

The Irish Catholic

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Tackling gangland 'show funerals' could lead to 'serious confrontation'

Courage needed but issue pastorally complex

Chai Brady and Susan Gately

Priests need to be "courageous" when celebrating Catholic funerals of gang members, even if it could bring them into "serious confrontation", a priest has warned.

Following Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin's decrying of "show funerals" of criminals directly involved in the "traffic of evil", several diocesan priests said they understood the archbishop's position and welcomed his leadership, but said the issue is pastorally difficult.

Strength

Fr Joe McDonald of Ballyfermot said priests must defend the sacredness of the funeral Mass, which must not be "hijacked as a way of showing strength or making points".

"The archbishop's comments bring us into a very serious dynamic or confrontation," he said, admitting that in many cases priests already risk unpopularity "because we dare to say 'no we're not doing that in church'", he told *The Irish Catholic*.

"I think Diarmuid Martin's point is we have to be strong enough to say to people who mark a person's death in a way that is utterly unfitting for the Catholic liturgy, to say that to them."

Fr Hugh Kavanagh, co-parish priest of Rowlagh and Neilstown, who has experience of gang-related funerals, said it is generally grieving families "who have lost a son whom they really love and cherish" organising the funeral, "rather than leaders or the gangs".

I understand perfectly what the archbishop is getting at, said Fr Kavanagh. "We don't want the funerals of gang leaders and people involved in drugs and in killing, to be presented to young

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Cruising for a blessing



Br Joel from the Franciscan Friary, Killarney, at Ireland BikeFest Street Parade during the June Bank Holiday. The three-day festival attracts thousands of motorcycle owners and enthusiasts from all over the world. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan

New Northern Assembly 'within touching distance'

Staff reporter

A former moderator of the Presbyterian Church says political parties are "within touching distance" of an agreement. Rev. Ken Newell told *The Irish Catholic* that there is a "very strong desire" among unionists on the ground to get up and running. "If you believe in unionism and you have no institutions locally to demonstrate that, it is like a failed political project. There is a real need to get devolved government."

The "sluggishness of political progress" on day-to-day issues like education and health was like "being in an airplane with no pilot", he said. "Unionists are as keen as mustard to get

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...the anti-life paradox

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Poor broadband coverage a big challenge for schools

Greg Daly

Broadband provision must be improved across Ireland's smaller schools, the head of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association has said.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* following a survey which revealed that large numbers of Irish primary schools have inadequate broadband access, Seamus Mulconry said that while progress has been made in connecting Irish schools to the internet, challenges remain for those schools who have not yet been linked up.

"There are still a minority of schools that are not connected and that are finding it's having an impact on teaching and learning," he said, adding that "it's important to note that 66.9% of the respondents to the survey stated that leadership, management and administrative tasks in their schools had been affected by

these issues".

Of 427 schools who responded to the CPSMA survey, almost half – 46.84% – said they had inadequate access to broadband, with 74.82% saying that teaching and learning in the school had been affected by issues with broadband provision.

Problems

Schools reported problems with bandwidth and streaming speeds, impacting on IT-based project work and online lesson resources, and even forcing principals of some schools to undertake necessary reports to the Department of Education from their homes, rather than on-site.

"A majority of these would be small schools," Mr Mulconry said of schools struggling with broadband access. "The minister is looking at ways to support small schools and strengthen them, and I think one of the key ways that

we can support small schools is by ensuring that they have broadband in order to assist them with administrative tasks and with the clustering of schools."

Stressing that IT is an integral part of modern education, Mr Mulconry explained that smaller schools – most of which tend to be in rural areas – need to be connected so principals can do the kind of administration necessary to keep schools running.

"What people don't realise is that there is a huge amount of paperwork involved in running a school now," Mr Mulconry said. "Schools are subject to all of the regulations that impact on small businesses, and yet at the same time are also accountable to the department for teaching and learning, so there is an immense amount of paperwork; schools need to be connected if they're to do that properly and easily."

Tackling gangland 'show funerals'

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people as a celebration of the glory their life was because their life was anything but a glorious life."

Asked if the homilies at the funeral Masses for known criminals should include a warning against crime to young people, Fr Kavanagh said "You can say something, but it may not be appropriate."

"My experience has been that because of the life they have lived and because they have spent their life promoting drugs generally and ruining the lives of young people and also themselves and maybe being involved in the killing of other members of other gangs, there is really nothing particularly good that you can say in your homily about the person."

Graveside

Fr Patrick McKinley, Moderator of Jobstown parish, said it's not his business what happens outside the church or at the graveside. However, once inside the church he said that "if people are looking for stuff that's not acceptable, I'd simply say that's not going to work".

"Usually people then will see your point of view, and if they don't, then I say maybe you should go somewhere else. Whether it's someone who has been shot or someone who has died from cancer, my pastoral take is exactly the same, if people are looking for stuff that's not acceptable in a church I'd simply say that's not going to work."

At the centre of the inner city Fr Hugh O'Donnell SDB from Our Lady of Lourdes Church on Seán McDermott Street said the archbishop has "been vocal from the very beginning about the killings, and there's been a lot of them in the inner city, they're just spread out now slightly further afield."

"It's good that he's given some leadership, it's a Catholic funeral, you're talking about values that are very close to our hearts and we don't want somebody coming in trying to upstage it."

Manners

A senior Dublin priest who asked to remain anonymous said he would have expected the archbishop would have the "manners to contact priests about guidelines before speaking to the media".

"At these funerals we as priests can only pass on hope. We don't know if 10 or 15 Mercedes are going to arrive outside and there's nothing we could do about that. The altar and the pulpit are not the place for political statements. People are grieving enough; often there are loving parents who did their best. It's not our job to add to their pain."

Well done, well done, well done, well...



A group of boys from Willow Park Junior – a Spiritan school – taking part in the attempt to break the world record for the longest human chain of people patting each other on the back. Photo: Philip Murray Photography

Cork city to celebrate faith

Religious and laity will celebrate the 94th Cork Eucharistic Procession on June 23, which has become a feature of Catholic life in the city.

The event commenced in 1926 when a group of businessmen in the city approached the then-Bishop Daniel Coholan, with a view to having a Eucharistic Procession in the city to mark the Feast of Corpus Christi.

It was hoped that such an event might heal the division and bitterness in civil society at the time.



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Engage youth to run social media in parishes, says archbishop

Susan Gately and Chai Brady

Parishes should engage “tech savvy” young people and encourage them to be ‘digital missionaries’ the Primate of All Ireland has told *The Irish Catholic*.

Archbishop Eamon Martin agreed that as many people active in parishes were not familiar with social media, young people can be the answer to spreading the Gospel online.

This was a discussion point at the synod of youth in the Vatican last October, he said: “The young people who were present said ‘we will do it for you, we know how to operate the digital world. You need to call

us and then empower us and give us the opportunity to do some of these things for you’.”

They may not do it the way we think, he continued, saying: “They’ll do it the way they know how to do it, and how they know will reach their fellow young people.

“God is already gifting people and we have to have the eyes to see it and the courage to call forward these digital missionaries.”

His comments come in the wake of the ‘Believers in the Digital World: Opportunities for Mission’ at St Patrick’s College in Maynooth last week – organised by the Irish Bishops’ Con-

ference – which saw several digitally savvy people give advice and warnings about social media use.

Archbishop Martin warned of the need for parishes to make sure content on their social media platforms is vetted and appropriate.

Communications

He said that “the world of communications is vast, it’s instant, everyone’s a communicator, everyone’s a reporter nowadays and that’s sometimes what happens in a parish where with the best of intentions they establish a social media platform but they don’t realise that it needs somebody to be,

I’m going to use the word policing it, but actually what we mean is somebody to be overseeing and co-ordinating, removing offensive content.

“This is what happens, all the major newspapers are having to do this, all major media – the Church is no different because sadly there are people who don’t think before they type or before they post something and it’s very easy to post something which can be offensive so I think people are aware that this is the real world and these things are happening so the Church needs to be responsible as does everybody in society.”



God’s boxing champion of the world

Colm Fitzpatrick

After gaining the title of undisputed lightweight women’s champion over the weekend, it seems Bray-native Katie Taylor [above] is thankful not only to her family and fans, but also to God.

The famous Irish boxer defeated Belgian fighter Delfine Persoon in Madison Square Gardens over the weekend, securing the WBC green belt.

In the lead up to the fight she told *Telegraph Sport* that on the arm of her tracksuit is embossed Psalm 18. “It’s my favourite psalm. I read before every one of my fights,” she said. The psalm recalls that ‘the Lord is my rock’.

It is also understood that before the momentous battle, the sports star was surrounded by her family in deep prayer.

Although it was a close call, Ms Taylor edged the win, and afterwards thanked God for the victory.

The Irish star has previously spoken about the importance of her Faith and the role of God in her personal and professional life.

Faith drives Liverpool coach’s kind words for fan

Greg Daly

“I’m Christian,” Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp reminded a terminally-ill fan ahead of the Merseyside team’s Champions League victory against Tottenham Hotspur.

The German coach sent a video message to Dave Evans, a Coventry-based Liverpool fan with terminal cancer, in response to former Reds striker Stan Collymore’s call for Liverpool stars to “let him know he’ll never walk alone”.

“Hi Dave, Jürgen Klopp here in Liverpool, an hour before we leave for Madrid,” the Stuttgart-born coach began, praising the fan’s courage and determination.

“It’s more than football. It’s about life. The only thing we try to do the whole year is to give

people some hope, some joy, good moments to remember. We share these experiences in the three and a half years I have been here. That makes us friends.

“I wish you from the bottom of the part all the best – I’m Christian, so see you,” he said.

Believer

The German coach has spoken about his faith in the past, telling, for instance the *Frankfurter Rundschau* in 2013: “To be a believer, but not to want to talk about it – I do not know how it would work!”

“If anyone asks me about my Faith, I give information. Not because I claim to be any sort of missionary,” he said, adding: “When I look at me and my life – and I take time for that every day – then I feel I am in sensationally good hands.”

Liverpool FC celebrating their 2-0 victory over Tottenham Hotspur FC in the UEFA Champions League Final.



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Boycott Netflix and Disney after 'scare tactics' over abortion law – Precious Life

Chai Brady

Pro-life groups in the North of Ireland have called for a boycott of media giants Netflix and Disney after their decision to economically threaten a US state's decision to restrict abortion law.

New legislation in Georgia, set to be implemented in January 2020, will see abortions outlawed once a foetal heartbeat is detected – which can be as early as six weeks into a pregnancy.

This comes as groups campaigning for abortion to be legalised in Northern Ireland have asked for "consistency", saying Netflix and Disney should put similar pressure on Stormont.

The Director of Precious Life, Bernadette Smyth said: "We would be asking people to boycott Disney and Netflix because of that threat."

"They're playing political football with the lives of innocent unborn children. I think the reality is Stormont wouldn't take something like this very seriously..."

She dubbed their decision

to withdraw business from Georgia "scare tactics" and that "intimidation is entirely unacceptable and will not go down well with many pro-life customers who support Georgia's law to protect the unborn after a heartbeat is detected".

'Celebrated'

Ms Smyth asked pro-life customers to take a strong stand against the decision, and that the passing of the "life-saving" law is being "rightly celebrated".

"This works both ways. Whilst Disney and Netflix are claiming they will pull their business from Georgia, it is just as likely that customers too will rethink their investment in such companies and will stop subscribing, watching their productions and giving them their hard-earned money."

She added that many people have contacted Precious Life saying they will boycott the companies.

Well known Irish businessman Declan Ganley posted a picture of himself cancelling his Netflix account. He wrote:

"Just cancelled @NetflixUK @netflix. As a family, we were very regular users but when corporations become hyper politicised and pick sides as they have in the abortion debate, the side that's been targeted can't just ignore it."

Governor Brian Kemp of Georgia signed the foetal heartbeat bill on May 7 this year.

Loving Both on the run



Supporters of pro-life group Love Both take part in the Women's Mini Marathon, Dublin, along with 30,000 others who ran in the 10km race, representing various causes and charities.

Bishop's LGBTQ comments like 'stake through heart'

Staff reporter

Comments made by a US bishop who told Catholics not to go to or support any LGBTQ Pride events have been dubbed "hugely offensive" and not based in fact.

Bishop of Providence, Rhode Island, Thomas Tobin (pictured) also said on social media the events "promote a culture and encourage activities that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals. They are especially harmful for children".

Cork-based Fr Gerry O'Connor CSsR told *The Irish Catholic* the relationship between the gay community and the Church is already "fractured". He

asked where was there evidence that gay pride parades were harmful for children, saying "I would ask him, is this true, bishop?"

"If Church officials want to engage in the public square and make divisive comments, then they really need to answer that question before they do so."

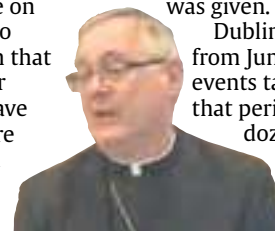
He added: "When you're on the ground and you listen to people, the truth is so often that the gay son or gay daughter that the bishop seems to have such a problem with, they're not there usually in Church but their parents are, and their grandparents are,

who are full of love for their child and grandchild.

"This is like getting a wallop over the head or a stake through the heart each time bishops engage in such insensitivity."

The Irish Bishops' Conference was asked for a comment regarding their view on Pride events, but no response was given.

Dublin LGBTQ Pride is set from June 20-29 with several events taking place throughout that period and is sponsored by dozens of companies as well as Dublin City Council. The Pride Parade is on Saturday June 29.



Don't ignore your dreams – Benedictine monk

Susan Gately

Dreams are crucially important as indicators of what's being left out of our lives, or not being given due attention, and must be carefully decoded, Benedictine Mark Patrick Hederman, former Abbot of Glenstal Abbey, has said.

It is essential for people to "get in touch with their subconscious", Dom Hederman said in an RTÉ interview about

his new book, *Living the Mystery*, published by Columba Press.

"We live in a tiny circle of light that we call consciousness, where we think we have absolute certainty" but outside that is a "massive dark place where we have absolutely no idea what's going on", he said. Most of our lives we try to avoid that place, he continued, but when an accident, an illness, a death occurs, suddenly we're into that area "of the mysterious" so we have to get in touch with that.

New Northern Assembly

» Continued from Page 1

back in but are holding on to certain red lines."

Sinn Féin's demands for an Irish Language Act and same sex marriage need to be discussed, he said. "They have to be resolved through dialogue, because as Fr Alec Reid used to say 'Dialogue is the arena in which the Holy Spirit acts in human history'. Where there is heart-to-heart dialogue, a door opens to new possibilities," he said.

Pointing out that republicans are keen on a united Ireland, he argued that "the proof that you believe

in a united Ireland is making Northern Ireland work before it happens".

"Unionism has to be much more inclusive," he added.

SDLP Cllr Roisin Lynch agreed, telling this newspaper that with elections out of the way, politicians were "going to have to produce something". The bigger parties like Sinn Féin, whose vote dropped significantly in the elections, "are keen to get a deal done but it will have to be choreographed", she said, adding that no decision would be made until the UK has a successor to Prime Minister The-

resa May.

"Whatever deal is done will have to be put to the electorate another time, to seal it as the will of the people," she added.

Welcoming the renewed political talks, the Diocese of Down and Connor's spokesman Fr Edward McGee said they resonate with "the general desire across communities within Northern Ireland calling for a new momentum within the political process", and provide "another opportunity to move beyond the longstanding political impasse" towards restoring the North's institutions.

Ecumenical Bible week is a chance to share 'pockets of hope'

Staff reporter

"We are overloaded. There is an onslaught of bad news and it needs to be counteracted with good news," Capuchin priest Fr Bryan Shortall has said. "Good news starts on the ground. The antidote is to find what we have in common, to find the pockets of hope out there."

The Capuchin was speaking in advance of a Prayer Breakfast, which will kick off the Ecumenical Bible week on Monday (June 10) at St Paul's Arran Quay. This year's theme is 'Always Be Ready' from 1 Peter 3:15 ("to give an answer for the hope that you possess").

Now in its sixth year, the week brings together a host of well known speakers including DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson who will address the topic: How can we be Christian in Ireland Today? Voices of Hope in a Secularised Ireland on Thursday afternoon at Clonliffe College Dublin at 2.00pm. Other speakers include the Archbishop of Dublin Dr Diarmuid Martin and Scripture scholars Katie Heffelfinger and Seán Goan. See <https://www.bibleweek.ie/>

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An exam test when bereavement strikes...

A relative of mine lost her father – to whom she was especially close – just as she was about to face her Leaving Cert exam.

There was no option at the time but to proceed with the exam, despite her grief. She got through with distinction. Possibly, having to do the Leaving Cert gave her, at least momentarily, a focus away from a loss she felt deeply.

But there was another factor, too. "The Dominican nuns were absolutely fantastic." She felt wholly supported by her teachers at the Dominican convent, who provided comfort, space to grieve, and a helpful environment at a distressing time. (This was years before schools had recourse to psychology counselors.)

Decision

In another case that I know, a young schoolgirl chose to do an end-of-term exam directly after losing a parent – but probably would not have chosen to sit a major exam, where there was much more at stake.



Mary Kenny

Time to apologise to James Dillon?

● In this week when we are remembering the Irishmen who fought with the Allies at D-Day on the Normandy beaches, perhaps it is time to revisit the case of James Dillon TD, who, in 1942, was expelled from Fine Gael for saying that Ireland should align herself with the American forces in the fight against Hitler.

Would this be a good opportunity for Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to apologise for his party's treatment of Mr Dillon?

James Dillon was a fervent Catholic, who believed – with good reason – that Germany had been taken over by the forces of evil. He spoke for his conscience as a Christian in opposing that evil.

This person, like many others, welcomes the decision by Education Minister Joe McHugh to allow students who have had a close family bereavement to sit alternative papers later on, in July, rather than adhering to the June timetable.

The move was prompted by a plea from Rhona Butler, who did an interview on the *Ryan Tubridy Show* speaking about the ordeal of having to sit the exam directly after losing her mother.

I heard that interview, and it was indeed moving. But I also admired the young woman for going through with the procedure, while experiencing such grief.

The option to allow more time, in the midst of a bereavement, is an enlightened one. Yet for some individuals, it can be better therapy to have to cope with what is already laid out in the scheduled programme. Much may depend, too, on how the student is otherwise

supported, by her teachers and, perhaps, pastors.

Life does throw all sorts of ordeals at you, at all sorts of unexpected moments. Winston Churchill always told himself, when descending into the depths of despair: "When you're going through hell, keep going."

Criticism

Exams sometimes come under the criticism of being, in any case, unfair. They are only a snapshot of how you can summon the correct knowledge at a given moment – a moment when you may be unwell or under exceptional personal pressures – rather than a measured assessment of your broader accomplishments. But so much in life is like that – you get tested, sometimes, just when you are least feeling like it.

The Education Minister's initiative is humane, but the hope must be that it will be seldom invoked and young people don't suffer the pain of losing a close family member in their tender years.



President Trump's glass floweth over... but never with alcohol.

Stout stunt has run its course

● President Trump is a teetotaler – he quit drinking because his brother was an alcoholic – so we are spared the ritual of a visiting head of state pictured downing a pint of Guinness. I don't want to sound like a fanatical Methodist preacher for whom all liquor is the devil's libation, but this PR stunt by the brewers of stout has surely run its course.

It's also been, on several occasions, a somewhat fake photo-opportunity, since several celebrity visitors didn't find the black stuff at all to their taste, and only pretended to imbibe it!

MEDJUGORJE

Promoting the Good Fruits

Pope Francis has officially given the green light for organised pilgrimages to Medjugorje. To mark the occasion, **The Irish Catholic** will publish a special edition of the newspaper on June 13.



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Signs of faith and mercy

The witness of Romania's martyred bishops are a constant reminder that Christians must resist ideologies that seek to stifle and suppress their cultural and religious traditions, Pope Francis said on the last day of his visit to Romania over the weekend.

Celebrating a Divine Liturgy at the 'Field of Liberty' in the Transylvanian city of Blaj on June 2, the Pope beatified seven Eastern-rite Catholic bishops, all of whom were arrested in 1948 during an anti-religious campaign and left to die of hunger, disease, exposure and the effects of hard labour, before being buried in unmarked graves.

During the ceremony, men women and children held up images of the martyred bishops Ioan Suci, Vasile Aftenie, Valeriu Traian Frentiu, Tit Liviu Chinezu, Ioan Balan, Alexandru Rusu and Iuliu Hossu, who died not knowing that in 1969 St Paul VI had secretly named him a cardinal in pectore.

The Pope's trip to Romania showed how Christians must persist in their Faith no matter what the challenges, writes **Greg Daly**



"These lands know well how greatly people suffer when an ideology or a regime takes over, setting itself up as a rule for the very life and faith of people, diminishing and even eliminating their ability to make decisions, their freedom and their room for creativity," the Pontiff said during the ceremony.

Defenceless

Recalling how under communism, Romanian Christians "were forced to endure a way of thinking and acting that showed contempt for others and led to the expulsion and killing of the defenceless and the silencing of dissenting voices", Pope Francis held up

the seven beatified bishops as modes of Christian faith and love.

"With great courage and interior fortitude, they accepted harsh imprisonment and every kind of mistreatment, in order not to deny their fidelity to their beloved Church," he said. "These pastors, martyrs for the faith, re-appropriated and handed down to the Romanian people a precious legacy that we can sum up in two words: freedom and mercy."

According to the Vatican, while about 20,000 people followed the liturgy on big screens around the city, an estimated 60,000 people filled the Field of Liberty,



Children present flowers to Pope Francis as he arrives for a meeting with members of the Roma community in Blaj. Photo: CNS

where, during the centenary of Romania's 1848 revolution, the country's communist rulers formally dissolved the Eastern-rite Romanian Catholic Church.

"This place, filled with meaning, evokes the unity of your people, which is found in the diversity of its religious expressions," the Pope said in his homily. "All these things constitute a spiritual patrimony that enriches and distinguishes Romanian culture and national identity. The new Beati endured suffering and gave their lives to oppose an illiberal ideological system that oppressed the fundamental rights of the human person."

The Pope also remarked on the beatified bishops' legacy of mercy.

"Their tenacity in professing fidelity to Christ was matched by their readiness to suffer martyrdom without showing hatred towards their persecutors and indeed responding to them with great meekness," he said, quoting how Blessed Iuliu Hossu had said during his imprisonment: "God has sent us into this darkness of suffering in order to offer forgiveness and to pray for the conversion of all."

The Pope stressed the need to keep the human person rather than economic theories at the heart of society

The Pope warned too of the rise in today's world of insidious and atheistic ideologies that devalue the person, life, marriage and the family, that encourage people to treat other human beings as mere objects and that seek to cut young people and children off from their richest cultural and religious traditions.

