

The Irish Catholic

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Thursday, June 8, 2023

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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'Upset' after all Catholic images removed from St Vincent's University Hospital

Ruadhán Jones

Staff and patients are upset at the removal of all Catholic imagery from St Vincent's University Hospital, after the hospital's controversial transfer from the Religious Sisters of Charity (RSC).

All crucifixes and holy images – including of the hospital's founder Mother Mary Aikenhead – were removed from public display this year in the hospital, while the Blessed Sacrament will no longer be housed in one of the two chapels in the South Dublin hospital.

The images were "reassuring" to people of faith, offering them "consolation in their illness", said Fr Fergus O'Connor, whose parish on Merrion Road is adjacent to St Vincent's.

Staff and patients "are upset that they were taken down", Fr O'Connor told *The Irish Catholic*.

He added that some staff are also disappointed that the small, central chapel will no longer house the Blessed Sacrament.

"Staff would go into that chapel to say a few prayers before the Sacrament when they were going on and off duty. They were upset too that that facility is no longer available to them, except in the main chapel which is much further away."

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Healing the sick...



Bishop Oliver Doeme of the diocese of Maiduguri, Nigeria, offers the blessing of the sick at the All-Ireland Rosary Rally in Knock Shrine on Saturday, June 3. See pages 10-11

PRISON OVERCROWDING

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FAITHFUL EXILE

Irish nun can't go home over kidnapping fears PAGE 13



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Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €185. Airmail €320. Six months €95.

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

Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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Michael Kelly's Editor's Comment will return next week

TDs claims about Church's far-right migration views dubbed nonsense

Jason Osborne

A Dublin-based priest has commended the Church's work with asylum seekers while condemning the attempted conflation of the Church with the anti-immigration proponents by Social Democrats Dublin Central TD Gary Gannon.

Taking to Twitter on Monday, Mr Gannon shared an *Irish Times* article titled, 'Why are Ireland's Church leaders

so silent on immigration?' while commenting that "the people the Church permits to speak on their behalf, are the very same mouth pieces driving anti-refugee hatred in far-right media platforms".

"The least Christian people you'll ever meet," Mr Gannon ended his tweet.

Responding to Mr Gannon, Dublin city centre-based priest, Fr Conor McDonough OP referred to the attempted conflation

of far-right views on immigration with the Church's stance as "ill-informed nonsense".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Fr McDonough listed the work done by various Catholic hostels in the city centre to aid asylum seekers and refugees, while pointing to organisations such as the Crosscare Migrant Project, Spirasi and the Jesuit Refugee Service that work with immigrants both in Dublin and throughout Ireland.

"I'm familiar with the work of the Regina Coeli hostel and the Morning Star hostel, who care for all the homeless, including immigrants and I'm very aware, in dealing with people who've been applying for asylum of the

important services that are provided by various Catholic groups in the city," Fr McDonough said.

He noted that many religious sisters "especially have been very proactive in providing language classes and means of integration into the local community, to asylum seekers around the country".

Fr McDonough said that if you pay attention to the preaching of pastors and to the official communications of bishops, especially on migrant Sunday every year, "it's very clear the Church has been communicating a very compassionate and responsible message with regard to asylum seekers," contrary to far-right messaging about immigration to Ireland.

Ireland would be poorer without embracing many races – prelate

Chai Brady

Irish people should celebrate migrants and asylum seekers and let them know the country would be "poorer without their presence here", the Archbishop of Dublin has said.

Speaking during Ecumenical Bible Week in Dublin City Centre, which ran from May 28-June 4, Archbishop Dermot Farrell spoke about the importance of hope and raised the issue of immigration.

At the symposium, the archbishop said: "We minister to people when we actually affirm the goodness that is in a person that they may not be able to yet sometimes see or actually grasp or understand for themselves. We minister in hope when we actually forgive, and we allow

ourselves to be forgiven. We minister in hope when love is called forth from us and we gladly share that love – we give it away.

"Especially we minister for hope when we're actually affirming the dignity of every person and that is a challenge in our country at the moment, to affirm the dignity of the many races and visions and people that come to our shores looking for shelter and looking for sanctuary," Archbishop Farrell said.

He also said that people should be "celebrating the existence of those people and letting them know that our country would be all the poorer without their presence here... it is a challenge to us but also we would be poorer if we didn't have that challenge to try and answer".

'Upset' after all Catholic images removed from St Vincent's University Hospital

» **Continued from Page 1**

The small chapel was "very convenient" for patients, being "at the heart of the hospital", Fr O'Connor said.

In a statement to this paper, St Vincent's Holding Group (SVHG) said all religious artefacts had been removed and an inventory taken following the transfer from the RSC to the SVHG, as part of a deal to gift the campus to the State for use as the new National Maternity Hospital.

The deal was controversial from the start, after it was reported that abortions would be performed in what was once a Catholic hospital, with moral theologians urging Rome to block the handover.

However, after the Vatican gave its approval, the sisters legally transferred their shareholding to the new St

Vincent's holding company.

The land is now being leased to the state for 299 years, with full State ownership of the maternity hospital building and the provision of abortion and other procedures against Catholic teaching guaranteed.

Despite this, a source close to the sisters previously told *The Irish Catholic* they were "fearful of the media", saying: "We've been treated like monsters. In no way do they want the Church involved in any way [in the running of healthcare]."

The lengthy inventory of religious artefacts included crucifixes, paintings, statues, St Brigid's crosses, busts and stained glass.

The hospital had already removed a large statue of Our Lady from the Merrion Road end of the campus following

upgrades to the car park.

Some of the items, selected by the sisters, have been returned to the order, whose founder Mary Aikenhead established the hospital in 1834.

The main chapel will

continue to facilitate daily Mass and a chaplaincy service is available to patients, a spokesperson for the SVHG told *The Irish Catholic*, adding "The hospital continues to provide care to people of all faiths and none".

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Sisters in the sun...



Redemptoristine Srs Jacinta and Ann Marie enjoy the fine weather with the Christ the Redeemer statue at their convent in Dublin on June 4.

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Morale at Catholic college 'damaged' by failure to appoint Head of Theology

Ruadhán Jones

Staff morale at Mary Immaculate College has been "damaged" by the lack of transparency around the failure to appoint a new Head of Theology, a senior lecturer has said.

Despite two rounds of interviews since September 2022, MIC has failed to find a new head for its theology department, meaning the department has been without a head for the whole of the 2022-23 academic year.

Applications to the position were opened for a third round of interviews in March, but as of the start of June, candidates have not heard if they made the shortlist, Dr Catherine Swift told *The Irish Catholic*.

Many staff "find it worrying that, for whatever reason, these interview boards are experiencing such difficulties in what

should be a straightforward, public service appointment", Dr Swift said in a letter to the paper (see P28).

The "wholesale dismissal of scholars whose curricula vitae showed them to be qualified at the short-listing stage, is unheard of in any Irish third-level institution", she added.

Dr Swift also warned that concerns have been expressed about the dilution or removal of Catholic third level presence given the delays in appointing a new head of theology.

"The lack of transparency to the process is damaging to morale," she told *The Irish Catholic*.

The interviews have been conducted under the "personal aegis" of Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy, Dr Swift said.

Bishop Leahy is also chair of the college's Governing Authority, with

some sources suggesting that his involvement in the interview process may be in breach of the Code of Practice for Governance of Irish Universities 2019. The code states that the chairman of a governing body "is not to be drawn into day-to-day executive management".

The interview board is a matter for executive management, one source told *The Irish Catholic*.

A query submitted to MIC's press office received no response at the time of going to print.

Neither has a previous query relating to staff feeling "very much in the dark" over a proposed linkage with University of Limerick. This paper has sought response both from the college's president, Prof. Eugene Wall, and Bishop Leahy.

Lana Del Rey's blessing in Brazil



Lana Del Rey

Jason Osborne

The internet has been asking questions about famed singer Elizabeth Woolridge Grant's faith, better known as Lana Del Rey, after she visited Rio de Janeiro's famous Christ the Redeemer statue while on a recent trip to Brazil.

While visiting a famous landmark is no cause for speculation, the popstar went to the chapel

of Our Lady of Aparecida, which is located inside the statue and Brazilian news outlet *G1* reported that the singer received a blessing from Fr João Damasceno of Christ the Redeemer.

The most explicit glimpse so far of Ms Del Rey's potentially Catholic faith, in a 2014 interview with *Complex Magazine*, she said that she was raised Catholic and attended Catholic school. However, at that time, she said she felt more attracted to hymns than religion.



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Dr. Eugene Duffy

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

Prof. Massimo Faggioli

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

Prof. Myriam Wijlens

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

Prof. Eamonn Conway

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

Mr. Christopher Lamb

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

Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ

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

Prof. Maria Cimperman RSCJ

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

Prof. Vimal Tirimanna CSsR

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

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Open doors for 'vibrant' African priests Nigerian bishop urges Irish hierarchy

Chai Brady

Irish bishops have been called to "open the doors" to "vibrant" African priests to re-evangelise Ireland by a bishop from a persecuted diocese in north-east Nigeria.

Bishop Oliver Doeme of Maiduguri diocese told *The Irish Catholic* that Ireland must intensify its devotion to Our Lady to combat "the forces of evil", after speaking at the All-Ireland Rosary Rally at Knock shrine over the weekend.

"The new development is that Africa has to come to Europe to evangelise Europe. It is our turn now to

come, they [Irish missionaries] did it in the past, and now with the secularism and other secularistic practices, the Church is diminishing in Europe, so we have to come," Bishop Doeme said.

"Happily enough, there are a number of priests from Africa, especially Nigeria, that are already in Ireland. I would appeal to the [Irish] bishops to open the doors. They are coming to help, to re-evangelise Europe. Because the causes of evil are so many, that when they come... definitely we will be victorious, so let them not close the doors."

Bishop Doeme spoke of the power of the rosary in his diocese, which

has been under sustained attack by jihadist terrorists Boko Haram for more than 20 years. He said more than 1,000 Catholics, not including other Christians, have been killed, and hundreds of churches destroyed. Many Catholic priests have also been taken hostage, some have been killed and others were released after various periods of incarceration.

However, he said "peace has returned to our diocese", which the bishop believes is directly connected to their Masses, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and their devotion to Our Lady – adding that they consecrated the diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary 13 years ago, and every

year have renewed the consecration.

Bishop Doeme said that "Our Mother Mary has clearly shown us that she is with us, and that she will never let us down, and she is performing miracles in our diocese".

He added: "I urge Catholics to go back to our Mother Mary, there are things happening that are definitely not the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Devil is at work, and we must name the demon by its name, all these practices that were not happening before, like abortion, why are they happening now? They are not the teachings of Jesus Christ."

See pages 10-11

Kerry diocese parish pleads for help to restore church

Ruadhán Jones

A parish in Kerry diocese is facing a bill of €100,000 for restorations and has released a plea to former parishioners and descendants of the parish to offer their support.

The Sacred Heart Church in

Glengarriff, Co. Cork, is "at the heart of our parish", Fr Niall Howard told *The Irish Catholic*, adding it is a popular destination for holidays and weddings.

The parish finance committee have started a Gofundme campaign to reach out to former parishioners and descend-

ants to keep the "lovely" church alive, said Fr Niall, following "generous" donations at parish level.

The church needs major restoration work and a "€100,000 is a huge amount" for a small community, he added.

Flanked by Bantry Bay

and the Caha mountains, the church is part of a parish that straddles the Cork and Kerry borders.

"It is about preserving a symbol of unity and providing a sanctuary for both locals and visitors," the parish said in a statement.

"The Sacred Heart Church offers a peaceful retreat where individuals can find comfort and a sense of belonging, regardless of their backgrounds or beliefs."

Restoration work on the walls and flooring is slated to begin in June.

New NI director announced for Christian persecution charity

Staff reporter

The new leader of a charity targeting Christian persecution around the world is from the North of Ireland and will serve for five years.

The international pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) will be led by Regina Lynch from June

14. She is a long-serving project director for the charity.

Ms Lynch (66) has worked at the international headquarters of ACN in Königstein in Taunus, Germany, since 1980. In 2008, she took over the role of project director and became annually responsible for 6,000 of ACN's projects in more than 140 countries. In more than 40 years, she has made numer-

ous trips to beneficiary countries and nurtured relationships with project partners, branches of the Church, and other charities.

In her new role, Ms Lynch is responsible for the basic content and statutory leadership of the international foundation, with its 23 national offices.

"In an ideal world, there should be no need for a charity like ACN,

but sadly, our service to the suffering and persecuted Christians around the world is as necessary as ever," said Ms Lynch. "I feel both humbled and privileged to take on the role of executive president of our papal foundation for the next five years, and with God's help and the prayers of our benefactors, I will do my utmost to ensure that ACN remains faithful to its mission."

Serving the guardian angels...



Secretary of the Church of the Guardian Angels, Newtownpark avenue, Dublin, Ruth Orr is congratulated on her retirement after 17 years in the post. She was presented with an inscribed vase on the part of grateful parishioners on Sunday, June 4. Ms Orr is pictured (centre right) with her sister Edel, son in law Keith, daughter Michelle, son John, daughter Catherine, son in law Cormac and grandchildren Jamie, Zoe, Clodagh and Cian.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ireland 'caricatures' national saint – Archbishop Martin

Ireland has "caricatured" our national saint, St Patrick, "a little bit too much" down through the centuries, Archbishop Eamon Martin has said.

St Patrick is a saint for the whole Church and "for our times", the Primate of All-Ireland said at a book launch for *The Spiritual Journey of St Patrick* by the late Fr Aidan Larkin SSC.

The book provides a "broader vision" of St Patrick than that which Archbishop Martin grew up with, he said at the launch in Dalgan park, Co. Meath.

The book reproduces St Patrick's 'Letter to Coroticus' and his 'Confession' in their entirety, with commentary from Fr Larkin.

Holy Land attacks on Christians condemned by Jerusalem's chief rabbi

Attacks against Christians are "not the Jewish way," are "strictly prohibited" and constitute a "grave sin," according to Rabbi Shlomo Amar, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem.

This comes in the wake of repeated attacks against Christian pilgrims and clergy of various denominations in Jerusalem.

"We were sorry to hear from non-Jewish clerics that a number of young Jews and some who pretend to be God-fearing, persecute them with curses, blasphemies and more, as they walk the streets of the city," Rabbi Amar said in his statement.

"We announce that such behaviour is strictly forbidden," he said.

