

# The Irish Catholic

## OFFERING HOPE AT A TIME OF SUICIDE

Fr Billy Swan  
Page 40



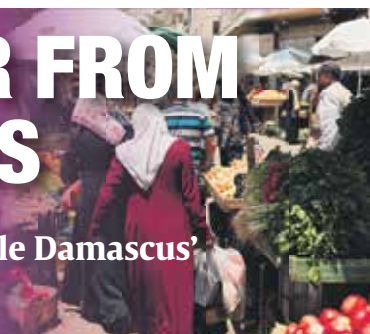
## HATE CRIME IN ULSTER

Martina Purdy  
Page 11



## LETTER FROM NABLUS

Visiting the 'little Damascus'  
Pages 28-29



Thursday, June 13, 2024

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

@IrishCathNews

www.irishcatholic.com

# Election results a 'good omen' for migrants – Sr Stan

Chai Brady and  
Renata Milán Morales

Prominent religious campaigners have welcomed the result of the local elections which saw a record number of immigrant candidates gaining seats compared to a small number of anti-immigration campaigners.

Founder of the Immigrant Council of Ireland Sr Stan Kennedy told *The Irish Catholic* the charity has been helping immigrants take part in the election as part of their work towards integration.

She said: "It really worked and it's great. Of course, there are many who want the immigrants to take part and be part of our society, there are others who don't, but the election results are a good omen."

Sr Stan added that there are many immigrants with a strong Faith which is "positive".

"I think they are very earnest, and I think any encouragement that can be given to them, in all areas including the Church, including sports... there are many signs of hope and we should encourage it," she said.

"Work needs to be done to encourage immigrants and help them find their place in Ireland, so many of them are working and they are contributing to society and it is never highlighted. All that is highlighted is that something bad that has happened, about the tents on the street – that's all we hear – but there is the other side of migrants being integrated, making their contribution and it's important to highlight that."

Sr Stan added, that "with young Irish people not

» Continued on Page 2

## The youngest priest in Ireland



Fr Anthony Hartnett (29) from Stranorlar, is pictured after his ordination by Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ in St Eunan's Cathedral in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal for the Diocese of Raphoe.

## EUROPE'S THREE QUEENS

Mary Kenny

PAGE 5



## THE BOOK OF KELLS – A BIBLE LIKE NO OTHER

Renata Steffens

PAGES 14-15



## EUROPE'S SWING RIGHT

David Quinn

PAGE 10



In 2024, Misesan Cara celebrates 20 years of support to Irish missionary organisations.



Be a part of the legacy,

By leaving a gift in your will to help ensure that we can support their life-transforming work overseas for years to come.

Visit us at [www.miseancara.ie/Legacy](http://www.miseancara.ie/Legacy) to learn more.



# Election results a 'good omen' for migrants finding their place in Ireland – Sr Stan

» Continued from Page 1

being very interested in the Church, we should encourage the immigrants to participate and they will support the spiritual side in Ireland", and that "It's great that we didn't see the far-right getting anywhere in the election".

Fr Peter McVerry said the election reflects the truth that the majority of Irish people are very open to migrants. However, he said "the problem is with the lack of services, not with the immigrants coming in, they do want the Government to provide housing, health and education services that are adequate to the numbers coming in".

"So I think the anti-immigrant individuals and groups have got very, very little support by and in large Irish society, that does not mean they can't have an influence. You don't have to get elected to have an influence, we see that already that immigration has become a topic of concern for the political system but I think it's more directed at the lack of services," Fr McVerry said.

Asked about vibrant migrant Catholic communities in Ireland, he said: "Some churches have Masses on a Sunday in three or four different languages, Spanish, Russian, Polish and others, so they are making a contribution to our society."

"I always say about the anti-immigrants, if the non-Irish people working in Ireland were to go on strike for a day, our hospitals would close, public transport would

shut down, many of the shops, retail units we have would not be able to function. They are making a huge contribution to Irish society, and to Irish culture and diversity which is great."

Dublin's new auxiliary, Bishop Paul Dempsey, welcomed the renewal migrant Catholics have brought to churches in the Archdiocese of Dublin at a Marian pilgrimage event organised by the Oblates in Inchicore on Sunday. It was dedicated especially to people and families from different international communities including the Hispanic, Brazilian, Greek-Catholic, Filipino, African, Italian, Vietnamese and Polish.

Bishop Paul Dempsey said: "You have enriched our society and our Church, here in Ireland. I have been in Dublin for a short while but even the parishes that I have visited, to see so many people coming to our churches, renewing the Church here in the Archdiocese of Dublin but also throughout the country. And I want to thank you for that."

He added: "And to thank you on behalf of the archdiocese... to the priests that have come from different countries and sent missionaries here in Ireland. To thank them for the sacrifices that they have made coming away from their home cultures and their families. To bring the Faith to us here in Ireland. It is so inspiring for me, on my own journey of Faith, to welcome my own brother priests here and the great work that they are doing and for that great richness that they have brought."

See page 13

# Parish falls out of harmony with Gay Men's Chorus

Matt Letourneau

Dublin's St Andrew's Church in the Westland Row Parish has had to cancel a performance by the Dublin Gay Men's Chorus, titled 'Pride In The Name Of Love' which was to be held in the church. The parish was originally slated to host the chorus on June 23 during the Dublin Pride celebration. The con-

cert was intended to celebrate 'love, solidarity, and community,' according to the Dublin Pride website.

In a statement sent to *The Irish Catholic*, the parish shares: "St Andrew's Parish is happy to welcome groups from all backgrounds to perform concerts in the church. However, the parish is disappointed that the nature of this event was not made clear at the time of booking. We have learned that in form and con-

tent it is being presented not as a simple choral recital but as a Pride Festival event in a context which is not compatible with our mission as a Roman Catholic Parish Church. In the circumstances the parish is unable to facilitate the performance on June 23."

It is unclear whether the Dublin Gay Men's Chorus will continue to perform at a different venue or if the show is cancelled altogether.

## Cistercian College gets on their high horse...



Willie Mullins returns to his alma mater the Cistercian College with Aintree Grand National winning horse 'I am Maximus'. Pictured left to right: Séamus Hennessy (Director of Admissions/Dean of Students, Cistercian College), Willie Mullins, Dom Laurence, Fr Aodhán, Dom Malachy, Bro. Vladimir and Colm Maloney, President Cistercian College Roscrea, Co. Tipperary. Mr Mullins has been awarded the dual accolade of British and Irish leading trainer.

## Govt's contraception scheme promotes 'disposable culture'

Renata Steffens

The general manager of Catholic youth group Pure in Heart, Helen Vysotska, has issued a warning regarding the negative consequences of the Free Contraception Scheme. She said the consequences of hormonal contraception "are very bad. A lot of women who take hormonal contraception have higher risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer".

It was announced an expansion on the scheme to include women aged 32-35, taking effect from July 1. The scheme currently includes women aged

17-31.

Ms Vysotska said that taking hormonal contraceptive for acne or to regulate periods is not a good solution, as it can mask the real issue. "It doesn't get to the bottom of what it actually is." She added that "this could be because you're lacking some necessary vitamins or some necessary protein."

For Ms Vysotska, to facilitate the access to contraceptives can have an impact on how young women see sex, and possibly lead them to engage in it more lightly, as it takes away the consequences.

"Not that it's not happening,

but it's going to be even more easier to. I feel like it's not even helping them to truly value the beauty of their body, the beauty of the feminine body."

Helen Vysotska believes a culture of death is being prioritised today. "There will be an older population, but also the amount of death rates will

be higher than the amount of birth rates."

For her, the contraception scheme is "promoting this culture, a disposable culture. A culture of individualism, selfishness and materialistic gain." People want to "prioritise having more money, more wealth than having a family."

## Donegal Sister appointed to esteemed Vatican position

Staff reporter

A sister from Manorcunningham, Co. Donegal has been appointed by Pope Francis as a Member of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, Section for First Evangelisation and New Particular Churches. Sr Mary T. Barron, is the Congregational Leader for the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of

Apostles (OLA).

The congregation considers the appointment to be "a great honour." Preparing to celebrate 150 years in 2026, the congregation remembers how its founder, Fr Augustin Planque, SMA, "communicated frequently with this dicastery, then known as Propaganda Fide, as he set his new Congregation on solid foundations."

## Support our Catholic Journalism and help us evangelise

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

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

Email [garry@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:garry@irishcatholic.ie) to sign up today, or call 01-6874028. We greatly appreciate your support. Thank you.

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, [chai@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:chai@irishcatholic.ie)

Multimedia Journalists:

Renata Steffens, [renata@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:renata@irishcatholic.ie)

Brandon Scott, [brandon@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:brandon@irishcatholic.ie)

Renata Milan, [renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie)

Gareth Foyes, [gareth@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:gareth@irishcatholic.ie)

Newsroom: [news@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:news@irishcatholic.ie) 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, [books@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:books@irishcatholic.ie)

Advertising: [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie) 01 6874027

Accounts: [accounts@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:accounts@irishcatholic.ie) 01 6874095

Magnificat: [magnificat@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:magnificat@irishcatholic.ie) 01 6874024

General inquiries: [info@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:info@irishcatholic.ie)

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

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

Printed by Webprint, Cork.

## Place an Advert

Phone 01 687 4027 or [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie)

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

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

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

Fr. Kevin or Monica 01 8720770  
[www.capuchindaycentre.ie](http://www.capuchindaycentre.ie)

# Theologian slams hierarchialism in diocesan mergers

## Staff reporter

The manner in which two West of Ireland dioceses were merged last April has shown that the Irish Church leadership talks the talk of synodality but doesn't walk the walk according to a leading theologian. Fr Eugene Duffy, theologian and priest of the Diocese of

Achonry, writing in the Furrow that "After 900 years, two diocese Achonry and Killala, would be merged with neighbouring dioceses...came as a shock to the people and priests of the dioceses concerned, none of who had been invited to attend" the announcement in Tuam cathedral. "It was an entirely hier-

archical event...and once again exposed the sharp disconnect between the rhetoric of magisterial teaching and the reality of ecclesial life in practice." He adds: "Just as people and their priests were beginning to raise their expectations about the emergence of a more synodal style of church, their hopes

have been undermined." Dr Duffy asks: "Perhaps one might have to accept the reality that, in fact nothing has changed." He adds that a more Synodal approach should be taken with future boundary changes which might lead to "a much more imaginative and more meaningful reorganisation emerging."

# Response to a Catholic 'X'-odus

## Renata Milán Morales

Concerns have arisen as Catholics express their intention to leave 'X' (Twitter) due to the platform's Adult Content Policy changes which state that "Adult Content covers our approach to sharing consensual sexual content and adult nudity".

While globally there is a wave of faithful people contemplating deleting their 'X' accounts, Fr Paddy Byrne PP of Abbeylax, Co. Laois, who is coming up to 33000 followers on the platform, has shared his thoughts on this reality: "I think that the Church has a fundamental call to spread the good news. And that in terms of evangelisation, it's very important that we are part of the conversation of social media." Fr

Byrne continues, "It would be foolish just to not engage, but I think we must do it in a professional manner. We have a responsibility in safeguarding our young people and ourselves around our use of social media."

Fr Byrne expects every local parish to "engage with every vehicle possible to communicate even the simple things like our parish newsletters. What's going on. Put them out on the various media networks. I find by using those at a parish level you engage, and you can attract people, even to Mass on Sunday by just putting out that invitation every week on social media. It's very surprising how people do respond... The great benefit of our reality as the Catholic Church is that one of our strengths is communication."

## Big-hearted Portarlinton boys donate to suffering children



Director of Public Affairs, Aid to the Church in Need Ireland Michael Kelly, Scoil Phádraig secretary Ailish Ridgeway, a pupil representing Sixth Class students and Harry Casey, Interim National Director of Aid to the Church in Need Ireland.

## Staff reporter

A group of big-hearted Confirmation students in Portarlinton, Co. Laois have embraced the Christian spirit of the Sacrament of Confirmation by donating a portion of the gifts they received to other children in need in troubled parts of the world.

Following their Con-

firmation, the Sixth Class pupils of Scoil Phádraig were so impressed by the generous financial gifts of their friends, relations and neighbours that they decided that they wanted to give something back.

They approached school secretary Ailish Ridgeway, who also helps prepare the boys for the Sacrament and with faith formation, and Ms Ridgeway suggested

they could donate to Aid to the Church in Need - a charity that works with vulnerable and suffering Christians in 140 countries.

Between them, the boys raised €500 for ACN, which is supporting vulnerable communities in war-torn places like Gaza and Ukraine.

"Faith is such a gift, and even though it is a human right to practise, this is not

something that can be said in every part of the world. It is not something that we can take for granted," Ms Ridgeway said of her suggestion to the pupils that they choose Aid to the Church in Need for their generous donation.

"Aid to the Church in Need works with those suffering and marginalised Christians," Ms Ridgeway said.

## UPCOMING PILGRIMAGES



### DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

GALWAY DIOCESE | FROM SHANNON | 26 JUNE | 5 NIGHTS | €899pps

KILLALA & ACHONRY | FROM KNOCK | 18 JULY | 5 NIGHTS | €929pps

### FATIMA & LISBON COAST

FROM DUBLIN | 29 AUG | 7 NIGHTS | €989pps

### ST PHILOMENA, POMPEI, SALERNO & SAN GIOVANNI

FROM DUBLIN | 30 JULY | 6 NIGHTS | €1149pps

### MEDJUGORJE | YOUTH FESTIVAL | SPECIAL OFFER

FROM DUBLIN & CORK | 31 JULY | 7 NIGHTS | NOW: €699pps

TO BOOK VISIT JOEWALSTOURS.IE

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

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



# Eurovision validated Christian insights says Theologian

## Concerned that schools fail to acknowledge insights

Staff reporter

An Irish theologian has said that “paradoxically, the desolation and desires expressed in the Eurovision performances (of acts such as Nemo Mettler from Switzerland and Ireland’s Bambi Thug) validate the Christian insight that only God can satisfy human desires.”

Writing in this issue of *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Eamonn Conway says that so many Eurovision performances expressed the desire for love, freedom, compassion, happiness, authenticity and self-acceptance, but that “we might want to gently bring them to recognise true two key Christian insights”; “...we humans are incapable of attaining what we desire by our own efforts”

and “the attainment of what we desire will always be incomplete in this life.”

Professor Conway added that he is concerned that many wellbeing programmes in schools fail to acknowledge these insights and confirm the belief that somehow a life without suffering or limitation is possible and happiness right now is a right. “Rather than alleviating

the wellbeing crisis, this presupposition only tends to make it worse,” he writes.

Prof. Conway writes that we forget the cautions of St Augustine at our peril that we cannot fill the infinite capacity we have for love with finite love. “If on the other hand, we permit God to fill what is an infinite capacity for infinite love, then everything else falls into place.”

“One Eurovision performer, Marko Purisic, from Croatia, who came second in the competition, recently described that he was filled with darkness and brokenness and sadness but when his father brought him to meet a priest, the darkness began to lift. He returned to the Church saying: “With God I got myself back.”

[i See pages 16-17](#)

# Three Irish comedians go into the Vatican

Ava Westendorf

Pope Francis invited more than 100 comedians, including Irish and international names, to join him at the Vatican on June 14 at a joint event organised by both the Vatican’s Dicastery for Culture and Education, and the Dicastery for

Communication. ‘Father Ted’ star Ardal O’Hanlon, ‘Late Late Show’ host Patrick Kielty and ‘The Tommy Tiernan Show’ host Tommy Tiernan will be representing Ireland at this event that a spokesperson at the Vatican says, “aims to establish a link between the Catholic Church and comic artists”.

Pope Francis arranged this

event because he “recognises the considerable impact that the art of comedy has in the contemporary culture,” in creating a “more empathetic and sympathetic world”. The Pope has always been openly appreciative of comedians and even says that “they have the ability to dream up new versions of the world”. In the Vatican’s state-

ment, an old interview between Pope Francis and Italian TV channel ‘TV2000’ was mentioned. In this interview Pope Francis says that he wishes to gain some of the talents that these comedians hold so he prays every day “Grant me, O Lord, a sense of good humour”, further emphasising his respect for the comedic talent. The Irish

comedians, as well as other international comics such as the US’s Jimmy Fallon, Conan O’Brien and many Italian comedians, meetup is hoped to “be a significant moment of intercultural dialogue and sharing of joy and hope” amidst much bad that is happening within the world.

## Catholic Ecuadorean community flourishing in Ireland



Ecuadorians after Mass said in Spanish. Photo, Daniela Canizares.

Renata Steffens

New Ecuadorean priest in Ireland is bringing that community together to live their Faith and celebrate their culture. A meeting with Mass and traditional food afterwards happened on the first week of June at the Avila Carmelite Centre.

Fr Jose Luis, who has been in Ireland for four months and is already bringing the Ecuadorians together, mentioned that “Faith takes a shape in our cultures and each culture has its way of living and to express itself.”

Daniela Canizares, part of the community for over a year attend Mass in Spanish at St Saviour’s ministered by a Colombian priest Fr Atanasio, who lived in Ecuador for a few years. She also mentioned the differences between Catholic life in Ireland compared to Ecuador.

“In Ecuador, religious holidays, such as Holy Week and Christmas, usually include processions and community celebrations that combine Catholic and ancestral elements,” she said.

Ms Canizares told *The Irish Catholic* about Fr Jose’s decision of bringing the Ecuadorians together.

“We shared with him the WhatsApp group, and his idea was, ‘we have to meet each other and form a united community’.”

Fr Jose said that “human beings are social beings by nature,” and that they “have noticed that besides meeting up and getting to know each other, it is important to live our Faith together and help each other in our struggles and hopes.”

For the meeting at St Saviour’s, “Fr Jose contacted people from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London,” said Ms Canizares. The gathering also had the presence of the Ireland Honorary Consul.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Novel awarded the ‘Theology Category’ publishing award

At the publishing award ceremony held in early June, Saint Patrick’s Pontifical University Maynooth won the ‘Theology Category’ award with their novel *Reforming the Church: Global Perspectives*. Edited by the Faculty of Theology at the University, Rev Professor Declan Marmion SM and Professor Salvador Ryan edited this novel to include topics such as ecclesial transfiguration and episcopacy, sexual abuse by clergy, globalisation of the Church and the Theology of synodality. Commenting on the honour of this award, Professor Ryan said “Most of all, we would like to acknowledge the excellent work of our contributors, whose candid, and often profound, essays on the themes of synodality and Church reform, are sure to provide much food for reflection at this pivotal time of discernment for the Church as a whole.” They hope that this novel will help readers explore broader issues of reform in the past, present and future of the Church.

### Bishop Doran: don’t abandon people with terminal illness

Bishop Kevin Doran has welcomed this year’s message for the Day for

Life Sunday, celebrated this Sunday, June 16, the message for Day for Life 2024 has as its theme: ‘The Lord is my shepherd - Compassion and Hope at the End of Life.’

Bishop Kevin Doran said, “Far from abandoning people who are living with terminal illness, we need to surround them with the kind of love that enables them to live life as fully and as richly as possible for the time that is left to them. This can be a time of growth and integration, both for the one who is sick and for those who gather around him or her.”

Day for Life Sunday is celebrated annually with a special message by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness and reflecting upon the deep value and meaning of human life at every stage, and in every condition.

### Misean Cara to celebrate 20 years hosting conference

Misean Cara to host a conference and reception to mark their 20th anniversary. With theme ‘Synodality in International Development,’ the talk will happen on June 26 in Camden Court Hotel. The conference starts at 2.30pm until 4pm, while the reception starting at the end of the conference will be held until 6pm.

A discussion and Q&A will follow the guest speakers’ talk. RSVP needed by June 19 via email [info@miseancara.ie](mailto:info@miseancara.ie).

# Three Queens and a self-made socialist

**W**e often hear rallying calls to get more women into politics – and I'm all for supporting such encouragement. Indeed, plenty of impressive women emerged in last week's local elections.

In the context of the EU, it's now predicted that three women are seen as the "queens of Europe" – and likely to dominate the agenda of European politics in the coming times.

This trio comprises Ursula von der Leyen, in Brussels, Giorgia Meloni in Rome and, quite possibly, Marine le Pen in Paris – her right-wing National Rally party may well take control after the French general election on 30 June and 7 July.

## Mussolini

Ms Meloni, as Prime Minister of Italy, was feared as an heir to Mussolini when she first appeared on the political stage leading the populist, right-wing "Brothers of Italy". But *The Times* of London now reports that she has "proved adept at making



**Mary Kenny**

friends among mainstream conservatives", and her new best friend is Ursula von der Leyen, EU leader.

**“It's often been supposed that women in politics are expected to be more caring, more compassionate - and more left-wing”**

The two women are on sisterly terms, although Giorgia comes from a working-class background, and speaks the Roman argot of the poorer quarters, while Ursula is the Euro aristocrat – highly educated, tri-lingual, attached to her horses (and a mother of seven).

The duo seem to have had a reciprocal impact on one another, politically: Ms Meloni has become less hostile to the EU, and has

moved to support Ukraine, in line with EU policy. While Madame von der Leyen has shifted to the right on issues like controlling EU immigration, reflecting current Continental European trends.

It's often been supposed that women in politics are expected to be more caring, more compassionate – and more left-wing. The women who have come to the fore as Irish political leaders have tended to be from the left, if we think of Mary Lou McDonald, Ivana Bacik and Holly Cairns.

## Queens

But in the broader picture, the EU "queens" are placed on the right of the political spectrum.

That's democracy. It reflects the aspirations of the voters.

All three women adhere to a religious identity: Von der Leyen is a Lutheran,



Ursula von der Leyen presents her vision to MEPs

while Meloni describes herself as a "Christian", and upholds many traditional Catholic values, including pro-natalism and opposition to assisted dying.

Marine Le Pen was raised a Catholic, but is liberal on issues like abortion, and affirms France's secularism: yet she says she has a religious faith, honours St

Joan of Arc and sees France's history as inextricably connected with Catholicism.

What was once disparagingly described as "petticoat rule" may surprise us.

**“Ms Meloni, as Prime Minister of Italy, was feared as an heir to Mussolini when she first appeared on the political stage leading the populist, right-wing ‘Brothers of Italy’”**

## Kicker/Headline

**F**ashionistas have observed that Angela Rayner – likely to be Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom after July 4 – has been dressing in a noticeably demure style. Her frocks have been buttoned up to her neck and some down to her ankles.

But this is about politics, not fashion. Ms Rayner's Manchester constituency of Ashton-under-Lyne has a marked quotient of Mus-

lim voters. There are eight mosques in this suburb of 48,600 people, which has double the UK national percentage of Muslims.

And Muslim voters like to see their female MPs dress modestly.

Fair play to Angela in responding to the sensitivities of her electorate. The Labour Party is aware of the power of the Muslim vote (and hence the sensibilities around Gaza and Palestine).

Once they would have

been aware of the Catholic vote – the Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson was attuned to his Catholic electorate in Huyton, in Greater Liverpool – but today that would no longer be a factor in voting.

Angela Rayner identifies as a socialist, and seems a spirited lass. She was a single mother at 17, and a grandmother at 37. She has three sons, one of whom was born at 23 weeks pregnancy.

**I**rish boarding schools may soon experience an inflow of British school pupils – a Labour government has pledged to slap VAT on private education, causing financial panic among parents who chose independent schools for their sprogs. (In Britain, you wouldn't get much change from £50,000 – €59,000 – this being the annual fee at many an élite British boarding school.)

A private education in the Republic of Ireland costs somewhat less – Blackrock College, which heads the list of best Irish boarding schools, is a mere €19,700 annually. Nord Anglia's Dublin International School – very posh – charges €24,000.

The leading Irish schools recommended by the British education consultancy Smapse Education surprised me – some I hadn't heard of previously. Blackrock is the only Catholic school listed in the top five (these being: Blackrock, Middleton College, Cork, Villiers School in Limerick, Monaghan Collegiate School and Royal Cavan School.)

Although boarding schools are broadly in decline (and often criticised, especially by kids who have attended one) there is so much globalism today, with parents working and living overseas, that there will always be some call for these educational institutions. At a cost.