"I would like to encourage you to bring the light of the Gospel to our contemporaries and to continue, like these Beati, to resist these new ideologies now springing up," the Pontiff continued. "It is our turn to struggle now, as it was theirs to struggle in their time. May you be witnesses of freedom and mercy, allowing fraternity and dialogue to prevail over divisions, and fostering the fraternity of blood that arose in the period of suffering, when Christians, historically divided, drew closer and more united to one another."

Ceremony

The beatification ceremony followed two days in which Pope Francis underlined the importance of ecumenism in a world where Christians are increasingly beleaguered, expressed his sorrow at and asked forgiveness for how the Roma people have been treated through history, and laid out a road-map for the future of European societies.

Speaking to representatives of civic society as well of Romania's Churches, he had praised the country for its commitment to "building a sound democracy through the plurality of its political and social forces and their reciprocal dialogue, through the fundamental recognition of religious freedom and through the country's full participation on the greater international stage".

Despite difficulties and challenges along the way, the Pope said, it was "important to acknowledge the great strides made on this journey".

"It is necessary to move forward together in unity and conviction in following the highest calling to which every state must aspire: that of responsibility for the common good of its people," he said. "To move forward together, as a way of shap-

ing the future, requires a noble willingness to sacrifice something of one's own vision or best interest for the sake of a greater project, and thus to create a harmony that makes it possible to advance securely towards shared goals. This is the basis of a society's nobility."

Describing this as "the path to the building of an inclusive society, one in which everyone shares his or her own gifts and abilities", whatever they may be, the Pope said how the weakest and most apparently inconvenient is a vital way of judging the health of a society.

The Church desires to contribute to the building up of society

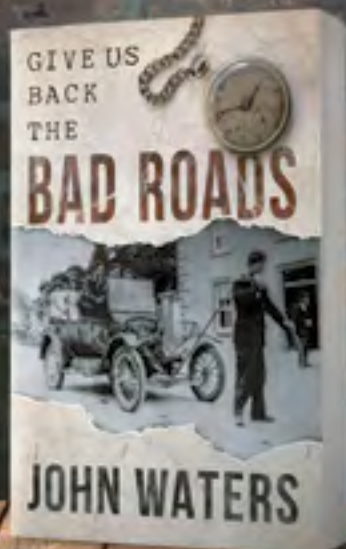
"Indeed, how they are treated is the best indicator of the actual goodness of the social model that one is attempting to build. Only to the extent that a society is concerned for its most disadvantaged members, can it be considered truly civil," he said.

The Pope stressed the need to keep the human person rather than economic theories at the heart of society, saying that the Christian Churches can play a key part in this.

"This is the path that the Catholic Church wishes to follow," he said. "She desires to contribute to the building up of society. She desires to be a sign of harmony in the hope of unity and to be at the service of human dignity and the common good. She wishes to cooperate with the civil authorities, with the other Churches and with all men and women of good will, journeying together with them and placing her specific gifts at the service of the entire community."

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Green politics: the anti-life paradox

The apparent resurgence of 'Green Politics' at local, national and EU level has been the focus of significant commentary in recent days. For many, this is a welcome development that signals the arrival of a renewed global consensus on the various ecological and biodiversity challenges that confront us.

This was certainly the reaction of the president of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), who has praised the victories of Green parties in the EU parliamentary elections.

Speaking to reporters, Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich went on to say that the success of ecological parties is a positive sign, because it signals attention to the themes of environment and creation. For the Archbishop, the overall sentiment was that "as a Church the victory of the green parties makes us happy".

I have no hesitation in affirming my belief that at best, this was an injudicious and ill-informed statement that calls for immediate and urgent qualification.

Let me be clear. As Catholics we have a clear duty to live and act in this world as stewards of creation. We recognise that the earth and its resources are a heritage from the Lord and as such they are not the exclusive preserve of any given generation.

There is no doubt that this entails the embracing of personal and corporate levels of social responsibility.

What it manifestly does not entail however is a commitment to celebrate the rise of individual political parties like the greens, who it cannot be forgotten, advocate for the permissibility of violence in the form of abortion toward the weakest members of that same creation, namely the unborn child.

Pedantic

I am sure that having read this some will take the view that I am being somewhat pedantic and even unfair to the good archbishop. Wasn't it clear after all that he was referring to one aspect of the green agenda and not endorsing their entire policy approach?

According to this logic however, would it not be equally appropriate for the European Bishops Conference to express happiness about

Delight at rising support for parties that care about the planet should not be unqualified, writes **David Mullins**



the rise of, let us say, extreme socialist or communist parties given their alleged focus on the poor and the fair distribution of wealth?

You see the dilemma.

What I want to suggest is that we ask ourselves the following basic questions when it comes to assessing the credibility of the various green parties claims that a vote for them is ultimately a life-affirming vote:

1. Is it credible to campaign against the human degradation and destruction of habitats that make animal and plant life unsustainable while at the same time promoting the right of human societies to violently attack the natural environment of unborn human life?

2. Is it credible to promote the adoption of legal attitudes that grant identical or equivalent moral status to animal life and human life (on the basis that all life is inherently equal) while at the same time promoting the view that it is ok to end some human lives on the grounds of disability?

3. Is it credible to argue against the infliction of pain

on animal life while denying the implementation of measures that would prevent pain capable unborn human life from experiencing pain?

4. Is it credible to promote gender equality as a core principle while arguing for the permissibility of ending some unborn human life on the basis of sex-selection criteria?

“Wasn't it clear after all that the archbishop was referring to one aspect of the green agenda and not endorsing their entire policy approach?”

If you do think that these positions are compatible, then I suggest that you have also accepted some of the more bizarre paradoxes that reside at the heart of green party policies.

In order to confirm that this is actually the case, and

“As Catholics we have a clear duty to live and act in this world as stewards of creation. We recognise that the earth and its resources are a heritage from the Lord”

in order to allow the Greens the chance to speak for themselves, let us take them one by one as they are outlined in various Green Party statements at national and EU level.

As regards the first question, we need only look to the document called 'Adopted-EGP Priorities for 2019: What European Greens Fight For'. Within that document you will find the line: "We want the right to abortion to be included in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights."

For a 'Green' take on the second question, we can turn to the UK Green Party statement on Values and Principles where we find the extraordinarily concerning assertion: "The Green Party is aware that issues such as sex selection, time limits and disability screening have been raised in attempt to restrict the rights of pregnant persons. The Green Party acknowledges that these can be controversial, but ultimately believes that no socio-economic, cultural or other social group should be stigmatised and denied healthcare."

Doubt

If there were any doubt about the reality of Green attitudes to the third question, look to the vote of the current Deputy Leader of the Irish Green Party who voted against an amendment requiring the administration of pain relief to pain capable babies during the Oireachtas debates on the Health Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy Bill 2018.

Finally, in trying to find out where Green politicians stand on the fourth question, we need only refer to the above statement made by the UK Green Party.

What this should hopefully make clear is that centrally occupied within the 'Green Politics' objective of achieving a better future is a policy approach that would deny any future at all to entire categories of unborn human life.

It's just something worth remembering as we are subjected to an endless focus on all other aspects of their more obvious political agenda.

i David Mullins is a bioethics commentator with a special interest in the ethical implications of emerging technologies.

Breda O'Brien

The View



Leo Varadkar wrong on 'individual tragedy' abortion

There are many tragic aspects to the recent abortion in Holles Street of a healthy baby misdiagnosed with a life-limiting condition, but one thing was sure. Leo Varadkar is entirely wrong when he described it as an "individual tragedy".

It was not an individual tragedy. It was a systemic failure caused firstly, by legalising abortion without a time-limit for babies with life-limiting conditions, and secondly, by the failure to provide families with a real choice, that is, perinatal palliative care. All maternity hospitals are expected to provide this wraparound service, which allows parents both space to grieve and space to find meaning in being parents for the short time they have, to give birth and have any family and friends they wish present immediately afterwards to meet the baby.

This baby's death was also the result of regressive views of disability. For centuries, people with disabilities were stigmatised and discriminated against. Then, for a short period, perhaps 30 years, the innate dignity of every human being was recognised. Services were inadequate, sure, but the principle of innate equality was recognised.

Then, as abortion for disability became ever more available, discrimination became institutionalised again. Internationally, it became conventional wisdom that these lives were not worth living, not only in the case of a life-limiting condition but also in cases like spina bifida (which can often be treated very successfully) and babies with Down syndrome.

Evidence

Before Repeal, there was anecdotal evidence that doctors were immediately suggesting that people travel for abortion after a difficult prognosis. Pro-life people said that even more pressure would be brought to bear to have an abortion



if the Eighth were repealed.

We were accused of scaremongering. Tragically, the predictions have proved all too accurate. The solicitor for the couple at the centre of the case, Caoimhe Haughey, has said that her clients never suggested termination. They never even used the word.

Think of a devastated couple who have just received terrible news. Imagine if they were told that there was no need to rush to a decision, that there were people who had been through the same situation who would be more than willing to tell them about continuing with the pregnancy.

Imagine if they were told that a dedicated bereavement midwife and a medical team would walk with them every step of the way. Imagine if they were reassured that their little baby was not suffering and would not suffer.

This is what families are supposed to be offered under guidelines issued by Simon Harris just a couple of years ago. But this couple was not even given standard medical care – a second opinion, which would have taken two weeks.

Given that there is no time limit on abortion for life-limiting conditions, it is unfathomable why they were not allowed to wait.

If any of these positive alternatives had happened, a perfectly healthy baby would have been born. But even if the baby really did have a tragic prognosis, Irish research has shown that couples who continue with the pregnancy find it a profoundly meaningful thing to do, despite the heart-rending pain of parting with their child. They develop a fierce protectiveness towards their little baby. They discover that they can be parents and that their child's short life

has meaning.

Instead, this couple was told, the solicitor alleges, that there was no point in continuing with the pregnancy. They were told that the situation was black and white.

“If any of these positive alternatives had happened, a perfectly healthy baby would have been born”

And of course, the situation is far from black and white. Dr Marty McCaffrey is a clinical professor in neonatal-perinatal medicine at UNC-Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He discovered that the greatest predictor of survival for US children with trisomy 13 and 18 is whether they are diagnosed before or after birth.

Some 36% of children diagnosed before birth lived less than 24 hours and 47% were discharged home, compared with 1% who lived less than 24 hours and 87% who were discharged home when the condition was discovered after birth.

The key difference was that babies diagnosed after birth were offered the same

interventions as any other baby in difficulties, such as oxygen, ventilation, tube feeding and intravenous fluids. Babies diagnosed before birth were sometimes not even offered hydration on the grounds that it was pointless.

Most children with these conditions live a very short time but there are always exceptions, like Kathleen Rose Harkin, who is now 12 and the light of her family's

life even though she has severe limitations. Born in the US, her family insisted on every possible help for her.

The Holles Street case was not an individual tragedy, a scientific misdiagnosis. This was a failure of our legislative system, a failure of our medical system and a failure of our compassion. And this approach has now been institutionalised.

David Quinn's column returns on June 20

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“As abortion for disability became ever more available, discrimination became institutionalised again. Internationally, it became conventional wisdom that these lives were not worth living”

Accompanied by Mary

Our Lady's love can carry us through the darkest of moments, writes Susan Gately



I met Marlies Bolsias by chance at a conference which had Mary, Mother of God, as its central theme. During a feedback session, Marlies spoke about how Mary had come to her aid during a crisis pregnancy as she prepared for an abortion. Afterwards, in a quiet translation booth, she told me her story.

Marlies Bolsias grew up in southern Holland, the youngest in a family of eight. When she was born, both her parents were over 50. Her nearest sister, a Downs baby, had died just months after birth. "You can imagine how worried my mother was when eight years later she was expecting me," she said.

From a young age, Marlies was aware of how difficult her mother's pregnancy had been. "She feared she would not see me grow up." An icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help occupied pride of place in their home where her mother used to say the Rosary. Often she told Marlies: "When I'm no longer around, Mary will always be with you!"

“After a period of time, Ernst too got involved in the Christian community from which Marlies got support”

A terrifying prospect for a four-year-old: "I would say: 'No mum, YOU have to stay with me! I don't know Mary!'" "Ah but she knows you!" replied her mum. At night, Marlies prayed to Mary: "Don't ever let me live without a mother."

Her teenage years were turbulent ones. Marlies felt oppressed by over-protective parents and siblings. As priests and religious congregated in their home which was a hub for Catholic activities, the feeling of rebellion grew within her. Aged 16 she met a group of motorbike-riding hippies. "They had no barriers or restrictions. I thought 'that's real freedom'."

Pregnant

She lived a double life between her sedate older parents and school where she excelled at her studies, and her anarchic hippy friends, through whom she met Ernst, the Indonesian drummer in a band called Blitz Kickers. "I had just turned 19 when I discovered I was pregnant," she told me.

She felt her world collapse. When she finally broke the news to her parents, her mum couldn't stop cry-

ing and her dad fell silent. Ernst was totally unprepared.

The school in which Marlies had started to teach politely asked her to leave. The only support seemed to come from her hippy friends who suggested abortion. They made all the arrangements, getting the two doctors' signatures required by law and making the appointment for the clinic. Meanwhile, Ernst seemed indifferent one way or the other.

"Inside me a huge battle was going on driving me to the point of suicide," she says, recalling the night she went to a station, intent on throwing herself under a train. "But in the end, I couldn't do it. I didn't tell anyone."

“As a hippy, I threw everything away but I still liked Jesus. I thought 'imagine if Jesus came to my street and asked to come and eat with me'”

A week later Marlies was in the abortion clinic. "Everything was ready, I just had to wait half an hour. Five metres away was the operation table where the procedure would be done."

Her life passed before her – her childhood and her mother's big heart. "How fearful she must have been, expecting me. But she had let her mother's heart guide her. She wanted to give life to me."

"I thought of her strong faith in Mary, the Madonna. In my mind I saw once again that treasured picture of Our Lady of Succour, her Rosary and my prayer as a child to Mary. 'My mother was sad and anxious giving birth to me at 51. What a strong woman she was. I want to be like her'."

"Then it was as though a gentle voice and a hand propelled me with great love outside the waiting room," she recalled, "as a strong feeling of motherhood filled my heavy heart."

On her return, her father, who knew nothing of the appointment, opened the door. Seeing her distraught face, he put his arms around her: "We'll help you."

Marlies married Ernst and some months later Jesse was born. She lived with her parents and Ernst, who was doing military service, visited at weekends. But their relationship was not good and almost from the start Marlies planned her escape. "When I have my own house, I'll divorce."

Two years later they moved to



Marlies Bolsias.



“On her return, her father, who knew nothing of the appointment, opened the door. Seeing her distraught face, he put his arms around her: 'We'll help you'”

Vlissingen. Korre, Marlies' eldest older sister, invited the family to a Christian gathering. They agreed to attend a session or two "until they got bored".

"They were talking about love," recalls Marlies. "In one talk they talked about seeing Jesus in each person. As a hippy, I threw everything away but I still liked Jesus. I thought 'imagine if Jesus came to my street and asked to come and eat with me – that's the way I must see Ernst and prepare a meal for him'."

It doesn't sound like a big deal, but for Marlies it was. At heart she and Ernst – an architectural student as well as a drummer – were both

artists. Marlies, back at university, filled her days studying, reading, playing music, and singing, with her parents looking after Jesse: "I didn't cook or keep house. I couldn't even make coffee."

Laid back

Ernst was laid back. "If there was no food, he'd say 'That's okay, I'll go to the Chinese'."

But the seed had been sown and a slow transformative process began in their relationship. "I realised I had to leave my study and be glad that Ernst could continue his."

Marlies worked part time, devoting herself to Jesse and she learnt to cook! "Things began to improve between us," she says smiling. Ernst noticed the change at home, asking himself what was going on. After a period of time, he too got involved in the Christian community from which Marlies got support.

Looking back at their long marriage, she says the difficulties, of which there have been many, are "the most wonderful moments" because "they are the moments when something grows".

"Step by step, with much falling and getting up again, I see that Mary, my mother in heaven, has always been there for me. In April we celebrated our 50th anniversary with our seven children and 12 grandchildren and Mary was not missing."



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Finding Christ in chaos



God's grace allows us to live in the mess of the world, **Martin O'Brien** is told

Th' whole worl' is in a terrible state o' chassiss". I wasn't exactly expecting that immortal line from 'Captain' Jack Boyle in Sean O'Casey's famous play *Juno and the Paycock* to be intoned with gusto by Alan Abernethy, the 62-year-old Church of Ireland Bishop of Connor, when we spoke at his home in south Belfast.

"That is one of my very favourite lines in all of literature," the bishop recalled.

Bishop Abernethy, a committed ecumenist, is currently on extended sick leave undergoing treatment for prostate cancer.

He had previously spoken candidly about his struggle with and treatment for depression, which was diagnosed in 2010, just three years after his appointment as bishop in 2007.

Connor, comprising all of Co. Antrim, the area west of the river Lagan in Belfast and a small part of Co. Derry is one of the largest Church of Ireland dioceses.

Anyone who spends time in Alan Abernethy's company or who has read his latest and courageously frank book, *The Jewel in the Mess*, will know why that line in O'Casey's masterpiece strikes a chord.

In the play, Juno Boyle, married to Jack, a lazy wastrel, is the heroine matriarch who keeps her impoverished family together amid the "chassiss" – chaos – and tragedy of Civil War Dublin.

For Juno Boyle, read Alan's mother, Madge Abernethy (née Sloan), who heroically provided for the future bishop and his brother Colin when their father, Walter, who had a secret gambling problem, lost a huge family inheritance and deserted them, leaving the family when Alan was just six, in east Belfast in the early 60s.

Addiction

Bishop Alan, who is married to Liz, and has two grown up children, writes in the book: "One of the very important lessons my mum taught me was that she found Jesus in the mess of the chaos she found herself dealing with, through no fault of her own, but because of my dad's gambling addiction."

The Jewel in the Mess is the bishop's third book, following *Fulfilment and Frustration* (2002) and *Shadows*

on the Journey (2011), both – like his latest work – Columba publications.

There seems little doubt in Alan Abernethy's mind that that the depression he suffered can be traced to the trauma he experienced as a young child in the wake of his father's flight resulting in his mum and brother having to leave their home overnight and moving in with their beloved maternal grandparents.

"There is no doubt that whatever happened as a child left a profound influence on me, [affected] me very deeply and you realise that only years later," he says.

The depression was picked up after surgery for gallstones in October 2010 and it kept him on sick leave for seven months until Easter 2011.

"I was worn out and tired. The 'sick line' said depression but both my GP and psychiatrist said it was absolute 'burnout'."

“Bishop Alan feels strongly that while the Good Friday Agreement “was wonderful”, the failure to find an agreement on how to contend with the past is a major obstacle to political stability and progress in Northern Ireland. “Until we deal with the past, we will find it very hard to find the future...”



Bishop Alan Abernethy.

Clearly, nearly 18 years of working as rector of Ballyholme near Bangor in Co. Down, one of the largest parishes in the diocese, had taken its toll.

"Sometimes we had up to 40 funerals a year plus baptisms and weddings. Pastorally, I gave of my utmost to people. When I do a funeral, I have nothing left, I leave a lot of myself behind."

“Central to Bishop Abernethy's worldview is what he sees as the infinite significance of the fact of the Incarnation: of God becoming flesh and thus entering the mess, chaos and suffering of this life on earth”

Then suddenly, out of the blue, he became a bishop, "a complete

shock".

He found himself "an ordinary guy holding high office", one where "the buck stops" and where he feels he "has authority but not power".

He remarks that there are "no formal support structures" for a bishop although there is the informal and valuable support of fellow bishops.

On the training of Church of Ireland priests and of lay people he calls for "much more fluid, flexible ministry, it's very static at the moment, you are either a priest or you are not."

Returning to the treatment for his depression, Bishop Alan says a programme of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or talking therapy "helped enormously" although like so many who have experienced depression, he is under no illusion that it may return.

Three years ago, Bishop Abernethy received "a phenomenal response" in letters and messages when as a bishop he broke new ground by publicly addressing the

issue of his own mental health in a 'live' BBC Radio 4 Morning Service from St Peter's, one of his churches, in north Belfast.

The story made newspaper headlines.

In his sermon the bishop recalled: "My brother and I had set out for school as normal, assuming we would return to our home that evening. I was never to see the inside of that house again.

"That particular morning the bailiffs arrived to inform my mum that we had lost our home because of my father's debts."

During his depression he experienced "a desire to hide and be left alone" just as when "as a child after my dad left and strangers came to the house I would hide behind the settee".

Absolutely central to Bishop Abernethy's worldview is what he sees as the infinite significance of the fact of the Incarnation: of God becoming flesh and thus entering the mess, chaos and suffering of this life on earth.

For him, Jesus is "the jewel in the mess".

He was brought up in a Church which seemed to promise people that they would be lifted out of the mess of their lives by "the life jacket of salvation and all would be fine."

But rather than "the life jacket" he stresses: "Jesus came into the



mess and He didn't fix it but somehow by His presence He brought blessing and that is our calling. He blessed not the mess, but the people in the mess.

He didn't heal everyone but those He touched He brought great healing in their mess.

"Sometimes the Church tries to fix people rather than being with them in the mess of their lives."

The euphemistically termed Troubles and their aftermath are of course very much part of "the mess" that people must contend with in Northern Ireland.

“I love writing, I find it a great way to articulate what is deep within and to recover from the cut and thrust of ministry”

For Alan Abernethy, one event during those dark years, which he witnessed as a young teenager in the early 70s "will disturb and shape me for the rest of my life".

He refers in the book to "a very angry mob vying for blood" which attacked a police station and then desecrated a Catholic Church, St Anthony's Willowfield, in east Belfast, within spitting distance of his home.

He recalls that the priest had to lock himself in the upper part of his house and that only the intervention of the British Army averted possible tragedy.

Speaking with passion he told me: "I was a Protestant in east Belfast. This was meant to be for God and Ulster. It was nothing to do with God as I saw it...reconciliation is key to Christian discipleship in Northern Ireland. If you are not a reconciler in Northern Ireland, you are not being very Christian."

A few years later, as a student at Queen's University Belfast, he recalls "my best friend at Queen's was Brendan McAllister".

Mr McAllister, a Catholic from Newry, is now a senior mediation

adviser with the United Nations, after serving as a Victims Commissioner and as director of Mediation NI.

In the experience of this writer such close friendships "across the divide" would have been unusual in Queen's at that time.

Bishop Abernethy said: "Brendan changed my life. I went to Mass with Brendan on Ash Wednesday and he came with me to the Christian Union at Queen's.

"Suddenly we learned to journey in faith together, to expose to each other all the good [in our respective traditions.] He questioned me, I questioned him, it was just great and very helpful."

That friendship prefigured friendships later between Bishop Alan and numerous other Catholics.

