me “you can't take it with you when you go” (that is, finally go).

“Clearing and de-cluttering our dwellings is now called ‘the Swedish clean’ – meaning simplifying our lives before we depart from this world”

Yet it's understandable to be attached to objects which represent memories, or gifts from family or

friends: a glass fruit bowl my father brought back from South America nearly a hundred years, in 1924: a Wedgwood mug from my late brother: a picture that hung in my childhood home.

Acquisitions

But still, eventually, we must detach ourselves from all these acquisitions. Things, things, things! All of this stuff not only takes up space in your surroundings, but in your head, and maybe soul.

Clearing and de-cluttering our dwellings is now called ‘the Swedish clean’ – meaning simplifying our lives before we depart from this world. And actually, yes, it can turn into a spiritual reflection on our attachment to possessions, and how wise, in many ways, are those who choose to live simply.

Our economic system depends on us buying stuff constantly, and sometimes, as in my case, buying the same things over and over again. Now is the time to offload, discard, give away – and recycle.



Decluttering can be good for mind, body and soul.

● As a PS to the above experience, I sincerely recommend Tommy, who advertises his services in this newspaper. His small firm really is prompt (and friendly) about taking away household items we can no longer keep – which will, usually, be recycled and repurposed for someone else's use.

SDLP's devastating decline...

When John Hume – acting for the best and to advance the cause of peace – entered into negotiations with Gerry Adams in 1988, the writer and sometime Labour Minister Conor Cruise O'Brien reacted critically. He predicted that the SDLP would be “swallowed up” by Sinn Féin, and this would be to the detriment of the middle ground of northern nationalists.

And judging by the outcome of the recent elections in Northern Ireland, this has come to pass. Sinn Féin has had its best ever results in the North; the SDLP its worst. The SDLP lost councillors in several constituencies, including Newry, and came bottom of the poll in Mid and East Antrim. It just about held its position in Derry and Lisburn – where Sinn Féin, as elsewhere in nationalist areas, topped the poll.

I daresay the devastating decline of the SDLP may be attributed to many factors. Perhaps a lack of leadership is one of them, as Rosella Walshe from Omagh pointed out in our letters page. If John Hume himself had lived longer in good health and active politics, the SDLP might have retained its identity and values more effectively. But it sure is disappointing to many of us who admired the original remit.

● Westminster has two rising Members of Parliament who speak for the family, and who adhere to Christian values. One is the Yorkshire MP, Miriam Cates, 40, a mother of three who has been very pro-active in opposing pornography and inappropriate sex education. The other is Danny Kruger, 48, who spoke about upholding the traditional family at the recent National Conservative conference. He is the son of the TV foodie celebrity Prue Leith. Mother and son disagree over a number of issues – including assisted dying – but they are still on good terms personally.

It will be worth watching the careers of both Ms Cates and Mr Kruger – Miriam Cates's profile, especially, has noticeably increased in recent times.



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Dr. Eugene Duffy

Is a priest of the diocese of Achonry and Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Renewal and Development; formerly lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick.

Prof. Massimo Faggioli

Professor of Historical Theology Villanova University USA. He is also a columnist for *La Croix International*, and contributing writer to *Commonweal*.

Prof. Myriam Wijlens

Professor of Canon Law Erfurt Germany. She is a member of The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, an advisor to ARCIC III and a Co-Moderator of the Peter and Paul Seminar.

Prof. Eamonn Conway

Is a priest of Tuam archdiocese and Professor of Integral Human Development in the School of Philosophy & Theology, University of Notre Dame Australia.

Mr. Christopher Lamb

Is a British journalist who is the Rome correspondent for *The Tablet*. He is a contributor to the Vatican Insider page of *La Stampa* and a regular commentator for the BBC on Vatican and religious affairs.

Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ

Is a sister of the Congregation of Jesus, director of the Religious Life Institute and senior lecturer in pastoral theology at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge. She teaches Christian spirituality at the Cambridge Theological Federation.

Prof. Maria Cimperman RSCJ

Is the Associate Professor of Catholic Theological Ethics. Founding Director, Center for the Study of Consecrated Life (2014-2022) and Associate Professor of Consecrated Life Catholic Theological Union (Chicago, USA).

Prof. Vimal Tirimanna CSsR

Is Professor of Moral Theology at the National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka, Kandy, Sri Lanka and the Pontifical Alphonsian Academy, Rome.

Non-payment for Baptisms, weddings ‘not fair’ on regular parishioners

Ruadhán Jones

People not expecting to pay a donation for Baptisms and weddings is “not fair” on parishioners who regularly support their local church, priests have said.

It is “common sense” that parish churches need financial assistance to survive, said Fr Michael Toomey, saying people forget “you have to heat and light and insure the

church”.

Parishioners are very generous, but “it’s always the same people who are generous because they are there every weekend”, said Fr Toomey.

“It’s not fair on them” when people who don’t attend regularly expect to be able to come to the church for Baptisms and weddings for free, the Tipperary priest told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fr Toomey added that

priests are in a “catch-22” over the issue as family’s are struggling with the cost of living.

However, “I always highlight that this is the people’s parish church and to survive, it needs people to support it”, he said.

Fr Karl Burns, parish priest in Mountbellew-Moylough, Co. Galway, believes the issue will become “pressing”.

“Any Baptism I would do, people do give a donation...

I don’t think it’s a rural issue myself,” Fr Burns told this paper.

However, “by and large it will become a pressing issue because of the cost of insurance, heating and lighting”, he added.

The Tuam priest said he believes that it will ultimately have to be dealt with at diocesan level with a diocese-wide policy.

While there is a question

of fairness around paying for church services, Fr Stephen Farragher said that “the Pope’s emphasis on outreach to the poor is always in the back of my mind”.

“I’d be very loath to criticise people,” said the parish priest of Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo. “You would be always conscious that there may be people who are stretched financially and who are not in a position to pay.

“For that reason I’d be very loath to make a general ruling or statement on it. But there are people who do avail of the church and don’t contribute anything,” he admitted.

NEWS IN BRIEF

500 attend Cork gatherings on diocese’s future

More than 500 people attended gatherings over Pentecost weekend to discuss the future of Cork and Ross diocese.

Two gatherings were held on May 27 and 28, as part of a diocese-wide consultation on moving forward as “Families of Parishes”.

Each parish in the diocese was represented by up to 10 people, including the priests, while other ministries in the diocese, eg. chaplaincies, were also represented.

Further discussions will take place within the family of parishes in the autumn, “drawing on the insights shared and learned in May”, a diocesan spokesperson said.

Ms Julianne Stanz, Director of New Evangelisation in the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, USA, gave the keynote address at the gatherings.

Bishops’ conference launches new sex ed resources

Staff reporter

The Irish bishops’ conference has released new sexual education resources to help teachers present Catholic teaching on RSE in secondary schools.

The move comes after the Minister for Education signed off on a controversial new curriculum for social, personal and

health education (SPHE), which includes relationship and sexual education (RSE).

A final draft of the bishops’ ‘Living Love’ resources has been released to some schools as part of a pilot process, with feedback sought to inform the draft’s final development. The director of the Council for Catechetics Dr Alexander O’Hara writes in this paper (see page 10).

The course is calibrated to meet the learning outcomes for the new SPHE curriculum, Dr O’Hara writes, but from a Catholic perspective.

Meanwhile, the head of the Catholic Education Partnership has called on Catholic schools to engage with the new SPHE curriculum.

“They are encouraged to do so in the spirit of Catholic pedagogy, one that is

open to genuine, respectful and sincere dialogue and encounter with other worldviews and beliefs, while confidently presenting Catholic teaching on these matters,” CEO Alan Hynes told *The Irish Catholic*.

The new resources have been released to assist in the “confident” presentation of the Catholic ethos, Mr Hynes added.

Vatican warns of ‘superficial’ social media use among Church leaders

Chai Brady

“Polemic and superficial” communications are “particularly worrying” when it comes from Church leadership, including bishops, pastors, and prominent lay leaders,” the Vatican has said in a new pastoral message.

In the 20-page pastoral

message about the use of social media, the Vatican continued: “These not only cause division in the community but also give permission and legitimacy for others likewise to promote similar type of communication.”

“Towards Full Presence: A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with Social Media”,

release on May 29, the Vatican outlined the benefits and dangers of social media use.

Seemingly referring to online ‘trolls’, who actively try to enrage people, the pastoral stated: “Aggressive and negative speeches are easily and rapidly spread, offering a fertile field for violence, abuse, and misinformation. On social

media, different actors, often emboldened by a cloak of pseudonymity, are constantly reacting to each other. These interactions are usually markedly different from those in physical spaces, where our actions are influenced by verbal and non-verbal feedback from others.

“Being aware of these pit-

falls helps us to discern and unmask the logic that pollutes the social media environment and to search for a solution to such digital discontent,” it added.

The message comes after a reflection involving experts, teachers, young professionals and leaders, lay persons, clergy, and religious.

Sacraments in the sun...



Some of the boys and girls from Holy Family Junior school who received first Holy Communion over the weekend of Pentecost in Portlaoise Parish, Co. Laois, are pictured after the ceremony on May 27.

‘Overburdened’ priests mean Mass schedules must change

Mass schedules in the Raphoe diocese will have to change, as priests face becoming “overburdened” due to the number of Masses and declining vocations.

The north western diocese conducted a survey of Mass attendance during March, releasing the figures late in May.

They showed that priests celebrate on average 2.5 Masses per weekend and five during the week. This doesn’t include weddings, funerals, Baptisms and other church services.

“This current age profile tells us that a further shortage [of priest] is coming and changes are coming sooner for some parishes,” a statement from the diocese warned.

Parishes will not be able to celebrate beautiful liturgies “if a small number of priests are overburdened with leading services for ever smaller numbers of people”, Bishop of Raphoe Alan McGuckian said.

Breda O'Brien

The View



An urgent need to address children's smartphone use



It is great news that every primary school in Greystones has signed up for a ban on smartphones. It is a significant gesture when everyone is wringing their hands about the impact of smartphones but few are doing anything about it.

It is not enough, however. There needs to be familial, local, national and international responses.

“Every form of deviant behaviour is available for viewing online for free. Images are constantly shared”

The US Surgeon General recently issued a serious warning about the impact of mobile phones. (The term surgeon general is confusing because you do not have to be a surgeon to hold the post. It is akin to a chief medical officer, and the current holder, Dr Vivek Murthy, is a general practitioner.)

Dr Murthy says: “Children are exposed to harmful content on social media, ranging from violent and sexual

content, to bullying and harassment. And for too many children, social media use is compromising their sleep and valuable in-person time with family and friends. We are in the middle of a national youth mental health crisis, and I am concerned that social media is an important driver of that crisis – one that we must urgently address.”

Dr Murthy's report is careful to say that the relationship between social media use and the rise in mental health difficulties among young people is complex. He also points out the benefits of social media.

Rise in anxiety

However, anyone who works with young people, as I do myself in my role as a teacher, will have noticed a significant rise in anxiety and depression over the last number of years, and not just since the pandemic, although that exacerbated it.

I have also noticed a curious phenomenon where people as young as 13 use psychological vocabulary such as ‘dissociated’, ‘insecurely attached’, ‘dopamine deficient’ and ‘obsessive fixation’.

This veneer of sophisticated concepts conceals young people who are just as insecure as the previous generation, who would have had to consult a dictionary for most of these words.

They are learning this vocabulary in the same place they are learning about sexual behaviour and celebrity gossip – the internet. We are all familiar with and shaken by the idea that when they first get a smartphone, they inevitably encounter porn, whether or not they seek it out.

Every form of deviant behaviour is available for viewing online for free. Images are constantly shared. Irish research during and after the pandemic showed that a significant increase in girls being approached to provide sexual imagery of themselves.

Girlguiding survey

A Girlguiding survey of 400 girls across the UK in 2021 also found that a third of girls aged 13-18 have seen rude graffiti about girls or women at school. Nearly a fifth of girls aged 13-16 and two-fifths of girls aged 17 and 18 have been exposed to shared pictures of women or girls

that made them uncomfortable at school. Just under a quarter have been asked to share an intimate picture of themselves. This rises to 42% of 17- and 18-year-olds.

“Joint action by schools is great but we need legislation forcing ‘Big Tech’ to be more transparent and accountable about how they keep younger people away from this firehose of material”

It is not just sexual imagery, distorting and damaging to healthy relationships though these images are. It is also ideas about acceptable weight and appearance, and values such as being reflexively pro-choice. All of these are shaped by being online.

Many Irish secondary schools are introducing pouches where mobile phones are locked away

for the full day. The mobile phone is a crutch. If the conversation flags or you feel awkward, you just take out your phone. A teenager told me recently that it is no longer rude to text in company without excusing yourself but it is rude to interrupt someone who is texting.

Of course, banning smartphones with primary children does not prevent access to the internet. Once there is an accessible tablet or laptop at home, young people will access many of the same damaging ideas and values. That's why the Greystones group of schools have called it a smart device ban, with particular emphasis on apps like Snapchat and Instagram, which are hotbeds of horrible bullying.

Joint action by schools is great but we need legislation forcing ‘Big Tech’ to be more transparent and account-

able about how they keep younger people away from this firehose of material. This will be most effective at EU or international level.

Economy

There is a strong feeling in Ireland that our economy is so dependent on Big Tech, we cannot afford to rock the boat. Is the kind of generational damage Dr Murthy is warning us against an acceptable substitute?

We also need better research on the impact of internet usage. People say that it downgrades real addictions, like alcohol or drugs, to say that smartphones are addictive but even among adults, it certainly appears like addiction.

This is why we all need to query our own addictive behaviour as well as lobbying Big Tech to change theirs.

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Irish still welcoming to asylum seekers despite concerns – priest

Chai Brady

Despite “understandable” concerns about housing and homelessness Irish people are still welcoming to asylum seekers particularly when meeting them face to face, a Wicklow-based priest has insisted.

Fr Donal Roche PP of Wicklow, Kilbride and Barndarrig told *The Irish Catholic* a large number of asylum seekers are now living in Wicklow Town but he has seen little evidence of “negativity or tension in the town”.

“We have welcomed a lot of people into Wicklow, the Wicklow Welcomes group is still

active and I think they’ve been successful in helping to bridge the gap and to diffuse any tension,” he said.

“I know we’ve seen in parts of Dublin and Co. Clare there has been a lot of negative publicity for local communities, stirred up by a small minority. I think by and large we are still a welcoming people and there’s a sense that we understand what it’s like because our own people suffered and had to go abroad. I can understand the fear, with people saying ‘well we have so many homeless ourselves, how can we get more in?’ That’s a perfectly understandable reaction, but it’s not the full picture.”

However, regarding asylum seekers in Wicklow Town he said there are a “large number living in very crowded conditions, it’s very unfair to them”.

Fr Roche warned that since the Grand Hotel is now being used as a centre for asylum seekers, there is no hotel in the town. “So there’s a need for accommodation but there’s also a need for a tourist industry. I think there’s a need to plan that this is going to be an ongoing situation. I’m not being critical of the Government – I think they’re doing their very best – I think they’re very stretched,” he said.

His comments come following a Red C poll for the Business Post which found that 75% of

1,000 people polled agreed with the statement “I think the number of refugees Ireland is taking in is now too many”.

A majority of people (76%) also said they appreciate the anger felt about asylum seekers being moved into local areas.

Fr Roche said: “I think people, when they see somebody face to face, they’re very happy to welcome and to house them. On the face of it, it looks like there’s a lot of people – we have a huge homeless problem, we can’t house those who are coming – it’s the obvious answer to give, that there are too many, but I don’t think it’s as simple as that.”

Govt must learn from Inch protests says Bishop Monahan

Ruadhán Jones

The Government has to learn from the protests in Inch, Co. Clare, regarding housing of refugees in the area, Bishop Fintan Monahan has said.

Bishop Monahan visited the

town and met with protestors and refugees after controversy erupted over a barricade that blocked refugees from being housed in a former hotel.

He said there’s learning to be done by both the Government and the local people, who Bishop Monahan felt were depicted “harshly”.

“The Government is much more conscious of the level of consultation needed” in the future, “making sure that things aren’t being done in a hurried manner”, the bishop of Killaloe told *The Irish Catholic*.

He added that the people of Inch had “genuine concerns” regarding the refugees, saying “they’re a really

great community”.

Bishop Monahan said he was glad progress has been made and the barricade dropped, with Minister for Integration Joe O’Brien slated to visit the community soon.

The controversy “isn’t typical” of what has happened in Co. Clare generally, the bishop pointed out.

“Co. Clare has taken in a huge amount of refugees who have integrated so well and it has worked so well. Everyone has made a serious effort,” the bishop said.