Religious sisters take part in Dublin mini-marathon

A group of Christian, Jewish and Muslim women, the Sisters of Faith for Peace, took part in the Women's Mini Marathon on Sunday to raise money for Afghan athletes living in Ireland who were forced to flee after the Taliban seized power in their home country.

One of the women who took part was 83-year old Sr Isabelle Smyth, who is a member of the Medical Missionaries of Mary.

Two other nuns from the same community, Sr Pauline Connolly and Sr Angela Kazalyebn, also took part, while their community housed the Afghan athletes in their Booterstown facility.

On politics and God in Ireland...

When I was a young feminist, engaging in fiery discussions with the likes of June Levine, Nell McCafferty, Mary Robinson and Mairín de Burca, there was one principle on which we agreed: this was “the personal is political”. And furthermore, we affirmed that “everything is political”. We young leftists absolutely concurred that politics was part of every sphere of life.

“Everything in this world is political, and that even personal judgements can be a political act. In which case, politics will inevitably creep into every sphere of worldly endeavour”

And now an old friend from those days, TP. O'Mahony, has written a new book – at the age of 84 – called *The Politics of God*, which stresses the damage and corruption that ensues when religion and politics are entwined. (The foreword is by Mary McAleese, who thunders



Mary Kenny

away eloquently about “the misogyny and homophobia” that has for so long characterised the “conservative values claiming divine legitimacy”).

Entwinement

With the entwinement of religion and politics, bad and evil regimes have emerged, TP. points out, giving as his examples the oppressive state of Afghanistan under the Taliban, the militarism of Japan under Imperial Shintoism, the sectarianism of the Northern Ireland regime, and the “theocracy” of the Irish Free State.

Quoting the Russian-Greek Marxist film-maker Costas-Gavras, and the atheist Polly Toynbee – she's a campaigner for secularism and deleting all religion from the public sphere – as well as many other distinguished liberal authors and intellectuals, TP. adduces that political religion is always a bad thing, and almost always perverts power.

Actually, I now agree that politics and religion should be separate. And so, surely, did Jesus Christ, saying: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are

Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.”

Yet a problem arises in analysing that idea we discussed as young feminists: that everything in this world is political, and that even personal judgements can be a political act. In which case, politics will inevitably creep into every sphere of worldly endeavour.

“Ireland wasn't Catholic because John A. Costello was devout: it was because the people adhered to their faith”

Moreover, if a certain state – say the Irish Free State from 1922 – is composed in the majority of Roman Catholics, then it follows that the values of the society, and therefore the political structure, will reflect that value system. Ditto for Shinto Japan, Lutheran Finland or Orthodox Greece – these societies have historically mirrored the religion of their people.

Sometimes, in the discourses of hi-falutin



The huge crowds that attended the 1932 Eucharistic Congress seen here on O'Connell Bridge. The Catholic values of the Irish Free State reflected those of the Irish people. Photo: National Library of Ireland.

intellectuals, the people are forgotten or overlooked. Ireland wasn't Catholic because John A. Costello was devout: it was because the people adhered to their faith.

Division

The division between Caesar and God should indeed be upheld as an ideal. TP. has written a challenging thesis underlining the dangers, sometimes evils, of politicising religion. Yet the paradox is that in a true democracy the people's values are reflected in the structures of power, and that's the conundrum of keeping faith and politics perfectly separate.

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's”

‘The world has gone mad’

Never thought I'd see the day when someone would be campaigning to ban the Bible in the United States. But following Utah's prohibitions on indecent publications, a parent is seeking to have the Scriptures banned on grounds that it's racist and a “dog-whistle” message for Neo-Nazis. Since the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible) is the history of the Jewish people, that's mad.

I do remember my mother lamenting “the world has gone mad”, and now I hear my contemporaries – and younger people too – uttering those words. Our lovely peat turf is seen as toxic; a traveller can't buy a cup of tea on a train using cash; animal lovers attack the race-track claiming that horse-racing is “cruel” to the very equines bred to run fast. And we are assured that men can be pregnant

while certain politicians are reluctant to define what a woman is.

France is marking “Mother's Day” this month, but there's a campaign to cancel the “Fête des Mères”, and replace it with “The Day for People One Loves” (“Fête des Gens Qu'on Aime”). Because, apparently, “mother” is a discriminatory noun, and it could offend those who are not, or do not have, a mother. Mad!

● I wonder what James Joyce would have made of the announcement that the Irish State plans to kill 150,000-200,000 head of cattle over the next three years to meet climate change requirements? With his adherence to symbol and metaphor, he might see it as an attack on the emblem of Ireland itself, which he calls “the silk of the kine” in *Ulysses*.

Ireland was portrayed as a cow by the Limerick-born poet (and Catholic convert) Aubrey de Vere in his patriotic verse: “The silk of the kine shall rest at last/ What drove her forth but the dragon-fly/ In the golden vale she shall feed full fast/ With her mild gold horn and her slow dark eye.”

Cattle represent wealth and status in ancient Ireland, as the 7th-8th Century epic the ‘Táin Bó Cúailnge’ – the ‘Cattle Raid of Cooley’ – demonstrates. To slay these sweet creatures in such numbers certainly seems an onslaught on our heritage.

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'Prison spaces won't solve prison overcrowding'

Jason Osborne

If the Government's solution to prison overcrowding is to simply build more prison spaces, "we'll be having this conversation in the future as well," a penal policy advocate with the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice has said.

Reports

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper about recent reports

that well over one hundred prisoners, both men and women, have been sleeping on mattresses in prisons due to a lack of suitable spaces, Keith Adams said that prison overcrowding is "the worst it's ever been".

While the Government's proposed solution to build more prison spaces might seem the obvious solution to prison overcrowding, Mr Adams said that it's a "well-established maxim" in prison policy that if you increase

prison capacity, "that's followed by an increase in the number of prisoners, leading to continuous pressure on prison capacity".

Mr Adams instead pointed to housing, mental health and addiction supports and the increasing of remission for prison sentences (if a prisoner is of good conduct and engages with prison programmes, the sentence is shortened) of up to a third, and enhanced remission of up to half of the sentence, if the prison over-

crowding situation in Ireland is to be properly addressed.

Resources

"With the Government saying that they have the resources available to provide another 600 spaces, they're clearly saying that there's resources available to think about how we deal with punishment and how we deal with crime," he said.

"It's been our policy tradition as well for the last few decades...

so I think we need someone to say 'We need to seriously re-evaluate how we use prison and use it much more sparingly, as a last resort', because there'll always be people who need to be removed from society for a particular portion of time, but I think to continue on the path that we're on, we'll be having this conversation in the future as well," Mr Adams said.

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War in Ukraine can be stopped in a day says chaplain in Ireland

Ruadhán Jones

The war in Ukraine "can be stopped in a day", just as the Soviet Union fell in three days, a chaplain to Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland has said.

Giving hope to those who fled the war in Ukraine "is very, very challenging", Fr Vasyl Kornitsky has said, but warned that despair is "a very dangerous path and a very dangerous state".

"When you see fear and horror in their eyes, how do you preach the message of hope to them," the chaplain to Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland said June 1, during a panel discussion in Ecumenical Bible Week.

"To those people who have a lot of issues

with anger and forgiveness – how do you forgive someone for killing my child? How do you forgive someone for making me leave my home?"

To encourage his community, Fr Kornitsky gives the example of the Soviet Union, of which Ukraine was once a part.

"Remember what happened with the Soviet Union, it collapsed in three days. The war in Ukraine, it can be stopped in a day. I truly believe that," he said.

His comments come as Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, Pope Francis' personal emissary tapped to lead the Vatican's peacemaking efforts between Ukraine and Russia, visited Ukraine on June 5-6.

Rural priest says cattle cull puts 'stewards of the land' in difficult position

Staff reporter

Irish farmers have been "singled out" by plans that Government is considering that could see up to 65,000 dairy cows a year culled so as to bring the agricultural sector into line with climate targets.

Speaking to *The Irish*

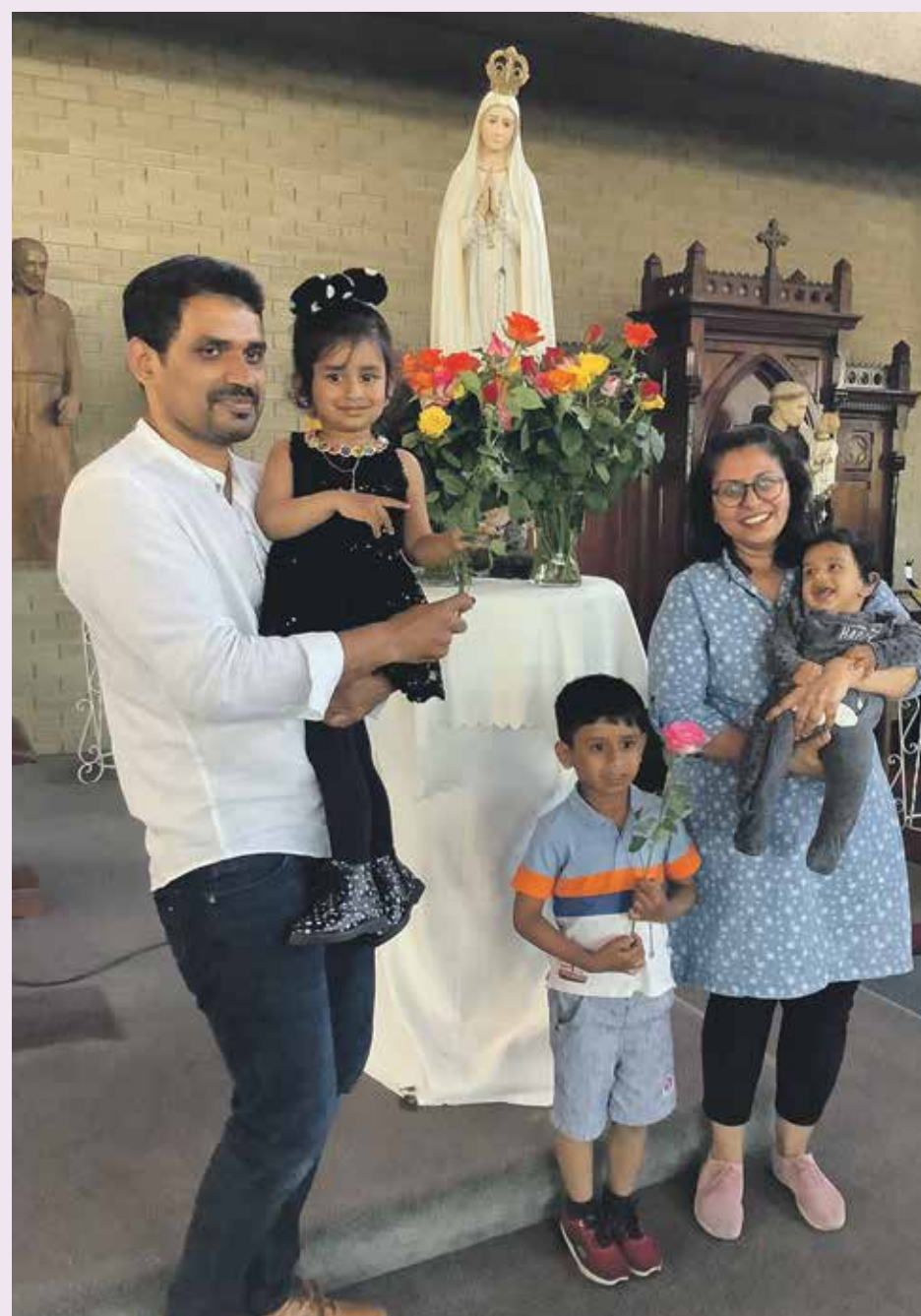
Catholic newspaper, Birr, Co. Offaly, parish priest Fr Michael O'Meara said that farmers are "good stewards" who try to balance care for the environment with "the modern demands", but added that it's "so tough" on them.

"They're singled out in a way...They want to do what's

right for the environment, but they have been stewards of it for generations and it's an integral part of all of rural Ireland, the land and the food production that they do," he said.

"They realise that they have to make adjustments but it's very difficult," Fr O'Meara said.

Loving Our Lady...



The Johny family, Drogheda, are pictured in Holy Family Church, Drogheda, Co. Louth, after they and many other parishioners completed a consecration to Our Blessed Mother after 33 days of preparation on the Feast of the Visitation.

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Becoming confident rather than resigned amid the European Church crunch



Ireland and Poland are just at different points along the same path when it comes to genuine Catholic faith, writes **Jason Osborne** from Poland

Life in Poland is a blast from the Catholic, Irish past in some ways. An example of this is that this week Poles enjoy a day off for Corpus Christi, whereas in Ireland we've just had the secular 'June Bank Holiday'. While there's a religious origin to our bank holiday, that is nowhere to be found these days, relegated to the depths of the Church as it is, hidden away from widespread view except for the odd public procession here and there, which are seen as quaint relics of Ireland past.

Bastion

Meanwhile, across the western world, Poland is often looked to, by many Catholics, as a last bastion of the Faith in Europe, along with Hungary. A prominent study earlier this year found that weekly or more frequent Mass attendance among self-identified Catholics was at 52% in Poland, making it the sixth highest out of the 36 countries with large Catholic populations surveyed.

The positive picture of Polish faith both these statistics and the civil presence of Catholicism in Poland paint is disputed by rival statistics and my own personal experience, however. According to figures published by the Church's statistical institute in Poland (the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (ISKK)) for 2021, which are the latest available, the proportion of Catholics in Poland attending Mass has fallen from 37% to 28% in two years.

The latest figures show that 28.3% attended Mass in 2021, which was down from 36.9% in 2019 (the survey wasn't conducted in 2020 thanks to the pandemic). In 2011, that number stood at 40%; in 2001 at 46.8%; in 1991 at 47.6%; and in 1981 at 52.7%. My own experience gels with the latter, more pessimistic, set of statistics, unfortunately, as do indicators like the number of young men presenting for Polish seminaries falling considerably year on year.

This isn't to say that Poland is bound to follow the Church in Ireland's trajectory; there are a number of significant differences between the countries that could result in a different outcome yet. The language barrier, different histories, the gap in timing of the Church's weakness and more could mean that the Church in Poland avoids falling to the lows the Church in Ireland is currently seeing.