## THIS SUMMER, EXPLORE IRELAND'S RICH MYTHOLOGY!

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



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

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



# Adding to the crosses already carried by faithful gay people



Breda O'Brien

Pope Francis addressed engaged couples on St Valentine's Day ten years ago. He gave his now-famous advice regarding the need to say, please, thank you and I'm sorry. He went on to say, "We all know that there is no such thing as a perfect family, nor even the perfect husband or the perfect wife. We do not speak of the perfect mother-in-law... Sinners, that's what we are."

## Wince

We might wince a bit at the mother-in-law joke but the advice is sound. There is no such thing as a perfect person. Neither is there a perfect

Pope. In recent times, many of us winced once again when the Pope commented about there being too much *frociaggine* (an offensive slang term loosely translated as 'gayness') in seminaries already.

It was more surprising because Pope Francis clearly wants to make the Church a more open and welcoming place for gay people.

**"I have an older, gay friend who used to say that it was much easier to be gay among the Catholics than Catholic among the gays"**

While people who are not gay may wince, or try to explain it away by saying that it is a common, vulgar Italian expression that is less shocking in Italian than in translation, gay and lesbian people already feel very vulnerable

in the Church, including those who are trying to live by the Church's teachings.

(Although one young gay person did tell me that Evangelical Protestant culture is often much more overtly homophobic than Catholicism. And I have an older, gay friend who used to say that it was much easier to be gay among the Catholics than Catholic among the gays. I am not qualified to judge either statement.)

## Sin

The Church has never said that homosexuality in itself is a sin but says that sexual intimacy should be reserved for marriage between a man and a woman. This is a hard teaching and could be almost impossible to live out without staunch support from the wider, Catholic community.

Catholics often embrace the idea that this teaching is old-fashioned and harmful. Many gay people agree. But a minority of gay people



want to live out the Church's teaching. They find themselves marooned, receiving support neither from the wider culture which thinks that they are repressed and self-hating, nor from liberal Catholics who are at one with the wider culture, and quite often, not from traditional Catholics either.

**"We are disciples with LGBTQ+ experiences, building community with others who desire a way of life in congruence with Christ and His Church"**

For example, orthodox Catholics may crack homophobic jokes because it never crosses their mind that there might be gay Catholics trying to live chastely. Even when one of those gay Catholics is standing right beside them.

This adds to the crosses already carried by faithful gay people. That is why initiatives like Eden Invitation are so important. Eden Invitation's mission state-

ment reads: 'Eden Invitation creates space to receive the whole person, grow systems of mutual support, and empower for creative discipleship. We are disciples with LGBTQ+ experiences, building community with others who desire a way of life in congruence with Christ and His Church.'

The Pope should be the last person to wound a person with LGBTQ+ experiences but if we take another of Pope Francis' key teachings seriously, we should accept that we are all sinners and we all need forgiveness – even the Pope.

## Flaws

Every Pope has weaknesses and one of Pope Francis' flaws appears to be carelessness in speech, or sometimes an insensitive earthiness.

For example, having apologised for his statements regarding seminaries, he followed this up with a comment about gossip being for women. It's a sexist and unhelpful comment.

The Pope has a unique authority given to him by God as the vicar of Christ. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church says that the Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the

perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful".

**"There are others who seem to embrace a version of 'My Pope, right or wrong,' and who will not accept any criticism whatsoever of the Pope"**

There are Catholics of every stripe who want the Pope to be made in the image and likeness of their favourite ideology and who will criticise viciously any Pope who does not meet their exacting standards. There are others who seem to embrace a version of 'My Pope, right or wrong,' and who will not accept any criticism whatsoever of the Pope, and will attack even the mildest critic as an unfaithful Catholic.

We need to be sparing in our criticism. We probably should not criticise at all unless we have prayed, fasted or made sacrifices for the sanctification of the Pope. But we should also acknowledge that while the Pope is preserved from preaching heresy, that does not mean that he cannot make mistakes. Nor should a Pope deliberately alienate the faithful, whether he perceives them as liberal or progressive.

But if we looked first at all the good things that Pope Francis has said, about migrants, forgiveness, and the destructive nature of abortion, to choose just three areas, we should be far more grateful than critical overall.

**"We should also acknowledge that while the Pope is preserved from preaching heresy, that does not mean that he cannot make mistakes. Nor should a Pope deliberately alienate the faithful, whether he perceives them as liberal or progressive"**

## The Irish Catholic

## FREE HOME DELIVERY

\*geographical restrictions apply

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



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

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

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

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

News Delivery brought to you by THE IRISH TIMES

For further details

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

# GUADALUPE, MEXICO

OCTOBER 3 – 12, 2024

PRICE  
PPS €2,345



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

## ITINERARY HIGHLIGHTS

- Plaza of three cultures in Tlatelolco to see the Church of St James where St. Juan Diego presented the 'tilma' of Our Lady to the Bishop as proof of her apparitions.
- Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe built in response to Our Lady's request to the visionary, St Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin.
- At Tepeyac Hill, kneel before the miraculous image of Our Lady.
- Explore Mexico City.
- Ruins of the Aztec city.
- Palacio National
- Paseo de la Reforma. Teotihuacan
- a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the pyramid of the Sun and the Moon.
- Church of the Holy Family, where the remains of the martyred Miguel Pro are venerated.
- Floating Gardens of Mexico, Xochimilco.
- City of Angels.
- Old City of Puebla.
- Shrine of San Miguel del Milagro.
- See the image of Our Lady of Ocotlan burnt into a tree trunk after she appeared to Diego Bernardino in 1531.

## INCLUDES

- Return flights from Dublin to Mexico City via Amsterdam with 23kg checked bag.
- 5 nights in the Hotel Casa Blanca, Mexico City with breakfast.
- 2 nights in the NH Hotel Puebla, Puebla with breakfast.
- 1 night in the Hotel Fontan, Mexico City with breakfast.
- 5 lunches in local restaurants and 2 dinners in hotel.
- Modern coach with professional guide throughout.
- Mass at the Basilica of our Lady of Guadalupe
- Tour of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Entrance fees to Teotihuacan (pre-Aztec Pyramids).
- Gondola boat trip of Xochimilco.
- Entrance to Anthropology Museum.
- Tour earpiece system "whispers"
- All taxes and surcharges
- Tips for driver and guides

## NOT INCLUDED

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

## FLIGHTS

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

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

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

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



**MARIAN PILGRIMAGES**  
RENEW OUR SPIRIT OF LOVE, FORGIVENESS & PEACE

**The Irish Catholic**

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

# Pride month, cultural Christianity and workplace tolerance



Eoin McCormack

Recently, well-known and outspoken atheist Richard Dawkins publicly declared himself to be a 'cultural Christian', as he defined England as 'culturally Christian country.' This perhaps unexpected admission from the hardened atheist who famously wrote *The God Delusion* was made during an interview regarding the city of London's decision to celebrate the Muslim feast of Ramadan by erecting 'Happy Ramadan' lights throughout the city. It was considered by many (including Mr Dawkins) to be a particularly controversial decision given that Ramadan was also during the season of Easter and yet nobody seemed to have thought of erecting similar 'Happy Easter' signs. Despite his adamant atheism, Mr Dawkins commented that he was 'slightly horrified' by the idea that England should replace its Christian celebrations with Muslim ones.

But why should he be worried about losing cultural links to Christianity? Given he was one of the key players at the beginning of this century whose intent was on tearing down religious beliefs in the Christian West, it seems odd to say the least that he is reminiscing about is a 'Christian culture.' For us as a Church however, it should certainly sound alarm bells when acclaimed atheists are complaining about the loss of our Christian roots. Are we perhaps taking for granted that we continue to live in a Christian society?

In a 2019 address to the Roman Curia, Pope Francis would appear to disagree with Mr Dawkins that we cannot take such sentiments for granted. He stated: "Christendom no longer exists. Today we are not the only ones who produce culture, nor are we the first or the most listened to. Christianity, especially in Europe, but also in a large part of the West, is no longer an obvious premise of our common life."

## Cultural Christianity

According to the 2021 census for England and Wales, for the first time in history, less than half of the population considered themselves to be Christian. Similarly in Ireland, the 'no religion' grouping on the national census is now the 2nd largest religious group as Catholicism also continues to decline. Despite this significant

decline in both countries, however, on an official level it could be argued, as Mr Dawkins claims, that England is a "culturally Christian country" given the head of state is also the head of the Church of England. But what about Ireland? We have no such official connection to any religion. In what way can we be considered a Christian culture in 2024?

According to acclaimed historian Tom Holland in his recent book *'Dominion'*, on one level all Western countries are "swimming in Christian waters" by the virtue of our shared Christian history. The mere idea of the 'welfare state,' looking after the needs of the less fortunate and the provision of free education and healthcare are all markers of a Christian-influenced culture. In this sense we can perhaps see remnants of the Church's influence. But on the other hand, what about the social and moral values in the modern Ireland? Can they be deemed to be 'swimming in Christian waters'? We are, after all, the country that introduced abortion by way of public vote.

## Pride month

All of this is no more evident than in the month of June. A month where I am continually approached by Catholics of all ages who report that they feel outcasted and imposed upon with cultural ideologies that are explicitly opposed to Christian values, particularly evident in the secular workplace. The moral value sphere of the workplace is becoming increasingly dogmatic in its approach and contemporary Catholic's are feeling less and less comfortable in expressing themselves on any level such as office spaces and work canteens become draped with LGBTQ+ imagery whilst work email inboxes become inundated with invitations to 'pride' events.

**“It is not only a ‘pride parade’ or even a ‘pride-day’, but the entire month of June”**

Ironically (or perhaps not), 'pride' has always been considered the worst of cardinal sins by Christianity. It is the root of all other sins, the selfish putting first of oneself before all others regardless of the consequences and the exact opposite of the great Christian call to humility.

The sense of imposition that Christians feel in the contemporary workplace is not a matter of tolerance regarding people's personal sexuality, but rather it is the inability to be seen to hold any alternative opinion or moral stance without being outcasted or labelled.

The sense of occasion given to this



'pride' celebration is like no other. It is not only a 'pride parade' or even a 'pride-day,' but the entire month of June has become socially and culturally dedicated as a 'pride month.' Whether it be multinational companies, government services or even our local schools, employees have little or no choice but to 'put-up and shut-up' about social events being organised like 'drag-queen bingo' or 'gay pride karaoke' in the office. Even governmental organisations like the Gardaí, An Post, and the Defence Forces make bizarre exceptions to their otherwise strict uniform and PR policies and participate and promote pride themed events.

For the ordinary person in Dublin, it becomes almost impossible to enter a supermarket, a bank, or a coffee shop without being surrounded by pride flags or pride-themed coffee cups or shopping bags.

Not content with the original rainbow flag, the latest edition of these flags also includes a triangular shaped section which according to the website

'humanrightscampaign.org' is called an "Intersex-Inclusive Progress Pride Flag." In fact, Volvo, the car manufacturer, published an entire section on their webpage dedicated to what is apparently "15 Pride Flags and what they mean."

Additionally, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation commits on their website to a 'Pride flag campaign' whereby there is a 'presentation and raising of the flag' service advertised for schools in Ireland. It also lists schools under various patronages, including Catholic Schools, as participating members.

## Tolerance

It appears that the moral sphere of our contemporary culture has denigrated the Christian ethos of willing the good of the other by 'loving thy neighbour' to not just 'tolerate thy neighbour' but 'tolerate, encourage, and promote them at any cost.' For the times in which we live, tolerance is no longer enough in this instance, but rather there exists increasing pressure for employees to be seen to be actively supportive in this area. In many companies, there are even LGBTQ 'Ally' badges to visibly show your support for the movement. By all accounts, the lack of ability for more companies and individuals to be even indifferent, never mind morally

opposed to, people's personal sexual lives are beginning to resemble something like George Orwell's 1984 mandatory 'support for the party'.

**“When it comes to the Christian feasts like Easter or Christmas, for fear of offending the other, it is much more acceptable to use secular terms like ‘happy holidays’ rather than mention their association with Christianity”**

In any case, it is not that people are even necessarily intolerant towards people's personal lives, in fact by international standards, according to research by University of California Los Angeles, Ireland is one of the most LGBTQ friendly countries in the entire world ranked at number 8 out of 175. 'Pride month' however seems an entirely overboard project aimed at taking over every facet of cultural and social life for something that is a) not necessary and b) effects a tiny minority. Is it necessary for every corner of society to promote homosexuality in a country that introduced gay marriage by public vote?

## Mission

Aside from Pride month, as Mr Dawkins highlighted, it is becoming increasingly more acceptable for the culture and workplaces to promote feasts of almost all faiths outside of Christianity. When it comes to the Christian feasts like Easter or Christmas, for fear of offending the other, it is much more acceptable to use secular terms like 'happy holidays' rather than mention their association with Christianity.

It can no longer be assumed that social and cultural norms are influenced by message of the Gospel. As Pope Francis reminds us, "Christendom no longer exists" and we must accept that we are not the only 'influencers' in the world of today. If we wish to have any influence in the wider social, moral sphere the question must be asked as to how we can change our approach and structures to share the message of the Gospel to a contemporary age that considers the Gospel a phenomenon of the past.

The Christian worldview has 2,000 years of learned experience, philosophy and theology to offer the world purpose and hope for the good life. While it is unclear what trajectory this secularised culture will ultimately take, we do know that we have something unique to offer a world that is directionless. The 'signs of the times' demand of us to be bold enough to get back to basics with apologetics and reintroduce Christianity to a world that has forgotten its heritage and demonstrate humility as the great antidote to the chaos of pride.

**“The sense of imposition that Christians feel in the contemporary workplace is not a matter of tolerance regarding people’s personal sexuality, but rather it is the inability to be seen to hold any alternative opinion or moral stance without being outcasted or labelled”**

# Is it time for safeguarding our priests from the lingering cloud of suspicion?



Frank Browne

**I**t is my experience that most people are fair-minded when they reflect on things. But the clerical child abuse scandal has for many years been such an emotional subject that a discussion about safeguarding priests from the lingering cloud of suspicion would have been challenging and even considered inappropriate. Despite the ongoing trauma and hurt of those affected by the abuse, there comes a time for a calm discussion of the trauma and impact on the priests and religious who have lived unblemished lives.

As a relatively new member of the Archdiocese Safeguarding Committee, I was impressed with the structures in place to protect both children and vulnerable adults. As a married permanent deacon and father of three children, I also work as a social worker within our health service and my children attend sporting organisations. I would consider the diocese's child protection policies and procedures as a model of excellence for these other organisations.

## Media

The Irish media has rightly highlighted the unfolding story of clerical child abuse in Ireland. It challenged those in leadership roles within our Church to be open and transparent about what had happened. The Church did begin to address its failings, particularly with the return of Diarmuid Martin as successor to Desmond Connell as Archbishop of Dublin in 2004 and with the establishment in 2006 of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church.

The Church in Ireland is once again a safe place for children. Patsy McGarry in the *Irish Times* reported in 2016 that clerical abuse allegations in Dublin continue to fall, and of the four new allegations that year, all were historical

with three of the priests dead and one retired. He referred to the work of diocese's child protection service, the numbers who are Garda Vetted and have attended safeguarding courses.

While there are few new cases of clerical child abuse, and almost all are historic, sadly within the wider society in Ireland this is not the case. The Central Statistical Office in Ireland's Sexual Violence Survey 2022 revealed that the rates for women who experienced sexual violence as a child were 36% and 22% for men. The fact remains that the most likely place a child will experience abuse is in their home.

**“They can become anxious in public when alone with a young nephew or niece and some are reluctant to wear clerical dress when walking in the city centre, for fear of insulting comments”**

The Church must neither become complacent in ensuring that best practices for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are maintained nor must it forget the past suffering inflicted upon many. But I believe it is time for safeguarding our priests who remain in ministry, from the lingering cloud of suspicion.

Those of us who work within parishes know of the devastating effects that the clerical abuse scandals have had on our priests. Priests and religious including returning missionaries have shared their experiences with me. They can become anxious in public when alone with a young nephew or niece and some are reluctant to wear clerical dress when walking in the City Centre, for fear of insulting comments. But most concerning for the future of our Church are the results from the diocese's child protection audits of parishes, which are revealing that



Eleven men lie prostrate during their ordination Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, June 1, 2024. More than 3,500 invited guests and 260 priests attended the ceremony featuring the biggest priest Ordination class in the archdiocese since 2008. Photo: OSV News

there are few children's ministries or group activities.

## Leadership

There is clearly work to be done by those with a leadership role within our Church, to develop a communications strategy to lift the lingering cloud of suspicion of the good but aging priests who have dedicated their lives to ministry. It is not acceptable that false narratives remain unchallenged in the wider society about both the exaggerated numbers of priests who did abuse children and that our parishes are still unsafe places for children. While it was understandable that a Church in crisis would not focus on the priests who were blameless for fear it may deflect from the trauma experienced by those who were victims of abuse. But the time is surely right for a discussion of the trauma and impact on the priests and religious who have lived good and unblemished lives. My priest friends need to be able to spend time with their young relatives, get involved in youth ministry and socialise in public free from abuse or suspicion. If we who are the Church do not value our priests, others will not, and there will be few younger men willing to follow in their footsteps.

**i** Frank Browne is a permanent deacon in Ballyroan Parish, Rathfarnham in Dublin and is a member of the Archdiocese of Dublin's safeguarding committee.

**“The time is surely right for a discussion of the trauma and impact on the priests and religious who have lived good and unblemished lives”**

## MAGNIFICAT

Your Daily Mass and Prayer Companion  
Every Month in the Post

Veritas shops are due to close by the end of 2024  
Magnificat will no longer be available in Veritas

Subscribe now to get  
Magnificat delivered  
to your door



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

+353 (01) 687 4024

www.irishcatholic.com

magnificat@irishcatholic.ie

### MAGNIFICAT SUBSCRIPTION

Six Months €35  
One Year €62  
Two Years €124

### MAGNIFICAT PRODUCTS

Adoration Companion €11.99  
Rosary Companion €6.50  
Leather Cover €25  
Plastic Cover €8.50  
Semi-leather Cover €15

Postage €5

# Why European politics has shifted more rightward



David Quinn

**W**e are not at all as European as we think. For all the talk of 'being Europeans' (which we clearly are), almost everyone identifies with and relates to their own country first. It is the same across the rest of Europe and next door in Britain as well. This is why we know much more about how the elections to the European Parliament went in Ireland than anywhere else in the EU. It is hard to see this ever changing.

But what happened elsewhere in Europe last weekend when hundreds of millions of EU citizens took to the polls is important because it helps to shape EU policy and therefore, what happens here in Ireland. After all, about 70% of our laws now come from Brussels and essentially get rubber-stamped in Leinster House.

To cut a long story short, right-wing parties in the EU's three largest countries – Germany, France and Italy – did very well. In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AFD) came second, beating the ruling Social Democrats into third place. The Greens slumped from second to fourth place.

In Italy, the Brothers of Ireland ('*Fratelli d'Italia*') came first. They are the party of Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni. They have gone from three seats in 2019 to 24 now. Meloni is regularly condemned as 'far-right' in the Irish media. We'll come back to this.

## France

In France, the National Rally, headed by Marine Le Pen, easily won the day, beating the party of French president, Emmanuel Macron by two to one, increasing its share of seats in the European Parliament from 14 to 30. Macron has now called a General Election which will decide the make-up of the French parliament.

In Poland it was more or less a draw between the centre-right party of Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, and the more right-wing Law and Justice Party.



Overall, left-wing parties did badly across Europe compared to parties of the centre-right and right.

**“All parties to the right of the EPP are regularly described as ‘far-right’ or ‘hard-right’ and not merely as ‘right-wing’ or ‘nationalist’”**

The biggest bloc in the European Parliament will remain the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), to which Fine Gael belongs. The blocs in the parliament to which Meloni's party and Le Pen's party, belong have increased their seat total and

influence.

Even before the election, the head of the European Commission, Germany's Ursula Von Der Leyen (who belong to the EPP) had begun to court Giorgia Meloni and shifted her party overall a few notches to the right in response to public sentiment and in hope of winning a second term as head of the Commission.

## RTE

If you were to watch or listen to RTE whenever European politics is being reported, you will be treated to a simplistic 'good guys/bad guys' version of what is taking place. All parties to the right of the EPP are regularly described as 'far-right' or 'hard-right' and not merely as 'right-wing' or 'nationalist'.

The term 'far-right' is intended to conjure up images

of fascism and warn off voters. For the most part, the term obscures more than it reveals.

**“Very often the term ‘far-right’ is used to describe parties that simply want to bring immigration under control”**

For me, a party is far-right when it is genuinely racist and/or 'Islamophobic' and/or wants to close a country's borders to immigration, or restrict it very severely. Outright fascist parties want to cancel liberal democracy completely and establish one-party rule, just as very far-left parties wish to do.

But very often the term 'far-right' is used to describe

parties that simply want to bring immigration under control, who believe too much power has been transferred from national parliaments to the EU, and who believe that some Green policies have gone too far and are imposing heavy costs on ordinary people.

## Unhelpful

None of this can reasonably be called 'far-right' and it is extremely unhelpful to lump in those who wish to keep immigration to manageable levels (like Giorgia Meloni does) with those who want to restrict it severely or stop it completely. By the way, is wishing to open our borders completely, or else allow extremely high immigration levels 'far-left'?

The Greens did well in the last European elections in 2019, and this caused Ursula Von Der Leyen to embrace a raft of new Green policies at EU level. These are now causing a backlash, led chiefly by farmers and ordinary people who think food prices have become too high.

Von Der Leyen and the EPP have since beat a bit of a retreat from some of those policies.

The EPP have also been rolling out measures to try and take more control over the EU's external borders and allow for more burden-

sharing within the EU.

Federalist tendencies within the EU have also been curbed, meaning attempts to give Brussels more power at the expense of national parliaments.

For me, none of this is a bad thing. Yes, immigration is unavoidable in the present day, but it must be kept manageable. Yes, we must have policies that cut carbon emissions, but these cannot send costs too high for ordinary people, and no, I don't think more powers should be given to the EU. I think doing so ultimately damages democracy.

**“Fine Gael, like the EPP, tacked a bit to the right on immigration and has curbed some of its ‘woke’ policies (for now anyway), like the ill-advised ‘hate crime’ law”**

At the same time, we do have to look out for genuinely far-right (and far-left) tendencies in European politics, but we have to use both terms accurately, and more sparingly.

What of Ireland? Well, here it is more or less steady-as-she-goes. The Government did quite well, and Sinn Féin did badly compared with its 2020 General Election result, although a bit better than in the last local elections in 2019. The Independents did well.

Fine Gael, like the EPP, tacked a bit to the right on immigration and has curbed some of its 'woke' policies (for now anyway), like the ill-advised 'hate crime' law. This is as a result of growing public concern about a lack of control at our borders, and because of the referendum results in March.

Fine Gael's change of tack, under its new leader Simon Harris, seems to have helped the party somewhat. It's a bit ironic that this should be happening under Harris given how ultra-aggressive he was about abortion. Maybe he is simply ruthlessly pragmatic and will go whichever way the wind is blowing.

Overall, I think what is happening in Europe will, in fact, curb the growth of the genuine far-right. If mainstream parties like the EPP respond to legitimate concerns about immigration and over-zealous Green policies, then the far-right has nowhere to go.

**“If mainstream parties like the EPP respond to legitimate concerns about immigration and over-zealous Green policies, then the far-right has nowhere to go”**

# Hate crime and the protection of 'reasonable' religious views



Martina Purdy

If you hate the thought of more hate legislation, brace yourself. There's a fresh push to deal with 'hate crimes' north of the border, despite controversies in the Dail and elsewhere, over this kind of law. It's a noble aim to stamp out hatred and prejudice.

But how far can the law go to achieve this? There is always a fair balance to be struck with freedom of speech and freedom of thought or religion.

## Offended

After all, there is no legal right not to be offended. If so, I would never be out of the police station, complaining about the anti-Catholic vitriol I receive when standing up for the rights of pre-born babies, or female athletes forced to unfairly compete with transgender ones.

