

The Irish Catholic

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'Hope' as young countercultural Catholics are emerging in Ireland

Renata Milán Morales

Catholic youth groups in Ireland have said they are experiencing a resurgence, drawing hundreds of young people to faith-based activities and community service.

Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross said the resurgence gives him hope: "I am very hopeful. We had last Sunday the Eucharistic procession and we had more than 4000 people. Many of them were young people that were living their faith on the streets. It is not about numbers, but it is about being there... We need to find a way where young people can be in the culture of today and be a life-giving force within that culture. Not running away from the culture but not embracing every aspect of the culture either. That is why young people need the support of one another".

Bro. Martin Kenneally, from the Presentation Brothers who celebrated the profession of a new brother last weekend, points out that "There is a young Catholic counterculture emerging

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Having Faith like a child...



Young people who are part of the lay prayer movement for children, 'Children's Rosary, attend the All Ireland Rosary Rally at Knock Shrine Co. Mayo on June 1. An estimated 13-15,000 thousand people descended on Ireland's national Marian shrine for the event. Photo: Sinead Mallee

New Auxiliary to head up city centre 'restoration' project

Staff Reporter

The recently appointed auxiliary Bishop of Dublin is to chair a group responsible for the pastoral renewal of Dublin City Centre, which will see two churches upgraded to Cathedral (St Mary's Pro-Cathedral) and Minor Basilica status (St Andrew's Westland Row) if approved by Rome.

Substantial financial support is believed to be forthcoming for structural work needed on St Mary's Pro-Cathedral and St Andrew's Westland row. Fundraising for pastoral and cultural programmes will be part of the remit of the new committee.

Speaking on the Feast of St Kevin, June 3, Archbishop Dermot Farrell said that the implementation of this new pastoral strategy for the heart of Dublin city was at a time when cities are being hollowed out and a living city is so much more than a commercial centre; "Our diocese has long been committed to inner city communities who bear much of the burden of change; we now seek to renew and deepen that commitment, providing these historic and vibrant communities with further tangible support and encouragement." At the Mass on Monday, the chairs of the two parish councils proclaimed the Word and deacons from both parishes were present, indicating an increased closeness between the two city centre parishes.

LIFE IS TOUGH FOR TEENS

David Quinn

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WE MUST NOT IGNORE SCIENTIFIC REALITY FOR SHORT-TERM GAIN

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100 YEARS OF O'CONNELL STREET

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'Hope' as young Catholic counterculture emerging in Ireland

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Ireland. They are genuine young people searching for meaning." Br Kenneally works with many youth leaders in Cork, including those involved the Leadership Education and Formation Project at Mardyke House.

Several prayer group organisers interviewed by this paper also say they are seeing a resurgence of interest among young people.

Eoin McCormack, a parish catechist based in Rathmines, Co. Dublin said that sixty mostly young people, packed into a small café for a talk on 'Does God exist?'

Mr McCormack said: "We as a Church need to be creative

in our apologetics and getting back to what it means to be a Christian... The younger people who are making the jump to come to church want community, but they also want the answers to their faith. We are in the position to give 2000 years of philosophy and theology on the good life" he said.

Bishop Fintan Gavin notes that "Maybe we come from a picture in the past that we had too much support from the culture, and we keep contrasting things. This is where we are called to be 'the Church of the here and now' as St Joan of Arc said. We need to be signs of hope. A Christian without hope is not really a Christian.

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Irish Church can help young Catholics caught in housing crisis

Staff reporter

The Irish Church can learn from parishes in America who are responding to the housing crisis by opening unused rectories to Catholics according to a leading Irish ministry leader and speaker based in California.

"They're starting to lease those to elderly communities, so the elderly can have assisted living communities. Or in my locality, a lot of young adults who can't afford to get on the property market are living in community with each other in former rectories and then they're doing service or they're teaching in the parish or maybe they're doing Make a Differ-

ence Day with the kids. There's some in-kind opportunities there" says Julianne Stanz.

She added: "I am seeing the Catholic Church in America galvanized to look at real needs and real issues. I know one bishop, for example, he started a house for women who were the victims of human trafficking.

"I know one bishop who moved out of the what was called the Bishop's Palace. And I know we have those in Ireland too. And he moved out of it. He took a little small house, little bungalow for himself. And the whole house was turned into a home for women fleeing domestic violence and men who were fleeing domestic violence."

Ms Stanz who's also an author and

director for Outreach for Evangelization and Discipleship with Loyola Press, says she thinks there is an opportunity for the Church in Ireland.

"So I think we have an opportunity to look at how the church can intersect with real people's lives today. That's where I'd love to see the Catholic Church in Ireland really look more deeply at itself and respond to the real needs of the Irish that are living there. I think the property issue is one of them. We should be able to accommodate people, you know, justly and fairly. And if we have open spaces and open properties that are not being used, let's look at what we can do for the good of society."

A transatlantic Rosary

Renata Milán Morales

Recent weeks have seen troubling incidents at the Dublin-NYC portal, but a recent initiative aimed to bring positivity. Collaborating with an American Catholic influencer -@FrancoTV-, three friars from the Order of Preachers -@irishdominicans- organised a Rosary prayer session spanning the Atlantic.

The American influencer's team explains on his 'X' (twitter) profile, "the idea was executed by Franco who got in touch with his

followers that live near the portal, and one got him connected with the Irish Dominicans on Instagram who brought several other lay people."

Fr Conor McDonough OP shared on his X (twitter) account "Our visit to the Dublin-NYC portal went great! A cheeky little transatlantic Rosary with @theFrancoTV and lots of interesting encounters with loving strangers".

This portal Rosary will continue happening each month on the 22nd at 7pm -2pm in NYC.

Students receive prayers for hope and strength



James McKeown, Tom Martin and Molly McKeown at the special Exam Mass prepared by Kingscourt Parish pastoral planning team for Leaving and Junior Cert students, Co. Cavan.

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Cost-of-living crisis is “crucifying” schools

Renata Steffens

The Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA) carried out an online survey on its member schools in May, 2024 and found that 1,440 of the schools who responded are experiencing financial difficulties due to the cost-of-living crisis.

The results show that more than 70% of schools have been running at a deficit over the past year, following the rising costs of electricity, heat and transport, and the shortfall in grant funding to cover basic expenses.

The general secretary of the CPSMA, Seamus Mulconry, said the cost-of-living crisis is “crucifying” schools, and that “inflation has more than eaten away all benefits of last year’s increase in capitation. In fact schools are burning through

their reserves just to pay for everyday expenses.”

The crisis also affects classroom teaching resources, like stationary and photocopying, as many schools said, they are having to cut back on these materials or not buy them at all. Also, over a half of the schools mentioned they are relying on fundraising to cover basic necessities.

“Teaching and learning resources are not being bought in order that basic running costs are paid for,” commented one principal. “It makes no sense that on one hand parents are gratefully receiving free books and free hot lunches for their children, and on the other hand the school community has no choice but to ask the parents to contribute.”

“We need either an injection of cash in the system now or a strong reassurance that funds

are on the way in September,” said Mr Mulconry. Reflecting that, The Department of Education said this year’s funding package for primary schools and post-primary schools is guaranteed to be the highest ever.

The Budget 2024 mentions that over €80 million is destined to permanent restorations of capitation funding for schools with an additional temporary fund in cost-of-living support.

“A total of €21m full year costs is being provided for a permanent restoration of funding for schools, bringing the basic rate of capitation to €200 per student in primary schools and to €345 in post primary schools,” the Budget states.

Possible increase in school funding may be considered for the Budget 2025, said the Department.

Bishop Niall Coll celebrates 200-year-old Church

On Sunday June 1, 2024, Bishop Niall Coll of Ossory said that “This evening, we honour and celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of the completion of the building of what Carrigan”, author of *The History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory* Canon Carrigan, “termed ‘The present commodious church’. At St Canice’s Church, Kilkenny Bishop Coll congratulates St Canice’s Parish, saying “Thus, I would

like, through the kind officers of Fr. Dan Carroll, V.G., to offer the Diocese’s congratulations to you the parishioners of St Canice’s and to your parish priest, Fr. Jim Murphy, in this important occasion for the parish. At a time of great change in both society and Church, it is good to look back in gratitude and look forward in hope for the part that St Canice’s Parish plays in the lives of its people.”

The Moher the merrier



Fr Tom Ryan, Fr Martin Shanahan, Deacon Leonard Cleary, Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe, and Fr Joy Micle Njarakattuvally CC celebrate the annual Mass at the Cliffs of Moher, Co. Clare last week.

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Abuse is a travelling wave says top Irish cleric in Rome

Staff reporter/Crux

The Irish priest who heads up Vatican investigations into allegations of abuse has said he'd like to see more transparency in dealing with victims and their families. "If I had a child who was abused by a priest, I would want to know the status of the case." "It's a question that's discussed in the office, it's something to have in mind for the future, but not too distant of a future," he said.

Monsignor John Joseph Kennedy

from Dublin is Secretary of the Disciplinary Section of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), and is one of the Holy See's leading authorities when it comes to investigating instances of clerical abuse and handing out punishments for abusers.

Mons Kennedy confirmed that Cardinal Fernández, after his appointment as prefect, only handles doctrinal cases such as heresy, apostasy and schism, and that "he leaves to me and the disciplinary

section to handle the cases in which there is abuse of minors," which is something he said comprises around 77 percent of the dicastery's cases.

Italy, he said, is currently "in the top ten" countries in the world due to the number of abuse cases coming to light, but that this will likely change going forward.

In his comments to journalists, Kennedy described the abuse crisis as "a wave" that travels and touches different coasts.

Twenty years ago, this wave

touched places such as the United States, Canada, Ireland, and several European countries, and "now it is touching Italy, India, the Philippines, Africa, and some countries in Latin America," he said.

In another 20 years' time, Kennedy said Italy will likely no longer be in the top 10, "due to the efforts we are seeing at every level of society. In every diocese, and in every religious order, we are truly seeing an effort to combat this thing.

"I want to have all cases brought

to light, so that the Church can be transparent, a source of light, a sign of hope, and a sign of life," Kennedy said, saying a high number of cases is a good thing, "because people find the courage to report."

Mons Kennedy spoke at a May 29 event titled "Abuse of minors: A reading of the Italian context (2001-2021)," which was organized jointly by the Italian Embassy to the Holy See and the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI).

Collapse in teacher's faith is an opportunity

Staff Reporter

The collapse in belief among teachers in Catholic schools offers a huge opportunity according to the Director for Outreach for Evangelisation and Discipleship with Loyola Press, Julianne Stanz, an

Irish woman now living in America.

Commenting on the recent Grace Report that showed that the next generation of Catholic school principals were unlikely to have faith she said: "I think, you know, there was a warning bell

that was sounded maybe 25 years ago around this issue. That warning bell has now become, for some people, a death knell, and it shouldn't be. I think there's a huge opportunity to look afresh at Catholic schools in Ireland.

I did read the report, and

it's pretty somber. We have Catholic schools because we have a mission to educate, to uplift the dignity of the human person. And at the center of that is our faith. Now, people want to take faith out of that equation. Then you lose something, I think, that's

very fundamental to us as Catholics, which is the desire to educate all children.

Ms Stanz added that Catholic schools need to keep their identity. "I know we're tip toeing around faith and different things here, but Catholic schools are Catholic for a

reason. And yes, we have a mission to welcome and educate all, but we have to look at why we're educating children and meet that challenge today.

So, you know, I think trusts have to really engage with this issue very seriously.

Beware of 'infection' by 21st Century biases bishop warns on Slieve Patrick

Martina Purdy

The new Bishop of Down and Connor has celebrated Mass at the place where St Patrick landed in Ireland almost 1600 years ago.

Bishop Alan McGuckian chose to go to Slieve Patrick, also known as Saul Mountain, Co. Down, to celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi and Day 4 of his new novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Bishop McGuckian told pilgrims gathered at Saul, Downpatrick that the novena prayer, inspired by the Dublin-born

Jesuit priest, Blessed John Sullivan, was also significant to St Patrick's mission.

"Our hope and our expectation is that we will be renewed in our hearts, that you will be renewed in your hearts... And we will fulfil the purpose that God had when he sent Patrick here that first day - and we will become the people of God."

The bishop chose the first Sunday of June, Corpus Christi, to celebrate the Mass although it is traditionally on the second Sunday as this is when St Patrick's Monument at Saul was first unveiled in 1937.

The monument - the largest

in the world to St Patrick - was conceived in 1932 and after five years of effort was unveiled in the presence of an estimated 50,000 pilgrims from across Ireland.

Celebrating Mass just below the monument, Bishop McGuckian spoke to a crowd of local parishioners, some of the children who had made their first communion, and 16 American 'Young Ambassadors' who are

visiting The Saint Patrick Centre in Downpatrick.

Bishop McGuckian warned against 21st Century biases when it comes to hearing ancient stories from the Old Testament. He said there is a modern temptation to think of the Israelites as weak or inferior for offering sacrifices to God, as Sunday's Mass reading included a passage from Exodus about the sacrifice of bulls and the scattering of blood.

"(These stories) were first read in Ireland when Patrick brought them here 1600 years ago. He brought us the truth. The truth about us human beings. We are made to offer sacrifice to God. Sacrifice is giving God everything because God gives us everything and deserves our everything.

"That is who we are. We swim in this 21st Century sea and we are infected by its ideas and biases and we could be deluded by those biases to forget who we are. We are people made for God and we will only be fulfilled in God."

Concelebrating Mass were Canon John Murray PP for Downpatrick, Fr Robert McMahon of Saul Parish, Fr Derek Kearney SMA, of Crossgar and Killyleagh, and Deacon Jackie Breen.

The novena will end on Friday June 7 with the Bishop celebrating mass at St Peter's Cathedral Belfast at 7pm.

NEWS IN BRIEF

2024 Light the Fire Event

On Sunday August 4 2024, Archbishop Francis Duffy DD will be joined by Eurovision winner Dana Rosemary Scanlon at the Light the Fire rosary and healing service. This Mass began in 1986 by Pope John Paul II and is being celebrated at Ballintubber Abbey this year. Although this Mass now embodies a remembrance of faith, it began as a song that was used as an effort to rekindle the flames that St Patrick lit on the hill of Sloane in 433 AD. At this year's event, Dana Rosemary Scanlon will perform her new song that encapsulates how St Patrick first lit this fire of faith. To allow this faith to prosper, each baptised person in attendance of the Light the Fire Mass will be evangelised in an effort to relight the faith inside of them. This event will begin at 12pm for the Gathering and end at 4pm proceeding the Eucharist Healing Service.

New novel showcasing regrets of transitioning

Member of an Irish Catholic family and graduate of the Catholic University of America Mary Margaret Olohan released a novel titled *Detrans: True Stories of Escaping Gender Ideology Cult* on May 29, 2024. Now a senior reporter at 'The Daily Signal', this is Ms. Olohan's first published novel. Her new nonfiction piece depicts "the unconscionable abuse these detransitioners have endured—manipulative therapy sessions, mental and emotional anguish, botched surgeries, and attempts to construct phantom body parts." Ms. Olohan gathered her information from personal interviews that she conducted with people who wish they had not transitioned due to outside pressure and decided to make "the journey back". She shares how teens are "are promptly set on the path of puberty-blockers, cross-sex hormones, and gruesome "gender-affirming" surgeries" after being "goaded by a toxic online "community" and assisted by teachers, doctors, and even their own parents".



Father Robert Mc Mahon PP of Saul and Ballee parish with first holy communicants Cormac Hanna, Issabelle Farrell, Darcie Mullen, Maria Byrne, Lucian Rose Smyth and Harry McMullan after celebrating the outdoor Mass on St Patrick's mountain, on which stands the largest statue of St Patrick in the world at Saul, Co. Down. More than 300 people made the pilgrimage to the top of the monument. Photo: Bill Smyth



Lucia Rose Smyth from Saintfield is pictured with the bishop's crozier after the celebration of outdoor Mass on St Patrick's mountain. Photo: Bill Smyth

The ups and downs of our most famous street

O'Connell Street is surely Ireland's best-known thoroughfare, named after 'The Liberator', Daniel O'Connell just a hundred years ago, in 1924. How interesting to learn, from Christine Casey's peerless architectural survey of Dublin, that the city Corporation had voted to change the name of Sackville Street 40 years previously, in 1884, but the local residents objected.

They preferred to retain Sackville, named after one of Ireland's undistinguished Lord-Lieutenants, Lionel Sackville, Duke of Dorset. (Limerick's O'Connell Street had previously been named



Mary Kenny

after King George III, a monarch in whose hearing the very words "Catholic Emancipation" could not be pronounced.)

But people started calling the wide boulevard "O'Connell Street" anyway, and in 1924 the change was formalised under the aegis of the new Irish State.

Inspired

It was fitting that the centre of the capital's centre should be named after 'The Great Dan', who had not only

achieved Catholic Emancipation in 1829, but who had inspired the nation with the confidence of achieving sovereignty through democracy and the rule of law. (And the American anti-slave campaigner Frederick Douglass always saw O'Connell as his mentor.)

O'Connell Street has been iconic; location of the 1916 Rising at the GPO, and of Clery's, which Christine Casey describes as a "marvellous Portland stone

façade" with Ionic colonnades. It featured distinguished statuary, from O'Connell to Parnell, along with James Larkin and Father Mathew. And of course we had, until 1966, 'the Pillar' – being Nelson Pillar, which has a starring role in Joyce's 'Ulysses'. This landmark was replaced at the turn of the 21st Century with the Spire, which Dr Casey describes as "a stainless-steel needle... with clearly visible joints, and nasty mirror-patterned base."

Decline

Frank McDonald, the renowned environmental writer on Dublin, has claimed that the decline of

O'Connell Street began after the destruction of the Pillar. And it can hardly be denied that in recent decades it has become tattier, more squalid and more associated with crime and drugs. (John Hinde's picture postcards of O'Connell Street in the 1960s display a much more salubrious sight.) I know plenty of Dubliners who just don't like to venture into O'Connell Street any more.

“We must hope that this once imposing part of Dublin can be redeemed”

Back in the 1930s, readers of *The Irish Catholic*

suggested, at several reiterations, that Admiral Nelson should be removed from his position atop 'the Pillar'. It was proposed that St Patrick should replace him (some also wanted a statue of Our Lady).

Demolished

If Dublin Corporation had acted on this suggestion, it's almost certain the Pillar would not have been demolished by the IRA. And if Frank McDonald is right, our famous thoroughfare would not have so declined.

Still, we must hope that this once imposing part of Dublin can be redeemed, and a hundred years after formally receiving Daniel O'Connell's name might be a good time to do so.



The virtue of honesty

Japan enjoys a well-deserved reputation for material honesty. If you lose your wallet in Tokyo you have between an 80 and 90% chance of having it returned, intact and with nothing taken.

Honesty is a point of national honour, although there is a tradition that when property is returned to its owner, a small reward is expected, of about 10% of the item's value.

This was also the custom – or at least the ideal – in Ireland. The Dublin *Evening Mail* newspaper ran a regular column advertising items lost and found – finders went to the trouble to write to the paper about items found. Fountain pens, greatly treasured in the 1950s, often featured.

My late friend, the novelist Clare Boylan, found a ten-shilling note on the Terenure street when a child. She took

it to the local Garda station, and was told that if no one had claimed it after a year and a day, she could have it. She returned after that time-lapse and was awarded the ten bob. There was a tradition that you would drop a small amount into the church poor box to acknowledge your windfall.

Ten shillings, at that time, could be a third of a weekly wage – many a clerk's pay was 30 bob a week.

This summer marks the 75th anniversary of the classical movie *The Third Man*, written by the Catholic novelist Graham Greene in 1949. In Greenland, there is always a moral ambiguity

between good and evil, and in this story, Harry Lime (Orson Welles) is the bad hat. Yet he's a compelling character who delivers a very famous speech, comparing Italy and Switzerland.

Italy had "thirty years

of warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed" which produced Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. Switzerland had 500 years of democracy and peace "and what did that produce? The

cuckoo clock". Trouble is productive, is his belief.

Anton Karas' zither music on the Harry Lime theme went straight into the hit parade. I remember my brother playing it on the mouth-organ. Evocative.

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Young Catholic counterculture emerging in modern Ireland



Renata Milán Morales

In Ireland, Catholic youth groups are experiencing a resurgence, drawing hundreds of young people to faith-based activities and community service. Groups such as Hakuna, Pure in Heart, Living Water Youth 2000 and even a women's group provide a sense of belonging and spiritual growth for the country's youth. With focus on worship, understanding their beliefs and living their faith in the community, they are redefining the role of religion in the lives of young Catholics.

Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross said: "I am very hopeful. We had last Sunday the Eucharistic procession and we had more than 4000 people. Many of them were young people that were living their faith on the streets. It is not about numbers, but it is about being there... We need to find a way where young people can be in the culture of today and be a life-giving force within that culture. Not running away from the culture but not embracing every aspect of the culture either. That is why young people need the support of one another".

Bro. Martin Kenneally, from the Presentation Brothers who celebrated the profession of a new brother last weekend, points out that "There is a young Catholic counterculture emerging in Ireland. They are genuine young people searching for meaning." Bro. Kenneally works with many youth leaders in Cork, including those involved in the Leadership Education and Formation Project at Mardyke House.

Resurgence

Several prayer group organisers are also seeing a resurgence of interest among young people. Bruna, a Shalom missionary in Dublin told the paper: "There is hope! Everyone wants to get closer to God, but many times they just don't know where to start and have no one around them that could give an orientation. Some advice I would give to someone who wants to learn more is to seek the Holy Sacraments!"

Eoin McCormack, a parish catechist based in Rathmines, Co. Dublin told this paper's podcast, 'The Confession Box', that "Recently, a social group

organised a meet up conversation titled, 'Is there a God? How do we know God exists?' There was 60 people, mostly young people, packed into this small café. There were people standing in the doorway. They had to say 'no' because of the size of the venue. One man at the table I was sitting, a young Irish working engineer, said that when he started to read Augustine, Aquinas and the Desert Fathers he couldn't believe after years of Irish Catholic education that he had absolutely no idea of what the Church was 'hiding'. We as a Church need to be creative in our apologetics and getting back to what it means to be a Christian... The younger people who are making the jump to come to church want community, but they also want the answers to their faith. We are in the position to give 2000 years of philosophy and theology on the good life", he said.

“They gather more than 80 young professionals weekly for a holy hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament. After this, they have social time in the nearest pub”

In the same parish as Eoin, there is a youth group called Hakuna. This group's moto is doing things wholeheartedly. They gather more than 80 young professionals weekly for a holy hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament. After this, they have social time in the nearest pub.

This paper also spoke with Peter Kasko, member of the Living Water's core team, who explained to the paper: "Living Water is a vibrant charismatic prayer group. Our mission statement is very clear: to lead people to encounter Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and to become saints together and set this nation on fire! Easy! I firmly believe that this group is a vibrant source of hope for the future of Catholic Church. Through our mission and ministry, we emphasise the active presence of the Holy Spirit, and dynamic and living faith. Through regular meetings we strive to cultivate a strong communal bond and sense of belonging which we can take back home to our families or local parishes".

Estefania Pryma, organiser

of a women's prayer group, said that "Living in Dublin, there are many different Catholic groups to be a part of, yet I found that they didn't align with my time schedule. Upon discussing with one of my housemates our similar desires for this community, we decided we would start our own women's group for those who were seeking and desiring genuine friendship, faith and formation. Every two weeks, on a Sunday evening we gather, read through the scriptures and ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since starting this group in April 2023, there have been incredible friendships made."