The bishop, an enthusiastic ecumenist and member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, speaks warmly of his friendships with Catholic bishops in the North, such as Donal McKeown, Tony Farquhar and Noel Treanor.

He fondly recalls his first Lambeth Conference in 2008 when Bishop Farquhar was the Vatican's observer.

He says that some English bishops found it hard to believe him when he told them of his friendship with Catholic bishops, given the situation here.

They were confounded when suddenly on the way to lunch Bishop Farquhar "came across the room and gave me a big hug".

Bishop Alan feels strongly that while the Good Friday Agreement "was wonderful", the failure to find an agreement on how to contend with the past is a major obstacle to political stability and progress in Northern Ireland.

"Until we deal with the past, we will find it very hard to find the future. My prayer is that we will find mechanisms to deal with that past."

He described the spectacle of Catholic priest Fr Martin Magill speaking in his Cathedral, St Anne's

in Belfast, at the recent funeral of the murdered journalist, Lyra McKee, as "a great symbol of what the Church can and does do constantly in this community and we have done it for years."

In the book Bishop Alan says: "We have to find grace to recognise the hurt we have caused each other and how a lack of grace has damaged the future possibilities."

Questioned about this he describes grace as "a God-given gift that Jesus gives us allowing us to live in a mess with hope, purpose and peace."

“I was a Protestant in east Belfast. This was meant to be for God and Ulster. It was nothing to do with God as I saw it...reconciliation is key to Christian discipleship in Northern Ireland”

In May 2018 Bishop Alan commenced a three-month sabbatical to write his latest book.

He had lots to say, things that are "in his soul" such as stressing the critical importance of the Incarnation, "which the Church seems to have lost sight of" and putting into book form some of his teaching messages from the open forums he regularly conducts with parishioners throughout his diocese during Lent, "which I love doing".

Wrestling with the paradox that God "seems to be more present in pain than in joy" was another thing he wanted to do in the book, he said.

"I love writing, I find it a great way to articulate what is deep within and to recover from the cut and thrust of ministry."

"Writing the book is part of my discipleship, this is my life, and this is what it is to journey with Jesus."

He had sent the script to Columba, whom he says, "were absolutely superb" and was preparing to return to work when he experienced symptoms, including difficulty in passing

Bishop Alan Abernethy fondly recalls his first Lambeth Conference in 2008 when Bishop Farquhar was the Vatican's observer.

water, that resulted in tests and confirmation that he had prostate cancer.

"There was both good and bad news. It was not the worst type of tumour, but it had spread beyond the prostate, but not too far."

By November 2018 he was on sick leave and commencing "a most unpleasant" chemotherapy programme that continued until Easter, as well as hormone therapy.

When Bishop Alan spoke to *The*

Irish Catholic, he was about to commence an intensive eight-week course of radiotherapy and more injections to target the cancer.

"I have experienced God in my mess in the most profound way, even in this cancer journey. I have never experienced as much peace in my life," he said.

i The Jewel in the Mess is published by Columba Books and available from columbabooks.com

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Religion is going nowhere

In a way, Rupert Shortt admits, the central question posed by his new book *Does Religion Do More Harm than Good?* is a ridiculous one. As has been pointed out, he says, religion is an aspect of culture, and it shouldn't be hard to see the futility of asking a similar question about culture in general. This struck Shortt as a crucial insight, because religion can't really be isolated from culture.

"We're always being reminded – as with Brexit – that it's not like leaving a golf club, it's more like trying to remove the egg from the omelette," he tells *The Irish Catholic*. Asking what society would look like without religion is, he says, "a counter-factual speculation too far; it's too deeply interwoven into the fabric of human culture".

Born and raised in Spain by Anglo-Irish parents, Mr Shortt is religion editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* and the author of a range of books including *Rowan's Rule*, a 2009 biography of Rowan Williams, the then Archbishop of Canterbury which gave Shortt what he calls his "five seconds of fame" when it prominently appeared as the bedtime reading of Tom Hollander's beleaguered vicar Adam Smallbone in the hit BBC sitcom *Rev*.

Dr Williams in turn wrote effusively in praise of *God is No Thing: Coherent Christianity*, Mr Shortt's 2016 riposte to the so-called 'New Atheists', which the author describes as him "trying to explain in 100 pages how you can be philosophically and scientifically literate and still go to Church without leaving your brain at the door".

Does Religion Do More Harm than Good? was originally planned a part of a series of – in effect – long pamphlets on various religious themes by a range of writers, but it ran slightly overlong and was published instead as a freestanding book, opening with an impressively astute and somewhat inflammatory observation.

"The world swarms with self-appointed experts on religion," it opens. "A leading sociologist such as David Martin has noted that few matters are as heatedly debated – and pronounced on at a moment's notice – as the relationship between faith and culture."

Defining religion

Shots fired, one might say, yet Mr Shortt goes on to wheel out a litany of familiar responses to the question before pointing out that the question is, if not a futile one, at least one that's difficult to properly engage with. Even defining religion can be tricky, of course.

"This is looking at mainstream sociology of religion," Mr Shortt says. "Practitioners there would remind us that human beings don't merely investigate the naturalistic world at a scientific level; we also seek to make sense of our lives via

The author of *Does Religion Do More Harm Than Good?* talks to Greg Daly



all sorts of evolutionary adaptations, agriculture, dance, literature, that have emerged from animal play, animal empathy, ritual and myth during the long history of tribal societies without much sense of a beyond, through supernatural king-god monarchies, to more recent societies with their religions of value transcending the great givens of existence."

Whatever else religion may be, it is of course a human practice, and as such is as open to abuse as any other human practice – everything from medicine to art can be put to nefarious ends, after all. Often, Mr Shortt says, religion can be wrongly identified as having been the cause of atrocities. He cites the example of the Bosnian war of the mid-1990s.

"That has been cast in religious terms, but somebody like Milosevic



Author Rupert Shortt.

wasn't motivated by religion – he was a former communist apparatchik who for reasons of political expediency draped himself in the mantle of Orthodoxy," he says.

"So often, although it's really easy to blame this or that conflict on religion," he continues, "where what we're really looking at is a complicated tangle of social, political, ethnic, linguistic factors, and religion is just one more badge of identity which of course can be put to evil use as well as good."

Isn't this a kind of special pleading, though, where religious people are happy to take credit for good deeds done in the name of religion, but will rationalise away wicked ones supposedly motivated by faith?

"I hope I don't do that, because there's a huge amount in this book about toxic religion," Mr Shortt replied. "I do not doubt for a millisecond that Paschal is

entirely right in saying that men never commit evil with so much enthusiasm as when they are acting in the name of God. That is obviously true, and if you look around the world at the moment there is obviously a particular problem with violent Islamism."

Part of the problem with how people can sometimes see religion as – overall – a force for harm is down to the way news is reported, Mr Shortt says.

“This is the sort of thing that British Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says to great effect in his book *The Great Partnership*, where he maintains that the cure for bad religion is good religion, not no religion”

"I am a journalist – I know a thing or two about the corruptions of my trade – and there is something about bad events that make them by definition more newsworthy than good events," he says. "A plane exploding is news, a huge rail crash is news. The fact that thousands upon thousands of trains reach their destinations on time without the slightest problems for any of the passengers is not news. A volcano erupting is news, but underground streams supplying irrigation and livelihoods for large numbers of people across the generations is not news."

* * * * *

News favours not just bad events, but unusual events, of course, as famously codified in how 'dog bites man' isn't news, but 'man bites dog' is, and Mr Shortt says these tendencies to favour the unusual and the appalling do distort our understandings.

"I think that very much applies in the religion sphere," he says. "When somebody blows themselves up screaming 'Allahu Akbar', obviously that's on the front page the next day. When the mosque or the church across a huge belt of the world is the hub for the distribution of aid, medicine, and education for vast numbers of people, that is overlooked."

It wouldn't be hard to point to how Catholicism is reported upon



George James De Wilde's (1804-71) *The Seven Ages of Man* (1823). Here we see the seven ages: infant, schoolboy, lover, soldier, justice, pantaloon and extreme old age. The painting is embedded with moralistic and even pedantic overtones, not only in the depictions of the seven main figures.

in Ireland's media as an example of this, of course, but as an example of this which most Irish Catholics would probably be utterly unfamiliar with, he cites the example of the growth of Pentecostal Christianity.

"I think a very, very concrete example of that would be something like Pentecostalism, which has been called the Christian counterpart to Islamic revivalism," he says. "Now that has spread like wildfire and it claims the allegiance of hundreds of millions of people around the world."

"Honeycombing around the edge of the global megacity you have got thousands upon thousands of very democratic lay-led Christian communities in which women assume positions of leadership and men are forsaking promiscuity and the bottle etc."

"Whatever the truth or otherwise of the claims of Pentecostalism, the social capital generated by that Christian movement among many others is vast," he says. "Does the western media want to know about that? Of course it doesn't, because among other things they are resolutely non-violent. They're just getting on with it."

None of these changes the fact that religion can be put to hugely corrupt use, he stresses, pointing out that his latest book takes in the likes of Buddhism and Hinduism as well as Christianity and Islam, but the fact remains that despite the best efforts of 20th-Century totalitarian states and the 'new atheists' of the 21st Century, religion isn't going away.

"We appear to be moving into what have been called post-secular times," he says. "There might be fewer bums on seats at Mass in Ireland and the UK, but in the world as a whole Christianity and Islam are

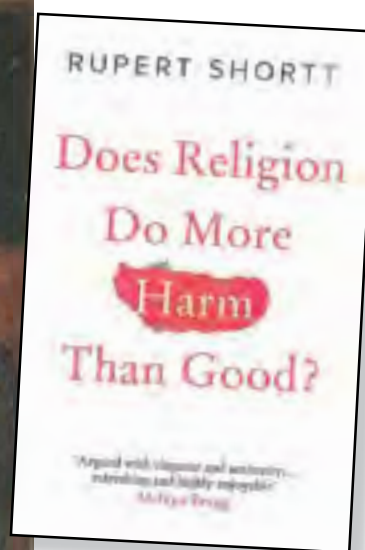
both growing strongly, so given that there isn't the slightest prospect that religion is just going to fade away, we might as well try to accentuate the positive and the ways in which religion can provide the antidote to its own poison."

This is the sort of thing that British Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says to great effect in his 2011 book *The Great Partnership*, where he maintains that the cure for bad religion is good religion, not no religion, and Mr Shortt is convinced that Islam, every bit as much as Christianity, is capable of tackling its own more dangerous manifestations.

"In the same way that Christians wouldn't read every verse of the Old Testament literally, and indeed Jews don't either, especially those passages that represent God as bloodthirsty and vengeful, there arose within Islam quite a sophisticated tradition of interpretation whereby a distinction was drawn between verses that were considered relevant for all time and other verses that were considered context-specific," he says.

“There might be fewer bums on seats at Mass in Ireland and the UK, but in the world as a whole Christianity and Islam are both growing strongly”

"The problem with violent Islamism in a way isn't that it's too Islamic, but that it isn't Islamic enough because it's leapfrogging centuries of tradition in the same way that – I don't know – reconstructionist Protestants in America who



and everywhere, and other forms of Islam have been marginalised. That's the sadness of it for me."

* * * * *

So if good religion is the key to tackling bad religion, how then can we define and identify good religion?

"I think it needs to be self-critical," he says. "I say at the end that conviction and dogmatism are not the same. There's a difference between having seen some truth and claiming to speak in the name of all truth, between knowing what one believes and refusing to respect the beliefs and experiences of others."

In this Mr Shortt appears to be echoing G.K. Chesterton's line that while it is not bigotry to be certain that we are right, it is bigotry to be unable to imagine how we might possibly have gone wrong, and it seems he thinks that a suitably self-critical conviction can be invaluable in dealing with people of other creeds.

“Religious liberty really matters because it's a way of keeping in check the potentially totalitarian claims of the State”

"I suggest that people of faith can speak with a humble authority, combining real knowledge with an awareness of the limitations of that knowledge," he says, adding ruefully: "Heaven knows that that model has hardly been observed in the Christian world at all times."

The Church reacted very fiercely against the French Revolution, he says as an obvious example. "Catholicism pulled up the drawbridge and adopted a siege mentality for a couple of centuries after the Enlightenment, but it has now recovered a strain of humanism that was always there, albeit dormant. There are the resources there for pluralism."

Genuine pluralism is, he insists, vital, recommending that anyone with time should take advantage of YouTube to listen to Rowan Williams 2016 lecture on Religious and Civil Liberty at Oxford's Las Casas Institute, in which the former Archbishop of Canterbury talks about the 19th-Century English Catholic historian Lord Acton.

Acton, Mr Shortt says, said "some very prescient things about an era

when the State was trying to claim ownership of the consciences of minorities like Catholics".

"But now I think you could argue that it's trying to take ownership of the consciences of religious believers and to behave as though the State is the only actor that matters. Religious liberty really matters because it's a way of keeping in check the potentially totalitarian claims of the State," he continues. "It's a subtle and very interesting argument that could sort of reframe the whole way one looks at this situation."

France is a country where thinking about religious liberty in this way could make a real difference, he says.

"You can see it in what's been called a rather secular authoritarian atmosphere like contemporary France, where they try to sweep religion out of the public square," he says. "And what you get then is not some marvellous tolerant neutral space, but rather on the contrary you get groups of rather angry believers consigned to the sidelines, sharing their grievances among themselves without being brought to account, and without being brought to the bar of sort of public debate."

* * * * *

Banishing religion to the private sphere, as certain hard secularists would try to do, does seem a dangerous game.

"It's much better," Mr Shortt says, drawing again on Rowan Williams, "certainly not to have religious groups imposing their views on others, but just to be allowed to voice those larger visions of what the good life consists of, bring them in to the public square and be defeated perhaps by argument but maybe some of the time persuade some of your interlocutors that maybe some of what you're saying is reasonable."

The importance of this is really brought home when Mr Shortt explains just how ill-equipped a purely secular morality can be when it comes to tackling serious moral questions.

"When you turn to a topic that rests on some of what have been called 'thick' values – rather than 'thin' values like tolerance – a strong sense of the dignity of the human person – for instance, where does that come from? Can secularism, by its own resources provide that?"

Most obvious case studies for that kind of discussion tend to evoke strong feelings that cloud our judgment, but taking the kind of example that's so removed from us that we can discuss it dispassionately, Mr Shortt says it's hard to define Gladiatorial combat – which didn't die out until after the adoption of Christianity as the Roman Empire's official religion – as the abomination it surely was without a theological basis.

"If you are a strict secularist, how is it possible to say on purely naturalistic grounds that gladiatorial combat is wrong? I think it's very, very difficult myself," he says, adding: "So banish religion, and you may be careful what you wish for."

i Does Religion Do More Harm Than Good? by Rupert Shortt is published by SPCK Publishing.



Rowan Williams and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

perhaps want the Ten Commandments to be enacted in statute and want you to be sent to prison if you commit adultery or whatever, those fundamentalists like-wise leapfrog over the fact that classical Christianity developed very sophisticated mechanisms for reading the Bible in context," he continues.

"The trouble with contemporary Islamism is that it's as though the

Southern Baptists in America had suddenly found that they were sitting on the world's largest supplies of oil, that overnight they'd become colossally wealthy, and were in a position to export their version of Christianity across the whole world."

Admitting that this analogy doesn't quite work, for historical and other reasons, he nonetheless maintains that it helps explain what

has happened with Islam in recent times.

"The Islamic world has been shaken to its foundations in the 20th Century with all the invasions by western powers and what have you," he says, "and Saudi Arabia has stepped into the breach and provided what I would see as a rather questionable strand of the faith which has been exported here, there,

“The Islamic world has been shaken to its foundations in the 20th Century with all the invasions by western powers and what have you,” he says, ‘and Saudi Arabia has stepped into the breach’”

Encouraging and protecting brave, new, digital world



Detective Sergeant Mary McCormack.

Archbishop Eamon Martin has the attention of the panel and attendees at the conference. Photos: Chai Brady

The key to avoid danger, and continue on a path of responsible and positive internet use is education, both of young people and adults, as Irish law can't keep up with the speed of developing technologies according to the Archbishop of Armagh.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* at the Believers in the Digital World: Opportunities for Mission seminar held in St Patrick's College, Maynooth to mark World Communications Day 2019, Archbishop Eamon Martin said that although legislation is needed, personal responsibility is "key".

He said: "I suppose having spoken to a lot of parents who are concerned that they simply don't know enough about the digital world, they don't know the sites, they think children are maybe on one site but they're on another one – young people are way ahead of the rest of us."

"The key to me is to educate young people, and indeed to educate parents. First of all, to educate young people to be safe and responsible themselves online: we know this with regard to so many other issues in the real world."

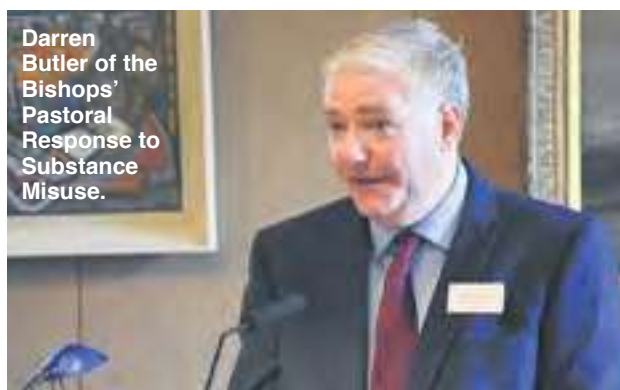
Group discussions

About 50 people attended the interactive seminar on the digital world, which included talks from experts, group discussions and a Q&A. Archbishop Martin praised the fact people were

Chai Brady focuses on discussions about internet use after Maynooth seminar



Darren Butler of the Bishops' Pastoral Response to Substance Misuse.



coming together to share their "understanding through experience" and that this can help those looking to comprehend how youth are using the online world.

At the Synod on youth, the faith and vocational discernment in the Vatican, which was held last October, Archbishop Martin said young people said they were not looking to be scolded about social media or online use.

"They don't want to be criticised, but they're willing to evaluate and interrogate the way they're behaving online and I think that's really the key to this," he said.

It was highlighted throughout the seminar the need for open dialogue about

how both young people and everyone uses the internet.

“Some families never know this is happening in their houses and we have to come in and unfortunately give them the bad news”

Just because your son or daughter is upstairs in their room doesn't mean they're safe, conversations must be had about their internet use, according to a Garda expert.

Speaking after the seminar to this paper, Detective Ser-

geant Mary McCormack, who works in the Online Child Sexual Exploitation Unit of An Garda Síochána, said parents need to know how children are using the internet. Her talk was based on the extent of the challenge to society of online abuse and how to respond.

She said: "Unfortunately some families never know this is happening in their houses and we have to come in and unfortunately give them the bad news and try and help to assist them if they're the house where a victim is. And if they're the family of a perpetrator that they get some assistance around why someone in their house would have done something like this."

Harmful behaviour

Det. Sgt McCormack mentioned the One in Four programme for individuals who exhibit sexually harmful behaviour towards children, who say: "While the state provides treatment programmes for convicted sex offenders both in prison and on release, there is a lack of services for non-convicted sex-offenders in the community". They offer structured interventions that are mostly in a group setting.

While praising the Church for interacting with An Garda and promoting the need to protect and inform children online, she added because people they work with may have never known what was happening to their child: "That is why we push for fam-

Archbishop Eamon Martin offers ten principles to guide believers on the "digital highways":

1. Be positive, communicating the 'joy of the Gospel'.
2. Strictly avoid aggression and 'preachiness' online; try not to be judgemental or polemical.
3. Never bear false witness on the internet.
4. Fill the internet with charity and love, continually seeking to include a sense of charity and solidarity with the suffering in the world.
5. Have a 'broad back' when criticisms and insults are made – when possible, gently correct.
6. Pray in the digital world! Establish sacred spaces, opportunities for stillness, reflection and meditation online.
7. Establish connections, relationships and build communion, including an ecumenical presence online.
8. Educate young people to keep themselves safe and responsible online, particularly in light of cyberbullying and the prevalence and accessibility of pornography and online gambling.
9. "Give a soul to the internet", as Pope Benedict XVI once said – at all times witness to human dignity online.
10. Be missionary, remembering that, with the help of the internet, a message has the potential to reach the ends of the earth in seconds.

ilies having conversations, it's not good enough just to say they're upstairs, they're in their room, they're on the internet: they're happy.

"You don't know that. Interact with your children, know who they're talking to, why they're online this hour of the night, do they really need to be on, and they're all questions that you need. There is loads of information on websites all over the internet about how to get involved with your children."

She advised people to get involved with Safer Internet

Day (SID), the Safer Internet Ireland Awareness Centre and to report suspicious activity to www.hotline.ie.

Darren Butler of the Bishops' Pastoral Response to Substance Misuse spoke about the role of parishes in addressing internet addiction.

Although Mr Butler has generally been dealing with substance misuse relating to tobacco, alcohol and illegal substances, internet addiction has continuously been coming to the forefront of discussion. He said that it's a "major issue in our parishes"

online users in a



Above: The rapporteur of one of the seminar groups gives feedback. Left: Communications Officer of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, Brenda Drumm.

Embracing an online world

This is an edited extract of Emma Tobin's (22) speech at the Believers in the Digital World: Opportunities for Mission seminar.



Emma Tobin addressing the conference.

and that he works with diocese, parishes, universities and more regarding targeting addiction.

During the seminar he spoke of online gaming and the fact many young people use it "as an escape", saying there's a need to look at why young people are becoming addicted to games and social media.

This comes as the World Health Organisation (WHO) officially recognised 'gaming disorder' as a behavioural disorder last week. WHO say: "Gaming disorder is defined in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a pattern of gaming behaviour ('digital-gaming' or 'video-gaming') characterised by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences."

Social media

Mr Butler added that social media can be accessed easily by people at all ages who can easily lie about their age. For example, both Twitter and Facebook mandate that their users must be at least aged 13, but it's far too easy to make an account and be dishonest about age.

He added that internet addiction "is real, it's happening certainly in our

families".

"Between social media and with young people looking for likes; we all like to be told we look well, and if some young person who has very low self-esteem – which is something around the internet safety programme that we look at – and you put up a photograph that you can photoshop and make yourself look whatever way you want and 100 people like it, it makes you feel good, but it's not the real world we're in."

“How might we understand more fully the driving forces within cyberspace”

Social media use can lead to extremes, with Archbishop Eamon speaking of the 'Me' or 'selfie' generation who need instant gratification and are "nurtured by the narcissism and voyeurism of social networking".

This can be seen in young people who constantly check their smartphones for "likes and friends, obsessing for hours over their profile picture".

There is also "the macabre filming and instant sharing of tragic incidents like road accidents or the aftermath of terrorist attacks".

"What can believers say into this space? How might we understand more fully the driving forces within

cyberspace and witness by our example to a Christian, healthy and wholesome presence online?" he asked.