Voltaire's famous quote is a cliché, but it is no less valid: "I disapprove of what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

Northern Ireland already has laws to deal with hate as any crime that is aggravated by hate carries a tougher penalty. The other day, for example, a judge slapped extra hours of community service on a young man who used foul sectarian language while engaging

in disorderly behaviour. For police to act, a victim need only perceive that an incident is motivated by hate because of a personal characteristic (transgender for example).

Days ago, a nationalist SDLP councillor came under attack in South Belfast from hooded youths who stole election posters while shouting sectarian abuse: "Fenian rats" and "All fenians should be crucified."

**“Ms McLaughlin said the current laws on hate crime are outdated and called on the Justice Minister Naomi Long to introduce stand-alone legislation based on the Marrinan Review”**

This politician sent a video of the incident to the police. The reaction seemed patchy based on what I saw. I did see a robust condemnation from the Ulster Unionist leader Doug Beattie who issued a strong statement. One representative in the area tweeted her condemnation of a disgusting racial attack but not this one. In fairness she may have missed the media coverage.

I do sometimes wonder if politicians generally - desperate to legislate on hate crime - really care about all hate crime equally - or just a particular type of hate crime.

The latest debate on proposed hate crime at Stormont

was led by the SDLP's Sinead McLaughlin (she infamously complained that voters questioning her pro-choice stance should "get a life!").

Ms McLaughlin said the current laws on hate crime are outdated and called on the Justice Minister Naomi Long to introduce stand-alone legislation based on the Marrinan Review, which made far-reaching recommendations in 2020.

McLaughlin told the assembly she wanted to protect communities with protected characteristics (i.e. race, gender and sexuality) while ensuring "adequate protection for 'freedom of speech' and 'reasonable' religious, political or other beliefs.

Who gets to decide what is 'reasonable'?

## Society

Of course hate is a problem in our society - whether it is based on race, religion, gender or indeed sexuality. But giving special status to protected groups is not necessarily wise. Don't we all have the potential to be victims of organised hate crime?

One critic, an assembly member who is also a barrister by training, wondered if the real target of this legislation was in fact street preachers. "Some people may be offended by what they say," said the TUV's Jim Allister.

Has he identified the current battlefield, or babelfield (to coin a biblical phrase)? The biggest tension or conflict right now is perhaps those who articulate Christian moral teaching on male/ female and sexual morality, and those who espouse the new 'anything

goes' creed. And that is a minefield. A key question for me is whether St Paul - on indeed Jesus Christ himself - would be able to preach freely if laws were tightened in favour of 'protected groups'.

**“A High Court judge just quashed a 2022 Stormont law which in effect protected the identity of alleged sex abusers even after death”**

"We must," cautioned Ulster Unionist leader Doug Beattie, "preserve the ability to discuss and debate at all costs, because abuse and opinion are not the same as crime."

Perception is also a problem: one member spoke of a young man interviewed by police for a 'hate crime' after he threw eggs out of a moving vehicle at three people. One of the victims was Polish and

complained of a hate crime. The youngster protested he had no such knowledge as it was an indiscriminate act.

So, what is the Justice Minister going to do about this fresh call for standalone hate legislation?

Naomi Long says there is no time to introduce stand-alone legislation in this mandate but intends to proceed with higher penalties and perhaps a Victims of Hate Crime bill.

## Reflect

In the meantime, here's something to reflect on. A High Court judge just quashed a 2022 Stormont law which in effect protected the identity of alleged sex abusers even after death. The Belfast Telegraph and other media protested this law would have prevented them from reporting about the historic sex abuse of the late Jimmy Saville or indeed the late paedophile priest Fr Malachy Finegan. A High Court judge found fault with some sections of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Traffick-

ing Victims Act) 2022 dealing with anonymity of suspected abusers. He found a fair balance had not been struck as it interfered with public interest journalism.

**“Freedom of speech, freedom of the press and indeed freedom of religion always needs to be handled with care”**

So, a judge was left to clear up the mess created by elected members of the Stormont assembly.

Even so, the Justice Minister refused to rule out appealing this decision.

Let us all take note. Law-making is a tricky business.

Freedom of speech, freedom of the press and indeed freedom of religion always needs to be handled with care.

And a fair balance needs to be struck.



Sinead McLaughlin

## STATE OF THE NATION



### A brand-new name in Ireland's media landscape!

Every week we'll be asking hard questions and saying what others are too afraid to say in public.

Journalism with integrity is our business.

Our first few podcast episodes on the March referendums with renowned journalists Michael Kelly, David Quinn and Wendy Grace gained us the respect of listeners across Ireland. We have since turned a critical eye on other social issues, including the findings of the Oireachtas committee on Assisted Dying, the Hate Speech Bill and its chilling effect on the freedom of expression, the inclusion of gender ideology in Irish school curriculums, and more!

Visit [www.rss.com/podcasts/stateofthenation](http://www.rss.com/podcasts/stateofthenation) to listen to the full podcast episodes. Also available on all major streaming platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, etc.

For more information, e-mail [info@stateofthenation.ie](mailto:info@stateofthenation.ie)





# 100 years of The Disciples of the Divine Master community

Renata Milán Morales

**F**ounded in 1924, The Disciples of the Divine Master community have celebrated their 100th anniversary on Sunday, June 9.

His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland was the main celebrant of the Eucharist. The Mass was followed by refreshments in the Foxrock Parish Pastoral Centre in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Foxrock Parish.

The Disciples of the Divine Master are a religious congregation part of the Pauline Family, founded in Alba Italy by Blessed James Alberione. Throughout this year, the Sisters in 28 countries on 5 continents have been marking this anniversary.



Sisters from the Disciples of the Divine Master with Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Dermot Farrell, Archbishop of Dublin alongside a Liturgical Dance group who performed during the Mass. Photos: John McElroy



Sr Lidwina placing candles on a tree representing the Pauline Family. There are 10 candles to be placed representing the institutions which were founded by Blessed James Alberione both religious and lay.



Sister Nieves from the Disciples of the Divine Master bringing up 10 candles to the altar representing the Pauline family.



Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor Papal Nuncio to Ireland incensing the Altar at the beginning of Mass.



Sr Louise O' Rourke PDDM leading the singing with the Sisters from the Disciples of the Divine Master during the Mass on Sunday.



Sisters Franca and Ndidi from the Holy Rosary Sisters at the Mass on Sunday.



Clarissan Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Yahaira, Elena, Rosa Lilia, Luz and Maureen at the reception after the Mass.



Sisters from the Disciples of the Divine Master cutting the Centenary cake after the Mass on Sunday.



Sisters from the Disciples of the Divine Master with a large congregation during the Mass on Sunday.

# Pilgrims of hope



**Renata Milán Morales**

**O**n Sunday June 9, a Marian pilgrimage took place in the Church of Mary Immaculate of Inchicore, Co. Dublin, dedicated especially to people and families from different international communities of Dublin (Hispanic, Brazilian, Greek-Catholic, Filipino, African, Italian, Vietnamese and Polish communities).

"You have enriched our society and our Church, here in Ireland. I have been in Dublin for a short while but even the parishes that I have visited, to see so many people coming to our churches, renewing the Church here in the Archdiocese of Dublin but also throughout the country. And I want to thank you for that," said Bishop Paul Dempsey.

The programme started at 1.30pm with an International Mass in different languages and continued with a procession with the statue of Our Lady while praying the Rosary in different languages. After this, there was a gathering with food brought by different international communities.

This event was organised by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. It aimed to "pray together for peace and for the renewal of our Faith and to thank our Lady for her protection and closeness to all of us. It was also a great opportunity for the local Irish Community to meet the vibrant international communities," said Fr Eduardo Núñez OMI, organiser of the event.

Bishop Dempsey concluded the procession by appreciating the work of the missionary priests in Ireland: "And to thank you on behalf of the archdiocese... As I was saying earlier on, again, to the priests that have come from different countries and sent missionaries here in Ireland. To thank them for the sacrifices that they have made coming away from their home cultures and their families. To bring the Faith to us here in Ireland. It is so inspiring for me, on my own journey of Faith, to welcome my own brothers priests here and the great work that they are doing and for that great richness that they have brought."



Bishop Paul Dempsey with the Italian community



Procession with the statue of Our Lady while praying the Rosary



From left to right. Fr Stephen Syambi, Fr Coriandolus Muresan, Gerard Bisset, Davide Cammarano and Bishop Paul Dempsey



Bishop Paul Dempsey with members of different international communities



Left to right. Fr Dominik Dogmala OMI, Fr Atanasio Florez OP, Fr Coriandolus Muresan, Gerard Bisset and Davide Cammarano



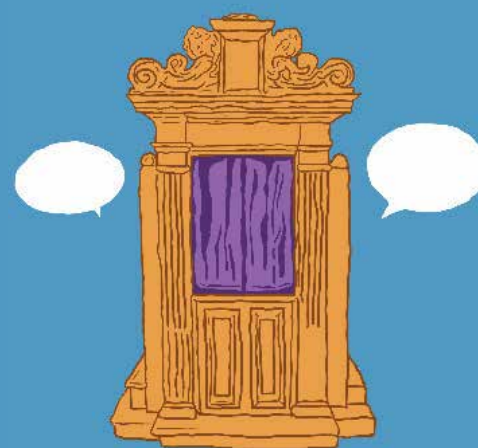
Bishop Paul Dempsey, Fr Eduardo Núñez OMI and Fr Atanasio Florez OP with members of the Hispanic community



From left to right. Fr Michael O'Connor OMI, Bishop Paul Dempsey, Fr Eduardo Núñez OMI, Fr Coriandolus Muresan, Fr Dominik Dogmala OMI and Fr Atanasio Florez OP

## The Confession Box

Presented by  
Wendy Grace and Brandon Scott



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

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

amazon music

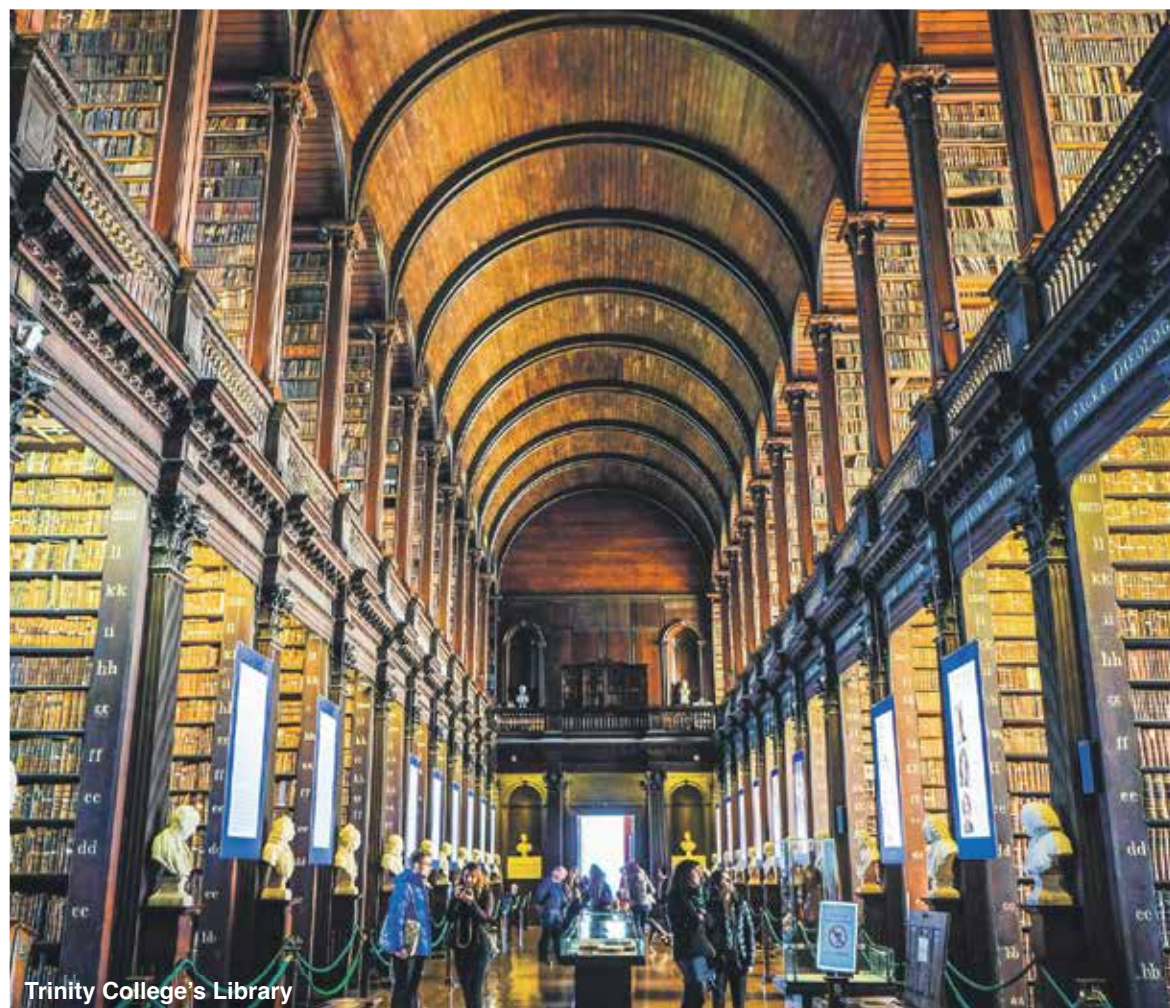
APPLE PODCASTS

Spotify

Google Podcasts

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

# Catholic history in a glass box



Trinity College's Library



Book of Kells. Photo: Rachel Moss.



Renata Steffens

One of Ireland's greatest treasures, the *Book of Kells* is currently under Trinity College's custody and attracts over a million visitors every year. Containing the four Gospels, the book displays beautiful visual art with its religious text.

## Purpose

According to Dr Rachel Moss, associate professor of History of Art and Architecture at Trinity College Dublin, the *Book of Kells* "is not just a very old Bible." The gospel book had many uses throughout the ages, but the reason for its creation is only speculative.

"It's quite large for a gospel book of that period, and due to its decoration, we think that it was probably made around the year 800," said Dr Moss, "so it's roughly 1200 years old and we think it was probably made as what would be known as a display text."

In other words, the book was not made to be used on a daily basis. It is believed to be either used "on special feast days", or to be displayed "on the high altar." The professor

believes another possible reason for the book's creation was "to celebrate perhaps, an anniversary related to St Columbkille's death, or possibly his birth. It would have been made to celebrate something associated with the saint."

**“It may have been made in Scotland, we’re not quite sure where it was made, but it was definitely in Kells in Co. Meath by 1007”**

As the book became a relic quite quickly, it is probable that its utilisation as a gospel book fell out of use, if it had been used at all. "Instead, it became known basically as a manuscript that had actually been written by the hand of the saint," Dr Moore explained. The professor also mentioned that Saint Columbkille was known as a scribe himself.

Even though the origin of the book is uncertain, its time

in Kells was registered on its blank pages. "It may have been made in Scotland, we're not quite sure where it was made, but it was definitely in Kells in Co. Meath by 1007," said the doctor.

There is a reference of the *Great Gospel Book of Columbkille* being stolen in the *Annals of Ulster*, from what scholars think was a sacristy or a Church, where various relics would be kept, as the *Book of Kells* had a precious cover. "The book, we're told, was recovered after a couple of months, and it had been hidden under a sod," Dr Moss told *The Irish Catholic*.

The book was shallowly buried, and it is believed to be the same manuscript because there is a lot of water damage to the start and end of the *Book of Kells*. Dr Moss explains that "would sort of corroborate, that it had spent some time in not particularly ideal conditions."

## History

From the late 11th century into the early 12th century, the book was proved to be in Kells, as some of its blank pages of vellum were used to transcribe legal deeds. The notes were related to land gifted to the Catholic Church, and the Kell's landscape was described. It would say for example, "a plot

of land close to St Columbus Herb Garden," explained Dr Moss.

The reason why people would use the manuscript as a way to record such legal agreements was because "it was already so old at that time that it would have been seen as being a permanent place to record something."

The professor explained that other additions were made to the book, like a poem written near the end of the manuscript.

**“The first time the manuscript was referred as the Book of Kells was in 1620”**

"In the 17th century," Dr Moss said, "when the Church had been converted to a Protestant Church, the vicar, Richard White, lists off all of the recent famines and plagues, and wars, and then underneath, writes 'this will continue to happen unless ye be converted,' so that suggests that you've got people coming into the Church who aren't Protestants, they're actually members of the local community who are Roman Catholic, and they are coming in, and they're looking at the book."

Dr Moss mentioned that the first time the manuscript was referred as the *Book of Kells* was in 1620, by James Usher, a protestant bishop who was a historian and collected manuscripts to study their biblical

**“Differently from today, the manuscript was not very known or popular, and ‘unless you were a theologian or you were particularly interested in ancient manuscripts’ you would not know about the book”**

content.

"He used the name *Book of Kells* to distinguish it from another manuscript in his diocese, the Diocese of Meath, which was also attributed to Saint Columbkille," the doctor explained. "So he called one Gospel book of Columbkille *The Book of Durrow* and he called the other Gospel book of Columbkille *The Book of Kells*."

Dr Moss pointed out that "between the 1641 rebellion and then the Cromwellian arrival in the late 1640s, early 1650s, many churches were destroyed." She also added that "in 1653 the manuscript was taken into safe keeping, probably locally in Kells and then it had been given to the Library of Trinity College for safekeeping."

## Trinity

The book was sent to Trinity around the year 1661, "along with a lot of other famous early Bibles. So the *Book of Durrow* would have come in around the same time, and also the *Garland of Howth*, which is another early gospel book."

One of the reasons the books were brought to the college, was that "at the time, Trinity College had the only large library of scholarly works

in the country." Another reason is related to the then protestant bishop of Meath, Henry Jones, who was also Chancellor of Trinity. At the time, Trinity was predominantly a place to educate young men to become clergymen for the protestant church.

**“At the time, the book could be borrowed, and scholars could flick through its pages freely”**

Dr Moss told *The Irish Catholic*, that all the manuscripts were gathered so their biblical textual content could be studied. The book was not on display, "It was simply available in the library reading room for mainly scholars of the university with their guests and visitors to come and look at its text."

At the time, the book could be borrowed, and scholars could flick through its pages freely. However, differently from today, the manuscript was not very known or popular, and "unless you were a theologian

or you were particularly interested in ancient manuscripts" you would not know about the book.

## Art

The scholars started to show interest in the artistic content of the manuscript only in the 1830s. "The visual content is what sets the *Book of Kells* apart from other Bibles," Dr Moss explained that "its biblical text isn't particularly extraordinary," and added, "but it's really exceptional because of its art."

The first colour reproductions of the *Book of Kells* happened around 1850, which coincides with the upsurge of people's interest in wearing replicas of ancient jewellery and ancient designs. "It was at that time that Queen Victoria first visited Ireland, just after the end of famine, she's taken into Trinity and she's shown what she calls St Columba Gospel," said the professor.

She explains that the Queen commented on the beauty of the book and, as she was very influential, people started to

show interest in seeing the manuscript. "So a glass case was put into the long room in the early 1840s, and at that stage VIP visitors were allowed to come in and look at it once they were accompanied by a member of staff or fellow of the university, but increasingly, then, there was more public interest in it."

**“The lectures are a way to help visitors understand what they were looking at”**

"By 1881," said Dr Moss, "it has essentially been opened up for the public to come in and have a look at it." At that time, people were allowed to open the glass case and flick through the book. At the turn of the 19th century the book would have about 3000 visitors a year. It was only then, that concerns about security and conservation started.

By the 1920s the university began to promote the manuscript and invite people in. "The college actually made an effort not only to open the library and invite people in, but they also put on a whole series of lectures," pointed Dr Moss. "Since then, there's been this kind of steady climb in interest."

The lectures are a way to help visitors understand what they were looking at, and give them more to enjoy apart from only looking at the book quickly and leave. "It's very important that we provide something else, some other information around the manuscript, so that people go away, not just having seen it, but also understanding a little bit of what it is, which first and foremost is a sacred object. It's not Disneyland."

The professor told that the entry fees were introduced in the 1980s, to cover the expenses of security, conservation, and professionals involved in the visitation. In the 1990s the *Book of Kells* would attract around 100,000 people a year, whilst today the number of visitors is close to a million yearly.

## Conservation

Explaining about the importance of the book being stored at Trinity College, Dr Moss said that conservation and scholarship are the main original reason, and are overlooked during discussions around the manuscript.

To the professor, Trinity College provides necessary professionals and conservation equipment that guarantee the book's preservation. She said that "there is a full time keeper of conservation together with the whole team, who are the experts in the country on the care of parchment manuscripts."

**“I think the idea is custodianship, and that's what we take seriously. We don't think of ourselves as owners”**

"We have various bits of high tech equipment that allow us to do things like understand better the pigments that were used. We have very strong microscopes that allow us to not just find out more things like the scribal methods or little details that give us greater insight into how these objects were created."

She explained that all that equipment helps monitor the conditions of the book, as it is incredibly valuable, not only monetarily but also historically. "I mean, books are an ephemeral thing. So the fact that they've managed to survive for

so long, often in quite hostile circumstances, is near miraculous, I would say."

Dr Moss considers Trinity College to be the manuscript's custodian for over 400 years. "I think the idea is custodianship, and that's what we take seriously. We don't think of ourselves as owners."

## Visitors

The lecturer said that today, the visitors are mixed into those interested in the historical aspect of the book, and those interested in its religious content. She believes many visitors see the manuscript as a link to their Irish Catholic past.

The doctor mentioned that people taking the available free online course on the *Book of Kells* were "all across the world, Canada, America, Australia." She explained those people were interested as a result of "growing up as a member of the Irish diaspora."

Of course, there are those who are more interested in its historical aspect, as the book was made during the Dark Ages, which in Ireland can be called the Golden Ages, as so many important objects were made in that period.

Dr Moss believes that one cannot come to Ireland and not visit the *Book of Kells*. "It's a bit like going to Paris and not going to the Eiffel Tower." People feel compelled to do so, as many "of the visitors that we have com-

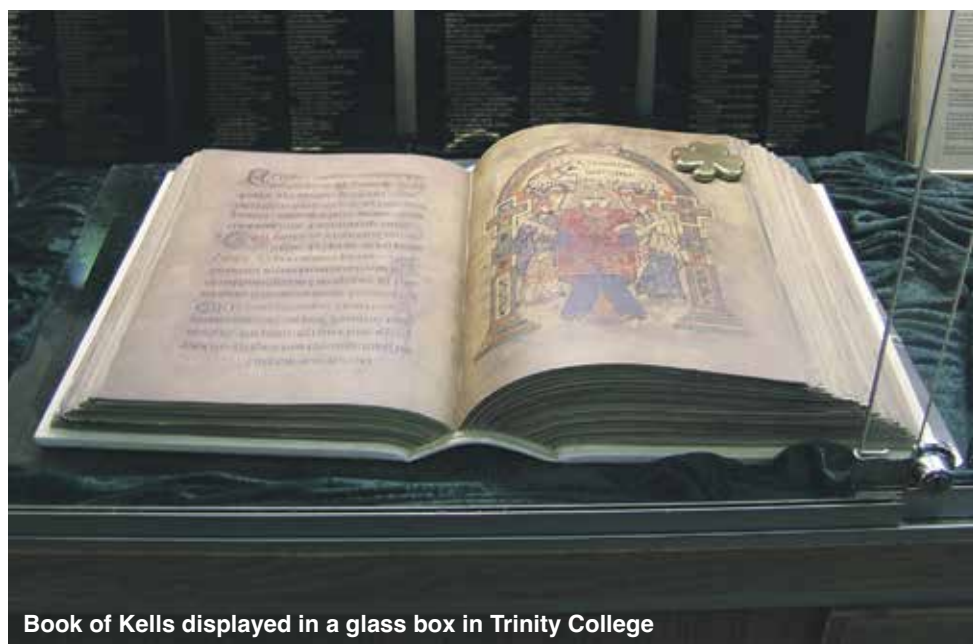
ing, particularly from overseas, are coming because they've heard so much about it."

Even though the book has been in Trinity College for so long, some people believe it should be displayed somewhere else, perhaps the National Gallery, to be seen for free. "Trinity College has extremely rigorous security and display the book in a tightly controlled environment, with strict controls on lux (light) and humidity conditions," Dr Moss said, and explained that moving the book would need very carefully planning, before and during the moving, to guarantee its preservation.