Discern

James Aherne is the organiser of a lay-led young adult ministry of the Jesuits. It aims to help each member discern God's call in their life. "We focus on having a weekly bible study, an end of week Examen in the Companion's house chapel as well as monthly offerings; these recently have included a series on Catholic social teaching, weekend and day retreats, open-mic evenings, hikes and a monthly Samuel group for discernment," says James.

Another prayer group in Ireland is Pure in Heart. Helen Vysotska, head of the group shared with the paper that "Young people are thirsty for true authentic love which ultimately comes from a source of a relationship with God has a better understanding of sacrificial love than a person who does not. So, when we are searching for a lifelong spouse and partner, the Catholic Church is the only social institution that offers a lifelong commitment".

Bishop Fintan Gavin notes that "Maybe we come from a picture in the past that we had too much support from the culture, and we keep contrasting things. This is where we are called to be 'the Church of the here and now' as St Joan of Arc said. We need to be signs of hope. A Christian without hope is not really a Christian. And that doesn't mean that we don't face challenges. Because there are plenty of challenges. But we are still faithful to preach and make disciples. To build lives of faith and make a community of faith. To reach out to the world around us".

This resurgence of Catholic youth groups in Ireland reflects a renewal of faith and community and is a sign of hope for the future of the Church.



Bishop Fintan Gavin



Faber Companions



Eoin McCormack giving a talk to Youth Rathmines Prayer Group



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Women's group



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

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- Tour of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
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- Gondola boat trip of Xochimilco.
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Thousands descend on Knock for the All Ireland Rosary Rally

Staff reporter

An estimated 13-15 thousand people came to Knock on Saturday June 1 for the All Ireland Rosary Rally.

Rallying calls from Dana, Maria Steen, Mickey Harte, Wendy Grace, Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin, Bishop Phonsie Cullinan, Fr John Harris OP and many more by way of videos on social media inspired people from all over Ireland and beyond to come to Knock.

Many of the pilgrims arrived by bus, with nearly 50 coming from the four corners of Ireland. The large, enthusiastic crowd gathered early for a Marian Conference at 9.30am to

hear speakers such as Fr Joseph Mary Deane CFR, Fr Brendan Kilcoyne, and Sr Ana Lanzas. More than 20 apostolates from around Ireland then met people at a specially created conference area. Rosary and Scapular making workshops ran for over two hours in the morning, and at midday over 200 people took part in Ireland's first ever living rosary, where people wearing white and different colour-shirts formed gigantic rosary beads, and an overhead drone captured the scene on video.

Fr John Harris led the Stations of the Cross for thousands of pilgrims and representatives from different youth groups including the Children's Rosary Movement, which has grown rapidly in recent years, led thousands of pilgrims in a rosary procession.

Bishop Phonsie was the main celebrant at the Mass, joined by Bishop John Buckley, and many other priests. He reminded the people that the real good news is found in St John's Gospel: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (Jn 3, 16) He encouraged the thousands gathered to write another chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and to spread the gospel message with joy and enthusiasm. Dana finished proceedings by singing the hymn she herself wrote, 'Our Lady of Knock'. Organisers said it was very encouraging to see the All Ireland Rosary Rally grow year on year and that there is a great thirst for faith in Ireland today.



Fr Marius O'Reilly at the rally.



A large congregation at the All Ireland Rosary Rally.



Children reciting the rosary in the basilica in Knock.



Children who prayed at the rally.



Fr Peyton Cluster Choir including Dana at the All Ireland Rosary Rally.



Mother Adela Galindo SCTJM, prays with a pilgrim.



Mother Adela Galindo SCTJM, and Sister Ana Margarita Lanzas with pilgrims at the Rosary Rally, Knock Shrine, June 1. Photos: Sinead Mallee



Pilgrims attending the All Ireland Rosary Rally.



Dana singing at the Rosary Rally.



One of the children's rosary groups in attendance.

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Preacher: Fr. John Walsh OP

4th June, 7pm
Celebrant: Archbishop Dermot Farrell

Feast of St. Anthony, 13th June, 7pm
Celebrant: Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor
Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland
Blessing of children at 4pm
Blessing of Lillies at both Masses

All are Welcome



Life is going backwards for many of our teenagers



David Quinn

How are our teenagers faring, and more specifically, what about our 13-year-olds? This is the question examined by a new report from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) called 'The Changing Social Worlds of 13-Year-Olds'.

Here is the short version: compared with 13-year-olds ten a decade ago, today's 13-year-olds get on a bit better with their parents (although often a bit worse with their mothers in the case of girls); they have fewer friends; they are a bit more likely to take part in organised activities;

they have greater peer difficulties and they have a lot more emotional difficulties.

Conclusions

The data to arrive at these conclusions comes from something called the 'Growing Up in Ireland' survey which tracks the lives of thousands of children across time so we can see how they are getting on across the course of their childhood.

The new ESRI study looks at children born in 1998 and who therefore turned 13 in 2011, and compares them with children born 10 years later, that is in 2008, and therefore turned 13 in 2021.

Now, you might think there couldn't be that much difference between two groups of children born relatively close in time, just ten years apart, and we wouldn't want to exaggerate; the differences are not that big in the main, except in terms of emotional difficulties.

But if you turned 13 in 2011, you spent part of your child-

hood growing up in a country in a severe economic downturn. Remember, we had a disastrous property crash in 2008. Many families suffered greatly. Lots of parents were thrown out of work. There was a lot less money to go around. That curbs what people can do. This could be one reason why a 13-year-old today is more likely to be brought along to organised activities. Organised activities cost money, and even though the cost of living has gone up a lot recently, at least almost every working age adult is in work.

A child born in 2008 spent only a very short part of his or her life in recession-hit Ireland and they were still infants when we emerged from it.

Another big difference in that a child born in 1998 had basically zero exposure to social media before becoming teenagers. This is because smart phones only became available around 2012 and took a while to spread through the popula-



tion. Social media platforms like Instagram and so on were still in their early stages.

But if you were born in 2008, social media is likely to have been a much bigger part of your childhood, and if your parents gave you a smart phone, or some other internet-connected electronic device before you reached your teens, then it might have been a very big part indeed.

Unfortunately, and a bit oddly, the ERSI report hardly looks at smartphone use at all. It does say that mobile phones were almost universal among the 13-year-olds born in 1998. But a mobile phone that only allowed you to send texts and make phone calls is a very different thing than a smartphone.

Lockdown

Another huge difference between a child who turned 13 in 2011 and one who turned 13 in 2021, is that the second group spent part of their childhood in lockdown. Those born in 1998 were 22 by the time we went into the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. They had left school several years before.

On the other hand, if you were born in 2008, the first lockdown arrived when you are 11 or 12. Suddenly, at an age when you might be joining secondary school and meeting new friends, you couldn't meet anyone at all.

Schools were closed. Sport was banned. You couldn't visit a friend's house or play with them on the street. Social isolation is very bad for older people. There are lots of lonely elderly people in the country, but imagine if you are suddenly denied social experiences at a very formative period in your life?

What's more, schools in Ireland remained closed for longer than anywhere else in Europe.

The age group who turned

13 in 2021 spent months and months locked out of school. This was very bad both from an educational and a social development point of view. It was especially bad for those from deprived backgrounds who might have been living in a small flat with no garden, maybe no siblings and perhaps only one parent, and you are stuck together all day long for weeks and months on end. That is not healthy.

“Many children from deprived backgrounds who dropped out of school during lockdown have not come back”

But the study only takes us up to 2021. Pandemic-related restrictions of some sort lasted right through to February 2022, so it will be interesting to do a follow-up study of the effects of lockdown on the children who lived through it.

Many children from deprived backgrounds who dropped out of school during lockdown have not come back. This will have drastic effects on their life chances.

A very big change in 13-year-olds now compared with a decade ago is in the level of reported illnesses/disabilities among them. Among the group born in 1998, it was 19% and among those born in 2008, it was 36%, which is almost double.

The illness or disability could be severe anxiety or depression.

What's going on? The big rise might really be happening, or it could be that parents are more aware of a mental illness when they see one, or maybe

the mental illnesses that have always been there are now being recorded. Or maybe over-diagnosis is going on.

It is probably a combination of all these things. However, we do know that children's hospitals are reporting a big surge in young people coming in after self-harming, especially following the lockdowns. Something bad is really happening.

The report doesn't go into the causes very much. As mentioned, it barely looks at the issue of smartphones. The issue of pornography isn't raised at all. Nor is the issue of family breakup analysed. We are told that about one in five 13-year-olds today are raised by lone parents, which is about the same as a decade ago, but we are not told how many 13-year-olds born in 1998 saw their parents split up compared with those born in 2008.

Religion

Religion gets almost no look-in. Mass attendance among teenagers has been very low for a long time, but it would have been good to see if there are any differences between those who do go to church, and those who don't.

Despite the fact that teenagers get on somewhat better with their parents than they did 10-years ago, this new study seems to show that things are getting worse for them. This appears to be partly because of the lockdowns, partly because of smartphones and social media, but could it also be down to rising family instability and a continued breakdown in the structures of meaning and purpose, chiefly religion, that once existed in this country? We need more information on this and the ESRI should attempt to provide it. If not, then we are flying blind.

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Catholic votes, and voting



Martina Purdy

“Knock and the door shall be opened to you!” is an oft-quoted scripture. But it can be a tricky process for candidates seeking a vote at election time.

An old politician’s trick, to avoid unpleasantness, was to hang back on the footpath while canvassers knocked the door.

Years ago, I heard a story from a colleague whose mother lived in a border county. The mammy was fiercely anti-Sinn Féin due to a particularly gruesome murder of an alleged IRA informer.

During the Troubles, the local Sinn Féin canvassers knew not to approach her door. But republicans had noticed a thaw in attitudes with the advent of the IRA ceasefire. So armed with the peace process, a couple of Shinners ‘chanced their arm’. “When my mammy answered the door,” said my colleague. “One of the two boys asked her if she would consider voting for Sinn Féin. And to their surprise, she answered ‘Why yes, yes she would...’”

“They were all smiles until my mammy, added: ‘when hell freeeeeeezes over!’” before slamming the door.”

Restrained

I was more restrained the first and only time Sinn Féin ever knocked my front door in Belfast. It was during last year’s council elections. Though firmly annoyed, I was polite: no political party or politician who supports abortion would be getting my vote.

“Aaah,” said one of them. “but we have moved on from that!”

“Noooo,” says I, “And youse can tell Mary Lou McDonald and Michelle O’Neill that I still remember their ‘The north is not sign.’”

I did not slam the door in their faces but it has since occurred to me that parties, who traditionally attracted Catholic voters, have slammed the door in our faces.

Public service is supposed to be a mission but these elites have abandoned Catholic voters like me.

Indeed ‘Catholic Ireland’ was fed a lie during the 2018 referendum that abortion would be safe, rare and legal.

Yet the casualties are mounting.

In Ireland, well over 30,000

DUP politicians gather to support Jonathan Buckley’s Westminster election campaign.



lives have been destroyed since the law was changed on both sides of the border. Amid demands for more ‘abortion rights’, consider England and Wales, where 252,122 lives were lost to abortion in 2022, according to Right to Life UK.

In the south, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Sinn Féin, The Green Party, Labour etc have overwhelmingly supported the so-called right to abortion, even in free votes. Indeed TD Peader Tóibín quit Sinn Féin over this issue and founded Aontú, a passionately pro-life party. Almost 70 Aontú candidates will contest the local elections, including a mayoral battle in Limerick and four candidates are fighting the European Parliamentary poll on June 7.

“The most powerful elected representatives in these parties have backed the choice for abortion, even up to birth for pre-born babies with disabilities”

In the north, a Westminster poll is set for July 4. Incredibly there are few parties that are firmly pro-life: these include the fledgling Aontú, the small hardline unionist TUV, and the largest unionist party, the DUP.

The SDLP and Alliance parties have traditionally attracted Catholic voters. Their position that abortion is a matter of conscience effectively reduces the destruction of life to a choice. And frankly powerful elected representatives in these parties have backed the choice for abortion, even up to birth for pre-born babies with disabilities.

No wonder the SDLP leader Colum Eastwood, a most unworthy successor to John Hume, is struggling to keep his once-safe Foyle seat. His party colleague, Claire Hanna might have been cast as pro-life at the last election. But not any longer.

Some individual members within political parties say they are personally pro-life. I don’t believe them. I think anyone who is genuinely pro-life would do what Peadar Tóibín TD did. The silence in the face of abortion is deafening.

Championed

The Alliance leader Naomi Long, who has championed woke politics, also backed so-called abortion rights. She is

seeking to unseat the DUP’s Gavin Robinson in East Belfast.

“Aontú and the DUP are far apart on the constitutional question but much closer on other issues, including the right to life”

When the snap Westminster poll was called, Mr Robinson, the new DUP leader, and his fellow MPs were fiercely opposing the latest attempts to introduce even more extreme abortion law. Abortion campaigners were using amendments to the Criminal

Justice bill to fully decriminalise abortion right up to birth.

The Alliance deputy leader Stephen Farry was backing this push because he doesn’t want women going to jail for late-term abortions. Why stop at birth?

This battle will be back on again as soon as the poll ends. Astonishingly, the DUP are the only pro-life party at Westminster.

Aontú and the DUP are far apart on the constitutional question but much closer on other issues, including the right to life.

I had a word with Gavin Robinson after his leader’s launch the other night. He told me he receives around 300 or so emails every time abortion comes up in Westminster.

Abandoned

I asked how he plans to appeal to Catholic voters who feel abandoned on issues such as abortion? “If they think I am going to support constitutional aspirational change, then I am not their man,” he said. “But if they can look

beyond that issue and are more fundamentally moved by the issues of principle that they share with me, then they will find me to be a strong advocate.”

“I don’t believe that any politician - who supports the right of a doctor to cut up a child before birth - will respect my rights”

Here’s the thing: I will only vote for parties that stand up for the right to life.

Abortion deforms a nation. And frankly, I don’t believe that any politician - who supports the right of a doctor to cut up a child before birth - will respect my rights. Or yours for that matter.

Just take a look at freedom of speech these days. Do you feel free or are you afraid to speak out?

So, do knock at my door. It shall be opened.

MENS RETREAT, GLENCOMERAGH

Jesus encouraged his disciples to come away to a quiet place to nourish their souls. There is a men’s retreat in the spectacular glen of the Comeragh mountains, which gives participants an opportunity to grow spiritually under the guidance of the very experienced Fr. Patrick Cahill, and Mr. Pat Reynolds. This retreat enables like-minded Christian men to converse freely about faith topics concerning men, “iron sharpens iron,” (Proverbs 27:17).

St. Cardinal John Henry Newman notably said that he learned more chatting in informal settings than he did in formal lectures. In this men’s retreat at Glencomeragh there will be plenty to discuss over a barbecue and camp-fire, having worked up an appetite engaging in “Air Soft”, (paint balling), and axe-throwing.

The retreat is for all men over the age of eighteen. It is the comprehensive nature of this retreat, that marks it out. The retreat gives men the opportunity to grow in Faith, while being nourished by the sacraments of the Church, and not without some craic and fraternity. Without fraternity, there can be the danger a lack of accountability, but this can be rectified with a retreat for men in Holy Family Mission, Glencomeragh.

Pope Francis has designated this year as a year of Prayer, preparing for the Jubilee next year in Rome. There will be plenty of time for adoration, confession, music, communal and individual prayer on this retreat.

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We must not ignore scientific reality for short-term gain



Nuala O'Loan

When the Covid-19 pandemic emerged we were repeatedly told that we must “trust the science”. There was no scope for argument. Those who questioned the construction of the new mRNA vaccines and their universal administration were ridiculed and called anti-vaxxers. Yet those vaccines did not have full approval when they were administered to millions of people. Similar group think applies to the question of climate change – everybody is required to accept what is perceived as “the science” or they become “climate deniers”.

Those who control the media refuse to allow much of a debate about such matters. People’s accounts on social media are shut down or posts are removed. Free speech has been seriously curtailed by the media in all its forms. We have just accepted this rather than engaging in rational debate.

So extreme has become the accepted dialogue that the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said last year that “the era of global warming has ended” and “the era of global boiling has arrived”. This was a manifestly ridiculous statement.

In the wider field of health, population control is presented as essential because of climate change: people are encouraged to think that it is in the interests of the planet not to have children or alternatively that to have children is to expose them to the dangers of climate change. Our young people are exposed to multiple stressors in relation to climate issues.

As we contemplate all of this we must ask ourselves where lies truth, and how can we really take care of the planet which God gave us?

Covid

Of course the early days of Covid were very difficult and caused concern and uncertainty among those in government. The options were mass vaccination which required the rapid development of the vaccine, or allowing matters to proceed and hope that we would develop natural immu-



nity. They opted for mass vaccination. The reality we now know is that, despite all the assurances about “going with the science” and that the vaccines would protect from infection, Covid vaccines do not prevent you from getting Covid, nor do they prevent transmission. At best they limit the impact of the virus when one is infected.

The incidence of side effects from the vaccine would appear to be under reported. Some deaths and serious injury have been recorded, and there is clear evidence of the incidence of cardiac problems among those in their 30s.

“I personally know two people whose lives were wrecked by the vaccine, and two young men who suffered cardiac issues which lasted for a long period”

The BMJ reported the various side effects of the vaccines in February this year, identifying both transverse myelitis and acute disseminated encephalomyelitis as new and rare risks, reporting a statically significant increase in Guillain Barre syndrome and cerebral venous sinus thrombosis after the AstraZeneca vaccine and a sig-

nificantly higher risk of pericarditis 42 days after vaccination, and of myocarditis following doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. The AstraZeneca vaccine has now been withdrawn.

We are told that such cases are rare, yet I personally know two people whose lives were wrecked by the vaccine, and two young men who suffered cardiac issues which lasted for a long period. Most people I speak to have had similar experiences. The evidence on the causes of excess death rates will ultimately emerge. There have, however, undoubtedly been more deaths not attributable to Covid, than would have been anticipated normally.

Developing

It is not that we need to avoid developing vaccines: that would be nonsense. Rather we have to understand that the vaccines developed in response to Covid did not have the effectiveness which was asserted and did cause major problems and we need to learn lessons from this for the future. Similarly we were told that lockdown was essential to prevent Covid from spreading, and so we closed down our countries, imposed draconian laws which now seem very strange, which resulted in massive economic damage, serious interruption of children’s education and development, and increased levels of mental health problems. Countries like Sweden, most of Africa and many other

places did not lockdown, yet did not experience the kind of Covid devastation which was predicted and did not suffer the economic damage which resulted from the actions which our governments took.

That which we were told was ‘science’ which must be trusted, was clearly at best inaccurate.

“Climate change is not driven by the production of CO2, which is a natural process and which is necessary for plants to survive”

Similarly with the issue of climate change. There can be no doubt that the climate has changed gradually since the world began. There have been six great ice ages and they all began when there was much more CO2 in the atmosphere than there is now. A ‘Little Ice Age’ is reported to have begun around 1300 and lasted to the mid-19th century. It led to serious crises: reduced crop yields, famine, reduced access to food and ultimately political problems deriving from such events. The causes of climate change are reported by scientists, such as the distinguished Australian geologist and academic Prof. Ian Plimer, to include tectonic changes, astronomical changes, cosmic radiation, orbital cycles,

changes in ocean currents and the distance and activity of the sun, as well as events such as massive volcanic eruptions. Climate change is not driven by the production of CO2, which is a natural process and which is necessary for plants to survive.

Our drive to reduce CO2 is requiring us to abandon our current energy sources and to adopt alternative lifestyles. Renewable energy sources are desirable but we have to consider the cost of the changes which we make: renewable energy is heavily subsidised at present. We do not yet have the solutions to provide effective alternative heating systems for everyone. People will be, and currently some people are unable to heat their homes as they are deprived of affordable energy.

Diesel

Many of us are old enough to remember the pronouncement that diesel cars would be better for the environment than petrol cars. It was known to the scientists that diesel cars produced different pollutants from petrol cars, but they are still polluting. This was not made known when people were encouraged to buy diesel cars.

The current drive to electric cars does not take account of the multiple environmental problems of accessing the raw materials for the batteries which are required, manufacturing the batteries which have a limited life span, disposing

safely of the massive number of lithium-ion batteries at the end of their lives, the production of electric vehicles which weigh up to twice as much as other vehicles, the damage to roads caused by such heavier vehicles, and the problem of tyre pollution. Electric cars are generally much costlier than other cars.

“Evidence based knowledge evolves over time. The goals must be clear – the best possible protection of people and the environment”

In considering how we progress as a people who cherish the earth and all that God made, we must be aware of the needs of all our people for food, warmth, energy etc. Governments have a duty to provide for national security and that includes sustainable supplies of food, water and energy.

Science is important. Evidence based knowledge evolves over time. The goals must be clear – the best possible protection of people and the environment. The solutions cannot be short term, nor can they ignore scientific reality in the interests of short-term political gain or profit. People need to be able to trust ‘science’ and to make informed rational decisions.

We need a smartphone free childhood to thrive



Wendy Grace

Last week the media regulator, Coimisiún na Meán, released an updated draft online safety code which will now be submitted to the European Commission for assessment.

The code focuses on video-sharing platforms that are headquartered in Ireland. This in itself is problematic, for example, Snapchat which is hugely popular among young people doesn't have their headquarters here.

Tech companies will have to use more robust age verification to prevent children from encountering pornography or gratuitous violence online. It puts some of the onus on social media companies to protect children, but much of the code is self-determined with no strict rules on timelines, for example responding to complaints or removing harmful content. Another glaring omission from the code is the fact that algorithms / suggested content are not covered in the draft.

Hooked

This is the very technology that learns exactly how to hook the user and keep them hooked. It can also direct a user to harmful content since it works by recommending content based on where you live, your age and your search history.

Researchers at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue found that YouTube's 'shorts' video system routinely recommends extremely hateful misogynistic material to young boys.

An Ireland Thinks poll, conducted January 2024, asked if algorithm restrictions should be in place and 82% of respondents agreed. Meta's (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) internal research disclosed that 64% of new users joining extremist groups was because their algorithms connected people to those groups.

Meanwhile, various investigations setting up accounts posing as children have



shown how videos glorifying suicide, as well as hardcore pornography were accessed within hours of launching the social media accounts. Remember, almost 25% of six year olds own a smartphone in Ireland, that figure steadily rises to 74% by the time children reach 12.

There are efforts being made here to make Big Tech accountable - legislation and regulation is part of the picture. But just as necessary are grassroots community efforts to challenge the cultural norms.

Some of the country's largest mobile phone operators have gotten involved backing a voluntary no-smartphone policy for primary aged school children"

We have seen how an initiative like 'It Takes a Village', which started with a few schools in Co. Wicklow asking parents to sign a voluntary code not to introduce smartphones at primary level can have an effect. The Department of Education has since started promoting similar initiatives across the country, and some of the country's largest mobile phone operators have gotten involved backing a voluntary no-smartphone policy for primary aged school children.

There is huge power in these grassroots efforts. For example, in the UK a few local mums started a Whatsapp group called 'Smartphone Free Childhood' committed to just that and within 24 hours the group had reached capacity. Within days the movement

extended to local groups being created across the UK. It was clear parents were desperate to find solutions and to support one another. The movement aims to empower parents to delay giving smartphones until at least 14, with no social media access until 16. These parameters are recommended by one of the foremost experts in this area Dr Jonathan Haidt author of 'Anxious Generation.' He called this movement: "the beginning of the global tipping point in the fight back against a phone-based childhood."

Tellingly his extensive research with young people echoes what the Irish and UK data says, young people wish they didn't have phones, and they are desperate for parents to give them boundaries.

Speaking to one of the founders, Clare Ferrynough, she explained that "The tidal wave of support we've received from parents from every walk of life has only strengthened our conviction that childhood and smartphones simply shouldn't mix."