Archbishop Martin points to Pope Francis who refers to the danger of creating "closed circuits" in which people who think alike encourage their own beliefs by never leaving their own bubble of thought.

Quoting the Pope, Archbishop Martin said this makes them easily manipulatable by powerful outside interests which can "facilitate the spread of fake news and false information, fomenting prejudice and hate".

"He cautions on the other hand against the isolation and loneliness which can pervade our internet use, and 'the dangerous phenomenon of young people becoming social hermits who risk alienating themselves completely from society'. How can Christians build bridges across the divides online, be reconcilers, peacemakers, comforters, instilling hope, love, faith?"

"I suggest that Church and society has much to evaluate and reflect on in these areas. However, the sheer exponential speed of development of the World Wide Web, the immensity of questions raised about our identity and relationships and belonging, not to mention the huge ethical and moral questions it poses, can sometimes frighten us from even going there."

Chairperson of the event, Senator Joan Freeman, who is

behind the Children's Digital Protection Bill 2018 brought to the Dáil in December last year told *The Irish Catholic*: "We are without a doubt going to face so many barriers. We're going to get push-back all the time. To be honest I couldn't care less."

Her proposed bill, which is still at the early stages, "targets" and would put a lot of responsibility on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block content.

Senator Freeman said it would give legislative power to "take down sites that are going to harm our children, this is not about freedom of information or freedom of anything, it's about safeguarding children and we're talking about sites which are promoting suicide, promoting self-harm, food deprivation".

She added there are step by step guides on websites on how to "kill yourself" and these must be blocked by the ISPs and "if they don't, they're fined, if they still don't, it's a crime".

Although the internet can be positive, and used as a tool for furthering knowledge and spreading information at a rate faster than any other medium thus far, people must know the dangers. Whether you are a parent, someone monitoring a social media page, or a young person who is taking full advantage of what the internet has to offer, there are dangers that must be known and advantages that can't be underestimated.

It's a powerful thing, social media. I've tried to ignore it, tried to pretend it didn't matter to me if people 'liked' what I said or not, but in reality, it does matter. It mattered immensely, to me.

There were very real stakes involved in the comments you wrote on peoples' posts. I knew girls who said the wrong thing and were shouted down by twenty or thirty outraged voices, and it would be naïve to think the cold shoulder disappeared when they came to school the next day. If a boy liked one of your pictures, it was reason to think he liked you.

Of course, when I asked for permission to join Facebook (technically, Facebook is only for ages 13+), I was given a crash course in how to act responsibly online.

Many of my friends either joined social media sites in secret or had no oversight whatsoever from their parents.

Amazement

My first Facebook friend was my mother, and I was always surprised when my friends reacted with amazement to that fact. They would never, in a million years, have let their parents near their Facebook pages.

Around when I was in fourth year, I lost interest in the Facebook-style social platform, which generally seeks to connect you with people you already know.

Two girls I knew, who I thought of as cool, introduced me to a new website after they heard me complaining about how hard it was to find people who liked to read epic fantasy.

It was called Tumblr, a

microblogging platform which was then what Facebook tries to be now; a never-ending series of videos and pictures and posts to scroll through.

On Tumblr, finding dozens of people who shared your interests was as simple as typing 'Lord of the Rings' into the search box. Half a second later there were 50, 60, 100 blogs all dedicated to discussions, debates, pictures, videos, artwork and of course fanfiction about that very thing.

“Social media connects us to people who share our passions”

That's the real power of modern social media. In a world where technology has made the interests and passions of those around us so diverse, so particular, social media connects us to people who share our passions.

Fanfiction particularly has a strange reputation now, as something almost shameful, but I can honestly say I wouldn't be half the writer I am today if I hadn't practically grown up within a community of passionate writers who, for no profit whatsoever, would write hundreds of thousands of words of richly imagined stories in existing fictional worlds.

We would read each other's stories, offer helpful criticisms and heaps of praise, encourage each other to keep writing, to keep creating. It's funny, I remember teachers telling me how rare I was, a

» Continued on Page 18

Embracing an online world Continued from Page 17



Archbishop Eamon Martin addresses the conference.

teenager who read so much, when I knew for a fact that almost every one of my peers was reading for hours every day- online.

Isolating

It can be quite isolating, as a young person of faith, in secondary school. It's the age when it's trendy, and important, to question what our parents have taught us.

Most of my friends saw only what the media and the internet were telling them about religion. My best friend in the world at that time told me in a whisper, during math class, that she believed in God, and she didn't care what anyone else thought. But she still whispered, and it felt like a secret between us.

That's where social media is important to young people of Faith; because it is often not cool to have faith, and it can isolate young people, and therefore make them more likely to let their faith slip away.

Social media has the potential to connect people, to give them spaces where they are able to live their faith. I would have loved, in secondary school, to

have seen my parish using Facebook and their own website to reach out to young people and get them involved in what interests young people above all else – action. Climate action, social justice action, helping the homeless, helping migrants. At its heart faith is about action, and love, and neighbourliness, and getting young people involved in programmes where they can see the positivity they are bringing into the world is so important, and social media is the way to get people involved.

Social media has definitely enriched my life. I've had in-depth conversations about medieval battle tactics with a girl from Turkey, exchanged theories about Doctor Who with a girl from Australia going through chemo.

It's not just that social media means that if my friend has a problem at 2am my phone will wake me up to be there for them, or that as my friends scattered across the country, across the world to China and Sweden, I've never been unable to contact them.

I've spoken to people I've



The groups attending the seminar discuss questions put forth by organisers. Photos: Chai Brady

never really met, people I would never have known, people a thousand miles away who needed me after a difficult break-up, who needed me to tell them that they wouldn't be working in a McDonald's in central London forever.

“Social media has shaped me and changed me and made me more aware of the world outside my corner of it”

Social media is powerful. Less than six months ago

I was reading pleas from bloggers I half-knew in Brazil, who claimed that the election of a new president might endanger their very lives. Some of those bloggers have since gone silent. I can scarcely imagine how small my world would be if I hadn't sat on my bed in awe reading as my friend in Istanbul described getting water cannoned during political protests in her city, what she recommended for your eyes after getting tear gassed. In a moment, I can read with my own eyes what Pope Francis is saying about climate, about migrants.

It's powerful, it's magical. It has already changed the world and how we relate to it, how we relate to

others. It has shaped me and changed me and made me more aware of the world outside my corner of it. Social media has touched almost every aspect of my life, I think ultimately for the better. Thanks to Facebook and Tumblr, Snapchat and WhatsApp and Viber, there is always a shoulder to cry on, or a miasma of all your favourite things to sink into when the world seems dark.

It is, and will continue to be, a part of who we are.

The other day I was walking through my local shopping centre, the late afternoon sun streaming on the polished floors, and with few exceptions every person I passed was not looking at how the sun played on the

marble, or the bright displays around them. Their eyes were fixed on their phones. And for a moment, yes, I thought that was a shame. It is. But then I imagined those people lit up with invisible threads of light, signals, connecting them to faraway people, connecting them to invisible worlds and unheard conversations. And I thought it was beautiful too.

1 Emma Tobin is a post-graduate student from Newbridge, Co. Kildare. A UCD graduate of the Bachelor of Arts in English and Philosophy in 2018, she will begin a Masters' in Creative Writing in UCD this September.



Senator Joan Freeman receives a bouquet of flowers from Archbishop Eamon Martin.



Archbishop Eamon Martin takes part in discussion during the seminar.

Out&About

Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
colm@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



CLARE: Bishop Fintan Monahan of the Diocese of Killaloe launches *Connected*, a newsletter edited by the Director of Youth Ministry Ms Joanne O'Brien and her team.



▲ **MAYO:** Pope Francis bestows a Benemerenti to the St Muredach's Cathedral Choir directors past and present for their outstanding contribution to liturgy. Also pictured are Bishop John Fleming and Msgr Paddy Gallagher. Photo: John O'Grady

◀ **WEXFORD:** Sr Rosella and Sr Gabriel (Adoration Convent Wexford) enjoy a bite during a civic reception celebrating the contribution of religious in Wexford.



ANTRIM: Fr Dan Baragey CSsR, Fr Brendan McConvery CSsR, Fr Michael Kelleher CSsR, Noreen Castle, Rev. Dr Ken Newell, Fr Peter Burns CSsR, Dr Gladys Ganiel, Fr Ciaran O'Callaghan CSsR, Ed Petersen and Fr Noel Kehoe attend the Unity Pilgrim Book Launch in Clonard Monastery, Belfast.

CARLOW

The 14th annual Solemn Novena will take place in St Clare's Church, Graiguecullen, running for nine consecutive Monday nights until June 24.

CLARE

Youth 2000 prayer meeting every Friday at 7pm in the Poor Clare's Oratory, Ennis. Join other young adults for prayer and reflection followed by tea and chats in the Friary.

Annual Killaloe Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine will take place on Sunday, June 23. Led by Bishop Fintan Monahan.

Cloughleigh Oratory will continue to pray the Novena Prayer to St Anthony every Tuesday morning at the 9.30am Mass.

CORK

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

Rosary conscious group prayer meeting on Fridays from 7.30-8.30pm in the Portiuncula Chapel, St Francis Church, Liberty Street. Entrance to the rosary through the Mass office door.

DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Monday to Friday, 8-12pm and 3-9pm.

DONEGAL

Talitha Cumi: A day retreat for women led by Fr Philip Kemmy and Thérèse McCrystal takes place on Saturday June 8 at Ards Monastery, Creeslough. For bookings details call: 094-9375993 or 085-8608835

DUBLIN

Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home, Glenayle Road, Raheny, Dublin 5, from 8-9pm.

Youth Mass on Saturday June 15 at 6pm in Neilstown Church, Clondalkin. Inchicor Gospel Choir will lead the music and a special invite goes out to those in the middle of the Leaving or Junior Cert. Young people who'd like to get involved can contact Frank Brown at 0861018173

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Tuesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7pm: www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly. There is also a St Peregrine Novena Mass in Holy Cross Church, Lisnaskea on Tuesday nights at 7pm. www.churchservices.tv/lisnaskea

GALWAY

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoe, every Monday, 10-11am and Thursday, 8-10pm.

The annual 33-hour Adoration takes place in St Jarlath's College Chapel, Tuam, from June 8-9. Mass in the Cathedral at 10am followed by a procession to St Jarlath's College for Benediction and Exposition, concluding with Mass at 7pm in the cathedral. All parishes in the

diocese are invited.

KERRY

Weekly Monday prayer meetings led by Ben Perkins, from 8-9.30pm in the Ardferret Retreat Centre.

KILDARE

Praying, reading and sharing the following Sunday's Gospel in Resurrexit, Kilmeague, every Wednesday from 8-9.30pm. See www.resurrexit.ie for details, or ring 087-6825407.

KILKENNY

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

LIMERICK

Eucharistic Adoration takes place each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until 10pm, Crecora on Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12pm and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret Church on Wednesdays, from 10-12pm.

LOUTH

Mass in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary will take place at 10.30am every first Saturday of the month in St Malachy's Church, Anne Street, Dundalk. Organised by the Legion of Mary, Presidium of Our Lady of the Listening Heart. Spiritual Director Fr Bede McGregor OP.

A Centre Prayer Meeting is held at Mount Oliver (near Ballymascannon, Dundalk) every Wednesday evening at 7.30pm. Contact 00353 863623361 from the North of Ireland or 0863623361 from the Republic of Ireland.

MAYO

Adoremus National Eucharistic & Marian Pilgrimage in Knock Shrine on June 14-15. Programme commences on Friday evening at 7.30pm and begins again on Saturday morning at 10.30am. For more details, call 016625899 or text 0872478519.

MEATH

Enfield Prayer Group meets every Monday evening at 7.30pm in the parish centre.

Adoration in St Patrick's Church, Stamullen, after 10am Mass every Thursday until 5pm in St Mary's Church, and in St Mary's Church, Julianstown, on Wednesdays from 9am and after 10am Mass.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday, 7.30-8.30pm.

WATERFORD

Celebrating Pentecost Sunday on June 9 in the Edmund Rice Chapel, from 11am-5.30pm. Guest: Fr Damian Ryan. With Prayer, Praise, Scripture, Testimonies, Prayer Ministry and Mass.

WICKLOW

The Glencree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glencree on the first Saturday of the month.

St Patrick's Prayer Group, Wicklow town, meet on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the De La Salle Pastoral Care Centre.

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Catherine McCann



Catherine McCann uses her own experience of retirement to show us how to have a positive approach to our older years and empowers us to opt for quality living over a long life without quality.

WAS €12.99 **€8.45**

Fifty Masses with Children
Sr Francesca Kelly



This revised edition of Sr Francesca's bestselling title includes 10 new Masses along with the best and most popular Masses from her previous books, which have provided teachers and priests throughout the world with topical and engaging Masses for use with primary school children.

WAS €15.99 **€10.40**

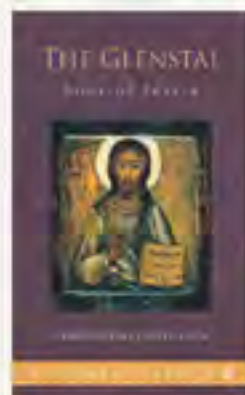
How to Defend Faith Without Raising Your Voice
Michael Kelly and Austen Ivereigh



How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice answers some of the most common criticisms of Catholicism and helps Catholics and non-Catholics alike to understand where the Church is coming from on controversial topics like abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage and the use of condoms in the fight against HIV.

WAS €14.99 **€9.75**

The Glenstal Book of Prayer
Monks of Glenstal Abbey



The Glenstal Book of Prayer is a rich resource for the mysterious, but exciting journey that is prayer. This prayer book draws on the wisdom of the Bible, enshrined in Benedictine liturgy, on the experience of modern monks, and on the wisdom of the Christian church.

WAS €12.99 **€8.45**

Five Years to Save the Irish Church
Various Authors



Many believe the death knell of the Catholic Church in Ireland has been sounded. This is the time for radical change. This book is a clarion call from some of the most respected and challenging religious commentators of our time for a new, inclusive form of Church.

WAS €9.99 **€6.50**

Tomorrow's Parish
Donal Harrington



This book is for anyone who has an interest in the future of the Church. It will be of particular importance to those involved in parish ministry and parish pastoral councils, offering a fundamental resource for their formation and organisation in a new context.

WAS €14.99 **€9.75**

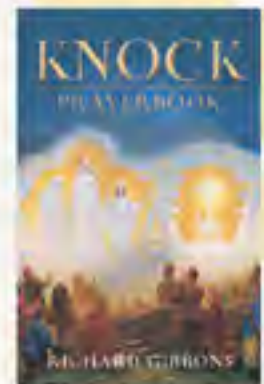
Clare's Wild Atlantic Way
Patrick G. Ryan



Clare's Wild Atlantic Way is a collection of aerial photographs, taken and compiled by pilot-photographer Patrick G. Ryan, that renders Clare's coast in all of its unique beauty. The awe-inspiring images capture both the rugged natural landscape of Clare and the man-made structures – castles, towers and lighthouses – that enhance it.

WAS €19.99 **€12.99**

Knock Prayer Book
Fr Richard Gibbons



The Knock Prayer Book is a resource for those who may not get the chance to pray, have forgotten how to or would just like something simple and accessible to help them journey along the pilgrim road of life.

WAS €14.99 **€9.75**

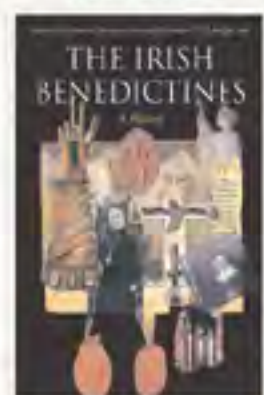
Achill: The Island
John F. Deane



Achill: The Island brings together celebrated poet John F. Deane and leading Irish sculptor John Behan in a tribute to the island close to their hearts, presenting an in-depth awareness of its people, its heritage, its spirituality and its physical wonder.

WAS €19.99 **€12.99**

The Irish Benedictines
Martin Browne



These essays celebrate and explore the stories of these Irish Benedictines over a period of 1400 years across Dark Age Europe, through Reformation England, war-torn Europe and into modern Africa. In exile and persecution they established centres of learning and refuge; returning to Ireland they continue to devote themselves to these activities, seeking to glorify God in all things.

WAS €29.99 **€19.50**

All the Risings
Kevin Kenna



An intriguing compilation of the major risings in Ireland's history – nine principal occasions on which resistance was made to the dominant forces who controlled the country's destiny. From the Battle of Clontarf in Dublin in the year 1014 up to the 1916 Easter Rising, this book is an excellent overview of the main events that have shaped Ireland's history.

was €14.99 **€9.75**

A Year in the Life: Glencainn Abbey
Valerie O'Sullivan



Through a series of images and words, we get a rare insight into the daily life of the Sisters of St Mary's Abbey in Glencainn, the only Cistercian monastery for women in Ireland. Their lives are a true, monastic journey fulfilling the motto of St Benedict *ora et labora* (prayer and work).

was €24.99 **€16.25**

Why the Irish Church Deserves to Die
Joe McDonald



The Catholic Church in Ireland is dying. While this death has been taking place for quite awhile, it is now accelerating. Uncompromising views, lack of accountability, unrealistic expectations and the inability to connect with younger generations have all taken a toll. Is it too late for salvation or is there still hope?

was €12.99 **€8.45**

Trinity: A Story of Deep Delight
Anne Marie Mongoven, O.P.



Sr Anne Marie Mongoven's book delves into the mysteries of the Trinity through investigation of dynamic literary images and reveals what the love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit can teach us about loving each other and ourselves.

was €14.99 **€9.75**

Mindful Meditations for Every Day
Sr Stan



Mindful Meditations for Every Day carries the reader through the calendar year, with daily meditations, mindfulness exercises and scripture for each month. The book can act both as a guide to the practice of mindfulness and as a source of daily inspiration.

was €12.99 **€8.45**

Mystics: The Beauty of Prayer
Craig Larkin



With *Mystics: The Beauty of Prayer* Fr Craig Larkin explores the lives and influence of fascinating characters like St Augustine, Julian of Norwich, Dante and St Teresa of Avila. There is a brief excerpt from the writings of each one, followed by the author's own reflections and insight.

was €12.99 **€8.45**

Prism of Love
Daniel O'Leary



In *Prism of Love*, Daniel O'Leary continues to share his passion for enriching the lives of his readers by guiding them through a daily reflection that allows readers to see beyond the present and realise the presence and profound mystery of our Lover-Creator in the everyday.

was €11.99 **€7.80**

Afterlife
Audrey Healy



In *Afterlife*, people from all over the world, of different ages, backgrounds and beliefs unite to share their experiences of after-death communication. After-death communication is the spontaneous communication from the deceased to the living, without the use of mediums, psychics or clairvoyants.

was €9.99 **€6.50**

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World Report

IN BRIEF

Australian prelate's appeal begins

● This week sees Australian Cardinal George Pell making a case for a last chance of freedom, with his case being heard by the Appeals Division of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

Three judges will preside over the June 5-6 hearing, with a decision expected within several months.

The cardinal was convicted on December 11 on five charges of sexually abusing the two boys while he was Archbishop of Melbourne in 1996 and 1997, after a previous trial for the same charges had left the jury deadlocked the previous August.

Cardinal Pell, who turns 78 on Saturday, is not required to attend the hearing in person. His legal team will argue the appeal on three grounds, most importantly that the December verdict was "unreasonable and cannot be supported having regard to the evidence".

EU bishops call for unity after elections

● Church leaders have welcomed the outcome of last week's EU elections as endorsing their continent's unity, but also called for stronger dialogue in European politics. "People have shown responsibility by voting. This is a very positive sign," said Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, president of the Brussels-based Commission of European Union Bishops' Conference, or COMECE.

"My message to politicians now is not just to engage in party politics, but to consider the needs of Europe's citizens," he said. "Europe is built on compromises, so we should move in that direction."

French commission into clerical sex abuse begins

● An independent commission set up by the French Catholic Church to look at allegations of clerical sexual abuse has begun its work by calling for witness statements.

The country's bishops decided in November to set up the commission following a series of scandals. It will investigate allegations of abuse stretching back to the 1950s.

"For the first time in France, an independent institution is going to

launch, over the course of a year, an appeal for witness statements about sexual abuse," commission president Jean-Marc Sauve said, promising that the 22-strong commission would deliver its findings by the end of next year.

Mr Sauve said he expects thousands of telephone calls to a special hotline, along with email messages, with abuse survivors being offered face-to-face interviews in a later stage.

Officials knew of McCarrick restrictions – former secretary

● Pope Benedict XVI imposed restrictions on the public ministry of former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick in 2008, but they were not formal sanctions and were not followed strictly, even during the papacy of Pope Benedict himself, McCarrick's former secretary has said.

Msgr Anthony Figueiredo, who was the former cardinal's secretary for nine months in 1994-1995, but continued to assist him from Rome, released extracts from correspondence last week, saying he wanted the truth out about what was known about McCarrick, when and by whom.

Besides knowing about the restrictions himself, the monsignor also said he had evidence that Washington DC's recently retired Cardinal Donald Wuerl knew about them, along with Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, then-prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, then-Vatican secretary of state and Archbishop Pietro Sambi.

Four Catholics die in latest Burkina Faso church attack

● Attackers believed to have been Muslim extremists have killed four people and wounded two more in a Catholic church in Burkina Faso. The attackers opened fire in the Church of Our Lady of All Joy in the village of Toulfe during Mass. In a statement, Bishop Justin Kientega of Ouahigouya urged Catholics to "pray for peace and the conversion of the executioners". No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Talks with Benedict 'give me strength': Pope Francis

Pope Francis has said that he continues to visit retired Pope Benedict XVI, 92, who is like a grandfather who continues to encourage him and give him strength.

"I take his hand and let him speak. He speaks little, at his own pace, but with the same profoundness as always. Benedict's problem are his knees, not his mind. He has a great lucidity," the Pope told journalists on June 2 on his return flight from Romania.

Asked about his relationship with his predecessor, the Pontiff said his conversations with Pope Benedict make him stronger, likening the knowledge he receives from his predecessor to sap "from the roots that help me to go forward".

"When I hear him speak, I become strong," he explained. "I feel this tradition of the Church. The tradition of the Church is not a museum. No, tradition is like the roots that give you the sap in order to grow."

"You won't become the root; you will grow and bear fruit and the seed will be root for others."

Recalling a quote by Austrian composer Gustav Mahler, he said tradition "is the guarantee of the future and not the custodian of ashes".



Pope Francis meets with retired Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican in April. "When I hear him speak, I become strong," Francis said. Photo: CNS

"The tradition of the church is always in motion," he said.