“We generally live healthier as Christians in a time of dis-privilege than in a time of privilege, even if it isn't as pleasant”

Why do I bring this up at all in the *Irish Catholic* newspaper? To caution against the fatal mistake of believing that the grass is greener elsewhere. The recent Census 2022 data that revealed a 10% drop had taken place in the number of self-identifying Catholics between 2016's 79% and last year's 69% came as an enormous shock to many. I saw and heard lamentations about the plight of Catholic Faith in Ireland, and while there's certainly a problem, it's better viewed as an opportunity, difficult as that may be.

As Fr Ronald Rolheiser wrote in our paper some weeks back, “for too long we have enjoyed a situation of privilege, never a good thing for the Church. We generally live healthier as Christians in a time of dis-privilege than in a time of privilege, even if it isn't as pleasant”. Is this to say that the Church should always be falling in numbers, losing its place in the public forum and facing increasing indifference, and in some quarters, hostility, from those who don't adhere to its authority?



A file photo shows an exterior view of St Mary of the Angels on Church Street in Dublin. Just over half of residents of Dublin now self-identify as Catholic, according to data released May 30, by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Photo: OSV News photo/John McElroy

Of course not, and it's the job of all Catholics to figure out how to make Catholicism not only acceptable again in public life, and appealing to those who don't understand it yet, but the foundation upon which our future society will be constructed. What it is to say, though, is best left to the late Pope Benedict XVI, who outlined the future many of the Churches in Europe face, and the opportunity that lies at the heart of it:

Crisis

“From the crisis of today the Church of tomorrow will emerge – a Church that has lost much. She will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity. As the number of her adherents diminishes, so it will lose many of her social

privileges. In contrast to an earlier age, it will be seen much more as a voluntary society, entered only by free decision...”

“But in all of the changes at which one might guess, the Church will find her essence afresh and with full conviction in that which was always at her centre: faith in the triune God, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, in the presence of the Spirit until the end of the world” (‘What will the Church look like in 2000?’, Joseph Ratzinger, 1969).

While the contraction continues in 2023, both in Ireland as evidenced by the latest stats, and gathers pace in Poland, despite the superficially Catholic sheen, we must realise the treasure we have in Christ and work from that, rather than from any trust or safety in temporal ebbs and flows of power and influence.

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Nuala O'Loan
The View



A need for fewer churches and larger, vibrant communities

Once upon a time 11 shocked and weary disciples gathered together to mourn the death of their leader, betrayed by the 12th disciple. There must have seemed to be no hope at all. Their leader had told them that he would return to them, but they knew he had died a shocking, terrible agonising death. It must have been devastating – to have been working with Jesus as the crowds gathered eager to touch him and see him, desperate for miracles, wondering at the powers of this man whose message was one of love and compassion, and then to see the crowd turn on him, baying for his crucifixion.

Yet from the darkness and anguish of Good Friday the Church as we know it today was born. The 11 presumably largely uneducated men, working without transport as we know it today, without modern communications, without any books other than the Old Testament, with no churches, no buildings, working in faith were the medium through which Christ created the Church as we know it today.

There is a salutary lesson for us there as we contemplate the situation of the Church in Ireland today.

Congregations

We emphasise a great deal the falling numbers in our congregations, the 10% or so who are said to attend Mass, the falling revenues (and inflation demands that we give more to allow the Church to maintain its current situation), our ageing clergy population, and the lack of men presenting for formation as priests.

Yet perhaps we should step back from that place. That 10% equates to 450,000 people and that is a huge number of people who voluntarily belong to the community of the Church, who gather to pray and to receive the Eucharist, to celebrate together their lives lived in faith. According to an ACP survey, we have 2,116 priests serving 1335 parishes – that equates to one priest for, approximately, every 215 practising Catholics. That is a very good ratio of priest to people in comparison with

other countries.

Some 60% of our priests are under 60. People are generally working longer now, in part because they are more healthy than 60/65 year olds used to be, and in part because of economic need. Priests, like the people they serve, are working longer. Some of them don't want to do so, but many prefer to continue to contribute, albeit having laid aside the administrative responsibilities of being a parish priest. In addition to that we have priests coming to serve here from overseas, bringing their gifts and talents to the service of the Church in Ireland.

Have faith

Maybe we need to remember that the Lord has told us that he will send labourers into the vineyard, and have faith that his Church will not die. We have to tell young men that priesthood is a profound and great vocation, because the priest's role is to bring people closer to God, walking with them through all their days, always helping them to keep focused on the God who made them and loves them, especially when things can be so very difficult for them. I heard Sligo golden jubilarian, Canon Niall Ahern, speaking recently of the joys and privilege of priesthood. We have to tell our young men these things, help them to be open to the possibility of vocation.

As we look at planning for the future much of it is predicated upon involving the laity more in ministry functions – conducting funerals, prayer services etc if there is no priest available.

Perhaps we need to consider some more realities though, and factor them into our planning and contemplate logical reductions in the burden we place on those who minister to us? There is a welcome recent focus on clergy wellbeing, but could such wellbeing derive also from fundamental changes to the way in which we are Church? I think that priests are more important than buildings, even churches, and in planning we need perhaps to prioritise the care of our priests, and to contemplate how we might nurture fewer vibrant congregations with whom



our priests could work.

Churches and parish buildings are very often expensive to maintain and insure. A lot of time is spent on them. Parish collections very often do not provide enough money to keep their parish priests, let alone sustain the buildings.

People generally drive to church, rather than walking, as they used to, long distances to Mass. We no longer need churches in every village or townland. Many of the big city churches, often built a century ago, have increasingly small congregations.

As fewer people attend church we need to close some churches. This is never a popular suggestion, but it can be done and there are very considerable arguments to say it should be done, reducing the administrative

burden and costs of running those churches. Michael Kelly wrote in this newspaper last October, saying, "Can we really say that when Jesus said 'do this in memory of me' he had in mind handfuls of people huddled together in parish churches a few miles apart from one another rather than celebrating the Eucharist as a vibrant living community?"

Rationalise

Our current planning seems to concentrate on maintaining the number of dioceses, parishes and churches and requiring our clergy to provide services in all of the churches, and to carry out constant administrative tasks.

If we were to rationalise our dioceses we could end up with say 12 or 15 dioceses rather than 26. England and

Wales, which has a significantly larger land mass, has only 22 dioceses.

Could dioceses centralise more administrative functions? Could we change Canon Law to enable greater lay participation in decision-making in our Church, thus relieving the clergy of some of their managerial and administrative burdens, and freeing them to concentrate on the vital life-giving sacramental and liturgical life of the Church?

Rationalisation of parishes is probably necessary too. Could smaller rural parishes be merged into adjacent urban or city parishes leading to a reduction in the number of parishes? Should some churches which have small and dwindling congregations, and churches which require major financial investment just to keep

them safe, be closed?

There would be inevitable and probably significant opposition to a national strategic analysis of churches and church attendance leading to a reduction in the number of parishes and the number of churches in the country. Questions would be raised about the future use of buildings, the problems of demolition or sale, issues relating to graveyards. All those matters would have to be dealt with.

However, times have changed. Here in Ireland we are blessed with more priests per lay Catholic than most areas of the world. If we rationalised our structures, closed churches, if people selflessly agreed to gather in larger groups in fewer places, would that not be better for both priests and people who would become part of larger congregations with all the opportunities for parish groupings, events, service of others etc which would ensue?

If we really love God we would not turn away from his Church simply because we had to change our ways of being Church.

“Should some churches which have small and dwindling congregations, and churches which require major financial investment just to keep them safe, be closed?”

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Thousands rally around the rosary in Knock



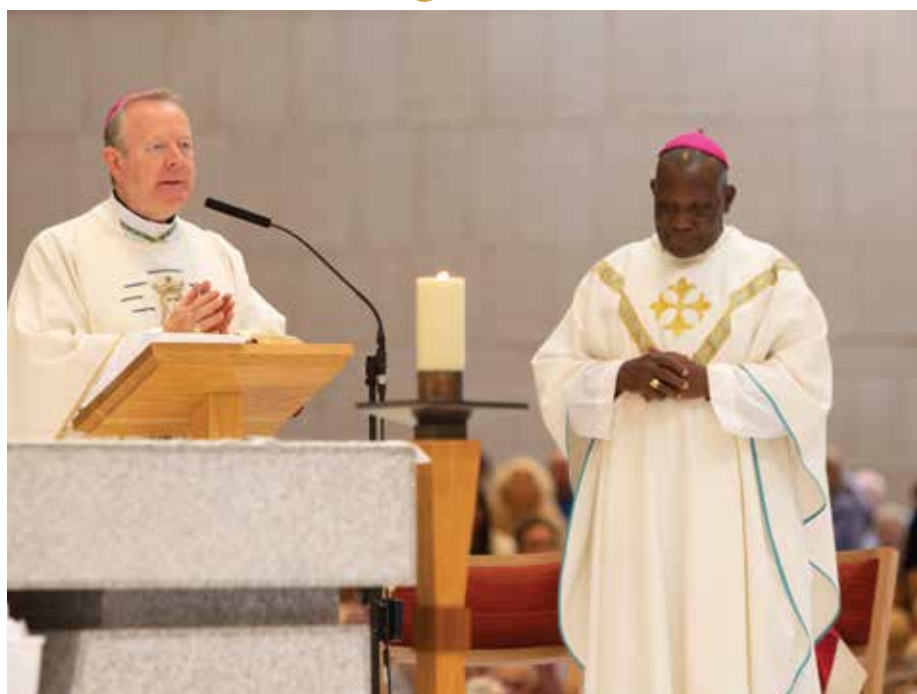
Ruadhán Jones

Thousands attended the All-Ireland Rosary Rally held in Knock Eucharistic and Marian shrine on Saturday, June 3.

Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin was the main celebrant for Mass in a packed Knock Basilica.

The Rosary talk was given by Bishop Oliver Doeme, a bishop in the embattled diocese of Maiduguri, Nigeria, which has suffered persecution at the hands of Islamist terrorists Boko Haram.

The day began in bright sunshine with the stations of the cross and the rosary on Knock shrine's grounds, before Mass and anointing of the sick at 1pm.



Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin celebrates Mass at the rosary rally in Knock, with Bishop Doeme concelebrating.



Bishop Oliver Doeme, bishop of Maiduguri dioceses, Nigeria, gives the rosary talk in Knock at the All-Ireland Rosary Rally on Saturday, June 3.

Pilgrims pray the stations of the cross on Saturday, June 3







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Census 2022 reveals widening cracks in Irish social foundations



Rates of marriages and births decline as our social bond weakens, writes **David Quinn**

Ireland, or at least our opinion-formers, love declaring how much we have changed in recent decades and that it is almost all for the better. We are much more 'tolerant' now, they say, far more 'compassionate'. We have legalised same-sex marriage. We have legalised abortion. A new abortion bill is before the Dáil. If and when passed, it will be even worse than the law currently in operation, which is already very bad.

“In some circles, Census 2022 data are also being celebrated as a sign of how we are changing for the better”

An Oireachtas committee on assisted suicide is currently meeting and we all know it will recommend a law permitting the procedure, first of all for the terminally ill, but then, only a few years later, the law will certainly be expanded to other categories, just as the abortion law is being.

None of this is true progress. Quite the contrary.

Instead, these changes represent a society that has put 'choice' and 'autonomy' on a pedestal. It doesn't matter how personally and socially destructive some of the choices are, the point is that they are (seemingly) free choices.

In some circles, Census 2022 data are also being



The number of births in Ireland is down 20% since 2012, the data from Census 2022 shows.

celebrated as a sign of how we are changing for the better. The preliminary results of last year's census were released last week and they show a population that is increasing far faster than anywhere else in the EU (which partly explains our housing shortage).

Catholic

The results also confirm the decline of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The share of the population that identifies itself as 'Catholic' has fallen from 79% in 2016, to 69% last year.

But the extent of the change is probably being exaggerated. For starters, the religion question in the Census changed. In 2016, the first-choice people were given in the religion question was 'Roman Catholic'. This time it was 'No religion'. So, it is no wonder a lot more people ticked this box. (The number doing so grew from 10% to 14%). Would this have happened if 'No religion' was still the last choice on the list?

In addition, while the Catholic share of our fast-growing population (the growth being driven mainly by immigration) has declined by ten points, the actual number of self-declared Catholics has

shrunk by only half this.

The Census shows that 80% of people living here who are Irish only (that is, they are not non-nationals and do not have dual passports) remain Catholic, nominally at least.

So, the biggest driver of the changes to religion identified by the Census is immigration.

“We saw recently that around 8,500 abortions took place last year”

Nonetheless, the trend revealed is being celebrated as another sign of the declining influence of the Catholic Church over Irish society. This is presented as a good thing because it means we are freer and more tolerant. (By the way, the Protestant share of the population is also falling, something much less noted).

But look deeper into the foundations revealed by the Census, along with other CSO data, and we see a lot of widening cracks.

For example, we find that the number of people who have been through a divorce or separation continues to grow. It now stands at over 320,000 people, up from

283,000 in 2016. In 1986 (before we had divorce), there were 40,000 separated adults in the country. These figures do not include all the affected children which will also run into the hundreds of thousands.

Are these numbers a cause for celebration? It seems highly doubtful.

We saw recently that around 8,500 abortions took place last year. Is that a cause for celebration? Hardly.

Marriage

The percentage of adults who are married also continues to decline. It now stands at just 46%. Marriage still remains for many people the first step before having children. In many cases if you don't marry, you don't even up having children.

Some of the growing number not marrying will be happy about that. It is a choice. But not always, and even when it is a choice, it is very much a sign of growing individualism in society, a shying away from commitment.

At the same time, according to the latest Vital Statistics volume published last month by the CSO, the percentage of babies being born outside marriage has reached an all-time high of 43%. Among women under 31, a majority

give birth outside marriage.

Out-of-wedlock birth lessens the odds that a child will be raised by their own mother and father together throughout their childhood. Is this a positive development? It only is if we believe that having both a good father and a good mother in a child's life is of no real importance. What sensible society really thinks that?

CSO data also confirm a big decline in the number of births taking place in Ireland. It is down 20% compared with 2012 despite high immigration. In 2012, there were more than 72,000 births and last year the number was 57,500.

“Sooner or later, there will be more deaths than births here, which is already happening right across Europe and East Asia”

The rate of natural increase in the population has halved in 10 years. In 2012, there were 43,277 more births than deaths, while last year the difference was only 22,063.

The fertility rate is now just 1.7. We need 2.1 children per woman to keep the population level without

immigration. So, we are now well below a replacement number of births.