Bishop Monahan said he invited the refugees he met to visit the parish church.

Taoiseach says new Catholic school ‘popular with families’

Staff reporter

A new Catholic school opened in Taoiseach Leo Varadkar’s constituency will be a popular choice for families in the area, the Taoiseach said.

Mr Varadkar was speaking at the opening ceremony for Edmund Rice College in Castleknock on the site of the former Phoenix Park racecourse.

“It was a long time coming, but the day is finally here. This school will be a popular choice for children and families living in the area,” Mr Varadkar said in a statement.

He was joined at the opening ceremony by Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell, as well as Rev. Colin McConaghie of the Church of Ireland and Dr Qadri of the Islamic community.

Mr Varadkar has previously supported parents’ wishes to keep Catholic schools in his constituency, saying “I do not agree with forced secularisation of our education system. We should not force secularism on people who do not want it.”

The Taoiseach said “It is important to take into account what parents actually want”.



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Helping young people navigate sexuality



We need to help teenagers to recognise their own value and that of everyone else, writes **Alexander O'Hara**

We are currently experiencing not only an environmental crisis which threatens the future existence of our species, but an anthropological crisis that threatens to reshape and redefine the very nature of what makes us human. With massive technological advances in computing power, Artificial Intelligence (AI), the increasing prevalence of the integration of tech in our daily life, and the more widespread influence of gender theory ideologies across all levels of society, we have already entered a brave new world that marks not only an era of change, but a change of era.

Correlative of these social changes and the destabilising effects that they have in severing us from our natural, communal and biological realities there has been a marked increase in the prevalence of anxiety, depression, alcohol, sex and drug addiction, and suicide in our society. This has been particularly marked in the younger generation. Ireland's youth suicide rate is one of the highest in Europe, with young men being particularly vulnerable to suicide.

Education

Education can play an important role in awareness and prevention. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has now launched a course curriculum specification for Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) for Junior Cycle that is comprehensive and integrated in its approach to tackling some of the major issues that young people face today. It is designed around four interconnected strands:

1. Understanding myself and others,
2. Making healthy choices,



3. Relationships and sexuality, and
4. Emotional wellbeing.

The pedagogical approach is underpinned by three cross-cutting movements that support effective teaching and learning: awareness, dialogue and reflection and action.

“The course tries to help empower teenagers to make responsible decisions in line with their values and to hold firm to their decisions regardless of external pressures”

Designed to meet the Junior Cycle SPHE learning outcomes, Living Love is a Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) course developed by the Council for Education of the Irish Episcopal Conference for use in schools with a Catholic ethos in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. Although it is written from a Catholic point of view, it is not a religious education resource. Central themes of the course are reassurance,

agency and respect. Each year of the course builds on previous work, and has sections devoted to students' identities, relationships, and responsibilities. The course is carefully calibrated to meet the learning outcomes expected by the Department of Education. As the NCCA recognises (strand 1.4), sexuality and gender identity are part of what it means to be human and have biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions – indeed, any course that didn't encompass spiritual dimensions wouldn't meet the department's criteria. The modules cover issues of identity, self-management, rights, respect, friendships and relationships, mental health and much more.

Accessible

Although at the heart of the course are such Christian convictions that every single one of us is made in God's image and is infinitely valuable, the course is designed to be accessible and helpful for students of all faith backgrounds and none. In connection with this, it draws along the way not just on Catholic thinkers and current scientific understanding, but also ancient Greek philosophers and modern Jewish and atheist writers like the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and the English fantasy author Terry

Pratchett. Agency, respect and reassurance are core aspects of the course, which calls on teenagers to recognise their own value and that of everyone else, while reminding them that uncertainty is a normal phenomenon during puberty. As such the course urges teenagers to keep in mind both their own intrinsic value, and that of their fellow pupils. It is especially strong on how any kind of bullying or denigration is completely unacceptable.

Respect

Respect is a core theme of the course, grounded in its focus on our intrinsic value: this means respect for ourselves and respect for others.

“A key element in the course is the development of strengths or life skills that equate to the classical virtues of justice, common sense, moderation and courage”

Running through the course is the idea that nobody should coerce or otherwise try to push anyone into sexual or other acts they believe to

be wrong or are uncomfortable with. The course, as such, makes clear that consent is an absolute bare minimum requirement for any kind of sexual activity, while also stressing that even that bare minimum may not be enough – we draw on data from the *Growing Up In Ireland* survey, for instance, to point to how teenagers feel pressured to engage in sexual acts even when they don't want to. This isn't just a matter of consent, as we all regularly consent to things we're not keen on. As such, the course tries to help empower teenagers to make responsible decisions in line with their values and to hold firm to their decisions regardless of external pressures.

Pornography

Pornography is accessible to today's teenagers in a way that would have been unimaginable a generation ago, so it is important that students understand that pornography is not a harmless activity. Students will learn how pornography is exploitative – sometimes brutally so – of those involved in producing it, presents false and misleading ideas of sex, and entails the objectification of other human beings by those involved in and using it, something we should all have a heightened awareness of in the wake of the #MeToo movement. Pope Francis has

been very keen to remind us that we need to meet people where they are at, and to avoid treating them as labels instead of as people with their own stories, feelings, and experiences. As such, the course recognises that some students will feel uncertain about their gender and sexual identity, and calls for students in such situations to be treated with love and respect. Allowing that students doing this course will be young teenagers, it attempts to reassure students who are working things out, advising them to talk to adults and to have patience. A key element in the course is the development of strengths or life skills that equate to the classical virtues of justice, common sense, moderation and courage. The resource is being released initially as a pilot, with feedback from schools being used to inform the development of the resource in its final form. Schools collaboration in providing feedback on this pilot resource will be greatly appreciated.

① Dr Alexander O'Hara is the National Director for Catechetics and Executive Secretary of the Council for Catechetics, Irish Episcopal Conference. The course is free and available to download online at: <https://catholiceducation.ie/post-primary-2/>

Legalising euthanasia will harm vulnerable and erode trust, palliative carers warn

Ruadhán Jones

The Irish Association for Palliative Care (IAPC) has called for assisted suicide legislation to be rejected as legalisation will harm the rights of vulnerable people and erode trust between doctors and patients.

“While respecting the autonomy of patients, the IAPC said ‘individual autonomy is not absolute’”

Their call comes as a Dáil committee discusses proposed ‘Dying with Dignity’ legislation, which seeks to mandate healthcare professionals to perform assisted suicide.

Palliative care can never involve treatment “designed to cause a patient’s death”, the IAPC said in a new position paper, which it has sent to the Committee for Assisted Dying.



Photo: CNS.

The association, which represents more than 250 palliative carers in Ireland, “does not support any change in the law to legalise euthanasia or physician assisted suicide”, it said in the May 26 paper.

Autonomy

While respecting the autonomy of patients, the IAPC said “individual autonomy is not absolute”. The rights of others and the needs of society must

be considered, particularly the rights “of those who are more vulnerable”.

“Regard for the autonomy of the individual cannot require health professionals to honour requests for euthanasia/PAS, given the harm which could ensue for the patient, for society and for healthcare professionals,” the IAPC said.

The ban on healthcare professionals euthanising patients “protects those who

feel they ought to die. It acts as a form of protection for vulnerable patients who may be basing their decision to die on confounding addressable factors, such as a sense of being burdensome or mental health conditions”, the position paper says.

Requests for euthanasia are “often motivated by fears” of loss of autonomy or uncontrolled suffering, the IAPC warned and palliative carers

need more support to ensure a “patient dies with dignity and as little suffering as possible”.

Introducing assisted suicide could lead to the “erosion of trust between patient and doctor”, the association said, which is vital so that patients know their wishes will be respected, “even when they are no longer able to voice them”.

“Coercion, whether ‘intended or implicitly experienced’, is also a concern for palliative carers”

When it comes to dignity, the IAPC acknowledge that some people associate the loss of physical and mental functioning as being synonymous with a loss of dignity.

They then “see euthanasia/PAS as a solution to this”. However, “human dignity cannot be lost through illness or disability, because it is inherent in each person”, the IAPC asserted.

The association raised concerns regarding the ‘slippery

slope’ effect, saying that experience in Canada and other countries with euthanasia is legal “have shown the progressive expansion of eligibility in practice”.

Coercion, whether “intended or implicitly experienced”, is also a concern for palliative carers. Although many proponents claim physical discomfort is the main justification for legalising euthanasia, “Issues such as depression, loss of hope and the fear of being burdensome are more clearly linked to a desire to hasten death for terminally ill patients than the severity of physical discomfort”, the IAPC said.

Programme

The IAPC appealed for a hearing at the Committee on Assisted Dying as it discusses TD Gino Kenny’s ‘Dying with Dignity’ bill. Following a press query from *The Irish Catholic*, a spokesperson for the committee did not confirm if they would be heard, saying that the programme for public meetings is yet to be finalised.

THE SYNODAL TIMES



MAY
2023 ISSUE

One year on from the Synodal Listening process, Editor Garry O’Sullivan pleads with Irish Archbishop Eamonn Martin as Chair of the Irish Bishops Conference to try unite the Irish bishops and their priests if the national synod in Ireland is to have a chance. He calls for professional change managers to be employed and for resources to be deployed for any chance of a synodal success story. New wine for new wine skins he says.

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The false view of 'gender' in new SPHE programme



The Government has listened to ideological campaigners instead of parents, writes David Quinn

The new Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) syllabus for Junior Cycle students aged 12 to 15 in the Republic has been published by Education Minister, Norma Foley, and it is a deeply ideological piece of work that will upset many parents.

“Let’s remind ourselves what gender ideology (something Pope Francis frequently criticises) entails”

SPHE incorporates Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). In the run-up to the development of this new syllabus, a consultation process took place that all interested parties, including parents, could take part in.

Participating parents tended to be most concerned about how the syllabus would teach so-called ‘gender ideology’. Those concerns seem to have been totally ignored. The public consultation looks like it was window dressing. Campaign organisations have been listened to instead. Norma Foley does not seem to have had the nerve to face them down. It is very doubtful whether she herself believes in gender ideology to the extent the programme does and that children will now be expected to accept.

Let’s remind ourselves

what gender ideology (something Pope Francis frequently criticises) entails.

It has two aspects. The first and most controversial one would have us believe that a person can identify as a ‘gender’ that is different to the one they were born into. That is, someone might be a boy, biologically speaking, but identify as a girl. A biological girl might identify as a boy.

Pronouns

They would then expect to be treated exactly as if they were actually the sex/gender they identify as. Therefore, a biological boy who says he is a girl would expect to be called by a new name, be addressed with the pronouns ‘her’ and ‘she’ plays in sports team for girls and use their toilets and changing rooms.

They might also use puberty blockers to stop their bodies developing and then later maybe sex hormones.

This is all incredibly controversial stuff, but the Irish Government now wants it all taught as a fact to pupils who are little more than children in the name of ‘tolerance’. In the name of ‘tolerance’, pupils will be expected to believe that it is perfectly alright for a biological boy who identifies as a girl to play alongside biological girls in (say) their GAA team. Parents will also be expected to accept this without question.

A second aspect of gender ideology is the belief that all the differences between male and female behaviour is connected to how we are raised and what society expects of us. The technical term is that male and female behaviour is ‘socially constructed’.

This ideology expects us to believe that if biological boys were raised in stereotypically ‘girlish’ ways, then they would behave as girls, and the same, only in reverse for biological girls, that is, if raised as boys, they would end up behaving in ‘boyish’ ways.

It totally discounts the possibility that some of the differences between male and female behaviour is natural and innate. Therefore, it believes that boys only become interested in playing with toy trucks if that is what they are given by their parents, and girls only becoming interested in playing with dolls, if they are given dolls.

If boys were given dolls, this theory says, they would play with dolls, and girls

would play with trucks.

Then in later life, boys might be drawn to more traditionally ‘female’ occupations such as nursing, and girls to more traditionally ‘male’ occupations like construction work.

“There would be one culture where a big majority of truck-drivers and bin-collectors are women and nurses are men”

But does any sensible person really believe this? Yes, both boys and girls can be stereotyped, and this can have an influence on their behaviour, but it is a long way from there to insisting that male and female preferences in jobs etc are entirely to do with how we are raised and have nothing to do with natural differences.

Everywhere you go in the world, you find far more men than women working in construction, and far more women than men working in jobs like nursing.

You will find far more men working in physically dangerous jobs as a general rule.

Are we really expected to believe that these differences, which are found across all cultures, are to do with the way we are raised? If the differences have no natural basis, then surely one culture somewhere would have wiped out or even reversed stereotypically male and female behaviour. There would be one culture where a big majority of truck-drivers and bin-collectors are women and nurses are men. But no society, anywhere, looks like this.

Indeed, even in a country like Sweden, which has been pushing gender ideology for years, men and women still work in exactly the jobs you would expect.

Therefore, why push an ideology on boys and girls that is clearly false in the extreme form we find in the new Junior Cycle SPHE syllabus? It is one thing to tell children to avoid gender stereotypes, but it is quite another to pretend differences at a general population level in male and female



“Everywhere you go in the world, you find far more men than women working in construction, and far more women than men working in jobs like nursing”

behaviour have no natural basis at all. Why confuse and mislead them on the point?

Furthermore, if it is important to fight stereotypes, why fight those based on ‘gender’ to the exclusion of others based on social class, ethnicity, or religion? Social class is certainly socially constructed.

Stereotypes

If you asked a classroom of 14 years olds to describe a typical Catholic, the stereotypes you would hear back would probably be almost entirely negative. That certainly needs to be addressed, and Catholic

schools would be a good place begin the process.

The new syllabus is to start in schools from September. But under Section 9(d) of the Education Act, schools are supposed to “promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school”.

SPHE is precisely concerned with the “social and personal development of students”, and therefore, this programme should not go into schools without consult-

ing parents in each school properly first, and without taking into account its “characteristic spirit”.

Any school which does not do so, will be flouting the law.

It remains to be seen what Catholic schools do. How much of this syllabus will they accept, and how much will they adapt to Catholic beliefs? They should be careful not to accept too much of gender ideology. In the extreme form presented in the new State syllabus it is incompatible both with Catholic teaching, and reason, because its view of human nature is so plainly false.

Confirmation joy in Donegal



Caoimhe with parents Kevin and Sharon and brother Luke in Pettigo, Co. Donegal.



Charlie McAndrew, sister Katelyn and parents Charlie and Kelly.



Michael and the Murphy family. – Photos Jason McCartan



Mia Roohan and family.



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Dublin parish commemorates



Chai Brady

St Teresa's parish, Donore Avenue in Dublin 8 has unveiled two new stained glass windows commemorating those who died during the Covid-19, at the Feast of Pentecost on May 28.

The parish pastoral council worked for 18 months, in conjunction with Abbey Stained Glass Studios in Kilmainham, to design the two windows. They represent aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic experienced in the St Teresa's community and also commemorate those who died during that period – whether it was from the virus or otherwise.

According to parish pastoral assistant Sam Byrne: "This was important to us as all families were impacted by restrictions and the break from the normal rituals at a time of bereavement, regardless of the cause of death."

"The second window represents the community and its people, with the support, help, togetherness and hope that was shared amongst us in order to get through it," she said.

The windows were unveiled and blessed by Bishop Emeritus Éamonn Walsh, who in his homily said that the pandemic was a "terrible, difficult time for people" but also gave space for reassessing priorities.

He said: "People came together, and there were street parties, or just greetings, or birthday parties on the lawn – social distancing always being respected – but in a way we became a neighbourhood again and the street became a street, and the village a village. And we became, in a certain way, family. So it wasn't all bad, and we reassessed the price tags we put on things."

However Bishop Walsh said what they were commemorating in a special way was those who had died, mentioning one of the stained glass windows.

"It's a terrible affliction to have to face death at any time, it's part of life, but you can imagine what it must be like to have a husband, a wife, a child or family member dying in hospital and you can't hold their hand," he said,

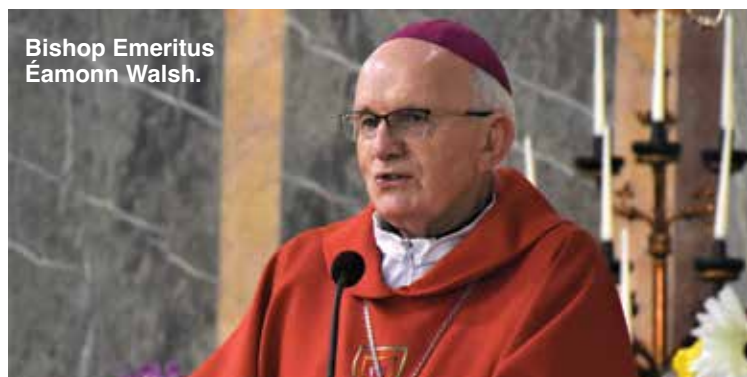
"I remember a prisoner once said to me when I was a chaplain when I had to break the news that her mother had died, the one question she asked, was there anyone with her? We always want to be with those who are dear and that was denied so many people. They were terrible, difficult times for people."