**“We don't see it as a commodity. We see it as sacred and it is treated accordingly”**

She also stressed that the manuscript being in a protestant university might seem odd to some, but "the gospel book was consecrated. It was kept on the altar, and we would still see it in that way. And treat it with that degree of respect as well." She concluded, "we don't see it as a commodity. We see it as sacred and it is treated accordingly."

**“The visual content is what sets the Book of Kells apart from other Bibles. Dr Moss explained that 'its biblical text isn't particularly extraordinary,' and added, 'but it's really exceptional because of its art'”**



Book of Kells displayed in a glass box in Trinity College



Book of Kells. Photo, Rachel Moss



Trinity College Dublin

# Veritas Shops are closing...

By the end of 2024

**Don't miss the latest in Catholic news from Ireland and abroad**  
**Subscribe today and get *The Irish Catholic* delivered to your door**

Featuring news and analyses that represent your voice on the national stage, regular contributors who provide commentary on hot button issues and local voices highlighting the ongoing work of parishes and communities throughout the country.

**Special Offer for New Subscribers**

**3 MONTH SUBSCRIPTION**

**€55**

Down from €65

**Print Subscription**  
3 Months for €65  
6 Months for €105  
1 Year for €199

**Digital Subscription**  
3 Months for €20  
1 Year for €60

For more information, please visit  
[www.irishcatholic.com/shop](http://www.irishcatholic.com/shop)  
or call on 01 687 4028

**The Irish Catholic**

You can also send us a cheque/postal order to:

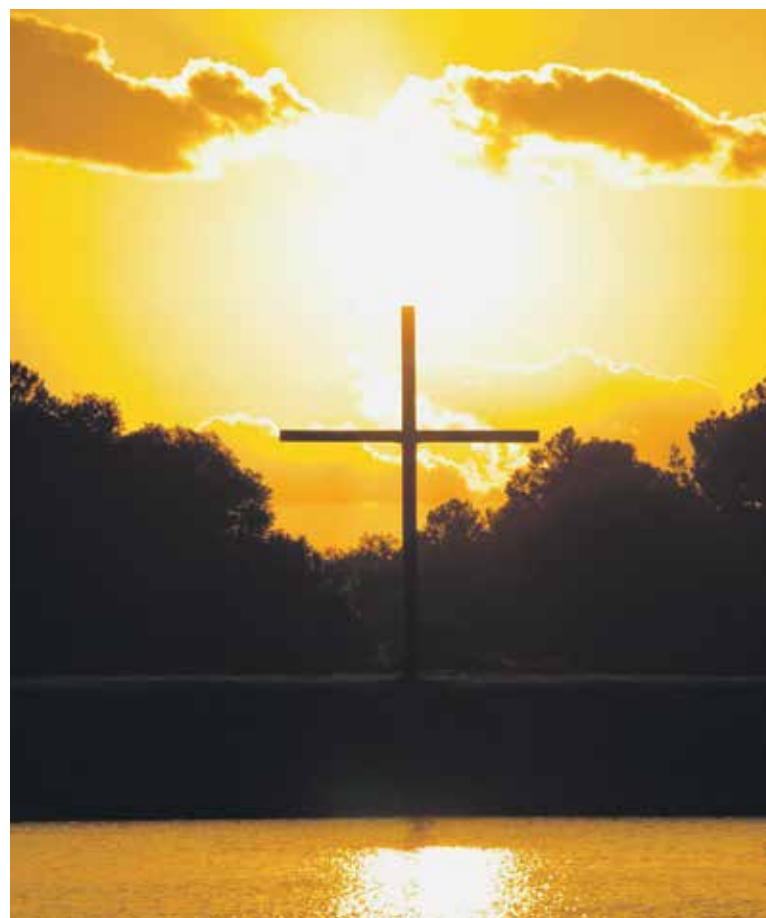
The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277



# Eurovision exemplifies that only God can satisfy human desires



Switzerland's Nemo who won the 2024 Eurovision song contest.



Prof. Eamonn Conway

**T**he controversy surrounding Eurovision 2024 led me to recall Fr Michael Paul Gallagher SJ's commentary on St Paul's visit to Athens. On arrival, St Paul "was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16). Yet despite this, he searched for something in the Athenians' worship of pagan deities that he could use as a 'hook' to proclaim the Gospel. Gallagher sees in Paul's approach a model for genuine discernment of contemporary culture rather than the mere adoption, on the one hand of a stance of tense hostility, or, on the other, of innocent acceptance. Along similar lines, I want to consider the Eurovision performance by the winner, Nemo Mettler from Switzerland, and by Ireland's Bambie Ray Robinson, aka Bambie Thug, who came sixth. The desolation these performers expressed and the desires they evoked clearly resonated with many people and therefore can shed some light on the cultural landscape in which we seek to proclaim Christian faith today.

## The desire for the perfect

The winning song, entitled 'The Code' is reported to have been

a source of personal healing for Nemo. "Finding myself has been a long and often difficult process... but nothing feels better than the freedom I have gained by realising that I am non-binary," Nemo said.

**“Both Nemo and Bambie allude repeatedly, on and off stage, to their desire for love, freedom, compassion, happiness, authenticity and self-acceptance”**

So, Nemo invites "everyone to crack their own code and enter the kingdom of authenticity". The song's lyrics, it is reported, articulate a journey from loneliness and uncertainty to happiness and self-acceptance: "I went to hell and back to put myself on track", Nemo sings, adding that "somewhere between the 0's and 1's (sic) that's where I found my kingdom come... Now I found paradise."

Bambie Thug also identifies as non-binary and, like Nemo, claims to have gained freedom in realising this, accusing critics of being "jealous of the freedom I live in". This freedom notwithstanding, however, Bambie has admitted in an interview that "everything I do is

going to be dark". There's a chilling shrillness to 'Doomsday Blue', the Irish Eurovision 2024 entry. It is all crucifixion and no resurrection, as ritualised by Bambie's wearing of a crown of thorns and ceremoniously crowning Nemo with it as the Swiss win was announced. The song is born, apparently, out of the pain of a relationship that turned toxic: "For your romance, I'd beg, steal and borrow. It's draining me hollow, I guess you'd rather have a star than the moon." Both Nemo and Bambie allude repeatedly, on and off stage, to their desire for love, freedom, compassion, happiness, authenticity and self-acceptance.

## True desire is for God

The Areopagus at the time of St Paul's visit was a centre of altars, shrines and temples and in this respect perhaps not all that different from the Eurovision. As Michael Paul Gallagher points out, Paul's address to the Athenians, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, is surprisingly generous given the initial sense of revulsion that seized him when he arrived there. Paul begins by praising the Greeks for their religiosity, telling them that

their many altars to different deities demonstrates a deep desire for God. He then explains how God has created humans precisely so that they would search for Him "though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'in him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'" Here, Paul cleverly uses the Athenians' own poets to make his point. Then comes the clincher: the God whom you desire has been revealed in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. On hearing this, we are told, some scoffed but others indicated a willingness to hear more (Acts 17:32); all things considered, not a bad outcome.

## Created to desire God

In today's Areopagus, and perhaps learning from St Paul, we too need to begin by affirming as good the desire, shared by so many young people today and articulated in these Eurovision performances, for love, freedom, compassion, happiness, authenticity and self-acceptance. At the same time, we might want to gently bring them to recognise as true two key Christian

insights. The first is that we humans are incapable of attaining what we desire by our own efforts. The second is that, in any case, the attainment of what we desire will always be incomplete in this life.

**“Each of us comes from God with a hole in the heart, an emptiness which we are always seeking to fill”**

Let me say, in passing, that I am concerned that many of our wellbeing programmes in schools and colleges, even those that are Catholic, fail to acknowledge these two insights sufficiently. Instead, they confirm many people's belief today that a life without suffering or limitation, is somehow possible and that happiness, here and now, is theirs by right. Rather than alleviating the wellbeing crisis, this presupposition only tends to make it worse.

As St Paul told the Athenians, humans are created to search for God. And so, Christians know that no 'thing', nothing that is created, no object or possession, not even friendships and relationships, can satisfy the deepest of human desires. Only God can do this. Enda Lyons explained this well: "Each of us comes from God with a hole in the heart, an emptiness which we

**“The first is that we humans are incapable of attaining what we desire by our own efforts. The second is that, in any case, the attainment of what we desire will always be incomplete in this life”**



Ireland's Bambi Thug with Matt Williams pictured at the opening of the 2024 Eurovision in Malmö, Sweden. Photo: Andres Poveda

are always seeking to fill... Despite our best efforts ... nothing but love that knows no limit will fill the hole fully because our capacity for love knows no limit."

If we forget this, St Augustine cautioned, that if, for instance, we task even the most loving and durable of human relationships with filling the infinite cavity in our hearts that only God can fill, then we run the risk of damaging and even destroying these relationships. If, on the other hand, we permit God to fill what is an infinite capacity for infinite love, then everything else falls into place. We can form relationships with other people that are non-possessive and enjoy friendships that are grounded both in love and in freedom. We can enjoy finite things, whether belongings, achievements, a career or whatever, appropriately, that is, without expecting these limited realities to provide us with a level of happiness or satisfaction that they simply cannot.

### Perfection

Contemporary culture tends to 'frame' human life in immanent, that is 'this-worldly', terms only. If there is no God, and the existence of a transcendental or 'other-worldly' dimension to life is illusory then happiness and fulfilment are entirely pinned on the present. This, of course, intensifies the pressure on our lives to be 'successful', whatever that means.

Increasingly, however, fewer people are opting for a 'pure' atheism. Instead, as Tomáš Halík, says, the wall between 'believers' and 'non-believers' is collapsing and

there is "a growing number of those in whose minds and hearts faith and unbelief are intertwined". This explains to some extent the melange of spiritualities, myths and legends behind the witch persona adopted by Bambi Thug. At most, however, such a melange of beliefs is likely to demonstrate a self-selected openness to the transcendent rather than an encounter with it.

**“If this life is all there is, then the pressure to live it in a state of perfection is all the greater”**

Some 80 years ago, the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that to be human means "to choose oneself". He said that there is nothing outside us that we can receive or accept. This is what we see at play today. We are disposed to believe that we can and must invent

**“If there is no God, and the existence of a transcendental or ‘other-worldly’ dimension to life is illusory then happiness and fulfilment are entirely pinned on the present. This, of course, intensifies the pressure on our lives to be ‘successful’**

for ourselves what being human means, and that authentic freedom is achieved precisely in doing so. If nothing is 'given' or predetermined, then everything is, indeed, 'fluid'. And if everything is fluid, then it seems possible and even plausible to pursue what seems the perfect human state, modifying our minds and bodies as we see fit, gender included, and using all that science and technology has to offer to enable us to do so. If this life is all there is, then the pressure to live it in a state of perfection is all the greater.

### Occupation

The difficulty, however, as Sartre recognised, is that, in his words, "making ourselves to be, down to the slightest detail" becomes "an intolerable necessity". It becomes intolerable because we are simply not built for it. Rather, as the philosopher William Desmond has put it, we are "given to be" before "we give to be". There is no getting out of the Creator-creature relationship, much as we would like (think, Original Sin). Life is not something we manufacture for ourselves. Rather, it is a response to a gift and a calling. Happiness is found in accepting our

**“The desolation and desires expressed in the performances validate the Christian insight that only God can satisfy human desires”**

dignity and destiny as dependent creatures. So long, however, as we ourselves occupy the throne of God ("my kingdom come", sang Nemo), God cannot reach us. "So long as we play at God, or we put something in His place", writes Halík, "we cannot encounter God."

**“This led him to realise that true happiness comes from following Christ and so he returned to the Church”**

One Eurovision 2024 performer, Marko Purišić from Croatia, who came second in the competition, recently gave an interview in which he exemplifies what Halík is saying here. The Pillar reports that Purišić came to the realisation that: "I was a god to myself, and everything was subordinated to me. And inside? Darkness, brokenness and sadness. I cried for days on end sometimes." This was despite considerable

career success. While in a particularly dark place his father took him to meet a priest friend. "Having met with him, the darkness slowly began to disappear, and happiness and a feeling of fulfilment took its place." The Pillar reports that in prayer Purišić came to recognise God as a living person who was saying to him "you are mine". This led him to realise that true happiness comes from following Christ and so he returned to the Church. "With God I got myself back," he says. Purišić's performance came second in the Eurovision.

### Takeaways

There are two 'takeaways' worth reflecting upon from Eurovision 2024. The first is that, paradoxically, the desolation and desires expressed in the performances validate the Christian insight that only God can satisfy human desires. The second 'takeaway' is the invitation to channel our own 'inner St Paul' and engage with renewed confidence with whatever we see as the Areopagus of our own era.

**i** Fr Eamonn Conway is a priest and Professor of Integral Human Development at the University of Notre Dame Australia.

# Presentation Family celebrate First Profession of new Brother

Staff reporter

**T**he Presentation Family in Cork celebrated the first profession of a new Brother on June 1.

Antony Sahayampillai (28), a native of Sri Lanka, has been studying in Ireland for the past three years. Br Antony's vows were received by Br Barry Noel, Congregation Leader of the Presentation Brothers.

The Mass of Religious Profession was celebrated by Bishop Fintan Gavin in the beautiful and historic church of St Finbarr's South. It was attended by a large number of people, including many young people involved in youth ministry and the various faith movements in the Diocese of Cork & Ross.

**“His call was further nurtured by his journey with the Presentation Brothers over the last three years as he came to know and love the Presentation charism and way of life”**

In his homily, Bishop Fintan stated:

“In answering the God's call, Antony is inspired by a deep faith in Jesus, a faith which was first nurtured in the context of his own parents and family. He had the courage to say ‘Yes’ and to journey to a far country. His call was further nurtured by his journey with the Presentation Brothers over the last three years as he came to know and love the Presentation charism and way of life.”

Speaking at the end of Mass, which was livestreamed to Sri Lanka, Br Antony thanked his parents, his family and all those who had been part of his formation journey in Ireland.

Commenting on living in Cork, Br Antony said: “I have met wonderful friends here. And it is the people who make a place! Thanks to all of you who travelled to our beautiful city from different parts of Ireland and a special welcome to friends from other religious orders and to members of the Tamil Community. To each of you who participated in this Mass. I am so grateful for your presence and your prayers. Please continue to pray for me as I continue this amazing journey.”



Bro. Antony Sahayampillai greets friends and wellwishers after his First Profession ceremony at St Finbarr's South Chapel in Cork on June 1.  
Photos: Adrian O'Herlihy



The procession at the start of Mass at the First Profession of Bro. Antony Sahayampillai, at St Finbarr's South Chapel, Cork.



Bro. Antony Sahayampillai kneels before Presentation Brothers Congregation Leader Br. Barry Noel, during his First Profession. Included are Br. Martin Kenneally, Br. Simon Fernandes and Br. Denis Aherne OFM.



Pictured at the First Profession of Bro. Antony Sahayampillai at St Finbarr's South Chapel, Cork, are (from left): Br. Simon Fernandes, Fr Kevin O'Regan PP, Br. Martin Kenneally, Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin, Br. Antony Sahayampillai, Br. Denis Aherne OFM, Br. Barry Noel, Fr Shinu Varghese and Canon John O'Donovan.



# Out&About

## Loving Christ in Leitrim



**LEITRIM:** Kilmore Diocese youth volunteers from Lough Allen College, Drumkeeran with their group leaders, Maria Foley and Heather Brady.



**CLARE:** Dr Labhrás Ó Murchú, Árd-Stiúrthóir, and members of the Comhaltas Ceoltóirí na hÉireann, during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Fleadh Nua on Sunday, June 20, at Cathedral of St Peter and Paul, Ennis. Photo, John O'Neill.



**CLARE:** Sr. Essie, writers Sr. Roisin and Sr. Aine and Ed Seannell, Principal of St Clare's Ennis, during the launch of the *Adapted Grow in Love for Special Education* book.

## INSHORT

### Bon Secours Sisters celebrate 200 year anniversary

The Sisters of Bon Secours celebrated their bicentenary anniversary with Mass celebrated by Bishop Fintan Gavin in Cork. The Bishop mentioned in his homily, how the sisters arrived in Cork in 1861 and how the religious community thrived.

The congregation was founded in France in 1824 with the intent of bringing compassion, healing and liberation to those they serve. Their mission is to "respond to a universal need: providing care to all who suffer and give them a reason to live and a reason to hope."

The Bishop said that the celebration is a way to "pay tribute to the countless Sisters

of Bon Secours who have left everything and selflessly answered that call of Christ to bring his healing and his compassion into the lives of those who needed it most."

The sisters' work has spread worldwide. Ireland was the first expansion, but today the congregation is also in Britain, USA, Peru, South Africa, Tanzania and Democratic Republic of Congo.

### Bishop Gavin visits special needs school in Co. Cork

On the last week of May, Bishop Fintan Gavin visited Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School in Ballincollig, Co. Cork. During his stay, he was welcomed by both students and faculty with a prayer assembly and a Q&A discussion.

Bishop Gavin answered inquiries the stu-

dents had and shared many personal stories that he has lived since being ordained on June 30, 2019. After the Q&A, the Bishop received a tour around the school where he answered more questions, commended students' artwork and watched students complete their classwork in a regular school period.

Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School recently became a part of the Diocese of Cork and Ross after being established by the Brothers of Charity. Bishop Gavin is "grateful to the Brothers of Charity as they plan for the future and the transfer of patronage to future-proof the Catholic ethos of this cherished school".

### Cavan Cathedral shines light on climate change

On Trinity Sunday, May 26, Cavan Cathedral hosted Eco-Congregation Ireland (ECI) for a

celebratory Mass, shining both a literal and a metaphorical light on climate justice.

The Mass began after Bishop Martin Hayes and Kilmore Care of Creation Group lit a candle for ECI, calling for those in the Faith to recognise climate change and take action. The bishop then read sacred scripture before saying a Homily about humanity's role in the Holy Trinity and taking care of nature. Although the bishop said that humans have already harmed the environment, he also stressed that, with God's help, we can move forward.

Along with this hopeful message, the bishop spoke of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter that was recently celebrated for its 9th anniversary (*Laudato Si*). Connecting environmentalism to the letter, Bishop Hayes stated, "we must undergo an ecological conversion and enter into the interconnectedness of all life, human and natural."



CURRACHBOOKS



columbaBOOKS

# SALE

## PAPERBACKS

### 60% off



€5.99  
was €14.99

### **How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice**

Michael Kelly & Austen Ivereigh

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



€5.99  
was €14.99

### **Tomorrow's Parish**

Donal Harrington

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



€5.99  
was €14.99

### **Setting God Free in Minds and Hearts**

Paul Robbins

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



€9.19  
was €22.99

### **Fears, Phobias & Fantasies**

Prof Patricia Casey

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



€5.20  
was €12.99

### **The Death of Jesus the Jew**

Peter Keenan

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



€5.99  
was €14.99

### **Rainbows & Windmills**

Peter Tarleton Stewart

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



€5.99  
was €14.99

### **Voices From the Desert**

Hugh MacMahon

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



€6.79  
was €16.99

### **Holistic Healing**

Fr Pat Collins

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



€7.99  
was €19.99

### **Give Us Back the Bad Roads**

John Waters

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



€5.99  
was €14.99

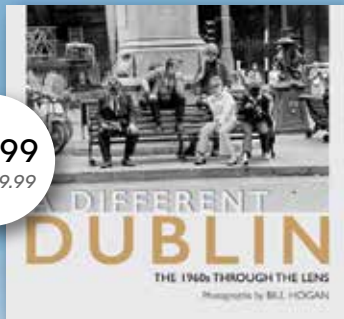
### **The Birth of Jesus the Jew**

Peter Keenan

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

# HARDBACKS

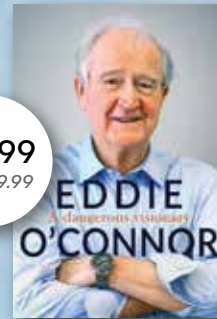
30% off



€13.99  
was €19.99

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

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



€13.99  
was €19.99

## **A Dangerous Visionary** Eddie O'Connor

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



€10.49  
was €14.99

## **Flight of the Earls** Liam Swords

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



€9.09  
was €12.99

## **Sending Positive Vibes** Fr Bryan Shortall

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



€13.99  
was €19.99

## **Living the Mystery** Mark Patrick Hederman

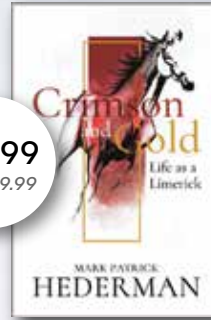
Life is a mystery beyond the comprehension of our normal understanding. A Benedictine monk explains how to engage with this mystery and bring a new sense of the sacred into it.



€6.99  
was €9.99

## **Vicka Her Story** Finbar O'Leary

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



€13.99  
was €19.99

## **Crimson & Gold** Mark Patrick Hederman

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



€11.89  
was €16.99

## **The 17 Irish Martyrs** Mary McAleese

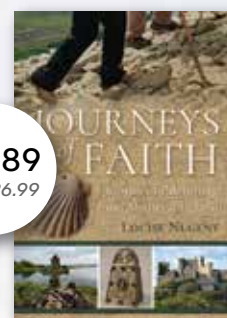
An historical account detailing the inspiring stories of the 17 Irish martyrs beatified by Pope John Paul II and what made their causes for martyrdom stand apart from others.



€13.99  
was €19.99

## **Horizons of Hope** Daniel O'Leary

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



€18.89  
was €26.99

## **Journeys of Faith** Louise Nugent

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

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

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

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

### MY DETAILS

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_

Eircode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### MY ORDER (Please put the quantity before each book)

#### HARDBACK – 30% OFF

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

#### PAPERBACK – 60% OFF

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

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

☐ PAY BY: Cheque/Postal order

for € \_\_\_\_\_ payable to: **Columba Books**

☐ PAY BY CREDIT CARD: \_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_ Master Card \_\_\_\_ Debit

Card No: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Exp date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ CVV No: \_\_\_\_

**€5.00**  
FLAT RATE  
P&P

Edited by Renata Steffens  
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**GUERNSEY:** Chevalier Thomas Kilduff, GCHS (Cavan) with Rev. Canon Gerard Hetherington, KCHS (Guernsey) on the occasion of his Diamond Jubilee celebration of ordination to the Catholic priesthood.



**LONDON:** Chevalier Emmanuël Brasseur, KCHS (Lieutenancy of Belgium) and Chevalier Thomas Kilduff, KC\*HS (Lieutenancy of Ireland) Knights of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem at the annual Corpus Christi procession in central London on June 2.



**CLARE:** Parishioners pictured with Fr Damien Nolan, in the event of enjoying Tea/Coffee/Chat after morning Mass at Parish of Sixmilebridge.



**CORK:** Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin carried the Blessed Sacrament in the 98th Annual Eucharistic from the North Cathedral to St Patrick's Street to celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi.



**CORK:** The 98th Annual Eucharistic Procession counted with attendants of all ages.



**CORK:** The 98th Annual Eucharistic Procession took over 4,000 people to the streets.

## ANTRIM

Our Lady of Bethlehem Abbey invite men between the ages of 20 and 50 for a 'monastic come and see day' on June 23 starting at 10am. The event happening in the Cistercian monastery of Our Lady of Bethlehem, in Portglenone aims to answer questions and assist those who feel a calling or vocation to start a religious life.

## DUBLIN

'The Mission of Friendship: John Paul II on Catechesis as Intimacy with Christ' talk with Bill Keimig, Franciscan University Steubenville happens on June 18, at 7.30pm at St Saviour's Priory Dublin. The event is organised by Clonmacnois Press and St Saviour Lay Dominicans and is free to attend.

## FERMANAGH

The Golden Age Club meets every Sunday at St Michael's Parish for music, games and conversation, from 3pm to 5pm. Anybody interested, contact Fr Joe at the parish office for more information.

## GALWAY

'Eight Centuries of Friendship: The Burkes and the Dominicans in the West of Ireland,' lecture happens on Friday, June 14 at 7pm at the Portumna Castle Gallery with Fr Conor McDonough OP. The event is free but need to be booked on 0469422900.