Shift

Parents working together creates a cultural shift so the new norm is that by the end of primary school no one has a phone. There should also be a critical mass of peers who won't get one for another few years either.

Now Ireland is following suit with the 'Smartphone Free Childhood' Whatsapp groups beginning to grow. We are beginning to realise that tech companies spend billions on making their products intentionally addictive, we can no longer say we don't know that the internet is a gateway to porn, bullying, grooming, intensified relentless peer pressure, and a plethora of

other harmful content. Even without the nasty stuff, time glued to a screen is time not spent doing what children should be doing: playing, exploring, being bored, creative, imagining, and developing social skills.

I spoke to several parents who were part of different groups aspiring to delay use of devices. Here is just a snapshot of what I gathered:

She contacts her friends on Google chat. She will be 14 this year and we don't plan on giving her a phone any time soon"

Sandra shared her experience with her 13 year old daughter explaining that when she was in 6th class all her peers had phones, her daughter felt left out

and was 'unfriended' simply for not having a phone. Sandra decided to homeschool - "We found new friends and parents who were on the same page, she has not once mentioned a mobile phone since moving away from public schools. She contacts her friends on Google chat. She will be 14 this year and we don't plan on giving her a phone any time soon."

Muireann, a mum of three, aged 8, 6 and 3 year old said:

Success

"I think where we have seen the most success internationally, and in Ireland, is where parents come up with a collective norm. What concerns me most is that these devices can become a way that children can become isolated.

Social media usage is so addictive, the algorithms are created that way - what damage is this doing when

the brain is still developing? Devices can feed social anxiety with a constant pressure to see what friends are doing, saying and looking like."

13 year olds now have fewer friends than they did ten years ago"

Is it any surprise that the recent ESRI Growing Up in Ireland report highlighted a number of psychosocial impacts on Irish teens. Worryingly, 13 year olds now have fewer friends than they did ten years ago, suffer from increased anxiety, and increased screen time has led to less time playing sport.

For their generation, and the ones that will follow, let's all join together to support one another in the noble quest of a device free childhood.

The Irish Catholic

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Out&About

Prayers for Donegal



WEXFORD: Diocese of Ferns youth section during their 'Ferns Pilgrimage to Lourdes' with their leaders, Bishop Ger and members of the clergy.



CAVAN: Members of the Lough an Leagh ICA, on the occasion of their Golden Jubilee Mass at the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Muff, Kingscourt, with their President, Kathleen Reilly.



CORK: Students from Sacred Heart Secondary School, Clonakilty were presented with the Pope John Paul II awards by Bishop Fintan Gavin. The award was received for engaging in a host of faith-based activities and a range of social awareness activities within the parishes.

IN SHORT

Three more schools to stop being Catholic

In September 2024, three primary schools located within Cork, Kerry and Limerick will be separating from the Catholic Church. Instead, they will be Community National Schools (CNSs), which are their local Education and Training Board's co-educational, state-run, multi-denominational models. Following a similar situation with a primary school in Dublin separating from the Church in April, these three schools bring the number of CNSs nationwide to 32. When asked about this recent separation, the Director of schools at Education and Training Board Ireland Dr Séamus Conboy stated that "the main thing that will change is that the ethos in a CNS

includes all children and their families equally throughout the school day, rather than prioritising one religion or belief over another". He created this plan to warrant "that preparation for the sacraments does not take away from the valuable teaching and learning time". The government hopes to decrease more school's connections to the Catholic Church by 2030.

More than 100 years of service

Phyllis Furness, who is believed to be the oldest person in Ireland, has celebrated her 109th birthday on May 23.

Phyllis volunteered to work in munitions during World War II and was then taken on by the Red Cross in Bournemouth. Within a few years, she was manager of an elderly people's

home in Dorset.

Ms Furness has also been receiving commemorative coins from President Michael D Higgins for the last eight years, for each birthday since turning 100. Other pastimes she enjoyed included knitting sets of Holy Family figurines for Christmas – presenting one set to the Poor Clare nuns in Galway.

Phyllis' birthday was celebrated by the local community. The year Phyllis was born witnessed significant historical events, such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood Military Council was planning the Easter Rising.

Her one wish, she said, is "to make it to 110".

Wicklow students showcase their talent

Students from fourteen schools in Wick-

low participated in a national Junior Juries programme for this year's KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards, on May 22.

Wicklow students from Coláiste Chill Mhantáin, also, took to the stage at the KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards ceremony, held in partnership with the International Literature Festival Dublin this week.

The students recited their own poems to schoolchildren from across Ireland as well as much-loved children's authors and illustrators in attendance. Their poems were the result of a spoken-word poetry initiative which encouraged students to write about their own ideas and experiences. Through a series of workshops, students were introduced to spoken word poetry and the power of language.

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



ANTRIM: SAFFYRE band. From left to right: Shauneen Doran, Maria Flanagan and Emma Tokic



DUBLIN: Baby Alexander George Robinson is pictured with his parents Gareth and Claire Robinson as he's baptised at the Church of Mary Immaculate, Refuge of Sinners, in Rathmines May 11.



ANTRIM: Pentecost Ireland 2024 was the second annual day of renewal, in the Parish of Antrim. It was a day when the family of the Church could come together to receive, be equipped and commissioned by the power of the Holy Spirit to share the good news of Jesus to this generation.



DERRY: Saint Eithne's Primary School's Principal Terence Mc Dowell, with Darren Hazlett and Elsie Gormley, as they crown the statue of Our Lady during annual May procession.



DERRY: Saint Eithne's Primary School's annual May procession. All of the children process around the school, carrying flowers and singing hymns to Our Lady, before joining their parents, grandparents and families in the playground to sing and pray the rosary together.



CORK: Students from Coláiste Éamann Rís in Cork were presented with the Pope John Paul II Awards by Bishop Fintan Gavin.

ANTRIM

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

DERRY

'Fitness and Faith meeting for all ladies will happen on June 10 and June 17. Meet up at 7.30pm at Christ Church Parish Hall before going for a walk or run. A healthy supper will happen afterwards back in the hall at 8.15pm.

DONEGAL

6 weeks walk and talk bereavement group 'Woman Warriors' to start on Monday, June 10. The first week will happen at 7pm, at the Bank Walk Dobegal Town. Interested must contact Glenda on 0876418681 or Tracy on 0877386558.

DUBLIN

Pilgrims of Hope International Mass and picnic organised by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate will take place on Sunday, June 9 at the Oblate Church, Tyrconnell road, Inchicore, Dublin 8 at 1.30pm. The event will bring together Catholics from all nationalities, to celebrate the cultural richness of the Church.

Legion of Mary's game night for young adults 18-40 to be hosted on Saturday, June 8 at 7pm at Presentata House, 263 North Circular Road, Dublin 7. For more information email deusetpatria@gmail.com.

FERMANAGH

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

KERRY

Sacred Heart Novena will happen at St John's Parish, Tralee, from May 30 to June 7. Prayers will be each evening at 6pm followed by Mass at 6.10pm

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

LAOIS

Rosary prayed in the Church of the Assumption, the Heath, Portlaoise parish, daily at 2pm and at 3pm on Sundays.

LOUTH

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

'Taize prayer around the cross in candlelight' will happen on June 7, 8pm-9pm at 'Bethany', 34 Point Road, Dundalk A91W0C9

MAYO

Achonry Diocese Youth Commission's 'Achonry Reek Challenge' to happen in Croagh Patrick, Westport on Sunday June 9 at 3pm. Everyone between ages 18 - 35 welcome (under 18s must be accompanied by guardian). The event is free, and refreshments will be served afterwards. Contact Stephen to register at youthministry@achonrydiocese.org.

TIPPERARY

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

WATERFORD

Diocesan Mission 2024, 'Light of Hope' will happen from June 12-16, in association with Catholic Christian Outreach, and will include many activities such as meetings after morning Mass, with music, prayers and testimony. For more information see www.waterfordlismore.ie/mis-sion2024.

Youth of Raphoe Diocese “on fire for the faith” and one man’s story to getting there

Gareth Foynes

We might hear a lot of doom and gloom when it comes to faith in Ireland, in particular when it comes to young people and their involvement, but various pockets of Ireland are “on fire for the faith” according to one youth minister in Donegal. The diocese of Raphoe has been one of those communities. While many involved in spearheading the Raphoe youth pastoral ministry are responsible for this, one man has been recognised for not just being able to connect to the youth but also his story in getting there. Keith Kelly’s life could have materialised very differently from what it has become. According to him, it is all due to “God’s providence”. Keith Kelly experienced a youth that was characterised by mischief and issues with the law. It was a court case, with the likely threat of a prison sentence, that was the turning point for Keith. An experience at Medjugorje, during a pilgrimage, led to a reversion for Keith during the summer of 2005, just prior to the court case. Following this, Keith explained to the judge, in a case that wasn’t materialising in his favour, that he had experienced God in a way that he hadn’t before. He explained that this would be the starting point to what



Pictured here and below are youth that Keith Kelly works with in his ministry and his family based in Donegal

would be a radical change in his life. Judge Mary Devins gave Keith the second chance he asked for and he felt the mercy of God.

Athenry

Keith would eventually find himself in Athenry “working with youngsters on and off”. It was in Galway where he met his wife. Finding themselves in Donegal with their family was not something they expected but Keith believes the plan was in place before he could object.

There are multiple forces at play that are responsible for the success of the Raphoe’s Pastoral Youth ministry but Keith puts it down to two things... trust and authenticity: “I would say, there are multiple factors responsible for the success of Raphoe. Faith is about relations. The trinity is about a community of persons and we have seen during Covid-19 how much we are social beings. In terms of strategy, it is important to spend quality time with them (young people). During a

pilgrimage to Medjugorje, you would get to spend quality time with them. A week with them really solidifies their faith. If they trust you, they are more likely to share more and be more vulnerable... it’s better that way... trust is the foundation. They are more likely to trust if they see there is a relationship of authenticity... this is the foundation... even if you butcher it (a presentation), they don’t care. If it’s too smooth, young people are less likely to pay atten-

tion to it. Those working in the Raphoe Pastoral Youth Ministry have an authentic faith and an interest in youngsters. They provide a safe environment, quality time, trust and with this they (the young people of Raphoe) trust you. My previous employer, Fr Brendan Kilcoyne, has a successful podcast and he always talked about the importance of being genuine.”

Virtues

Keith also recognises the capabilities and virtues of his colleagues who are spreading the good news in Raphoe: “Our leaders are not too old... and they just have a strong relationship with the Lord... their faith is alive and strong... they have a heart for youngsters.”

The youth pastoral ministry also organises a range of quirky activities that often have a faith lesson incorporated into them and this helps them stay engaged. Moreover, the more physical activities that the ministry organises have also been a hit: “We’ve brought them to a surf school in Westport, outside laser tag and white-water rafting... We have a lot of young guys here that are interested in

sport.”

On top of this, Keith credits the enthusiasm of young people in the Raphoe diocese. He sees this as characteristic of young people in the Church across the world also: “Young people want to be challenged these days... you have to be prudent as well... an element of care has to be there.”

“A lot of young people we work with, do in fact come from broken homes and faith can offer a healing element”

The Church has been subject to much friction over the last number of years and Keith has much to say about this as he has seen a cohort of young people who do express possibly more conservative views in relation to their faith. Asked if he thought there was a yearning amongst young men to experience male guidance given his own relationship





with his father was so fractured, he said: "I think there is a 'Fatherless' crisis. If the father is in the home, they can often be emotionally absent. Parents are the primary agents when it comes to conferring identity on children, if they have no relationship with their children, it creates a vacuum. A lot of young people we work with, do in fact come from broken homes and faith can offer a healing element."

Future

Keith was asked what he thought the future held for the Church in Ireland and abroad: "I'll be honest about where we are, the Church could theoretically die in this country. I don't think the Church will die but we have to do our best

to spread the faith. I would even have huge hopes... some pockets in Ireland are on fire for the faith. And we have a great Marian and Eucharistic tradition in this country."

“It became apparent that a lot of kids have no faith culture at home... often their last confession was when they were preparing for their Holy Communion”

Despite his innovative style of ministering to young people, Mr Kelly remains a fan of the charisms and believes in

their value and effectiveness despite their diminishing popularity: "During Confirmation retreats... it became apparent that a lot of kids have no faith culture at home, often their last confession was when they were preparing for their Holy Communion."

Keith remains satisfied that he discerned out of the priesthood and into marriage. He really enjoyed the community life of the priesthood but enjoys the same at home with his family in Donegal.

Despite the raucous that four sons can cause in the house, Keith remains hopeful for himself, his family, the youth of Raphoe and the Church in Ireland: "There are pockets in Ireland just on fire for the faith!"



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The abortion of babies with Down syndrome is a human rights crisis



Eilís Mulroy

A society can best be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members. Unfortunately, Ireland's current treatment of unborn children with disabilities, chiefly Down syndrome, leaves a shameful mark on our society.

During the referendum campaign in 2018, government politicians and prominent Yes campaigners tried to pour cold water on entirely reasonable forecasts from the Pro-Life Campaign that in the event of repeal, the abortion rate of children with disabilities would sharply rise. We knew this was the case from international examples, such as

“Ireland's current treatment of unborn children with disabilities, chiefly Down syndrome, leaves a shameful mark on our society”

Britain where 90% of babies diagnosed with Down syndrome are aborted. In England and Wales, it's perfectly legal to have an abortion right up until birth in cases where a baby has been diagnosed with Down syndrome. Meanwhile, in Iceland there were very few babies born with Down syndrome due to the normalisation and widespread practice of eugenic abortion.

Statistics

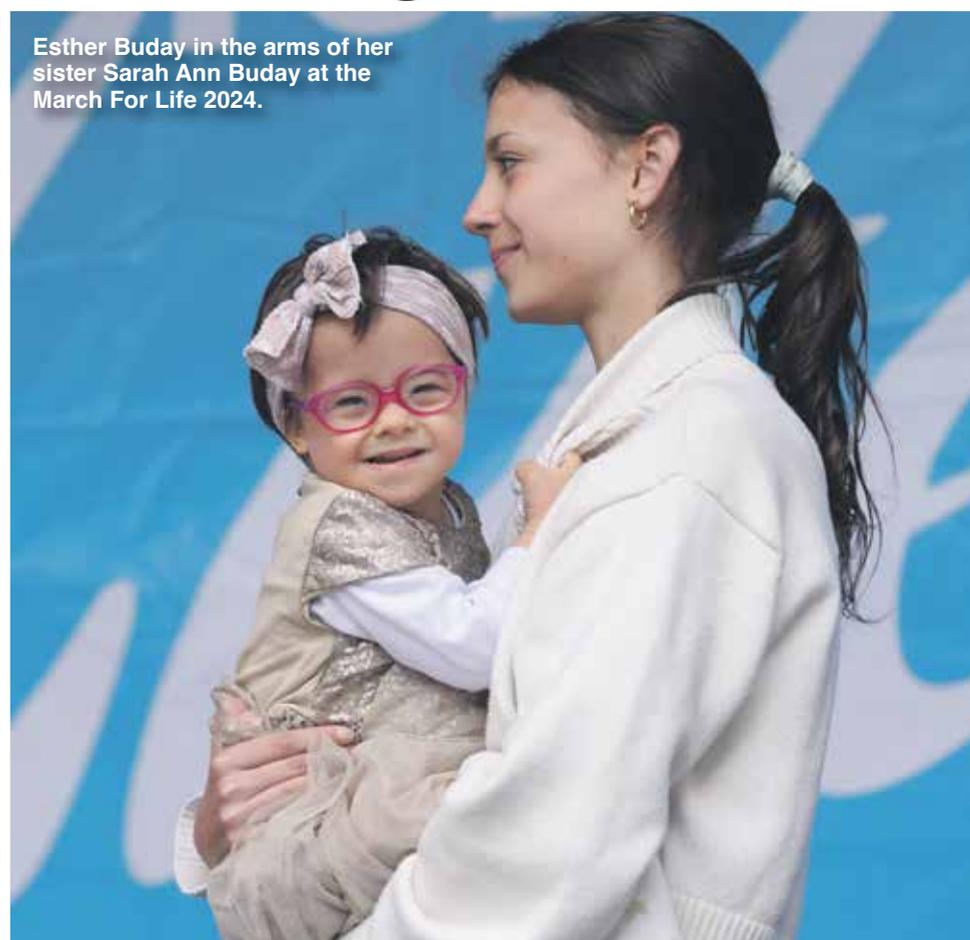
Since the referendum, the situation has only gotten worse internationally. In Scotland, the most recently published figures (May 2024) show a 4% increase in the number of abortions where a baby has a disability, from 274 in 2022 to 285 in 2023. 49 of these were

abortions where the baby had Down syndrome.

“When the issue of abortion comes into play too many campaigners shirk from addressing it”

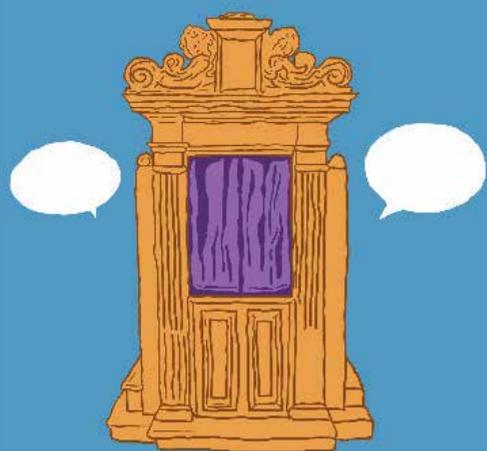
Unfortunately, evidence suggests that the predictions we made in 2018 have come true. In 2022, Dr Fergal Malone, then Master of the Rotunda Maternity Hospital said that about 95% of parents whose babies are diagnosed with Down Syndrome at the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin now opt for an abortion. This points to the undermining of Ireland's formerly robust culture of life and the cheapening of human life, particularly the

Esther Buday in the arms of her sister Sarah Ann Buday at the March For Life 2024.



The Confession Box

Presented by
Wendy Grace and Brandon Scott



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lives of vulnerable people with disabilities. Statistics from England and Wales show that in 2021, 59 of the 206 babies (29%) aborted to women from the Republic of Ireland had received a diagnosis of Down syndrome.

As the rate of abortion in general has dramatically increased since 2019, it's high time that a public discussion is held about how we can proactively reduce the abortion rate. Of particular concern is the issue whether abortion is now being seen as the preferred option for a baby with a disability rather than providing better supports for parents and families of children with special needs. Normally parents and campaigners would feel no apprehension about voicing the need for more resources for people with disabilities, but when the issue of abortion comes into play, too many campaigners shirk from addressing it.

Restoration

Some campaigners have cut through the unfortunate silence on this issue, such as Anna Buday - a mother of Esther, a child who has Down Syndrome. In May, Ms Buday spoke at the March for Life in Dublin where she spoke passionately about her journey and experience of raising a child with Down syndrome. She addressed the issue of pre-birth discrimination head

on, "what truly frightens me, is a society that allows discriminatory actions to be directed towards babies like Esther. It saddens me deeply to witness the inequalities and biases that still plague those with genetic differences, particularly babies with Down Syndrome."

“Don't be afraid. There is hope. There is plenty of laughter and joy. There is learning. There is opportunity. There is kindness and capability. There is so much love!”

The experience of Ms Buday and others is deeply important to restore a life-affirming culture in Ireland and internationally again. Speaking directly to any expecting parents who may receive news that their child will have Down syndrome, she said: "Don't be afraid. There is hope. There is plenty of laughter and joy. There is learning. There is opportunity. There is kindness and capability. There is so much love!" Her words of optimism and encouragement help to show the beauty and hope which comes with raising a child who has Down syndrome.

Other campaigners such as Michael O'Dowd and his son Conor have tirelessly fought to highlight the valuable contribution of people with Down syndrome to society and the unfortunate reality that babies with special needs are far more likely to be aborted. Recently, Conor O'Dowd even wrote a letter to the Master of the Rotunda Hospital to protest against his throw-away comments about the vast majority of babies in the Rotunda who were diagnosed with Down syndrome being aborted and his implication that disability abortion should thus be legalised in Ireland in similar extreme grounds as it is in England. Instead, Conor argued, we should be celebrating and defending all human life regardless of disability and other factors.

Clarity

If we live in a compassionate society, we must seriously question a status quo which wilfully shuts its eyes to the reality of an increasingly targeted discriminatory practice abortion against people with special needs. We are constantly told, rightly, that people with disabilities can contribute so much to society and can live happy and fulfilling lives; yet contradictorily, the government and media ignore the reality of eugenic abortion.

THE SYNODAL TIMES



“Synodality is what the Lord expects from the Church of the third millennium” – Pope Francis

SISTERS SAVING SISTERS FROM TRAFFICKING

LUCA ATTANASIO IN ROME

PAGES 20-21



INTERVIEW WITH CARDINAL NZAPALAINGA

LUCA ATTANASIO

PAGE 22



German reform proceeds as four bishops abstain and Rome protests



KNA

In the Catholic Church in Germany, the debate on reforms in the Church continues. The Synodal Committee is to become an important body for this. However, four bishops do not want to take part in this dialogue.

On June 14 and 15, bishops and representatives of the Catholic laity will meet for the next round of the reform dialogue on the future of the Church in Germany. At its second meeting in Mainz, the Synodal Committee intends to begin work on the content of the dialogue. The first meeting

in Essen last autumn essentially served to agree on a constitution and rules of procedure.

The Synodal Committee, which currently consists of 70 members, is a result of the Synodal Path launched by the German bishops and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) in 2019. Among other things, the committee is to prepare a Synodal Council in which bishops and Catholic laypeople continue their consultations on possible reforms in the Church.

The project is subject to strong reservations from the Vatican. The four bishops Gregor Maria Hanke (Eichstätt), Stefan



Synod participants at the German Synodal Assembly

Oster (Passau), Rudolf Voderholzer (Regensburg) and Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki (Cologne) had therefore declared in advance that they would not participate in the work of the Synodal Committee.

“In Roman objections to the Synodal Path in Germany, it had become clear time and again that

a ‘Synodal Council’, as envisaged and formulated in the resolution of the Synodal Path, was not compatible with the sacramental constitution of the Church,” the four bishops explained in advance.

The Synodal Committee nominally has 74 members: the 27 German local bishops, 27 representatives

of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) and a further 20 members elected by the Synodal Path plenary assembly. Resolutions are passed with a simple two-thirds majority. In contrast to the Synodal Way, an additional two-thirds majority of the bishops is no longer required.

In March, representatives of the German Bishops’ Conference and the Vatican presented a joint declaration following a meeting in Rome, according to which the Synodal Committee and all other “forms of synodality” must be submitted to the Holy See for approval.

Sisters saving sisters from trafficking



Luca Attanasio
in Rome

The Sisters' Anti-Trafficking Awards (SATAs) is the celebration of three Sisters, as representatives of their congregations and networks, who have demonstrated exceptional courage, creativity, collaboration and achievement in the protection of their communities from human trafficking. The second edition of SATAs was held in Rome on the 23rd of May. Held at the Augustinianum, in Rome, the 2024 edition, moderated by Delia Gallagher (*CNN, Inside the Vatican*), started with the contributions from Mary Mugo, an Anti-Trafficking Youth Ambassador from Kenya, Nasreen Sheikh a widely-respected advocate for survivors, and Kevin Hyland, the former UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner. Three awards were presented: The Common Good Award, The Servant Leadership Award, and the Human Dignity Award.

This year's winners were: Sr. Gracy Rodrigues FDCC Indian, working in Goa, India; Sr. Anne Victory USA, Sisters of the Humility of Mary and Sr. Marie Claude Naddaf Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Syrian, working in Lebanon. As for the prizes connected to the SATAs, each laureate was awarded \$20,000 to put towards the anti-trafficking work or institution of their choice.