Sooner or later, there will be more deaths than births here, which is already happening right across Europe and East Asia. This is not a good trend and when we discuss it, it is really only with a view to increasing immigration and the retirement age. We never discuss increasing the fertility rate again, as though this would somehow be a retrograde step.

Facts

Putting all these facts together, can it really be claimed we are making great strides as a country? Yes, the economy is doing well, and the population is increasing, even if this is mostly to do with immigration.

But the foundations are cracking. A strong society needs its people to commit to marriage and to having and raising children together in sufficient numbers to prevent itself from ageing rapidly.

We are doing the opposite of all these things. I think it is connected at some level to the decline of religion. Religion is an antidote to individualism. Throw religion away, and the social bonds weaken. We see this across the Western world, including here in Ireland. It is not to be celebrated.

Irish nun can't go home over kidnapping fears



A volatile situation in Cameroon means an Irish nun cannot visit her family, Ruadhán Jones hears

Sr Angèle Nkamsi MSHR, an Irish citizen since 2013, cannot visit her home in Cameroon due to the volatile political situation in the country, she told *The Irish Catholic*.

The last time the Holy Rosary sister visited Cameroon in 2019, she couldn't visit her family house near the city of Bamenda, where she was educated by Irish Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary. There as part of her work on the order's leadership team, she had to stay in the convent and city areas.

"I was afraid to go home because it's not safe," says Sr Nkamsi. "The people there know me and once they know you are coming from abroad, you have brought money. That's the mentality people have – once you're abroad, you come back and have money."

Target

Tragically, this makes Sr Nkamsi a target for kidnapers, who would try to force her family or her religious

order to pay a ransom for her release. This is not an unrealistic fear, with priests and even a cardinal kidnapped in the past.

Cardinal Christian Wiyghan Tumi, a 90-year-old former archbishop, was kidnapped and released in 2020. He died only a few months later, with his trying experience blamed for his death, Sr Nkamsi explains.

"When he was kidnapped his health deteriorated," she says. "When they kidnap people, they take them to a forest. You get beaten by rain, bitten by mosquitoes, things like that – it's just a sad situation in Cameroon at the moment."

“In Cameroon, you speak up against the government, you are in trouble, you may be locked up somewhere”

The conflict in the central African nation, which is predominantly Christian, has its roots in Cameroon's colonial past. Initially conquered by the German empire, after World War I, it was divided between France and England. The majority of the country was controlled by the French and used French as its official language. After Cameroon achieved independence in 1961, the French- and English-speaking regions were united. Now, about 80% of the country speaks French and follows French legal systems, while 20% retains its Anglo influence.

In 2016, protests erupted in the predominantly English-speaking northwest and southwest of the country, Sr Nkamsi explains, following campaigns to retain the English language

in its schools and courts. The protests involving many teachers and lawyers ended in deaths and violence.

"In Cameroon, you speak up against the government, you are in trouble, you may be locked up somewhere," she says.

"This is what these teachers and lawyers were trying to do, they were trying to fight for their right so that they will not impose the French system of law and education in the English part of the country."

The friction emerged because "there were times when a French teacher would be sent to an English-speaking school and want to teach in French. Then the lawyers would come... and they want to impose the French system of law in that part of the country."

Local, English-speaking teachers and lawyers rose up in protests and marched on the streets in November 2016. "The army would come and arrest them. Sometimes people would lose their lives," Sr Nkamsi recalls.

Since these initial protests, the situation has become increasingly fraught and violent as a separatist movement arose. The armed separatists, also known as "Amba boys" have been engaged in an ongoing battle with government troops in their bid to create an independent state which they wish to be called "Ambazonia".

Casualties

The prolonged conflict has created thousands of casualties and widespread displacement. The conflict has killed over 6,000 people and displaced 765,000 people to date, while upwards of a million people are in need of aid, OSV News reported earlier this year.

With schools at the centre of the protests, these have faced particular problems. According to the United Nations, more than 600,000 children have been deprived of effective schooling because of the conflict between the government and separatists from the English-speaking minority.

Two out of three schools in the breakaway region have been closed as a result of the violence, the UN reported, while Cameroonian Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute said there has been a 72% drop in school enrolment in the breakaway region between 2017 and 2022.

In the middle of all this, men and women of the Church are seen as targets by the separatists. Following the burning of a church and the kidnapping of five priests, a nun and three laypeople in September 2022, the country's bishops decried the "heinous act against the house of God

and the messengers of God", the *Catholic News Service* reported.

The bishops in their statement said the Church has been paying a disproportionate price.

"Since this crisis started in 2016 until today, the people have suffered terribly, and men and women of God have been soft targets of kidnapers, torturers and unscrupulous gunmen.

"A wave of persecution against the hierarchy of the Church is now the new game of the 'struggle' and all kinds of threat messages are sent out against missionaries who have surrendered their lives to work for the people," they said.

Repent

They called on those attacking the Church to "repent from their evil ways",

because by doing so, they are fighting against God.

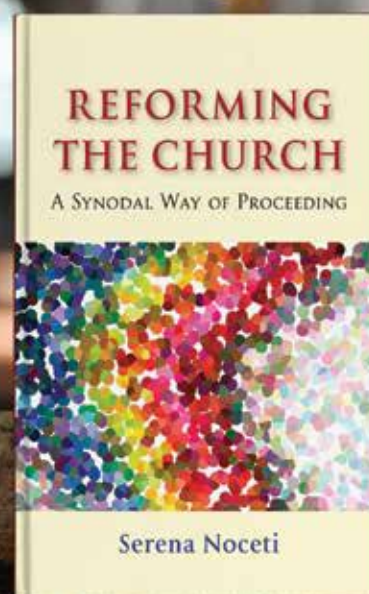
"And no one ever fights against God and wins."

For now however, "the situation is very volatile", Sr Nkamsi says. "Unfortunately, at the moment, there are people in the diaspora funding those fighters", the Ambazonians, she adds, bemoaning the fact that in Ireland, "we don't hear much about Cameroon".



A Cameroon elite Rapid Intervention Battalion member patrols the abandoned village of Ekona in the Anglophone region of the central African country on October 4, 2018. Photo: CNS.

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Sr Angèle Nkamsi MSHR (right) pictured with Sr Kathleen Scullion MSHR, both members of the leadership team of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary. Photo: John McElroy.

Bridging the divide and finding the Church



Many adults are still learning about and joining the Church despite cultural changes and challenges, writes **Chai Brady**

The most recent Central Statistics Office (CSO) stats on religious affiliation in Ireland could be pessimistically received considering the large – but foreseeable – decrease in Ireland's Catholic population. While the 10% drop is significant, from 79% in 2016 to 69% in 2022, there are still many courageous stories of those who go against the grain and find their way to the Church.

North and south people who may not have grown up in a Catholic setting, or perhaps just never received the Sacraments of Baptism, Communion and Confirmation as a child, are engaging with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process. It involves several meetings, which include study and prayer, to better understand the Church and the Faith until they are ready to become a fully initiated member at Easter.

Jess

Having spent 10 years growing up in Nepal with her family, Jess McMillan (27) has quite an atypical story of finding her way to the Church. Her parents are Protestant missionaries, so when she wasn't growing up in Bangor in Co. Down, she was in the South Asian country. While her grandad was Catholic, she has not had much experience of the Catholic Church and it was only after reading *Story of a Soul* by St Thérèse of Lisieux – which she describes as “beautiful” – the seed had been planted.

“I'd read it and I'd read a few other things and I left it and went about my life. But then a couple of years ago my grandad was very ill and it got me thinking, if he was to pass away what do we do and what kind of funeral would he like to have?” Ms McMillan told *The Irish Catholic*.

After attending the Catholic Mass of a friend's mother, at which she was blown away by the service and community solidarity, she decided she



Photo: Alex Shute/unsplash



Jess McMillan (27) pictured after her baptism into the Catholic Church.



Kildare-based Ken Lin with Fr Joe Connolly and his godparents after completing the RCIA process in Ballymore Eustace.

“I suppose the final piece of the puzzle for me was the Holy Father, Pope Francis, he is absolutely outstanding if you ask me. I was very much drawn to him”

would go to Mass in Belfast, to the church her grandad went to as a child.

At the Mass, she explained she didn't know what to do. “People were genuflecting when they went to sit on the pew and they were crossing themselves and I thought ‘I'm just going to pay attention’”, she said.

“As I was there I had this real sense of peace in my heart and it was something I hadn't had in a long time and I just knew that was where I was to be. I said ‘Lord if this is what you want for me then open the door and I'll walk through it’. I definitely believe the Lord has a sense of humour because I picked up the news bulletin and at the back of the page at the very bottom it said ‘If you or anybody else you know is interested in learning more about the Catholic Church we have the RCIA course, please contact Deacon Martin Whyte’.”

It was from there she went to her first Thursday meeting, which she described as full of blessings and that if there was not a course such as the RCIA, she would still be searching.

“It was mind blowing. There was so much more to faith than just ‘read your bible and pray everyday’”, Ms McMillan said.

“The RCIA has been such a blessing and I know a lot of the people who have gone have taken away so much from it and the community that brings too. I have a few friends that are Catholic and are not very into their Faith. I thought I would like to be with people who are either on the same journey as myself, from a Protestant background, and who are wanting to get into their faith and that was so amazing just listening to people's stories as weeks went on.”

Coming from a Protestant background in the North and converting to Catholicism is a contentious decision for many who take the leap, particularly as it can be “mixed up in politics” Ms McMillan said.

“I know people who would have openly said ‘I'll never date a Catholic’, and I would die inside, this is before joining the Church. Last year when it was on my heart to start going, I was terrified, I don't really know why. I suppose because it was so different and unknown,” she explained.

Fortunately, her parents were very understanding and supportive of her decision.

She said: “I think it's been a huge learning curve for themselves, they've been present at my Baptism, Rite of Election and things like that and it's something they never would have really been involved in so to be able to share that with my parents, who are still so involved in their own church as well, has been so amazing.”

Ms McMillan was very aware she did not want her decision to cause division, adding “I definitely think whenever people understand that it's a personal journey, and it's a Faith one, politics gets put aside”.

Guidance

In Kildare's Ballymore Eustace, a town close to the Wicklow border, 19-year-old first year medical student Ken Lin also decided to learn more about the Catholic Faith and completed the RCIA process this year in his parish. His parents were part of the relatively small Christian community in China before moving to Ireland, where Ken was born.

While he had never received the



A delighted Colin Tenner from Bangor, Co. Down with an RCIA-styled cake made to celebrate completing the course.

sacraments as a child, he often goes to church and describes his parents, particularly his mother, as religious. It was during the Leaving Cert that he thought more about the sacraments. It was this year, with the guidance of Fr Joe Connolly, that during Holy Saturday Mass his goal became a reality after his Baptism, Communion and Confirmation.

He said the experience "opened

his mind" and he learned a lot more about his Faith as well as himself.

"I feel everyone has their different way of helping themselves, religion has always been a big factor in my life. Since I was a child I've been going to church... it's always been there for me. I feel like it's helped a lot," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Asked about how his friends reacted to his decision, considering

it would be quite uncommon for a person of his age to engage in the RCIA process, Mr Lin said: "I'm comfortable with my friends, they're not overly religious but they've been baptised, confirmed and everything. My middle name is Ignatius and I got that from two close friends. I was thinking what I should choose, a lot of people use uncles' or grandparents' names as their middle name, my grandparents and uncles and aunts they all have Chinese names. So I wasn't too sure, so Ignatius seemed like a good option for me."

He added that he has not personally received any hostility but if there is it's mostly directed in a "general way" and that "There's still a reluctance to have full blown conversations about religion, it's kind of like politics, it opens up a path towards loads of more problematic conversations".

A convert from the Church of Ireland, Colin Tenner (58) from Bangor in Co. Down, also completed the RCIA process this year. Having always been a person of strong Christian faith, Mr Tenner explored it in many ways during his youth, and then in university he specialised in the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. "I don't know if it's just in my nature, but in studying all of that I always seemed not to follow the revolutionaries but look at the people left behind. I started to think what was the poor Catholic Church doing in response to all these Lutheran firebrands?" he said.

Another push on the path to the Church was the Camino di Santiago, a pilgrimage he has completed sev-

eral times over the years. He defied anyone to do the northern Spain pilgrimage, with so much Catholic history, architecture and churches, not to feel drawn.

"I suppose the final piece of the puzzle for me was the Holy Father, Pope Francis, he is absolutely outstanding if you ask me. I was very much drawn to him in a world where there's a lot of people who maintain they are Christian but I don't think live in a way that's true to Jesus or the Gospels," Mr Tenner insisted.

"I just looked at Pope Francis and everything he does from his humility, his kindness, generosity, reluctance ever to judge people, I just thought 'you know what I'm happy to be part of an organisation that has him at the top of it'.

"I'm comfortable with the history, the traditions, the liturgy – it challenges me – but at the same time I do feel at home now," he said.

Asked about growing up Protestant in the North of Ireland and what his friends and family thought about his decision, Mr Tenner explained all he would get is a "wee chortle" because of the timing – converting aged 58. Also, he said he has spent many years abroad, away from the North's politics. However he says there were others on the programme that had a harder time, coming from more challenging neighbourhoods in Belfast.

He said: "I have to say I'm very, very fortunate I've encountered none of that and to be honest if I did, because of my stage in life, it really wouldn't bother or upset me."

Advice

If a person begins to feel a desire to learn more about the Church and are interested in the RCIA, Mr Tenner said his advice would be to "Go for it".

"No learning is wasted, I've experimented with lots of different types of Christianity throughout my life, you'll learn and just let the Holy Spirit guide you. Sometimes there'll be a thunderbolt and he'll take you there right away, other times, like with me, you go through some cul-de-sacs, some highways and byways but you eventually get to the spot you are meant to be. I would say to try and be brave, go along and see what it's like and hopefully it will be something that really appeals to you."

Coming from an ecumenical standpoint, Mr Tenner believes now it is more important than ever for Christians to support each other.

He said: "I just think it's important now in a world where so many people are losing Faith and moving away from it completely that the whole Christian family should stick together as much as possible and get close to Jesus and stand up and fight the corner for that, rather than just letting everything else wash us all away."

"I do feel for a whole variety of reasons religion in general, and faith in particular is coming under attack, and it's been pushed to the edges of society in lots of ways. Fundamentally I disagree with that because I think it speaks to your heart and to some eternal truths and your life is richer for it, not poorer."