"The nostalgia of the 'integralists' is to return to the ashes," but that is not Catholic tradition; tradition is "the roots that guarantee the tree grows, blossoms and bears fruit".

Remarks

Referring to remarks he had made in Romania about unity and fraternity, he was asked about growing divisions within the European Union and said continental unity is a task for every European country.

"If Europe does not guard well against future challenges,

Europe will wither away," he warned, adding that while cultural differences must be respected, Europeans must not give in "to pessimism or ideologies".

The Pope also was asked about an event in the Romanian Orthodox Cathedral in Bucharest, where it appeared that many people at the gathering did not join in reciting the Lord's Prayer.

Where there is tension or conflict, the Pope said, Christians must have "a relationship with an outstretched hand."

"We must go forward together," he said, "always keeping in mind that ecumenism isn't about arriving at

the end of the game. Ecumenism means walking together, praying together, an ecumenism of prayer."

Ecumenism

Christians also share "an ecumenism of blood, an ecumenism of witness and what I call 'an ecumenism of the poor' – working together to help the sick, those who are on the margins", he added.

The Pontiff said Chapter 25 of St Matthew's Gospel – where Jesus says those who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and prisoners do the same for him – "is a good ecumenical program".

Shooting sign of broken culture, American bishop says

American society needs to examine why mass shootings and other violent incidents occur, the chairman of the US bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development has said following the murder of 12 people in Virginia.

"This shooting reminds us yet again that something is fundamentally broken in our society and culture when ordinary workplaces can become scenes of violence and contempt for human life," Bishop Frank Dewane of Venice, Florida, said in a statement, calling on society to look at ways to "root out the causes of

such evil".

"Action is needed to attempt to reduce the frequency of these abhorrent acts through legislation and training," the bishop said, continuing: "I call on Catholics around the country to pray for the dead and injured as well as for healing in the community."

Authorities at Virginia Beach said that a 15-year employee of the city's Department of Public Works entered a building in a municipal complex shortly after 4pm on May 31 and began shooting people. Twelve people died and six were injured

in the mayhem, they said, with all but one of those who died being city employees.

Police Chief James Cervera would not discuss a motive for the shooting, but said the shooter, DeWayne Craddock, had been employed by the city as an engineer, working as a project manager and contact for utility projects. According to Virginia Beach City Manager Dave Hansen, Craddock had resigned hours ahead of the shooting, citing "personal reasons".

Philippine police use Marian festival to win hearts

Philippine authorities are trying to win the hearts and minds of people amid allegations that police officers have been behind many of the thousands of drug-related killings that have stained the country's image in recent years, ucanews.com reported.

At a police camp in the central Philippines, police hosted a traditional 'Flores de Mayo, ('Flowers of May') celebration in honour of Mary.

Regional police spokeswoman Police Lt. Col. Bella Rentuaya said law enforcement officers were doing

their best to teach children how to become "God-loving, responsible human beings and disciplined citizens".

"Aside from teaching them how to pray, we also provide lessons on rights awareness and health issues," she said.

Florlyn Gapul, a police

officer who worked with the children, admitted that since the government launched its anti-narcotics war in 2016, there has been an "apparent gap" on how the public look at law enforcement authorities. "We are doing (Flores de Mayo) to bridge the gap," she said.



Edited by Colm Fitzpatrick
colm@irishcatholic.ie

Remembering Romanian martyrs



Pope Francis marks an icon of seven martyred bishops of the Eastern-rite Romanian Catholic Church during their beatification at a Divine Liturgy at Liberty Field in Blaj, Romania. Photo: CNS

East African bishops develop child protection handbook

Catholic bishops of East Africa have introduced a handbook to help Church leaders develop standards to safeguard the safety of children.

Child Safeguarding – Standards and Guidelines: A Catholic Guide for Policy Development was introduced in the Kenyan capital by the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa, known as AMECEA.

The release followed a three-day child safety seminar over May 28-30 attended by bishops, other clergy, religious men and women and laypeople working in various ministries.

George Thuku, AMECEA's child protection officer, said the handbook is expected to be used by each national

bishops' conference throughout the region as they establish their own safeguarding policies.

"Each of the national episcopal conferences should ensure that it has officially launched its national policy on the issue, child safeguarding," he said.

Requirements

The handbook sets the minimum requirements for individual bishops' conference to follow, according to Fr Emmanuel Chimombo, director of AMECEA's Pastoral Department.

"The document is not everything, but has minimum standards and guidelines that the Church in the region can effectively use to tackle matters pertaining to

the child safeguarding and protection," he said.

Archbishop Ignatius Chama of Kasama, Zambia, said the handbook builds on discussions by the heads of the world's bishops' conferences during February's Vatican summit on child protection.

"Whichever way you look at it, the two complement each other, not forgetting that some national conferences in the region had already formulated the policy before the bishops' summit," Bishop Chama said.

"But whichever way, the Holy Father Pope Francis must be thanked for his input on the issue."

Arrested Catholic activist accused of 'undermining' Vietnamese govt

Police in Vietnam have been accused of abducting a Catholic advocate for social and charitable activities.

Nguyen Thi Tinh said her husband Nguyen Nang Tinh, 43, was seized and pushed into a truck by police officers while he and their two sons were on their way to breakfast on May 29, ucanews.com

reported.

The official police newspaper in the province said Nang Tinh was arrested for "producing, disseminating or spreading information and documents aimed at undermining" Vietnam. Authorities also threatened to arrest other activists, including Fr Anthony Dang Huu Nam and

Fr John Baptist Nguyen Dinh Thuc, whom they described as "reactionaries".

Activities

After news of the abduction spread, hundreds of Catholics gathered on May 29 at My Khanh Church in the province to pray for Nang Tinh, who had been involved in rights,

justice, cultural and religious activities in the Diocese of Vinh.

Presiding at the gathering, Fr Nam said: "I will be happy if communists hate, persecute, imprison or kill me as they have said because in that way I know I belong to God, the Church, the truth and you."

Vatican roundup

Pope's teachings on devil focus of new book

A new book of Pope Francis' teachings on the history of the devil, "his empty promises and works" and "how we can actively combat him" has been published by the US hierarchy.

Titled *Rebuking the Devil*, the book is meant for a wide audience and "shows us how to recognise the tricks of the enemy, avoid his traps and defeat his efforts through the power of God in Jesus Christ", according to a statement from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"In this important book, Pope Francis tells us how to use powerful tools of spiritual combat against the devil," said Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, chairman of the US bishops' Committee on Communications.

Those tools, he said, include "the word of God, adoration of God in the Blessed Sacrament, participation in the Sacraments, fasting, prayer and the intercession of Mary, Mother of God, through the most holy Rosary".

"We must recognise that there is a devil who is alive and active, but there is also a shield against him through the power of Jesus Christ!" he continued.

Trócaire now under new Vatican department

The Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development will oversee the activity of Caritas Internationalis, the Church's confederation of Catholic aid agencies, the Vatican has said.

The confederation, which includes Trócaire, had been entrusted to the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, which ceased to exist when the council's work became part of the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in 2016.

The general decree – signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, and approved by Pope

Francis – was dated May 22 and published by the Vatican on May 31.

"Caritas Internationalis very much welcomes the new decree from the Holy Father. It reflects a simplification of our legal standing" and was the result of working with the secretary of state, said Patrick Nicholson, director of communications for the confederation.

The decree reiterates the different roles Vatican offices and the Pope play in working with the charity confederation, including naming and approving new board members and approving its texts, contracts with foreign governments and financial transactions.

US professor receives papal foundation prize

Two top cardinals have praised an academic from Villanova University in Pennsylvania for her work fostering dialogue between the fields of economics and theology.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, and Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising thanked Mary Hirschfeld for her work during an award ceremony on May 29. The Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation awarded its Economy and Society international prize to Hirschfeld for her book *Aquinas and the Market: Toward a Humane Economy*.

The foundation said Hirschfeld's innovative approach offered economists "a broader view" of what constitutes a good life, "giving a critical accent to the ethical deficiencies of modern capitalism".

Cardinal Parolin thanked Hirschfeld for her choice of topic, "which is of great importance for the Church's social doctrine and for building a more human economy". While theology and social doctrine often draw upon St Thomas's teachings, modern economics often does not, he added.

Cardinal Marx, chairman of the jury conferring the award, said in his speech that Hirschfeld's book "constitutes a true dialogue between theology and economics".

Letter from Rome

Following in anti-populist footsteps

Although right-wing populist Matteo Salvini is now Italy's undisputed political leader after his Lega party finished in first place in last week's European elections, he doesn't bask in universal acclaim. Among other expressions of disapproval, some Italians who reject his anti-immigrant, anti-outsider rhetoric have taken to showing up at his rallies and other events dressed as Zorro, the legendary swordfighter.

Thus it was that the Italian news magazine *L'Espresso*, attempting to capture the obvious tension between Salvini's vision and that of Italy's other undisputed point of reference, Pope Francis, put an image of the Argentinian Pontiff in a Zorro costume on the cover of last week's issue. (The headline was '*Zorro subito!*', a play on the famous chant at the funeral Mass of Pope John Paul II, '*Santo subito!*', meaning 'Sainthood now!')

The cover story was introduced by an essay from Marco Damilano, the editor of *L'Espresso* and a veteran Italian journalist who got his start working on a news magazine published by the Italian bishops. (It was eventually suppressed, by the way, amid charges of censorship in the era of Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the ultra-powerful Vicar of Rome and president of the Italian bishops' conference under Pope St John Paul II.)

Movements

To begin with, Damilano made the interesting observation that many of today's nationalist populist movements in Europe appear to have their greatest strength in territories of the former Habsburg Empire: Hungary, parts of Poland, and northern Italy, the former Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, which today forms the base of Salvini's Lega party, formerly the 'Northern League'.

Of course, that leaves France and the UK out of the equation, where populist movements also finished first in the European elections, but the overlap with Habsburg lands is nevertheless striking. At one level, it's entirely understandable, given that defending the Catholic-Christian identity of Europe was part of the empire's rhetoric and

Papal opposition to right-wing demagogues is nothing new, writes
John L. Allen Jr



Italy's Interior Minister and Deputy-Premier Matteo Salvini.

ideology.

Still, the Habsburgs also had a reputation for handling what was then known as Europe's 'nationalities' problem more successfully than most, allowing their territories significant self-government and turning the senior ranks of both the military and the civil service into a genuine melting pot.

It's ironic, therefore, that the 21st-Century version of the 'nationalities' problem is especially acute in the same place which, not so long ago, was considered an exemplar of enlightenment.

More provocative still, however, was Damilano's comparison between Salvini and Charles Maurras, a 19th-Century philosopher, poet and political activist who was the intellectual architect of Action Française, a royalist and nationalist movement extolling integralism and Catholicism as alternatives to what they regarded as an unstable and unreliable parliamentary democracy.

Maurras himself was a non-believer, but he saw traditional Catholicism as a force of order in French society, especially in the wake of the revolution. As

Damilano put it, Maurras had little use for the Christianity of the Gospels, which he regarded as anarchic, preferring the Church that resulted from the Edict of Milan and its close alliance between throne and altar.

(No one, by the way, is suggesting that Salvini has quite so erudite a conception of the Lega, although he too is given to invoking the symbols and heroes of Catholicism to make his points, often brandishing a rosary at his rallies and even in his post-election press conference on the evening of May 26.)

“In standing up to today's right-wing, nationalist and populist movements in Europe, Francis...is building on what's been a consistent papal policy since Pius XI”

Despite the fact that Action Française promoted Catholicism and that most of its members, including a significant swath of the French clergy, were Catholic, it ran afoul of ecclesiastical authority.

Watching things unfold from Rome, Pope Pius XI became concerned about Maurras's unorthodox conception of Christianity and especially the influence that Action Française was exercising over French Catholic youth. In December 1926 Pius XI issued an official condemnation of the group, and several of Maurras's writings were placed on the Vatican's index of forbidden books.

Famously, those moves did not go down well with the French Jesuit Cardinal Louis Billot, who believed that Rome should support the monarchist and nationalist currents in the country. He



protested vigorously, leading to a September 1927 meeting with Pius XI in which he submitted his resignation as a cardinal, becoming the only Prince of the Church in the 20th Century to lose that status.

Crackdown

The papal crackdown significantly diminished the following of Action Française, though it managed to keep going at a reduced level and is still in existence today following several reformations and transformations. However, it was denied any possibility of suggesting Church support for its activities and ideas.

That background suggests the following food for thought: in standing up to today's right-wing, nationalist and populist movements in Europe, Francis isn't simply indulging a personal whim but building on what's been a consistent papal policy since Pius XI – who was also the Pope who decided to end the 'Roman Question' with the 1929 Lateran Pacts, essentially signalling that the Vatican had made its peace with the separation of Church and state.

(As a footnote, though he's hardly there yet, German Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former head of the Vatican's doctrinal agency, could be on his way to becoming the Billot of the Salvini era. In the wake of the elections, he publicly counselled the Pope and his team to pipe down and make nice in an interview

with Italy's daily paper of record, *Corriere della Sera*: "A Church authority cannot speak in such an amateur way about theological questions and especially it must not intrude in politics, when there is a democratically legitimised parliament and government as there is in Italy," Müller said.)

“In the wake of the elections, he publicly counselled the Pope and his team to pipe down and make nice”

Whenever Francis is seen as challenging Europe's populist tide with his open support for migrants and refugees, it's often framed as a maverick Third World Pope once again breaking the mould and leading the Church into a new era.

What history may actually suggest, however, is that the perceived antagonism between the Matteo Salvini of the world and the Catholic forces mobilised by Francis is that this is indeed an expression of a new era – but one launched long before Francis got here, which has become more or less standard operating procedure for Popes regardless of their provenance.

John Allen Jr is Editor of *Cruz.com*



Elise Harris

A month on, Vanier as 'modern-day prophet'

At nearly a month since his passing, the legacy of Jean Vanier is far from forgotten, and continues to live on in friends and colleagues who say the Canadian theologian not only impacted their lives personally, but also changed theology and the way the Church views the human person.

"He was such a humble man with such a passion for what he did, he was adamant that he was going to do something that would make a difference, and it wasn't about fame, it was about putting his ministry on the map, and he did that by creating homes for people and vehicles for relation," Cristina Gangemi said in an interview.

"Do I think Jean Vanier is a saint? I think Jean Vanier is a modern-day prophet," she said.

Gangemi is co-director of The Kairos Forum and an expert in pastoral care for people with intellectual disabilities. In the past, she has partnered with the Vatican Council for the New Evangelisation in organising and hosting conferences on catechesis for people with disabilities.

She was speaking nearly a month after the May 7 death of Vanier, who lost a battle with cancer at the age of 90, passing away in a Paris facility run by the L'Arche community that he founded in 1964.

Born in 1928 in Geneva to Canadian parents, Vanier eventually abandoned his academic endeavors and, after befriending a French priest, became aware of people suffering from disabilities. In response, he invited a couple of other friends to come live with him and a handful of disabled persons in Trosly-Breuil, France, launching what became the L'Arche movement.

In 1971, Vanier co-founded the Faith and Light movement, focused on people with learning disabilities. L'Arche has spread to more than 37 countries, and Faith and Light to roughly 80.

Christian efficiency

After his death, Pope Francis told reporters on board his flight from Skopje, Macedonia to Rome that Vanier was "a man who knew how to read the Christian efficiency of the mystery of death, the cross, of sickness, the mystery of those who are disrespected and discarded by the world."

"He didn't just work for the least of us, but also for those who, before being born, there is the possibility of condemning them to death," he said, calling Vanier "a great witness."

According to Gangemi, Vanier gave the world an image of humanity "where diversity was our richness." And the core of this image, she said, was Vanier's call to follow God "in the fullest love"



Jean Vanier.

through the friendships he built.

"I think that what it did was it woke the world up."

In what could be seen as part of this "waking-up" experience, Vanier's influence has not only opened the door for thoughtful reflection on those with intellectual disabilities, but his practical legacy continues to ripple through the Church, influencing Catholic minds and inspiring action.

In terms of his practical impact on theology, pioneering what has become known as the "theology of disability", Gangemi said Vanier "transformed theology, there's no doubt about that, and nobody else has done what Jean has done. No one."

Luca Badetti, who holds a PhD in disability studies with background in clinical psychology and theology, hailed Vanier as a model who not only shaped his vision of humanity, but who inspired his own career.

Speaking to Crux, Badetti said he first came into contact with L'Arche about 10 years ago in the United States. He joined the movement while living in the Boston area and

moved to different communities in Europe, including the house in Trosly-Breuil, where Vanier lived.

After spending several years as part of the L'Arche community, he chose to do his doctorate in disability studies, and has recently published a book based on his experience in community, *I Believe in You*, with a forward written by Vanier.

Badetti hailed Vanier as a simple and humble man whose "profound and grounded gentleness" stuck out the most.

This was lived out primarily in simple everyday experiences, he said, recalling one night in community when Vanier gathered everyone into a circle to discuss their fears. At another point, Badetti recalled walking down the hall while Vanier was speaking to someone else and, after seeing him, Vanier removed his hat and made a small bow.

"It was such a fun, nice little thing," Badetti said, explaining that for him, this gesture "really shows that he noticed and he had a respectful demeanor in front of humanity, in front of people," but especially the marginalised,

including those with intellectual disabilities.

"In his vision he emphasised how precious and important they are. I think this has also influenced hopefully the Church, especially toward his later years," he said, noting that at times there is a danger of treating disabled people "as inferior," even unintentionally.

"Even if people have the intention of doing good, there is always a sort of power deferential, like 'I'm better and I can help you'," Badetti said, adding that for him, Vanier's style of community was a "refreshing" way of viewing the disabled as equals.

Similarly, Fr Daniel Hess, a priest from Cincinnati working on a doctoral thesis exploring the reception of the Eucharist by people with disabilities, said that although he was already exploring the theology of disability, Vanier has catapulted and deepened his research.

Hess, whose youngest sister has Downs Syndrome, said that he "can't imagine life without her" and believes her presence in his family

helped plant the seeds for his vocation to the priesthood.

While in seminary, he wrote a master's thesis on the possibility of marriage for people with Down syndrome, and that it was during his research that he encountered Vanier's 1984 book, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, which explored human sexuality.

"I discovered that in Christian theology Vanier has a distinct voice and an incredible voice," Hess said, saying he "devoured" the book, finding it "inspiring and excellent".

"That was my introduction to Jean Vanier and the theology of disability, and it was inspiring, it was hope-filled and it was beautiful," Hess said, calling Vanier "a very unique witness to and voice of what it means to live with that daily awareness of daily vulnerability and dependence."

"I discovered that in Christian theology Vanier has a distinct voice and an incredible voice"

One of Vanier's great gifts, he said, is that "he can put words to it...he lives it but with his philosophical and theological background he writes about it and gives testimony to a life that is bigger than living for gain or for advancement...it's almost an invitation to live in a preternatural way".

On whether the answer ought to be 'yes' or 'no' for disabled people to receive the Sacraments, Hess said theologians have mixed answers, and that while he personally would recommend allowing disabled persons to receive the Eucharist on a case-by-case basis, "we're walking delicately".

Although all people can receive Baptism, the *Latin Code of Canon* limits the reception of the other sacraments of initiation, such as Confirmation and the Eucharist, to those who have reached the age of reason, meaning they are often not given to severely developmentally challenged adults. (In the Eastern rite Church, all three sacraments are given to infants, so it is less of an issue.)

Either way, they should be a part of the regular parish community, including during the liturgy, he said, adding that for him, the takeaway from Vanier is that if a community "doesn't include people with disabilities, and serious disabilities, it doesn't really reflect the Church, the body of Christ, fully".

Elise Harris is a correspondent with Crux.com

"After his death, Pope Francis told reporters on board his flight from Skopje, Macedonia to Rome that Vanier was 'a man who knew how to read the Christian efficiency of the mystery of death, the cross, of sickness, the mystery of those who are disrespected and discarded by the world'"

Pope in new interview: 'I knew nothing' about Theodore McCarrick

In his first direct comments about the case of Theodore McCarrick, Pope Francis said that "about McCarrick I knew nothing, obviously, nothing, nothing".

"I said it many times, I knew nothing, no idea," Francis said in an interview with Mexican journalist Valentina Alazraki.

Speaking about the allegation made by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, who claimed last August that he had told the Pope about Vatican-imposed restrictions against the former Archbishop of Washington, Francis said that "I don't remember if he told me about this. If it's true or not. No idea! But you know that about McCarrick, I knew nothing. If not, I wouldn't have remained quiet, right?"

McCarrick was removed from the college of cardinals last year, after it was alleged he sexually abused both minors and seminarians. Earlier this year, the Vatican announced Francis had removed him from the clerical state, after he was found guilty.

In a wide-ranging interview, he also spoke about the US and Mexico.

Speaking about the trip he took to Mexico in 2016, where he said Mass at the US border, Francis said that he doesn't understand this "new culture of defending territories by building a wall".

"We know of one, the Berlin one, that brought us many headaches and a lot of suffering ...but it seems that what man does is what animals don't. Right? Man is the only animal that falls twice in the same hole. Right? We go back to the same. Right? [Man] lifts up walls as if this was the defence. Right? When the defence is dialogue, growth, welcoming and education, integration, or the healthy limit of saying 'we can't [welcome] anyone else.'"

Migration

Still talking about migration, the Pontiff turned to the example of what's going on in the Spanish region of Ceuta and Melilla, which is on the coast of North Africa and is separated from Morocco by razor-wire fences. Francis said it's cruel to separate children from their parents, and it goes against natural law.

Asked what he'd say if instead of Alazraki the Pope was facing



Inés San Martín

American President Donald Trump with no cameras on, Francis said that he would say the same thing because he's said so in public before.

"I also said in public that those who build walls ends up prisoner of the walls they build," Francis said, adding that territory can be defended, but perhaps through a bridge rather than a wall. "But I'm talking about political bridges, cultural bridges. We cannot build bridges at every border, right? It's impossible."

In relation to the case of the disgraced Argentine bishop 'parked' at the Vatican, Alazraki asked the Pope about Bishop Gustavo Zanchetta, the former bishop of Oran, in northern Argentina, who was transferred by the Pope to the Vatican, and who's currently suspended from his position at the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See (APSA).

“The clergy didn't feel well treated by him...they complained until they made an allegation as a body to the Nunciature”

The journalist said many don't understand why Francis brought him to Rome to begin with, when there were already allegations against the bishop.

The Pontiff confirmed that Zanchetta is currently being judged by the Vatican.

"Before I asked for his resignation, there was an accusation, and I immediately made him come over with the person who accused him and explain it," Francis said.

The accusation involved the bishop's phone, which contained homosexual pornography, and explicit sexual images of Zanchetta in his bedroom.

"The defense is that he had his phone hacked, and he made a good defense," the Pope said, adding that it created enough doubt, so Francis told Zanchetta to go back.