The three winners, contacted by The Synodal Times that followed the ceremony at the Augustinianum, commented on the awards and explained their valuable work as follows.

Sr. Gracy Rodrigues

Sr. Gracy has worked to prevent human trafficking for 13 years, across Maharashtra, Gujarat and in Goa. Based in Mumbai, she has worked to protect the marginalised from exploitation - children living in slums, and transgenders, for example. They are given awareness sessions on protection and safety from



sexual exploitation. She has also tried to empower women through various skills trainings like tailoring, beautician courses, legal literacy courses, computer courses, and adult literacy classes.

“I work closely with other organisations, with the police who call me for rescue operations or to provide counseling to victims or to help them with legal advice”

“Approximately we reach thousands of people espe-

“Approximately we reach thousands of people especially children, women, migrant women as we work in the field every day. For us, prevention comes first”

cially children, women, migrant women as we work in the field every day. For us, prevention comes first. My main job is therefore to make people safe from exploitation and to make them aware of the risks they run. Sometimes I work closely with other organisations, with the police who call me for rescue operations or to provide counseling to victims or to help them with legal advice. As far as concrete rescue operations are concerned, in the last few months we have literally rescued about fifteen young boys who had been trafficked into begging. When we rescue them from trafficking, we secure them in a protection house and then we follow the procedures and, especially if they are minors,

we go through juvenile judges in this field I am helped a lot by the fact that I am a lawyer myself. Once they are safe, we trigger a rehabilitation process for the victim, psychological and legal counselling, we initiate them into a profession by providing basic skills and at the end of the process we work for a complete reintegration into their contexts with a holistic approach”.

“Sister, if you had come a few hours earlier my life would have changed, I would be safe”

Sister, you have been working for five years in

Goa and are engaged in a very direct intervention on the ground, do you see any change? In general terms are things getting better?

“I have to say that things are worsening, also due to an amount of online human trafficking. Generally speaking the situation is becoming more and more unsafe and talking about Goa, there is an increase of tourism and with this, unfortunately, an increase in the trafficking. That is precisely why there is a need for ever greater commitment. I will tell you a story, one of my first impacts with this world was with a young girl who said to me, ‘Sister, if you had come a few hours earlier my life would have changed, I would be safe’. The young woman had been taken by traffickers in the evening and abused by a dozen men. That terrible story was a personal challenge for me, it is not possible for these things to happen that ruin people’s lives forever”. And

what became of her? “We managed to help her, took her to doctors, provided counselling and followed her. But it took years for her to regain a modicum of serenity”.

Sr. Anne Victory

Sr. Anne began her health-care ministry as a staff nurse at St. Joseph Hospital, Lorain, where she worked as a clinician and a nurse educator. She currently holds a position on two Mercy boards: the Board of Managers at Mercy Willard and the Mercy Regional Foundation Board in Lorain where she uses her knowledge and experience to keep the mission and values of the organisation present. Mercy Health has recently made a commitment to raise awareness of human trafficking and train their staff to recognise it, and Sr. Anne is grateful for this focus.

“The main anti-trafficking activities in which I continue to be involved



Sr. Anne Victory



Sr Marie Claude Nadda



Sr. Gracy Rodrigues

“We operate mainly in the poorest neighbourhoods of Beirut and other cities. But besides the contexts of the cities or societies where we operate, our teams work closely with refugees, inside the camps where Palestinians, Syrians live”

include three fields. Giving presentations on human trafficking groups tailored to the needs of the audience (students, general public, church groups, healthcare and social work professionals, hospitality workers, etc.). Emphasis is on what the crime is, the two major categories of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, how large it is, how it manifests itself, whom to call if someone may be being trafficked, and other actions people can take to address the issue. Participating locally, statewide, and nationally on advocacy legislation through visits and letters to members of local, state, and national government elected officials to promote sound legislation that is before them for consideration, giving the rationale for our position with an emphasis on the protection of human rights, and the intersection of human trafficking with other major concerns, such as poverty, migration, climate change, etc. And Connecting services on behalf of trafficked persons which requires building relationships with various professionals to focus on the common mission of ending the crime

and supporting victims so that they can live a fulfilled and satisfying life for themselves, their families, and the community. A current effort locally (the Collaborative to End Human Trafficking in Cleveland, Ohio) is to gather better data”.

You do political advocacy which is one of the most important activities, are you getting results?

“There are some efforts to get much better data, and it’s a struggle because of the hidden nature of the crime”

“I would say results are mixed, especially in our current political environment. However, elected officials seem willing, for the most part, to listen to their constituents, to learn more about the issue, and at least consider the information as bills come before them. The relationship-building is essential, and we focus on policy matters, not the individual’s political party affiliations”.

How big is human trafficking in the US?

“As I mentioned above, there are some efforts to get much better data, and it’s a struggle because of the hidden nature of the crime, the reluctance of those being exploited to come forward due to fear of threats that have been made to them, and a lack of awareness that what they are experiencing is not their fault and is in fact a crime against their rights. Our survivor friends tell us that it is “in every zip code, every neighborhood.” The National Human Trafficking Hotline monitors calls they receive, and they have ranked each state according to the number of calls from that state, the type of human trafficking, the age, gender, race, and country of origin, etc. However, some cases never go through the

“Is the socio-economic crisis that Lebanon is experiencing also increasing the phenomenon of trafficking?”

National hotline, but are reported through other means”.

Can you tell us a particularly symbolic success story?

“She told of how she visited several hospitals regularly for various injuries, and the staff did not identify her as a victim, but only as a drug-addicted prostitute”

“Although I do not do direct service myself, I am a nurse by profession. I worked closely with a woman survivor who was featured in a film the Collaborative made for healthcare professionals in the Cleveland, Ohio area. She courageously told her story in the film of having gotten involved in trafficking because of her addiction to drugs. She needed money to support her addiction, and at first did not realize that the person (the trafficker) was using her to

make money for himself. He gave her the drug to keep her under his control. She told of how she visited several hospitals regularly for various injuries, and the staff did not identify her as a victim, but only as a drug-addicted prostitute. She eventually began working with a judge who has a specialized human trafficking docket as an alternative to going to jail, and learned about the real issue she was facing, followed the judge’s strict rules, and received supportive services to regain her sense of self-worth. She is now a member of the Survivor Advisory Council of the Collaborative and also serves on the Ohio Attorney General’s Survivor Council”

Sr Marie Claude Naddaf

When Marie Claude Naddaf assumed the role of Mother Superior at the Good Shepherd Convent in Damascus in 1994, Syria did not offer social services for women suffering domestic violence, homelessness, or trafficking. In 1996, Sister Marie Claude and the convent opened Syria’s first facility, the “Oasis Shelter,” for victims of trafficking and domestic violence. In the years since it opened, the success of the shelter inspired the launch of another facility: the first women’s telephone hotline, which is attached to a new emergency shelter where women can get counselling, legal advice, and temporary shelter 24 hours a day. Now she is the regional coordinator of Wells of Hope (the Talitha Kum Network based in the Middle East) that, with

teams in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan, seeks to prevent human trafficking in the Mediterranean Basin and to help survivors heal and rebuild their lives.

“Lebanon has gone from being a land mainly for receiving trafficked people to producing human trafficking”

“We operate mainly in the poorest neighbourhoods of Beirut and other cities. But besides the contexts of the cities or societies where we operate, our teams work closely with refugees, inside the camps where Palestinians, Syrians live. There, the work is as important as it is complex, we try to help them first of all to be aware of the risks. We welcome their requests, we listen to them and try to support them in finding small jobs or organising training sessions. The first thing we do, before any intervention, is to get alongside the victims, to listen to the girls who are at risk or have already ended up in human trafficking”.

Is the socio-economic crisis that Lebanon is experiencing also increasing the phenomenon of trafficking?

“Unfortunately yes, Lebanon has gone from being a land mainly for receiving trafficked people to producing human trafficking. This is clearly due to the wars around us as well as the great socio-economic crisis that pushes the poorest into trafficking. We often hear of girls being literally sold to other Arab countries, the Gulf countries”

Interview with Cardinal Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui



Luca Attanasio

The Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the most Christian countries in Africa. According to the latest estimates, the presence of Christ's faithful exceeds 80%, and thanks to an evangelisation more than 130 years old, it can boast a strong presence in a vast area, just below the Sahelian belt, where Islam is clearly prevalent. Catholics, who make up 40% of the Christian faithful, are divided among nine dioceses in this huge country, which, however, only has a population of 5.5 million.

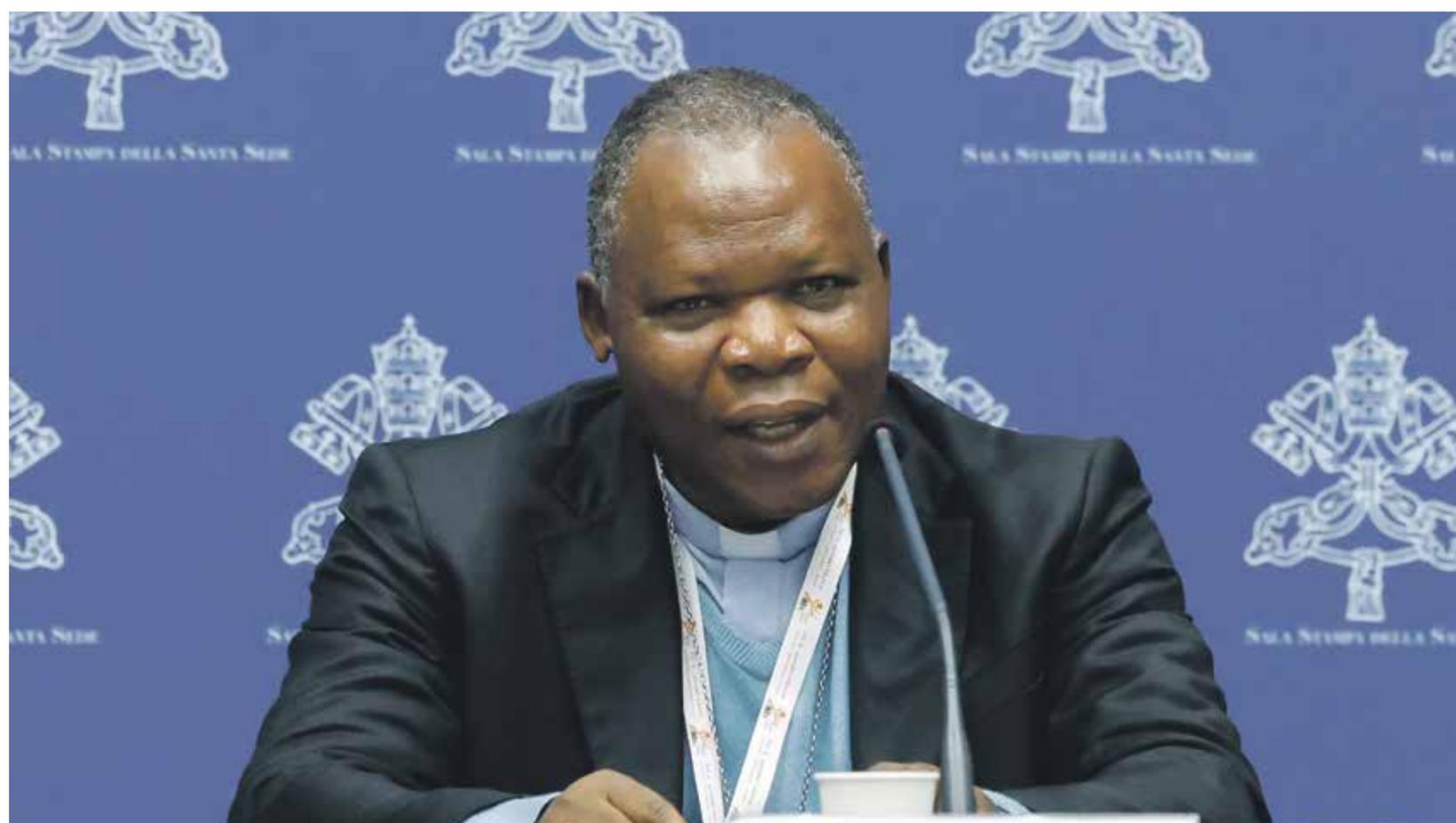
The country has been the victim of a ferocious civil war that exploded in the aftermath of the ousting of President François Bozizé in March 2013, which is still lingering in the aftermath of two blocs that were only apparently opposed on religious grounds in a war that, instead, had strong economic connotations and was linked to the control of land and its huge resources: the anti-Balaka (Christian) militias and the pro-Islamic groups that made up the Seleka formation.

In recent years, the security situation has definitely improved, but the decade of fierce confrontation that made the Central African Republic one of the major humanitarian emergencies in Africa and the world, leaves the country full of problems and issues to be resolved.

The *Synodal Times* spoke about this in Rome with Cardinal Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui, the country's capital.

Your Eminence, after years of very serious instability can it be said that the situation is slowly improving?

"Without a doubt, we can say that the situation has now improved and, also from a personal point of view, I can tell you that I have been able to move all the way to the interior where it was absolutely unthinkable to go a while ago. At the worst time, 95% of the territory was occupied by rebels, now exactly the opposite. Businesses have resumed without difficulty, I



“Given the level of teaching and the costs that families face, many parents think it is not worth sending their children to school and prefer them to work

see people cultivating in the fields and returning home without fear, cars circulate quietly throughout the country and pupils can go to school. Until two years ago, on the other hand, the country was shrouded in terror and teachers, to give an example, could not guarantee service because they did not know whether they would return home in the evening. The economic and commercial system was under the control of the rebels who imposed curfews.”

Now that the conflict has subsided, what are the main needs of the CAR's population?

"Currently one of the worst emergencies is education. We have accumulated many years in which there were at most four or five months of schooling, at every level. We therefore find ourselves with poorly trained students but also poorly trained teachers, so that it often happens that people who are not well trained, little more than employees who do not have the necessary vocation, go to

be teachers. This is a source of great concern to us as we question the future of our country. One of the worst consequences of this situation is that attendance is very low, it would be compulsory, but given the level of teaching and the costs that families face, many parents think it is not worth sending their children to school and prefer them to work.

In addition, there is a serious lack of infrastructure, especially roads. Since 2008 there are some roads that remain impassable, to go 700 km during the rainy season it takes up to three, four weeks, so it is really difficult”.

From being an 'exporting' country of refugees, CAR in recent months has found itself welcoming many displaced persons fleeing a terrible war in a large neighbouring country, Sudan. About 30,000 Sudanese refugees have entered Central Africa Republic. Can you tell us something about this? And is the Church involved in assisting this category of people?

"This is a very serious emergency that creates serious problems for the whole area. Yes, many refugees are arriving but it is very difficult for us to reach them because they are settled in remote areas where it is almost impossible to get to. Unfortunately, only a few planes can reach out to those places and the aid that reaches the Sudanese is very little also because the planes are few and small and cannot hold much material. The Church is present especially in Birao (in the north of the country) through Caritas and thanks to the local church, it sensitises and activates the faithful by engaging them daily in providing aid, calling on Christians to share and support and calling on the international community to intervene”.

How are relations between Church and State?

"The relationship between Church and State was good until the president decided to change the constitution and the Church took a stance by coming out clearly against it (President Touadéraera demanded an amendment that would practically guarantee him the presidency for life, ed). From then on, the relationship was never the same. We are not an opposition force but a prophetic voice that tries to say what others cannot say. The Church's role

is to awaken consciences and call everyone to respect the given words and invite the sharing of goods according to social justice. There is a small group that tries to hoard all goods and we see many people living in absolute poverty. It is for these people that the Church speaks”.

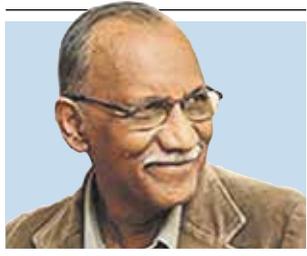
And now let's talk about the Synod: how is the preparation for the final stages next October going and how are people experiencing the Synod on Synodality?

"We have presented the Synod as a favorable time in which the Spirit brings a new breath, and each of us, who through baptism has received the Holy Spirit, lives the time of the Synod as an opportune time to learn to be together, to pray, to dialogue, to listen to each other, and to bring all the analyses that concern the Church and the world into the light of the Spirit. I believe that in the Central African Republic the Christians, the priests, the laity, the people have had and are continuing to have an active participation. We are certain that this

will bring a great contribution to the universal Church. Each diocese worked on a synthesis of the phases and developments of the Synod and then all those responsible developed a single synthesis for the whole country. I can tell you one thing, we do not experience fear, the tension of how the Synod will go, but rather the hope of how the Spirit will act and speak through the synod delegates. It is a journey of faith that is not only intellectual, because if we only stop at the human level, we can be carried away by fear and anguish. The Synod is a great opportunity to walk together in full respect of differences. We have diversity to preserve, each person has its own genius, and we must seek the happiness of all our people and other peoples. If we look at the Synod in this way, seeking the common good, all fears will fall away. We come to confront each other, to make proposals to make an important contribution, and we know that the Spirit will take his Church where he wants it to go”.

“The Church's role is to awaken consciences and call everyone to respect the given words and invite the sharing of goods according to social justice”

The resilience of religion



Fr Myron J. Pereira

For several decades in the last century, it was taken for granted that secularism was an important component of modernity. This was undoubtedly the inspiration behind the Constituent Assembly declaring in 1950 India a “secular republic” and not a “Hindu *rashtra*” (nation).

How society existed yesterday...

Traditionally, most societies have had a dominant religion, which enormously helped create a unified ethos and a focused polity. Thus, Christian Europe united in obedience to the Pope, even while the cult of the saints flourished.

Similarly, the Indian sub-continent venerated the Mother Goddess under various names – the term ‘Hinduism’ only comes in with the British – and proliferated in a variety of castes.

Tensions arose when a given society suffered an invasion, and ‘new gods’ replaced the older deities. Thus, Christian Europe resisted the incursions of Muslim Arabs and Turks as aggressively as Arabs and Turks resisted the Crusades, which sought to carve a Christian kingdom in West Asia.

“Governance slowly shed its religious moorings and took a scientific, rationalist form, the beginnings of what we call ‘modernity’

However, external threats were not the only reason. Internal issues like ignorance, priestly corruption, and superstition created their own disquiet. A scientific temper might displace the old cultic practices and cause power equations to shift.

For example, in 16th-17th-century Europe, the Copernican Revolution, the Wars of Religion and the Peace of Westphalia undermined the authority of the Catholic Church. That was when men began to desire a ‘reformed’ religion instead of the old stagnant faith.

The beginnings of secu-



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pictured on March 12, 2021.

larism (Latin. *speculum*, ‘this world’) lie here. Governance slowly shed its religious moorings and took a scientific, rationalist form, the beginnings of what we call ‘modernity’.

...And their form today

However, the scholar Jose Casanova surveys the roles that religions play today in the public sphere of many societies and makes some surprising discoveries. The relationship between religion and modernity needs to be reconsidered.

The modern secular approach, both in the West and in many Asian societies like Turkey and India, long believed that public life should be secular and religious belief should be privatised.

However, during the 1980s, religious traditions worldwide, from Islamic fundamentalism to Catholic liberation theology, began making their way, often forcefully, out of the private sphere and into public life, causing the ‘de-privatisation’ of religion in contemporary life.

No longer content merely to administer pastoral care to individual souls, religious institutions are challenging dominant political and social forces, raising questions about

“Religion is no longer about cultic worship, pilgrimages and shrines; it is about respect and care for each human being, her well-being, and the development of each individual’s full potential”

the claims of entities such as nations and markets to be ‘value-neutral,’ and straining the traditional connections of private and public morality.

This leads one to ask, what role does religion play in constructing the modern world?

The traditional answer

For decades, the answer to the above question was a definite ‘no’. Religion was seen as an obscurantist vestige of a pre-scientific age, its role in public life increasingly curtailed and given over to courts of law, and its influence relegated to primitive peoples, unlettered groups, children and women.

Modern societies and nation-states aspired to be scientifically based and technologically advanced.

It has taken two world wars, a profligate ‘space race’, and the destruction of vast areas of the Earth to realise how short-sighted and foolish such a view has been.

The Western European model was that public life would be resolutely secular, religiously neutral, if not hostile to all forms of religion. The State took the roles of education and welfare, as well as the more important tasks of

controlling the economy and guiding the nation.

It did not take long to see the government’s incompetence and gross corruption in many of these areas.

However adversely one may feel about religious groups, they are usually led by idealism and self-sacrifice, which are notably absent from state functionaries. Education (schools, colleges) and welfare (hospitals, orphanages) demonstrate this quite clearly, even if macro-politics is more ambiguous about religion’s role.

This leads me to say that probably the most significant ‘change-maker’ in the modern world is not the stock market, electronic technology, government machinations, or the groundswell of social revolution. It is religion.

Throughout human history, religion – no matter what its form – has shown itself as the most satisfying form of human endeavor. Crushed and persecuted it might be, it has always bounced back.

The modern reality

Why is this so? Let’s look at two phenomena that have impacted the role of religion in modern society: rampant migration and the omnipresent role of technology.

Migration in search of work is the child of colonialism. It was the regular colonial practice to transplant millions of laborers within countries and from one country to another to work in different plantations.

It was also colonial practice to import millions of menial workers into the mother coun-

try to do work that the native-born refused to do. Decades later, the migrants have settlements of their own, with churches, temples, mosques, and gurdwaras in the host country and their own form of cultic worship.

Migrants indeed create new patterns of religious behavior wherever they settle. This means that no country is a ‘pure’ country anymore because migration has irrevocably mixed populations. Interracial and inter-caste marriages are the fastest-growing phenomenon in such societies, despite resistance from those in power. Migration has made the stranger a brother – or at the very least a brother-in-law!

“Modern societies are increasingly pluralistic and have no shared values from a common religious source, for almost all societies today have several religious traditions”

It is true that today certain groups still fantasise about a ‘promised land’ given to them by God, or a *punya bhoomi* (holy land) meant for their exclusive use and safekeeping. Still, less and less is such an argument acceptable to modern men and women.

These arguments rest on religious premises deriving from monolithic societies. But modern societies are increas-

ingly pluralistic and have no shared values from a common religious source, for almost all societies today have several religious traditions.

The second significant influence is the omnipresence of technology, which has made life easier for thousands of ordinary people. However, media technology has impacted religion as well, transforming traditional parishes into electronic churches with sophisticated sound systems and televised pastoral outreach. No major religion is free from this.

This has meant that mass conversions, persecutions, and ghettos are a thing of the past. Sadly, this doesn’t mean that these have ceased altogether – we know that they haven’t – but that all modern societies that accept pluralism of belief and values as practical ways of living together need to strive to make these not just aspirations but sustainable goals.

For, too many individuals and societies live in a past of their own making.

Pope Paul VI was prescient enough in the 1960s to state, “Dialogue is the new way of being Church.” This applies not just to the Church and organised religion but also to society itself. When men and women of different belief systems can talk to each other, work together, and accept each other’s diversity without rancor, then something has changed.

What has changed is the human element in religion.

The new element in religion

Religion is no longer about cultic worship, pilgrimages, and shrines; it is about respect and care for each human being, her well-being, and the development of each individual’s full potential. The “works of mercy” take precedence over cultic worship and devotion.

In such a religion, there is no place for curses and incantations, for hostility and hatred of the ‘other’. There may not even be time for the worship of the transcendent deity, for such a religion is of the *saeculum*, this world: it is concerned with the peace and prosperity of all, and with saving this planet.