THE SYNODAL TIMES



JUNE
2023 ISSUE

In the latest summer special edition of The Synodal Times, we roundup the best news pieces from the past 12 months:

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Cork gathering looks to the future

Ruadhán Jones

More than 500 people gathered over Pentecost weekend to discuss the future of the Diocese of Cork and Ross.

Representatives of parishes and faith communities in the diocese, along with their priests and Bishop Fintan Gavin, took part in two gatherings on May 27 and 28.

The keynote speaker was Julianne Stanz, who serves the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, USA, and who spoke on the challenges of hand-

ing on the Faith to a new generation.

The Saturday meeting was held in Rosscarbery and was attended by people from West Cork parishes. Sunday's gathering in the city had people from Cork City, suburbs and surrounding areas.

Feedback from the discussions is being collated and this, along with the presentations will be available at family of parishes meetings to be held in the autumn.



Cór na Óg Inis Céin, a children's choir from Enniskeane parish, provide some musical accompaniment during the day. The choir was directed by Marie Cronin and was accompanied by Colum Cronin (guitar) and Mark Murphy (keyboard). Photo: Andy Gibson.



Marian O'Brien, Denis O'Regan and Fr Dave O'Connell, all from Barryroe, attend the gathering in Rosscarbery. Photo: Andy Gibson



Tess Chambers with Grace Murphy and Bernie O'Dwyer, from Enniskeane. Photo: Andy Gibson.



Deirdre Tuohy and Imelda McCarthy, Drimoleague Parish. Photo: Andy Gibson.



Bernie O'Dwyer, Enniskeane and Kieran Cronin, chair of the parish association, Enniskeane. Photo: Andy Gibson.



Jim McGrane and John McCarthy, Bandon Parish. Photo: Andy Gibson.



Orla and Emer Wycherley from Enniskeane Parish are pictured at the Cork and Ross gathering in Rosscarbery, West Cork, Saturday, May 25. Photo: Andy Gibson.



Photo: Andy Gibson.



Mary Anne Collins, Jack Maguire and Maria Wilson took charge of registration in Rosscarbery. Photo: Andy Gibson.



Bridie Holland, Caheragh; Anne Crowley, Cheragh and Mary T. Minehane, Bantry. Photo: Andy Gibson.



Sr Maria McCarthy, SMA, Wilton, St Joseph's Parish with Fay Clohessy, St Peter and Paul's parish. Photo: Brian Loughheed.



Photo: Brian Loughheed.



Julianne Stanz from the diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, USA, gives the keynote address at the second day of the diocesan gatherings in Clayton Silversprings conference centre on Sunday, May 28. Photo: Brian Loughheed.



Photo: Brian Loughheed.



Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin is pictured with some of the attendees at the second day of the diocesan gathering in Clayton Silversprings. Pictured are (from left): Dean O'Brien, Glounthaune Parish; Julianne Stanz, keynote speaker; Bishop Gavin; Orchella Vofo, St Patrick's Parish; and Bro. Simon Fernandes, Presentation Brothers. Photo: Brian Loughheed.



Aoibh Kingson and Roger Power, Gurrabraher parish. Photo: Brian Loughheed.



Clodagh Twohig and Eileen Hanley, both Glounthaune Parish. Photo: Brian Loughheed.

Prison overcrowding the ‘worst it’s ever been’



Expanding prison capacity is more a coping strategy than a solution to prison overcrowding, **Jason Osborne** hears

Prison overcrowding has been back in the news, with recent reports claiming that well over one hundred prisoners, both men and women, have been sleeping on mattresses in prisons due to a lack of suitable space. As well as this, there have been reports of multiple people having to share a cell originally designed for less people, greatly reducing the safety of such spaces.

As of late April, 167 prisoners were sleeping on mattresses on the floor, with half of them in Dublin's Mountjoy Prison.

This comes following a temporary dip in the number of people in Irish prisons during the Covid-19 pandemic, but since then, numbers have soared to previously unheard of heights.

Overcrowding

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* newspaper, Penal Policy Advocate for the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice Keith Adams said that while rehabilitation is the stated aim of imprisonment in Ireland, overcrowding makes that much more difficult.

“What was most interesting about the chaplaincy reports is that a number of those reports suggested that some of the people in prison weren’t even able to understand the significance of the sentence”

“To place it in its context at the moment I think, overcrowding has been an issue for a long time within the Irish prison service and I suppose the way overcrowding works it tends to peak at certain times and then it will get a cycle in the news and then it will go back to not being



talked about,” Mr Adams said.

“Prison numbers prior to the pandemic were over 4,000 – so there were about 4,200 in March 2020 and then due to the public health emergency, but then also the slowing down of the court system and actually the closure of the courts, the prison population dropped to under 3,700 by June 2020, so this was a low point in the prison numbers and this was kind of important as a response to Covid.

“But then I suppose, unfortunately, as society has reopened and as the courts have reopened, there was a natural backlog in the number of cases that had to be heard before judges and then this naturally led to more and more people being imprisoned and I suppose this leads us to where we are at the moment, where there were 4,600 people in prison on Friday past, which is an increase of almost one thousand since that low point in June 2020,” he said.

Special needs

Not only is overcrowding an issue, but the struggle to treat people living with ill mental health, addiction and special needs had never been so pronounced in Irish prisons, with

the recent 2021 prison chaplaincy reports only reaffirming this.

“The chaplaincy reports from 2021 and they high-lighted that, and we would be very much in broad agreement, their main point was that prison is being used as a substitute for hospitals in many places, in that there’s lots of people with mental health issues, addiction issues and special needs who are in prison,” Mr Adams said.

“Overcrowding only compounds these problems, Mr Adams says, before addressing the Government’s intended strategy of simply providing more prison spaces”

“What was most interesting about the chaplaincy reports is that a number of those reports suggested that some of the people in prison weren’t even able to understand the significance of the sentence, so the very fact of being in prison is lost

on them. With the added pressure of quarantine and various public health measures, prison became a very traumatic experience for them at that point.”

Overcrowding only compounds these problems, Mr Adams says, before addressing the Government’s intended strategy of simply providing more prison spaces.

Increasing capacity

“In response to the overcrowding the Minister for Justice Simon Harris last week committed the Government to a programme to expand prisons, so he intends to over the next five years, add about 620 prison spaces, so this would bring our official prison capacity up to over 5,000, which is a very significant change of prison policy, because, in 2013 there was a joint Oireachtas committee on penal reform. This was across Government, all parties were involved in the Oireachtas committee, they released a report in 2013 saying that we needed to reduce our prison population by a third in 10 years.

“We’re in 2023, 10 years later after that very significant report, with very ambitious goals, we’re now in a position where overcrowding is

probably at the worst it’s ever been and the solution being proposed is to expand prison population.”

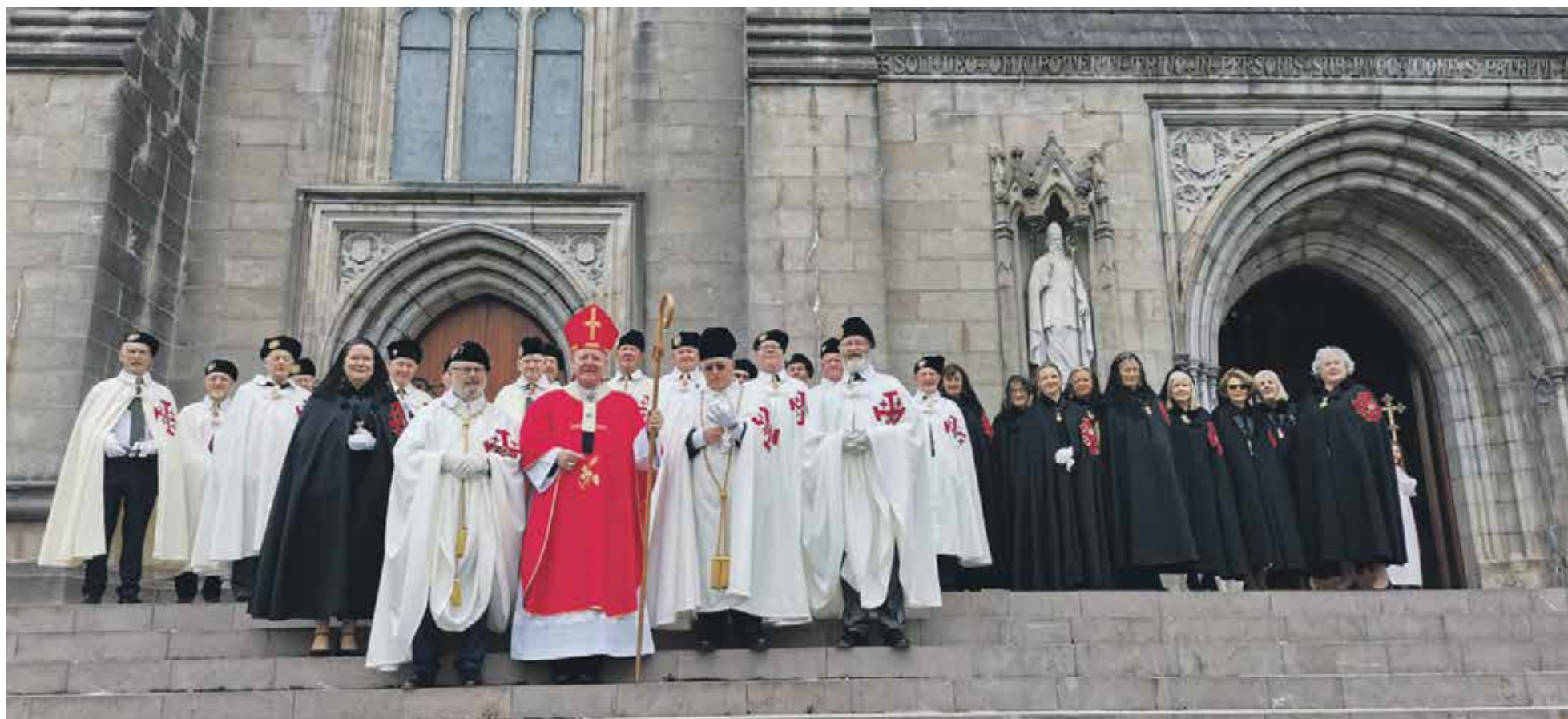
While more prison spaces might seem the obvious solution to prison overcrowding, Mr Adams insists that it’s a “well-established maxim” in prison policy that if you increase prison capacity, that’s followed by an increase in the number of prisoners, leading to continuous pressure on prison capacity.

So what measures would constitute better solutions and supports for a prison system under unprecedented strain? Mr Adams points to a number of measures that social workers and activists have long earmarked as being effective in the push for successful rehabilitation: housing, mental health and addiction supports and the increasing of remission for prison sentences (if a prisoner is of good conduct and engages with prison programmes, the sentence is shortened) of up to a third, and enhanced remission of up to half of the sentence.

Mr Adams is of a mind that this approach does more to enhance the dignity of those who find themselves in prison, and as such, is good not only for them, but for society too.

Out&About

Knights to the rescue...



ARMAGH: Dames and Knights of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem are pictured with Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin, KC*HS, on the steps of St Patrick's Cathedral on Pentecost Sunday, May 28.



FRANCE: Members of the Cooley Parish Group, who travelled with the Armagh diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, are pictured with Bishop Michael Router in Lourdes.



DUBLIN: Archbishop Emeritus of Dublin Diarmuid Martin joins Fr Severino Pinheiro and the Brazilian community for Pentecost celebrations in Church Street on May 28.

IN SHORT

Diocese faces challenge of aging clergy, bishop warns

The diocese of Kildare and Leighlin is "challenged" by the aging demographic of its priests, Bishop Denis Nulty has warned.

In his 10 years as bishop, Dr Nulty said he has buried 19 priests and ordained just two for the diocese.

"Doing the sums, 20 priests dying in 10 years replaced by two doesn't make for good maths," the bishop said in a homily for Pentecost Sunday.

"In addition over the past 10 years I have taken in 10 priests from abroad who gener-

ously serve here: four from Romania; two from Poland; two from China and one each from Brazil and Sri Lanka."

Bishop Nulty said that "We are asked to have eyes of faith in these more challenging times".

The diocese is currently undertaking conversations and gatherings in each of its pastoral areas, with Bishop Nulty appealing for prayers for their success.

"Our prayer this Pentecost Sunday is to kindle and preserve that fire that allows new voices to speak and new members to find their feet in Church today," Dr Nulty said in his homily at Holy Cross Church Killeslin.

The diocese needs to consider, what does

renewal mean, the bishop of Kildare and Leighlin said.

SVP see 50% increase in calls for energy help

In the first quarter of 2023, energy requests to the Society of St Vincent de Paul increased 50% against the same period last year. This comes after 2022 saw a 40% increase in requests for assistance related to energy.

Overall, the wider trend of the SVP's overall requests rising by approximately 20%, according to figures presented to members of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Environ-

ment and Climate Action by Issy Petrie, SVP Research and Policy Officer.

SVP presented to the committee alongside Social Justice Ireland and Friends of the Earth.

Ms Petrie said that SVP are supporting many households who are facing multiple bills that they cannot clear before the next one comes through.

The situation continues to be extreme for prepay customers, who continue to face self-disconnection when there is simply no more money to feed the meter.

"People are forced to make strategic choices between essentials," she warned. "Food through the week, or energy through the week?"



FERMANAGH: Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes presents Mary Maguire with the Benemerenti Medal in recognition of her many years of service to the Parish of Knockninny, Derrylin in St Ninnidh's Church, Derrylin, on Sunday, May 28.



TYRONE: Some students from Holy Family Primary School, Omagh, are pictured with Michael Kelly Sr after winning the 'Ann Kelly Cup', dedicated to the late mother of *The Irish Catholic* editor Michael Kelly.



ENGLAND: Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem from Ireland were invited to participate in the annual Mass of the Eastern Section, Lieutenancy of England and Wales, celebrated in the Cathedral of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, Ely, Cambridgeshire on May 27. Pictured are (from left): Dame Mary Parker-Walker (Monaghan); Fr David Finegan, PP Shrine of St Ethledreda, Ely; Bishop of Northampton David Oakley, KC*HS. Bishop of East Anglia Peter Collins, KC*HS; and Chevalier Thomas Kilduff (Cavan).



BELFAST: Fr Brendan Kelly CSsR speaks during his installation as rector of Clonard Redemptorist Monastery on Pentecost Sunday at 11am Mass.