## KERRY

New members welcome to participate on the Legion of Mary weekly meetings happening in St John's Parish Centre, Tralee, every Friday, from 5pm to 6pm.

## KILDARE

The Irish Church Music Association's 54th Annual Summer School 'Water of Life', is taking place in Maynooth from July 2-4, at St Patrick's College Maynooth. For more information check [www.icmamusic.ie](http://www.icmamusic.ie).

## LAOIS

Rosary prayed in the Church of the Assumption, the Heath, Portlaoise parish,

daily at 2pm and at 3pm on Sundays.

## LOUTH

All are welcome to 'Family Fun Day' as part of The Archdiocese of Armagh's 1500th Anniversary celebration that will happen in St Patrick's Church, Dundalk. The event will take place on June 16 at 3pm and will be followed by a procession to St Nicholas Church for a prayer service.

Cancer prayer support for men and women who have, or had, cancer happens on June 19 and 26 from 11am to 12noon, followed by Tea/Coffee. All welcome to a time of relaxation, meditation and prayer at 'Bethany' House of Prayer, 34 Point Road, Dundalk. A91 W0C 9. For more information contact on 0429331602 or [bethanypointroad@gmail.com](mailto:bethanypointroad@gmail.com)

## SLIGO

The 'Annual Maria Goretti Novena' takes place in Collooney Church, Co. Sligo from June 28 to July 6. Mass each evening at 8pm. Confessions and Rosary from 7.30pm. Further details of speakers on [www.kilvarnetparish.com/novena](http://www.kilvarnetparish.com/novena)

## TIPPERARY

The Thomistic Institute are hosting their second annual intellectual retreat this July 3-5 in Glencomeragh house. This retreat is open to all students in Ireland and it is free for all to attend, with bus transport to be arranged. There will be mass, prayer, socials, and lectures on the topic "How to Live A Happy Life". Interested need to apply to participate on Thomistic Institute website.

## WATERFORD

Diocesan pilgrim walk at Mount Melleray Abbey, as part of Diocesan Mission 2024, 'Light of Hope' will happen on June 16. The assemblage is at 2.10pm for prayers in the church. The event counts with four different walks with prayer stations in each. Wear appropriate footwear and for more information see [www.waterfordlismore.ie/mission2024](http://www.waterfordlismore.ie/mission2024).

# European voters deal blow to Pope's agenda on migration and climate change



John L. Allen Jr

**L**ess than a week after Pope Francis called on people to recognise migrants as “a living image of God’s people on their way to the eternal homeland,” voters across Europe dealt a potentially serious blow to that vision by rewarding far-right, anti-immigrant parties in elections for the European parliament.

While mainstream, pro-EU forces are still expected to put together a governing majority, with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proclaiming the results show that “the centre is holding,” a major storyline in the June 6-9 elections nevertheless was the strong showing of far-right parties in several nations.

## Dramatic

The results were most dramatic in France, where President Emmanuel Macron’s faction was swamped by the National Rally party under Marine Le Pen, forcing Macron to dissolve parliament and call snap elections for June 30.

In Austria, Germany and the Netherlands too, far-right parties scored major gains. Conversely, Green and liberal parties each lost an estimated 20 seats, with the Greens dipping from 72 seats in the current parliament to just 53 in the new one.

In Italy, the centre-right Brothers of Italy party under Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was the big winner, claiming almost 30% of the vote, although the main leftist opposition party, the Democrats, also did better than expected, finishing at roughly 24%.

Many analysts believe the fact that both France and Germany, considered the two most influential



A ruined ship on the dry Aral Sea bed near the town of Aralsk, south-western Kazakhstan.

members of the 27 states that make up the European Union, now face surging right-wing populist movements may prove especially consequential.

On the whole, most observers expect the new-look European Parliament to be somewhat more Euro-sceptic, less aggressive in responding to climate change and on environmental policies, and tougher on migration.

**“Last August, he used the platform created by World Youth Day to condemn ‘populism and conspiracy theories’”**

All that may pose serious

challenges for the Vatican’s diplomatic and political agenda under Pope Francis, who has repeatedly warned against the rise of the very sort of nationalist and populist forces who scored major gains.

In November 2022, for example, Francis hosted a Vatican lunch for hundreds of refugees and homeless persons, saying at the time, “Let us not be enchanted by the sirens of populism, which exploit people’s real needs by facile and hasty solutions.” Last August, he used the platform created by World Youth Day to condemn “populism and conspiracy theories.”

## Letter

Ahead of the European elections, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, president of the Italian Bishops Con-

ference (CEI), and Bishop Mariano Crociata of Latina and president of the Commission of Episcopal Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), issued a public letter on the vote widely perceived to have been inspired by Pope Francis.

In it, the two prelates urged commitment to European unity, writing, “Some would push to believe that we would be better off in isolation, whereas any one of your countries, even a large one, would be fatally reduced to the weakest position.”

**“Sooner or later, we will learn that responsibilities, including the ones towards migrants, can only be shared, to face and solve problems that are indeed common problems”**

They also pressed European voters on migration,

saying “you cannot just look inwards. You cannot live just to feel good; you need to feel good enough to help the world, to combat injustice, to fight against poverty.”

“Sooner or later, we will learn that responsibilities, including the ones towards migrants, can only be shared, to face and solve problems that are indeed common problems,” the two bishops said.

Elections results, however, would suggest those messages weren’t quite shared by a growing number of European voters.

## Challenging

The results may be especially challenging for Catholic leaders in Germany, where the country’s bishops in February had called the far-right Alternative for Germany party “incompatible” with Church teaching, and a parish worker who was also a prominent party member was fired. Despite those efforts, the Alliance for Germany gained 16% of the vote, outperforming Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats and making it the second-largest

political force in the country.

**“In April, the European Parliament voted to include access to abortion in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights”**

On the other hand, the growing political influence of more right-wing forces in Europe could help Francis on a couple of other fronts, including Ukraine, where Francis and some populist groupings share a scepticism about Western backing for prolonging the war with Russia, as well as the Pope’s noted opposition to ‘gender theory,’ as well as euthanasia and abortion.

In April, the European Parliament voted to include access to abortion in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, an outcome considered mostly symbolic given that all 27 member states would have to agree to such an amendment, and both Poland and Malta vowed to block it.

Given the new composition of the parliament, such measures are likely to face greater resistance.

**“The growing political influence of more right-wing forces in Europe could help Francis on a couple of other fronts, including Ukraine, where Francis and some populist groupings share a scepticism about Western backing for prolonging the war with Russia”**



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Croatia team visit Vatican before Euro 2024 campaign

● Last week seen the Croatian national team visit the Vatican to meet with Pope Francis at the Paul VI hall. The delegation was led by the President of the Croatia National Football Federation. A special greeting was given by Pope Francis where he stated: "While you play football, you are a team and have the honour of representing your nation. This 'being a team' is an aspect of sport that I love to highlight because it mirrors social life, in various environments where people live and work together. Individual actions are important, imagination, creativity... But if individualism prevails, the overall dynamics are disrupted, and the goal is not achieved. Thank you for setting an example of how to be a team!" said Pope Francis.

Pope Francis was then presented with a framed Croatia jersey and the President of the Croatia National Football Federation echoed the devotion to God that many of the players have.

### Promotion of abortion and euthanasia in Chile meets resistance

● Bishops in Chile have condemned a plan by President Gabriel Boric's to endorse a bill to depenalise euthanasia and to pass another bill regulating legal abortion in the South American country.

Boric announced those projects on June 1, during the annual presidential speech in Congress, which is similar to the U.S. State of the Union address.

"I am convinced of the need to have a democratic debate on sexual and reproductive

rights. That is why, during the second half of this year, we will introduce a bill on legal abortion. (...) The women of Chile deserve their right to decide," Boric declared.

He recalled in 2017, former President Michelle Bachelet promulgated a law allowing women to legally perform abortion under three conditions: If the baby is the result of rape; if the baby puts the mother's life in danger; or if the baby would not live out of the mother's womb.

### Catholics dismayed at Colombian priest's murder

● Both Catholic and civil leaders in Colombia have reacted with outrage to the brutal June 4 slaying of a Catholic priest in the country's northeast, during an apparently botched robbery which may also have had a personal motive.

Father Ramon Montejo, 45, was approached by two men at a parking lot in the Jesus Cautivo neighborhood of the city of Ocaña, located on the border with Venezuela, as he prepared to take his car and go to the church in Buenavista, another district in the urban area.

An altercation ensued and the men stabbed Montejo several times. CCTV footage shows the moment when the priest is hit and ran over by his own truck, which had been taken by his murderers.

Later that day, the police captured two suspects, José Antony Montilla Jovito, 29, and Misael Rodolfo Valdez Pedrosa, 21. Both of them are Venezuelan nationals who worked at parking lots in Ocaña.

According to the local press, the authorities initially suspected that the perpetrators only wanted to steal Montejo's truck and ended up killing him after he resisted the robbery.

### Traditional African King revels in meeting Pope Francis

● A traditional African leader from a region of Cameroon currently torn by conflict, has described a June 3 meeting with Pope Francis in the Vatican "like a miracle," saying it may contribute to the cause of dialogue and peace.

Fon Moolo II of Nkar was in Rome for an interreligious dialogue conference sponsored by the Focolare movement.

In Cameroon, 'Fon' is the local term for a king. Moolo II's territory is in the troubled English-speaking northwestern region of Cameroon, a nation of roughly 30 million people in west Africa.

"It was like a miracle. The entire world knows the pope, so it was a privilege for me to greet the pope. The pope even blessed the staff of power and authority that I use in ruling my people," he said.

"He gave me a gift, and I plan to contact the bishop of Kumbo, my bishop, so we can organise a Holy Mass to present the gift and thank the Holy Father for it," he said. Bishop George Nkuo is the head of the Kumbo diocese.

Moolo II didn't feel comfortable talking specifically about the separatist war threatening to tear Cameroon to shreds, but noted that the theme of dialogue and peace discussed at the meeting spoke directly to the heart of the Cameroon conflict.

## Vatican embassy occupied by protestors in Colombia

After two days occupying the apostolic nunciature in Bogotá, protestors agreed to leave.

They were protesting the violence of paramilitary groups against community leaders and Indigenous peoples and will now hold a meeting with the government about potential solutions.

The group of about 15 activists got into the area on June 4, during a march that had begun in front of the Interior Ministry. They were members of a civic organisation called Congreso de los Pueblos (Congress of the Peoples), which gathers 600 different community and social justice associations. They were promoting a "national mobilisation for life and permanence in the territories."

They ended up setting up a 'humanitarian refugee camp' at the nunciature's parking area.

The group also included Indigenous and peasant activists, and put up road blockades in different regions of Colombia.

The demonstrators' main goal was to demand of the government the urgent demobilisation of the right-wing paramilitary groups that have been operating in the South American nation for decades.

Initially established by conservative forces in order to



Apostolic Nunciature in Bogotá.

combat communist guerrillas as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the paramilitary organisations gradually began to control vast territories and got involved in delinquency.

Left-wing groups like Congreso de los Pueblos accuse the paramilitaries of harassing entire communities and killing their leaders.

That was the case, for instance, Narciso Beleño, a

long-time peasant leader in the Bolivar department who was shot dead on April 21 after denouncing the presence of paramilitary forces in the region.

According to the Institute of Studies for Development and Peace (INDEPAZ), at least 72 community leaders have been killed in Colombia so far in 2024.

Some of the demonstrators also occupied offices of the

Interior Ministry.

Congreso de los Pueblos said in a statement that the national government must "adopt effective measures to dismantle paramilitarism, taking into account its growth through the territories, controlling – either through terror or cooptation – the autonomous action of communities, putting their existence at risk."

## Europe voting base reject Pope's message in voting booths

Less than a week after Pope Francis called on people to recognise migrants as "a living image of God's people on their way to the eternal homeland," voters across Europe dealt a potentially serious blow to that vision by rewarding far-right, anti-immigrant parties in elections for the European parliament.

While mainstream, pro-EU forces are still expected to put together a governing majority, with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proclaiming the results show that "the center is holding," a major storyline in the June 6 to 9 elections nevertheless was the strong showing of far-right parties in several nations.

The results were most dramatic in France, where President Emmanuel Macron's faction was swamped by the National Rally party under Marine Le Pen, forcing Macron to dissolve parliament and call snap elections for June 30.

In Austria, Germany and the Netherlands too, far-right parties scored major gains. Conversely, Green and liberal parties each lost an estimated 20 seats, with the Greens dipping from 72 seats in the current parliament to just 53 in the new one.

In Italy, the center-right Brothers of Italy party under Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was the big winner, claiming almost 30 per cent of the vote, although the main leftist

opposition party, the Democrats, also did better than expected, finishing at roughly 24 per cent.

Many analysts believe the fact that both France and Germany, considered the two most influential members of the 27 states that make up the European Union, both now face surging right-wing populist movements may prove especially consequential.

On the whole, most observers expect the new-look European Parliament to be somewhat more Euro-skeptic, less aggressive in responding to climate change and on environmental policies, and tougher on migration.

## Ex-Vatican employee arrested for extortion

The lawyer for the former Vatican employee accused of trying to sell St Peter's Basilica an allegedly stolen 17th-century manuscript about plans for the massive canopy over the basilica's main altar said the illustrated manuscript is different from one listed in the archives and later reported missing.

Angelo Coccia, the lawyer,

told Catholic News Service June 10, that even the arrest warrant for his client, Alfio Maria Daniele Pergolizzi, showed doubt when it asserted that the item Pergolizzi attempted to sell could "presumably be traced back" to a booklet purchased in 1879 for the archives of the Fabbri di San Pietro, the office that oversees the upkeep of the

basilica.

Pergolizzi was arrested by Vatican police May 27 after a sting operation in which he delivered the manuscript to Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, archpriest of the basilica and president of the Fabbri di San Pietro, in exchange for a check for 120,000 euros (about \$130,700).

From 1995 to 2011, Pergolizzi worked for the Fabbri di San Pietro, serving as photo archivist and de facto communications officer. He founded a publishing house specialising in art books and after leaving the basilica, pursued publishing as a full-time career until the company declared bankruptcy in 2022 or 2023.



Edited by Gareth Foyne  
gareth@irishcatholic.ie

## Hostages and tears of joy...



A young woman reacts during a rally in support of hostages in Gaza, asking for their release, amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict in Tel Aviv, Israel, June 8, 2024. The same day Israel carried out its largest hostage rescue operation since the latest war with Hamas began, taking four to safety out of central Gaza in a heavy air and ground assault.

## Lyke conference in Texas to discuss how black Catholics can bring their gifts to Mass

A national gathering will explore how black Catholics can “embrace the gifts” they bring to the church, particularly to the Mass, according to organisers.

Some 300 are expected to attend the 2024 Lyke Conference, which takes place June 18 to 22 in Grapevine, Texas. The event, launched in 2004 and held annually for most of the years since, is named in honour of the late Archbishop James P. Lyke, the second black archbishop appointed to the Catholic Church in the U.S., who died at age 53 in 1992 while serving as archbishop of Atlanta.

The Lyke Foundation sponsors the conference as part of its mission to continue the late archbishop's legacy of fostering black Catholic liturgical expression. Among his pioneering accomplishments, Archbishop Lyke was instrumental in coordinating the production of the black Catholic hymnal

‘Lead Me, Guide Me,’ released in 1987 under the direction of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus.

This year's conference theme, ‘Standing in the Need of Prayer – Reclaiming Our Black Catholic Liturgy,’ will explore the riches of how the Mass is celebrated in the “cultural expression of prayer” that characterises the experience of black Catholics, Lyke Conference director Richard Cheri told OSV News.

“(It’s) evident in a preaching style, a genre of music, a sacred dance and a real conscious effort to hear the voice of our young people,” said Cheri, brother of the late Bishop Fernand J. Cheri, who served as auxiliary bishop of New Orleans until his death in March 2023, and who had served on the Lyke Foundation board.

“I reflect on the ministry of my brother,” Cheri told OSV News. “He

never apologised for being black and Catholic. ... He brought (to the Church) something different.”

Delivering the conference's welcome message will be Cynthia Bailey Manns, a lay delegate to the Synod on Synodality, adult learning director at St Joan of Arc Catholic Community in Minneapolis and adjunct professor at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in St Paul, Minnesota.

Manns will speak on ‘Gifts of Conversation in the Spirit,’ a theme that has been key to the synod process and that involves active listening, speaking from the heart and -- as the Lyke Conference materials describe -- creating “sacred space to listen to the protagonist, the Holy Spirit and allow ourselves to move from ‘I’ to ‘We’ and “continually encounter God.”

## Pope calls for another ceasefire in the Middle East

Pope Francis once again renewed his call for a cease-fire in Gaza following the rescue of four hostages, that led to what officials in Gaza said was the killing of more than 270 Palestinians in an Israeli rescue operation that one European Union diplomat deemed a “massacre.” Addressing pilgrims gathered in St Peter's Square on June 9, the Pope recalled the recent commemoration of the invocation of peace held at the Vatican 10 years ago, saying the historic meeting “showed

that joining hands is possible, and that it takes courage to make peace, far more courage than to wage war.” He encouraged “the ongoing negotiations between the parties” and expressed hope that proposals for peace, a cease-fire and the freeing of hostages would be “accepted immediately.” An emergency meeting on the humanitarian situation in Gaza is planned for June 11, convened by Jordan's King Abdullah II, and co-hosted by Egypt and the United Nations. The four hostages rescued in

Gaza were Noa Argamani, 26, Almog Meir Jan, 22, Andrey Kozlov, 27, and Shlomi Ziv, 41, all of whom were kidnapped at the Nova music festival during the October 7 Hamas attack. AP reported that Gaza's Health Ministry said an estimated 274 people, including 64 children and 57 women, were killed and an estimated 700 were wounded during the June 8 raid. Israeli Defense Forces said fewer than 100 people were killed.

## Vatican roundup

### Pope urges people not to be enslaved by money, power and pleasure

● The Pope urged people to determine whether they were sacrificing their serenity, peace and freedom to be enslaved by money, power and pleasure. It was his idea that we should look to Christ to find: “If we let ourselves be conditioned by the quest for pleasure, power, money, or consensus, we become slaves to these things,” he said.

“If instead we allow God's freely-given love to fill us and expand our heart, and if we let it overflow spontaneously by giving it back to others with our whole selves without fear, calculation, or conditioning, then we grow in freedom and spread its good fragrance around us in our homes, in our families, and in our communities.”

### An unlikely virtue being celebrated at the Vatican...

● Pope Francis will welcome comedians from all over the world next week, including top American names, such as Whoopi Goldberg and Jimmy Fallon, for a cultural event at the Vatican aimed at forging stronger ties between the Catholic Church and the world of comedy.

Announced Saturday, the audience between the Pope and comedians will take place Friday, June 14, at the Vatican and is being jointly organised by the Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education and the Dicastery for Communication “to establish a link between the Catholic Church and comic artists.”

A June 8 Vatican press release announcing the event said Pope Francis

“recognises the significant impact that the art of comedy has on the world of contemporary culture.”

“Through the humorous talent and the unifying value of laughter, unique reflections on the human condition and the historical situation are offered today,” it said, saying comedy can also “contribute to a more empathetic and supportive world.”

Pope Francis in the past has said he prays daily that God would give him “a sense of humor,” and he expressed his belief that comedians – actors, artists, cartoonists, writers and more, “have ‘the ability to dream new versions of the world...with irony, which is a wonderful virtue.’”

### Christian persecution continues according to Archbishop Gallagher

● “More than 365 million Christians, approximately 1 in 7, face high levels of persecution for their faith,” Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Vatican secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations, said at a conference on religious freedom held in Rome this week.

The conference, titled ‘Religious Freedom and Integral Human Development: A New Global Platform,’ was jointly organised by the Sovereign Order of Malta, the Atlantic Council, and several universities, including the Pontifical Urban University of Rome and the University of Notre Dame.

In his speech, Gallagher said attacks on churches and Christian properties “increased significantly in 2023, with more Christians than ever before reporting violent attacks.”

### Pope Francis calls for two state solution

● Israeli and Palestinian envoys to the Holy See have applauded Pope Francis' prayer for peace in the Vatican gardens Friday, commemorating a similar event held 10 years ago, with both calling the initiative symbolic and illustrative of the Pope's commitment to ending the Gaza war.

The event was held to commemorate the 10th anniversary of an historic prayer for peace held in the same location of the Vatican Gardens in 2014, which was led by Pope Francis and attended by the late President of the State of Israel, Shimon Peres, and the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, and Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople.

Francis said he prays daily that the war in Gaza will end and that he prays for all communities in the region, including Jews, Christians and Muslims.

He called for a ceasefire, for the release of Israeli hostages “as soon as possible,” and asked that access to humanitarian aid be guaranteed in Gaza. He also prayed that the homes of those who have been displaced will soon be rebuilt so they can return “in peace.”



# Letter from Rome

## US pressure to find the 'right' kind of Catholic Vatican ambassador



John L. Allen Jr

**W**ith the imminent departure of Joseph Donnelly as the US Ambassador to the Holy See, it seems likely the post will be vacant for a while. It would make little sense to try to ram through a nominee before the election in November, and afterwards it can take a new (or returning) administration six months or more to work its way down to the Vatican gig on the list of federal jobs to fill.

As a result, we have a cesura, a pregnant pause, which could provide a moment to rethink America's approach to whom it sends as its envoy to the Vatican.

I'm going to lay out here a modest proposal I've been floating periodically for the better part of two decades, in the serene confidence that it's no more likely to be taken up now than at any other point over that span. The fact I can't get anyone to listen, however, doesn't, *ipso facto*, make me wrong.

### Competence

Both elements of this modest proposal are intended to expand the talent pool, as well as privileging competence and preparation over politics. To wit, I suggest the United States break with what have been two unquestioned assumptions about the position since full diplomatic relations were first launched under President Ronald Reagan in 1984:

First, we should end the bias in favour of political appointees in favour of giving consideration to career foreign service professionals.

Second, we should also break with the convention



that the ambassador to the Vatican has to be a Catholic.

**“Bill Clinton's choice of Lindy Boggs, an influential former member of congress and the first woman ever to preside over a national political convention, was well received”**

To be clear, these are American conventions, not Vatican requirements. Plenty of other nations appoint career diplomats to the Vatican role, and plenty also name non-Catholics.

Let's take each point in turn.

### Logic

In terms of a political appointee, there is a surface logic to it, beyond the obvious patronage factor of rewarding somebody who supported the incoming administration. Generally speaking, any host nation wants to feel the US takes its relationship seriously, and picking an ambassador who's known to have political juice with the White House is certainly one way of making that point.

When George W. Bush sent Jim Nicholson to Rome, for instance, the former head of the Republican National Committee and a figure who had Karl Rove on speed dial, it said something about the importance Bush attached to the role. Similarly, Bill Clinton's choice of

Lindy Boggs, an influential former member of congress and the first woman ever to preside over a national political convention, was well received.

However, choosing a career politician for the ambassador's role is often a prescription for a steep learning curve. Generally, the new envoy arrives with little experience of diplomacy, no command of Italian and a blank slate as far as the inner workings of the Vatican. Often they're only beginning to get the hang of things by the time their term is up.

**“One can complain about government waste in other arenas, but the payroll of the US foreign service, in my experience, is money well spent”**

On the other hand, I've known every deputy chief of mission, or number two official, at the Vatican embassy for the last 25 years, and I can say

with metaphysical certainty that any one of them would have made an outstanding ambassador. They're generally career diplomats with a facility for languages, not to mention the institutional sophistication required to navigate the opaque environment of the Vatican.

Over the years, I've made it a point to set up a meeting with a political officer at the US embassy in whatever foreign country I visit for the first time, and I've invariably found these folks to be smart, well-informed, balanced and realistic in their expectations while also committed to getting things done. One can complain about government waste in other arenas, but the payroll of the US foreign service, in my experience, is money well spent.

### Apparatus

For sure, the diplomatic apparatus in the Vatican would be delighted to see a person of substance and energy appointed to the ambassador's role, as opposed to a politician nearing the end of his or her career and looking at the gig as a soft landing.