Is there a place for such resilience in religion, not just for individuals but for societies as well?

✎ Jesuit Fr Myron J. Pereira, based in Mumbai, has spent more than five decades as an academic, journalist, editor and writer of fiction. He contributes regularly to UCA News on religious and socio-cultural topics.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Elderly pro-life activist sentenced to two years in prison in US

● Paulette Harlow, an elderly woman with a debilitating medical condition, was sentenced to 24 months in jail Friday after being convicted last November of participating in a pro-life blockade of a Washington, DC, abortion clinic in 2020.

Ms Harlow (75) of Kingston, Massachusetts, was convicted under the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act and of a civil rights conspiracy, a statute that prohibits the violation of someone's rights guaranteed to them by the US Constitution and law.

The FACE Act prohibits "violent, threatening, damaging, and obstructive conduct intended to injure, intimidate, or interfere with the right to seek, obtain, or provide reproductive health services".

Priest arrested during landless occupation of a farm in Brazil's Amazon

● A Catholic priest was arrested on May 27, along with pastoral agents and a public defender, during a police operation against the occupation of a disputed farm by landless families in the central part of the country.

Fr Luiz Claudio da Silva, a member of the Bishops' Conference's Land Pastoral Commission (known in Brazil by the Portuguese acronym "CPT") and of the Prelature of São Félix do Araguaia, was accompanying a group of 74 families that had occupied a farm named Cinco Estrelas ("Five Stars"), in the city of Mundo Novo, earlier that day, along with other CPT agents.

Security guards hired by the farm owners arrived a few hours after the occupation and, according to witnesses, acted with violence against the landless families. The police arrived shortly afterwards with two empty school buses to haul the occupiers away.

Real Madrid offers championship trophy to Virgin of Almudena

● The Archbishop of Madrid received unusual guests June 2 as Europe's best soccer team, Real Madrid, came to the Spanish capital's St Mary the Royal of the Almudena Cathedral to offer its championship trophy to Mary.

The players arrived at the cathedral right after returning from London, where they won the Champions League.

Real Madrid sealed its 15th European Cup after a 2-0 win over Borussia Dortmund, June 1.

"Mary welcomes this cup and makes it a blessing for you, your families, for the people of Madrid and for all those who value the good sport that helps to make the world a better place," Cardinal José Cobo of Madrid said.

Record crowd at Sydney Corpus Christi procession

● Record crowds celebrated the largest 'Walk With Christ' Australian initiative since the COVID pandemic as more than 15,000 Catholics joined the procession through the streets of Sydney for the feast of Corpus Christi.

Speaking with joy at the public witness, Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney stated that the solemn event on June 2 was an encouraging display of devotion as Australia aspires to host the 2028 International Eucharist Congress.

"Today, my dear friends, you have done as the council asked and helped prepare this city and country for that event we devoutly hope Pope Francis will grant us in 2028," Archbishop Fisher said, referring to the Australian Plenary Council.

Italian bishops ready to launch study of abuse cases

● The Italian Bishops' Conference will "soon" begin a pilot programme to research cases of alleged abuse against minors that were reported to diocesan authorities between 2001 and 2021, said the new president of the conference's commission for the protection of minors.

The pilot study will be conducted by independent experts from two national-level research institutes, said Chiara Griffini, a psychologist and psychotherapist, who was named to head the commission on May 24.

The experts will conduct a multidisciplinary, quantitative and qualitative study and analysis of cases reported to diocesan bishops in Italy with results expected by the end of 2025, Ms Griffini said on May 29 during a conference on abuse against minors in Italy.

Christian man dies from wounds received in May attack in Pakistan

A Christian man attacked in Pakistan on May 25 died in the hospital on Monday, causing a leading bishop to call for stronger protection of religious minorities in the Muslim nation. According to local observers, hundreds of Muslims took part in the mob violence in Sargodha, Pakistan, located in the Punjab province, in May. The incident began with an accusation that a Christian had defaced a Koran, the Muslim holy book, which led to an assault in which his shoemaking factory was burned to the ground.

Nazir Gill Masih, a Christian man from Sargodha in his 70s, was the man who died.

Bishop Samson Shukardin, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Pakistan, said unless laws are passed making it an offence to fabricate allegations of blasphemy, Christians will never feel safe in their own country. Christians represent just under 2% of the country's population of 236 million.

"It is very important that legislation is introduced whereby those found to have wrongly accused people of blasphemy are given sentences including jail terms," the bishop told the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are among the most controversial in the world, with critics charging they're



People gather at a church building vandalised by Muslims in Jaranwala, Pakistan. A crowd vandalised churches and torched homes in the town in the Faisalabad district after two Christians were accused of blasphemy. Photo: OSV News/Fayyaz Hussain, Reuters

often used to harass and intimidate religious minorities. One oft-cited example is Asia Bibbi, an illiterate Catholic woman who spent almost a decade on death row after a charge of blasphemy in 2010 and who was eventually forced to seek refuge in Canada.

Bishop Shukardin said alleged government inaction

has emboldened more people to weaponise the controversial laws against innocent minorities. Last August, a wave of violence against Christians in the Punjab's Jaranwala district also led to no convictions against the attackers.

Hundreds of Muslims went on a rampage over allegations that a Christian

man and his friend had desecrated a Koran. Christians who fled their homes to escape the attackers later returned to a scene of destruction affecting homes and places of work. "Nothing has happened to bring justice following the Jaranwala incident. This is a disaster. It is not good for the minorities," the bishop said.

Cameroonian priest released from abductors

Christians in the west African nation of Cameroon are expressing joy over the May 29 release of Fr Elvis Mai Ngum, the pastor of a parish in the country's troubled southwestern region. The priest had been kidnapped Tuesday, May 28 as he made his way to one of the 11 mission stations he serves in the area.

In a May 29 statement, Bishop Agapitus Enuyehnyoh Nfon of Kumba Diocese

expressed gratitude to the people of God for their prayers in seeking the release of the priest and thanked God for heeding those prayers. "It is with profound joy and thankfulness to God that I wish to inform you that news has just reached me that the Parish Priest of St Martin de Porres Parish, Bekora, Father Elvis Mai, has been released," the bishop's statement reads.

Bishop Nfon didn't say what led to the release of the priest or whether any ransom was paid, nor did he say who kidnapped the priest. It is widely believed, however, that Mai might have been taken by separatists who have been very active in the area, including sometimes targeting Christian leaders and structures as well as schools and hospitals.

Italy's Prime Minister tells bishops to back off over constitutional reform

After the leader of the Italian bishops recently appeared to throw cold water on a key constitutional reform backed by Italy's conservative government, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni essentially told the bishops to back off, reminding them that "the Vatican state is not a parliamentary republic".

President Meloni made

the comments in a May 30 interview on Italian television, in response to May 23 comments from Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, president of the powerful Italian bishops' conference CEI and a key ally of Pope Francis.

In his remarks on May 23, Cardinal Zuppi seemed to many Italians to lean toward

that critical view. "Institutional equilibriums always should be touched only with great care," he said. "Some bishops focused on this, expressing concern."

In her May 30 television appearance, President Meloni was asked about Cardinal Zuppi's comments. "I don't know exactly what worries the Italian bishops'

conference, since the reform of the premiership doesn't affect relations between Church and state," she said. "But let me also say, with all due respect, that it doesn't seem to me that the Vatican state is a parliamentary republic, so no one's ever said they [should be] worried about this. So, let's make sure no one worries."



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Christ beams out from the bay



New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan elevates the monstrance and blesses New York City from a boat during the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage May 27, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Dominican Fr Patrick Briscoe

14 Catholics killed in DR Congo after refusing to convert to Islam

Pope Francis condemned the recent killing of 14 Catholics in the African Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) who reportedly were killed after they refused to convert to Islam.

The Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* reported that the 14 Catholics, several of them very young, were killed in North Kivu by members of the ISIS-affiliated militia called the "Allied Democratic Forces".

Diverging from his prepared statements on May 25, the Pope said: "I would like to stop and thank God for the testimony of martyrdom that a group of Catholics from Congo, from North Kivu, have

given in recent days".

Pope Francis added that "their throats were slit simply because they were Christians and didn't want to convert to Islam".

According to a report by International Christian Concern (ICC), the Allied Democratic Forces also carried out an attack on the Christian village of Ndimbo in Ituri state. ICC said that 11 Christians were executed with machetes and rifles on May 13 while several others were kidnapped, and some houses were set on fire.

Butembo-Beni Bishop Melchisedec Paluku condemned the killings and praised the Christians' resili-

ence, ICC reported.

"The resilience and courage displayed by the villagers in the face of such adversity are a testament to their unwavering spirit and determination to rebuild their lives amidst unimaginable tragedy," Bishop Paluku said.

The bishop called on the DRC government to increase its counterterrorism efforts, saying: "The brazen disregard for human life and dignity exhibited by these extremists underscores the urgent need for heightened security measures and robust counterterrorism efforts to safeguard innocent civilians from such brutal acts of violence".

The Butembo-Beni Dio-

cese has been facing rising Islamist terrorism for several years. Following a bombing of Emmanuel-Butsili Catholic Church in Beni in 2021, CNA reported Bishop Paluku saying that "a large-scale project is underway to Islamise or expel the indigenous populations" of the region.

"Anyone who has been kidnapped by these terrorist groups and managed to escape from them alive has told the same story. They were given the choice between death and converting to Islam," he said, adding that "not a day goes by without people being killed".

Trans-identifying monk risks 'confusion' in Church, experts say

Church leaders risk sowing scandal and confusion, experts say, by allowing a female monk who has been living as a male for years - and who recently publicly announced her transgender identity - to continue presenting herself as a man.

Christian Matson, a hermit living in the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky, went public with her transgender identity in a Religion News Service story published May 19 that was based on interviews

with both Matson and Bishop John Stowe, a Conventual Franciscan who leads the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky, where Matson lives.

Matson was born female but began identifying as a male years ago. On May 21, the Diocese of Lexington published a statement on the controversy on the diocese's website.

"On Pentecost Sunday, Brother Christian Matson, a professed hermit in the

Diocese of Lexington, has made it public that he is a transgender person," the statement said, using male pronouns to refer to the female hermit.

Theresa Farnan, a founding member of the Ethics and Public Policy Centre's Person and Identity Project, told the Register that Matson's public identification as a male risks confusing Catholics regarding what the Church has said about transgenderism.

Vatican roundup

Catholic doctors, ethicists criticise Pontifical Academy for Life

● Representatives of the Australian Catholic Medical Association, with the support of several Catholic moral theologians and bioethicists, have criticised a book published by the Pontifical Academy for Life for its lack of understanding of "current science" and specific areas of medicine.

The experts argue that the book spreads "misleading and confusing" theological and medical information that contradicts established Church teachings on contraception and assisted reproductive technologies.

The book in question, 'Etica Teologica Della Vita' (ETV), covers 'Theological Ethics of Life: Scripture, Tradition, and Practical Challenges'. The 528-page Italian publication is a synthesis of a seminar sponsored by the academy in 2021.

The critique, published April 23 in the *Linacre Quarterly*, the official journal of the Catholic Medical Association, describes contradictions between the book and established Church teachings on contraception and assisted reproductive technologies.

Pope Francis hails 'immense gift' of vocation to the consecrated life

● Pope Francis last week addressed a message to participants in a conference on consecrated religious life currently taking place in Brazil.

In his message, he expressed his gratitude for "the immense gift of the vocation to consecrated life which, in its most diverse charisms, enriches ecclesial communion and contributes greatly to the mission of the Church

throughout the world".

The Pontiff noted that in many places "the first proclamation of the Gospel is made by consecrated men and women, who take up with great commitment and with the dedication of their lives the mandate of the Lord".

The Pope also said that "the gift of vocation must be safeguarded and cultivated every day, so that it produces good fruits in the life of each religious".

Pope Francis opens new catechetical cycle on Holy Spirit's role in salvation

● Pope Francis last week opened a new catechetical series during his weekly general audience, focusing on the theme of creation across history and the role of the Holy Spirit in the story of salvation.

Titled 'The Spirit and the Bride: The Holy Spirit Guides God's People Toward Jesus Our Hope', the new cycle will unfold across three main themes: the Old Testament, the New Testament, and "the time of the Church".

"The Spirit of God, who in the beginning transformed chaos into cosmos, is at work to bring about this transformation in every person," the Pope said during the general audience held May 29 in St Peter's Square.

Papal Nuncio in Kenya: Church in Europe is losing 'its inner compass'

● The Church in Africa, which for many years was considered a missionary territory, has evolved and is growing "stronger" compared with the Church in Europe, which seems to have "weakened", according to the representative of the Holy Father in Kenya.

Archbishop Hubertus van Megen, who was preaching during the episcopal consecration of Fr John Kiplimo Lelei as auxiliary bishop of Kenya's Diocese of Eldoret, highlighted some of the weaknesses of the Church in Europe, which he said reflect an orientation toward secularism.

"As the archbishop of Kinshasa, Cardinal Ambongo said some months ago, 'The Church in Africa has always been considered a daughter of the Church in Europe. However now, with good reason, one can call them sister Churches.' The Church in Europe is weakened, the Church in Africa ever stronger," he said during the May 25 celebration at Mother of Apostles Seminary Grounds in Eldoret.

Letter from Rome

A wave of controversy



Elise Ann Allen

After Pope Francis sparked a wave of controversy for using an off-colour gay slur, he now appears to be attempting to mend fences, offering reassurances to a homosexual man turned away from seminary and writing the preface to a book by a prominent LGBTQ+ activist priest.

On June 4, the Italian version of Jesuit Fr James Martin's book, *Come forth: The promise of Jesus's Greatest Miracle*, was published, including a preface written by Pope Francis.

The book, published in English in September 2023, offers an extended reflection and analysis of the biblical account of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead and telling him to come out of the cave where he had been buried.

Fr Martin, editor at large for *America Magazine* and famous for his support of the Catholic LGBTQ+ community, explores various aspects of the passage and the figure of Lazarus in art and culture, focusing on the story as an example of how God's presence can transform people and offer them new life.

In the preface, Pope Francis hailed Martin's book as "always fascinating and never predictable," saying Martin was able to make "the biblical text come alive."

Stressing the importance of reading the Bible daily, Francis said God speaks through scripture, a fact he said "should give us a little jolt each and every day."

Gospel

As he has in the past, he urged believers to carry a version of the Gospel with them, either in a pocket or handbag, or on a smartphone, as a source of reflection for the ups and downs of every day.

"Actions like these will help us grasp the extent to which Scripture is a living body, an open book, a vibrant witness to a God that is not dead and buried on the dusty shelves of history," the pope



Pope Francis listens to a question during a meeting with priests ministering in the Diocese of Rome who have been ordained 10 years or less in the Church of Jesus the Divine Master on May 29, 2024. The Pope is seated between Rome Auxiliary Bishops Baldo Reina, left, and Michele Di Tolve, right. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

said.

Francis said the book brings readers directly into the story of one of Jesus' closest friends and stressed that each and every person is a friend of Jesus.

Sometimes people are "dead" in a figurative sense "on account of our sins, our failings and infidelities, the despondency that discourages us and crushes our spirits," he said, saying Jesus is not afraid "to get close to us – even when we 'reek' like a dead body that's been buried for three days."

“Jesus' only concern, he said, is that 'no one goes missing, that none are deprived of the possibility of feeling the loving embrace of His Father'”

Jesus, he said, is not afraid of sin or death, but rather waits "outside the closed door of our hearts, that door that only opens from within, that we lock with a double bolt whenever we think God could never forgive us.

Pope Francis said Martin's book illustrates how believers can "practically feel the pro-

found meaning of what Jesus does when He finds Himself before a dead man who is really dead, whose body gives off a nasty odor – a metaphor of the moral rot that sin produces in our souls."

"Jesus isn't scared of coming close to sinners – to any sinner, even the most brazen and undaunted," the pope said. Rather, Jesus's only concern, he said, is that "no one goes missing, that none are deprived of the possibility of feeling the loving embrace of His Father."

According to Italian media, Pope Francis also apparently recently responded to a young man named Lorenzo Michele Noè Caruso, 22, who said he was rejected from the seminary for being gay.

Controversy

Pope Francis caused a wave of controversy after a report was published in Italian blog *Dagospia* saying the pontiff had used a distasteful slur for homosexuals during a recent session with members of the Italian Bishops Conference (CEI).

During the May 20 closed-door meeting, Francis apparently spoke of homosexuality in seminary life, saying there was too much *frociaggine* in seminaries, loosely meaning "faggotry."

The comment was leaked

to the press and generated immediate backlash against the pope, including from some who were shocked to hear that the pope famous for the quip, "Who am I to judge?" and who has been seen as a champion of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Catholic Church, apparently used such crude terms.

“The pope never intended to offend or express himself in homophobic terms, and he apologises to those who felt offended by the use of a term”

The Vatican released a mild apology May 28, saying the pope reiterated his stance that "in the Church there is space for everyone, for everyone! No one is useless, no one is superfluous, there is space for all. Just as we are, everyone."

"The pope never intended to offend or express himself in homophobic terms, and he apologises to those who felt offended by the use of a

term, as reported by others," the statement said.

Caruso

According to Italian newspaper *Il Messaggero*, after hearing the pope's remark, Caruso wrote a 3-page email to the pontiff explaining his own story, and how he was bitter at being turned away from the seminary and disappointed by the pope's remark.

Caruso apparently told the pope that he and many others like him "live on the margins of the Church, often forced to hide because they are excluded from the community or forced to pay the high price of rejection for their sincerity."

He spoke of his work as a catechist, the deep call he had felt to the priesthood, and his disappointment at being rejected over the fact that he was gay.

Referring to the ongoing Synod on Synodality, during which the inclusion of LGBTQ+ Catholics has been a major talking point, Caruso reportedly said he trusts the process as "a turning point to walk together under the light of Christ, where no one is rejected, and everyone is an expression of God's plan for our Church."

Caruso also asked that Italian bishops review "the ban on admission to the seminary

of homosexual people," saying many young people "feel lost in a Church that often seems to be tied to a toxic and elective clericalism, where only some deserve to be welcomed and where others are excluded as false Christians."

Pope Francis apparently wrote a handwritten letter that was scanned and attached to an email responding to Caruso's own email on June 1.

“Go forward with your vocation. I pray for you, please do it for me”

According to *Il Messaggero*, the pope thanked Caruso for reaching out, saying he was struck by the phrase, "toxic and elective clericalism."

"It's true! You know that clericalism is a plague? It's an ugly 'worldliness' and as a great theologian said, 'worldliness is the worst that can happen to the Church, even worse than the era of concubinary popes,'" he said, referring to the writings of Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Francis reiterated his position that "Jesus calls everyone, everyone," telling Caruso, "Go forward with your vocation. I pray for you, please do it for me (I need it)."

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

The extreme hatred of all things Catholic...

Dear Editor, Recently in the media was a story of a local elections candidate and her querying of Dublin City Council expenditure on a statue of the Sacred Heart at a city centre location. Hardly a huge hole in the council budget, the reason she gave for her concern was that it "might cause offence to Muslims".

As a primary school teacher with decades of experience working in Catholic schools both here in Dublin and 'beyond the Pale', I can bear witness to the fact that never have I heard or come across any instance of a religious statue or picture being objected to by any Muslim parents or visitors to any school in which I or my colleagues have worked.

It is true however that Catholic iconography in schools under the management of the Catholic Church has come under attack from a small but vocal contingent of parents who have earned the moniker 'ABC' – Anything But Catholic.

The irrational and extreme hatred of all things Catholic has a long history in Ireland; right back to the 16th Century in fact, when a king of our neighbouring country sought to rid himself of his lawfully wedded wife when she failed to deliver a male heir. The ensuing debacle – as those who are familiar with the facts of history well know – resulted in the establishment of a state religion, imposed on the unfortunate subjects of this despot who went on to marry and execute several more women, most of whom also failed to deliver a male heir and found themselves surplus to requirements.

The infamous Penal Laws imposed on our ancestors meant that the Catholic Mass was outlawed, priests exiled or killed (often after being horribly tortured) and until 1829 when Daniel O'Connell's Bill of Catholic Emancipation was successfully passed through parliament, no Catholic Church was allowed to exist and certainly

no Catholic statues or pictures could be publicly displayed.

The political party to which the objector to the Sacred Heart statue belongs has no specifically anti-Catholic policies (that can be found on their website, at any rate) but another of their members as Mayor of Dublin tried to ban the annual Christmas crib at the Mansion House and another of her colleagues pursued a similar vendetta regarding another Catholic statue in the city of Dublin.

I call on her to desist and retract her objections.

One wonders at the political priorities of this party; on their holidays in Italy, Austria, Spain etc. do their members recoil from the sight of the many Catholic roadside shrines that are part of life in these Catholic countries?

Yours etc.,
Maria Ni Mhurchu
Phibsborough, Dublin 7

Overburdened priests and more parishioner responsibility

Dear Editor I can't help wondering why Bishop Roche felt the need to ask for the laity to accept that overburdened priests need time off [*The Irish Catholic* – May 30, 2024]. My experience is that the laity care very much for their priests, worry about the increasing burden placed upon them, especially as the typical parish priest becomes more aged, and want to do whatever they can to ease the burden. I doubt that there are many parishioners who think that "there should be Mass in every church, every day".

Could there, perhaps, be some correlation between how priests who feel particularly overburdened are those same priests who are most reluctant to let their parishioners take on more responsibility and insist on managing everything themselves?

Yours etc.,
Martin Harran
Castlefinn, Co. Donegal



Can you box someone in as 'conservative Catholic'?

Dear Editor, How does a Catholic know whether he/she is a 'conservative' Catholic? A recent definition has characterised conservative Catholics as people whose hearts are "closed up inside a dogmatic box" and that conservatism in Catholicism is "a suicidal attitude". One recalls St Teresa of Calcutta's maxim that the task of a Catholic is to "seek to be faithful" in pursuit of an ultimate, definite, happy destiny, a gift furnished by a God who wishes everyone to avail of it, and in the process come to know and integrate with reality in the life of the same God. As Jesus Christ and St Paul and St John the Apostle point out this integration derives from keeping the Commandments. The pursuit of faithfulness

at work here is energised by engagement in prayer, good works, in the sacramental life of the Church and in acts of repentance. There are Catholics who by choice pursue such cooperation with Church teaching. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who dissent from same, for instance declining to accept the notion of truth in Catholic dogma. In pilgrim fashion personal behaviour can oscillate in various directions. At which point on the spectrum is the designation 'conservative Catholic' meaningful? How can the truth of Catholic dogma, as truth, box someone in?

Yours etc.,
Neil Bray
Cappamore, Co. Limerick

What will become of the 'anxious generation'?

Earlier this year, American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt wrote about *'The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness'*, arguing that the rise of smartphones has seen teenagers spending less time socialising, more time glued to their screens, with girls in particular most likely "to be sucked into the self-esteem crushing vortex of social media".

His book was not without criticism, citing possible conflation of correlation and causation in his conclusions, furthering online discussion and in-depth rebuttal from the author himself. Now, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) of Ireland has come to similar conclusions in a report released last week.

Titled *'The Changing Social Worlds of 13-Year-Olds'*, the study looks at changes in 13-year-olds' relationships with their parents and peers, in their day-to-day activities and in their experiences of school.

Firstly, it is important to note that the report highlights a number of positives, such as less conflictual relations between parents and teenage children, including a reduction in punitive parenting. But that seems to be where the good news ends. At a superficial level, there seems to be more engagement in organised sports but there is an increase in numbers who have very low levels of engagement in physical exercise. There is a reduction in involvement in cultural activities, particularly at the lower socio-economic levels.