BELFAST: A heavenly choir raises their voices in song to welcome the installation of Clonard Redemptorist Monastery's new rector on Sunday, May 28.



KERRY: Pictured are the 37 married couples who celebrate their 25th, 30th, 35th, 40th, 45th, 50th, 55th and 60th wedding anniversaries after the annual wedding anniversary Mass celebrated by Fr Kieran O'Brien, Adm. Killarney Parish. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.



KERRY: Bill and Maureen Purser, Toremore, Kilcummin, who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary, are pictured with Fr Kieran O'Brien Adm. Killarney parish at the annual wedding anniversary Mass at St Mary's Cathedral, Killarney on Saturday, May 27. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
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Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



WESTMEATH: Nora Dunne celebrates receiving her jubilee pioneer pin from Fr Liam Carey and Fr William Coleman PP Rochfortbridge following the pioneer Mass and novena to Ven. Matt Talbot in Rochfortbridge.



CARLOW: Killeshin NS's sixth class enjoy the fine weather during their retreat day in Graiguecullen parish.



LIMERICK: Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy is pictured at the Pope John Paul II award ceremony at St Munchin's College Chapel with members of the Order of the Knights of St Columbanus. Pictured, from left, are: Reil Morales, John Leonard, Brendan McCann (Supreme Knight) Brian McCarthy, Senan Ryan and Brendan O'Neill.



LOURDES: Some of the volunteers for Ferns diocesan pilgrimage are pictured on pilgrimage in Lourdes in May.

ANTRIM

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

ARMAGH

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

CARLOW

Graveyard Mass for Leagh, Graiguecullen-Killeshin parish, takes place Wednesday June 14 at 7.30pm.

CAVAN

Eucharistic adoration takes place daily between 11am to 7pm in St Clare's Chapel, Cavan Cathedral.

CORK

Eucharistic procession for feast of Corpus Christi on Sunday, June 11, begins at 3pm at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork City. This year, the procession will follow a new route, turning to Half Moon Street and concluding at Ss Peter and Paul, Paul Street.

Medjugorje prayer meeting takes place every Wednesday night at 8pm in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the Third Order chapel, Holy Trinity Church, Fr Matthew Quay.

Rosary followed by Divine Mercy devotions take place at 8pm every night year-round at the Grotto in 'Carraig an Aifreann' Mass rock, Glenville.

DERRY

Mass for the feast of St Columba will be celebrated by Bishop Donal McKeown in St Columba's Church, Long Tower, at 7.30pm on Friday, June 9. Begins with the rosary in Irish at the outdoor Calvary scene. After Mass, there will be a procession to St Columb's Well, which will be led by the Colmcille Pipe Band.

The Maghera Parish 'pray and play' for parents, grandparents and tots (three years old and younger) meets every Friday, in the Fairhill Youth Centre, after the 10am Mass. It runs from 10.30am until 12 noon.

DONEGAL

Rossnowlagh friary to host a Triduum of prayer to St Anthony beginning Saturday, June 10 and

concluding on the feast of St Anthony, Tuesday June 13.

Young adult prayer meeting (18-40) takes place every Wednesday at 8pm in the meeting room upstairs in Mountcharles church.

DOWN

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

DUBLIN

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

GALWAY

A Youth 2000 prayer meeting for young adults (18-35) takes place in the Church of St Oliver Plunkett, Renmore on Fridays at 8.15pm.

KERRY

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

KILDARE

Annual cemetery Mass in St Corban's Cemetery takes place Wednesday June 14 at 7.30pm. The Mass will also be live streamed onto the parish YouTube channel. A link will be provided from the parish website nearer the time.

KILKENNY

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

LAOIS

The Divine Mercy chaplet is prayed at 3pm every Sunday in Portlaoise parish church.

LEITRIM

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

LOUTH

St Anthony's novena in St Peter's Church, Drogheda, concludes with a blessing

of the lilies at 10.30am and 7.30pm Mass on Tuesday, June 13. Preacher is Fr Paschall McDonnell OFM, Ennis Friary.

A Novena to St Gerard takes place every Wednesday at 9.30am and 7.30pm in St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass (Tridentine) will take place in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Knock Shrine, on Sunday, June 11, at 6pm.

Lectio Divina in Westport parish takes place Mondays 11-11.30am in the choir room on the ground floor of the Parish Centre at the James St entrance.

MEATH

Navan parish Novena in honour of the Sacred Heart takes place Fridays in St Oliver's Church with 7.30pm Mass and devotions.

TIPPERARY

Annual St Patrick's cemetery Mass takes place Friday June 23, 7pm, an opportunity to pray for our deceased family members and friends.

TYRONE

The annual St John's Eve anointing of the sick and infirm and Blessing of carers and those in the nursing and medical professions will be held at the Washingbay on Thursday June 22 at 7.30pm.

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

WATERFORD

A Corpus Christi procession takes place Sunday, June 11, beginning at 3pm from the Old Black Friars Abbey in Waterford City, ending at St Saviour's Church, Bridge Street. Bring rose petals to throw.

WEXFORD

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



World Report

IN BRIEF

Benedict XVI's private secretary to return to home diocese

● According to a German newspaper report, Pope Francis ordered Archbishop Georg Gänswein to leave the Vatican and return to Germany by the end of June.

The longtime private secretary of Pope Benedict XVI has been told to return to his home diocese of Freiburg in southwest Germany but has not been given any role or assignment, the *Welt* newspaper reported on Friday.

According to CNA Deutsch, the report claims Pope Francis informed the 66-year-old archbishop of his decision during a private audience on May 19.

Archbishop Gänswein had not responded to a request by CNA Deutsch by the time of publication, and the Vatican has not issued any communication on the matter.

Two pro-life activists beaten outside of US abortion clinic

● US police are searching for a man who is accused of attacking and beating two elderly pro-life activists who were praying outside of a Baltimore Planned Parenthood abortion clinic on May 26.

According to witnesses cited in the police report, the unidentified suspect attacked a 73-year-old man and an 80-year-old man after engaging in a "debate" with one of the pro-life activists about abortion.

The report, citing video surveillance of the alleged assault, states that the

suspect was talking to the 80-year-old man, turned away from him and then turned back and tackled him over a large flower pot.

The report states that a second elderly pro-life activist ran over to help the victim. At that point the suspect shoved the second man onto the ground and struck his face with a closed fist while the man's back was to the ground. The report adds that the suspect stood up and kicked the second man in the face "with extreme force" and then walked away from the scene.

Dictatorship in Nicaragua accuses Church of money laundering

● The Nicaraguan National Police, controlled by the dictatorship of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, published a statement May 27 accusing the Catholic Church of various crimes such as money laundering, a baseless charge according to human rights defenders.

The statement says that the police conducted "investigations that led to the discovery of hundreds of thousands of dollars hidden in bags located in facilities belonging to the dioceses in the country," such as Matagalpa and Estelí.

The day before, according to what was reported by various media outlets, the regime had ordered the accounts of the country's dioceses and parishes to be frozen.

Captive Nigerian priest freed on Pentecost Sunday

● Fr Matthias Opara, a Nigerian Catholic priest who was abducted on May 26 while returning from a funeral, has been released.

The parish priest of Holy Ghost Obosima Catholic Parish of Owerri Archdiocese in Nigeria regained his freedom on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, the chancellor of the Nigerian Metropolitan See, Fr Patrick Mbarah, announced in a statement.

"We thank God almighty for his infinite mercy and for answering our prayers," said Fr Mbarah, who also thanked the people of God for their "fraternal solidarity and prayers".

"To God be the glory," Fr Mbarah added

Act of reparation performed after shocking security breach in St Peter's Basilica

Two days after a naked man stood on the high altar of St Peter's Basilica in a shocking security breach, the basilica's archpriest on Saturday held a penitential rite as required by canon law in cases where sacred places are desecrated.

Vatican News reported that the unidentified man was a Polish national who approached the high altar on June 1 as the basilica was about to close. He quickly undressed and climbed onto the altar. Photos posted online showed the words "Save children of Ukraine" written in marker on his back.

"As officers of the Vatican Gendarmerie approached, the man did not resist but cooperated as they led him to the police station inside the Vatican," the *Vatican News*-report said. "After ascertaining his identity, the man was handed over to the Italian police, according to the Italy-Holy See Treaty, and was issued an expulsion order and instructed to leave Italian territory."

The basilica's main altar, where the Pope celebrates Mass, is called the Altar of the Confession. Reached by climbing seven steps, the marble altar is located directly above St Peter's Tomb and is crowned by Gian Lorenzo Bernini's large Baroque sculpted bronze canopy.

Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, the basilica's archpriest, led the penitential rite, held at noon Rome time Saturday. Canons of the Chapter of the



Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, archpriest of St Peter's Basilica, uses holy water to bless the main altar in the basilica June 3, as part of an act of reparation after a man climbed on the altar naked. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

Papal Basilica of St Peter's and several members of the Faithful also participated, *Vatican News* reported.

According to a report by *ACI Prensa*, during the act of reparation, the cardinal pointed out that "it is the structure of sin that conditions the hearts and minds of people".

"This structure of sin is the one that feeds the wars, the one that inhabits our society," he added.

Referring to the desecration carried out on June 1, the cardinal pointed out that it is this "structure of sin" that pushed the man "to make an inappropriate and deplorable gesture," *ACI Prensa* reported.

"We are here to tell the Lord that we recognise that this structure of sin condi-

tions the actions of God's people. Lord, we ask your forgiveness, purify us," Cardinal Gambetti said.

Next, after praying the Creed, the cardinal blessed the water and later spread it on the altar as a sign of purification. Later, two nuns dressed the altar with a tablecloth, candles, flowers, and a crucifix.

The Code of Canon Law and the Ceremonial of Bishops provide guidance for situations where altars or other sacred spaces are violated.

Canon No. 1211 states: "Sacred places are violated by gravely injurious actions done in them with scandal to the Faithful, actions which, in the judgment of the local ordinary, are so grave and contrary to the holiness of the

place that it is not permitted to carry on worship in them until the damage is repaired by a penitential rite according to the norm of the liturgical books."

The Ceremonial of Bishops, Nos. 1070–1092, specifies that crimes that can desecrate a church are those that "do grave dishonour to sacred mysteries, especially to the eucharistic species, and are committed to show contempt for the Church, or are crimes that are serious offenses against the dignity of the person and society".

A penitential rite, either a Mass or a Liturgy of the Word, should be carried out as soon as possible after such a desecration, the norms state.

Church in Peru donates thousands of doses of medication

The Archdiocese of Piura in northern Peru donated thousands of doses of medication May 30 to the government's Regional Health Directorate (DIRESA) to combat the epidemic of dengue fever that has affected almost all regions of the country, especially Lambayeque and Piura.

Dengue is a virus that is transmitted to humans through mosquitoes and can cause nausea, fever, pain, and in severe cases, internal bleeding and death.

"In the face of these terrible moments that our region is experiencing, the love

of Christ impels us, and since man is the pathway of the Church, we are committed to contributing in this difficult hour to reduce the suffering of our brothers suffering from dengue and to avoid more deaths to mourn," Archbishop José Antonio Eguren of Piura said on May 30.

A press release from the archdiocese states that thanks to the contribution of Caritas Peru, 15,000 paracetamol pills, 1,140 bottles of oral rehydration serum, and 1,000 units of insect repellent were donated for the poorest patients. The delivery was made in a ceremony held

at the premises of DIRESA's central warehouse in Piura.

According to the National Centre for Epidemiology, Disease Prevention and Control of the Ministry of Health (Minsa), as of May 29, 111,085 cases were reported nationwide with 153 deaths and 1,212 people hospitalised.

Just four and a half months into 2023, the figures are 27.82% higher than the 68,290 infections diagnosed in 2017 and 38.19% higher than those reported in 2022 (63,168), years in which dengue infection reached its highest levels.

Suspected mastermind of Rwandan parish massacre arrested

Fulgence Kayishema, a former Rwandan police officer who is suspected of having ordered the killing of at least 2,000 Tutsis who were seeking refuge at St Paul's Nyange Catholic Parish in the current Nyundo Diocese during the 1994 genocide, has been

arrested in South Africa.

Reuters reported May 25 that Kayishema, one of the top suspects in the genocide, which claimed some 800,000 lives, was arrested May 24 on a grape farm in South Africa while using a false name, Donatien Nibashumba.

The suspect has been on the run since 2001 when the now-defunct International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) accused him of genocide for his role in the destruction of the Nyange Catholic Church.

Serge Brammertz, the

prosecutor at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), the UN body that took over ICTR's function, said Kayishema's arrest "ensures that he will finally face justice for his alleged crimes".



Edited by Jason Osborne
jason@irishcatholic.ie

Tradition is alive and kicking



A record number of 16,000 Catholics participate in the 41st annual traditional Catholic Pentecost pilgrimage from Paris to Chartres, organised 27-29 May, 2023, under theme 'Eucharist Salvation of Souls'. Some 1,500 foreigners from 27 countries participated this year. Photo: OSV News/courtesy Notre-Dame de Chrétienté

Vatican investigating \$17 million transfer from US based charity to investing fund

The Vatican is looking into the transfer of \$17 million (€15.8 million) from the US arm of a Church mission to an investment fund, according to the *Associated Press*.

AP reported May 31 that Pope Francis has asked aides to "get to the bottom of how" the money was transferred.

The transfers date mostly to 2021, when the board of directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies USA (TPMS-US) approved moving at least \$17 million to a nonprofit organisation and its private equity fund owned by the organisation's then-national director, Fr Andrew Small, OMI.

TPMS-US is the US-based branch of the Pontifical Mis-

sion Societies, a worldwide network of four societies that provide financial support to the Catholic Church in mission territories, especially in Africa. Most of its funds come from an annual donation taken up in Catholic churches in October.

As a pontifical organisation, it is an official instrument of the Holy See and the pope.

While national director of TPMS-US in 2014, Fr Small founded the New York-based nonprofit Missio Corp. and its private equity fund, MISIF LLC, under the umbrella of TPMS-US. They were separately incorporated in 2018.

After 10 years at the helm

of TPMS-US, Fr Small has been the temporary secretary of the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors since 2021. He also continues to be president and CEO of Missio Corp., which runs Missio Invest, an impact investing fund providing financing to agribusinesses, health and education enterprises, and Church-run financial institutions in Africa.