Jack and Chloe Kinahan are pictured at the Presentation of Gifts on Pentecost Sunday, received by Bishop Emeritus Éamonn Walsh, in St Teresa's parish, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8. Anne Browne from the 35th Dublin Donore Avenue Scout Group and Garda Marta Radziul from Kevin Street Garda Station are in the background. New stained-glass windows commemorating those who died during the Covid-19 pandemic were unveiled and blessed by the bishop at the Mass. Photo: Chai Brady



Reader pictured during Mass



Bishop Emeritus Éamonn Walsh.



loved ones lost during Covid



The Donore Avenue parish team with Bishop Emeritus Éamonn Walsh (second from left), Fr David Corrigan SM, Sam Byrne, Fr John O'Gara SM and Fr John Hannan SM in front of the parish's new stained glass windows.



Parishioners of Donore Avenue who attended the event on Pentecost Sunday.



Orlagh Wullich, Teresa Doyle and Luise Wullich.



Joe, Seamus and Geraldine Marken with Philomena McCarthy.



Eileen Porter and Maureen Hart.



Elliott Lee and Ely O'Reilly of the 35th Dublin Donore Avenue Scout Group who were among the scouts who helped with the event.



Kay Lee, community police officer Garda Marta Radziul from Kevin Street Garda Station and Peggy Lynch.

A summer of serenity



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Armagh pilgrims flock to Lourdes

Ruadhán Jones

Pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Armagh flocked to Lourdes Marian Shrine for their annual pilgrimage from Wednesday May 24 to Saturday 27.

Bishop Michael Ruter accompanied the pilgrims for their week of prayer and healing at the famous shrine in southwestern France.

While heavy rain spoiled the chances for the torchlit procession, it didn't dampen the spirits of the pilgrims, who proudly displayed the diocesan banner and local and national flags.

The sanctuary of Lourdes, renowned for miraculous healings associated with the local spring, is one of the most-visited Catholic shrines in the world.



The Armagh diocesan banner as well as local and national flags are displayed during the opening ceremony of the archdiocese' 2023 Pilgrimage to Lourdes on Wednesday, May 24.





Out&About

Pilgrims climb the reek...



MAYO: St Cuan's Diocesan Secondary College transition year students arrive on the summit of Croagh Patrick after a pilgrimage to the holy mountain.



CORK: Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin, Lord Mayor of Cork City Cllr Deirdre Forde and Cllr Mick Finn are pictured at the launch of the 97th annual Cork Eucharistic Procession to take place on June 11, in front of the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne. Photo: Peter Pietrzak.



CORK: Members of the Legion of Mary from West Cork parishes gathered in Darrara Church, Clonakilty, for their renewal of commitment, called the Acies, and afterwards socialised at Darrara Community Centre. Pictured (from left) are members of the Darrara Paesidium who hosted the Acies: Sheila Coughlan, Philip Joyce, Ann Lehane, Vera Calnan, Sue O'Brien, Joe Coakley, Elma McCarthy and John Keohane. Photo: Tom Hages.

IN SHORT

Eucharistic procession returns to Cork City

The annual Eucharistic procession through Cork City is set to return for the first time since 2019, it was announced on May 23.

The 97th annual Cork Eucharistic Procession will take place on June 11, beginning at 3pm at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Bishop Fintan Gavin announced on May 23.

For the first time, the procession will take a new route, crossing Christy Ring Bridge and concluding at Ss Peter and Pauls Church for a homily and Benediction celebrated by Bishop Gavin.

The Eucharistic Procession has been a milestone in religious and community life since the first one too place in 1926, a state-

ment from the diocese said.

"I invite you to join the Procession on Sunday June 11 to walk in faith as people and families from different parishes, age-groups, communities and countries. Together, we look forward to a memorable and prayerful procession this year," said Bishop Gavin at the launch.

We must plan for migration say Irish religious

Ireland must plan for migration as part of demographic change, a new release from Irish religious orders and charities says.

The policy briefing 'Migrations in Our Common Home: Forecasting for Change' calls on the Government to form a group on

forecasting for migration and to implement a human rights-based approach to immigration policy.

In a statement, the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, who co-funded the briefing paper, said that "In a globalised society, we must plan for migration as part of demographic change".

Ireland must "cultivate flourishing communities where everybody's rights are secured", they said.

Christian Brothers depart Cork's North monastery

The Christian Brothers have ended their 200-year presence at the North Monastery in Cork City, with a Mass held to honour their service.

The North Monastery secondary school was founded in November 1811 by Christian Brothers Jerome O'Connor and John Baptist Leonard, when they were given charge of a school at Chapel Lane on Cork's northside.

In 1814, a 14-acre site was donated nearby by a wealthy Catholic businessman, Sir George Gould Bart, which became the North Monastery campus where the brothers provided education to thousands of Cork people.

A community of brothers lived and worked on the site until 2020, when the last Christian brother left the residential house during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin celebrated a Mass in their honour, organised by past pupils and attended by the Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr Deirdre Forde.



MONAGHAN: Pictured with their teacher Ms Deery, Bishop Larry Duffy, Fr Jerry White and Fr Tom Quigley are the 23 children from Scoil Mhuire who received their confirmation in St Patrick's Church, Bawn.



LIMERICK: Young boys and girls who made their first Holy Communion at St Patrick's Church, Doon, are pictured with Fr Jimmy Donnelly PP and teachers Shane Ryan and Elizabeth Doherty after Mass.



KERRY: The Sisters of St Clare from Kenmare and across Ireland, gather for a final farewell celebration as the community leaves the Co. Kerry town. Pictured (centre) is Mother Abbess Julie McGoldrick with Fr George Hayes. Also pictured (from left) are Sr Maureen O'Dea, Sr Anne Kelly, Sr Zita Daly, Sr Concepta Looney, Sr Karen Small and Sr Mercedes Coen. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.



DUBLIN: Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem – Lieutenancy of Ireland meet the newly appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, during an audience at the Apostolic Nunciature on Tuesday May 24. Pictured are Mark Kane (Tuam), Fr Derek Darby (Mullingar), Nicholas McKenna (Ballymena), Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Peter Durnin (Drogheda) and Gearóid Williams (Kilrush).



NEW YORK: Dana Rosemary Scallon is pictured with Cardinal Timothy Dolan at St Patrick's Cathedral on May 14, after performing her new song 'Light the Fire'.



NEW YORK: Dana is pictured with New Yorker Marie Liddy at St Patrick's Cathedral.



TIPPERARY: Hannah O'Connell, Ayle National School, is pictured with her parents Joanne and Dave after her first Holy Communion in Our Lady of Fatima Church, Cappawhite.



DONEGAL: Fr John Joe Duffy CC Creeslough meets with President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins and the new Papal Nunico to Ireland Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor at the National Famine Commemoration in Milford on Sunday, May 21.



CAVAN: Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes prays before a relic of St Oliver Plunkett which was present in the Conaty Chapel of the Kilmore Diocesan Pastoral Centre for 12 hours on Tuesday, May 23.



CAVAN: Pictured are the pupils of Laragh Muff School with their teachers Aonghus Byrne and Cherri Campbell at their first Holy Communion at the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Muff.



CLARE: Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan is pictured with recipients of the John Paul II award in St Flannan's College on May 23.



CLARE: Fr Martin Shanahan celebrated the annual Mass at the Cliffs of Moher with Frs Tom Ryan and Martin Blake, while Deacon Leonard Cleary, director of services with responsibility for tourism in Clare County Council, assisted on Thursday, May 18.



CLARE: Fr Paschal Hanrahan, head chaplain of the Irish Defence Forces, returns to his native parish of Ennis to celebrate the silver jubilee of his ordination. He is pictured with Bishops Fintan Monahan and Willie Walsh, Fr Paul Murphy and the Poor Clare Sisters Ennis, and he was also joined by his mother Gertie and family members, as well as Fr Tom Ryan, Ennis.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



DOWN: Benedictine monks from Rostervor Abbey are pictured with Dr Tim Campbell, director of the Saint Patrick Centre, and guides Elaine Kelly (left) and Martina Purdy, following a tour of some of the holy sites associated with Ireland's patron saint.



ENGLAND: Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire, has dedicated a building to Fr Willie Doyle, a WWI chaplain who is on the road to sainthood. Pictured at the official opening of Fr William Doyle English Centre, Ratcliffe College on May 22 are (from left): Fr Philip Sainter, Ratcliffe College; Patrick Kenny, Father Willie Doyle Association; Sam Spillane, Chair of Governors, Ratcliffe College; and Fr John Hogan, diocesan postulator.



MONAGHAN: Julie Culleton is pictured with her parents Sean and Rosella after her first Holy Communion in St Mary's Church, Lattin.



LIMERICK: Beibhinn Treacy is pictured with her family after making her first Holy Communion in Doon.

ANTRIM

The JCM prayer group meets every Sunday evening in St Joseph's hall, Antrim parish, from 6-8pm.

ARMAGH

A first-class relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis will visit Armagh Cathedral Sunday June 11–Tuesday 13.

CARLOW

Killeshin graveyard Mass takes place on Friday, June 2 at 7.30pm.

CAVAN

Christian Meditation takes place every Thursday evening at 7pm in the conference room at the back of Cavan Cathedral.

CORK

Eucharistic procession for feast of Corpus Christi on Sunday, June 11, begins at 3pm at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork City. This year, the procession will follow a new route, turning to Half Moon Street and concluding at Ss Peter and Paul, Paul Street. Medjugorje prayer meeting takes place every Wednesday night at 8pm in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Third Order chapel, Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay. Rosary followed by Divine Mercy devotions take place at 8pm every night year-round at the Grotto in 'Carraig an Aifreann' Mass rock, Glenville.

DERRY

Mass for the feast of St Columba will be celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, at 7.30pm on Friday, June 9. Begins with the rosary in Irish at the outdoor Calvary scene. After Mass, there will be a procession to St Columba's Well, which will be led by the Colmcille Pipe Band. The Maghera Parish 'pray and play' for parents, grandparents and tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10am Mass. It runs from 10.30am until 12 noon. The 'Fan the Flame' Mass for Confirmation children takes place Thursday, June 8 in Celtic Park.

DONEGAL

Rossnowlagh friary to host a Triduum of prayer to St Anthony beginning Saturday, June 10 and concluding on the feast of St Anthony, Tuesday, June 13. Young adult prayer meeting (18-40) takes place every Wednesday at 8pm in the meeting room upstairs in Mountcharles church.

DOWN

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed in Newry Cathedral every Thursday from 5-9pm, on Saturday after 10.30am Mass until 5.30pm and Sunday from after the 12 noon Mass until 5.30pm.

DUBLIN

St Patrick's Church Ringsend to hold their annual memorial Mass for deceased infants and children on Sunday, June 11 at 3pm. Light refreshments available after Mass.

GALWAY

Eucharistic adoration takes place in Galway cathedral from Monday to Friday from 11.30am-6pm and on Sunday from 1.15-6pm.

KERRY

North Kerry local cemetery Masses take place in Ballybunion St Johns Friday June 9 at 7pm; Ballydonoghue Lisselton on Monday, June 12 and Gale, Thursday, June 15, both at 8pm.

KILDARE

St Padre Pio's glove will be in Fitzpatrick's house, Kilberry, Athy on Saturday, June 3 from 11am-5pm.

KILKENNY

St John's Parish Scripture group meets in the presbytery at 7.30pm each Thursday to reflect on Scripture texts for the following Sunday's Mass.

LAOIS

St Peter and Paul's cemetery Mass, Portlaoise parish, takes place on Sunday, June 4, at 1pm. The Mass will take the place of 12.30pm Mass in the parish church.

LEITRIM

Daily Rosary at 6pm in St Joseph's Church, Leitrim Village.

LOUTH

Taize music in candlelight, a time of peace and reflective prayer with the music of Taize, takes place Friday, June 2, 8-9pm, followed by tea/coffee in Bethany, 34 Point Road, Dundalk, A91 W0C 9. A Novena to St Gerard takes place every Wednesday at 9.30am and 7.30pm in St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass (Tridentine) will take place in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Knock Shrine, on Sunday, June 11, at 6pm. Lectio Divina in Westport parish takes place Mondays 11-11.30am in the choir room on the ground floor of the Parish Centre at the James St entrance.

MEATH

Blessing of expectant mothers takes place on Saturday, June 3, after 6pm Mass in St Mary's Church, Navan.

TIPPERARY

Family Day in Glencomeragh House, Holy Family Mission, Kilsheelan, takes place Sunday, June 4, 10am-3pm. A day of prayer, talk, Mass, music, fun and games for all. Booking is essential: email info@holymission.ie

TYRONE

A baby and toddlers' group is held in Holy Trinity Church Hall, Dromore, "The Ark", every Tuesday morning from 10am-12pm. All babies and toddlers with their carers' welcome.

WATERFORD

Lectio Divina with the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a time of reading the Sunday Gospel, prayer, followed by conversation takes place Tuesdays, 2.30-4pm in St John's Pastoral Centre or Thursdays, 7.30-9pm in the Sacred Heart Convent, Cedar Lodge (Newtown Rd.).

WEXFORD

Rosary and devotions continue every Tuesday at 2.30pm at Rocklands shrine to Our Lady of Wexford until the summer.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Woman arrested following arson of Marian shrine

● A 41-year-old woman has been arrested and charged in connection with causing more than \$78,000 (€72,696) in damages in an arson attack at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines, Illinois.

The 60-acre shrine, which receives hundreds of thousands of pilgrims each year and is meant to spread devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, operates under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Virginia Roque-Fermin of Arlington Heights, Illinois, was charged with one felony count of Arson, police said.

Des Plaines police responded to the fire at 2:31 am and unsuccessfully tried to extinguish the fire. The Des Plaines Fire Department was able to put out the fire after arriving.

Honouring drag queen 'nuns' disparages religious

● Responding to the news that the Los Angeles Dodgers will honour a self-described "leading-edge order of queer and trans nuns" with a long history of obscenely satirising the Catholic faith, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is calling for "all Catholics and people of goodwill to stand against bigotry and hate in any form".

"The decision to honour a group that clearly mocks the Catholic faith and makes light of the sincere and holy

vocations of our women religious who are an integral part of our Church is what has caused disappointment, concern, anger, and dismay from our Catholic community," the archdiocese said in a statement on May 22.

The LA Dodgers baseball team had backed down from its plans to honour the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence after criticism, before retracting the decision and apologising.

Bolivian govt pressures Vatican after abuse revelations

● Bolivia's president has urged the Vatican to join the Bolivian government in revising procedures for allowing any foreign clergy in the South American country, where revelations of a deceased Jesuit's sexual abuse of children have caused outrage.

In a May 22 letter to Pope Francis, Bolivian President Luis Arce requested the Vatican open its archives and share information from investigations into priests and religious in Bolivia accused of sexual abuse.

He also promised to review all bilateral agreements signed by Bolivia and the Holy See.

The letter stated, "The Bolivian state reserves the right to admit the entry of new foreign priests and religious who have records of sexual abuse against minors."

Anti-Catholic attacks continue 'without consequences'

● Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco said on May 28 that prosecutors' decision to reduce the charge against activists who destroyed a parish's statue of a saint from felony to misdemeanour sends the signal that attacks against the Catholic Church can continue with impunity.

"If the same kind of offense had been committed against another religious congregation or group, it would almost certainly have been prosecuted as a hate crime," Archbishop Cordileone said.

Archbishop Cordileone's statement follows a decision by the Marin County District Attorney's Office to reduce charges against five protesters who, on October 12, 2020, defaced and tore down the statue of St Junipero Serra.

"Now, with this decision, the Marin County district attorney has given the signal that attacks on Catholic houses of worship and sacred objects may continue without serious legal consequence," the archbishop said.

Canada Cathedral and historic church suffer arson attacks three days apart

The archbishop of Grouard-McLennan in Northern Alberta, Canada, says he is saddened but "not overcome" by the loss of a 121-year-old church to arson on May 22.

A second church in Alberta, St Mary's Cathedral, was also the victim of alleged attempted arson three days earlier, as local police seek assistance in identifying a man who allegedly set a fire and assaulted two staff members.

Archbishop Gérard Pettipas, CSsR, released a statement Tuesday, May 23, following the May 22 fire that destroyed the historic St Bernard Catholic Church.