As far as picking only Catholics, not only does that practice artificially limit the range of possibilities, but it also muddies the waters by artificially injecting a sort of ecclesiastical litmus test into what should be a strictly objective exercise of choosing the best possible envoy to represent the administration's agenda.

**“Both sides of the aisle are pressured to find the 'right' kind of Catholic, which unnecessarily complicates the choice and invests it with a distracting, and misplaced, significance in terms of Church politics”**

Democratic administrations have to find a Catholic who's at least sufficiently pro-life that the nomination won't seem like a poke in the eye, while Republicans, especially under this papacy, have to find a Catholic who's not seen as flagrantly at odds with the rest of the Pope's social agenda, such as climate change, poverty and war and peace.

In other words, both sides of the aisle are pressured to find the 'right' kind of Catholic, which unnecessarily complicates the choice and invests it with a distracting, and misplaced, significance in terms of Church politics.

Both of these conventions, meaning the informal rule that the ambassador has to be a political nominee and has to be Catholic, were born with noble intentions of showing respect to the Vatican. Yet over the 40 years in the US and the Vatican have enjoyed full diplomatic relations, experience has shown they sometimes cut in the opposite direction, producing envoys who, despite the best of intentions, are unprepared to fully exploit the potential of the role.

Would US/Vatican relations be stronger if America stopped artificially handicapping itself and expanded the roster of possible choices for the ambassador's post? In my view, unquestionably. Is that likely to happen? Probably not... frankly, it might just make too much sense to fly as policy.

**“Over the 40 years in the US and the Vatican have enjoyed full diplomatic relations, experience has shown they sometimes cut in the opposite direction, producing envoys who, despite the best of intentions, are unprepared to fully exploit the potential of the role”**

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### A narrative which sees life, family, religion as dispensable

**Dear Editor,** As we look back on a completely lacklustre European election campaign, we see that it ignored the most important challenge facing our continent, namely the impending social and economic collapse which is seen as inevitable by multiple demographic statisticians.

No generation is replacing itself due to birth control (abortion) and that relentless ever more brazen pessimism dressed up as gender ideology. We are spiralling

towards the destruction of our own humanity and the very existence of civilisation as we know it. The evidence is there in front of us all, but opinion influencers continue to ignore it, in much the same way as those in charge of the Titanic failed to act on reports of iceberg infested waters up ahead.

We have a political class dissociated from reality, just as they were in the immediate run up to the collapse of the 'Iron Curtain' or the eco-

nomie crash of 2008, or more recently the eruption of wars in the Ukraine and in Gaza.

They continue to act like puppets for simplistic Punch-and-Judy shows, presented as media debates, all of which must fit within an overarching narrative which sees human life, family, religion and national identity as dispensable accessories in a world where consumerism is the primary concern. Those who refuse to go along with this phony consensus

are ostracised as despicable deplorables (irrelevant and/or dangerous). Why concern the public – the unsuspecting passengers – with inconvenient truths liberalism has actually brought about?

And yet something inside each of us, irrespective of our political hue, issues that in suppressible summons: "To thine own self be true."

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

## Be careful not to have knee-jerk reactions to trans people

**Dear Editor,** The news item entitled 'Trans-identifying monk risks 'confusion' in Church, experts say' has the potential itself to cause further confusion [The Irish Catholic – June 6, 2024].

It might be worth pointing out to your readers that the example of the person in question – Christian Matson – could provide an opportunity for further reflection on transgender issues.

Matson is a diocesan hermit and therefore not in Holy Orders and not performing sacramental ministry. There are both female and male diocesan hermits.

Irrespective of one's views on the morality of transition, Matson looks very much like a man. This is a result of the complex physical changes in some secondary sex characteristics that can result from taking testosterone. Anyone unaware of Matson's transgender status would automatically use male pronouns about the hermit.

Indeed a quick search on X/Twitter reveals that many commentators were quick to condemn what they assumed was someone who wanted to undergo male to female transition and not vice versa.

If someone looks very different from their genetic sex, there is a possibility that an instruction to them to insist on pronouns matching their genetic

sex may actually cause more confusion than allowing others to assume their pronouns based on their appearance.

Matson's case also raises questions about the place of post-transition trans people within the Church. Matson actually converted to Catholicism after transitioning. The physical appearance of someone in Matson's situation cannot be easily changed. As yet, the Church provides very little practical guidance to someone in this situation. Even if they are not to be admitted as a diocesan hermit or similar, to what extent can they participate in the life of the Church? How many people are they required to inform about their medical history? How often must they clarify their pronouns in their everyday lives?

We should be careful that a desire to promote truth does not encourage knee-jerk reactions whose full consequences have not been taken into account.

*Yours etc.,  
Joe Curran  
Artane, Dublin 5*



### Where was the Palestrina Choir?

**Dear Editor,** There was 'Joy in Dublin as two auxiliaries appointed' [The Irish Catholic – May 30, 2024].

It was great to see this important event live on the church web camera. The two bishops, appointed auxiliaries to the archbishop, gave presentations which were inspiring and full of hope for the hard

road ahead.

The music during the ceremony was very wide based, a traditional Irish group, many parish choirs, an all-Chinese choir. But, many 'Dubs' will ask where was the Palestrina Choir of Dublin's cathedral?

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

### Politicians' cheap shots at the GAA

**Dear Editor,** As a long-retired dub officer and player, in my declining years, I understand and support GAA GO. Msgr O'Brien clearly explained the limitations to showing all inter-county games (hurling and football) on RTÉ and he understands the merits of GAA GO to followers living abroad. My son, living in Singapore for many years, falls into that category.

The costs of fielding inter-county games in both codes at all levels are increasing year after year. Add in the expense of preparing/coaching of many under-age groups (as development squads), while allowing

for major voluntary/parental inputs.

I am able to see Cork games on GAA GO in the local GAA club. If that option is not available to senior citizens, I feel they should be able to draw on a family member, friend or neighbour to get access to GAA GO.

Full marks to GAA president Jarlath Burns for standing up to politicians for their cheap shots at the GAA, as diversion from their own problems.

*Yours etc.,  
Phil Duggan  
Bishopstown, Co. Cork*

## A self-important political echo chamber...

**W**hile there has been much talk of the UK looking likely to buck the trend of the move to the right in politics that is occurring across Europe with the impending election of a Labour government, ostensibly the local and European elections point towards a similar outcome in Ireland.

With Fianna Fail and Fine Gael achieving the largest share of the vote and competing to be the largest party in local government, voters have somewhat reverted to form in opting for stability and familiarity once again in a time of uncertainty and upheaval.

Prior to the elections, COMECE – the Catholic Church's representative office in the European Union – published a position paper entitled Strengthening the Culture of Democracy through Values, which argued, subtly, for voters to vote with prudence in the Europe wide elections.

COMECE argued that the success of the European project depends "on the acceptance of fundamental rights and values, such as human dignity, human rights, freedom, non-discrimination, common good, subsidiarity, justice, tolerance, inclusion, solidarity, equity and religious freedom."

Results in the Local and European election indicate that Ireland remains supportive of these values, choosing, in the main, to reject candidates from either end of the political spectrum that were demanding upheaval or revolution. The centre certainly held.

Overtly far-right candidates, few and far between and marginal in any case, failed to gain the traction that was feared by the mainstream, centrist candidates except in a few isolated locations where the electorate feels ignored by an unrepresentative government. The far-right bogeyman appears to be just that. Far-left candidates also fared poorly, while independents, disparate as they were, now occupy a larger space in local governance.

Although the narrative is that Europe is closing its doors as it moves to the right, Ireland has adopted 'common sense' approach to the elections. Stifling conformism was rapidly abandoned on immigration as Fine Gael under Simon Harris took the wind from both Sinn Féin's and anti-immigrant campaigners sails with a more pragmatic position than was offered by Leo Varadkar.

The message from the elections is that Ireland remains open, that it supports the values of human dignity, the common good, tolerance and solidarity. It rejects the simplistic narratives of us versus them, but also of unmanaged – rather than unconstrained – official immigration policy.

Ireland appears to have listened to, even if we did not hear, COMECE's call 'to avoid and repel extremism ... to resist the temptation to turn in on ourselves'. The electorate has shown that Ireland is not a xenophobic or intolerant society as it is often assumed to be under the politics of bogeymen that has come to the fore in recent years.

Ireland's two civil war parties will be relieved at the outcomes of the elections. But they shouldn't be complacent. These were the first elections in four years in Ireland and the lead up to them demonstrated that the government parties move to listening mode with elections looming. With a General Election likely in less than 12 months, they will remain in listening mode for a little bit longer.

But events in Europe should be a warning to them not to take the electorate lightly. The hiatus since the last elections created a government that thought it did not have to listen. It may be that voters have given stability and familiarity one more chance.

The question for the centre parties is whether they now believe that they are invulnerable to the waves of dissatisfaction that are turning governments in France, Belgium and the Netherlands on its head. They cannot assume that the decent Irish values, founded in our Christian identity, will hold should they continue to ignore the concerns of middle Ireland. No electorate wants to be considered gullible and the General Election is not far away.

The value of democracy through elections is that it forces politicians out of their ivory towers and to come face-to-face with the people, to hear their concerns and to give them some consideration. This will continue until the General Election. Whether they will pull up the drawbridge as they did after the last elections remains to be seen.

That would be unwise. The threat to democracy does not come just from the 'Far Right', but from a political establishment that exists in an echo chamber of its own self-importance.

## 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.



# Letter from Jerusalem

## A saint of Palestine for our times



Justin Robinson OSB

I'm writing from Nablus, in the West Bank, where the Christian community has just celebrated the feast of St Justin Martyr who was born here in the year 100 AD. Nestled between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim – some fifty kilometres north of Jerusalem – today's Nablus is a far-cry from the city of Justin's day, though some impressive archaeological remains can be found scattered around this Palestinian city.

St Justin is very much a man for our times. The Early Church was fortunate to call upon this scholarly and holy convert as he knew paganism inside-out and could tackle both internal heresies and outside criticism, particularly those of pagan polemicists.

“His hometown now has a population of around 180,000 people and is nicknamed *jabal in-nar* – the fire mountain”

Justin's enquiring mind sought explanations to the great questions of life, leading him on a journey through the various philosophical schools of his day. He was always left wanting, however, and eventually became a Christian. Justin spoke of himself as a philosopher, and his writings show a determination to engage the leaders and thinkers of his day in order to rebut criticism and expound the sound doctrine and right



belief which he came to find in Christianity. He was martyred in Rome in 165 AD, yet still sketches a possible approach for this present age if we also engage the surrounding culture in search of 'seeds of the Word' which might be a starting-point for evangelisation.

His hometown now has a population of around 180,000 people and is nicknamed *jabal in-nar* –

the fire mountain – as a nod to the worship of the Samaritan community on nearby Mount Gerizim and the city's reputation as a hotbed of political activism. The people of Nablus are close to my heart, though they are known for their fiery temperament. Perhaps it was for this reason that Eugene Hoade, a Galway-born Franciscan who ministered in the Holy Land during the last century

wrote of how “the natives have the reputation for being rather turbulent. Its contemporary history shows Nablus in constant revolt against the Ottoman authorities.”

### Sprawling

The sprawling city is stretched east-west along a valley, and creeps up the sides of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. It has made a proud contribution

to Palestinian culture, and has long been an important commercial centre for the region. Its famous syrupy knafeh dessert of pastry topped with (an itself famous) Nabulsi brine cheese is known and eaten throughout the Arab world, whilst the city's scentless olive-oil soap has been produced here and exported across the globe for more than a thousand

years.

An overwhelmingly Muslim city, Nablus is home to a few hundred Samaritans, an ethno-religious group hailing from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh who practice a religion linked to Judaism and worship on Mount Gerizim. There are around 600 Christian residents from the Greek Orthodox, Latin Catholic, Greek Melkite and



Anglican denominations, and the city proudly contains the Church of Jacob's Well close to the Balata refugee camp, site of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman.

**“Here in Nablus we seem to have a special task because we’re living with other Christians, with Muslims and with Samaritans, all of which gives us an important and very beautiful opportunity for dialogue”**

Sitting at the parochial house's kitchen table in the Rafidia suburb, Fr Miguel Perez Jimenez pours coffee as we unwind after the morning's celebration. “Christians are a part of city life: they're here for a long time and have been a very important influence in the city,” he explains. “The locals call the big blocks of Nablus soap *sabon al-khawarneh* (the priest's soap), because priests used it to clean their cassocks and vestments. There's many beautiful stories like this about the Christian influence here,” he says.

The thirty-something Spaniard is incardinated into the local diocese as a member of the Neocatechumenal Way.



Speaking about his work, he tells me “I'm a parish priest, which means I have work like any other priest. But here in Nablus we seem to have a special task because we're living with other Christians, with Muslims and with Samaritans, all of which gives us an important and

very beautiful opportunity for dialogue.”

#### Students

“For example, just ten percent of the students in our school are Christians,” Fr Miguel says, “and studying there is an education in dialogue, in living with and being open to one another.

Students are proud to have studied there because it's a symbol of Nablus and some of the city's most important personalities went there.”

**“What is fear of the Lord? Is it anything like fear of the army? Of course no”**

We reflect together on the morning's celebration of Saint Justin, where four young people received the Sacrament of Confirmation. During the homily, I was struck by a question posed by the auxiliary bishop to the students – “what is fear of the



Lord? Is it anything like fear of the army? Of course not”, to which I was reminded of the challenges of Occupation in a city where army raids are simply a part of everyday life.

#### Escape

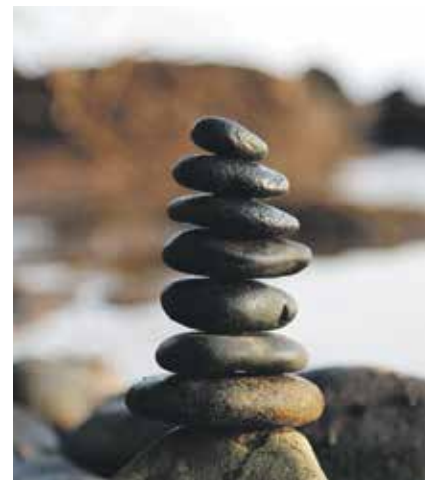
Fr Miguel speaks of how many people wish to move away to escape the economic and political problems of the city, where life might be easier, more comfortable and secure. “It is a temptation to prefer comfort over the mission of God, which is to be a Christian here in the Holy Land. Sometimes people think it's difficult to be Christian here, but easier in Europe. It's not true, because whoever lives the Christian life has

persecutions and troubles, wherever they are. The important thing is always to do the will of God, and to live our mission of love,” he says.

Nablus and its people have shaped my life in various ways since my first visit here more than a decade ago, and the opportunity to celebrate the feast of Saint Justin in the city of his birth was an opportunity not to be missed. May Saint Justin intercede for the entire Church and particularly for his hometown, “the little Damascus” of Palestine.

**Justin Robinson OSB** is a monk of Glenstal Abbey in County Limerick currently residing in Jerusalem.

**“Whoever lives the Christian life has persecutions and troubles, wherever they are. The important thing is always to do the will of God, and to live our mission of love”**



# I can't believe it was Jesus all along



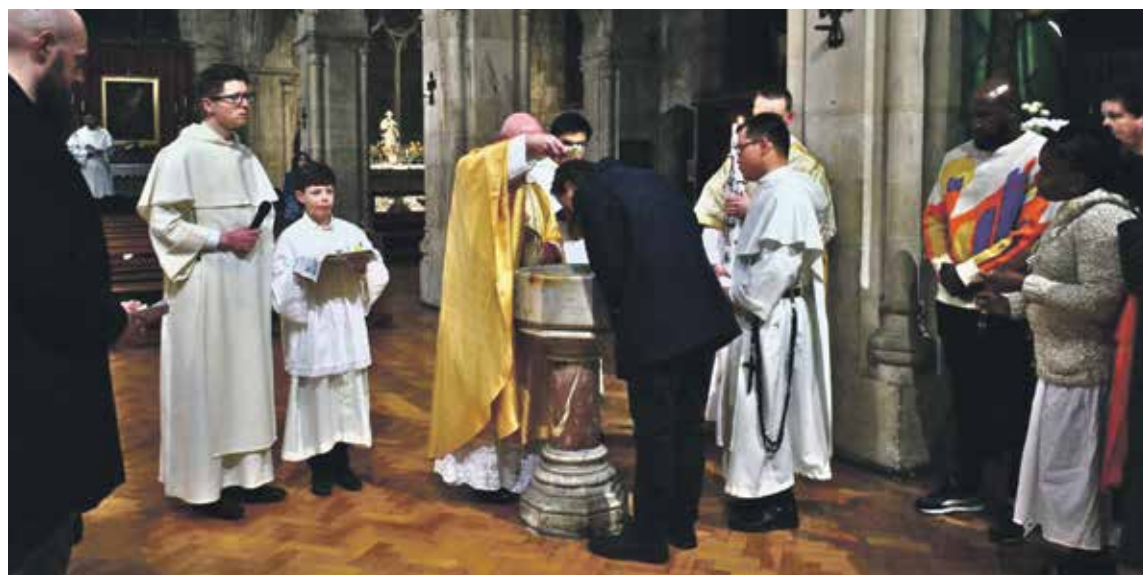
Rohan Healy

**W**e are reminded daily of the many social ills that the internet, and social media in particular, perpetuate. The increased sense of social isolation, despite early promises to bring people closer together, the negative effects on self-worth as we are constantly bombarded with exaggerated examples of others success, the ever-present temptation to get lost in an infinite number of rabbit holes offering short term gratification, scrolling endlessly through comments or engaging directly in arguments online or cyber bullying. I could go on. A world glued to the phone, heads down, stooped in reverence to an electronic deity that feeds us superficial satisfaction. But like Herod swooning lasciviously over Salome, when the dance ends and we find out what is being asked of us in return, we are devastated by the answer.

The pitfalls are real, the dangers are documented. But all tools can be used for both good and ill. Medicine can heal or harm, weapons can kill or feed families, and social media, in the right hands, and used with prudence and temperance, can be a great force for good in the world.

## Journey

When I experienced a life changing encounter with God the Father and Christ a year ago, I was left ecstatic; saved, redeemed, forgiven. I cried until I couldn't, then I cried some more. Then I laughed, I distinctly remember thinking to myself "I can't believe it was actually Jesus all along". I stepped foot into a created world for the first time and experienced grace; internal changes to my habits, weak-



nesses, behaviours and thoughts that defied explanation, and without any willpower on my part. I had received divine revelation and there was no going back.

**“I found myself nodding along as their words resonated with my experience”**

So, what now? I was distinctly concerned about bringing this up with people in my life, afraid I'd be judged, maybe the validity of my experience wouldn't be taken seriously. I knew that I could never deny Christ, I knew this was a one-way ticket, however I knew myself! I knew previous to this experience that, while I had a general respect for those who were strong in their faith, I was as cynical as they come, I had a litany of 'actual' reasons why people 'found' God and not one of them was the truth; that in fact the risen Christ is at work in the world and a relationship with him is not only possible but vital.

Then, I went online. I knew instinctively that to explain my experience in a way that is coherent, patient and can stand up to scrutiny I would have to develop my formation and apologet-

ics. I began watching long form YouTube content. Primarily talks, podcasts and debates. Christian apologists like Frank Turek and William Lane Craig appealed to me with their intellectual, logical and philosophical approach and I found myself nodding along as their words resonated with my experience. I had at this time purchased three Bibles, the NIV, Douay Rheims (I love this Bible so much!) and – don't laugh – the Action Bible, a graphic novel depiction of the Old and New Testament that I found useful to get up to speed and flesh out the stories! But that wasn't enough, I wanted more ways to experience the Bible, so I went searching on YouTube and found Fr Mike Schmitz' Bible in a Year Podcast. I'd put on an episode each day while eating my meals. I had to understand how it all ties together!

## Baptism

This led the YouTube algorithm to begin suggesting more Catholic content, and the real turning point was Pints with Aquinas and Matt Fradd. Wow! A veritable wellspring of endless Catholic podcast content delving into every facet of the faith imaginable. This led to Dr Taylor Marshall, a polarising figure and a little click-baity, but his knowledge is vast, and I found him

fun as well as informative. Then Aquinas 101 and Fr Gregory Pine. Finally! My eyes were opened to the vastly deep and complex world of Dominican Theology. The intellectual tradition of the order was like a salve, pouring over me, stimulating both my heart and mind, making sense of the mysteries of the Faith and of life.

**“I began attending Mass, and at the Easter Vigil on March 30, I was baptised and confirmed”**

By this point I was determined to get baptised in the Catholic tradition. I was also watching Irish YouTube blogger Robert Nugent (Decrevi), and when I opened to my family and asked my father for advice on how to seek baptism, he suggested sending Robert a message. I did. He responded within minutes with the email of a Dominican Priest, Fr Conor McDonough OP. Once again, I rushed to YouTube where I watched a podcast he did with Benburb priory about Faith, science, his work with the excellent 'Treasure Ireland' Youtube series and more.

I emailed him and once again the

response was prompt and kind and warm. I fell to my knees again and wept at this point, as it hit home that I was about to enter the body of Christ.

From this point, under the guidance of Fr Conor, and the Fathers and Brothers at St Saviours' Church in Dublin, I was formed through one-on-one meetings, recommended readings and their excellent Catechism course, where I met other Catholics, young and old, eager to explore their Faith more deeply, I began attending Mass, and at the Easter Vigil on March 30, I was baptised and confirmed.

So few words feel like a total disservice to the love, care and patience that was shown to me by all at St Saviours' Church. Their empathy, intelligence, humour, sense of wonder and enquiry cannot be overstated. One day I'll put the full account of my conversion to paper, for myself if no one else, with the hopes of doing the entire story justice, even if only a little more.

## Current

To this day I enjoy regular content by the like of Bishop Robert Barron and the Treasure Ireland and Sunday Sermons of the Irish Dominicans, as well as many more. There is an endless wealth of content on Church history, the early Church Fathers, the Saints and, of course, the story of Christ, all freely available on YouTube. And in, what feels miraculous to me, the past 6 months I have met in person both Matt Fradd and Fr Gregory Pine at their talks in Dublin and had the opportunity to thank them both in person for the impact they had on my life.

I remain a deeply flawed person, conversion is life long and I pray daily for the love and forgiveness of God. I start my day praying Lauds from the Universalis app, and I end it with a candle lit prayer at my prayer space. I'm as guilty as anyone for misusing the internet and falling prey to its temptations, but I hope that with a little discipline and intention the internet, and social media can be an incredibly powerful tool forming and strengthening our faith. And in my story, it was a vital part of my journey to baptism and beyond.

# Summer media survival tips for parents



Sr Hosea Rupprecht

**W**hen I was a kid, my main form of media consumption was books. I used to go to the library and check out four or five 'Hardy Boys' books at a time. I don't know why I never got into Nancy Drew (I am a girl, after all), but I think it's the fact that Frank and Joe Hardy had access to a speedboat! That's neither here nor there, but once home, I snuggled into the loveseat in the living room and would read for hours. Finishing the books I borrowed, I was back to the library in less than two weeks. Ensconced on the couch during the summer months but oblivious to the sunshine outside, my mother would tell me, "Get your nose out of a book, go outside and do something constructive!"

I was usually hesitant to put down my book, but once I did, I loved helping my mother in the garden, throwing a frisbee with my father, going to the school grounds around the corner, playing tennis with my brother or walking the 15 minutes it took us to get to our grandparents' homes.

Parents today may have to give the same admonition to their kids, but it probably goes something like this: "Get your eyes off your phone (or gaming console), go outside and do something constructive!"

## Balance

In our technology-obsessed world, it's a challenge for adults to find a good balance between tech-based activities and other stuff. It's even more difficult for kids whose devices seem to be grafted onto their arms. During the summer months, without school to fill up their kid's time, parents may find themselves in the same situation my mother found herself in with me. You may ask, "How do I entice my child to put down the device and do something unplugged?"

Don't get me wrong. There's nothing wrong with

technology-based activities, such as gaming, scrolling through one's social media feed or even going to the movies. The key word is balance. During the upcoming summer vacation, if you notice your child glued to a screen, here are a few suggestions.