The mission group's new national director, Msgr Kieran Harrington, and new board of directors have now written off \$10.2 million (€9.5 million) of the total transferred as a loss since "there is no timeline and no guarantee of investment return," according

to its latest audited financial statement, AP reported.

"Management of the organisation is diligently working to redeem the investment, however there is no timeline and no guarantee of investment return," the financial statement says.

Fr Small, in comments to AP, called the write-off of the investment "shortsighted" and said there is no reason to think there will not be a return on investment after the minimum 10-year commitment.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni told AP: "The Holy See is aware of the situation and is currently looking into the details of the events."

Indian bishop cleared of rape charge in civil trial resigns

Pope Francis June 1 accepted the resignation of an Indian bishop cleared in early 2022 of charges of raping a religious sister in his diocese.

The resignation of the 59-year-old Bishop Franco Mulakkal as head of the Diocese of Jalandhar comes more than 16 months after his acquittal by a court in India's Kerala state in January 2022.

The judge in the case found that "the prosecution failed to prove all the charges against the accused".

The Vatican did not indicate whether it carried out its own investigation into the accusations against Bishop Mulakkal,

who has denied the claims and contends he was falsely accused after he questioned alleged financial irregularities at the accuser's convent.

A religious sister with the Missionaries of Jesus accused the bishop of raping her during his May 2014 visit to her convent in Kuravilangad, in Kerala. In a 72-page complaint to police, filed in June 2018, she alleged that the bishop sexually abused her more than a dozen times over two years.

The Missionaries of Jesus is based in the Jalandhar Diocese, and Bishop Mulakkal was its patron.

Bishop Mulakkal was arrested in September 2018 amid protests calling for a police investigation into the allegation. He was subsequently released on bail.

The bishop was charged in April 2019 with rape, unnatural sex, wrongful confinement, and criminal intimidation. After Bishop Mulakkal tried to get the charges dropped pretrial, the Kerala High Court found there was enough evidence to proceed.

He was cleared of all charges by the Kottayam court on January 14, 2022.

Vatican roundup

Pope has named two-thirds of cardinals eligible to elect his successor

● Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, the retired archbishop of Naples, celebrated his 80th birthday on June 2 and, consequently, became ineligible to enter a conclave to elect a new pope.

The cardinal's aging out left the College of Cardinals with 121 clerics under the age of 80 and eligible to vote.

Of those 121 cardinals, 81 – 66.9% – were inducted into the college by Pope Francis.

According to modifications to the norms governing the election of the bishop of Rome promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI in 2013 and still in force, "a majority vote of two-thirds of the cardinal electors present is always necessary for the valid election of a Roman Pontiff".

With Cardinal Sepe's birthday, just over two-thirds of the currently eligible voters were made cardinals by Pope Francis.

Another seven cardinals – including three given their red hats by Pope Francis – will celebrate their 80th birthdays before the end of the year. They include Cardinal Juan Cipriani Thorne, former archbishop of Lima, Peru, who was made a cardinal by St John Paul II; and Cardinals Giuseppe Versaldi, Angelo Comastri and Leonardo Sandri, all retired Vatican officials who were made cardinals by Pope Benedict.

Abolition of torture Pope's June prayer intention

● Pope Francis' prayer intention for the month of June is for the abolition of torture.

"Torture is not past history. Unfortunately, it's part of our history today," Pope Francis said in a video released May 30.

"How is it possible that the human capacity for cruelty is so huge?" he questioned.

"There are extremely violent forms of torture. Others are more sophisticated, such as degrading someone, dulling the senses, or mass detentions in conditions so inhumane that they take away the dignity of the person."

The Pope reminded

the Faithful that this is not something new. He urged everyone to "think of how Jesus himself was tortured and crucified".

He added: "Let us put a stop to this horror of torture. It is essential to put the dignity of the person above all else. Otherwise, the victims are not persons, they are 'things' and can be mistreated mercilessly, causing death or permanent psychological and physical harm lasting a lifetime."

Pope Francis concluded his message with a prayer: "Let us pray that the international community commit itself concretely to abolish torture, guaranteeing support to victims and their families."

Pope praises missionary who proclaimed Gospel in China

● Pope Francis dedicated his entire general audience May 31 to sharing the life of Venerable Matteo Ricci, a 16th Century Jesuit missionary in China.

The Pope, who has mentioned China at every Wednesday general audience in the past three weeks, praised Ricci's "missionary spirit" in witnessing to the Gospel in the heart of the Imperial City of Beijing.

"Matteo Ricci died in Beijing in 1610 at the age of 57, a man who gave his entire life for the mission," Francis said in St Peter's Square on May 31.

"His love for the Chinese people is a model, but what represents a current path is his consistency of life, the witness of his life as a Christian."

Ricci is known for introducing Christianity to China's imperial Ming Dynasty. By studying the language and adopting the local clothes and customs, the Jesuit priest gained access to the interior parts of the country that had been closed to outsiders.

"He always followed the path of dialogue and friendship with all the people he met, and this opened many doors for him to proclaim the Christian faith," the Pope said.



Letter from Rome



Justin McLellan

Vexing vexillology: even the Vatican gets its flag wrong

The flag of Vatican City, yellow and white with crossed keys under the papal tiara, is incorrect in many emojis, flying outside the United Nations and often even on Vatican buildings.

Through confusion possibly caused by an erroneous Wikipedia entry, the Vatican flags waving outside its buildings and sold in Roman souvenir shops differ from the official design first published by the Vatican in 2000.

In that official illustration of the flag, the base of the papal tiara over the crossed keys is white. Yet for more than five years, the flag displayed on the Vatican City Wikipedia page depicted the tiara's base as red. The correct version with a white base was uploaded in January 2023 after a back-and-forth on an internal Wikipedia forum.

Google's flag

As the top Google search result for "Vatican flag" and one of the only high-quality images available in the public domain, the flag formerly displayed on Wikipedia became the most commonly sold version in Roman souvenir shops.

And the error appears to have seeped into the Vatican itself as can be noted on the different versions of the flag waving outside Vatican-owned properties.

On the facades of the many Vatican properties that line Via della Conciliazione, the long road leading to St Peter's Square, no two Vatican flags are the same. Some have papal tiaras with red bases while others are white. Some tiaras have coloured jewels on them while others are solid gold. And almost all of them have very different looking lappets, the decorative flaps attached to the papal tiara that resemble those on a bishop's mitre.

Where all the flags come from isn't exactly clear.

The Floreria Apostolica Vaticana is the Vatican office responsible for the provision, set up and maintenance of Vatican furnishings, covering everything from the plastic chairs put out for papal audiences in St Peter's Square to the art on Vatican office walls – as well as for the flags flying on its buildings. In response to an email inquiry, a Floreria official told *Catholic News Service* on 1 June that the flags used in the Pope's residence at Domus Sanctae Marthae and in the Apostolic Palace's San Damaso Courtyard, where heads of state arrive when meeting the Pope, are all produced by the same flag maker outside of Rome.

Yet the official noted that the Floreria, which also provides fur-



The Vatican flag flies at half-staff on a Vatican office building in Rome
Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

“Prior to the late 20th Century, uniformity among flags was a rarity since flag makers would rely on descriptions of a flag's design and create their own artistic interpretation of the flag, rather than reproduce a standardised image”

nishings to the Vatican's "extra-territorial" properties in Rome – Vatican-owned buildings outside the walls of Vatican City – had never received a request for a flag from an extraterritorial Vatican property.

The doorman at one of those properties, a Vatican-owned office building which had an incorrect and tattered flag over its door, told CNS on 1 June that the building gets its flags online or "from one of the shops around the building".

Amazon's flag

The top result for "bandiera Vaticana" (Vatican flag) on Italian Amazon is a flag with the incorrect red base under the papal tiara.

According to Graham Bartram, chief vexillologist, or flag expert, at the UK-based Flag Institute, discrepancies on even official national flags are common.

"What you often find in govern-

ment is that there is no department or person responsible for flags, and so there is likely no one walking around the Vatican area of Rome and going into buildings to say, 'Get the correct flag,'" he told CNS in a phone interview on 31 May.

Asked about the differences among the flags on Vatican properties, the Vatican press office told CNS that the Vatican City flag has not been altered since the first official illustration was published in 2000. But virtually no Vatican properties outside the walls of Vatican City use that flag today.

Prior to the illustration published in 2000, only a description of the flag was provided in Vatican City's Fundamental Law from 1929, the year the micronation was founded. It specified that the flag was a "drape split in yellow and white," featuring, "in the centre of the white, crossed keys surmounted



The official Vatican flag.

by the papal tiara".

Mr Bartram said that prior to the late 20th Century, uniformity among flags was a rarity since flag makers would rely on descriptions of a flag's design and create their own artistic interpretation of the flag, rather than reproduce a standardised image.

The differences in the Vatican City flag, he said, are likely the result of different flag makers "who thought, for instance, the tiara would look prettier with coloured jewels on it".

Apple's flag

Apple's Vatican City flag emoji features a tiara with those coloured jewels, which have never been included in the Vatican's official flag illustrations, and several Vatican buildings have the jewels on their flags as well.

"Virtually every flag in the world we manage to get wrong in some way or another: shades of colour,

proportions, angles," Mr Bartram told CNS. "The more complicated the flag the more variations you're going to spot."

And those variations can make their way into official uses. For example, the Vatican City flag outside the UN headquarters in New York, where the Holy See has permanent observer status, has a tiara with a red base.

In this instance, Mr Bartram said the United Nations "would have made a flag based on the best information they had, and they would have shown it to the Vatican ambassador to get approval".

"The problem is that the Vatican ambassador is a senior clergyman and not a vexillologist," he said.

i Justin McLellan is Rome correspondent with Catholic News Service

Vatican reaffirms traditional stance against IVF and contraception



Elise Ann Allen

While maintaining its stance against IVF, the Vatican issued a new document May 30 sounding an alarm about declining birth rates and touting alternatives to methods of artificial reproduction the Church sees as morally unacceptable.

The text also reiterates the Church's traditional opposition to contraception, despite speculation in some quarters that Pope Francis might be rethinking the teaching of St Paul VI in his 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* condemning artificial birth control.

Called the 'Global Family Compact', the document is an initiative of the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences and the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, consisting of four main action points, and was accompanied by a message from Pope Francis.

Challenges

It encourages Catholic universities, institutes and research hubs to study family life and the challenges families face with the aim of encouraging more young people to get married and have children amid a rapidly aging culture in which couples frequently opt against marriage and choose to start families later for financial and social reasons, presenting challenges in terms of infertility and ethically questionable methods of reproduction.

Apart from encouraging couples to get married and have lots of children, the compact also touches on challenges such as poverty, single-parent households, and the impact of war, as well as reproduction and the challenges that can at times accompany the process of attempting to welcome a new life into the family.

In several places the compact encourages both infertile couples and those simply wishing to grow their families to consider adoption and it urges Catholic universities and research centres to promote this option, while condemning methods of artificial reproduction.

The compact specifically recommended "promoting the establishment and development of centres for the study and monitoring of cases of couple infertility, where alternative solutions to assisted reproduction are proposed," such as NaPro-Technologies, which monitor women's reproductive cycles and seek natural solutions



to infertility.

It said that centres that monitor and study infertility and which offer alternatives to assisted reproduction ought to be promoted and financially supported.

“Those who choose prenatal diagnosis for ‘eugenic purposes’ belong to a ‘reproductive culture which sees the birth of a child as the fulfilment of a mere desire, rather than the acceptance of a priceless gift’”

In section 1.3 of the compact, dedicated to the challenges of “welcoming new life,” the document notes that both among married and unmarried couples, “contraception, abortion and sterilisation are widespread practices” that have increasingly “transformed the meaning of procreation.”

Procreation has gone “from a natural inclination and gift of God to a project and result of a procreative will that tends to dominate life,” the compact said, and criticised the assisted reproduction industry.

“Assisted reproduction, embryo selection to avert the birth of children with genetic disorders or unwanted sex, embryo and gamete donation, [all] lend themselves to a selective mentality by which adults end up projecting unjustified expectations onto their desired children,” it said.

The mentality of “a healthy child only at the right time” is now the dominant cultural attitude surrounding reproduction, especially in advanced countries where newer, streamlined technologies

are available.

Those who choose prenatal diagnosis for “eugenic purposes” belong to a “reproductive culture which sees the birth of a child as the fulfilment of a mere desire, rather than the acceptance of a priceless gift”.

The compact argued that sex is inevitably tied to procreation, and that marriage is the best place for this to happen. It called for greater education in the emotional and reproductive aspects of sex, so that it does not become “trivialised” among youth.

It also hit back against what Pope Francis has dubbed “the throwaway culture” in which those with disabilities are excluded, often facing violence, stigma and abuse stemming from “the denial of the person's dignity and an identification of the person with a pathology”.

Trends

Given current societal trends, in which many couples are choosing to have children later, the compact said greater support must also be given to couples who have families at an older age while incentives for invitro must be avoided.

IVF, it said, is wrong because it produces “large numbers of embryos destined to die or remain frozen, raising significant ethical issues,” and diverts vast resources that could be used to support couples that already have large families, or who are seeking procreative help through other means.

Yet while condemning embryo donation, one thing the Vatican's new Family Global Compact does not specifically address is the question of embryo adoption.

The terms refers to prospective parents choosing to “adopt” an embryo whose biological parents have signed away their parental rights, meaning they are frozen with no one waiting for them. It's an alternative many couples are

increasingly turning to, including many Catholics reluctant to use IVF techniques.

The cost is often much more manageable for those hoping to start a family, and while still debated among theologians, for many Catholic couples it represents a viable alternative to other, more dubious forms of assisted reproduction.

Representatives from the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life did not respond to a *Crux* request for comment on whether embryo adoption will be studied as part of the compact research and whether it could potentially be a viable option for infertile couples seeking to welcome a child.

“We cannot resign ourselves to the decline of the family in the name of uncertainty, individualism and consumerism, which envision a future of individuals who think only of themselves”

The compact's clear and definitive stance against contraception and assisted reproduction comes after debate on these issues flared up last year over a publication from the Vatican's Pontifical Academy for Life included contributions from theologians suggesting the Church change its stance.

In the book, titled, *Theological Ethics of Life. Scripture, Tradition, Practical Challenges*, some theologians appeared to suggest that in certain limited circumstances, couples might be justified in choosing artificial contraception, or methods of artificial reproduction.

Critics hit back against the

volume, accusing the academy and its president, Italian Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, of attempting to orchestrate a change in Church teaching, while the academy itself defended the text, saying its role as an academy is to facilitate dialogue among top academic and theological minds on key issues of modern interest.