Archbishop Pettipas said the church was "irreparably destroyed" and marks "a sad moment for the many people who have fond memories of this church. Frequent Masses, baptisms, funerals, confirmations, and confessions took place between these walls, which are now charred and rendered as rubbish".

Royal Canadian Mounted Police have charged two men in connection with the fire: High Prairie, Alberta, residents Kenneth Ferguson, 56, and Gerald Capot, 50, are both charged with break and enter to commit theft as well as arson. The two appeared in court in High Prairie on May 29.

In his statement, the archbishop said St Bernard was "a place of immense historical



The interior of St. Bernard's Church in Grouard, Alberta, Canada, after it was destroyed by fire on May 22. Credit: Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan photo/BC Catholic.

significance."

"It was not only a monument to the past but [also] a vital part of the present and a building our diocese has been trying to restore, little by little, to its original beauty," he said.

Saying he greatly mourned the loss of the church and regretted "the incident that led to its destruction," the archbishop said: "I am not overcome by this loss. Nobody lost their life in this fire."

The church was the diocese's first cathedral, built when the episcopal vicar of Athabasca, Bishop Emile

Grouard, chose Lesser Slave Lake Post as the seat of his diocese.

Just three days before the fire, on May 19, police responded to reports of a "deliberately set fire" at St Mary's Cathedral in Calgary, in the western province of Alberta.

Two staff members at the cathedral heard a "commotion" outside and opened the back door to see what it was, the statement said. When they opened the door, a man "aggressively charged at them," according to police.

The two staff members,

both men, closed the doors before the man could reach them, the Calgary Police Department said May 25. The man continued to attempt to enter the church, the statement said.

Law enforcement was called and the Calgary Fire Department put out the fire when it arrived.

More than 50 Catholic churches in Canada have been vandalised or burned down since the announcement in 2021 that graves had apparently been found near a former residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Ideologies cause escalating violence in Manipur, Indian archbishop says

Divisive ideologies and agendas are the root cause of an ethnic conflict that has led to violence against Christians and attacks on churches in India's northeastern state of Manipur, said Indian Archbishop Dominic Lumon of Imphal, the state's capital city.

"Hidden agendas and ideologies contrary to the constitutional and democratic values often infiltrate into the region and the state which jeopardises the peaceful coexistence and religious harmony of the state and the region," Archbishop Lumon told OSV News on May 24.

"Outside forces with the hidden agendas to disturb communal harmony and vested interests have to be recognised and resisted," he said.

Violence began in early May when ethnic tribal groups, primarily Christian, protested against a High Court decision granting "Scheduled Tribe" status to the majority Meithei Hindu community.

Scheduled Tribes are Indigenous tribal groups that are given reservation status under India's constitution. Traditionally disadvantaged communities recognised as Scheduled Tribes are guaranteed polit-

ical representation and receive benefits such as education and employment.

Answering questions from OSV News via email, Archbishop Lumon explained that opposition to the Meithei community's inclusion in the list of Scheduled Tribes also would grant them the right to own land in ethnic tribal areas and is an issue that is at the "heart of the violence in Manipur."

He also cited disparity in land distribution and in political representation in favour of the Meithei community as reasons for escalating tensions in the region.

Court ruling on sexual orientation harms Church independence in Chile

A Catholic bishop has criticised the 2022 ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) on the Pavez Pavez vs Chile case for proposing controversial nondiscrimination "training" regarding sexual orientation that could threaten the country's religious denominations.

The court gave Chile, and

indirectly the Church, two years to comply.

ACI Prensa recently interviewed Dr Juan Ignacio González Errázuriz, the bishop of San Bernardo, Chile, where the controversy originated, to learn how the Church is dealing with the case.

The prelate said the rul-

ing against the Chilean state "implies that the independence of the Church or religious denominations is disavowed, and that is very serious and absolutely unacceptable".

"The ruling jeopardises the independence and autonomy of a religious denomination to fulfil its own purpose," he pointed out.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that the Chilean state had discriminated against Sandra Pavez Pavez because of her sexual orientation. The Church did not renew her accreditation to teach religion because she was maintaining a same-sex relationship.



Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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The 'capoeira' kid...



A group from Brazil performs a demonstration of *capoeira*, a martial art, at the end of Pope Francis' weekly general audience May 24, in St Peter's Square at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.

Mexican bishops demand investigation into priest's murder

The Mexican Bishops' Conference (CEM) expressed "consternation and pain" over the May 22 murder of Augustinian Fr Javier García Villafañá and demanded "an exhaustive and transparent investigation".

"We strongly condemn this act of violence that has not only taken a life but also threatens peace and justice in our nation," the Mexican bishops said.

"It's a painful reminder of the dire situation we face as a society, in which the presence of organised crime and impunity continue to threaten the lives and safety of so many," they added.

According to the Michoacán State Attorney General's Office, the priest's body was found inside his car on the Cuitzeo-Huandacareo highway with gunshot wounds.

Fr García was pastor of St Mark Parish in the town of Capacho in the Huandacareo district, a region in the Archdiocese of Morelia.

"We urgently call on the competent authorities to carry out an exhaustive and transparent investigation that leads to the identification and punishment of those responsible. We cannot allow this and other similar acts to go unpunished," the bishops

stated.

According to the Multimedia Catholic Centre, this is the ninth priest murdered during the six-year term of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, which began in December 2018.

Almost a year ago, on June 21, 2022, two Jesuit priests were murdered inside a Catholic church in the town of Cerocahui in the Sierra Tarahumara area of the state of Chihuahua.

In March of this year, José Noriel Portillo, accused of being the gunman who killed the Jesuits, was found dead by authorities.

For the CEM, "it is

essential that the rule of law be restored and the safety of all citizens be guaranteed, especially those who dedicate their lives to the service of others".

The Mexican bishops renewed their commitment "to announce the Gospel of peace and reconciliation in the midst of adversity".

The murder of Father García followed a May 21 attack on Archbishop Faustino Armendáriz Jiménez of Durango, who said an elderly man swung a knife at him in the sacristy of Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in the northwest Mexican state.

Hundreds of Christians killed in southeast Nigeria

A leading Nigerian human rights organisation has published a report with sobering statistics on summary executions, maiming, forced disappearances and illegal detentions in Imo state of southeast Nigeria.

Presenting the report during a press conference on May 21, Emeka Umeagbalasi, a Catholic human rights activist and chairman of the Intersociety organisation, said that in just 29 months, from January 2021-May 2023, "security forces and allied militias killed 900 unarmed citizens,

wounded 700, arrested 3,500, extorted 1,400, disappeared 300".

In addition, the report said 1,200 civilian houses were burned down, displacing 30,000 owners and their families and forcing 500,000 citizens to flee.

According to the report, non-state actors, such as Fulani jihadists and other militias were responsible for most of the deaths – 700 – and for an additional 900 kidnappings that occurred during the same time period.

Most of those killed in Imo state

and elsewhere in southeast Nigeria might have been targeted because of their Christian faith, the report's authors stressed.

Mr Umeagbalasi said that people are slain based on their ethnicity and religion, and he criticised the Nigerian police for rarely looking into the crimes.

"We are not against the police and security agencies performing their jobs," Mr Umeagbalasi told journalists, "but they have to do that within the confines of the law."

Vatican roundup

Pope prays Chinese Catholics can practice faith freely

● Pope Francis prayed that Catholics in China would be free to share the Gospel and live their faith fully.

At a time when Vatican-Chinese relations are strained because of apparent differences over an agreement to name bishops, the Pope publicly marked the annual World Day of Prayer for the Catholic Church in China, May 24, the feast of Mary, Help of Christians, venerated and invoked at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan in Shanghai.

"I invite everyone to lift up a prayer to God so that the Good News of Christ crucified and risen may be proclaimed in its fullness, beauty and freedom, bearing fruit for the good of the Catholic Church and of the whole Chinese society," the Pope said at the end of his weekly general audience.

Pope Francis said he wanted "our brothers and sisters in China" to know that Catholics around the globe are close to them, "sharing their joys and hopes", and that "all those who suffer, pastors and faithful", find consolation and encouragement "in the communion and solidarity of the universal Church".

Activists face prison time for Vatican Museums protest

● Two environmental activists who glued themselves to an ancient statue in the Vatican Museums said they did not intend to damage its marble base but wanted to draw attention to the urgency of acting against climate change, they told the Vatican's criminal court in a hearing May 24.

The activists, Guido Viero (62) and Ester Goffi (26) are on trial at the Vatican for an August 2022 protest in which they glued their hands to the base of the statue of Laocoön and His Sons, believed to date back to the first century BC.

They held up a banner that read "No Gas and

No Coal" and showed the logo of the Last Generation environmental group, which organises civil disobedience protests.

A third activist who filmed the incident is also facing charges but was not present at the May 24 hearing.

After the hearing Ms Goffi told the Italian news agency ANSA that the activists each face a maximum of three years in prison and fines of more than €3,000.

The court is expected to deliver the sentences after the trial's next hearing, which is scheduled for June 12.

'Surfing angel' seminarian set on path to sainthood

● The Catholic Church is one step closer to canonizing a surfing saint after Pope Francis recognised the heroic virtue of Brazil's "Surfer Angel" Guido Schäffer in a decree issued by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on Saturday, May 20.

Mr Schäffer was a seminarian, a doctor, and a surfer who drowned while surfing in 2009 off the coast of Rio de Janeiro at the age of 34 before he could fulfil his desire of being ordained to the priesthood.

The Brazilian seminarian, known locally as the *Anjo Surfista* or 'Surfer Angel', used to begin each of his surfing lessons with a prayer and was known for his work with the poor, providing medical care to Rio's *favelas* (poor, working-class neighbourhoods) alongside the Missionaries of Charity.

With the decree, Pope Francis declared Mr Schäffer "venerable". The Church will now need to approve a miracle attributed to his intercession before he can be beatified.

Sr Caritas of the Missionaries of Charity recalled how Mr Schäffer talked to each of the people he served about Christ, taking care of "both their body and their soul".



Letter from Rome



Elise Ann Allen

In snub to Russia, Ukraine's Orthodox Church moves Christmas to December 25

In a decision seen as an act of defiance towards the Russian Orthodox Church, which also has the effect of promoting closer ties with Roman Catholics and other Western branches of Christianity, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine has decided to move Christmas to December 25.

Traditionally, Ukrainian Christians, the bulk of whom are Orthodox, have celebrated Christmas on January 7, along with other predominantly Orthodox nations, including Russia, which invaded Ukraine in February of last year.

On May 24, the Council of Bishops of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine voted nearly unanimously to switch from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar as regards most major feasts, except for Easter and a handful of other feast days, such as the feast of the Trinity.

Not an easy decision

In a statement following the Council's decision, Metropolitan Epiphany, head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, said the decision "is not an easy one, we have been coming to it for a long time, gradually, step by step, and we are making it carefully".

However, Metropolitan Epiphany said the decision was "as necessary as the decision to introduce the Ukrainian language in worship instead of the traditional Slavic language, to introduce an autocephalous structure of the Church's life instead of centuries of subordination".

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, one of several Byzantine-rite Churches in full communion with Rome, was the first to make the switch to a new calendar in early 2023.

Adherents to Orthodoxy still follow the Julian calendar, while the Catholic Church and most of the world follow the Gregorian calendar, introduced via papal bull Pope Gregory XIII on February 24, going into effect in October 1582 as a modification of, and replacement for, the Julian calendar.

The transition from the Julian calendar without making a change regarding the celebration of Easter is called the "New Julian" calendar, which is already used by many Orthodox churches in Europe.

In Ukraine there are two primary branches of Orthodox, the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate – a branch of Orthodoxy in Ukraine that reports to Moscow.

Following their recent vote, as of September 1, which marks the



Metropolitan Epiphanius conducts a liturgy at St Michael's Cathedral in Kiev, Ukraine. Photo CNS/Valentyn Ogirenko, Reuters.

beginning of their new Church year, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) will celebrate Christmas on December 25, rather than on January 7.

The Orthodox St Nicholas Day will now take place on December 6, and the church will join Catholics in celebrating the feast of the Epiphany on January 6.

Modern realities

In a decree announcing their decision, the OCU said they made the decision to switch the date of their observance of Christmas not only because the Julian calendar is of secular origin and "has no sacred significance", but also because it is associated with Russian Orthodoxy.

The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war last year has caused a fracture inside the Orthodox world

"In the modern realities of the existence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in Ukrainian society, especially in connection with the aggressive Russian war against Ukraine," the demand for a change in the calendar increased "significantly", they said.

For centuries, the traditional Julian calendar "was perceived as one of the main identifiers of

Ecclesial tensions in Ukraine are also being felt at the political level, as the Ukrainian parliament debates a bill banning all activities of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine

Ukrainian Church culture. At first, it was a sign of resistance to Latinisation, and after the Bolshevik revolution, it was also a sign of resistance to the Soviet system," they said.

However, the social and cultural context in Ukraine has changed dramatically since then, the OCU's statement said.

Nowadays, it said, the Julian calendar "is perceived by the majority not so much as connected with ancient Ukrainian traditions, but as connected with Russian Church culture. After all, the Orthodox Churches that support the Orthodox Church of Ukraine use the modern calendar, while its opponents, and primarily the Russian Orthodox Church, follow the old calendar."

"Therefore, the desire to preserve and affirm one's own, Ukrainian, spiritual identity, protection from the aggression of the 'Russian world,' requires a timely decision – to join the majority of Local Orthodox Churches – in introducing into use the New Julian calendar, as more accurate astronomically and ecclesiastically accepted, with the preservation of the traditional Easter," the statement said.

The outbreak of the Russia-

Ukraine war last year has caused a fracture inside the Orthodox world, with several local Russian Orthodox churches opting to break away from the Moscow Patriarchate over Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill's support of the war, requesting to switch jurisdiction to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, led by Patriarch Bartholomew, instead.

Traditionally, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Moscow Patriarchate have been at odds, seen as representing two different strains of Orthodoxy, with Moscow accusing the former of being too indulgent of the West and, therefore, of Western secular values.

However, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, this sentiment has changed among many Orthodox, sparking a significant shift in sentiment among Ukrainian Orthodox, particularly those who are loyal to Moscow.

Last spring, shortly after the war broke out, priests within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate began collecting signatures for a petition to oust Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill from his position of leadership over his support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

This follows a similar petition launched at the beginning of the war that was signed by nearly 300 Russian Orthodox priests, including several prominent members of the Russian Orthodox Church, and which urged Kirill to condemn the war, which over a year later, he still has not done.

Ecclesial tensions

Ecclesial tensions in Ukraine are also being felt at the political level, as the Ukrainian parliament debates a bill banning all activities of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine.

Despite his frequent condemnations of Russia's invasion, the leader of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, has condemned the bill, saying it is not only problematic on grounds of religious freedom, but would have the counterproductive effect of turning supporters of Russia into martyrs.

The UOC's statement specified that despite the shift in calendar, parishes that wish to continue following the old Julian calendar for economic or other reasons may do so, but the decision must be approved by a two-thirds majority of community members and it must be "properly documented".

Elise Ann Ellen is senior correspondent for Crux

'I fell in love with Christ' to portray Padre Pio, says American star



Shia LaBeouf stars in the new drama *Padre Pio*, which premiered at last year's Venice Film Festival and will be released in US theatres and on demand, June 2. Photo: OSV News/Gravitas Ventures.



Gina Christian

A film making its US and streaming debut recounts the life of a beloved 20th-century saint – and the movie's star told OSV News he "fell in love with Christ" to prepare for the part.

Actor Shia LaBeouf portrays St Pio of Pietrelcina in the new drama *Padre Pio*, which premiered at last year's Venice Film Festival and will be released in US theatres and on demand June 2.

Pivotal

Directed by Abel Ferrara, the movie traces a pivotal period in the life of St (Padre) Pio, when the 33-year-old Capuchin Franciscan priest – bearing the stigmata, the visible wounds of Christ – begins what would become his lifelong ministry in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, just after World War I. (The Capuchin himself had served as a private in the Italian army's medical corps during the conflict.)

Mr LaBeouf said he "wasn't even

trying to make movies" when Mr Ferrara approached him about the role.

The acclaimed 36-year-old actor – whose Emmy-winning career as a child on the Disney Channel blossomed into big-screen success – found himself "totally lost" after his inner demons led to partying, work conflicts and run-ins with the law.

"I was wandering around, living in my truck," he said. "I wasn't interested in acting anymore."

As Mr LaBeouf began confronting his personal issues, Mr Ferrara tapped him for *Padre Pio*, a saint to whom the Bronx-born director – best known for his gritty cinematic takes on the underworld – felt himself "drawn".