High levels of screen time are generally associated with less involvement in sport and cultural activities. Even spending one hour per day on screens results in a reduction in exercise and sport. The problem is that the numbers spending more than four hours on screen is increasing.

There is a decline in the proportion of girls who say they like school very much with the study stating that this is at least partly related to increased emotional difficulties among girls. The report also notes (with concern) the stickiness of girls' preference for languages and boys' affiliation with STEM subjects – despite significant efforts at policy level to over-

come what starts to feel like an innate difference in wiring between the male and female minds.

Similarly, the report notes that there are marked gender differences in young people's lives, with girls more likely to be involved in cultural activities and reading and boys more likely to be involved in sport and hard physical exercise. Again, policy efforts at curbing these 'inequalities' through social engineering aimed at redressing social norms appears to fail in the face of nature – or perhaps culture. The report's response is to double down on efforts to address this in the earlier years of children's education.

Reflecting Haidt's research, the findings point to a significant shift in screen time, whereas boys born in 1998 were spending longer on other (non-TV, non-gaming) screen time than girls but this pattern reversing for those born in 2008.

The report suggests this pattern merits further investigation yet research elsewhere, including Haidt's, is available to explain much of this. Although the ESRI report does not go so far as Haidt's to draw conclusions as to causation, there appears to be strong correlation between increasing screen time and teenage girls' increased emotional issues which are negatively impacting their relations with peers and parents – particularly their mothers – and their engagement with education.

Girls in particular appear to have fewer or smaller circles of friends and close friends than previously, something Abigail Shrier cited with concern in her book *'Irreversible Damage'*, resulting in vulnerability and isolation that is exacerbated through increasingly living lives online in the virtual world. Girls have fewer friends to laugh, cry and share the turbulence of growing up with.

Absent from the report is any analysis of changes in the religious and spiritual lives of both cohorts. While the study asks how often young people engage in various social groups (sports, cultural, Church) there is no disaggregation of groups. This makes it impossible to draw any deeper conclusions as to correlations between engaging with religion, teenage girls' changing social worlds and their greater well-being.

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.

Can cooperation between Kenya and Ireland be reinvigorated?



Dualta Roughneen

In 2015, the governments of Ireland and Kenya played an important role in co-facilitating the global agreement that is known as the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs as you may have heard them called. The impact of the work of Ireland and Kenya together had the potential to be huge but it is starting to look like that it is going to be untapped.

The SDGs are a roadmap for creating a better world. Also known as Agenda 2030, the 17 SDGs address the many causes of poverty, injustice and damage to our planet. The goals are backed up by 169 targets. These targets outline the actions needed to create a sustainable, prosperous and peaceful world.

The goals are universally applicable. This means they apply to every country in the world. All 191 members of the United Nations have agreed to work towards them. We implement them in Ireland, as well as internationally in Ireland's Overseas Development Assistance.

Everything sounded so promising in 2015.

Progress

2023 saw a mid-term review of progress against these highly ambitious goals. Unfortunately, progress is bleak. The Goals are failing. The review highlighted that only 12% of the SDG targets are on track. 30% of the targets are going backwards. It is reflective of the state of the world we live in right now, beset with conflict and crisis.

The achievement of the Ireland-Kenya collaboration looks like it will be undermined by global inertia and apathy.

In September this year, the nations of the world meet again at what is being called 'the Summit of the Future' to turbocharge the 2030 Agenda and to solidify global commitments to meet the very ambitious targets set.

How realistic is the ambition? In Ireland, we are on target for over 80% of the targets. Starting from a much higher baseline, it takes much less work for us here than our co-facilitators in Kenya. The baseline is lower yet the goals and targets are universal. How can Kenya and other countries like it make the leap in such a short space of time?

Recently, Kenya was the setting for the United Nations Civil Society Conference bringing together senior UN System officials and international civil society organisations, youth changemakers,



Dr James Casey of Independent Living Movement Ireland, with CBM Global Board Member, Dulamsuren 'Duhya' Jigjid, outside the UN buildings in Nairobi after the Civil Society Conference.

academia, public opinion makers and international media to discuss issues of global concern in advance of 'the Summit of the Future'.

Irish and Kenyan civil society activists were there to argue for a more accountable process.

“In the preparatory document, the ‘Pact for the Future’, people with disabilities are not just lacking visibility, they are invisible”

Bringing voices from Ireland and Kenya together at this critical juncture in achieving Agenda 2030 feels like it has a particular fortuitous resonance. While everything felt so optimistic in 2015, where all nations of the world committed to a brighter future, facilitated by the governments of Ireland and Kenya, the promise has failed to deliver, most particularly for people with disabilities.

“The time may be right for Ireland and Kenya to come together again to make sure that the rights of people with disabilities are not lost in the noise that will accompany the ‘Pact for the Future’

Putting Disability Rights at the centre of the September Summit

Commendable as the agreement on the SDGs was in 2015, people with disabilities are at best peripheral to this global agreement. Right now, with preparations for the Summit of the Future underway, the hard fought battle for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the SDGs now appears to be in reversal. In the preparatory document, the 'Pact for the Future', people with disabilities are not just lacking visibility, they are invisible. This a regressive move and will potentially damage all of the progress made to date on disability inclusion.

James Casey, a disability rights activist with the Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) travelled to Kenya on behalf of CBM Ireland, an international NGO working on ending the cycle of poverty and disability, to share perspectives on the progress for people with disabilities here in Ireland with organisations in the Global South.

Dr Casey argues that it is necessary for a change in approach if the world is to come close to achieving what it set out to do in 2015: “The

world's social contracts are under strain - it is time to try something new, something democratic and something authentic. We must move from simple consultations with DPOs to meaningful co-creation. We must move from issues to strategy and strategies to solution and it is us, disabled people, that can lead this journey”.

“The coming months offers the chance for Ireland and Kenya to crystallise the commitments that they helped bring about in 2015”

Speaking at the Nairobi Conference, James was joined by CBM Kenya's Country Director, Edwin Osundwa, and the Irish Ambassador to Kenya, H.E. Catriona Ingoldsby, in asking for “A Seat at the Table for 1 billion Persons with Disabilities” in the negotiations on the Summit for the Future.

CBM Kenya's Country Director

Edwin Osundwa, a blind person who advocates with the Government of Kenya for greater inclusion of people with disabilities is of the same view that progress for people with disabilities will not be made without their active involvement in negotiations and policy creation: “The Summit of the Future wants to reinvigorate the social contracts and by us being here today - we say to civil society, the UN and others that disability must be included and part of any process or consultation.”

Ireland's Ambassador to Kenya, Catriona Ingoldsby, was the only government representative to attend the event organised by the disability rights groups at the conference. The time may be right for Ireland and Kenya to come together again to make sure that the rights of people with disabilities are not lost in the noise that will accompany the 'Pact for the Future'.

The coming months offers the chance for Ireland and Kenya to crystallise the commitments that they helped bring about in 2015. This must not just be a commitment to ensure that not just the outcomes are inclusive of persons with disabilities but the processes leading up to the Summit are also deliberately made accessible and inclusive.

Limitations

While the space for civil society engagement with the negotiation process has been limited, it has been even more inaccessible to persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs- organisations of persons with disabilities). The ongoing consultations do not provide preconditions for participation such as sign language interpretation, Braille, real time captioning, or easy read and other alternative formats. The software used for virtual consultations are difficult to navigate for people using screen readers.

If these preconditions are not being met in the process of the negotiations on global development what does that tell people with disabilities about commitments to their rights? It perpetuates the anachronistic attitude of ableism that people with disabilities are to be recipients of the beneficence of wider society who know best when it comes to disability rights.

i Dualta Roughneen is the CEO of CBM Ireland, an international disability rights organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and those at risk of disability, in low-income regions of the world.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, June 6, 2024

When does a marriage 'lack proper form' in canon law, and can a lay person perform intinction themselves?

Jenna Marie Cooper

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Into the mind of a convert

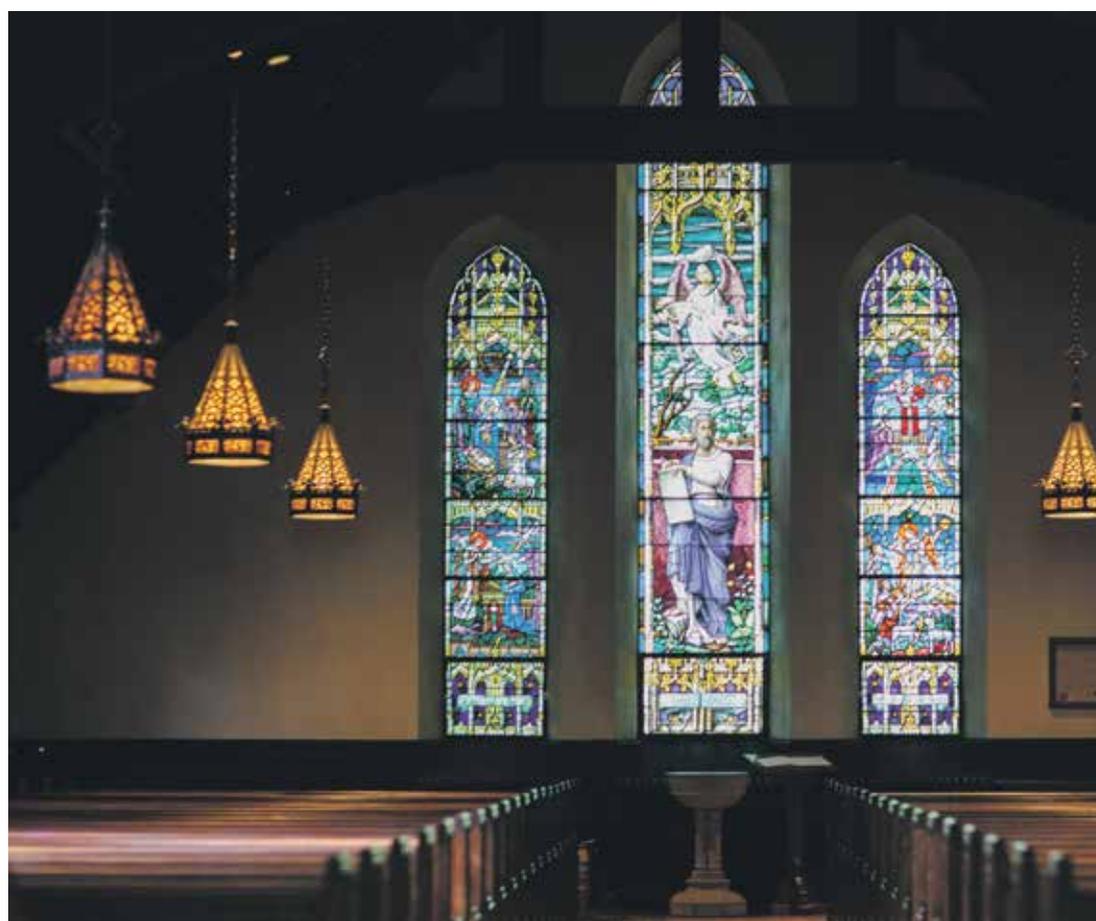


Roman Cabay

To those who knew me then, the idea of my conversion was an absurd prospect. I was raised non-denominationally protestant, variously attending Anglican and Methodist services as well as Sunday school. Church, to me, was an interminable lecture where I fruitlessly attempted to achieve apostasy. Faith was a private certainty of my damnation my various shortcomings. Eventually the inability to rationalise my obvious condemnation to eternal punishment with the notion of an omnipotent and loving creator broke the inertia of inherited piety and I resigned myself to a militant and hopeless atheism. I somnambulated in the manner characteristic of the postmodern generations towards an increasingly vulgar and hollow opinion of the world- man being a cosmic accident, consciousness an electrical phenomenon, existence an arbitrary imposition. Many people have had an 'epiphany', a 'come to Jesus' moment' or a 'moment of clarity'- a very brief spiritual experience which irrevocably precludes the possibility for a vulgar, empirically atheist view of the world. I had one such experience and resolved myself to pursue faith. Ultimately, the only attractive option was Roman Catholicism, to the point that I'd resolved myself to converting by the first semester of my last university year without ever having attended a mass in my life.

Elements

For an insight into the mind of the convert, I'll highlight two of the most important elements of Catholicism in my life. Throughout my familiarisation with the faith, the apparent unpopularity of Confession among liberal Catholics has baffled me; besides the theological necessity of the sacrament, Reconciliation was something I



was impatient for- Confession is to the soul what medicine is to the body. Imagine a man shambling about, delirious from blood loss yet refusing medical attention, and you understand the silent weight of guilt that hangs on the shoulders of the unconfessed. Of course, a full pursuit of grace must be wrought by deed as well as rite. Even so, the sacrament of Reconciliation provides a genuine opportunity for a confrontation with oneself. Private reflection over one's wrongs often fails as it may become self-congratulatory- minimising one's wrongdoing out of pride- but arguably worse, it may become self-pitying. Wallowing in one's guilt is a common kind of arrogance, one which asserts oneself uniquely hideous,

“There's something conceptually depressing about the notion that no human institution could be worthy of dictating religious law”

dotted with a singular agency by which one has irredeemably condemned himself- and therefore can seek or expect no personal improvement. Most pride in our generation is the pride of self-hatred, embracing the comfort of giving up because it's easier to think yourself intractably worthless than it is to confront your demons and improve as a person. Confession compels one to accept that they are not special: you, just like everyone else, have been forgiven for your sins- you need only accept it. The key contradiction at the heart of Protestantism is that there is an absolute, uncompromisable truth which all people must recognise and live by... but also that this truth may only be

interpreted and put into effect by disparate private individuals. This, of course, had the effect of causing protestant denominations split and multiply like cells in a petri dish, but moreover it raises an obvious theological problem. If your church values individual judgement so much, and indeed split off from another branch to preserve this, it becomes very susceptible to misinterpretation.

Argument

I recently got into an argument with a Baptist who derided my faith in the Holy See for her various shortcomings but by what standard should she be measured? Against the “worst” Baptist church, or the “best”? Furthermore, if I set out a standard of morality by which to judge, on what authority is it based? Merely stating “the Bible” is practically refusing the question- Jehovah's Witnesses and megachurch evangelicals promising riches to their followers demonstrate that it is in fact very easy to create an insane cult which is

“based” on the Bible. Fundamentally, the non-hierarchical system is incredibly susceptible to perversion by bad or incompetent actors for any number of reasons, and this requires constant vigilance by its parishioners: having no guarantee that a pastor is telling you the truth, you must second-guess his every word with reference to scripture and refer to your own judgement as a basis of faith. If I can't have a guarantee of the truth at church, well, why on Earth am I going? 'Amen' doesn't mean 'I agree'. I'm sure you're aware of the rich intellectual tradition among Catholic scholars, and that the faith's history of erudition has been impressed upon you.

“Are we so unworthy that any attempt at ordering ourselves towards God is doomed to fail? Is constant fracture and theological bickering the best we can hope for?”

Well, I'm here to tell you that Catholicism is just as much the religion of fools and ignoramuses. Your friar may be borderline illiterate, but if he performs the rites correctly his worship and yours are entirely valid. Similarly, the world's most wretched cretin (it could be you or me, folks!) can go to mass or pray the rosary at peace. These are methods of worship which have been sanctified from on high with divine authority. The considerable fallibility of individuals' judgement is shorn from the question entirely.

Finally, there's something conceptually depressing about the notion that no human institution could be worthy of dictating religious law. Is man so fallible that he must be condemned to a primitive and simplistic understanding of religion? Are we so unworthy that any attempt at ordering ourselves towards God is doomed to fail? Is constant fracture and theological bickering the best we can hope for? For no reason more complex than simple faith, I want to believe that we can dare to believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Understanding Pope Francis, women and holy orders



Deacon Dominic Cerrato

The issue of admitting women to the diaconate has been, over the past decade, a subject of intense theological debate. In a recent interview with CBS News, Pope Francis unequivocally stated that women cannot be ordained as deacons. This stance, delivered during a '60 Minutes' interview, has significant implications for ongoing discussions about the role of women in the Church.

To understand the complexity of this issue, it is crucial to examine the main points from a broader contextual framework, and how they relate to Pope Francis' current position.

The discussion of admitting women to holy orders must be situated within a wider theological context. This approach ensures coherence and alignment with the core principles of the Catholic faith. Indeed, the question of women in the diaconate is fundamentally theological, rooted in Christological, ecclesial and sacramental dimensions. This theological foundation is essential because it aligns with the mind of God as revealed through Divine Revelation, whose interpretation is the exclusive competency of the Magisterium.

Authenticity

To deviate from this theological framework and adopt a secular, egalitarian perspective would strip the issue of its Catholic identity and authenticity. In essence, it would rob it of its soul. As Pope Francis noted in off-the-cuff comments to the 21st assembly of the International Union of Women Superiors in 2019 on this very subject, he said, "I can't do a decree of a sacramental nature without having a theological, historical foundation for it." This underscores that any consideration of admitting women to the diaconate must be deeply rooted in the theological traditions of the Church.

The question of admitting women to holy orders is not merely a matter of ecclesial discipline, as was the restoration of the permanent diaconate by the Second Vatican Council. Instead, it involves a

significant doctrinal change. As such, proponents must provide cogent and compelling arguments grounded in Divine Revelation to justify such a development. This requirement places the burden of proof entirely on those advocating for the ordination of women. Thus far, no such argument has been provided. Instead, proponents offer a sociological response to a theological question. Not only is this completely inadequate, but it also renders theological dialogue virtually impossible.

“It indicates that the existence of deaconesses does not provide a doctrinal basis for admitting women to the diaconate”

The historical role of deaconesses in the early Church is often cited by proponents of admitting women to holy orders. However, careful consideration reveals that deaconesses were not equivalent to male deacons. Their primary role was to assist bishops in baptising women and catechising female converts, emerging out of pastoral necessity rather than doctrinal development. Over time, as the practice of baptism evolved, the need for deaconesses declined, and their role was absorbed into other forms of ecclesial service, such as religious orders. This historical non-equivalency is crucial because it indicates that the existence of deaconesses does not provide a doctrinal basis for admitting women to the diaconate.

Proponents of ordaining women to the diaconate often argue that ancient ordination rites for deaconesses provide a doctrinal foundation for their admission to the diaconate. However, while these rites bore some similarities to those of male deacons, they were not identical.

According to the theologian Father Manfred Hauke, "we cannot identify the consecration of deaconesses with the ordination of deacons." The term "ordination" in the

“The Church's teaching authority, the Magisterium, has consistently interpreted Divine Revelation in a manner that upholds the exclusivity of men to the sacramental ordination of holy orders”



Deacon Rachid Murad offers the chalice to a communicant during his ordination to the diaconate at St Joseph Cathedral in Brooklyn, N.Y., May 25, 2019. Photo: OSV News/CNS file, Gregory A. Shemitz

ancient context referred to a form of religious consecration, not a sacramental ordination equivalent to that of male deacons. Indeed, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (par. 1538) clarifies that "ordination" today is reserved for the sacramental act integrating a man into the order of bishops, presbyters or deacons. Thus, while deaconesses may have been "ordained" in an ancient sense, this does not equate to the sacramental ordination of deacons. The tradition concerning this reveals several essential differences between deaconesses and deacons.

Differences

These are:

- The ordination rites were different.
- Deaconesses did not serve in the liturgy as deacons did.
- Deaconesses did not exercise the same sacramental roles.
- Deaconesses did not minister in the community in the same way.
- Deaconesses did not relate to the bishop in the same manner.

- Deaconesses were never given grounds to aspire to the priesthood.
- The order of deaconess did not develop over time as the diaconate did.

“He highlighted the important, non-sacramental roles that women play in the Church, describing them as ‘masterful custodians of life’”

These differences underscore that the roles of deaconesses and deacons were distinct and not interchangeable. Therefore, the historical presence of deaconesses does not support the ordination of women to the diaconate.

Pope Francis' recent statement to CBS aligns with the theological and historical considerations outlined above. He emphasised that women cannot be ordained as dea-

cons within the context of holy orders. Instead, he highlighted the important, non-sacramental roles that women play in the Church, describing them as "masterful custodians of life" and integral to the Church's maternal nature.

While the universal Synod may continue to discuss the possibility of ordaining women to the diaconate, Pope Francis' clear and emphatic statement to Norah O'Donnell renders that discussion moot. His decisive "no" to the question of whether women will ever have the opportunity to be ordained as deacons within the context of holy orders leaves little room for ambiguity. Simply put, "no" means "no."

Self-identity

As a private theologian, it is my opinion that this issue fundamentally touches on the Church's own self-identity and, because of this, is proper to the sacred deposit of the faith. The Church's teaching authority, the Magisterium, has consistently interpreted Divine Revelation in a manner that upholds the exclusivity of men to the sacramental ordination of holy orders. This is not a mere disciplinary matter that can be changed with time or cultural shifts, but a doctrinal issue embedded within the Church's understanding of Divine Revelation and the sacramental nature

of ordained ministry.

“The focus should remain on exploring and expanding the many vital and irreplaceable roles that women already play”

Therefore, it is my firm belief that the matter of ordaining women to holy orders should not be pursued further as it significantly distracts from any advancement of the theology of the diaconate and its role in the mission of the Church and the mystery of salvation. The discussion, while valuable in its intent to recognise and enhance the role of women in the Church, should not be allowed to evolve into an advocacy for a doctrinal change that the Church does not have the authority to make. Instead, the focus should remain on exploring and expanding the many vital and irreplaceable roles that women already play within the Church's life and mission, roles that Pope Francis himself has praised and encouraged.

i Deacon Dominic Cerrato, editor of *The Deacon* magazine, was a member of a recent Vatican commission to study the possibility of women deacons in the Catholic Church.

A theology professor and convert reflects on his path to the Church and Catholic academia



Charlie Camosy

Every convert's path to the Catholic faith is unique, and some come to the Church through more winding paths than others. Jeffrey L. Morrow, currently a professor of theology at Seton Hall University's Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology (ICSST), recently spoke about his journey from Judaism to Christianity to Catholicism and what he's observed in his time teaching at a Catholic seminary. He is the author of several books including *A Catholic Guide to the Old Testament*, *Murmuring Against Moses* and *Modern Biblical Criticism as a Tool of Statecraft*.

-Charlie Camosy: Can you tell us a bit about your conversion story?

-Jeffrey Morrow: For anyone interested, my story is told in more detail on an EWTN interview I did with Marcus Grodi for his series, *The Journey Home*, and in an essay, I contributed to the 2022 book, *By Strange Ways: Theologians and Their Paths to the Catholic Church*.

I was raised in a fairly non-religious household, but began to identify with my father's Jewish family when I was in middle school, and I attended Hebrew school, after my day-school, which culminated in my bar mitzvah.

College

When I entered college, I considered myself a Jewish agnostic, although I did not believe in God, so I really leaned in an atheist direction. I had the good fortune of attending Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and it was there that I met a number of intelligent evangelicals involved with Campus Crusade for Christ (now called Cru). At the time, Miami's Cru boasted the largest weekly parachurch meeting at any college campus in the world, with over 1,000 members in attendance.

Two of these members challenged me to consider the claims of Christianity. I began to investigate the historical background of the Bible, philosophical arguments for a Creator God, and the historical events surrounding Jesus' resurrection.

Eventually, I became con-



Jeffrey L. Morrow

vinced that God must exist, the Bible is incredibly historically reliable, and that Jesus' resurrection was the best explanation for the historical events. I then became an evangelical Protestant by default. In learning about the wide diversity of Christian traditions, communities, and denominations, I set out to see if there was a way to determine what sort of Christian I should be, how I should live out my newfound Christian faith.