**“I remember loving listening to my mother tell me about going camping when she was growing up, or how she first met my father”**

- Set reasonable time limits for digital interactions. When that time is up, help your child do something creative, such as a painting, outdoor 'fort' construction, bike riding or hiking or writing an original mystery story.
- As a family, visit at least one person (or group of people) face-to-face during the summer that you've been wanting to visit for a while but just couldn't seem to find the time. When I was young, I always enjoyed going over to my great aunt's home. I loved listening to her tell stories of when she was a nurse in World War II.
- Use your child's screen 'obsession' to do something together as a family. Go to the movies and, afterwards, talk about the film, what you liked or didn't like about it and what you got out of it. Play a favourite video game together. My dad, brother and I used to play Atari games until Mom kicked us out of the living room.
- Don't forget to give some extra time to God. Try showing up for Sunday Mass 15 minutes or a half-hour early to pray and prepare for the celebration of the Eucharist. If your parish has eucharistic adoration, introduce the kids

to this wonderful practice that will bring them closer to the Lord and sustain them as they grow.

- Bring technology into your prayer in an appropriate way. Find a streaming audio or video Rosary to pray along with.
- Read some Bible stories together using an age-appropriate children's bible. There's a book called, 'The Book that Changed Everything,' by Sister Allison Regina Gliot about how special the Bible is. She's even done some videos reading various bible stories for children. Look for 'Bible Read-Aloud with Sr Allison' on YouTube.
- Get your kids into the kitchen. Look up a recipe online for something you enjoy, such as cupcakes, and bake them together. If you're not into sugar, try doing something special on the grill. Not only is it fun but it will give your kids skills they'll use later in life.
- Take advantage of school holiday time to get to know your kids better. Tell them stories about yourself when you were their age. I remember loving listening to my mother tell me about going camping when she was growing up, or how she first met my father.

## Time

However you decide to keep your kids busy during the summer months, remember that this time is a gift, a golden opportunity to develop your relationship with them. Let conversation about anything and everything in the family be the default and not an afterthought. Give the kids time with their devices but also make sure they have the opportunity to make real world connections with other people and with the Lord.

**❗ Sister Hosea Rupprecht, a daughter of St Paul, is the associate director of the Pauline Centre for Media Studies.**

**“However you decide to keep your kids busy during the summer months, remember that this time is a gift, a golden opportunity to develop your relationship with them”**



A girl is pictured in a file photo on a playground in Los Angeles. (OSV News photo/Lucy Nicholson, Reuters)

# Want revival? The Sacred Heart shows us what it takes



Jayme Stuart Wolfe

**E**very sincere Catholic hope for a revival of the faith - even if we don't all agree about what that should look like. But now that the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage has begun, and the National Eucharistic Congress being held in Indianapolis is only six weeks away, I expect that the inside baseball debate over how what is and isn't being done will intensify.

And that's a shame. Because if we really wanted revival as much as we say we do, I suspect we'd be a little less intent on telling the Holy Spirit how to do his job, and more focused on what's required of us to do ours. What exactly is our job? The Sacred Heart of Jesus - to which the month of June is dedicated - shows us.

## Repentance

When it comes to a movement of God's grace, our first and foremost task is to receive it. That might sound simple, and in some ways, it is. But the disposition to receive doesn't just fall from the sky. It requires something of us: repentance. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus emphasises this. When St Margaret Mary Alacoque saw a vision of Christ, she was inspired with deep sorrow for sin. And there's plenty to be sorrowful about. The Christian response to sorrow to sin, however, isn't self-pity or despair, but repentance. If we try to ignore it or save ourselves, we will fail. Only the mercy of God can succeed. Only repentance opens our hearts to God's grace.

Repentance always precedes revival. That is why John the Baptist (whose feast is also in June) was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. His baptism of repentance in the Jordan was how God prepared his people to receive the gospel of salvation. This still holds true today. If we want to see revival, we must first come to God in a spirit of repentance.

**“This still holds true today. If we want to see revival, we must first come to God in a spirit of repentance”**

Our secondary task when it comes to revival is to do what we can to sustain it. Here, too, the Sacred Heart of Jesus can give us a glimpse into what that might mean. Jesus' words to St Margaret Mary are poignant: “Behold the Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify its love.” The Sacred Heart is a suffering heart, one pierced by indifference, crowned with thorns and yet burning with unquenchable love.

To sustain authentic spiritual revival, our hearts must be like Christ's. That is, we must expect to suffer as he did and cultivate a willingness to do so. How? First, by leaning into whatever cross God asks us to bear. The true disciple takes up his cross every day. Sharing in the suffering of Christ has always sustained the mission of the Gospel. Those who offer their suffering in union with his passion and death work out

their own salvation and contribute to the salvation of others.

Repentance and suffering, of course, aren't usually at the top of anyone's wish list. But maybe they ought to be. Sin and suffering, after all, are never in short supply, but people who know how to make good use of them certainly seem to be.

## Revival

Most of us are happy to honour the Saints, especially if we can avoid having to live the kinds of lives they did. But if more of us decided to turn those tables, I wonder if the revival we hope for would stop being so elusive, so just-beyond-our-reach. If we truly want revival, we must be able to receive the revival we are praying for and repent of our sins in sacramental confession. And if we want to sustain the revival we are seeking, we will commit ourselves to redemptive suffering in solidarity with the cross.

As we look for ways to foster revival in our parishes and dioceses, let's take our inspiration from the heart of Christ. There, in the most Blessed Sacrament, we encounter the depth of God's love. There we see the truth of our own sinfulness together with his willingness to suffer - not for its own sake, but for ours. Let us, then, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And let each and every one of us take up our cross and follow him.

*Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, petaholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.*

**“If we really wanted revival as much as we say we do, I suspect we'd be a little less intent on telling the Holy Spirit how to do his job, and more focused on what's required of us to do ours”**



## Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

### What is the Church teaching on yoga and reiki?

**Q: Can you explain the Church's teachings about yoga and reiki? Recently a priest gave a presentation in which he said that, to avoid the devil, Catholics should also avoid things like palm readers and ouija boards. He also mentioned yoga and reiki. I've practiced yoga on and off for many years and have found no religious references to it in my practices. My experience has been a western, non-religious practice for strength, deep breathing and calmness. I became familiar with reiki when I had cancer and received reiki treatments. Over recent years, medical practices and hospitals use reiki to help patients with relaxation and pain reduction.**

A: First, this priest was correct in saying that Catholics should avoid things like palm readers, ouija boards or anything else related to the occult. Not only can engaging in such activities open us up to contact with evil spirits, but these activities are also a sin against the first commandment.

Currently the Church does not have any clear official teaching on yoga, and so it remains somewhat of a grey area. On the one hand, yoga did originate as a non-Catholic religious practice, and for this reason it would be problematic if a Catholic engaged in yoga on specifically spiritual terms. But on the other hand, as you note, many if not most westerners who engage in yoga do so without any kind of religious intentions. That is, they participate in yoga for the pure physiological benefits of this kind of gentle exercise and controlled breathing, benefits that do seem to have a basis in the natural medical sciences.

Some would argue that because yoga began as a religious practice, it is impossible to ever fully 'divorce' yoga from the spirituality of its origins. Yet others would point out that the Church has a long history of adopting what is good from various pagan cultures - for example, St Thomas Aquinas made extensive use of the ancient pagan Greek philosophers in his writings - and that a similar argument might be made for the legitimacy of non-religious yoga.

I think right now, unless or

until the Church comes out with a clearer teaching on yoga, whether or not Catholics should engage in yoga is something that should be personally discerned, perhaps with the help of a confessor or spiritual director. And of course, if a Catholic does choose to engage in yoga, they should be sure that whatever classes they attend are firmly non-spiritual and for health benefits only.

Reiki is a different story. In 2009 the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a document titled *Guidelines for evaluating reiki as an alternative therapy*. This document begins by noting that physical healing can come about through natural or supernatural means, i.e., through medical science or through God's direct intervention in response to prayer. While we can ask God for direct supernatural healing, we ultimately must accept that such healing can only come about at God's discretion and cannot be seen as an automatic guarantee. But we are always free to use the natural means at our disposal to try to effect physical healing.

While reiki is not a religious practice per se, it is based on the idea of channelling purely spiritual energies. And so (unlike yoga) has no plausible basis in the natural medical sciences. The document concludes by stating that, “Since reiki therapy is not compatible with either Christian teaching or scientific evidence, it would be inappropriate for Catholic institutions, such as Catholic health care facilities and retreat centres, or persons representing the Church, such as Catholic chaplains, to promote or to provide support for reiki therapy.”

By extension, it stands to reason that Catholics should not practice or receive reiki, because it would be inappropriate, if not spiritually dangerous, for a Catholic to seek out purely supernatural healing apart from Christian prayer or the sacraments.

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



## We easily vilify the ordinary...

In its calendar, the Church singles out special seasons to celebrate – Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. But, outside of these special times, it invites us to live and celebrate *Ordinary Time*.

*Ordinary Time*. For most of us, I suspect, that phrase conjures up images of something that is less than special – bland, flat, routine, domestic, boring. Inside us there is the sense that the ordinary can weigh us down, swallow us up and keep us outside the more rewarding waters of passion, romance, creativity and celebration.

We easily vilify the ordinary. I remember a young woman, a student of mine, who shared in class that her greatest fear in life was to succumb to the ordinary, “to end up a content, ordinary housewife, happily doing laundry commercials!”

### Artists

If you're an artist or have an artistic temperament, you're particularly prone to this kind of denigration because artists tend to set creativity in opposition to the ordinary. Doris Lessing, for example, once commented that George Eliot could have been a better writer “if she hadn't been so moral.” What Lessing is suggesting is that Eliot kept herself too anchored in the ordinary, too safe, too secure, too far from the edges. Kathleen Norris, in her biographical work, *The Virgin of Bennington*, shares how as a young writer she fell victim to this ideology: “Artists, I believed were much too serious to live sane and normal lives. Driven by inexorable forces in an uncar-



Fr Rolheiser

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

**“Life, Jesus assures us, is not meant to be lived simply as an endless cycle of rising, going off to work, responsibly doing a job, coming home, having supper, getting things set for the next day, and then going back to bed”**

ing world, they were destined for an inevitable, sometimes deadly, but always ennobling wrestle with gloom and doom.”

**“We need bread, but we also need beauty and colour”**

The ennobling wrestle with gloom and doom! That does have a seductive sound to it, particularly for those of us who fancy ourselves as artistic, intellectual or spiritual. That's why, on a given day, any of us can feel a certain condescending pity for those who can achieve simple happiness. Easy for them, we think, but they're selling themselves short. That's the artist inside of us speaking. You never see an artist doing a laundry commercial!

Don't get me wrong. There is

some merit to this. Jesus, himself, said that we do not live by bread alone. No artist needs an explanation of what that means. He or she knows that what Jesus meant by that, among other things, is that simple routine and a mortgage that's been paid do not necessarily make for heaven. We need bread, but we also need beauty and colour. Doris Lessing, who was a great artist, joined the communist party as a young woman but she left after she'd matured. Why? One phrase says it all. She left the communist party, she says, “because they didn't believe in colour!” Life, Jesus assures us, is not meant to be lived simply as an endless cycle of rising, going off to work, responsibly doing a job, coming home, having supper, getting things set for the next day and then going back to bed.

### Ordinary

And yet, there's much to be said for the seemingly dram routine. The rhythm of the ordinary is, in the end, the deepest wellsprings from which to draw joy and meaning. Kathleen Norris, after telling us about her youthful temptation to sidestep the ordinary to engage in the more ennobling battle with gloom and doom, shares how a wonderful mentor, Betty Kray, helped steer her clear of that pitfall. Kray encouraged her to write out of her joy as well as her gloom. As Norris puts it: “She tried hard to convince me of what her friends who had been institutionalised for madness knew all too well: that the clean simple appreciation of ordinary, daily things, is a treasure like none on Earth.”

Sometimes it takes an illness to teach us that. When we regain health and energy after having been ill, off work, and out of our normal routines and rhythms, nothing is as sweet as returning to the ordinary – our work, our routine, the normal stuff of everyday life. Only after it has been taken away and then given back, do we realise that the clean simple appreciation of daily things is the ultimate treasure.

Artists, however, are still par-

tially right. The ordinary can weigh us down and keep us outside the deeper waters of creativity, outside that one-in-a-million romance and outside of the wildness that lets us dance. However, that being admitted, the ordinary is what keeps us from being swept away. The rhythm of the ordinary anchors our sanity.

**“Sometimes obedience to that imperative is what saves our sanity”**

Paul Simon, in an old 1970s song entitled, *An American Tune*, sings about coping with confusion, mistakes, betrayal and other events that shatter our peace. He ends a rather sad ballad quite peacefully with these words: “Still tomorrow's gonna be another working day, and I'm trying to get some rest. That's all I'm trying, is to get some rest.”

Sometimes obedience to that imperative is what saves our sanity. There's a lot to be said for being a contented, little person, anchored in the rhythms of the ordinary, and perhaps even doing laundry commercials.

**“There's a lot to be said for being a contented, little person, anchored in the rhythms of the ordinary”**

# To walk by faith, and not by sight



Ez 17:22-24  
Ps 92:2-3, 13-14,  
15-16  
2 Cor 5:6-10  
Mk 4:26-34



**The Sunday Gospel**

Jem Sullivan

**T**o walk by faith, and not by sight, is one of the challenges and joys of the spiritual journey. This is the invitation extended to all in God's word this Sunday. As the Church returns to ordinary time, God's word invites us to encounter the extraordinary graces of God in word and in sacrament.

## Aloysius

The Church offers us countless examples of holy men and women, known and hidden, who show us that it is possible to walk by faith in God. Take the life of St Aloysius Gonzaga, whose feast day the Church celebrates this coming

week.

**“He gave up his inheritance to answer God's call as a novice in the Society of Jesus in Rome”**

Born into an aristocratic Italian family, the young Aloysius was set to live a comfortable life in inheriting his family's wealth and pursued a life of pleasure and honour. God had a different plan for his life. For when he went to Florence to study, he began reading the lives of the Saints while recovering from an illness. Then

he heard the Lord's call to offer a self-gift of his life as a missionary. Even as he was drawn to the Jesuit order his family did all they could to prevent him from answering the call to the priesthood, even threatening the loss of his inheritance. The saintly Aloysius continued on, walking by faith, as he gave up his inheritance to answer God's call as a novice in the Society of Jesus in Rome.

## Sowing

Soon after, he dedicated himself to teaching youth and to caring for those suffering from the plague and other contagious diseases. The witness of his holiness was a seed

**“This cedar plant will, by God's care, become a large cedar in which birds of every kind dwell and find shade in its branches”**

of faith that spread among the people, growing like branches of a vibrant tree. He is said to have died with the name of Jesus on his lips, radiating the peace and love of God.

**“God's mighty hand will accomplish all these marvellous works”**

In the Gospels, Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed. This smallest of seeds, when sown in the ground, grows into the largest of plants, putting forth branches that give shelter and shade from

**“The daily challenge is learning to let go of self-dependence and to grow in childlike trust in Jesus”**

the heat of the day. This Gospel imagery continues the teaching of the prophet Ezekiel in the first reading when God promises to plant a cedar on the mountain heights. This cedar plant will, by God's care, become a large cedar in which birds of every kind dwell and find shade in its branches. God promises to bring low the high tree, and lift high the lowly tree, wither up the green tree, and make the withered tree bloom. God's mighty hand will accomplish all these marvellous works.

## Ponder

As we ponder the word of God today, we hear the

call to walk by faith and not by sight. Our journey of faith begins in the grace of God, who plants the seed and nourishes and sustains the gift of faith in our lives. The daily challenge is learning to let go of self-dependence and to grow in childlike trust in Jesus as we pray in faith, “speak to me, Lord.”

Question: What does it mean to walk by faith in friendship with Jesus?

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

# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## A political curriculum, social justice and an election fever

There is a phenomenon I'd call 'the illusion of consultation' – e.g. where a government or one of its offshoots consults the public on a topic, and then proceeds to do what they were going to do anyway.

The current consultation on the new Primary school Curriculum was featured on **Newstalk Breakfast** Thursday, June 6. Journalist and former **Irish Catholic** editor David Quinn was concerned that not many people knew about it. The fact that it has been extended to June 18 would suggest he was right. David Quinn had some concerns about the content of the new curriculum, and wondered why the current encouragement to foster Irish identity didn't make it into the new version. Puzzlingly the role of Europe was downplayed, with more emphasis on global citizenship. He thought there could be content overload, and much of the new additions would be rather political – he wondered if parents would be OK with this. A commitment to justice and equality sounds good, but he pointed out that these were contested – there were different interpretations



Prof. Eric Kaufmann

of what they meant. He hoped the variety of views would be aired rather than there being a bias in a particular direction. Asked by presenter Shane Coleman (tongue-in-cheek?) if what he was afraid of a lefty woke brainwashing, he said that could happen, but what parents wanted was the important thing.

I'm not altogether enamoured with the word 'woke'. Yes, it has come to describe a kind of prissy and stifling political correctness, devoid of all humour, but at its best political correctness can be an

antidote to casual cruelty and prejudice, while 'woke', if you dig deep, can be an awareness of the demands of social justice. However, I fear modern culture has left those core meanings far behind.

On **Sunday** (BBC Radio 4) William Crawley discussed an upcoming book *Taboo*, that sees 'woke' as a kind of religion. The author was Eric Kaufmann, Professor at Buckingham University, and book will be called *Taboo* (US title: 'The Third Awakening') I wasn't convinced of the idea that woke is effectively a new religion, but certainly it was easy enough to make out that there are features that make it LIKE a religion, e.g. key events, sacred people, punishment for the transgressors, etc., Prof. William Davis of Goldsmith University in London thought Kaufmann's idea of woke being a religion was pejorative and that he was using religion to disparage a particular set of views, implying some sort of irrational fundamentalism among the woke. I felt the presenter was more challenging towards Kaufmann than he was to Prof Davis – e.g. asking him if he was 'deploying culture warrior tactics'.

Justice is one of those many words to which you can add the word 'climate' and some would accuse the advocates of climate justice of being overly 'woke'. The dismissiveness does not serve us well. Media discussions can be patronising and censorious, but as usual, the discussion on **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC One) was varied. The specific question was whether the rich should have to pay extra taxes to 'fix' the climate crisis. Melanie Nazareth of Christian Climate Change agreed as the rich consume the world's finite resources disproportionately. Julia Davies of Patriotic Millionaires UK also agreed and said that when she became rich, she felt a responsibility to put her wealth to good use, planet wise. Andy Mayer thought carbon taxation was better than a Robin Hood raid on the rich, while Ella Whelan, journalist with *Spiked-Online* was concerned about where the money collected would go, if it would be put to good use. She didn't want to see those in poorer countries told they couldn't enjoy the lifestyle we in the West have had, the things that she thought made for an enjoyable life, like

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

**BBC One Sunday June 16, 12.30pm**

On Father's Day, Aled Jones meets inspiring dads leaning on their faith through the joys and challenges of fatherhood. With music reflecting and celebrating the fatherly love of God

#### ALL OR NOTHING - SISTER CLARE CROCKETT

**EWTN Sunday June 16, 9pm**

Sister Clare Crockett gave up a promising acting career to serve the Lord. While her life was tragically cut short, her talents, infectious personality and deep love of God inspired people on three continents.

#### YOUNG SHELDON

**RTE One Friday June 21, 7.30pm**

Baptists, Catholics and an Attempted Drowning: Georgie and Mandy's wedding plans pit Mary against Mandy's mom, Audrey (Rachel Bay Jones), with baby CeeCee caught in the middle. Funny and touching series, but sometimes has jaundiced view of religion.

travel, holidays and culture.

Finally, the media was dominated by election fever at home and abroad and as a political anorak I loved it but am concerned that only around 50% voted. The dust hadn't settled at the time of writing, but following the news and current affairs coverage over the weekend and early this week there was quite a sense of drama –

President Macron of France calling an election, the Belgian Prime Minister resigning, Benny Ganz resigning from the Israeli war cabinet, Douglas Ross declaring his intention to resign as leader of the Scottish Conservative Party after the UK election. Dominoes or what!

# Film

Aubrey Malone



## Fasten your seatbelts for Joyce and Bette

The Irish Film Institute is commemorating Bloomsday (June 16) this year with a showing of the film *Adam and Paul*, Lenny Abraham's debut. It's an interesting choice as it has no Joycean overtones. The echoes come from the peripatetic wanderings of the central characters (two drug addicts played by Tom Murphy and Mark O'Halloran – who also wrote the screenplay) which resemble those of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus.

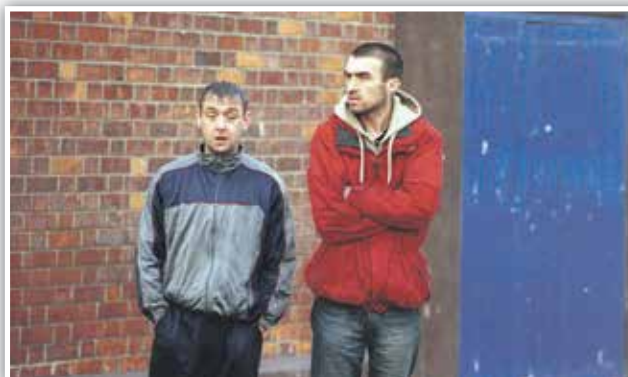
The film has a kind of grim humour, parts of it presciently prefiguring attitudes towards immigration which are afflicting Ireland today.

The curtain-raiser for this is Kelly Campbell's short fea-

ture *An Encounter*, an adaptation of one of Joyce's stories from *Dubliners*, again written by O'Halloran.

On June 15, the IFI is showing *Kino Volta*, a quasi-documentary about the embryology of Joyce's managership of the Volta cinema in Mary Street in 1909. It's hard to get one's head around the idea of Joyce as a cinema manager but he was indeed one, albeit only briefly. The film has him trying to sell the idea to four entrepreneurs in Trieste, where he was then living.

The IFI also has a Bette Davis season this month. June 15 showcases one of her greatest films, *Now, Voyager*, also starring Paul Henreid.

A scene from the film *Adam and Paul* (2004).

The film has the famous scene where Henreid lights two cigarettes simultaneously and gives one to her, causing her to exult, "Oh Jerry, don't let's ask for the moon; we have the stars."

The Davis season continues with an equally powerful performance from her in *All About Eve*, which gave many people their first sight of Marilyn Monroe. Davis' character was said to have been based

on the irrepressible Tallulah Bankhead; she denied this. It had her iconic line, "Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night" – delivered in that unmistakable rasp that seemed like the legacy of a thousand cigarettes.

Also in the Davis season is *Another Man's Poison* (June 18), *A Pocketful of Miracles* (June 20) and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (June 22). Her career was on the ropes when she made the latter film. She revived it with a tour de force performance. Though yet only 54, she looked ten years older.

Davis was the Meryl Streep of her time, an actress unconcerned about her appearance, unlike her co-star Joan

Crawford who was terrified of 'uglifying' herself – which probably explains her absence from its 'sort of' sequel (*Hush Hush*, Sweet Charlotte) – she walked off the picture after a week.

On June 28 you can see Sidney Lumet's masterpiece, *Network*. This won a posthumous Oscar for Peter Finch. It has a particular resonance for me as it was the first film I reviewed professionally – for want of a better term. I'd been doing so for university magazines beforehand but only as a hobby.

Little did I know as I sat in my seat in the Savoy that day in 1976 that we'd still be talking about this landmark work almost half a century on.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## The 'new Caravaggio' in Madrid



The Genoa version of "Ecce Homo"



The "new Caravaggio" now on display in the Prado, Madrid

Peter Costello

The circumstances of the recovery in Dublin of a lost painting by Michelangelo Caravaggio on the walls of the dining room of the Jesuit residence in Leeson Street, a picture which is now hung with pride in the National Gallery on Merrion Square for all to see, has given the painter a special appeal to Irish devotees of art.

Therefore the recent report that another 'lost Caravaggio' has been found in Spain is of special interest to us here. But as is so often the case these days, the initial reports, while gaining headlines, do not reveal the whole story.