“He got into RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). The friars and I were helping to catechise him”

Based in Rome for the past two decades, Mr Ferrara had begun exploring the life of Padre Pio by first making a documentary, then crafting a feature film to depict a saint “struggling (as) an individual who, like all of us, is confronted with a lot of questions”.

"I wanted to make a film about a man," Mr Ferrara told OSV

News. "I didn't want to make a film about a saint."

The project "seemed like a neon sign" beckoning Mr LaBeouf, who said he "was looking for salvation (and) ... a relationship with God".

While researching the film, Mr LaBeouf met Bro. Alexander Rodriguez, a Capuchin Franciscan who is assistant vocation director at the order's Old Mission Santa Inés in Solvang, California.

Beloved

Soon Mr LaBeouf was asking about more than one of the congregation's most beloved saints.

"Shia was looking to know about Padre Pio, and then delved into the Faith," Bro. Rodriguez told OSV News. "He got into RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). The friars and I were helping to catechise him."

Mr LaBeouf said "(learning) how to pray the rosary" brought a "tangible relief" that he had previously sought through drugs, alcohol and life in the fast lane.

The lessons continued as Bro. Rodriguez accompanied Mr LaBeouf to Italy for filming, with the Capuchin providing technical assistance for the project while appearing in the movie as Padre Pio's fellow Capuchin and spiritual advisor.

Drawing on the saint's writings at the time, the movie presents

a "pretty accurate" image of "a very human Padre Pio, one (who) did not become a saint in an easy way," said Bro. Rodriguez.

The film links the saint's reception of the stigmata – and its attendant suffering – with postwar Italy's tumultuous "two red years" (*biennio rosso*) of economic and social upheaval, which saw riots, strikes and peasant land seizures across the country. San Giovanni Rotondo itself was the scene of a little-known October 1920 massacre in which 14 peasants were killed by police after socialists attempted to install their mayor.

“In the face of evil, Mr LaBeouf said he now draws on his faith for strength, wisdom and courage, with Padre Pio as a role model”

Mr Ferrara said he sees the tragedy – which he called "the first battle of World War II" – as a window into "Padre Pio's position of compassion and sacrifice beyond petty politics," amid the reality of evil and human suffering.

Bro. Rodriguez said Padre Pio's stigmata, which over the years

drew thousands of pilgrims to San Giovanni Rotondo, had been divinely given "as a ministry for the people who were suffering" in such troubled times – which continue today, said Mr Ferrara, who recently returned from Ukraine, where more than 88,000 Russian war crimes have so far been documented since the start of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Evil

"The fight has never stopped," said Mr Ferrara, adding, "what's happening in Ukraine (and) what happened in World War I (both) show that evil is there, that it exists."

"I have Polaroid pictures of evil in my life," said Mr LaBeouf, stressing that evil typically manifests itself in mundane forms such as "selfishness, self-centeredness ... dishonesty (and) a complete lack of empathy for others."

In the face of evil, Mr LaBeouf said he now draws on his faith for strength, wisdom and courage, with Padre Pio as a role model.

"He suffered in patience, silence and solitude. He didn't complain about it," said Mr LaBeouf. "The deeper I got into Pio, the more I realised the right way to suffer. His life was instructive."

i Gina Christian is a national reporter for OSV News. Follow her on Twitter at @GinaJesseReina

Letters

Letter of the week

Preparing for a dearth of priests

Dear Editor, In a report by Jason Osborne [*The Irish Catholic* – May 11, 2023], Fr Enda Cunningham said that couples preparing for marriage should be made “aware that the Sacrament of Marriage can be celebrated in its own rite, aside from the celebration of the Eucharist”. Fr Conor McDonough OP argued that in certain circumstances it may be “best to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage outside the context of the Eucharist, especially when a large number of people at the celebration are not regular Massgoers”.

The article failed to communicate that there are reasons other than those listed by the priests why the sacraments may

need to be celebrated aside from the celebration of the Eucharist. One such circumstance that looms large these days is the shortage of priests. And for this same reason, it is not only marriages that may need to be celebrated in this way, but funerals may also need to be carried out without the benefit of the Mass.

We in Ireland have been blessed with a surplus of priests up until recently, but the time is coming, and will soon be upon us, when we will not have enough priests to allow marriage or funeral rites for everyone within the context of the Mass. Church leaders in Ireland have been slow in preparing the faithful for this

situation and many may now be shocked and appalled at the idea of a marriage or funeral without Mass.

During this year of prayer for vocations, it is more than ever necessary that the laity put themselves forward to serve as deacons who can administer the sacrament of matrimony and officiate at funeral services. This is already happening in so-called missionary lands. We may need also to come to terms with the fact that we will soon depend on foreign missionaries coming to serve us.

*Yours etc.,
Brendan Kennedy,
Belfast, Co. Antrim*

Non-Mass marriage ceremonies

Dear Editor, In 1975 when arranging our marriage, we opted for a marriage ceremony ritual without Mass at the local Catholic church where we then lived in Wales. My husband to be, and family, were not Catholics and this meant they could not take part fully in a Eucharist. This was my main reason for a wedding without Mass. Our marriage ceremony was simple and memorable and we are still together.

I think this option should be suggested to all couples coming for marriage preparation courses and positively encouraged where priests are aware that the majority of the congregation attending are likely to be unfamiliar with the ritual.

*Yours etc.,
Geraldine Williams
Aughur, Co Tyrone.*



DUP are losing moral high ground

Dear Editor, The Sinn Féin gains in the council elections is because of their progressive policies, their urgency in returning to Stormont (if only we could), and their strides made towards an all-inclusive party.

The DUP are losing the moral high ground by using the protocol as an excuse in delaying a return to power sharing and their antiquated policies due to their supposed adherence

to Biblical scripture (although once they condemn usury, in all its guises, then I'll believe their old fluff).

Unionists must decide whether to maintain their love affair with a Great Britain that wants out of the relationship (let's face it, they never took it seriously) or to accept a state encompassing the shores of Ireland, but one where the Irish language isn't imposed on us. The last time I was in Dub-

lin everything was in English and everybody spoke English. We don't want the Irish tricolour flying from every public building and lamppost. But it isn't like that in the south. I've taken buses from Belfast to Killarney and back again, and I didn't see one tricolour. We don't want a situation where 'them'uns' from down south are "coming up and taking our jobs and houses".

This is something they've

had the right to do for decades and we can do the same down there. But I think most people prefer to be near family and friends and stay around what is familiar to them. Lastly, we could have a cultural space where the orange order can still parade and practice, as they still do in Cavan, Monaghan, and Donegal.

*Yours etc.,
Louis Shawcross
Hillsborough, Co. Down*

Nonviolence has not been widely preached

Dear Editor, Commemorative occasions are a golden opportunity for reminding ourselves of Jesus' teaching of "love your enemies".

Bishop Coll did not refer to the will of God as revealed by Jesus in his homily at the Mass on the occasion of the annual State commemorative ceremonies for the 1916 Easter Rising in Arbour Hill, Dublin, May 3, 2023.

We need to re-programme our minds and to admit that many policies of state as well as attitudes held generally in soci-

ety, and even in churches, are not always in keeping with Jesus' teaching.

Redemptive violence is a sheer waste of people's talents and goodness, a destroyer of even the people who think they will gain from it.

People cannot live by a truth which has not been preached to them.

Nonviolence has not been widely preached by the Church and needs to be, so that all followers of Christ will seek truth and peace by peaceful means.

Nonviolence could be promoted at all

levels, and the acceptance of 'justified' violence in real life and on our television screens critically viewed.

To return good for evil is the only way of stopping evil in its tracks – even if it causes us temporary suffering and death. For the Christian a renewal of the faith and zeal of the early martyrs is surely preferable to the inertia and ignominy of collaborating with evil.

*Yours etc.,
Máire Mhic Fhearghusa
Greenhills, Dublin 12*

Essential parts of the initiation

Dear Editor, The sooner we take sacramental preparation out of the schools the better. Confirmation and first Holy Communion, as well as Baptism are the essential parts of the initiation Rite into the Christian community. After First Holy Communion in our local church last week, there wasn't a single child at Mass the following weekend.

Of course, most people reading this letter would probably say: "Sure that's the new normal!"

But anybody, with any sense, would know that if a person goes through an initiation rite without any intention of becoming a genuine member of the particular organisation involved, it is deceitful and wrong. And in the case of the Church, it is counter productive.

If we continue with this charade, our churches will soon be empty. If, on the other hand, each parish were to take responsibility for the catechesis and the initiation of our new members – especially the children, and definitely outside of school-time – then I think that quite a number of parents and children would rise to the challenge and make a definite choice to follow Christ as practicing Catholics.

*Yours etc.,
Pat Seaver
Farranshone, Co. Limerick*

Challenging young people's exposure to porn

Dear Editor, Fr Chris Hayden is to be congratulated on the clarity of his article [*The Irish Catholic* – May 11, 2023] entitled "Education cannot be value-free on pornography".

The major issue facing Catholic parents at this time relate to the Relationship and Sex Education curriculum that Minister Norma Foley plans for September's secondary school intake. The areas of study causing most worry are those relating to "ethical pornography" and to "gender ideology".

According to those parents who have seen the text books in circulation for this new programme these are considered most inappropriate for use in Catholic schools.

Through your columns I would like to recommend last weekend's conference on porn broadcast on Radio Maria. The six expert speakers, including Fr Hayden, provide excellent insights into issues relating to porn and rightly challenge the Government's proposals for exposure of our young people to so called "ethical porn".

A podcast of the conference expertly chaired by Patricia Keane is well worth a listen.

*Yours etc.,
Alan Whelan
President Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Association
Killarney, Co. Kerry*

Fighting off a windfall

Dear Editor, Our Government spend millions fighting off a windfall of €13 billion from Apple, while at the same time they have appointed an expert negotiator, to extract further payments from religious congregations whose members, in the last century, provided the only refuges available to some of the most unwanted in society at that time, those who through coercion or manipulation conceived a baby out of wedlock.

This should tell us who is running the country, and in whose interests it is being governed.

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

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.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, June 1, 2023

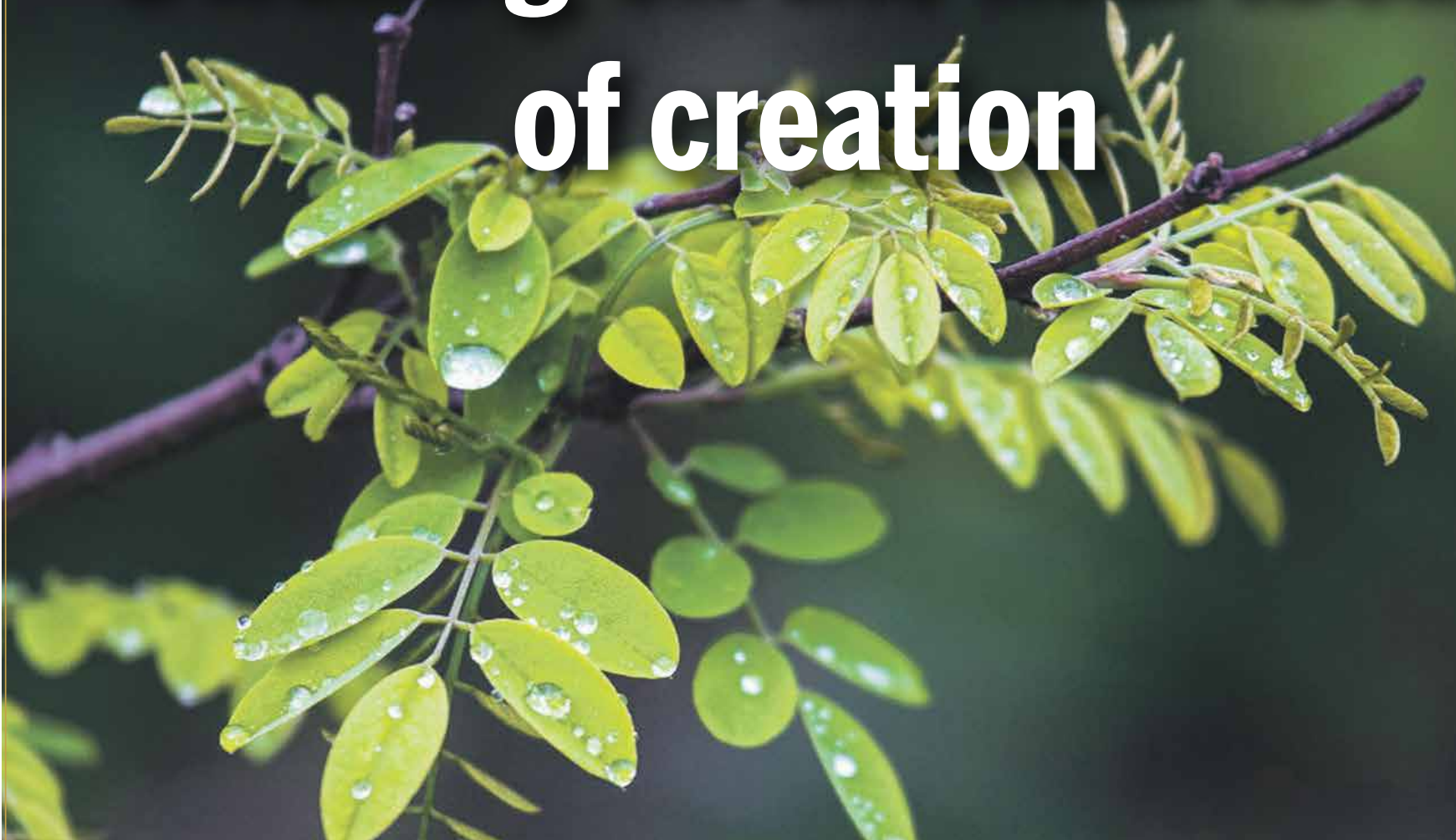
Questions of Faith

Are objective moral values real?

Page 32



Dwelling on the heartbeat of creation



“Let Justice and Peace Flow” is the theme of this year’s ecumenical Season of Creation, inspired by the words of the prophet Amos: “Let justice flow on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (5:24).

The evocative image used by Amos speaks to us of what God desires. God wants justice to reign; it is as essential to our life as God’s children made in his likeness as water is essential for our physical survival. This justice must flow forth wherever it is needed, neither remaining hidden deep beneath the ground nor vanishing like water that evaporates before it can bring sustenance. God wants everyone to strive to be just in every



We can and we must prevent the worst effects of climate change from happening, writes Pope Francis

situation, to live according to his laws and thus to enable life to flourish. When we “seek first the kingdom of God” (Mt 6:33), maintaining a right relationship with God, humanity and nature, then justice and peace can flow like a never-failing stream of pure water, nourishing humanity and all creatures.

On a beautiful summer day in July 2022, during my pilgrimage to Canada, I reflected on this

situation, to live according to his laws and thus to enable life to flourish. When we “seek first the kingdom of God” (Mt 6:33), maintaining a right relationship with God, humanity and nature, then justice and peace can flow like a never-failing stream of pure water, nourishing humanity and all creatures. On a beautiful summer day in July 2022, during my pilgrimage to Canada, I reflected on this

the maternal heartbeat of the earth. Just as the hearts of babies in the womb beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonise our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life”.

During this Season of Creation, let us dwell on those heartbeats: our own and those of our mothers and grandmothers, the heartbeat of creation and the

heartbeat of God. Today they do not beat in harmony; they are not harmonised in justice and peace. Too many of our brothers and sisters are prevented from drinking from that mighty river. Let us heed our call to stand with the victims of environmental and climate injustice, and to put an end to the senseless war against creation.

The effects of this war can be seen in the many rivers that are drying up. Benedict XVI once observed that: “the external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast”. Consumerist greed, fuelled by selfish hearts, is disrupting the planet’s water cycle. The unrestrained burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests are push-

ing temperatures higher and leading to massive droughts. Alarming water shortages increasingly affect both small rural communities and large metropolises. Moreover, predatory industries are depleting and polluting our freshwater sources through extreme practices such as fracking for oil and gas extraction, unchecked mega-mining projects, and intensive animal farming. “Sister Water”, in the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, is pillaged and turned into “a commodity subject to the laws of the market” (*Laudato Si'*, 30).

“St John Paul II encouraged us to embrace: the renewal of our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from our Creator”

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that acting now with greater urgency means that we will not miss our chance to create a more sustainable and just world. We can and we must prevent the worst from happening. “Truly, much can be done” (*ibid.*, 180), provided we come together like so many streams, brooks and rivulets, merging finally in a mighty river to irrigate the life of our marvellous planet and our human family for generations to come. So let us join hands and take bold steps to “Let Justice and Peace Flow” throughout our world.