"Evidently he had, some say,

Then-Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, exchanges the sign of peace with Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington before his removal from the college of cardinals.



despotic treatment of others – he was bossy," and a "not completely clear dealing of finances," though as the Pope noted, this hasn't been proven.

"But certainly, the clergy didn't feel well treated by him," Francis said. "They complained until they made an allegation as a body to the Nunciature," meaning the Vatican's embassy in Argentina.

The Pope said that he then called the nuncio, who told him that the allegation of mistreatment was "serious," and the Pope understood it to be a case of "abuse of power." So, he sent Zanchetta to Spain to receive psychological treatment and asked him to resign from the Diocese of Oran.

The treatment, Francis said, found that Zanchetta was within the normal range, but they advised he received further treatment once a month in Madrid, so the Pope took him to Rome. In his own words, "parked him" in Italy.

When it comes to the fact that Zanchetta is accused of misusing funds, Francis said that at present there is no evidence of that, only that he wasn't "ordered" when it came to money. Despite not being good at keeping track, the

Pontiff said, the bishop had a "good vision."

Once he had a replacement for the bishop, the Pontiff said, he opened the investigation of the allegations. He received the result of the investigation 15 days ago, "and I decided that it's necessary to have a trial. So, I gave it to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith."

Regarding the "impatient ones" who accuse him of having done nothing, Francis said that the Pope doesn't have to "go publishing everyday what he's doing, but I was never not on this case from the first moment".

As Francis noted, he asked for the investigation late last year, but between the holidays and the slowness of Argentina's summer – which takes place from December to March – things took longer than they should have.

"There are cases that are long, that wait more [like this one], and I explain why, because I didn't have the elements," he said. But now that he does, Zanchetta is on trial. "Meaning, I didn't stop."

Francis also said that he must always follow the principle of "presumption of innocence,"

something even the most "anti-clerical judges" follow. However, he said, there are cases where the guilt "is evident," as was the case of McCarrick, which is the reason why he removed him from the college of cardinals even before the trial had ended.

“Between the holidays and the slowness of Argentina's summer things took longer than they should have”

Speaking about the Council of Cardinals that advises the Pope on the reform of the Roman curia, Francis said that it was "obvious" that Cardinal Javier Errazuriz, emeritus of Santiago, Chile, couldn't continue to be a part of the team. Francis doesn't give a reason, though he does lump him in with Australian Cardinal George Pell, who's "imprisoned and condemned, well, he appealed, but he has been condemned."

Errazuriz is one of nine Chilean bishops who've been subpoenaed by the prosecutors' office on



Pope Francis waves outside St Patrick's City Church in Washington while accompanied by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, then the apostolic nuncio to the United States. Photos: CNS

charges that he covered up cases of clerical sexual abuse.

Allegations

As Alazraki noted, there are also allegations against the coordinator of the group, Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, of Honduras. Francis said that "the poor [man] will get things from every side, but there's nothing proven, no ... He's honest and I made sure to find things out. In this case, it's calumnies."

"No one has been able to prove anything to me," the Pontiff said. "Maybe he made some mistakes, he's done things wrong, but not at the level that they want to hang on him. It is important, so I defend him on this."

Francis said that he wouldn't know how to give a sociological explanation for what's happening with violence against women, but

"I would dare to say that women today are still in a secondary place".

In the collective imagination to this day, he said, when a woman reaches a position of power, it's noted as a thing: "Oh, see, a woman made it! She got a Nobel prize. Great coincidence."

Going from being "in second place" to being treated as slaves, Francis said, it's not a long road. It happens in Italy, he said, in the streets of Rome, where women are forced into prostitution. "They are enslaved women. Enslaved. They're for that...and well, going from there to killing them..."

The number of femicides is growing throughout Latin America, with one woman being killed every 40 hours in Argentina by a partner or former partner.

"The world without women doesn't function," he said. "Not because she's the one who brings

children [into the world], let's leave procreation to the side...a house without women doesn't function. There's a word that is about to fall out of the dictionary, because everyone is afraid of it: tenderness. It's the patrimony of the woman. Now, from there to femicide, slavery, there's one step. What is the hatred, I wouldn't be able to explain it."

* * * * *

As is often the case when he speaks to reporters, Francis answered questions about homosexuality.

He was asked in particular about something he said last year, that parents who have gay children should consult a specialist.

He said that "homosexual persons have the right to be with their families and the parents have the right to recognise their son as homosexual and their daughter as

homosexual. No one can be kicked out of their family, nor have their lives made impossible because of that..."

To say that a person has a right to be in their families, the Pope continued, does not mean to "approve homosexual acts, in the least".

Asked about the fact that in Argentina he was known as "doctrinally conservative", the Pope interrupted Alazraki to say: "I am conservative."

"But when you were made Pope, it seemed you became much more liberal than when you were in Argentina," the journalist replied.

"The grace of the Holy Spirit certainly exists," Francis answered. "I have always defended doctrine. And it is curious, in the law about homosexual marriage... it's a contradiction to speak about homosexual marriage."

Nevertheless, Francis does acknowledge that he's a different person than he was before being elected to the pontificate in 2013.

"I trust that I've grown some, that I've sanctified myself some more. One changes in life. That I extended my criteria, that it is possible, seeing the world's problems I am more aware about things I wasn't conscious of before. No, I think in that sense there have been changes, yes. But I am conservative...I am both things."

“Asked about what he thinks is the most beautiful thing he’s done, the Pope said that it’s ‘being with the people’”

Speaking about his relationship with the media, he said that he's grown to appreciate it, and that he understands the need for journalists to be critical, though he doesn't mind correcting them when he thinks they've been unfair. Reporters, the Pope said, don't only have the responsibility of being critical but also of "building".

Asked about what he thinks is the most beautiful thing he's done, the Pope said that it's "being with the people", spending time in the slums, the prisons, the public squares.

Going through his mistakes, he said that something he wouldn't do the same way is how he handled the situation in Chile, where he made some errors of judgements, things that he had "to correct" after making bad judgements.

Questions

Francis admitted in the interview that the questions from journalists made him rethink his strong defence of Bishop Juan Barros, who had been accused of covering up the abuse of notorious paedophile and former priest Fernando Karadima.

In his interview with Alazraki, the Pope admitted that after journalists asked him about the case, he reflected and prayed about the issue, before sending someone to investigate the situation.

"I realised that the information I had was not what I had seen [previously]," he said.

Alazraki came to international attention when she was asked to address the Vatican summit on clerical sexual abuse which took place in Rome over February 21-24. She told the presidents of the world's bishops' conferences that journalists will be the bishops' "worst enemies" if they continue to cover up abuse.

① Inés San Martín is Rome Bureau Chief and co-editor of Crux.com

“Going from being ‘in second place’ to being treated as slaves, Francis said, it’s not a long road. It happens in Italy, he said, in the streets of Rome, where women are forced into prostitution. ‘They are enslaved women. Enslaved. They’re for that...and well, going from there to killing them...’”

Letters

Letter of the week

Focus on today's sins, not yesterday's

Dear Editor, We in the Republic of Ireland have had the most anti-Christian government in Europe for the past eight years.

We have had legislation redefining marriage, legalising abortion and now proposals leading to quickie divorces. In addition religious symbols have been removed from hospital wards and corridors and every effort is being made to remove religious teaching from our schools.

In 2013 the then Government leader introduced abortion legislation into Irish law for the first time, despite having publicly promised before the election that he would not do so – some action from an individual who claims to be a practicing Catholic.

Had Eamon de Valera as Taoiseach attempted to introduce similar legislation it is doubtful if Archbishops McQuaid and Fogarty would have remained silent.

The Marriage Act 2015, which gave legal recognition to same sex marriage, changed the centuries old definition of marriage, and marriage in the Republic of Ireland can no longer be defined according to the historic doctrines of Christian faith.

We have so-called practicing Catholics who propose, support and vote for legislation which is contrary to the fundamental teaching of the Catholic Church and some of those people continue to actively participate in the celebration of the Mass, both as

Readers and Ministers of the Eucharist.

In recent years the leadership of the Catholic Church in Ireland, with a few notable exceptions, have been silent on what is happening in the country. Maybe it is time for Church leaders to move on from continuously apologising for the sins of the past, which was a very dark period in the Church's history.

It might be time now to address the sins of the present in society and not be shy to confront civil leaders and the liberal left media who together are attacking the Christian ethos of the nation.

*Yours etc.,
Michael Donnellan,
Ballymote, Co. Sligo.*

Science can bring people closer to God

Dear Editor, There is a widespread false assumption that science and faith are in conflict with one another. Recent studies, moreover, have demonstrated that this is one of the commonest reasons given by young people who decide to jettison their Christian faith. And in modern Ireland we have a real difficulty in that in the mainstream, catechetical initiatives are neither intellectually robust or apologetically fruitful in face of scientific worldview. Thankfully, an association of Catholic scientists are hosting their Third

Annual Conference this month at the University of Notre Dame, in Indiana. The overall theme, 'What does it mean to be human?' will feature cutting-edge talks from Theistic Evolution to Modern Cosmology.

There is a rich vein of scientific intellectual history running through great figures of deep Christian faith, such as Johannes Kepler, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton etc., all of whom consistently affirmed their scientific studies brought them closer to God, and not farther away.

Thus the case can be forthrightly

made for enlisting the scientific project in the New Evangelisation, as expressed by St John Paul II in his 1997 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*.

Incidentally, at this year's conference, Prof. Maureen Condic, a neuroscientist and embryologist of the University of Utah, will be honoured with the St Albert Award, for her courageous scientific and philosophical defence of the humanity of human embryos.

*Yours etc.,
David Walshe,
Malahide, Co. Dublin.*

When does Church act?

Dear Editor, When a new covenant, "in which the Church and faith-based organisations are no longer at the centre of Irish life, but one in which they still have a place" is spoken of by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, I wonder what is envisioned.

Will the Church be expected or allowed to pick up the pieces of a broken secular society, without making the input that could have prevented the brokenness in the first place?

I hope our Bishops will take warning from Cardinal Newman, due to be canonised soon, who said: "All Churches must examine their consciences as to possible inordinate links with the political structures surrounding them. Such a liaison paralyses the Church's essential prophetic task of proclamation, and, worst of all, takes the Church's eyes off Jesus, our unique consoler and companion along the roads of history and the byways of the world."

*Yours etc.,
Judith Leonard,
Raheny, Dublin 5.*



'Trifling issue' shows need for higher standards

Dear Editor, Mary Kenny's article asking whether there is a moral dimension to the Maria Bailey saga (IC 30/5/2019) beggars belief.

Yes, she's right of course to say that there are moral dimensions to the question of liability and to how we should be honest with ourselves and ask if we should take responsibilities for our mishaps, since accidents do happen.

And yet, Mrs Kenny also argues that Ms Bailey did nothing wrong, but instead "just showed poor judgement in making a federal case out of an incident

which, though evidently painful for herself, was nevertheless trifling".

Ms Bailey had originally claimed that after her fall from a swing in 2015 she had not been able to run for three months; it subsequently transpired that she had ran a 10km race just three weeks into that period. Well, she told RTÉ's Seán O'Rourke, her 53-minute-56-second running time hadn't been good by her standards, although it was just 44 seconds slower than her time in the same race the previous year, and while over a minute slower than her 2013

record, it was over four minutes' faster than her time in the 2012 race before that.

I'm not sure that this kind of stuff counts simply as errors of judgment. Perhaps Ms Bailey has indeed done nothing legally wrong, but in discussions of moral dimensions we should consider higher bars than whatever the State happens to think the law should be at any given point.

*Yours etc.,
Geraldine Kelly,
Drogheda, Co. Louth.*

facebook community

Each week we publish a selection of comments from *The Irish Catholic* Facebook page

Delight at President Trump's visit to Ireland – Clare priest

That's capitalism. Would they prefer not having the opportunity to work? – **Ronnie Pryor**

How did his (current) anti-abortion position (he waxes and wains on all of his principles) become the only thing that matters to so many people? Do we care about refugees? Do we care about peace in our world? Do we care about people with disabilities? Do we care about proper treatment of women or is it 'grab away Mr President'? – **Jim Deeds**

EU should uphold Christian values on which it is built – bishops

A poll last year revealed that 54% of the population in the UK ticked the box as having no religion. That's an amazing figure of 60 million people. Secularism is a growing trend and a new culture is going to take over again as cultures die and are reborn on average every 300 years or so. It will be the fall of Rome all over again only this time with Wi-Fi... – **Stephen McElligott**

How can it take so long for church leaders to express themselves? – **Peter McNamee**

Irish Catholic Pro-Life Conference

All of the speakers were super. The big important lesson is: be not afraid, we are on the side of right and truth. I urge all people go beyond your initial first fear and you will become a fearless warrior. – **John Taaffe**

In historical terms Ireland's defection is sad but not really a world class 'game-changer'. In the long term after the revolutionary fervour has faded, it will probably end up as a sort of 'Cuba', clinging to a 60s ideology while the rest of the world moves on. – **Charles Glenn**

They saw only what the media told them about religion – Digital Faith Conference

I pity children who are brought up to believe that life is meaningless and who will have nothing in their lives to comfort and console them if they suffer a tragedy such as losing a loved one or if they contract a terminal illness. What do atheists tell teenagers who are terminally ill or children who lose a parent? It seems so cold and cruel to deprive them of all hope. – **Mary Murphy**

What do you think? Join in the conversation on *The Irish Catholic* Facebook page

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Around the world



ITALY: Nuns arrive to cast their votes in the European Parliament elections at a polling station in Rome. Photos: CNS



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis holds a soccer ball given by representatives of the Clericus Cup during his general audience in St. Peter's Square. The Clericus Cup soccer tournament involves 16 teams from the pontifical seminaries and universities in Rome.



BELGIUM: A woman holds a placard during a demonstration called 'No fascism in Belgium or in Europe!' outside the European Parliament in Brussels. Catholic Church leaders welcomed the outcome of key European Union elections as endorsing their continent's unity.



PARAGUAY: A church is seen partially submerged in floodwaters after heavy rains caused the Paraguay River to overflow in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Asuncion last week.



ROMANIA: Children sing as they wait for Pope Francis' arrival for a meeting with members of the Roma community in Blaj.



USA: People attend a prayer vigil for the victims of a shooting at the municipal government complex in Virginia Beach, Virginia. In the wake of the May 31 mass shooting that left 12 people dead in Virginia Beach, the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development called for American society to examine why such violent incidents continue to occur.

Jesus died afraid...many do



A common soldier dies without fear; Jesus died afraid. Iris Murdoch wrote those words which, I believe, help expose an oversimplistic notion we have of how Faith reacts in the face of death.

There's a popular notion that believes that if we have strong Faith we should not suffer any undue fear in the face of death, but rather face it with calm, peace and even gratitude because we have nothing to fear from God or the afterlife. Christ has overcome death. Death sends us to heaven. So why be afraid?

This is, in fact, the case for many women and men, some with Faith and some without it. Many people face death with very little fear. The biographies of the saints give ample testimony to this and many of us have stood at the deathbed of people who will never be canonised but who faced their death calm and unafraid.

So why was Jesus afraid? And it appears he was. Three of the Gospels describe Jesus as far from calm and peaceful, as sweating blood during the hours leading up to this death. Mark's Gospel describes him as particularly distressed as he is dying: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" What's to be said about this?

Famous homily

Michael Buckley, the California Jesuit, once gave a famous homily within which he set up a contrast between the way Socrates faced his death and the way Jesus faced his. Buckley's conclusion can leave us perplexed. Socrates seems to face death more courageously than Jesus does.

For example, like Jesus, Socrates was also unjustly condemned



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

to death. But he faced his death with calm, completely unafraid, convinced that the just man has nothing to fear either from human judgment or from death. He discoursed very calmly with his disciples, assured them that he wasn't afraid, imparted his blessing, drank the poison, and died.

And Jesus, how much to the contrary: in the hours leading up to his death he felt deeply the betrayal of his disciples, sweated blood in agony, and just minutes before dying cried out in anguish as he felt himself abandoned.

We know, of course, that his cry of abandonment wasn't his final moment. After that moment of anguish and fear, he was able to hand his spirit over to his Father. In the end, there was calm; but, in the moments before, there was a time of awful anguish within which he felt himself abandoned by God.

If one does not consider the inner complexities of Faith, the paradoxes it contains, it makes

no sense that Jesus, sinless and faithful, should sweat blood and cry out in inner anguish as he faced his death. But real Faith isn't always what it looks like from the outside. Many persons, and often times particularly those who are the most faithful, have to undergo a trial that the mystics call a dark night of the soul.

Dark night

What's a dark night of soul? It's a God-given trial in life wherein we, much to our own surprise and anguish, can no longer imagine God's existence or feel God in any affective way in our lives. In terms of inner feeling, this is felt as doubt, as atheism.

Try as we might, we can no longer imagine that God exists, much less that God loves us. However, as the mystics point out and as Jesus' himself gives witness to, this isn't a loss of faith but actually a deeper modality of faith itself.

“So we might expect that our journey towards death and our face-to-face encounter with God might also involve the breaking down of many of the ways we have always thought about and felt about God. And that will bring doubt, darkness and fear in our lives”



Henri Nouwen.

Up to this point in our faith, we have been relating to God mainly through images and feelings. But our images and feelings about God are not God.

“Knowing his mother's radical faith, Nouwen expected that the scene around her deathbed would be serene and a paradigm of how Faith meets death without fear”

So, at some point, for some people, though not for everybody, God takes away the images and the feelings and leaves us conceptually empty and affectively dry, stripped of all the images we have created about God. While in reality this is actually an overpowering light, it is felt as darkness, anguish, fear, and doubt.

And so we might expect that our journey towards death and our

face-to-face encounter with God might also involve the breaking down of many of the ways we have always thought about and felt about God. And that will bring doubt, darkness and fear in our lives.

Henri Nouwen gives a powerful testimony to this in speaking about his mother's death. His mother had been a woman of deep Faith and had each day prayed to Jesus: let me live like you, and let me die like you. Knowing his mother's radical faith, Nouwen expected that the scene around her deathbed would be serene and a paradigm of how Faith meets death without fear.

But his mother suffered deep anguish and fear before she died and that left Nouwen perplexed, until he came to see that his mother's lifelong prayer had indeed been answered. She had prayed to die like Jesus – and she did.

A common soldier dies without fear; Jesus died afraid. And so, paradoxically, do many women and men of Faith.

Questions of Faith returns next week

Family & Lifestyle

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Dealing with difficult bosses



As the weather heats up so can the office as tensions intensify or disputes go downhill, but all is not lost, there are a few tactics that can help improve the work atmosphere even when dealing with an exasperating manager.

Support them

This may sound counterintuitive, but being supportive and helping your boss become more successful in achieving their goals is a productive way of getting them on-side.

This doesn't mean becoming a doormat, but identifying their needs and delivering above and beyond their expectations may help them understand how much they rely on your talents and



Chai Brady discusses tips and tricks to tackle tough bosses

skills, and just how indispensable you are to them.

Understand behaviour

One of the keys to challenging difficult behaviour is understanding what causes it in the first place.

It is only then that you can discover what are the underlying causes driving the behaviour as opposed to what is appearing on the surface. The

more you understand your boss the better positioned you are to manage the situation. Try to put yourself in their shoes and look at the workplace from their perspective. Not only will this help you to be more patient and forgiving of your boss's behaviour but it will also make it easier to take the high road. Rather than sinking to their level, be the type of colleague you wish your boss was. Your

positive behaviour will have an impact.

Also understanding their preferences and pet peeves means you can communicate better. For example, if your boss is fast-paced and quick to make decisions and prefers to do things in person than via e-mail, then approach them in this way.

We all have different personality types and we must handle people according to their personality type. Working according to your boss's preferences is an easy way of managing your boss without them ever knowing it. It is a key leadership skill to develop regardless of the type of boss you are working for.

It is also important that you

manage your own negative emotions or reactions to your boss' behaviour so you don't end up engaging in self-defeating behaviour such as stonewalling or counter-attacking your boss. This will help you communicate your concerns in a positive manner.

Avoid confrontation

Try not to react to verbal abuse or overly harsh criticism with emotion. This generally will lead to more trouble. When a personal attack is made on you or your work this is a way to try and bait you emotionally. If you react the first time, then you become a target for additional attacks. If you do not react, you strip the

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Family News

AND EVENTS

A FESTIVAL THAT IS NO MERE FLIGHT OF FANCY

One of the greatest feats of aviation history, the first ever non-stop transatlantic flight, will be celebrated in the surroundings of Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way as part of a centenary commemoration. Alcock & Brown 100 Festival will mark the remarkable achievements of aviation heroes Sir John Alcock and Sir Arthur Whitten-Brown 100 years after flying from Newfoundland, Canada and crash landing at Clifden, Connemara. Taking place in Clifton, Galway, from June 11-16, the summer festival is jam-packed with events. Bringing to life one of the most significant moments in history, visitors can experience a live re-enactment of the 1919 landing, featuring the journey of Alcock and Brown to Clifden and a street parade welcome. Visitors will also have a front seat at the premiere of the Alcock and Brown feature length, factual documentary featuring Tony Alcock MBE and more. There will not only be talks, exhibitions and street entertainment throughout the week, there will also be the Traditional Boats Regatta and Tour De Bens to name a few of the spectacles promised. More info can be found at <https://alcockandbrown100.com/>

PAINT THE TOWN RED AT CLONAKILTY CARNIVAL

The Clonakilty Street Carnival, winner of the best West Cork event award, will see the streets of Clonakilty take on a festival vibe and the town will be fully pedestrianised from 9am until 9pm on Saturday June 15. Throughout the day – amidst the colourful ribbons and bunting – there will be street performers and costumes, live music, a kids zone with supervised bouncy castles, face painting, magicians, bubbles, popcorn machines (Ashe Street), giant games, ping pong, crazy golf and much more. Last year more than 2,000 people were served the best of Clonakilty fare from the West Cork town's top restaurants. The Clonakilty Street Carnival dinner party will run the length of the town's main street. Food service commences at 3pm providing €15 adult meals and €7 children's meals. Up to 2,500 meal tickets are available to purchase locally and online. A children's meal area has been added on Astna Square in the centre of Clonakilty where Clonakiddy meals will be available, as well as free pottery classes for kids.

FAT-SHAMING YOUTH CAN CAUSE INCREASED OBESITY

Young people who are bullied or teased about their weight end up gaining more weight in the long run than those who weren't ridiculed according to a US study. The study, from the National Institute of Health, was published in the journal *Pediatric Obesity*. Childhood obesity is connected with a myriad of health problems including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea and orthopedic complications. In addition, weight-based teasing is one of the most common reasons for bullying cited among youngsters in the US. According to previous research, 90% of high school students have witnessed their peers made fun of for their weight, and 60% of overweight youngsters have reported being teased about their weight by peers and family members. The study involved 110 youths who were an average age of 11.8 years when they were enrolled.