I read the Bible, studied the early Church Fathers, Protestant Reformers, and contemporary Catholic and Protestant theologians and writers. I was especially drawn to the papal encyclicals of Pope St John Paul II. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that the Catholic Church

is the Church Jesus founded.

-Camosy: How does that conversion story connect to your 2017 book on the Resurrection and your new online course with the Emmaus Academy?

Resurrection

-Morrow: My recent online course, 'The Resurrection', through the Emmaus Academy, grew out of my 2017 book, *Jesus' Resurrection: A Jewish Convert Examines the Evidence*. Both are intimately bound up with my personal conversion. The question of whether or not Jesus rose from the dead was a central part of my conversion process, and, in fact, my wrestling with that question was the pivotal moment of the first part of my conversion to Christianity, prior to entering

the Catholic Church. What the online course and the book do is walk through the historical evidence that helped me recognize the Resurrection as the most likely event, and only theory adequately explaining the historical facts.

-Camosy: You are in the process of moving to Ohio to start a new position at Franciscan University. What brings you to this new institution?

-Morrow: I am excited to begin this new phase in my career at Franciscan University of Steubenville. They have perhaps the undergraduate theology program with the largest number of majors at a Catholic institution, and I am excited to join such a wonderful faculty. In addition, they are opening up a new theology doctoral program, which I am excited

to assist in its earliest years as it gets off the ground.

Experience

From my past experience working with faculty members at Franciscan University, I know that it will be an academic environment well suited to professors with my beliefs and commitments, as we strive to teach the Catholic faith from the heart of the Church. Another draw for me is the work of the St Paul Centre for Biblical Theology, which works closely with the university and which I will be working with, as I have been for a number of years now. It will be much easier for me to collaborate with my colleagues at the St Paul Centre than it has been in the past since I will be working there on site.

-Camosy: Before the move to Franciscan, you spent many

years teaching at the seminary associated with Seton Hall in New Jersey. Do you think Catholic seminaries could pick up the slack for so many Catholic colleges and universities abandoning, closing and often - in a related story - refusing to embrace the particularity of a Catholic mission and identity?

“Some Catholic seminaries are certainly poised to pick up the slack for so many Catholic colleges and universities abandoning and closing and refusing to embrace the particularity of a Catholic mission and identity”

-Morrow: Yes, I have spent 15 years teaching at Seton Hall University's Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology (ICSST), which will always have a fond place in my heart. I grew in so many ways while teaching at ICSST and am forever grateful for my time there. I do think that Catholic seminaries have the opportunity to help in regard to Catholic mission and identity, and I know that ICSST has been an integral part of Seton Hall University's own Catholic mission and identity.

Some Catholic seminaries are certainly poised to pick up the slack for so many Catholic colleges and universities abandoning and closing and refusing to embrace the particularity of a Catholic mission and identity. This is a very complicated question, though, and each institution has its own specific challenges.

Some Catholic seminaries have closed, much as some Catholic colleges. Most seminaries remain unattached to universities, unlike ICSST which is both on campus at Seton Hall University and is an affiliated school serving Seton Hall as its School of Theology. Seminaries with a robust and highly skilled faculty, like ICSST, are well positioned to fill this need since they have something like 13 full-time faculty members who are of exceptional quality. The key factor for many such institutions is enrolment - the same challenge faced by non-Catholic institutions.

Charlie Camosy is professor of medical humanities at the Creighton School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska, and moral theology fellow at St Joseph Seminary in New York.

Celebrating the class of 2024



Greg Erlandson

It is always hard to predict how a generation is going to be judged by history. When my dad graduated in 1939, did anyone see that his would be the Greatest Generation? Yet perhaps the stress and pressure of the Great Depression and the nation's response to that challenge helped forge the courage that was to come.

I am going to be more than a little interested to see how the graduating class of 2024 turns out, but in my mind, theirs may be our Resilient Generation.

Impact

These were the kids who were denied a high school graduation four years ago because a worldwide pandemic was striking us. It is easy to forget what 2020 and 2021 were like. We have lost 1.2 million Americans to this disease (so far), with the majority dying in those first two years. It's almost three times the number that died in World War II when the Greatest Generation made its reputation.

Of course, it was the Greatest Generation that paid the highest price in our fight with the pandemic as well. The elderly, particularly those in nursing homes, were hard hit. We may have forgotten the refrigerated trucks where bodies were stacked because morgues were overflowing, but those families who lost loved ones during these years have not. And in many of those families were the students

who entered college in 2020.

These students had to adapt to a new way of doing college. At the beginning, public gatherings were taboo as we struggled to find out what would keep us safe. Dorms and classrooms were seen as potentially dangerous. Remote learning and Zoom classes, then-hybrid learning, were substituted for the normal collegiate experience. Incoming students were often strangers to their classmates for at least the first year.

Not everyone overcame these challenges, of course. Dropout rates and low attendance rates climbed. Those who earned the right this spring to march into their halls to the magisterial strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" had to overcome much to get there.

“My advice was simple: Care for others. Be grateful for what they have. Never stop learning”

All of which makes it more upsetting to know that at least a few universities, large graduation ceremonies were cancelled due to the demonstrations over Gaza. Unhappy graduates told reporters that they had been denied a high school graduation, and now four years later, they and their families were being denied a ceremony once again.

“Care for the family you have and the family you may one day have. Care for the weakest and most defenceless, the youngest and the oldest. Be grateful. Be resilient”

I had the rare honour to speak at one commencement ceremony that was not cancelled. It was for the University of St Francis, a small liberal arts school in Fort Wayne, Ind. I didn't talk to them about the state of the Church or the role of women or the proper liturgy they should attend.

My advice was simple: Care for others. Be grateful for what they have. Never stop learning. This generation seated in cap and gown before me has experienced so much stress and anxiety, and I assured them that they don't have to have everything figured out as soon as they graduate.

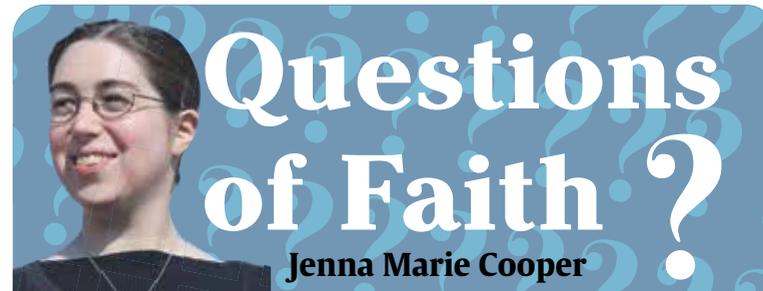
I believe the Covid pandemic will be the defining event of their generation, I told them. What I did not want them to forget is that they rose to the challenge. They were not deterred. They were resilient. And their resilience and their determination are what our country needs right now and, in the years, ahead.

If there are any marching orders, I think they need, it would simply be: Care for the family you have and the family you may one day have. Care for the weakest and most defenceless, the youngest and the oldest. Be grateful. Be resilient.

Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News. Follow him on Twitter @GregErlandson.



Graduating senior Jillian Mancz reacts after receiving her diploma during commencement ceremonies at St Mary's College Preparatory High School in Manhasset, New York, May 31, 2023. (OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

When does a marriage 'lack proper form' in canon law, and can a lay person perform intinction themselves?

Q: A divorced, annulled Catholic friend of mine recently got engaged to another divorced Catholic, who said her previous marriage was ruled "lacks proper form" by the Church. What does this mean? Are they able to marry in the Catholic Church?

A: Even as a canon lawyer, it's impossible to draw firm conclusions about another person's canonical marriage situation based on a second-hand account and without knowing all the details. Still, it sounds like the marriage in question was invalid due to what we would technically call a 'lack of canonical form'.

Catholics, and only Catholics, are bound to observe "canonical form" in marriage as per Canon 1108 of the Code of Canon Law. Essentially, this means that Catholics are required to be married in a Catholic context, saying their wedding vows and exchanging matrimonial consent in the presence of two witnesses and a properly authorised Catholic bishop, priest or deacon.

If a Catholic marries outside of canonical form - for example, if they married in a courthouse or even in a non-Catholic religious ceremony - this is not only illicit (that is, against canon law) but also invalid (meaning that the wedding simply wouldn't 'work').

In some cases, depending on specific pastoral needs, it may be possible for a Catholic to receive a 'dispensation from canonical form', or special permission from the bishop, to marry a non-Catholic in a non-Catholic ceremony.

It's also important to note that if someone becomes Catholic at any point in his or her life, even if they fall away from the Church, he or she is always considered Catholic in canon law. This means that a baptised Catholic who no longer actively practices the faith would still be bound to observe canonical form in their wedding.

So if a Catholic - practicing or not - attempts to marry in a non-Catholic ceremony without a dispensation, this marriage would be invalid in a very objective, clear-cut way. Other causes of marriage nullity, like certain psychological issues or a lack of proper intention, are generally less obvious and more nuanced. This is why a mar-

riage can be declared invalid due to lack of form much more quickly and easily than a typical marriage nullity process.

Presuming there are no other impediments, a Catholic who had his or her marriage declared invalid due to lack of form would indeed be free to marry in the Catholic Church.

Q: May a Catholic lay person perform self-intinction using the consecrated host in the precious blood?

A: No, self-intinction is not permitted for a lay person. Intinction is a well-established, albeit relatively less common, way of receiving holy Communion under both kinds. As paragraph 245 of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal tells us: "The Blood of the Lord may be consumed either by drinking from the chalice directly, or by intinction."

This same idea is reiterated in the US bishops' 2002 document 'Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America'. However, in paragraph 50, the U.S. bishops' document explicitly states: "The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction. Communion under either form, bread or wine, must always be given by an ordinary or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion." Extraordinary ministers are by definition laypersons, as clergy - meaning ordained bishops, priests, and deacons - are considered ordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Similarly, in a section describing the norms for Communion under both kinds for the non-ordained lay faithful, the Vatican document "Redemptionis Sacramentum" tells us in paragraph 104: "The communicant must not be permitted to intinct the host himself in the chalice, nor to receive the intincted host in the hand."

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

We are better and worse than we think



Our own complexity can be befuddling. We are better than we think and worse than we imagine, too hard and too easy on ourselves all at the same time. We are a curious mix.

On the one hand, we are good. All of us are made in the image and likeness of God and are, as Aristotle and Aquinas affirm, metaphysically good. That's true, but our goodness is also less abstract. We are good too, at least most of the time, in our everyday lives.

Generally, we are generous, often to a fault. Despite appearances sometimes, mostly we are warm and hospitable. The same is true in terms of the basic intent in both our minds and our hearts. We have big hearts. Inside everyone, easily triggered by the slightest touch of love or affirmation, lies a big heart, a grand soul, a *magna anima*, that's itching to be altruistic. Mostly the problem isn't with our goodness, but with our frustration in trying to live that out in the world. Too often we appear cold and self-centered when we're only frustrated, hurt, and wounded.

Frustrated

We don't always appear to be good, but mostly we are; though often we are frustrated because we cannot (for reasons of circumstance, wound, and sensitivity) pour out our goodness as we would like, nor embrace the world and those around us with the warmth that's in us. We go



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

through life looking for a warm place to show who we are and often don't find it. We're not so much bad as frustrated. We're more loving than we imagine.

“At the very roots of our instinctual make-up, there's selfishness, jealousy, and pettiness of heart and mind”

But that's half of it, there's another side: we're also sinners, more so than we think. An old Protestant dictum about human nature, based on St Paul, puts it accurately: "It's not a question of 'are you a sinner'? It's only a ques-

“We are loved sinners. Both goodness and sin make up our identity. Not to recognise this truth leaves us either unhealthily depressed or dangerously inflated, too hard or too easy on ourselves”

tion of 'what is your sin?'" We're all sinners, and just as we possess a big heart and a grand soul, we also possess a petty one (a *pusilla anima*). At the very roots of our instinctual make-up, there's selfishness, jealousy and pettiness of heart and mind.

Blind

Moreover, we are often blind to our real faults. As Jesus says, we easily see the speck on our neighbor's eye and miss the plank in our own. And that generally makes for a strange irony, that is, where we think we are sinners is usually not the place where others struggle the most with us or where our real faults lie. Conversely, it's in those areas where we think we are virtuous and righteous that often our real sin lies and where

others struggle with us.

For example, we've have forever put a lot of emphasis on the sixth commandment and haven't been nearly as self-scrutinising in regard to the fifth commandment (which deals with bitterness, judgments, anger, and hatred) or with the ninth and tenth commandments (that have to do with jealousy). It's not that sexual ethics are unimportant, but our failures here are harder to rationalise. The same isn't true for bitterness, anger, especially righteous anger, nor for jealousy. We can more easily rationalise these and not notice that jealousy is the only sin for which God felt it necessary to write two commandments. We are worse than we imagine and mostly blind to our real faults.

“Two contraries can (and do) exist inside of us morally. We're both good and bad, generous and selfish, big-hearted and petty, gracious and bitter”

So where does that leave us? In better and worse shape than we think. If we could recognise that we're more lovely than we imagine and more sinful than we suppose, that could be helpful both for our self-understanding and for how we understand God's love

and grace in our lives.

Aristotle says, "two contraries cannot co-exist within the same subject". He's right metaphysically, but two contraries can (and do) exist inside of us morally. We're both good and bad, generous and selfish, big-hearted and petty, gracious and bitter, forgiving and resentful, hospitable and cold, full of grace and full of sin, all at the same time. Moreover, we're generally too blind to both, too unaware of our loveliness as well as of our nastiness.

Humbling

To recognise this can be humbling and freeing. We are loved sinners. Both goodness and sin make up our identity. Not to recognise this truth leaves us either unhealthily depressed or dangerously inflated, too hard or too easy on ourselves. The truth will set us free, and the truth about ourselves is that we're both better and worse than we picture ourselves to be.

Robert Funk once formulated three dictums on grace which speak to this. He writes:

*Grace always wounds from behind, at the point where we think we are least vulnerable.

*Grace is harder than we think: we moralise judgment in order to take the edge off it.

*Grace is more indulgent than we think: but it is never indulgent at the point where we think it might be indulgent.

We need to be both easier and harder on ourselves – and open to the way grace works.

Have you ever felt rejected by the people you love?

Gn 3:9-15
Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
2 Cor 4:13-5:1
Mk 3:20-35

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



You're in good company. The Scriptures show what Jesus went through in his hometown - and they offer us a valuable perspective.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus hears some criticism and name-calling that is downright blasphemous, with relatives claiming that the Son of God is "out of his mind."

But one phrase really struck me. You could almost miss it but look closely. It comes at the very beginning of the excerpt from Mark's gospel: "Jesus came home."

Those simple words are freighted with meaning - and by the end of this passage Christ has redefined what it means to be "home" and challenged his listeners to reconsider what it means to be "family."

Before that, though, Jesus encounters accusations that are more than a little bit shocking. He is accused of being possessed, of using "the prince of demons." His neighbours and relatives call him, in effect, a madman.

Respond

Yet Jesus doesn't respond with shock or outrage. He's not even offended. He chooses another way, explaining who he is with clarity, reason, authority and wisdom. You might even say he speaks out of love.

Then, when his family comes looking for him, he doesn't turn his attention to them. He looks instead to those who are surrounding him, "those seated in the circle" and listening to his words. What he says may have left them startled - and even scandalised.

"Here are my mother and my brothers," he says, "For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Unexpectedly, with just a few words, Jesus offers a

new sense of belonging, of describing what makes up the Christian community. Here is a new definition of "family" and, by extension, a new way of thinking about "home."

"Family," in the teaching of Christ, is more than just a matter of genetics or geography. It is not just a shared history; it encompasses so much more than the people you call your relatives. The Christian family goes beyond blood.

“Jesus shows that following his path isn't easy, even in the place you call 'home.' This message: don't seek acceptance in this world, but plan instead for the next”

Being part of Jesus' family means living, like Jesus, obedient to God's will. It means trusting in the father who loves us and nurtures us, the father who desires nothing more than for us to spend eternity with him and who sent his son to help make that possible. It means embracing that son as our brother - living with fidelity to God's teaching and with hope in a life yet to come, in a place we can only imagine.

And that destination is, really, our home.

This episode in some ways foreshadows the Christian persecution that will come - and the kind of rejection of Christ's message that will eventually lead to Calvary. Long before that, though, Jesus shows that following his path isn't easy, even in the place you call "home." This message: don't seek acceptance in this world, but plan instead for the next.

It's a timely message. We can't forget that in some parts of the globe today, to live as a Christian



is to live with a target on your back - being marginalised, mocked, persecuted, imprisoned, even killed. The age of the martyrs continues.

Embrace

But this Sunday's Scriptures call on us to

embrace being part of the Christian family anyway, to remember that we are meant for other things. We belong elsewhere, "doing the will of God."

In this Sunday's epistle, St Paul explains it perfectly. He writes in his letter to the Corinthians

that we should "look not to what is seen but to what is unseen." And the tentmaker from Tarsus adds: "If our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven."

We may give someplace else our address. But there is another place that is truly our true home.

i Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog "The Deacon's Bench."

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Extremism, absolutes and elections

For many, religion can be inspirational and enhancing, bringing out the best in people as they try to live in a harmonious relationship with God, each other and nature. But it can turn sour if infected by extremism, and that draws the media like a magnet.

Cults are a particularly ugly manifestation of this, a theme explored in **Waco Untold: The British Stories** (Virgin Media 1, Thursday). The stories of David Koresh, the Branch Davidians and the Waco siege of 1993 were familiar enough, but I hadn't previously realised how many British people were involved. Koresh had recruited intensively in the UK among Seventh Day Adventists, and several recruits headed off to what became the increasingly repressive and abusive compound in Waco, Texas. It was disturbing to see idealistic young people, even theology students, hoodwinked by the charismatic leader – a common story when it comes to cults. It just shows how charisma in leadership can be deadly if it goes off the rails. It was heartbreaking to hear, years later, from the relatives of those who went to Waco – at that time trying to make contact with their relatives who were increasingly cut off from home, worrying especially



Pope Francis

when news stories of the siege began to filter through to UK media.

Koresh's familiarity with the Bible and his ability to link themes across several parts of it was part of what enhanced his appeal, but it wasn't clear whether he was a deluded fantasist or a cynical manipulator, probably an unhealthy combination of both. A local sheriff found him to be a 'creep' and a 'punk' and thought there must be something

lacking in the people who were drawn to the cult – all the more awful as Koresh was using their vulnerabilities against them. I thought there was value in revisiting the story – as a warning to people not to be taken in by gurus or scammers, especially those who use religion as bait, even if initially they seem well motivated.

Liveline (RTÉ Radio 1) frequently unveils scams or other dodgy practices in commercial or religious

circles. However last week presenter Joe Duffy tuned his attention to the controversial remarks of Pope Francis about homosexuals in seminaries. An off-the-cuff remark, regarded as a homophobic slur, was leaked to the media and caused quite a stir. Predictably, among those invited to speak on air was Bernard Lynch, a dissident American priest living in an openly gay relationship (described as a 'great campaigner' by the presenter). On Wednesday he used slurs against previous Popes ('homophobic absolutes') and made sweeping claims about the clergy and homosexuality but wasn't asked for evidence. Yet, when the Trump storm kicked off again last week, RTÉ News re-introduced the tagging of his claims as being 'without evidence'. This only works if applied consistently, which it's not. It was a common device when Trump lost the election in 2020, but curiously the phrase was used across several media outlets at the time. I wonder how that happened and who was pulling those particular strings.

To be sure, some of Trump's angry claims in his post-trial press conference were outlandish and offensive, especially where it concerned migrants coming to the USA from jails and

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY SEQUENCE

BBC Radio Ulster Sunday June 9, 8.30pm

Topical religious and ethical issues with a Northern Ireland flavour.

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday June 9, 1.15pm

Ahead of Carers Week, the Rev. Kate Bottley is in Norfolk, exploring the important role faith plays for those caring for loved ones.

1531 - A STORY THAT IS NOT FINISHED YET

EWTN Sunday June 9, 9pm

Film about the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe as told through the actual testimonies of St Juan Diego, Bishop Zumárraga and the people who witnessed the miraculous image.

insane asylums. Particularly bizarre was his statement that one of his witnesses was 'literally crucified' in court. Wow!

Finally, it was good to see **Sunday Morning Live** (BBC One) returning last weekend for a new series. The lifestyle stuff can be fluffy (there was an item last Sunday about the spiritual side of bubbles!) but they do get into serious issues and make sure to have a genuine diversity of views. The main debate this time was the role of young people in society and in particular whether voting should be extended to 16-year-olds – a debate coming our way soon. The debate was set in the context of recent moves

in the UK to bring in some form of national service for young people – that seems a poorly thought-out election gimmick, whatever the merits of the actual proposal.

The second serious discussion, and not unrelated to the first, was about high levels of loneliness in young people and the proposal for 'social prescribing' – assigning worthwhile activities as a remedy. There wasn't much disagreement, but some felt this was too much medicalising and labelling.

I'm inclined to think that labelling the ailment rather than the child would be a forward step.

Music

Pat O'Kelly



Ireland's oldest chamber music festival is back

The Dublin International Chamber Music Festival, which began on Tuesday June 4, at the unusual venue of Richmond Barracks in Inchicore with the visiting JACK Quartet and Irish clarinetist Carol McGonnell, had an interesting mix by US and Irish composers including Ruth Crawford Seeger, Juri Seo and Belfast-born Ann Cleare who holds a PhD from Harvard University and an honorary doctorate from the NUI.

The festival ends next Sunday June 9, with Beethoven's *Spring Piano* and Violin Sonata, Brahms' Clarinet Trio, Schubert's 1st Piano Trio and introduces a new solo violin piece - *Strawberry Moon* - by Deirdre Gribbin, who also hails

from Belfast. The programme entitled 'Hugh Tinney and Friends' will have the splendid pianist joined by violinist, Katherine Hunka, cellist Adrian Brendel and Carol McGonnell, making her second appearance at this year's event.

In her introductory notes on *Strawberry Moon*, Deirdre Gribbin tells us strawberries are considered the 'food of love' and that "June's strawberry moon embodies the magic and fullness of life". Written during the Covid lockdown the composer wanted to "reflect a sense of freedom in the music's unrelenting dance movement and a joy of the new." Mind you, the venue - Killruddery House near Bray in Co Wicklow - is just beyond Dublin's border, but a long



summer evening there can have its own particular charm.

I recall being present on one occasion when heavy rain managed to drip down through the glass roof of the conservatory on to the piano and the very distinguished virtuoso Vladimir Ashkenazy. While a little surprised, the

true professional carried on regardless.

June 6's programme brings us to another unusual setting - the Casino at Marino where there will be two performances (5.30pm & 7.30pm) of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* played not as Bach intended on the harpsichord but on two

accordions with virtuosi Dermot Dunne and Martin Tourish.

On Friday June 7, Castle Hall in Dublin Castle is another festival ambience bringing Germany's Leonkoro String Quartet to Ireland for the first time. Formed in Berlin in 2019, the Quartet has garnered a series of prestigious accolades, solidifying its place among the most celebrated ensembles of their generation. The Leonkoro has also been part of BBC Radio 3's three-year New Generation Artists Programme from 2022.

The Leonkoro offers music by Janáček and Brahms as well as US composer Caroline Shaw. She says her *Entr'acte*, constructed like a minuet and trio, is greatly influenced by Haydn's Op 77/2 Quartet.

A group obviously on the 'up and up', this year also finds the Leonkoro Quartet making debuts at Berlin's Philharmonie, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and Vienna's Concert Hall. Interestingly, first violinist Jonathan Schwarz is a brother of the group's cellist Lukas, whose instrument dates from the 1720s.