How can we contribute to the mighty river of justice and peace in this Season of Creation? What can we, particularly as Christian communities, do to heal our common home so that it can once again teem with life? We must do this by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles, and the public policies ruling our societies.

First, let us join the mighty river by transforming our hearts. This is essential for any other transformation to occur; it is that “ecological conversion” which St John Paul II encouraged us to embrace: the renewal of our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from our Creator. Furthermore, we should realise that an integral approach to respect for the environment involves four relationships: with God, with our brothers and sisters of today and tomorrow, with all of nature, and with ourselves.

As to the first of these relationships, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the urgent need to recognise that creation and redemption are inseparably linked: “The Redeemer is the Creator and if we do not proclaim God in his full grandeur – as Creator and as Redeemer – we also diminish the value of the redemption”. Creation refers both to God’s mysterious, magnificent act of creating this majestic, beautiful planet and

Care for our common home starts at a young age. Photo: CNS



universe out of nothing and to the continuing result of that act, which we experience as an inexhaustible gift. During the liturgy and personal prayer in “the great cathedral of creation”, let us recall the great Artist who creates such beauty, and reflect on the mystery of that loving decision to create the cosmos.

Lifestyles

Second, let us add to the flow of this mighty river by transforming our lifestyles. Starting from grateful wonder at the Creator and his creation, let us repent of our “ecological sins”, as my brother, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has urged. These sins harm the world of nature and our fellow men and women. With the help of God’s grace, let us adopt lifestyles marked by less waste and unnecessary consumption, especially where the processes of production are toxic and unsustainable. Let us be as mindful as we can about our habits and economic decisions so that all can thrive – our fellow men and women wherever they may be, and future generations as well. Let us cooperate in God’s ongoing creation through positive choices: using resources with moderation and a joyful sobriety, disposing and recycling waste, and making greater use of available products and services that

are environmentally and socially responsible.

“Like a river basin with its many tiny and larger tributaries, the Church is a communion of countless local Churches, religious communities and associations that draw from the same shared waters”

Lastly, for the mighty river to continue flowing, we must transform the public policies that govern our societies and shape the lives of young people today and tomorrow. Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice. It is clear that the richer nations have contracted an “ecological debt” that must be paid (*cf. Laudato Si'*, 51). The world leaders who will gather for the COP28 summit in Dubai from November 30 to December 12 must listen to science and institute a rapid and equitable transition to end the era of fossil fuels. According to the commitments undertaken in the Paris Agreement to restrain global

warming, it is absurd to permit the continued exploration and expansion of fossil fuel infrastructures. Let us raise our voices to halt this injustice towards the poor and towards our children, who will bear the worst effects of climate change. I appeal to all people of good will to act in conformity with these perspectives on society and nature.

Another parallel perspective has to do with the Catholic Church’s commitment to synodality. This year, the closing of the Season of Creation on October 4, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, will coincide with the opening of the Synod on Synodality. Like rivers in nature, fed by myriad tiny brooks and larger streams and rivulets, the synodal process that began in October 2021 invites all those who take part on a personal or community level, to coalesce in a majestic river of reflection and renewal. The entire People of God is being invited to an immersive journey of synodal dialogue and conversion.

Communion

So too, like a river basin with its many tiny and larger tributaries, the Church is a communion of countless local Churches, religious communities and associations that draw from the same shared waters. Each source adds its unique and irreplaceable contribution, until all flow together into the vast ocean of God’s loving

mercy. In the same way that a river is a source of life for its surroundings, our synodal Church must be a source of life for our common home and all its inhabitants. In the same way that a river gives life to all kinds of animal and plant life, a synodal Church must give life by sowing justice and peace in every place it reaches.

In Canada, in July 2022, I spoke of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus brought healing and consolation to many people and proclaimed “a revolution of love”. Lac Ste. Anne, I learned, is also a place of healing, consolation and love, a place that “reminds us that fraternity is genuine if it unites those who are far apart, [and] that the message of unity that heaven sends down to earth does not fear differences, but invites us to fellowship, a communion of differences, in order to start afresh together, because we are all pilgrims on a journey”.

In this Season of Creation, as followers of Christ on our shared synodal journey, let us live, work and pray that our common home will teem with life once again. May the Holy Spirit once more hover over the waters and guide our efforts to “renew the face of the earth” (*cf. Ps 104:30*).

i This is the message of Pope Francis for Creation Day 2023 which will be marked this year on September 1.

Alive with love: the Sacred Heart of Jesus



Devotion to the Sacred Heart will always be central to the life of the Church, writes **Fr James Hanvey SJ**

The image of the Sacred Heart can be found in many of our churches. Once it was a familiar feature of many Catholic homes, as were the prayers and practices that went with it: the offering, the first Friday novena, the hope and consolations of the 12 promises, the acts of reparation. Fashions in devotions change as they do in everything else. The Church, however, has a faith-memory; it can keep important truths and insights alive and renew them.

The form and imagery may change, but devotion to the Sacred Heart remains always central in the Church's own life and heart. This should not surprise us. The devotion is more than a series of prayers

and practices. It is something experienced and contemplated. It is nothing less than our participation in the redemptive love of God made real in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote: "In the Heart of Jesus, the centre of Christianity is set before us. It expresses everything, all that is genuinely new and revolutionary in the new covenant."

"This heart calls to our heart. It invites us to step forth out of the futile attempt of self-preservation and, by joining in the task of love, by handing ourselves over to him and with him, to discover the fullness of love which alone is eternity and which alone sustains the world".

Real person

Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is a real person. He has a heart. This is the most challenging and consoling thing about him. In him we find the infinite and eternal God who chooses us and offers us a share in the Triune life. In all its material, historical and physical density, the 'him' is the reality we cannot escape, erase or deny. Jesus is not a myth like one of the Greek gods taking on

human or animal shape, nor is he some cipher for a philosophical idea of the transcendent that every human may recognise though it makes no further demand upon us. Jesus's reality and the claim that it entails shocks and resists all attempts to construct the category into which he will fit.

“There are no limits to the love of God that we discover in the heart of God's Son”

The person of Jesus haunts and pushes us beyond our limits into new realms of thinking and existing. With him we always have to begin anew. With Jesus it is always personal; we always have to begin in either response to or refusal of the encounter. We cannot slip or evade the personal relationship that his person requires of us. This is the meaning of the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is always a personal, affective, devotional relation with the whole of Jesus, contained in the image of his heart alive with love.

We cannot look upon the wounded heart of Jesus without encountering a love that is so completely human. The humanity of Christ is before us in all its vulnerability and strength. The image of the Sacred Heart offers a deep intimacy and like all such relationships we may long for it but it can frighten us. To be so exposed and so committed and, of course, so vulnerable.

Waiting heart

Yet, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is also a waiting heart. In it we can experience something of the patient, generous love of God which will not coerce or threaten us. The love in the heart of Christ seeks only our love, and what good is a love that is not freely given? The heart of Jesus creates the sacred, personal space for that deeply hidden and intensely personal exchange of 'heart to heart' – *cor ad cor loquitur*.

From our own experience with others we know that this intimacy can be fleeting even when we desire it. Often it can take many years of sharing and coming to know each other in the course of all life's twists and turns. True intimacy only really

happens when we trust someone; it is a resting in them, an 'at-homeness.' So it is with Jesus. The Sacred Heart – his heart – is the unchanging guarantee of a love that waits for us, that makes a home for us, for all that we are and all that we carry. His heart is a sanctuary for us.

“We see here the consequences of our sin and that calls us into a greater truth”

The heart of Christ is an open heart. All can find their place in it for all have a place in it. There are no limits to the love of God that we discover in the heart of God's Son. When we allow ourselves to be drawn to that love, we find that we are also drawn beyond ourselves to a greater, deeper love, especially those whose own heart is wounded. Then we begin to understand the beauty and mystery of the Sacred Heart that is itself wounded. The wound is infinite because Jesus' love is infinite. It is also the mark of truth. This heart is no symbol of a false love.

That it carries the wound of love – a love that knows the depths of betrayal and rejection – means that it also carries our truth as well as God's truth. We see here the consequences of our sin and that calls us into a greater truth. It also creates in us a greater freedom. Unless we recognise this truth we cannot change; we always remain in our illusions and self-justifica-

“The Sacred Heart – his heart – is the unchanging guarantee of a love that waits for us, that makes a home for us, for all that we are and all that we carry”

tions, minimising the consequences and protecting our interests. That is how systems as well as individuals perpetuate and inflict suffering, whether it is on other persons or nature and natural life itself. In the wound of the Sacred Heart we see our own hardness of heart; we have to confront our solipsistic indifference.

“We know that this cannot be done without cost, without enduring commitment or fidelity”

Yet Christ, too, does expose his heart not to crush us with just guilt but to heal our own woundedness and show us that sacrifice is not only the cost but also the gift of love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is the school of such a free, courageous and responsive love; we learn again how to love, how to give without seeking return, how to grow beyond ourselves.

Here is the meaning of reparation: when we become serv-

ants of this love in our families, communities and our world, we become ministers of compassion and agents of healing. We want to return this love; to make amends for what we or others have broken. This is not guilt but recognition and gratitude.

Faceless abstraction

The Sacred Heart of Jesus opens the eyes of our hearts. Just as we cannot make Christ into a faceless abstraction so we cannot make anyone we love into a faceless project.

We do not see a problem or a threat but only a person, a history; we cannot read a statistic without realising that it is also a story, a life: not a someone or somebody that could be anyone or anybody, but this person who has a name given to him or her by a father, a mother or someone who loved them from the very beginning of their life and did not wish them to be invisible and unknown. Out of this personal relationship and resistance to the impersonal, the work of reparation begins: whatever is broken we can work to repair; whatever is lost, we can go in search of.

Whoever feels humiliated and despised, we can esteem and restore. Whoever is abandoned, used and abused, we can work to bring into the heart of the community with justice and compassion. We can speak the name of those who are forgotten, whose lives are counted as without value, and write their stories in the book of life.

We know that this cannot be done without cost, without enduring commitment or fidelity. But if we have come to know the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we will also know that we have his Spirit too, and ‘nothing is impossible to God.’ For the Sacred Heart of the crucified and risen Christ is a sort of living icon of the Holy Spirit.

“This is a heart that is fully alive. In our hearts the world longs to see the heart of Jesus”

More than the great rainbow seen by Noah signalling the cosmic covenant and a new beginning, the Spirit is the new and eternal covenant that God’s love for us in Christ does not fail, “And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5).

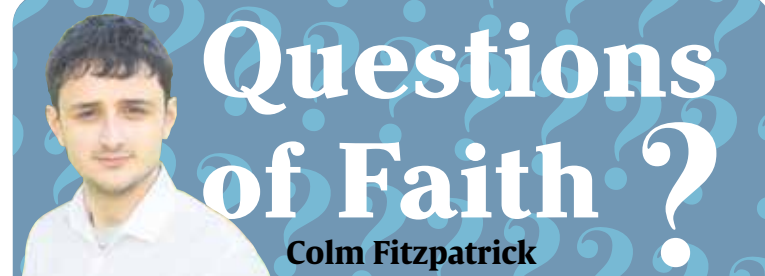
St Jean Eudes thought that the deepest living of the Christian life – we could also say the truly human life – is the mutual indwelling of our heart in the heart of Christ. Although our heart – the love that becomes our very essence – must always be finite, it can, nevertheless, have a limitless capacity for receiving and being transformed by God’s love. St Isaac of Nineveh expresses it beautifully:

And what is a merciful heart? It is the heart’s burning for the sake of the entire creation, for men, for birds, for animals, for demons, and for every created thing; and by the recollection of them the eyes of a merciful man pour forth abundant tears. From the strong and vehement mercy which grips his heart and from his great compassion, his heart is humbled and he cannot bear to hear or to see any injury or slight sorrow in creation.

For this reason he offers up tearful prayer continually even for irrational beasts, for the enemies of the truth, and for those who harm him, that they be protected and receive mercy. And in like manner he even prays for the family of reptiles because of the great compassion that burns without measure in his heart in the likeness of God.

This is a heart that is fully alive. In our hearts the world longs to see the heart of Jesus. Pope Francis has reminded us that this is our gift; to carry the merciful heart of Jesus in our own heart. It is such a heart, overflowing with compassion, that is the dynamic core of our Christian witness and the mission of the Church.

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Questions of Faith?

Colm Fitzpatrick



Are objective moral values real?

Plenty of secular accounts pertaining to morality co-exist in the world today – some hold that objective moral values are real; others that moral actions can be reduced down to evolutionary behaviour; and many that morals don’t exist at all but have been created to allow for a functioning society.

In opposition to some of these accounts, the Church teaches that morality is objective, that is to say, certain acts are either good or bad independent of one’s opinion. To take an example, the Church believes that murder or rape is always morally wrong, regardless of the circumstances.

“There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit by reason of their object; such as blasphemy and perjury, murder and adultery. One may not do evil so that good may result from it.” (CCC 1756)

Those who commit such heinous acts are not merely going against the social grain, but are doing something that is bad.

A quote attributed to St Augustine best describes this viewpoint: “Right is right even if no one is doing it; wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it.”

Actions

It’s very difficult to argue that morality isn’t objective; conceding to this point means maintaining that all moral actions are in some sense permissible. Our moral experience speaks to us every day, and acts as a reminder that good and bad exist. If, however, moral values are objective, it follows that there must be

an objective law-giver who embodies these values.

Atheists philosophers, like Sam Harris, hold that objective moral values are real without God – we can all agree that a world where everybody is suffering every second is bad, so our basis for morality should be striving to create a world as far away from this as possible. But while subjectively feeling immense pain would be awful and undesirable for everybody, this experience tells us nothing about whether it actually is bad.

The Church holds that moral values can be traced back to God who is intrinsically good and the more closely an action conforms to God’s nature, the better it is. Catholics can learn about these moral values in Scripture – for example, the Ten Commandments teach us about moral duties.

While biblical exegesis can help us learn more about right and wrong, the Church teaches that this divinely-inspired book isn’t necessary to know the difference between the two, as God has written the moral law in our hearts. By prudently listening to our fully-formed conscience, we can internally realise that a moral code exists.

“Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment... For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God... his conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths.”



Wonder has left the building



In a poem entitled, *Is/Not*, Margaret Atwood suggests that when a love grows numb, this is where we find ourselves:

We're stuck here
on this side of the border
in this country of thumbed
streets and stale buildings

where there is nothing
spectacular to see
and the weather is ordinary

where love occurs in its pure
form only
on the cheaper of the
souvenirs

Love can grow numb between two people, just as it can within a whole culture. And that has happened in our culture, at least to a large part. The excitement that once guided our eyes has given way to a certain numbness and resignation. We no longer stand before life with much freshness. We have seen what it has to offer and have succumbed to a certain resignation: "That's all there is, and it's not that great!"

All we can try for now is more of the same, with the misguided hope that if we keep increasing the dosage the payoff will be better.

Old souls

They talk of old souls, but old souls are actually young at heart. We're the opposite, young souls no longer young at heart. Wonder has left the building.

What's at the root of this? What



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

has deprived us of wonder? Familiarity and its children: sophistication, intellectual pride, disappointment, boredom, and contempt. Familiarity does breed contempt, and contempt is the antithesis of the two things needed to stand before the world in wonder, reverence and respect.

“The task of adulthood is to regain our sense of wonder and begin again.... We need to bring wonder back into the building”

G. K. Chesterton once suggested that familiarity is the greatest of all illusions. Elizabeth Barrett Browning gives poetic expression to this: "Earth's crammed with heaven. And

every common bush afire with God. But only he who sees, takes off his shoes. The rest sit round and pluck blackberries, and daub their natural faces unaware."

That aptly describes the illusion of familiarity, plucking berries while carelessly stroking our faces, unaware that we are in the presence of the holy. Familiarity renders all things common.

What's the answer? How do we recover our sense of wonder? How do we begin again to see divine fire inside ordinary life? Chesterton suggests that the secret to recovering wonder and seeing divine fire in the ordinary is to learn to look at things familiar until they look unfamiliar again. Biblically, that's what God asks of Moses when Moses sees a burning bush in the desert and approaches its fire out of curios-

ity. God says to him, "take off your shoes, the ground you are standing on is holy ground".

Deep secret

That single line, that singular invitation, is the deep secret to recover our sense of wonder whenever we find ourselves, as Atwood describes, stuck on this side of the border, in thumbed streets and stale buildings, with nothing spectacular to see, ordinary weather, and love seemingly cheapened everywhere.

One of my professors in graduate school occasionally offered us this little counsel: If you ask a naïve child, do you believe in Santa and the Easter Bunny, he will say yes. If you ask a bright child the same question, he will say no. But if you ask yet still a brighter child that question, he will smile and say yes.