Abortion: questions from the Irish experience

One year has just passed since the referendum paved the way for the introduction of abortion services in Ireland in January. The Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 permits abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy without any specified reason and in cases where there is a serious risk to the health or life of the mother. In addition, abortion is also permitted at any stage of pregnancy where there is a fatal foetal abnormality.

Abortion cannot be considered in any fundamental sense a healthcare issue given that nearly 97% of cases occur in healthy woman who have healthy babies. Indeed, one of the core ethical principles in medicine has been summed up in the maxim 'primum non nocere' – 'first do no harm' and the ancient Hippocratic oath also forbade abortion.

Whether one agrees with abortion or not, the legislation poses serious ethical questions around issues such as the right to conscientious objection. Under the current law, a doctor who does not provide abortion on request for their patient and is ethically opposed to it, must refer to another physician who does, and are thereby legally mandated to materially co-operate in a way which is fundamentally against their conscience.

Concerns have also arisen regarding increased pressures that may be placed on the healthcare system and on the extent of advance planning prior to services being rolled out. For example, it envisaged that about 20% of all abortions will take place between 9-12 weeks gestation and in such cases the procedure will be carried out in hospital. In addition, establishing accurately

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



gestational age requires ultrasound imaging in some cases and indeed, there has already been an increase in the demand for prenatal scans for some healthcare providers.

“Abortion cannot be considered in any fundamental sense a healthcare issue given that nearly 97% of cases occur in healthy woman who have healthy babies.”

At present, 10 out of 19 maternity units in the country provide abortions as do just over 10% of GP's (300+) though there are some counties where no doctors have agreed to provide the service. The HSE has budgeted €12 million this year for the service with GPs getting a reimbursement of about €450 per case (a fee which is actually more than that for GP care for women during pregnancy).

So how many abortions are occurring? It has been estimated that there have been over 800 abortions carried out every month since January though official figures are not available and will be not be compiled until the end of the year.

However, some doctors

have estimated that up to 10,000 abortions may take place annually. Such a number would represent a substantial increase when compared to the total number of Irish women accessing abortions in the UK and Netherlands in previous years as well the estimated numbers who obtained abortion pills online.

Looking to the UK for some perspective on figures, shows that in 2016 of all Irish women accessing services (3265), 21% had already had a previous abortion and overall 85% occurred within 12 weeks.

In the same year, 4.3% of all Irish women (141) had abortions due to a diagnosis



of a physical or mental health condition of the foetus. Of these, the majority had chromosomal abnormalities including Down Syndrome (30.5%), Edwards syndrome (14.2%) and Patau syndrome (2.8%) while neurological conditions such as Spina bifida (4.2%), anencephaly (9.2%) and others accounted for a smaller number.

The recent story of an abortion of a healthy baby believed to have Edwards syndrome (on the basis of two initial tests) which later proved to be a misdiagnosis highlights some concerns with testing. At 10 weeks gestation, noninvasive prenatal genetic testing with a simple maternal blood test (to identify foetal DNA) can be

used to screen for Edwards, Patau and Down syndrome and may indicate a higher chance of the disorder. Studies report a detection rate of up to 97.4% for Patau syndrome and 99% for Down syndrome but with varied false positive rates.

“While invasive testing can rarely give false positives it ultimately can create a ‘life or death situation’ for a potentially healthy baby.”

More definitive tests are those that examine foetal cells from the placenta via chorionic villus sampling (usually between 11-14 weeks and is 99%+ accurate) or directly via amniocentesis (15-20 weeks) which is more conclusive. However, both tests carry a risk of miscarriage of between 0.5-1.0%.

While invasive testing can rarely give false positives it ultimately can create a 'life or death situation' for a potentially healthy baby. Indeed, just this month there was a report of another pregnant mother in Ireland whose baby was diagnosed with Edwards syndrome after placental testing but opted to have amniocentesis which confirmed no abnormality.

Time will tell as to the full extent of the effect of the new legislation on the number of women seeking abortion. No doubt too, there will be future complex cases that will arise that will pose serious ethical questions.

Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

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difficult boss of their power without heightening the conflict.

It is always better to discuss rather than confront the situation. Confrontation simply breeds further confrontation. Use their criticism as a topic for discussion on goals and problem-solving and ask for advice. Schedule another time after the conflict to have a chat. When this happens make sure to take emotion from the discussion, don't get personal. The goal of the meeting is figuring out ways you can work together more productively.

“Make sure you have a clear action plan of the points you want to make.”

Make sure you have a clear action plan of the points you want to make. In this situation it is also good to include some praise of your superior – straight up criticisms will more than likely exacerbate the situation.

During the meeting it is good at some point to ask for your boss' advice and opinion on your work, make it clear that you are excited about your job and you want to be able to work more productively. This means you can leave the meeting with some tangible items to work on and you can schedule another meeting for a month's time to review.

If your boss can clearly see that working with you has a meaningful benefit to them, then they are more likely to be amenable.

Speak up

It goes without saying that if your boss is guilty of gross misconduct then you should immediately report them to HR. If their behaviour doesn't change, then getting advice on your options is wise.

If taking these measures does not work then the next step is to go to HR. It is important to have the courage to speak up rather than leaving the work environment altogether. Unfortunately, oftentimes employees leave rather than trying to have a difficult conversation with human resources. You owe it both to yourself and to your boss to try and work through the situation.

Take the high road

Never let your boss's bad behaviour be an excuse for your own. All too often, people start feeling entitled to slack off, take longer and longer lunches, lose interest or stop performing well because of their bad boss. Don't do it. Keep your mind focused on top performance. Complain to your spouse or your friends all you want, but when in the office or workplace, stay upbeat and engaged. Handling a difficult boss well can really set you apart. You never know who is watching or listening but be assured, people who can open or close future opportunities for you are doing just that!

While it may be easy to succumb to resentment or resignation and mentally check out of your job, doing so not only undermines your own integrity but it can put you at risk of being branded as whiner, a slacker, or both. If your boss is a shouter, don't react by shouting back. If they are petty or small minded, don't descend to smallness yourself. Rather maintain a calm and professional demeanour in dealing with your difficult boss. As Gandhi wrote “Be the change you want to see in the world.” In this case, act like the leader you wish your boss was.

If you feel you've run out of options for dealing with him reasonably, then don't go rumour-mongering or bad-mouthing him to everyone within earshot. That will ultimately say more about you than it does about your boss (and not things you'd want said!) Rather, follow proper procedures for registering complaints with Human

Resources or with higher-level superiors, documenting each step of the way.

Don't be intimidated

People who bully get their power from those who respond by cowering and showing fear. If your boss is a yeller, a criticiser, or a judge – stand firm. If you're doing the best job you can do, keep your head held high and don't give him the satisfaction of pushing you about. Rather ask questions, seek to understand, and work to defuse a difficult situation instead of cowering or responding in anger. It takes practice, but over time you will get better at it and he will look elsewhere for his power kick.

“Above all, work should be a place that you feel comfortable, and allows you to be yourself in an environment that is supportive.”

If this isn't the reality, if you dread entering the workplace every morning, you have to start asking questions about why you continue doing the job you're doing.

If you feel compelled to call your boss on his behaviour, go ahead but do so with a cool head and prepare in advance for the ensuing fallout. It could get ugly so think things through beforehand. What are your options? Who are your allies? Have you documented his behaviour? Can you deal with the possibility of the worst outcome? Sure, it's important to stand strong, but be smart about it.

Above all, work should be a place that you feel comfortable, and allows you to be yourself in an environment that is supportive.

If this isn't the reality, if you dread entering the workplace every morning, you have to start asking questions about why you continue doing the job you're doing.

Whatever is the case, many people spend a huge amount of time in work and if you are unhappy, you should take the necessary steps to improve the situation – or leave – otherwise it could lead to years of misery.



Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



What does it mean to educate a child? Too often, we conflate education with school. Yet education is a much broader concept. After all, children begin school already talking, sometimes in more than one language. They arrive knowing games, rhymes, songs and stories, and perhaps counting and even reading a little. They may have learned ideas about God, nature and the world. Nor do we cease learning once we leave school.

Children are naturally curious. They want to learn and play. In playing they learn most, perhaps. As I write, my four-year-old is randomly playing piano and singing along to her made-up song in the next room. My eight-year-old is upstairs, reading a 'horrible histories' book about the Tudors, while my nine-year-old is playing an iPhone game that involves chopping words into syllables. They are all just having fun, but they are also being educated – though they do not know it.

A lot of educating kids involves leaving interesting stuff lying around the house. If there are paper and crayons, they will draw pictures. If there's a piano, they'll play it. If there are books, they will read them. William Butler Yeats put it well: “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

If we inculcate a love of doing things that – perhaps covertly – involve learning, then play becomes learning, and learning becomes play. Interestingly, Yeats' own school described his scholarly performance as “only fair ... Very poor in spelling”. Fortunately, such negativity didn't discourage his writing, which led to a Nobel Prize.

Thankfully, education is done differently nowadays. Schools are kinder places, and are more encouraging of children. Technology is having an impact, too. Screens are much maligned, yet they possess an extraordinary educational power. When kids use devices, we can make sure they've got apps that are fun, but which also educate. These then become their games. Good television can also transport kids to the Pacific Ocean, to marvel at whales and coral reefs. Good kids' television channels, like CBeebies, provide pro-

grammes that educate. Used wisely, within the proper time limits, screens have their place in the education of modern children.

The idea of education has been on my mind, since our kids will have over three months out of formal education this summer, as we make the big move from England back home to Ireland. During the process, we're going to home educate them for a while, to help prepare them for school in Ireland after four years in the English system. It's been a fascinating to be fully responsible for the kids' education, even if just for a short while. We've found some amazing resources, books, worksheets and apps.

I'm giving them ad hoc Irish language, geography and history tuition. My wife is focusing on science and maths. We've also found brilliant apps that can teach Irish and French, and others that teach the entire Irish primary school curriculum. My mother, a retired primary school teacher, is also going to give lessons on Skype.

There is a beautiful freedom to homeschooling. I quite envy those who do it the whole time. They can travel off to the continent with their kids in September, or visit museums on weekdays, when they are quiet. They get to follow their kids' passions all day. Done well, it can achieve remarkable results. Such parents can be sure their kids are treated well. For sadly, in some schools, children still experience ill treatment from other pupils and even teachers. Schools can be wonderful, but they can also be places of tension and stress.

Yet every parent is a home educator really, even if we are unaware of it. We teach them cooking, gardening, swimming, we tell them stories, we read to them and we help them with homework. They forever ask questions about history, about nature, or space, technology and the world. All these interminable questions show curiosity, their enthusiasm for the world, and their yearning to learn. We parents must remember that education does not begin or end at the school gates.



Nashville sister lets God's plan lead the way

Personal Profile



Chai Brady

The Church in Ireland has experienced a huge amount of reputational and spiritual damage for many years, but suffering with people and having an "open and listening heart" can go a long way, according to a Dominican sister based in Limerick.

Sr Mara Grace Gore (34) came from the US to teach and work with the Irish community, and says the minute she arrived she felt at home.

"The people just welcomed us so graciously, and I've realised how much America has been formed by the Irish people, there are so many similarities," Sr Mara says.

“Most of my experience has been a very smooth transition and I've felt like its home. Every single place will have a different understanding and experience of religious.”

"At other times I do feel the difference, I went to my first school where they speak only Irish, and I felt like I was in a different country," she laughs.

"Most of my experience has been a very smooth transition and I've felt like its home. Every single place will have a different understanding and experience of religious."

Although she was born in Idaho, Sr Mara grew up as a Protestant in Lexington, Kentucky until her



Sr Rose Miriam Collins, Sr Beatrice Clarke, Sr Caitriona Kavanagh, and Sr Mara Grace Gore.

mother died when she was just 7-years-old. It was only when her father remarried that the family entered the Catholic Church.

Aged 12 she saw a youth group connected to her parish was going on a ski trip, and asked her parents if she could go. They said she would have to actually attend the club and not just avail of the getaways, which led to Sr Mara attending every week, saying "it was fun" and "made the faith relevant to my life as a secondary school student".

She says: "So it was really through the witness of my youth minister and through these other young people that I started to wonder, what is this joy that they have? Where does that come from?"

On one particular retreat, during Eucharistic Adoration, people were being invited to touch the humeral veil, which the priest uses to hold the monstrance. It was when she touched the veil that Sr Mara felt as if the "whole room was gone, it was just Jesus and I, it was the first time I had a heartfelt prayer".

"I don't even remember the words but I just remember having

this sense that that is truly God and I wanted to live my life for him. The seeds of my vocation were there in that moment, but certainly the flourishing of my baptismal call to live as a follower of Christ was there in that moment."

It was Sr Mara's father that suggested she go on a retreat in Nashville to visit a convent. At this time she knew very little about sisters and even less about their religious life.

"When I first pulled up to the convent, my Dad drove me down, the first thing I saw was all these nuns out on the pitch playing football, I couldn't believe it," she says.

"It blew out all the expectations I may have had, I had such a great experience with the sisters there. I think I found in them authentic women who were all striving to follow Jesus, to live their lives for him. Each one of them was their own person, they were all happy, a genuine joy." Sr Mara began to visit periodically after that.

Pursuing education, Sr Mara "made a deal with God" that if she finished university and wasn't in

a serious relationship, she would become a sister. After two years she felt restless, and on a trip back to Nashville she felt a gentle prodding at her heart. "I had this sense that I think he's calling me to enter the convent and so I took that leap of faith."

“At age 20, Sr Mara started on her seven-year path towards her final vows as a Dominican sister.”

"So that summer I asked to enter the convent. It was so scary, I'll tell you I was thinking about 'gosh am I making the right decision, what happens if I'm wrong?' she says.

"But all along there was still this gentle small voice saying 'trust me' and I knew that I did indeed trust and continue to follow what I thought the Lord was asking. He would keep guiding me, he wouldn't lead me astray."

At age 20, Sr Mara started on her seven-year path towards her final

vows as a Dominican sister. She became a primary school teacher and served in schools in Tennessee and Colorado before helping the congregation's vocations office by going to colleges, mainly, and telling people about religious life.

There's a big difference in the knowledge about religious depending where you are, according to Sr Mara who says: "When I came here I was so surprised the familiarity people have with religious, most people that we meet either have a relation or know somebody who is religious, and that is very new to me. That there is this living memory."

Sr Mara came to Ireland three years ago with three other sisters.

"I think the younger generation hasn't had as much exposure so one of our sisters goes to all the primary schools in Limerick and the first year when she'd walk into a classroom there was this shock.

"I'm also conscious there is also a lot of hurt that people have experienced from the Church here in Ireland so in that respect it brings a certain amount of awareness to suffer with people in a different way that have suffered because of representatives of the Church. In that way it has been a different experience for me."

Sr Mara added that their main drive in Ireland is faith formation for people all different ages, adding that young people have to be encouraged to know that God has a plan for them, "so don't be afraid to ask".

"I think a lot of times we think God's plan will make us miserable but his plan is better than anything we could ever imagine, so just to be open to what it is God has in store and then to courageously say yes."

More information about the Nashville Dominican sisters can be found at www.nashvilledominican.org

Supporting spouse to break smoking addiction

When I first met my wife she didn't smoke though she once did. Recently she has taken up smoking again without telling me about it, I just started noticing the smell, and it's really upsetting me, it has a huge impact on me and our family and I am so worried about her health, but she doesn't seem to want to give up. What should I do?

It's understandable that you are upset, especially as your wife didn't smoke when you first met and for many people smoking can be a deal breaker. I know it is hard not to take this personally but it is important to try and be a little bit dispassionate and understand how truly addictive smoking can be. Was there something that triggered her smoking again and can you start from there?

Although it is clear you are worried and want her to quit out of love, she still has to be the one who wants to quit. No amount of telling an addict will give them the will power they need to break the

habit. What will help is approaching her in a non-confrontational and non-judgemental way. I am sure you feel hurt she seemed to start smoking behind your back, but it is quite likely that the old habit crept back up on her. Perhaps a hidden difficulty or event meant she started having one or two cigarettes a day and slowly that number increased until it had gone back to how it was before she quit smoking.

If you go on the attack it is likely she may dig the heels in more. There are useful resources like quit.ie which will direct you towards various programmes and resources not just for your wife but for you too. It will help you to understand things like withdrawal symptoms and cravings. Your job is to try and eliminate the trigger that started her smoking again and be as supportive as possible. An important role as a husband when your wife falls down is to be the one to help her up again, not make her feel even worse while

she is struggling with something as difficult as an addiction to smoking.

I do think it is perfectly reasonable to set ground rules, like no smoking around the children. Your house should be a smoke-free zone with nothing like ashtrays or any smoking reminders around the house.

You might be tempted to push an 'all or nothing' approach but this will be counter-productive. You have to resist any temptation to try and nag the addiction away – it won't work! Instead you can help as much as you can, making sure she is eating and sleeping well, do lots of

nice things together as a family to help keep her mind off smoking, organise treats with money saved from not buying cigarettes, and be a source of encouragement taking it day by day.

And even when she might be snapping at you as the nicotine is leaving her system, always respond with love.



Love Notes

Wendy Grace



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Hell and Heaven team up to fight humanity?

Is there anything funny about the battle between good and evil? Can it be taken lightly in any context? Even in the world of fantasy fiction?

These questions were prompted by the new drama series *Good Omens* which was launched in its six episode entirety on Amazon Prime last Friday. I binge watched in the line of duty!

Considering that the original book was co-written by Terry Pratchett (with Neil Gaiman), it should come as no surprise that the plot is silly and that all sorts of religious faiths, legends and mythologies are jumbled together in a comically occult, but entertaining, hotch potch.

The storyline features a rather foppish angel, Aziraphale (Michael Sheen) and a sleazy demon, Crowley (David Tennant), who get along quite well with each other as they go about their business on earth. But they have, in a sense, gone native, got to like the earth so much that they are not too keen when they hear that Armageddon is imminent and their cosy lifestyle will come to an end.

The demon delivers the anti-Christ to a hospital run by satanic nuns but, in a staple of many comedies, the babies get mixed up, and so the anti-Christ is lost.

If a mature believer could get over unease about the ludicrous premise and the



Michael Sheen (left) and David Tennant star in *Good Omens* (Amazon Prime).

digs against God about suffering you might enjoy some of the dubious theological banter.

At times there's a serious edge to it, as when a modern witch-finder says the Churches don't do the battle against evil anymore, in this "desperate age", or when the demon having being described as "fallen" says "I didn't mean to fall, I just hung around with the wrong people".

Other times it's just comical, as when God is described as liking *The Sound of Music* or when the Angel Gabriel smells something evil about the Aziraphale's book store,

the latter says: "That'll be the Jeffrey Archer books!"

Frances McDormand plays the voice of God, as a rather detached narrator making quirky comments – I thought this aspect could have been better developed, and the series could have done with a theological advisor.

I was reminded of *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, but that had a spiritual depth sorely lacking in this outing. The brief Garden of Eden nudity could have been handled more discreetly and the occasional foul language struck a sour note, especially in a show featuring children. Apart from one dodgy com-

ment the crucifixion scene was handled with respect – thankfully, they resisted the temptation to make a skit of it.

Coherence

If there's any philosophical coherence it's an unobtrusive humanistic one – with the other-worldly forces of good and evil seen as capricious and uncaring, and the real battle being between heaven and hell on one side and humanity on the other. As for artistic flaws, it went on too long, and as it was about Armageddon, could have had more dramatic tension.

St Michael the Archangel

(female!) made some unflattering appearances but turned up in a more traditional context in *St Joan of Arc: Maid for God* (EWTN) last Saturday, in the context of an appearance to Joan about her mission. It was an interesting docudrama, not my favourite genre, and unfortunately the dramatised segments were the weakest, though Marie Lussignol, as Joan, did her best with little material.

More interesting was the historical background and some tentative reflections on her role in the light of modern sensibilities. And so, her virtues and commitment to them were emphasised.

A case was made for a righteous kind of patriotism, love of country and nation. Prof. Siobhan Nash-Marshall, author of *Joan of Arc, A Spiritual Biography*, stressed how Joan insisted on her soldiers being humane, doing the right thing in the right way at the right time, following the strictures of Aquinas.

On the difficult issues of war and peace she said that sometimes the right thing to do was to fight, and that the good thing wasn't always the nice thing, that right and wrong wasn't decided by our emotions.

Finally, away from all battles, it was good to see the Music Ministry Together group, with musical director Ian Callanan, providing the music for *Mass on Sunday*

PICK OF THE WEEK

SATURDAY MATINEE: LETTERS FROM MOTHER TERESA (AKA THE LETTERS)
RTÉ1, Saturday, June 8, 1.05pm

(2015) Juliet Stevenson as the saint. Drama based on her letters to her spiritual advisor, Fr Celeste.

UP BBC1, Saturday, June 8, 5pm

(2009) Animated feature about an elderly man and a feisty boy scout. Excellent opening sequence celebrates the ups and downs of marriage.

CATHOLIC IRELAND EWTN, Monday, June 10, 2.30pm, Friday, June 14, 10pm

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Eucharistic Adoration, the Cenacolo community and Marion Mulhall's world-priest.com website.

on RTÉ1. I was glad to hear Callanan's own *God Goes Up* for the feast of the Ascension, while John Angotti's *I Send You Out* could have been Joan of Arc's theme song!

✉ boregan@hotmail.com,
[boreganmedia](http://boreganmedia.com)



Pat O'Kelly

Music

Magnificent festival makes its way around the houses

Festival is a word that can be abused but with Great Music in Irish Houses I think it can be applied without hesitation. This annual event began in 1970 when it was then, and for many years afterwards, known as the Music in Great Irish Houses Festival.

In its initial year it embraced two venues – Castletown House in Celbridge and Carton close to Maynooth. Gradually it spread its wings to other stately edifices with Killruddery House, outside Bray in Co Wicklow, joining the list in the early 1980s. Home of Lord and Lady Ardee, Killruddery's orangery continues to offer a welcoming festival platform.

Under artistic director Ciara Higgins, this year's



Ciara Higgins.

event, running from the June 11-16 and opens at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin's

Dawson Street with a recital by eminent US pianist Richard Goode. His programme combines the classicism of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven with Chopin's romanticism and Debussy's impressionism.

Wednesday (June 12) sees a switch to the National Botanic Gardens and has the return of the particularly fine Pavel Haas Quartet. The Czech musicians bring two substantial works – Dvorák's *14th Quartet* and Beethoven's *3rd Razumovsky*. Described as 'probably the world's most exciting string quartet', the Pavel Haas first appeared at the festival in 2007 and has since gone on to cement its place in the upper echelons of quartet players.