A lunchtime programme on Saturday (June 8, at 1pm) may be of interest to younger music lovers. At the Windmill Quarter's Town Hall, the Irish Youth Training Choir, under Patrick Barrett, showcases choral pieces by the prolific Belize-born UK domiciled Errollyn Wallen. The Dublin International Chamber Music Festival certainly has a lot to offer.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The fractured future facing the world's largest democracy

The Hindus: An Alternative history,
by Wendy Doniger
(Oxford University Press,
£19.99 / €23.99)
Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan,
by Paul Thomas
(Routledge / Taylor Francis,
£28.99 / €34.99)

Peter Costello

As I write this the Republic of India, the world's largest democracy, is voting in a general election of a most complicated kind, with polling across the states in an extended series of ballots.

This is the largest election in the world. By the time this article appears in print, unless something cataclysmic happens, and despite the resurgence of the opposition parties, the BJP, the Hindu nationalist party that is led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will have been returned to power for a third term.

There are some 970 million people eligible to vote, some 257 million of these are in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh where Modi has his constituency, and which has long been seen as crucial to gaining power in Delhi.

This election is a matter that greatly affects us here in Ireland given our long historic links with the sub-continent going back, the presence of so many Indian nationals living here, and perhaps even more importantly, studying here at our universities.

Engaged

Ireland is deeply engaged with India, and what happens there affects us. Not least is the position of Christians among the minorities of India, which many here feel deep concern out of sympathy for fellow Christians suffering in often difficult circumstances.

To understand the problems of these minorities we have to try and understand Hinduism. This is not just a matter of charming customs like Diwali, or wearing a sacred red thread which Rishi Sunak celebrates; but having to deal with the

interpretation of Hinduism and mythical Indian history that drives the anti-minority outlook of the BJP.

Professor Doniger's book, running to nearly 800 pages, will provide those who are especially interested with a key to the background to the present situation in India, where they can launch space probes and still have soaring rates of unemployment and poverty.

“Banning a book which provides an alternative academic view of Hindu myths, history and culture, which is disfavoured by the BJP, was disturbing”

Keep in mind that legal action was taken against Penguin India, the original publishers, who withdrew the book under government pressure. The rights were passed to Oxford University Press, who sold it widely around the world.

Banning a book which provides an alternative academic view of Hindu myths, history and culture, which is disfavoured by the BJP, was disturbing. It has been said in fact, that Hindus, have in effect no sense of history, but live in a world combining ancient gods with state of the art computers.

For other readers though, a knowledge of her point of view will illustrate the complexities of an unfamiliar polytheistic outlook, which often seems so contradictory of its views.

Many, who feel less need for a scholarly encounter with ancient India, may find Prof. Doniger's introduction to her selection of *Hindus Myths* (Penguins Classics, £10.99 / €12.27) will give

“Paul Thomas in his well researched, even-handed book, shows that Christianity in India does indeed go back to the Age of the Apostles, with the arrival of St Thomas to preach and die there before 72 AD”

Nanendra Modi on the campaign trail.



them as much as they need in most cases.

These contradictions of Indian life go to the heart of Hindu rule. Prime Minister Modi began his public career as a teenager in the paramilitary Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (known as the RSS), founded a century ago.

Nationalism

The RSS leadership steered Modi into the BJP as an enterist to motivate it to a deeper nationalism. The RSS played no part in achieving Indian independence. It was set on a higher national destiny.

Prof. Doniger quotes in her afterword a passage from, M. S. Golwalkar, the then leader of the RSS, writing in 1938:

“The non-Hindi peoples of Hindustan must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungrati-

tude towards this land... but must...stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, desiring no privileges, far less any preferential treatment - not even citizens rights.” (M. S. Golwalkar, *We: Our Nation Defined*, Nagpur, 1936, pp, 48-49.)

“The first cabinet was formed in the spirit of the constitution with members of all the important communities in India, including Christians”

This was not the way the Republic of India was meant to be. Paul Thomas, in his

authoritative history of Christians and Christianity in India, first issued back in 1954, notes that the new Indian constitution guaranteed equality of treatment to all castes and creeds, freedom of worship, and the right to propagate religious ideas by peaceful methods.

The first cabinet was formed in the spirit of the constitution with members of all the important communities in India, including Christians.

However, Thomas ended his important book (now newly available in the shops) on a more cautionary note:

“All this augurs well for the future, and as long as the present leadership lasts Christians as a community have little to fear. But whether the same liberal traditions will be followed after the passing away of the present generation, the future alone will show.”

Battles

Today inter communal battles persist across India. The BJP seems to have little interest in assuaging these conflicts. BJP believes in what might almost be a grim adaptation of a famil-

iar Ulster catch phrase, “A Hindu state for a Hindu people”. No wonder that many of India's minorities face the future with fear.

“It antedates Islam, and has been a part of Indian culture along the south west coast for centuries, even influencing Hinduism”

Paul Thomas in his well researched, even-handed book, shows that Christianity in India does indeed go back to the Age of the Apostles, with the arrival of St Thomas to preach and die there before 72 AD. Thus it antedates Islam, and has been a part of Indian culture along the south west coast for centuries, even influencing Hinduism. But the story he tells covers much more than that, coming down to the emergence of the Church of South India in the last century as unions of the Reformed Christians traditions and the state of religion in independent India.

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

The memory of the dead

So Once Was I: Forgotten Tales from Glasnevin Cemetery, by Warren Farrell (Merrion Press, €19.99 / €16.99)

Peter Costello

Glasnevin Cemetery is an important place, but at the same time one which is little known. How it came into existence has to be kept in mind. It arose directly out of the repeal of the Penal laws. These, as we in Ireland so often forget (or choose to ignore) were laws that affected both islands of the then United Kingdom, and not just Ireland. (We hardly apprehend here in Ireland that English Catholics also suffered under them.)

In previous centuries there were no Catholic cemeteries as such. By law Catholics had to be buried in what would now be regarded as Church of Ireland graveyards.

But the post-1829 dispensation Catholics could have their own graveyards. Dublin under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell responded by opening a National Cemetery at Glasnevin.

Edifice

In time the most important edifice in the new creation would be the memorial to Daniel O'Connell, the place where his body now lies, while his heart is symbolically in Rome. And around him the serried ranks of Catholic

graves were laid out.

Comparisons are often made with the London Necropolis, and with the Catholic equivalent in London at Kensal Green. But I am more reminded by the sorts of campo morto found in Italy or France, say in Naples or Père Lachaise, though here the tombs and graves are not so extravagant.

So it was here over the decades that the great and the good of the Irish national revival over the course of the next century were interred.

“In Glasnevin I found the place was often a realm of anonymity; I was more often conscious, not of the great and the good, but of the tombs of the unknown citizens”

Since 2016 author Warren Farrell has been a tour guide there. This, his first book (but surely not his last) is written in a personal capacity and benefits from it.

So much so that he feels assured enough to begin his eleven chapters, with two on 'Strange Things' and 'Sport'. Eventually he does indeed work his way around top 'Religious Figures' and 'Conflict, Revolution and War.'

All this is, compared

A sharp eye on the Irish Free State

Gordon Brewster and his Cartoons, by Pól Ó Duibhir (Lettertec, Springhill House, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork, T45 NX81; selfpublish@lettertec.com; (021) 488 3370, or (01) 679 5844)

J. Anthony Gaughan

This book is a labour of love. At the outset the author reveals how he first became aware of the existence of Gordon Brewster.

Under a picture of Howth village from the Sutton end he continues: "Along the road on the right-hand side is a shop called The Gem, which sells newspapers, sweets and such-like.

"On the 16th of June 1946, a man entered the shop. He came from Sutton expressly to buy sweets for his teenage children. While dealing with the shopkeeper behind the counter, he had a massive heart attack and died on the spot. The shopkeeper rushed around from behind the counter and said an act of contrition in his ear.

"The man was Gordon Brewster, and the shopkeeper was my mother".

Gordon Brewster was born in Dublin in 1889. He trained as an artist in the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. On graduating he secured an appointment as chief artist at Independent Newspapers. His main duty was to provide

cartoons for the company's newspapers, chiefly for the Weekend Herald and the Sunday Independent. These were then the leading newspapers in the state.

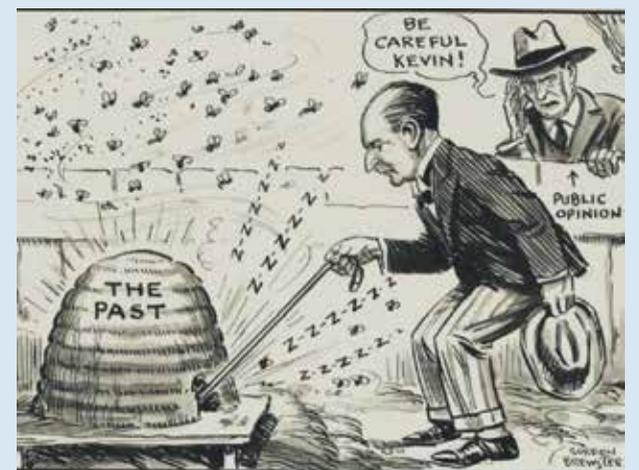
Survived

Gordon insisted on having his art work returned when the papers had finished with it. Hence the large number of his cartoons that have survived. Those listed in this book were handed in to the National Library of Ireland anonymously.

Pól's friend, Felix Larkin, the historian, informed him that the National Library had this collection of over four hundred originals of Gordon's cartoons and arranged for him to view them. Pól was enchanted by them and there and then determined "to write to honour this wonderful man!"

Pól provides a scholarly account of the cartoons. They are numbered, classified, appraised and many of them are reproduced. The caricatures, where the subject is the target of some gentle barbs, are divided into Irish Free State, Britain, Northern Ireland and Overseas. Under the Irish Free State, WT Cosgrave features in 21. Ernest Blythe in eight, Éamon de Valera in five and Kevin O'Higgins in three. Under Overseas there is one of Mussolini and one of Hitler.

Sadly, one of his cartoons on Kevin O'Higgins was prophetic. He had the Minister for Justice



Stirring up the bee hive by Gordon Brewster.

poking a beehive with his walking-stick and the cartoon was headed 'Be careful Kevin'. O'Higgins was most unpopular with those who opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty and were defeated in the Civil War. And he was regarded not only by his political opponents but by many others to be ruthless. In the end he was shot dead by gunmen on his way to Mass one Sunday morning in 1927.

Gentle

In general the barbs in Gordon's cartoons were quite gentle. Not so, however, those on Northern Ireland. He detested the place. It was, it seems, a feeling reciprocated by the authorities in the northern State. On one occasion when he was in Belfast he was kidnapped by members of the RUC and dumped south of the

border.

There were 16 cartoons on Craigavon (James Craig), the Northern Ireland Prime Minister. The most vicious one shows him holding a gun on a lady representing the Catholic minority in the northern State. It is emblematic of the abuse heaped on Northern Catholics during the first half-century of Northern Ireland's existence.

Gordon was also a painter of consequence. He exhibited in the Royal Hibernian Academy's Annual Exhibitions. However, only a few of his pictures have survived. The rest were lost as a result of a bitter dispute between him and his estranged wife.

Congratulations to Pól Ó Duibhir for this splendid tribute to a cartoon artist he so greatly admires, and the revelation of a trove of satirical wit.

with the earlier guide books, a very refreshing and human approach.

Quests

Over many long years on my various biographical quests I have spent long hours wandering around Glasnevin. But on these occasions in Glasnevin I found the place was often a realm

of anonymity; I was more often conscious, not of the great and the good, but of the tombs of the unknown citizens.

For instance the grave in which John Joyce and his wife, the parents of the great writer, is well marked, and often visited by his admirers. What is not realised is that it contains a number

of other Joyces, those children who died as neonates, including that other John Joyce, the first born of the family, who haunted the imagination of James himself.

Tales

For me then, while relishing all the tales that Warren Farrell tells, do indeed

capture aspects of the place, it is the anonymous dead that haunt my imagination, especially 'The Angels Plot' and the multitudinous dead of the great Dublin cholera outbreak

Also dismaying, or so I found, was the vandalism committed by young people climbing over the cemetery boundary walls, who spend many reckless evenings overthrowing the stones and crosses that mark the graves of Dublin's lesser known, but not quite anonymous folk. Certainly Ireland could and does neglect its dead, but desecration seems like plain wickedness.

Anyone going to visit the graves mentioned by Warren Farrell, should spend some time at least in the oldest section of the Cemetery down by the original entrance. They should also cross the road to see the extension where newer burials, rather than those of historic interest, are to be found. These sections of the cemetery are also part of the place's story, perhaps in way the greater part of it.

This is a book to buy and read, but also to carry along when doing your own searches and researches over in these dismal acres.



The O'Connell Monument towers over all the other graves in Glasnevin Cemetery

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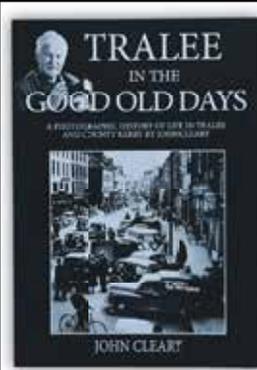
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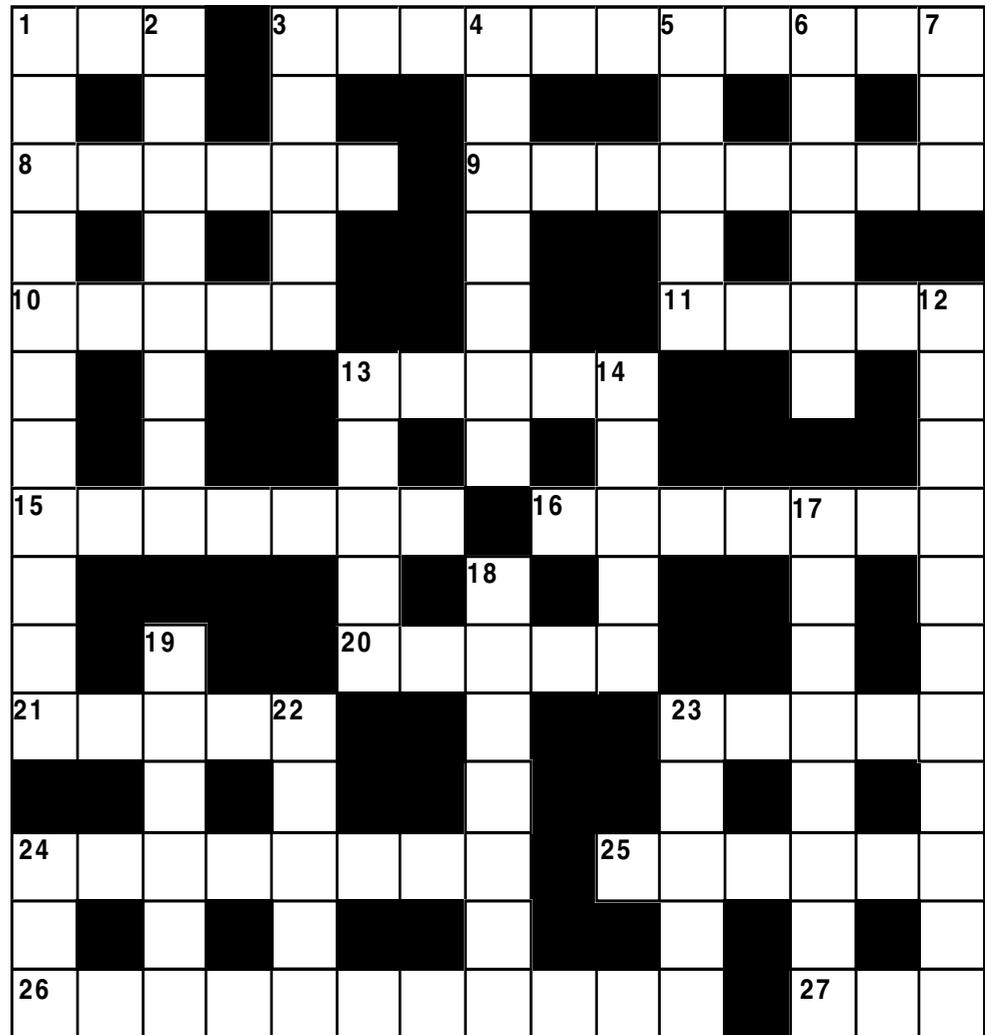
Leisure time

Crossword

Gordius 666

- Across**
- 1 Obese (3)
 - 3 Wary, discreet (11)
 - 8 Israeli unit of currency (6)
 - 9 Outer garment (8)
 - 10 Tale with a moral (5)
 - 11 Conjury (5)
 - 13 Liberated (5)
 - 15 A very welcome piece of good fortune (7)
 - 16 Large flatfish (7)
 - 20 The back of a ship (5)
 - 21 Item of bed-linen (5)
 - 23 Chimney-cleaner (5)
 - 24 Medical condition involving insulin (8)
 - 25 Marian shrine in Portugal (6)
 - 26 Devil-may-care attitude (11)
 - 27 Item of neckwear (3)

- Down**
- 1 Pieces of breaded seafood (4,7)
 - 2 Shook (8)
 - 3 Greek island, capital Heraklion (5)
 - 4 Beautiful work done with a hook (7)
 - 5 Liquid with medicinal properties (5)
 - 6 Ample, sufficient (6)
 - 7 Small bird (3)
 - 12 Ponder (11)



- 13 Financial resources (5)
- 14 Waste water channel (5)
- 17 He became Pope in 2005 (8)
- 18 This body of water is the lowest place on Earth (4,3)
- 19 Keep (6)
- 22 Molars, for example (5)
- 23 One's allocation (5)
- 24 Noise (3)

SOLUTIONS, MAY 30

GORDIUS No. 665

Across

1 Bug 3 Father Brown 8 Reason 9 Pacifist 10 Budge 11 Going 13 Tours 15 Ignited 16 Bourbon 20 Tease 21 Deism 23 Arena 24. Paternal 25 Barley 26 Papal legate 27 Gun

Down

1 Birdbrained 2 Grandson 3 Froze 4 Hopeful 5 Bling 6 Origin 7 Nit 12 Grand Canyon 13 Trent 14 Shove 17 Blue flag 18 Backlog 19 Big top 22 Mural 23 Amaze 24 Pup



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Easy

	3	6				2		
			2			9		
		7		3			1	6
					9	5	7	
5			8		6			4
	8	2	3					
8	7			9		1		
		9			4			
		5				8	6	

Hard

4	6					8		
			8	7		6		
	3		9					1
5	2	4		1				
7								4
					8		7	5
6					3		4	
		2		4	5			
		5					1	9

Last week's Easy 535

5	9	6	3	4	2	1	8	7
3	1	4	7	8	5	6	2	9
2	8	7	9	1	6	5	3	4
6	3	1	2	9	8	4	7	5
9	5	8	1	7	4	3	6	2
4	7	2	5	6	3	9	1	8
7	6	5	4	2	1	8	9	3
1	4	9	8	3	7	2	5	6
8	2	3	6	5	9	7	4	1

Last week's Hard 535

6	1	2	4	5	3	8	7	9
9	5	3	7	8	6	2	1	4
4	7	8	1	2	9	6	3	5
7	6	4	8	3	1	5	9	2
2	8	5	9	6	7	3	4	1
3	9	1	5	4	2	7	6	8
8	4	7	3	1	5	9	2	6
5	2	9	6	7	4	1	8	3
1	3	6	2	9	8	4	5	7

Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



Sacrificing the few for the many

The 'Big Day' has come and gone: Confirmation Day in my parish, that is. I was one of those pastors fortunate to be assigned a ceremony in the Easter season, so we celebrated the sacrament in Castlehaven and Myross Parish on April 26, the day after my birthday. I feel lucky to have had such a well-timed Confirmation. A colleague in whose parish the ceremony was conducted five times told me all five ceremonies took place during Lent. Isn't initiation more deeply connected with Easter than Lent? I recall hearing that our late Bishop Lucey, certainly no liturgical liberal, always began confirming on Easter Monday and concluded at Pentecost. Eastertide initiation ceremonies (baptisms, confirmations and first Eucharists) make a lot more sense to me. Of course the reason Confirmations cannot now be limited to the Easter cycle is that there are just so many of them. It seems as if any class of decent size has its own ceremony. And certainly a lot of work goes into these ceremonies, regardless of how many each parish hosts. I witnessed the work firsthand in this parish. Our two schools poured



resources into the liturgies. They used the suggested rite proposed by our Bishop Fintan, which has proved generally popular with priests and congregations.

“The candidates experienced a beautiful and prayerful liturgy, and of the course the sacrament has continuing inward and invisible effects”

This suggestion entails: A limited selection of hymns, largely ones regularly sung in the parish; Confirmation candidates sitting

with their families, rather than as an easily-distracted group at the top of the church; Each family getting one full seat in the church; Those to be confirmed coming forward in a group, each with a sponsor, with Confirmation being given standing by the officiant – all of which keeps the ceremony flowing nicely. The parents, sponsors, families, presiding bishop and I were all impressed at the schools' work of preparation. The lasting effects of the ceremony were less certain. The candidates experienced a beautiful and prayerful liturgy, and of the course the sacrament has continuing inward and invisible effects. But it is hard to detect any greater fervour in the candidates than before. I must share the story of a colleague who saw over a hundred young people confirmed in his parish. The following Sunday he asked those confirmed to make themselves known during Mass. The result was dismal: not a single candidate attended. I was not brave enough to attempt this in the parish, but the results might well have been similar.

Why have things changed so

drastically in a few short years? Some will say the catechetical programmes are to blame, that the children are not taught to appreciate the value of the sacraments in school, or at home. In truth, the issue is something deeper – the dying of the faith. Unfortunately,

our response to that seems to be to sacrifice the few for the many. All our resources are given to all, so whole classes of the uninterested are confirmed, instead of concentrating on the few who really want to be confirmed and who value all it means.

Avoiding tokenism...

After Confirmation, a group of clergy repaired to my home for a festive lunch. I invited neighbouring priests, active and retired, and a couple of clergy friends, to eat with the officiating bishop. We conversed freely, as brothers should. Meanwhile, the teachers booked their own meal, subsidised by the parish – an event they greatly enjoyed also.

In some places these two groups sit down together. While they would have a lot to say to each other professionally, socially, not so much. Better then to avoid tokenism and help each one relax with peers. I certainly did. An idea for 2025?

It used to be a rarity for an outsider to become bishop in an Irish diocese. Now it has become the norm, in Ireland as in many other

countries. The advantages of this approach are clear: the newcomer oversees his diocese with clear sight, unencumbered and objective. The downsides are less spoken of: the newcomer moves to a place where he knows no one, far from friends, family and other support groups. He doesn't know who to trust, and he may never feel truly at home in his new diocese. We can but hope that the advantages outweigh the downsides.



A Ugandan parish urgently needs our help to roof its new church

Fr Charles Osire has written to us from Uganda's Soroti Diocese. His bishop tells us, "The local Christian community together with Fr Charles have struggled to bring the structure to its current state and they now badly need some external financial help in order to complete the roofing of their church."

Father explains to The Little Way Association: "The construction of St Kizito's church started in 2013 and has been done in phases, but now has slowed down as we look for help to put up a roof and finish the building. We look forward to having a much better House of Prayer for our growing Christian community. Living conditions here are very difficult but the new church, when finished, will enable us to promote real catechesis and to empower the people to collaborate in work and prayer."

"I believe the Prophet Haggai is inspiring me to approach The Little Way for help. As he said: 'Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house; I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord.' On behalf of all our Christians I thank you in advance for the financial aid you are able to give us. May Our Lord bless your Association."

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"True glory is that which will last eternally, and to reach it, it isn't necessary to perform striking works but to hide oneself and practice virtue in such a way that the left hand knows not what the right is doing." – St Therese

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