Our sense of wonder is predicated initially on the naivete of being a child, of not yet being unhealthily familiar with the world. Our eyes then are still open to marvel at the newness of things. That changes of course as we grow, experience

things, and learn. Soon enough we learn the truth about Santa and the Easter Bunny and with that, all too easily, comes the death of wonder and the familiarity that breeds contempt. This is a disillusionment which, while a normal transitional phase in life, is not meant to be a place in which we stay. The task of adulthood is to regain our sense of wonder and begin again, for very different reasons, to believe in the reality of Santa and the Easter Bunny. We need to bring wonder back into the building.

Wise words

I once heard a wise man share this vignette: Imagine a two-year-old child who asks you, "where does the sun go at night?" For a child that young, don't pull out a globe or a book and try to explain how the solar system works. Just tell the child the sun is tired and is taking a sleep behind the barn. However, when the child is six or seven years old, don't try that anymore. Then, it's time to pull out books and explain the solar system. After that, when the child is in high school or college, it's time to pull out Steven Hawking, Brian Swimme, and astrophysicists, and talk about the origins and make-up of the universe. Finally, when the person is 80 years old, it's enough again to say, "the sun is tired and is taking a sleep behind the barn".

We have grown too familiar with sunsets! Wonder can make the familiar unfamiliar again.

“How do we recover our sense of wonder? How do we begin again to see the divine fire inside ordinary life?”

The Trinity is a family of love and peace



The Holy Trinity by Antonio de Pereda, circa 1659. Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

June 4, 2023

Trinity Sunday

Ex 34:4b-6, 8-9

Dn 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56

2 Cor 13:11-13

Jn 3:16-18

Our computers and phones are meant to connect us to the community. However, through the daily traffic of communication in emails, texts, and social media posts, the digital culture in which we are immersed can also isolate us.

Time spent in front of a screen is time away from family, friends, neighbours and all those places where human communities flourish around us. Think for a minute of the all-too-familiar scene of a family or

The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



group of friends gathered around a table while looking at their phones throughout the meal.

Humans are social creatures who come into this world in a community. First, the community of our immediate family, and then the ever-expanding communities of home, school, and work as we grow into adulthood.

And even though electronic devices have changed the way we interact socially we cannot escape a basic fact of our human existence. We are created as social beings, meant to flourish together.

This Sunday the Church invites us to reflect on the divine community that exists in the very heart and life of God, who we worship and praise as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“Time spent in front of a screen is time away from family, friends, neighbours and all those places where human communities flourish around us”

“Trinity Sunday” is not a distant theological abstraction but a graced opportunity to reflect on the mystery of God as a family of divine persons

who invite us into their community of love, grace and peace.

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit directs our gaze to a simple truth about who God is and who we are in relationship to God and one another.

We believe in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in whose life and love we share through baptism. At our baptism, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we became members of the family of God.

At the beginning of every Mass, we are welcomed with this Trinitarian greeting of St Paul, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.”

The goal of the Christian

life is to grow each day in loving communion with the triune God. To believe that God is a trinity of divine persons is to receive God’s merciful invitation to daily friendship with the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel we hear that, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”

Jesus is the visible face of the Father, whose eternal love lives in us in gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity is as relevant as the next breath you take, for our life originates in the creating and all-powerful hand of God the Father, is redeemed by Jesus, His Son, and sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit.

On this Trinity Sunday, we recall and draw strength from the grace of our baptism, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. Baptism calls us to nothing less than a share in the life of the Blessed Trinity.

Do we accept that divine invitation to community? As we pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit we grow in confidence to say, “speak to me, Lord”.

Question

What does belief in the Holy Trinity mean to you?

i Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of Catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Seeing the healing power of the arts

With so much emphasis on razzamatazz in the media, with so much having to be big, loud, brash, and celebrity focused, it's great to see something low-key and dignified.

The Centenary Commemoration of the Civil War (RTÉ One, Sunday) certainly fitted that description. The ceremony was short, with no speeches – the centre-piece was the laying of a wreath by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar (Fine Gael) and Tánaiste Micheál Martin (Fianna Fáil) rather symbolic given the context – the civil war parties now in a coalition government, however shaky. The theme was peace and reconciliation and the focus very much on the families of survivors. As presenter David McCullough said, there was nothing here to give offence – good to get relief from the fractiousness that marks so much of public discourse.

Army chaplain Fr Dónal Mac Cárthaigh, read the Prayer of St Francis – being in Irish gave freshness to a well-worn prayer. The healing power of the arts was recognised, and among the artistic elements there was a reading of Patrick Kavanagh's poem *Peace*, but most striking of all for me was a beautiful rendition of *Meet Me Here*, from youth choir Cór Linn.



The Centenary Commemoration of the Civil War. Photo: Government Information Service

The coverage started with a useful recap of the Civil War by Donal Byrne and the studio discussion, well chaired by David McCullough, featured relative newcomers Dr Síobhra Aiken of Queen's University and Dr Conor Mulvagh of University College Dublin. Again, it was good to hear new young voices. This historical background they gave was particularly interesting, especially when they

spoke of how the Civil War impacted the North, with so many deaths in Belfast and thousands of refugees escaping south.

It was back to grubby politics as usual that night with the **Nine News** (RTÉ One) leading with divisions in the coalition over potential tax cuts. It seemed like the throwing of shapes with an eye of the next election and gave Sinn Féin another chance

to posture on the high moral ground.

In the usual mixture of razzamatazz and some dignity **The Late Late Show** (RTÉ One, Friday) saw the last episode of the season and the final show presented by Ryan Tubridy, who has been in the chair for 14 years, no mean feat in a world where permanence is precarious. I'm not particularly a fan of the show or of the host, but that episode got off to a dignified and low-key start – a recorded interview with President Michael D. Higgins. Grouch that I am, I'm not a fan of his either, but I did find his reflections on the legacy of the famine and on modern homelessness quite thought provoking. After that it was back to normal with too much self-congratulation and back slapping for my liking, though to be fair, Mr Tubridy was gracious, keen to stress his gratitude to family, friends, guests and the wider audience. Several guests spoke of how well he treated them when they were facing

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY

BBC Radio 4 Sunday June 4, 7am

In-depth treatment of current religious and ethical issues.

QUEST FOR SHAKESPEARE

– **THE TRIUMPH OF SANITY**

EWTN Sunday June 4, 9am

Host Joseph Pearce concludes his discussion of the religious themes in *Hamlet*.

FATHER BROWN

Film Four Tuesday June 6, 3pm

(1954) Crime comedy starring Alec Guinness as Father Brown, a priest-cum-detective tasked with accompanying a priceless religious artifact from London to Rome.

into potentially difficult interviews.

He stressed how much he loved doing the toy shows (no, not a fan!) and it was a nice touch to bring back many of the children that had performed on the show over the years. The toy show has also raised impressive funds for children's charities, though I did wonder about a grant being given to BeLonG To, the LGBT group. Helping young people in difficulties is one thing, but I'd suspect many won't be too impressed with their donations being given to a group that seems to have as part of its remit to promote what is controversial gender ideology in schools. The lock-in labelling of young children who may be just exploring their identities is highly questionable. Their representa-

tive Matt Kennedy spoke of a 'LGBTQ+ Quality Mark' being given to schools – I wonder what schools have to do to get this, how much pressure they are under to comply and how it affects what children are taught.

The broader awareness of health issues has been done well by the show and the stories of people like the late Vicky Phelan and Majella O'Donnell were revisited. It was quite moving to see Charlie Bird taking part, though Motor Neurone Disease has taken a severe toll on him. He spoke with that amazing piece of tech, the 'voice box' – said he hadn't been very religious, but now felt a guiding spirit on his shoulder.

His positivity and enthusiasm despite everything were inspirational.

Film

Aubrey Malone



Boy meets fish in Disney extravaganza

The "meet-cute" is a hallowed tradition in Hollywood romances. It's how the hero first encounters the heroine. In *The Little Mermaid* (PG), a live action re-imagining of the Hans Christian Anderson classic directed by Rob Marshall, it acquires an innovative spin, occurring after a shipwreck when disgruntled Prince Eric (Jonah Hauer-King) has his life saved by the eponymous mermaid, Ariel (Halle Bailey).

The "delated kiss" is another hallowed tradition of the romantic genre. This is original here too. A spell is put on Ariel by the wicked witch of the piece, Squid Ursula (Melissa McCarthy), sister to King Triton (Javier Bardem), Ariel's father.

Ursula gives Ariel legs in exchange for her voice. Thereby hangs a tale – or tail. If she doesn't kiss Eric within three days, Ursula will "own" her. She'll revert to her mermaid status.

Ariel forgets the spell. We're not told why. Neither are we told why Sebastian, her adorable crab chaperone, doesn't tell her about it plump and plain instead of dropping oblique hints with her other buddy, a seagull who's always putting his foot in it – or should I say his claw.

Nor are we informed why Eric doesn't remember Ariel saved his life when he meets her after she gets her new set of pins. She can't tell him because of the voice loss.



Halle Bailey as Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*

(Could she not have written it down?)

So there's a lot of forgetfulness floating (sorry) around. Never mind. This is a deli-

cious frolic that kids will really go for. I'm an adult and I went for it too.

If the complex plot doesn't get you, the songs will. The

early ones are the best. So are the early scenes in the film. It slumps a bit in the middle but picks up steam again as we get close to the helter skelter finale.

If you're looking for templates for this account of "squidling rivalry" you could list everything from *The Student Prince* to *West Side Story*. Maybe throw in *Eliza Doolittle* and *Excalibur* too.

It's a tale of the disjunction between the worlds of land and sea, good and evil, titled and untitled.

Eric wants to get out of the castle. Ariel wants to get out of the sea. Think of the pair of them as an aquatic Harry and Meghan, cavorting around markets where Ariel

twirls her hair with a fork and munches the petal of a flower.

McCarthy plays Ursula like a cross between Mae West and Cruella De Vil in the film's best performance. Will she get away with her nefarious schemes? Will Ariel's Dad and Eric's mum shed their respective bigotries about things nautical? Will they allow the woosome twosome to traipse up the aisle?

It's all great fun. The songs will have you tapping your feet. The special effects are fantabulous. Bailey captures the wonder of one of the 'mer people' savouring the delights of the "above world".

Another Disney hit methinks. It might even become the new *Frozen*.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



A Kerry man goes to war for the Empire



Irish soldiers at Somme on July 1, 1916.

A Kerry Odyssey: The Boer War and Great War Experiences of John J. Moore,

by Martin Moore
(Gabha Beag Publications, Tralee,
€24.00/ £20.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This is a fascinating account of the remarkable military career of John J. Moore, written by his grand-nephew. It is a remarkable record of an Ireland we have almost lost sight of.

John Moore was born in Listowel, Co Kerry, on 28 May 1873. After attending the national school he was apprenticed for seven years to his father, a blacksmith who conducted his trade in a forge in the town's Pound Lane. Then in 1897, aged 24, he joined the British army in Limerick and requested to join the Royal Engineers. He 'took the shilling' because the army guaranteed a decent living, adventure and an opportunity to visit countries beyond his native shores.

Following his training at the Depot of the Royal Engineers in London, he and his colleagues soon found themselves involved in the Boer War. Initially they

assisted in the defence of Kimberley. Later they took part in the fighting at Driefontein and other crucial engagements.

During the war, which came to a final end with the Treaty of Vereeniging in May 1902, the engineers were engaged in constructing the "concentration camps" in which rural families of the Boer commandos on the run were interned, as well as the actual prisoner of war camps in which captured Boers were detained.

Back in London in 1903 Moore availed of the opportunity to visit his home. While in Listowel, he married Mary Anne Reidy, who resided near his father's forge. As he did not request nor receive formal permission from the military authorities, John and Mary had to exchange their marriage vows again at Salisbury in Wiltshire in 1908.

Urgently

In November 1913 the New Zealand government urgently requested the War Office to send Royal Engineer instructors to whip their new citizen army into shape. Moore was one of the four sergeant majors sent to New Zealand. Following their training, the

new army joined Australian forces and headed for the landings in Turkey in April 1915.

The New Zealanders went ashore at Gallipoli. They were hemmed in near the shore by German and Turkish soldiers who occupied the ground above them. But they succeeded in holding their positions until the general retreat eight months later.

“Moore and the New Zealanders were in the front line of the offensive in the horrendous and now notorious battle of the Somme, July 1, 1916”

Moore was later decorated for his bravery and service in the defence of a key sector known as Quinn's Post. For both countries this was a nation making experience, now marked on ANZAC Day, April 25, still celebrated each year by the two communities in Ireland.

After a rest stint in Egypt the Anzacs were ordered to the Western Front, where they distin-

guished themselves. Moore and the New Zealanders were in the front line of the offensive in the horrendous and now notorious battle of the Somme, July 1, 1916. Later he was wounded by shrapnel at Messines (south of Ypres in Belgium) in June 1917, and was invalided back to a hospital in England.

After the war Moore returned to New Zealand. The names of candidates for the position of chief engineering instructor at New Zealand's main army camp were being considered. Notwithstanding the strong presence of Freemasonry in the higher ranks of the New Zealand military (as also in Australia), Moore was appointed to the prestigious position.

Retired

Moore retired from the army in 1921. He and his wife resided at Ruislip in West London, near a Store Depot where he worked as a foreman. He died in November 1932.

More than 300 Kerry men served in the British, Australian and New Zealand armies at the same time as Moore's military service. One hundred of these

were from North Kerry. A wealth of information about them is provided by the author.

“His monograph is history writing at its finest and it is a most valuable contribution to the historiography of North Kerry, and should be warmly welcomed”

In his narrative he does not fail to highlight the harsh and unforgiving realities of war, nor the changing and developing anti-British environment the Irish soldiers experienced on their visits home. Only now are we gaining a true perspective on what happened in rural Ireland in the “War to end all wars”.

His monograph is history writing at its finest and it is a most valuable contribution to the historiography of North Kerry, and should be warmly welcomed. The book is further enhanced by a most interesting collection of photographs, not least one of John J. Moore's 10 medals for bravery and service.

Readers should note that *The Irish Catholic* circulates throughout the island of Ireland and the book prices listed are the retail price recommended by the Irish or British publishers, in either euros or sterling, as a general indication of what purchasers may expect to pay.

Daily life of the people in pre-famine Listowel



A painting of a shebeen in Listowel by Miss Brigid Fitzgerald.

Peter Costello

This Listowel interior (pictured), a water colour rather than an oil, painted in 1842, is a picture with a story. It is attributed to a Miss Bridget Maria Fitzgerald (1817-1905), a lady with some local reputation as a painter.

It was come upon by the distinguished art historian Dr Anne Cruickshank, who photographed it in a big house in the Blackwater Valley in Co. Waterford. This must have been Dromana House, associated with a branch of the Fitzgerald family.

Knight of Glin

She passed her photograph on to the Knight of Glin, a Fitzgerald himself, who in turn gave it to Fr Gaughan for use in his landmark history of Listowel. It was thought to show a local squire being entertained in a shebeen.

Local historian Maurice G. McElligot questioned this use of the term "shebeen" (directly from the Gaelic *síbín*). But it is clearly not an ordinary house, what with the assorted people present and the bar. This curiously is very reminiscent indeed of the set-up at the opening of *The Playboy of the Western World*, as described by Synge.

"Country public house, very rough and untidy. There is a sort of counter on the right with shelves, holding many bottles and jugs, just seen above. Empty barrels stand near the counter. At

the back, a little to the left, there is a settle with shelves above it, with more jugs and a table beneath the window. At the left there is a large open-fireplace, with a turf fire, and a small door into inner room."

Here perhaps is an image of a playboy of the Southern World? It may not be selling illegal drinks or spirits, so may not strictly be a shebeen, but it still seems to echo that illegal set up.

“It seems that as a nation, having abandoned the relics of saints, we are quite prepared to destroy the relics of our sinners as well. Will our great great-grandchildren forgive us?”

In any case it is a very interesting image of Irish socialising which echoes the atmosphere more of Ireland in the 18th Century than the first years of Victoria's reign.

The art restorer James Gorry, owner of the Gorry Gallery in Dublin, a specialist on the art of this period, remarked to me that the picture was perhaps larger than realised, given the nature of the building, which is clearly something more than a cottage. The huge scale of the chimney suggests a former forge. In any matter, given such a record of low life is a rarity, it is, he says, of great

interest, certainly a picture "of national importance".

Such images are rare and it is vital they be preserved. One wonder where the original is now.