### Ecce Homo

Now in the Prado for the time being, the picture is entitled "Ecce Homo" (after the passage at John 19: 5) from the words used by Pontius Pilate to the crowd when he brings out the tortured Jesus, crowned with thorns and partly covered by a regal purple cloak, to appeal to their sympathy some think,

to deride him as others think, in either case hoping to have them call for his release.

**“The low estimate of €1500 at the auction has now blossomed into € 35 million. The painting is set for a golden future, it might seem”**

Though when the offer was made to the crowd, it was symbolic of all humanity rather than merely the Jews of Jerusalem, preferred Barabbas the thief.

The picture at the centre of the present news was prevented from being auctioned by the Spanish authorities back in 2021. Then it was attributed to a minor Spanish

painter. This arrest has now made a difference, as the low estimate of €1500 at the auction has blossomed into €35 million. The painting is set for a golden future, it might seem.

And yet these excited news reports overlook an important element in the situation. There already is an 'Ecce Homo' by Caravaggio, expertly dated to around 1605, hanging in an Italian gallery, the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa, on ready display.

### Compositions

The compositions of the rival pictures are different, providing yet more material for debate. So which is 'the real one'? Or rather which has primacy? That is the sort of dispute involving experts that occurs all the time in history of art matters.

I suspect that in the end, whenever that is, despite the publicity, the Italian picture

will come to be considered the 'genuine' one, and the Spanish piece is a copy by a friend or a follower of Caravaggio, who had no studio or regular assistants. The 'Ecce Homo' was one of three commissioned from different painters by an influential Italian Monsignor. He turned down the Caravaggio.

**“'Ecce Homo' shows the pale frail body of the tortured Jesus in contrast to the violent dismissiveness of the custodian and Pontius Pilate himself”**

In any case these academic squabbles should not distract from the far more essential matter of the image itself. It is

undoubtedly a weaker image than 'The Taking of Christ' hanging in Dublin, which is a powerful picture filled with the passions of treachery and power.

'Ecce Homo' shows the pale frail body of the tortured Jesus in contrast to the violent dismissiveness of the custodian and Pontius Pilate himself. The seemingly powerless man has for many Christians an intended sharp contrast with the all-powerful Christ: as Jesus said to Pilate "You have no power over me." (John 19:11).

### Illusion

All too often the appearance of power is merely an illusion. Pilate looks powerful, but in the mind of the authors of the text which the painter tries to reflect, it simply does not hold the kind of real power that the tormented Jesus really does. These pictures provide food for thought, an education for the emotions.

But in effect, these two images are not 'holy pictures.' Caravaggio was a genius, but he was also a man accustomed to violence. His last

years were spent in flight after killing a man in a stupid row.

**“They are deeply human pictures, which express deeply held passions, fears and outcomes”**

Art is not made just to admire. It is made to change how we see the world, to give the viewer a new pair of eyes. They are images of treachery and torture akin to what is reported in our daily news. They are deeply human pictures, which express profoundly held passions, fears and outcomes. Never mind the supposed price tag now set on the 'new Caravaggio'. We need to think of the reality behind them, and to see Jesus as an exemplar of all the wretched of earth who are at the mercy of powerful figures and agencies which they cannot affect but which can destroy them. It is Mexico, Burma, Sinkiang and Ukraine. Above all, at the current moment it is Gaza.

**“Art is not made just to admire. It is made to change how we see the world, to give the viewer a new pair of eyes”**

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.

## All things Joycean and a little more



"The ghost of Sandcove", by Ronald Searle from *Searle in the Sixties* (Penguin Books, 1964; © the estate of Ronald Searle 1963)

**Tales from the Tower: A Personal History of the James Joyce Tower & Museum by its Curators,** by Vivien Igoe & Robert Nicholson, edited by Breandán Ó Broin, introduction by Vincent Bowne (Martello Publishing, €15.95 / £14.99)

**Peter Costello**

**T**his little book is produced by the Friends of the Joyce Tower Society and co-funded by Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. Though very much a local product about a local landmark, it will have great appeal to many of Joyce's readers far from these shores.

Though the main part of the text is by Vivien Igoe and Robert Nicholson, sections are provided by Vincent Bowne on how the Tower began, a

foreword by Julie Larkin, a useful chronology by Breandán Ó Broin, and a brief survey of the last decade or so at the tower under local government by Seamus Cannon. Vivien Igoe deals with the tower from 1804 to 1972, and Robert Nicholson with the later stage from 1972–2019 when the Tower was run by Bord Fáilte.

**Voice**

So some six figures make up the narrative voice, and the book is the better for it, for readers need a suitably varied idea of what went on over the years. Interest in the Tower was aroused first in a serious way in 1954, when the 50th anniversary of Bloomsday was celebrated by a sort of feckless, fractured literary spree. Running the Tower as a resource demanded steadier and more attentive minds in charge, which it had from Robert Nicholson and his associates.

After decades of distancing itself from James Joyce and all his works, the emerging modern Ireland grasped at Joycean nettle as symbolic of the newer, more open country it wanted to be. It is only fair to add, though, that there were several Catholic voices added to this debate in the person of Fr William T. Noon, the American expert who formerly link Joyce and Aquinas, Fr Eddie O'Donnell the psychologist and therapist, and Fr Peter Connolly the Professor of English at Maynooth and local pioneering Joyceans like W. B. Stanford, Kevin O'Sullivan and Patricia Hutchins.

This book concerns itself wisely enough with what it knows best, the local scene. Doubtless, this coming Sunday, the narrow roads of Sandcove well as the broad streets of Central Dublin will be filled with revellers dressed in fancy Edwardian gear, most

## The fallen leaves of life and memory



Art work by Steven O'Neill reflecting the spirit of Kieran J. Coote's memoir

**Mam an' Me: Living a Life Time in a Day,** by Kieran J. Coote, with a foreword by Dr Marie Murray and an afterword by Aine Lawlor (Red Stripe Press, €12.99 / £11.00)

**Peter Costello**

**T**he very striking cover on this book is a piece of art by Steve O'Neill, evocative of what happens with the onset and progress of dementia. One by one, the leaves of memory wither and fall, and though the bones of a human being are left, the personality has somehow drifted away.

We talk so casually in daily life of 'turning over a new leaf', but for those with dementia there are no new leaves to turn over, nothing to replace the ones that are lost. No new memories can now be retained. Nothing except perhaps the feeling of love returned.

In this book Keiran J. Coote describes a typical day caring for his aging mother in some ten chapters overviewing a single passing day from setting up in the morning to settling down for the night.

It is a deeply moving book, which presents the daily round as a series of little triumphs and few saddening failures. But it is suffused with a warming love, a sense of the past and the past

life of his mother, a life well lived, now coming to its close.

Whatever the experts may say about the affliction, this is a fine book which should be welcomed for its success giving a human dimension of a passage in life which many may not want to think about.

The feeling of losing control has to be assuaged by the established routines of the day and part of the night, which manage to be both predictable (though his mother no longer has the power of prediction), to provide the essential comfort of feeling that with everything arranged for one is not quite lost.

Coote plays down the difficulties to emphasise the effort to achieve a daily continuity, a continuity which is essential to supporting the frail and failing mind of his mother.

In comparison with other books dealing with dementia by therapists, this is a deeply human book. This is how it is for one loving son at least. It is this atmosphere that makes the book so readable, so deeply moving, and in the end, I suspect, so important to others in the same situation.

This is truly a book worth reading. I know that reviewers say this kind of thing all the time. They always truly mean it. But there are also times when one would like to award a book an extra gold star of recognition. This is one of them.

of whom will prefer to have a 'full Irish' for breakfast rather than risk the fried pork kidney that Mr Bloom actually had.

(Mr Bloom's method of cooking his kidney dismays all those who actually like that comestible, by not preparing it properly and then burning it: cooking was not one of Joyce's talents, he left that to Nora.)

**Celebrating**

But celebrating a writer is easier sometimes than reading and understanding him. And in Joyce's case, it is too easy to become over famil-

iar with the texts in the sense that they say nothing to one. Joyce was once a giant on the scene, but these days, like Swift's Gulliver, he seems to be well and truly pegged down to the ground by hordes of scribbling Lilliputians from countless countries.

But then, like Gulliver, a couple of hearty heaves and he is free to engage with the little minds beyond the reach of philosophy and to startle those who can still manage to be startled. It is worth recalling that Joyce's

works are comedies, not tragedies; they are Dantean rather than Sophoclean.

**Appeal**

The artist Ronald Searle realised this in his appealing cartoon treatment of the ghost of Sandcove, first published back in April 1963, in an American magazine devoted to extolling the glories and beauties of Ireland, both in landscape and literature, for the visitor. What our modern tourist trade owes to Mr Joyce and his admirers is incalculable.

# Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4027 or email [advertising@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie)

**Leave a Lasting Legacy to Rehab Group: Empower others through your will.**

## RehabGroup

Investing in People, Changing Perspectives

Leaving a gift in your will to Rehab Group enables people to pursue opportunities, be more independent, participate in society and live the life of their choosing.

To learn more about the difference your legacy will make.

Call: (01) 2057200

Email: [fundraising@rehab.ie](mailto:fundraising@rehab.ie)



**For further enquiries contact:**

Fundraising Department  
Rehab Group Head Office

10D Beckett Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin D12 K276

Charity number: CHY 4940

Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20006716

## Let Your Compassion Live On



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



CHY: 9768 | RCN: 20024505

For more information, please contact James at [jsullivan@materfoundation.ie](mailto:jsullivan@materfoundation.ie) or phone 01 830 3482.

## Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

**Please help us with a gift in your Will**

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.

Tel: 021-4545704 Email: [info@mscmissions.ie](mailto:info@mscmissions.ie)

[www.mscmissions.ie](http://www.mscmissions.ie)

*Remembering*  
**MEMORIAM CARDS  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
CARDS & NOTELETS  
BOOKMARKS**

*Samples / Information*  
**KENNEDY PRINTERS**  
BANTRY, CO. CORK, IRELAND  
Tel. 027 50102  
[www.kennedyprinters.ie](http://www.kennedyprinters.ie)  
email: [info@kennedyprinters.ie](mailto:info@kennedyprinters.ie)

**Listen to  
The Confession Box**



**Available now  
on all major  
podcast  
streaming  
services!**

## The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at  
[anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie](mailto:anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie)  
or call 01 679 3188



[www.hospicefoundation.ie](http://www.hospicefoundation.ie)

*Please pray for the beatification of*

## Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model"

— Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

**Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.**



**Your Lasting Legacy**

Many people are choosing to include a loving gift in their Will to support families, children and young people experiencing homelessness. You can make a real difference by helping future generations find a place called home.

For more information, please contact Assia:  
086 103 3130 [assia.buono@focusireland.ie](mailto:assia.buono@focusireland.ie)

Focus Ireland, 9 - 12 High Street, Christchurch, D08 E1W0  
[Focusireland.ie](http://Focusireland.ie)

**T'WAS ONLY LIKE YESTERDAY**  
A PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF LIFE IN IRISH TRALEE AND COUNTY KERRY BY JOHN CLEARY



Photographer John Cleary chronicled life in Tralee and Kerry for The Kerryman Newspapers from the 1970s to the 2020s.

**T'WAS ONLY LIKE YESTERDAY** features 300 Photographs (most with captions)

Order here: John Cleary, 1 Lios na Liothart, Ballyvelly, Tralee, Co Kerry V92E4A7. €20 + €6 Postage [clearypresspix@gmail.com](mailto:clearypresspix@gmail.com) - 0872518012

## YOUR LAST GIFT MEANS WE ARE ALWAYS FIRST THERE

A Gift in Your Will to GOAL Means We Can Be First There When Conflict and Crisis happen

**GOAL** [GOAL.IE/GIFTINWILL](http://GOAL.IE/GIFTINWILL)

## SERVICES

**ALL UNWANTED** home waste removed. Cookers, fridges, beds, suites, wardrobes, carpets etc. Removed and disposed of in a proper manner. No job too small or big. Contact Tommy, 087 6406015.

## SEEKING CONNECTION

**DUBLIN WIDOWER**, retired, loves travelling, gardening, playing music, singing. Would love to meet a genuine, trustworthy woman in 50+ for friendship/relationship. All letters treated with love and respect. PO Box No: 888

## ST PHILOMENA'S RELICS

**ST. PHILOMENA'S RELICS** return to Emmanuel House, Clonfert (One day only) Wednesday 7th August at 11.00am Mass, Confessions, Rosary Healing Service (Eddie Stones). Venerate statue, St. Philomena, Wonder Worker. Blessing with 1st Class Relic, St. Philomena. Bring packed lunch, tea provided. 087 922 4271

## SEEKING CONNECTION

**KILDARE MAN, SINGLE, 62**, wished to meet a single lady (35-60) for friendship relationship in County Kildare or in surround counties. Tel: 087 163 0881

## SEEKING CONNECTION

**SINGLE MEATH FEMALE, 64 YRS**, likes country music, reading. Would like to hear from male pen pal, roman catholic, non-smoker, non-drinker, P.O. box 287

## Classifieds: 01 687 4028

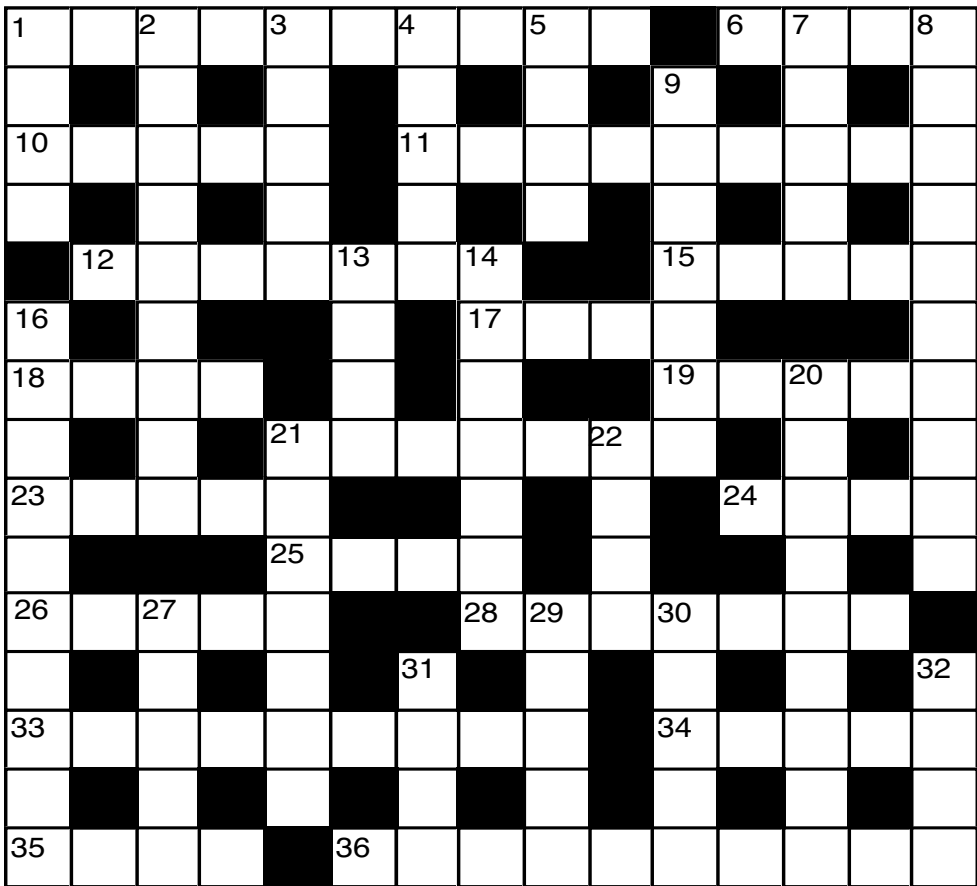
# Leisure time

## Crossword

Gordius 667

### Across

- 1 Instance of congestion on the roads (7,3)  
6 Group of three (4)  
10 Intone (5)  
11 Shouted loudly and insistently (9)  
12 Famous Arthurian knight (7)  
15 Structure built to support cables (5)  
17 Man-eating monster (4)  
18 City on the river Avon (4)  
19 A drink to wish someone well (5)  
21 A blast of trumpets (7)  
23 Edge, margin (5)  
24 Ancient church lectern (4)  
25 Gratuities (4)  
26 Herb often used in recipes involving tomatoes (5)  
28 She who has thrown the party (7)  
33 Variety of vegetable (9)  
34 Cutting this may bring tears to your eyes (5)  
35 Famously extinct bird (4)  
36 Fail to abide by a moral code (10)  
**Down**  
1 Small nail (4)  
2 Smooth, white sub-



- stance (9)  
3 Islamic decree (5)  
4 Bedtime drink (5)  
5 Greek hero of the siege of Troy (4)  
7 Relating to the countryside (5)  
8 Sacrament creating a priest (10)  
9 Vie (7)  
13 The All Blacks 'welcome' to an opposing team (4)  
14 Small shark (7)  
16 Patently honest (5,5)  
20 Truce, cease-fire (9)  
21 Part of a horse's leg which usually has a tuft of hair (7)  
22 Bones that form a cage in the body (4)  
27 Filled to satisfaction (5)  
29 Large sea area (5)  
30 Leather strap or Australian flip-flop (5)  
31 Poverty-stricken (4)  
32 Terminates (4)

### SOLUTIONS, JUNE 6

GORDIUS No. 666

#### Across

- 1 Fat 3 Circumspect 8 Shekel 9 Overcoat 10 Fable 11 Magic 13 Freed 15 Godsend 16 Halibut 20 Stern 21 Sheet 23 Sweep 24. Diabetes 25 Fatima 26 Nonchalance 27 Tie

#### Down

- 1 Fish fingers 2 Trembled 3 Crete 4 Crochet 5 Serum 6 Enough 7 Tit 12 Contemplate 13 Funds 14 Drain 17 Benedict 18 Dead Sea 19 Retain 22 Teeth 23 Share 24 Din

## Sudoku Corner 537

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 536

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

### Last week's Hard 536

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

MQI

Merchants Quay Ireland  
Homeless & Drugs Services

A gift in your Will to Merchants Quay Ireland can be lifesaving.

Hundreds of men and women at their darkest hour, come to Merchants Quay Ireland for food, showers and support when there's nowhere else to turn.

**A gift in your Will in any amount, will change lives. And we'll always remember your kindness.**

You can decide a specific amount or give a percentage after taking care of your loved ones. Even 1% is enough to help.

All your solicitor will need is this:

- Merchants Quay Ireland of 24 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8
- Revenue CHY Number: 10311
- Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20026240

**Just ring 01 5240139 if you'd like more information, or to let us know about your legacy. Thank you for the good you leave behind.**

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places

trócaire

It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call **Grace Kelly** on **01 629 3333**, email [grace.kelly@trocaire.org](mailto: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.**

We will pass on the flame of faith.

For over 130 years, The Irish Catholic has been a voice of hope and inspiration for Catholics in Ireland.

Find out more by scanning the QR code below

Phone: 01 6874028

The Irish Catholic

## Notebook

Fr Billy Swan



# Offering hope at a time of suicide

In recent weeks, I presided at the funeral of a young man who died by suicide. He was one of several who died in the same way in recent months here in the South-East. His tragic death was heart-breaking and devastating for his family. In preparing the homily for the funeral Mass, I was conscious of a delicate balance to strike between understanding the decision of the young man in a compassionate way and the inner turmoil he must have endured. Yet on the other hand, the Christian message must communicate that suicide is a tragedy and a mistake. Above all it was a time to share the hope that comes from our faith that is so important, especially at times of terrible darkness. In the homily,

the Holy Spirit led me to the following words. I shared them with the hundreds of people in attendance and I share them with you now. Despite how challenging the funeral was, it confirmed my hope in the power of the Lord's resurrection. I hope the following offers comfort to those whose lives have been touched by suicide.

"Today, we remember how John (not his real name) lived. And yet we must face up to how he died too. The Gospel proclaims that every problem we face, no matter how impossible it seems, is only temporary. There is no sin too great to be forgiven. There is no hurt too great to be healed. There is no shame too dark to be shared. There is no



memory too painful to be eased by talking to someone. And when we do, we always find new hope that someone else is in that same space too, that we are not alone and that there is help and support out there.

## Vulnerability

Many of us are not good at slowing down and stopping to face ourselves. We are not good at admitting our vulnerability. All of us need to help create safe spaces where we can share our vulnerability, woundedness and feel accepted and understood. Sometimes it's OK not to be OK and sometimes we need to do like the good thief did on the cross – to reach out for help and turn to someone as he turned to

Christ. Because when the good thief did turn to Jesus, he received more than he asked for. On the cross, the forgiveness of Jesus to the good thief reveals that God's mercy is far greater than our worst mistakes and because this is true, no one is without hope.

Let us pray that we might have the faith we need at this hour and the hope that faith gives. In our times of trouble, worry or sorrow, may we know that to be vulnerable is not a burden but a gift that reminds us of our need for God and need for one another. And because of that hope, help us Lord to believe that, despite everything, all will be well again.

## Priest jubilees

June is the month when many priests celebrate the anniversary of their priestly ordinations. In recent weeks, I attended the celebrations of several jubilarians – silver, ruby, golden and diamond. One of the most edifying aspects of these celebrations has been the witness of people designated to speak on behalf of the parishes where the priests served. They speak with warmth and appreciation of the place the priest has in their lives. These testimonies remind us priests of why we are priests in the very place – for the Lord and for the people of God.

## Back to ordinary time...

Following the celebration of the Easter season and the six weeks of Lent beforehand, we have returned to what we call 'Ordinary Time' in the liturgy, signified by the colour green in our vestments and churches. In a certain sense, this shift in focus can be interpreted as a time that is less

intense, less important or simply 'Ordinary'. To see things this way would be to misunderstand what 'Ordinary Time' is about. As we re-enter Ordinary Time, we do so with the paschal mystery we have celebrated at Easter, fresh in our minds. Indeed, we contemplate the parables, miracles and the life of Christ always in the light of his cross, resurrection and gift of the Holy Spirit.



The Little Way Association



## A Ugandan parish urgently needs our help to roof its new church

Fr Charles Osire has written to us from Uganda's Soroti Diocese. His bishop tells us, "The local Christian community together with Fr Charles have struggled to bring the structure to its current state and they now badly need some external financial help in order to complete the roofing of their church."

Father explains to The Little Way Association: "The construction of St Kizito's church started in 2013 and has been done in phases, but now has slowed down as we look for help to put up a roof and finish the building. We look forward to having a much better House of Prayer for our growing Christian community. Living conditions here are very difficult but the new church, when finished, will enable us to promote real catechesis and to empower the people to collaborate in work and prayer."

"I believe the Prophet Haggai is inspiring me to approach The Little Way for help. As he said: 'Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house; I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord.' On behalf of all our Christians I thank you in advance for the financial aid you are able to give us. May Our Lord bless your Association."

**Your gift will be most gratefully received, and will be sent without deduction to Fr Charles to help complete the long-awaited church at Kitane. (If we receive more funds than are required for this project they will be used for similar chapel projects).**



**"True glory is that which will last eternally, and to reach it, it isn't necessary to perform striking works but to hide oneself and practice virtue in such a way that the left hand knows not what the right is doing." – St Therese**

## Please help feed the hungry

Please spare a thought for the millions who die each year of hunger and disease in mission lands. Your donation will relieve the pangs of starvation, and every penny you send will be forwarded to a missionary priest or sister for food for the hungry.

## Would you like to volunteer at our Theresian House in Knock?

The work involves general house-keeping duties, providing guests with a light breakfast, prayer and welcoming pilgrims. If this work appeals to you, and you could offer one month of your time, please write to Maria Gracar at the address in the coupon, giving details, experience and a contact telephone number.

Email: [contact@littlawayassociation.com](mailto:contact@littlawayassociation.com)

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.w.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.w.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€..... **ROOFING MISSION CHAPELS**

€..... **FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY**

€..... **REPAIRING MISSION CHAPELS**

€..... **MASSSES** (please state no. )

We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass

€..... **LITTLEWAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewaysassociation.com](http://www.littlewaysassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

IC/6/13