Killruddery is the venue on

Thursday (June 13) for French cellist Marc Coppey who is also making a welcome return visit. Accompanied by the ubiquitous Finghin Collins, Coppey's programme has sonatas by Beethoven, Debussy and Brahms separated by the music of Nadia Boulanger and Bohuslav Martinu.

Gastronomic preface

Friday (June 14) finds the festival at a new venue, Belvedere House on the shores of Lough Ennell, near Mullingar. With good weather a picnic in Belvedere's gardens might be a gastronomic preface to the concert. This finds soprano Ailish Tynan, almost on home ground and in her festival debut, joining France's

Van Kuijk Quartet and Finghin Collins in quite an unusual musical mélange.

Songs by Grieg and Fauré as well as the almost forgotten English composer Muriel Herbert, who died in 1984, intermingle with music for voice, quartet and piano by Chausson and Guillaume Lekeu. Separately the Van Kuijk offers Mozart and Poulenc.

Following this Westmeath foray, the festival returns to Dublin for two Saturday (June 15) events – Chamber Choir Ireland, with mostly Bach, in St Ann's Church, Dawson Street at 7pm and the Colin Currie Quartet at the Printworks in Dublin Castle at 9pm. Do not be put off by Xenakis, Stockhausen or

Steve Reich as this percussive bash will be exhilarating and athletically dazzling.

With noon and evening concerts in Dublin Castle and an afternoon excursion to Farmleigh House, the festival's final day celebrates John O'Connor.

He is being honoured as exceptional teacher through former and current students while his unique contribution to Dublin's International Piano Competition is hailed through music written for, or played during, the competition over the years.

O'Connor as performer extraordinaire comes with Schumann's Piano Quintet when esteemed RIAM colleagues join him for the festival's concluding event.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Recent books in brief

Contemplating the Camino – An Ignatian Guide

by Brendan McManus SJ
(Messenger Publications, €4.95 / £4.50)

This little pamphlet is intended not as a guide to the actual trails from France across the north of Spain, so much as an aid to the inner, mystical path of which it is an exemplar. The author takes up the idea of St Ignatius, himself familiar with the Camino routes, and relates it to the whole 'Jesuit way'.

"This process of becoming your true self and shedding any masks or pretence is exactly what happens on the Camino and this book offers some Jesuit insights that may help in getting the most out of that experience."

He provides a certain amount of practical advice, but his 21 short chapters are devoted not to the road but to the inner path. This little book may well be more helpful to many seekers who will not actually walk the Camino. But for pilgrims on that way it has also the great advantage of being small and light, and easily carried in vest pocket or knapsack.



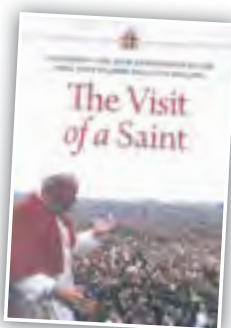
The Visit of a Saint: celebrating the 40th anniversary of the papal visit of John Paul II to Ireland

(Veritas, €9.99)

Perhaps a little early in the year, Veritas has produced this record of the papal visit which includes many photos, but essentially is a compilation of documents, speeches and statements. The anniversary of this visit in September will undoubtedly be the occasion for a great deal of media analysis of the current significance of that event and what its results truly were.

One can almost hear the noise of controversy already. Many people will be glad to have this book which will enable them clarify, what happened and what it meant if not for the nation, at least for them. The Pope's expression of love for the young people of Ireland suggests that the publishers see this pamphlet as a way of properly informing the current generation for whom the visit is a remote historical event and in doing this it will serve a very useful purpose.

It is published at the same time as *Christus Vivit – Christ is Alive*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis to Young People, of which a notice has already been published in these pages (see our issue of May 9).



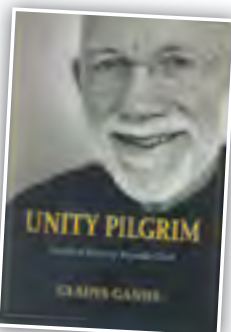
Unity Pilgrim: The life of Fr Gerry Reynolds CSsR

by Gladys Ganiel
(Redemptorist Communications, £12.95 / €13.95)

The author of this moving biography is an American academic who teaches in Queen's College, Belfast, but has been greatly engaged with change and conflict resolution in Ireland. Gerry Reynolds himself was from Limerick and so he too was new to the Ulster situation.

From the Clonard Monastery where he was based he could look out over the so-called 'Peace-line' the ironically named wall that actually maintained the division of the communities.

He was inspired by what he saw and what he felt to play an important part in the emerging peace process which eventually reached an agreement that offered the whole island a way forward.



Defenders of the risen people ?

'The Labour Hercules': The Irish Citizen Army and Irish Republicanism, 1913-23

by Jeffrey Leddin
(Irish Academic Press, €24.95)

Thomas J. Morrissey

The author's research and wide reading is evident in relation to the origin, nature, and activity of the Irish Citizen Army from 1913-1923. The book is, perhaps, too specialised for the general reader, but it will be welcomed by students of labour history and serious readers of political and social developments during those key years in modern Irish history.

The critical role of James Connolly and Michael Mallin in turning the original Citizen's Army into a well-drilled, organised and motivated organisation, is brought out in Mr Leddin's account.

His detailed description of ICA activities during the 1916 rising will be a welcome addition to most readers' knowledge of the insurrection.

“The ICA organisation effectively came to an end in 1923 when more than 100 of its members...were captured on ‘the night of the Bridges’”

There follows the account of the aftermath of 1916, the imprisonment of members of the ICA, the role of the organisation and its links with the IRA during the years of struggle, 1918-1921, and then the Treaty and the split in the Irish Citizen Army as some supported the Treaty and a larger number went against it, giving active support to the republican opposition in the civil war.

The ICA organisation effectively came to an end in 1923 when more than 100 of its members, including its main leaders, were captured on 'the night of the Bridges', when an anti-treaty force was foiled in its plan to blow up the bridges across the Liffey.

The author concludes with a chapter on the legacy of the Irish Citizens Army. The legacy, as presented, is thin and largely indirect: the number of left-



James Connolly memorial in Dublin today.



Citizen Army men on the roof of Liberty Hall during Easter Week.

wing organisations that fly the ICA flag of the Plough and the Stars, and the many who bolster their cause by appealing to the name, teachings and actions of James Connolly.

“This book bears the marks of a thesis, especially in its first five or six pages which are heavy with references to a range of authors”

This book is based on a doctoral thesis presented at the University of Limerick. It bears the marks of a thesis, especially in its first five or six pages which are heavy with references to a range of authors, most of whom are likely to be unknown except to specialised readers.

The book would benefit from a much shorter account of the background and history of nationalist citizen armed forces. Again, when the author writes that 'the ICA was born out of the Irish syndicalist movement', it would have been helpful to explain what syndi-

calism means, particularly in the Irish context.

It is not clear for whom the author is writing. The fact that much special knowledge is assumed on the part of the reader, suggests that the writer has a small specialised readership in mind, which is great a pity because the work is, as mentioned above, a testimony to a great deal of reading and research and has many pages of wide interest, which might enlightened the ordinary reader about perhaps unfamiliar aspects the Revolutionary period.

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.

In search of an essential Christianity



Author Mayhew-Smith under St Cynogs yew, Powys.

The Naked Hermit: A journey to the heart of Celtic Britain by Nick Mayhew-Smith (SPCK, £19.99)

Readers may recall a six-part television series *Britain's Holiest Places* from about seven years ago. This was presented by Nick Mayhew-Smith who had written the book that inspired the programmes of the series.

Here, however, he deals with a period what will immediately engage the attention of Irish readers covering as he does people and places in the Celtic realms during that enigmatic period of transition from the old religions into an accepted Christianity.

He tried to recapture the era through personal experiences, by following the steps of the religious figures of the day, even to the extent of wading naked into the sea to pray, the physical experience serving to heighten his mystical encounter.

Familiar

Here we are familiar at Croagh Patrick and Lough Dreg, of such penitential forms of devotion. But Nick Mayhew-Smith delves much deeper and suggest that at the heart of Celtic ideas was also a deep engagement with God

through creation itself.

A lay minister with a degree in theology, Mayhew-Smith is largely interested in the interaction of prayer and the natural creation around us. The advantage for Irish readers, however, is that though he discusses some Irish scenes, most of the book is devoted to Scotland, Wales and England, and events less well known on this side of the Irish sea.

“He has no desire to provide definitive answers; that is for the reader to do. What he tries to do is to draw his readers to share some of his experiences”

Here among the Celtic and later the Anglo-Saxon saints and holy people is able to integrate with a sort of primal Christianity. This book is something of an adjunct rather than a sequel to his earlier book. That concentrated on places, this book deals with ideas. He builds on what he had previously written to go deeper into their actual beliefs and experiences.

In keeping with our own

heightened awareness of the world (illustrated by the Green tide that has just swept over Europe) this is not a retrospective book at all, but a book that helps open portals into the future, not just of the environment, but of religion and faith itself.

Many years ago there were those who used to make fun of those they called 'Blue Domers', who claimed it was better to spend a day of worship not in church but in the open countryside. Perhaps they had a point. We cannot lose the community aspect of religion – being a hermit is a personal experience – but something is also owed to those we live with and among.

This is a book filled with detail, the result of wide reading and absorbed study. But in the last pages of the last chapter he describes what he saw and felt on the last night of his journey in St Ninian's cave at Whitethorn in Galloway, Scotland.

He has no desire to provide definitive answers; that is for the reader to do. What he tries to do is to draw his readers to share some of his experiences by following his example.

This is a most moving and informative book. Perhaps a book of the future. Let us hope so.

Mainly About Books

By the books editor

Old traditions, new landscapes

Recently our local amateur drama group was courageous enough to mount a production of Dion Boucicault's Victorian melodrama *The Colleen Bawn*.

I don't use the word Victorian casually, for this was one of the Queen's favourite plays; she had drawings she had done of the scenes in her personal art collection. She loved the theatre, but gave it up in her years of mourning. I have often wondered what thoughts about her Irish subjects she derived from the drama: that the Irish were both wildly sentimental and wildly violent perhaps.

But this production set me thinking about the drama itself.

The play was being produced to mark the 200th anniversary of the murder of Ellen Hanley in July 1819. This occurred, not in Killarney, but in the Shannon Estuary. It was used by Gerald Griffin, who reported the trial as a journalist, as the plot of his novel *The Collegians* (1829), which remains his best known work.

This was transformed by Dion Boucicault into his play *The Colleen Bawn* (first produced in New York in 1860). But he moved the scene of the action to "the banks of Killarney", largely because even then the Kerry lake district was the best known place in Ireland among Americans.

Within two years this had become Julius Benedict's opera *The Lily of Killarney*, produced in London in February 1862. One of the songs, *Eily Mavourneen*, which evokes the sentimental Irish idiom of the period so well, is still sung.

The settings of the play and opera were quickly identified with actual places in Killarney, which to this day these remain popular tourists sights.

Real history

Some years ago on a visit to the lake we asked a helpful girl in the tourist office about interesting things to around the lakes. She immediately mentioned these locations. But I said they were purely fictitious and had nothing to do with the real history of the town. Oh no, she assured us, they were all true and the murder had certainly taken place in Killarney. She wouldn't be shifted.

At the time I thought this a remarkable translation of reality by fiction. But there is an even

more extraordinary example in Brittany.

In the 5th and 6th Centuries there was a movement of Britons across the Chanel, under pressure from the invading Anglo-Saxons, into Brittany where they became the Bretons, and began to develop a distinctive Celtic culture of their own.

But they also brought with them the whole panoply of the Arthurian saga.

Instead, however, of the tales referring back to England, many of them became associated with Brittany.

It was now believed that Joseph of Arimathea (generally associated with Glastonbury in Somerset) actually came to Brittany, bringing with him either

the sacred vials that had held the blood and water from the side of the crucified Jesus, or the Holy Grail, the cup used at the Last Supper. But then he simply vanished and the relics, whatever they may have been, were lost sight of.

Legends

The Round Table too, and all the details of the legend of Tristan and Isolde came to be associated with local landmarks. For an Irish visitor to hear of legends so long associated with England and Ireland in a new territory is a strange experience.

So on new landscape was imposed old legends: exactly the process that had overtaken Killarney.

This has to make one wonder about our fine repertoire of legends connected with Irish places. Can these have originated elsewhere and been imposed on our mountains, fields and waters? It is a disturbing thought.

So when people talk about traditions and traditional associations, perhaps we need to be cautious. Of course with some traditions, such as the teachings of the Church for instance, do change and deepen as we explore them and understand them better. But even here caution is needed.

Are the traditions so many Catholic invoke really traditions, or are they merely a convenient creation of more recent centuries that served the purpose of those in command?

Here, as everywhere in life, we need to be wide-awake and cautious.



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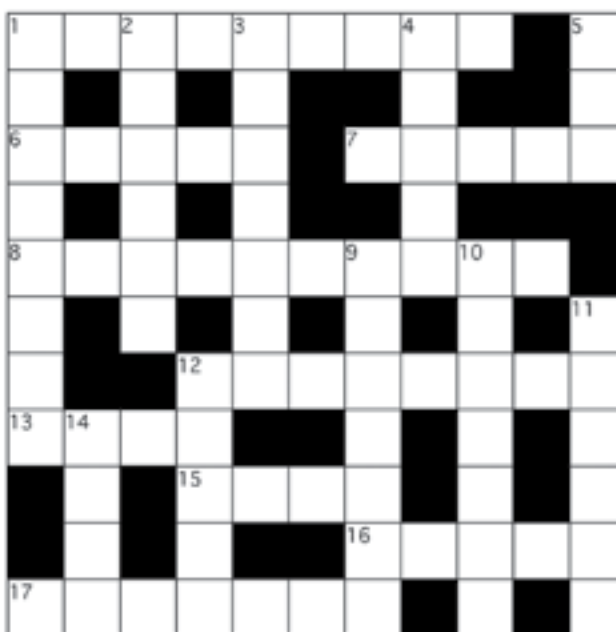
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 285



ACROSS

- 1 A toddler might sit in this when eating a meal (4,5)
 6 You should tighten that - it is _____ (5)
 7 Wobbly treat (5)
 8 A person who goes where he or she is not allowed (10)
 12 Pants (8)
 13 It allows you to hear your own voice coming back from a cave or other place (4)
 15 Tourists like to go up the Leaning Tower of _____ (4)
 16 A bird you might see in a farmyard (5)
 17 Baby frog (7)

DOWN

- 1 It's midway through a match (4-4)
 2 Wear them to keep your hands warm (6)
 3 Not as dear (7)
 4 Thoughts (5)
 5 It's blue on a sunny day (3)
 9 A 'banger' you fry or grill (7)
 10 Some hair on your forehead (7)
 11 Snoozing (6)
 12 Get credit for your mobile (3,2)
 14 Dark-coloured drink (4)

SOLUTIONS, MAY 30

GORDIUS No.405

Across - 1 Art Nouveau 6 Mist 10 Bleed 11 Wolverine
 12 Bicycle 15 Stale 17 Lost 18 Year 18 Ached 21 Hatchet
 23 Haste 24 Plan 26 Love 26 Get up 28 Dormice 33 Reclusive
 34 Amuse 35 Sate 36 Benefitted

Down - 1 Albs 2 The Rivals 3 Oddly 4 Vowel 5 Ally 7 Ibiza 8 The wedding feast at Cana 14 Elected 16 Pythagoras 20 Holocaust 21 Helpful 22 Ewer 27 Tacit 29 Oxeye 30 Miami 31 Pine 32 Read

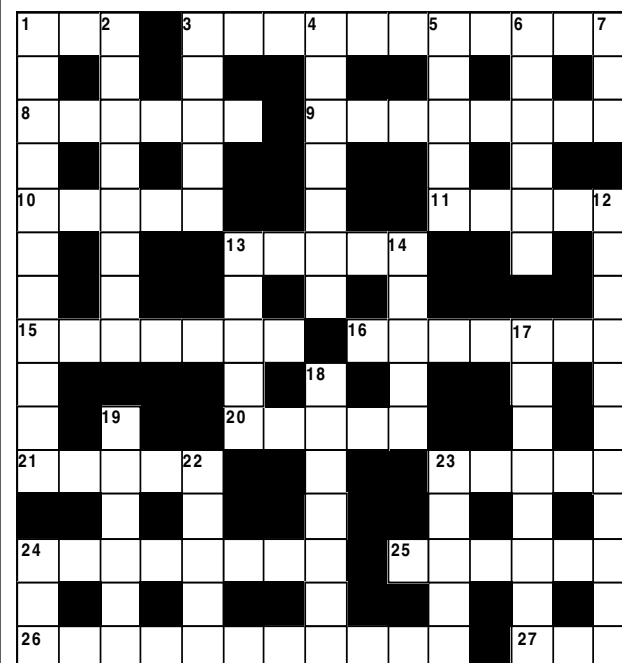
CHILDREN'S No.284

Across - 1 Good-bye 7 Awake 8 October 9 Rugby 10 Tents
 11 Ignores 13 Twist 15 Scare 17 Reader 18 Dye 19 Jigsaw

Down - 1 Ghost story 2 Often 3 Babysitter 4 Earrings 5 Badger
 6 Rely 12 Seesaw 14 Italy 16 Axes

Crossword

Gordius 406



ACROSS

- 1 A small apartment? How appropriate! (3)
 3 Top brass given an order by one on drugs? (4,7)
 8 Poured down, destroying a diner (6)
 9 & 21a Constellation that has the hunter so confused, then angry (8,5)
 10 Romantic get-togethers (5)
 11 Reasoning (5)
 13 Avoids the waterfowl (5)
 15 I can't remember what kind of condition this is! (7)
 16 Fortress (in a certain dialect) (7)
 20 A characteristic (5)
 21 See 9 across
 23 The finest embrace the novice, being sanctified (5)
 24 Might you park it in a strange cart room? (5,3)
 25 Had a reverie about a tram, Ed? (6)
 26 Do these technical artists not play chess? (11)
 27 Musical note often intoned by Homer Simpson (3)

DOWN

- 1 Will the academy iron out what can make this less air-

resistant? (11)

- 2 Number that's lucky for some at Bingo (8)
 3 Pays attention to (5)
 4 One possesses a garment that's soft to kneel on (7)
 5 Drive-in lodgings (5)
 6 Exact retribution for the destruction of Geneva (6)
 7 Many get in and make noise (3)
 12 Piece of needlework using a hawser instead of wool? (5,6)
 13 The doctor gets one foot to move aimlessly (5)
 14 The cardinal is not informally a holy person (5)
 17 & 18 Principals in a parable concerning disreputable joints and a man of Bethany? (5,3,7)
 19 Shylock's daughter makes Pa riot, strangely enough (6)
 22 Gesture with the shoulders (5)
 23 Aristocratic author of wonderful poetry - by little Ronald! (5)
 24 Wet soil from Central Bermuda (3)

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Sudoku Corner

285

Easy



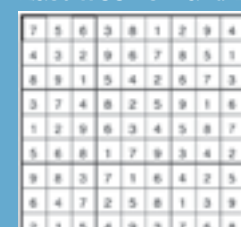
Hard



Last week's Easy 284



Last week's Hard 284



Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



There's more than one way to honour parish loyalty

IN THE FIRST PARISH where I served as curate, the retirement of the sacristan was a major event. This man was quite elderly, having served at the church for many years, after retirement from his civil service job. I don't know what the parish paid him over those years, if anything: I presumed his government pension kept him financially secure.

When his retirement was announced, the parish priest decided to look for the papal medal Benemerenti for him. This was a big deal, as the medal had rarely been sought locally before then. The papal decoration was duly secured, paid for and delivered at a solemn liturgy, the pope himself recognising our retiring sacristan's talents.

More common

Things have changed. Benemerenti have become much more common in the intervening years. Indeed, some feel they are now given out willy-nilly, "like snuff at a wake", as one brother priest put it.

Sometimes the papal honour seems entirely appropriate. Recently *The Irish Catholic* reported this medal being



bestowed on two volunteers in Kerry diocese, who had worked hard to ensure child safeguarding arrangements were up-to-speed across the diocese. Surely Pope Francis would want to reward and

● In 1984, 42 priests were ordained from Maynooth; I was one of them. In the years since, four of us have died (including three of the six ordained in Cork & Ross) and a few have disappeared. Some have married and a number are pursuing other careers at this stage. I reckon 24 of us are still ministering here in Ireland. June 9 is the date on which I was ordained 35 years ago (that's this Sunday). On this milestone, I would be grateful for your prayers for all the member of the Class of '84, wherever they are today.

acclaim such work?

Sometimes, however, the honour is a bit overused. Priests feel themselves in a bind: "The last sacristan who retired got the Benemerenti medal, so the current sacristan can get no less." This can happen despite the fact that the previous sacristan worked in a semi-voluntary capacity, while the sacristan retiring now was paid properly for his work.

“Surely Pope Francis would want to reward and acclaim such work?”

I wonder what the pope would think of it all. It's not as if he is leafing through his *Southern Star* or *Western People* and sees the news that someone is retiring after so many years of service to the parish, and then decides to honour this person with his gift. Sadly, the Pope has little to do

with it. The curial official in Rome who stamps all the papal blessing forms presumably looks after Benemerenti also.

Sometimes I wonder whether locally-originated marks of esteem might not mean more. One parish in which I worked in the USA (whose patron was St Bernadette) had its own Bernadette awards to honour upstanding Christians in the local parish. I cannot see why a diocese could not instigate similar marks of appreciation; after all, there is a better chance that the local bishop will have come across the person being honoured, something very unlikely to have occurred in the case of the Bishop of Rome.

My underlying fear in all of this is that 'Benemerenti' awards might be given in lieu of a proper wage for church workers, a kind of final apology-cum-validation of their good work in the Vineyard. It is hard to imagine the Lord of the Vineyard wanting his workers to be paid less than their due. Proper pay and conditions of employment, so strongly insisted upon in the Church's social teaching, should surely be the mark of every unit of the Church's life – even its parishes.

A holy sort of happiness

The first parish in which I served (Dennehy's Cross, Cork) has a community of Poor Clares Sisters (on College Road, near the Bon Secours Hospital). Initially, I approached them with awe, but was amazed to find a sense of humour among their attributes, wrapped up with holiness.

They were happy to be included in community activities and always provided prayer-power to parish efforts. Now my twice-yearly visit to the community is a highlight of my year: we talk of holy things, we have a laugh and very much enjoy each other's company.

And the craic is mighty (as it is in heaven).



SISTERS CARING FOR ORPHANS AND DISABLED CHILDREN ARE IN FINANCIAL CRISIS

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The Sisters need to improve the sustainability of their work now and in the future. They want to set up a pig farming project to benefit the hospital and to help the poorest families in the area. Can you be a "person of good-will" for these Sisters and the children they care for? Even the smallest donation will help them.

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