A great deal is made of Irish art in its most accomplished forms, but such high art was more often than not made for the prosperous merchant class, the landed gentry and the aristocracy. It did not involve ordinary folk at all.

Irreplaceable

Such images are irreplaceable evidence to a historian, but just rubbish to many of the present generation, some of whose memories hardly stray further back than the 1990s. It seems that as a nation, having abandoned the relics of saints, we are quite prepared to destroy the relics of our sinners as well. Will our great great-grandchildren forgive us?

If this picture can be traced there will surely be found a suitable wall for it somewhere in Listowel.

• The Listowel Literary Week is being held at present. This is a truly popular festival of writing, poetry, music, history and talk. It is an event not bound up in the business of proving 'tourist benefits for the local economy', which is often all local and national agencies seem interested in promoting. It is an exciting event for all. Events can still be caught up with.

INFORMATION: Listowel Writers' Week, 24 The Square, Listowel, Co Kerry, Ireland V31 RD93; Tel: +353 68 21074; Email: info@writersweek.ie.

A difficult case for the courts - the Tilson family and matters of marital conscience



After her trials: Mrs Tilson is pictured with her three children.

The Tilson Case: Church and State in 1950s Ireland, by David Jameson (Cork University Press, €39.00/£33.99)

Ian d'Alton

The Tilson Case hit the Irish public in the Holy Year of 1950. The West was overcharged with feeling, almost hysterical. In Hungary Cardinal Mindszenty had been imprisoned. The Korean War was in full swing, with the potential for nuclear exchanges. A godless communism was sensed to be rampant and almost unstoppable.

In Ireland, these ominous events were to be countered by an outpouring of popular Catholic devotion, such as the Pax Christi Crusade of Prayer, special devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Our Lady of Fatima – and always the ubiquitous rosary crusades. A popular groundswell led the Pope to declare the Assumption of the Virgin Mary as a dogma of the faith in November of that year. Into this maelstrom of feeling and anxiety in Ireland intruded the Tilson case.

Facts

The facts seem clear enough. In 1941 Ernest Tilson, a Protestant Dublin Corporation worker, married Mary Barnes, a Catholic. They went on to have four children.

"The union has not been altogether happy," as Mr Justice Gavan Duffy (a name for many with patriotic over-

tones) understated it in the High Court. In April 1950 Tilson deposited three of the children in a Protestant children's home, claiming that under Catholic canon law and *Ne Temere* he had been forced to agree that they be raised as Catholics.

But it cannot be ignored that previously Mr Tilson had been summonsed for neglecting his family. He had to make over a substantial proportion of his salary in support payments; the Supreme Court would later suggest that placing the children in the home was "an ingenious" way of improving his financial position.

Mrs Tilson, supported by Catholic interests, sought their return and the High Court gave judgement in her favour. The President of the Court, Judge Gavan Duffy, appeared to ground his ruling on the 1937 constitution's 'special position' of the Roman Catholic Church and it was interpreted as enshrining *Ne Temere* in Irish law.

The case went to appeal. The original judgement was upheld, but the Supreme Court in its turn subtly changed its basis into one founded on contract law, in which the Tilsons had agreed to bring up the children as Catholics. Neither party could unilaterally abrogate that contract.

This established the principle that parents "have a joint power and duty in respect of the religious education of their children" and the legal equality of the sexes in guardianship matters. The three chil-

dren were released back into the care of their mother, and she quickly reclaimed them.

The Tilson case has attracted attention from three angles. The first was a jurisprudential one, in which important principles of the law relating to contract, the place of Common Law after the 1937 constitution, and how the 'special position' of the Catholic Church under that constitution might be interpreted, as well as the motivations and views of the judges that dealt with the case in the High and Supreme Courts.

A second angle was political, how the parties in the case – Mr and Mrs Tilson – may have found themselves as part of a proxy war between a defensive Protestantism and a Catholicism at arguably its most powerful and influential over the political and public realm in post-independence Ireland.

A third angle is the most poignant and concerns the human story – the relationships and often traumatic domestic dramas behind the legalese, the bewigged barristers and the shadowy manipulators.

Forensic

David Jameson's book – well-rounded and forensic – will be required reading for those wanting to interpret and understand mid-century independent Ireland.

He shows how powerful Protestant and Catholic interests used the hapless and confused Tilsons to argue what values should govern post-1937 constitution Ireland – and that the grey eminence of Archbishop McQuaid was never far away.

Jameson is critical of the overt and covert Catholicism in the legal judgements and how it influenced the judges' attitudes, especially those of Mr Justice Gavan Duffy in the initial hearing – though that has not been without its Catholic critics, such as Donal Barrington and Finola Kennedy. In that regard, northern unionists who interpreted the case as embedding the Catholic Church's canon law in Irish jurisprudence may have had a point at that time.

But at the end of it all it is good to know that in later years the Tilson family got back together again. Their private life eventually survived its traumatic excursion into the public arena. The Tilson case was largely the product of a particular point in time. It highlighted the denominational disputes that were not uncommon in 1950s Ireland. In an ecumenical age we have thankfully moved on. Families have other preoccupations these days.

Classifieds

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Leisure time

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— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

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to people living in
the world's
poorest places

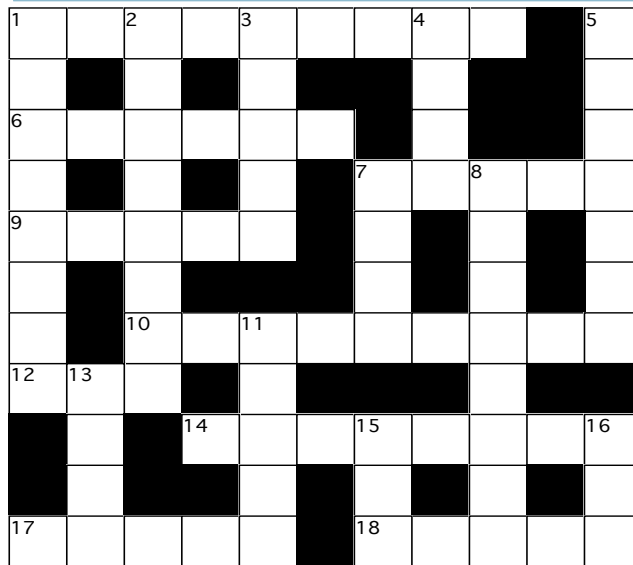
trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Crossword Junior

Gordius 485



Across

- 1 The police may set it up to stop traffic from getting through (9)
6 Computer you can carry around easily (6)
7 Short word for what you take with a camera (5)
9 These 'pictures' let a doctor look at your bones (1-4)
10 "The _____ gets the worm" (5,4)
12 Obtained (3)
14 Place to store things, in the kitchen perhaps (8)
17 Used oars to move a boat (5)
18 Country where you'll find the pyramids (5)

Down

- 1 Taking it easy (8)
2 The ABC (8)
3 You read them (5)
4 Money (4)
5 Permitted (7)
7 Take part in a game (4)
8 Normal, not special (8)
11 The usual shape of a ball (5)
13 The capital city of Norway (4)
15 Insect which makes honey (3)
16 It looks like a full stop (3)

SOLUTIONS, MAY 25

GORDIUS NO. 612

Across — 1 Coo 3 Stockbroker 8 Cotton 9 Autonomy 10 Nooks 11 Sleep 13 Saint Monica 15 Maximum 16 Airmail 20 Greek Orthodox 21 Knoll 23 There 24 Fair game 25 Scampi 26 Branches out 27 Nat

Down — 1 Coconut milk 3 Stops 4 Coal tit 5 Rooks 6 Kroner 7 Roy 12 Philatelist 13 Stung 14 Think 17 Alderman 18 Vespers 22 Logic 23 Tacit 24 Fib

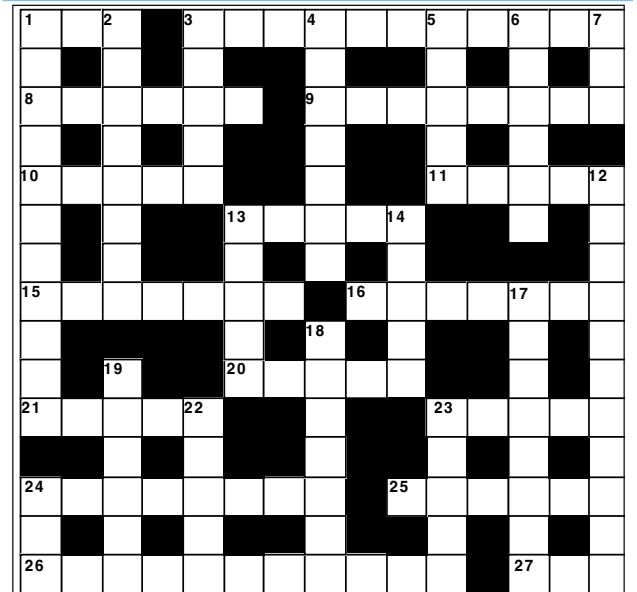
CHILDREN'S No. 484

Across — 1 Trolley 7 Ebony 8 Icicles 9 Title 10 Ton 11 Parents 14 Leap 17 Cygnet 18 Cuckoo 19 Tissue

Down — 1 Thistle 2 Onion 3 Lollipop 4 Yesterday 5 Cotton 6 Tyre 12 Statue 13 Fence 15 Ends 16 Ace 17 Cot

Crossword

Gordius 613



Across

- 1 Sing wordlessly (3)
3 & 17d Shape with a hypotenuse (5-6,8)
8 & 4d Red letter day on the liturgical calendar (6,7)
9 Lent an ear (8)
10 Subsequently (5)
11 Resided (5)
13 Rough fight (5)
15 Catch in a trap (7)
16 Superman's planet or a noble gas (7)
20 Stockpile (5)
21 Canadian territory associated with the Klondike Gold Rush (5)
23 Spanish square - found in La Paz? (5)
24 Heavy fall of rain (8)
25 Irish accent or style of shoe (6)
26 A highly successful and creative period (6,5)
27 Have some food (3)

Down

- 1 Mark Twain's Master Finn (11)
2 Iconic Canadian police

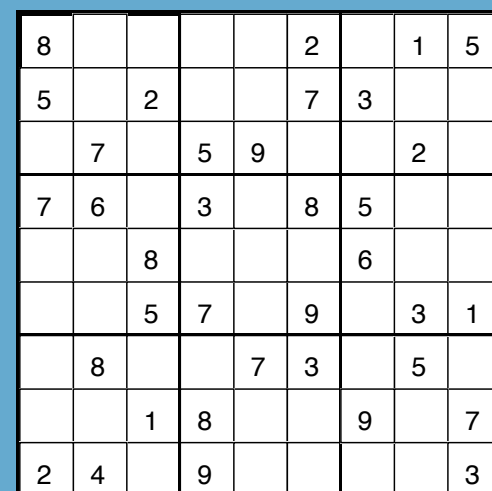
officers (8)

- 3 Competitor in a test of speed (5)
4 See 8 across
5 Made an observation (5)
6 Songbird - a kind of finch (6)
7 Performed (3)
12 See-through (11)
13 Deciduous tree with distinctive bark (5)
14 Enticed (5)
17 See 3 across
18 Spanish punch (7)
19 Spike on which a kebab is cooked (6)
22 Asian country where the plane crashed (5)
23 Veranda (5)
24 A quick swim (3)

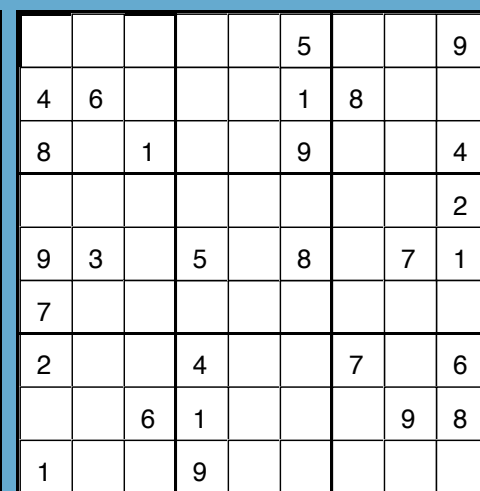
Sudoku Corner

485

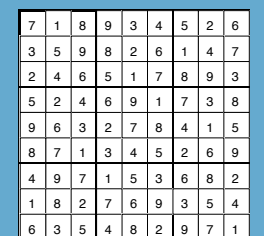
Easy



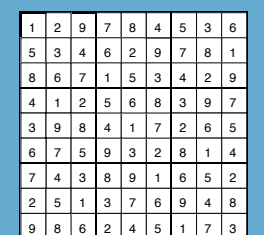
Hard



Last week's Easy 484



Last week's Hard 484



Notebook

Fr John Harris



Diocesan priests deserve support and prayers

As you already know we are in the midst of the year for prayer for vocations to the diocesan clergy. Someone asked me lately if I had a problem with this since I am religious priest. I think it is a wonderful idea and absolutely necessary.

A vocation to the priesthood is a supernatural calling. None of us who are priests believe it was our own idea. We believe that God has called us to follow him in this way of life. Since it isn't a natural decision it is the out pouring of grace into our hearts and minds, therefore it comes only as the fruit of prayer and penance. That is why it is absolutely necessary that we pray for vocations. Our Blessed Lord himself tells us this in the Gospels. "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest".

Dominican

When I was growing up in Limerick I knew only Dominican priests. I served Mass in the Dominican church from the age of seven. I began serving Mass the Monday evening after I made my First Holy Communion. It was really only after my ordination to the priesthood when I was sent to Rome to finish my theological studies that



I came to know diocesan priests, through meeting the students from the Irish College and others from around the world.

I now have very many friends who are diocesan priests and I admire their commitment to their parishes and their people. They have a different calling in the priesthood than I do. As religious we live in community and we can be called to go anywhere where the mission of our order

or congregation calls us. The local clergy give their lives to their own people and stay committed to you all their lives. Very often they live by themselves and have to fend for themselves. Because their numbers are decreasing they are being called to more work and to cover more parishes. They deserve our support and our prayers and at this time we are being asked to pray that they will have others to follow them.

Gospel

There is a passage in the Gospel when the Lord heals a man and the man wants to go with Jesus and become part of his band of disciples, travelling to other places but Jesus did not let him, rather he said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." When I read this passage from the Gospel of Mark (Mk.5:19) I always think of the vocation of our secular clergy. Like the man healed, our priests serve in our parishes sharing in our lives and proclaiming how much Jesus had done for them. They don't go to other places, where there are more priests, in other cultures where they will be more accepted. They have answered the Lord's call to stay with you, their own people, and to share fully in your lives in the good days of celebration and in the sad days of death and sickness.

I encourage you to join with me in praying daily for vocations to the parish clergy. I thank my brother priests who work in our parishes for their dedication and example to us religious priests.

A date for your diary

I was in Knock in May at the annual gathering to remember the late Donal Walsh. I was invited by Donal's wonderful parents to be part of the day. It was a day of great blessing. There were over 1,500 pupils from all over the country, mostly those in transition year. The story of how Donal's life continues to touch so many people is a proof to me of the joy of Christian hope. The death of such a young man is a deep tragedy but given our belief in the resurrection it can though the grace of Christ, become a means of hope to so many young people who are struggling with the pressures of the modern youth culture. I pray that the example of Donal, his words of insight and encouragement can become better known to all our young people. He died on May 12, 2013 and the Thursday closest to that date there is this amazing gathering of young people in Knock. Put it in your diaries for next year.



A poor rural community in Ethiopia need our help to build a solid chapel in place of a grass-roofed one



Fr Amanuel Mulatu CM, a Vincentian missionary in Ethiopia has written to ask for our help in enabling a solid and strong chapel building to be built to replace the grass-roofed one which was put up over a decade ago. The local bishop, Markos Gebremedhin, fully endorses this appeal and says that a modest but a permanent chapel will support evangelization and encourage the spiritual growth of the parish. It will be a worthy place for celebrating the Divine Liturgy and for Eucharistic Adoration.

The faithful people are very poor, depending on rainfall for the growth of maize, beans, coffee and root crops, which in good times they can sell and use themselves. The Manja ethnic minority earn a living partly from the sale of charcoal, firewood and honey. Fr Amanuel has many outstations to take care of and is asking The Little Way for the sum of €9,200 for the new chapel building.

Can you spare a small gift to build this chapel?

Your gift will be gratefully received and sent without deduction to Fr Amanuel for the chapel building. You may be sure of the prayers of Father and the people who will pray and worship in their new chapel. (If we receive more funds than are required for this project they will be used for similar chapel projects).



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

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Missionary priests rely more than ever on stipends for their daily subsistence and for helping the poorest of their congregations. The Little Way Association will convey your stipends and your intentions to the clergy overseas.

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