At the time, the academy also sent but within hours walked back Tweets arguing that St Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* – which reinforced the Church's teachings on marriage and upheld its condemnation of artificial contraception – was not covered by the dogma of papal infallibility, meaning it can be subject to change.

In his message for the compact, Pope Francis – who has repeatedly lamented society's falling birthrate and has urged couples to have more children – said its main goal is “to enable the pastoral care of families in the particular churches to benefit from the research and the educational and training programs in Catholic universities”.

Culture

Doing this can help promote a culture of family life “in this time of uncertainty and a certain shortage of hope,” he said, saying it is within the family that “God's dreams for the human community are realised”.

“Hence, we cannot resign ourselves to the decline of the family in the name of uncertainty, individualism and consumerism, which envision a future of individuals who think only of themselves,” he said.

The family, he said, is “a community of life and love, a unique and indissoluble covenant between a man and a woman, a place where generations meet, a source of hope for society”.

Francis closed his message thanking those who have joined the compact and those who will do so in the future, and invited those who plan to join “to devote themselves with creativity and confidence to every initiative that can help put the family once more at the heart of our pastoral and social commitment”.

For the launch of the compact, the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life held a webinar with the heads of more than 40 research centres and institutes for the family situated around the world in order to coordinate its implementation.

A new website for the compact has also been created where the text can be found in Italian, English and Spanish, as well as a brochure and various other materials, including the Pope's message, the explanation of the logo, and contact information for those who want more information.

Letters

Letter of the week

Tortuous attempts to fill MIC theology role

Dear Editor, Mr Ruadhán Jones wrote on the historic (but unminuted) negotiations currently taking place between Mary Immaculate College and the University of Limerick [*The Irish Catholic* – May 18, 2023].

In that article, concerns were expressed about the Church in Ireland's ability to prepare teachers for Catholic schools if a Catholic third level presence was to be diluted or even removed. Members of the Mary Immaculate teaching staff have expressed analogous concerns about the delays in appointing a head of Theology and Religious Studies in the college over the last year. Since September 2022, Mary Immaculate has

held two sets of interviews (in October and January respectively), conducted under the personal aegis of Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick. Both failed to appoint, although such a wholesale dismissal of scholars, whose curricula vitae showed them to be qualified at the short-listing stage, is unheard of in any Irish third-level institution. Candidates who applied to a third interview board in March 2023 have still to hear, as we approach the June bank holiday, whether or not they have made the shortlist for interview. The Department of Theology and Religious Studies in Mary Immaculate College has thus been without a head for a full academic year.

It is, of course, entirely conceivable that these tortuous attempts to fill a Theology and Religious Studies post are independent of what (to quote your article) has been described by the college's governing body chairman, Bishop Brendan Leahy, as "a structural alignment...and would not be a merger". On the other hand, many find it worrying that, for whatever reason, these interview boards are experiencing such difficulties in what should be a straightforward, public service, appointment at this particular time.

*Yours etc.,
Dr Catherine Swift (D.Phil, Oxon)
Limerick City, Co. Limerick*

Fools get involved in other people's rows

Dear Editor, Peace – prayers
Nato – no

Our Lady promised peace in Fatima, if people said the rosary. It is a fool that gets involved in other people's rows. Holy Spirit sanctify and enlighten us.

*Yours etc.,
Monica Hassett
Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny*



Dealing with locals and asylum seekers sensitively

Dear Editor, The continued, and absurd, statement being bandied about is that communities should not be consulted when asylum seekers are going to be housed in their towns or villages.

How does the Government expect people to react when hundreds of people are placed in a town with only a few thousand people in it? This huge change will cause surprise and anxiety among locals if they have heard absolutely nothing about the

plans. It is wholly unrealistic to expect people not to feel uncomfortable when changes such as these are foisted upon them with no notice.

This is not to say that people will not be welcoming, there has been mostly a very positive response to the call to help and support those fleeing war and persecution. More respect should be shown to these communities.

After all, what extra infrastructure is being delivered in order to cater for this massive

increase in population?

Local people know the potential difficulties that may be encountered considering they are the ones using the variety of services available in their area every day and know their limitations. It is far more difficult, and actually cruel to people seeking asylum, to identify a vacant site and throw them in just because there's so many asylum seekers arriving, and the system is under pressure. These people may be living in these centres

for a good while and will also have to rely on the limited resources of a small town in which they are placed. Not all of them will have cars and could be completely isolated.

There is certainly a need to help all who faced dire situations at home and are seeking succour but it must be dealt with sensitively, with both local people and asylum seekers in mind.

*Yours etc.,
Daniel O'Neill
Harold's Cross, Dublin 6W*

Targeted evangelisation needed for Dublin

Dear Editor, The fact Dublin is now the least Catholic county in Ireland comes as a bit of a surprise as the difference between other counties, such as Mayo (80%), is stark [*The Irish Catholic* – June 1, 2023]. The Central Statistics Office figures for 2022 on religion found just 53% of Dubliners described themselves as Catholic. Looking at Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown in Dublin, no religion was recorded for a quarter of people. The numbers are huge.

The reasons for this seem unclear.

Of course, Dublin's economic development may have contributed to a greater influence of secularism and alternative religious beliefs.

It is certainly worth deeper investigation, because understanding the issues could help in targeted evangelisation in certain areas – it doesn't seem like many missionaries have to go to Mayo!

*Yours etc., Beth Murphy
Sandymount, Dublin 4*

Condemn what is happening to unwanted babies today

Dear Editor, What happened in Tuam 1925 to 1960 is happening today in Ireland, in just a slightly different way. In the past unwanted babies were dumped in mother and baby homes. Today unwanted babies are aborted. In the past the bodies were buried in unmarked graves, or in an underground sepulchre which many people say was a sewage tank. With today's bodies no one knows if they are buried or burnt, but we do know their graves are also

unmarked.

In the past Irish couples and American couples were able to adopt these babies. Today we get our babies from Romania, Ukraine, Vietnam, Africa etc.

If we condemn what happened in the past we must equally condemn almost the same things that are happening today. It is easy to condemn nuns who are dead, but not so easy to condemn ourselves.

*Yours etc., John F. Hyland
Killiney, Co. Dublin*

facebook community

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

Nicaragua dictatorship announces 'voluntary dissolution' of university forming seminarians

So sad. If he could only realise the great good this Catholic university has done in promoting the Christian message of peace, hope and love. – **Lucy Ireton O'Sullivan**

A small group of people can't continue to carry the entire parish

The small number of parishioners should not be asked to carry the parish is a valid point and many people take the Church for granted as they want what they have always had in so many different ways and those days are at an end. But we should also ask ourselves what are we who are active in the Church doing to reach out to those who are Catholic in name only and do not engage with the Faith. – **Tony Fullerton**

It's true. A lot is taken for granted by parishioners. – **Patricia Shearer**

Raheny schools to stay under Catholic patronage after heated debate

Good for you Raheny. The Catholic Church is the heart and soul of every community and school in Ireland. – **Brendan Gallagher**

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

A vast gulf in living standards between global north and south

Dear Editor, Niamh Uí Bhriain in your paper last week claimed that Nigeria is not a war zone. In fact it is – Boko Haram has been terrorising the north of the country for over a decade, in a conflict that has claimed the lives of 350,000 people. With respect to the other countries she mentioned, ultimately the root of the problem is that vast gulf in living standards between the global north and south. It should be a searing indictment of all of us in the West that many asylum seekers prefer a precarious life in countries like Ireland, with its appalling direct provision

system, the risk of deportation and getting caught up in human trafficking to living in their own countries. I don't think it's reasonable to expect people in the third world to be content with their lot without a serious attempt to reduce the wealth gap, including the removal of punitive barriers to trade and a Marshall Plan-style plan involving trillions of dollars to develop sustainable infrastructure. Then, and only then, will we see the numbers moving north reduce.

*Yours etc.,
Keith Francis,
Sallynoggin, Co. Dublin*

Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, June 8, 2023

Saint of the week

St Ephrem the Syrian,
the most prayerful of
poets

Page 31



How to forgive and reconcile after being hurt or hurtful



Forgiveness is a thread that runs throughout the story of our faith. In the Garden of Eden, we see the frailty of human relationships, both with God and one another. Throughout our history, we also see God's mercy and love, his desire to restore us to relationship with himself and others. In the Old Testament, God proclaims a Year of Jubilee to his people – a time when all debts will be forgiven. And it's not just a one-time occurrence: God calls for this celebration to be repeated every seven years. He knows his people will need forgiveness again and again.

Forgiveness was also central to Jesus Christ's teaching. He talked and ate with people known to be sinners. He forgave



We all need to learn how to forgive and how to be reconciled in this imperfect world, writes Dr Joseph White

the woman accused of adultery (and saved her from being stoned to death by the angry crowd). Even after all but one of his disciples abandoned him at his crucifixion, Jesus' first word as he appears to them is "peace".

In a world made imperfect by original sin, human beings make mistakes. We are created to love God and one another, but we often fall short. We act

in ways that are impulsive, selfish or inconsiderate. And our wrong choices have consequences, not only for ourselves, but also for others. Unfortunately, our human failings often hurt the ones we love the most, resulting in broken marriages, "former best friends," severed parent-child relationships, and other family members who no longer speak to one another. These situations often cause

great and lasting pain to everyone involved.

When this happens, some basic steps toward reconciliation can be helpful. The following are some recommendations, both for those who have been hurt and for those experiencing the pain and loss of a strained relationship because they have been hurtful themselves.

1. Express the hurt. We can't heal what we won't feel. If we

are working with our hands and get a cut, we don't simply ignore it and hope it goes away. Instead, we wash it off, put some antibacterial ointment on it and bandage the wound. Our emotional wounds need the same care. Ignoring them can allow them to fester and grow worse over time. We need to talk about our hurt in order to heal the relationship. Some infractions may be so small that we can brush them aside and forget about them. But anything that is important enough to remember is important enough to talk about. Otherwise, we may later be dealing with a long list of grudges instead of just one issue.

2. Practice empathy. Every person has his or her own



way of looking at the world. Our perspective can affect our feelings about particular actions and the realisation of how those actions affect others.

It's important that we try to imagine ourselves in the other person's shoes and determine why he or she might have acted in a hurtful way. Loved ones often don't set out to be hurtful, but rather hurtful actions arise in a particular circumstance. What made this person feel like it was okay to say or do this? If we don't know, we may need to ask.

“Many long-standing feuds begin when one person is hurtful to another, the hurt person reacting in an angry way, and so on”

3. Make a decision to work toward reconciliation. Deciding that you wish to work toward reconciliation is not the same as saying that things have been resolved. Rather, it is saying that you wish to repair the relationship if possible, and you don't wish to remain “cut off” from the other person.

4. Offer forgiveness. Recognise that saying “I forgive you” does not mean all is forgotten. Rather, it says you want to let go of your anger and may be willing to work toward trust again.

When we have been hurtful, we can take important steps toward reconciliation. First, we

should think through the situation carefully, and try to imagine what it must have been like for the other person. We need to hear the other person out and allow ourselves to fully appreciate the consequences of our actions, even if it's painful.

Reconciliation

Next, realise that seeking reconciliation means being vulnerable and admitting you were wrong, even if you feel the other person didn't handle it well either. Many long-standing feuds begin when one person is hurtful to another, the hurt person reacting in an angry way, and so on. Some conflicts have a way of perpetuating themselves to the point that both parties forget how they began! The solution is in each party taking responsibility for his or her own actions. Someone has to begin this process. Often this leads to a willingness on the part of the other person to examine his or her own actions as well.

Tell the other person what you now understand about how they felt, and make a commitment to avoid being hurtful in the future. He or she needs to hear that while you might not have understood the effect your actions would have, you now know the hurt you've caused, and you don't want to cause this hurt again.

Finally, realise that forgiveness is a choice, but trust is not. While the other person may forgive you, it may take some time for trust to be reestablished. Be patient with this process. At times, the person

who was hurt may be reminded of what happened when similar circumstances arise. Reassure the other person at these times that you intend to follow through on your commitment.

“Letting go of this burden helps us enjoy our futures and approach new relationships with peace and openness”

Christ's life is the ultimate testament to the transformative power of forgiveness. He knows it is in our nature to hurt one another, and, in doing so, distance ourselves from him. He offers the Sacrament of Reconciliation to pour forgiveness into our lives, endlessly sustaining us in our efforts to forgive others.

Forgiveness does not always mean trusting that particular person again, or entering into similar situations with him or her. But forgiveness does mean allowing God to help us free ourselves of the anger, resentment and sorrow that can be destructive to us if we continue to carry them. Letting go of this burden helps us enjoy our futures and approach new relationships with peace and openness.

i Dr Joseph White is a clinical psychologist who writes on catechesis, ministry and other topics, and whose books include *Listening for God in Everyday Life* (*Our Sunday Visitor*, 2020).



Charity overcomes prejudice in a classic western

Faith in film



Ruadhán Jones

What's a western doing on a Vatican film list? A genre that typically praises the triumph of individualism and a non-conformist Protestant culture might seem 'anathema'. But Stetsons, stoic heroes, fantastic landscapes and engaging action have some Vatican sanction with its inclusion of the iconic western *Stagecoach* (1939) on a 1995 list of important films.

Directed by John Ford – son of Irish Catholic migrants – and starring deathbed convert, John Wayne, it resurrected the Western. Ford was determined to make it, but studios wouldn't bite; it didn't help that he wanted a nobody called John Wayne to star. Thank God, Ford got his way, the result being an exciting, charming and mostly wholesome drama and a legendary Hollywood figure in Wayne.

Special

But what makes it so special? Why is it on the Vatican list, under the 'art' section (the other two being 'religion' and 'values')? Those questions arguably have the same answer: the quality of the filmmaking matched with a Christian-inspired vision of society.

The first thing to say is that this is a very enjoyable film. I watched it with a small group who had never seen a western before and all were immediately won over. The balance of comedy, action and character drama ensure your attention won't wan-



John Wayne stars as Ringo Kid in *Stagecoach*.

der, as does the action-oriented set-up: a stagecoach carrying a motley crew – a cross-section of American life – attempting a fraught journey across what is effectively a warzone in the late 1800s.

“The stunts are frightening, with riders jumping off horses or falling under a fast-moving carriage, while bullets and spears and arrows whistle back and forth across the screen”

The most troubling element of the film – the characterisation of Native Americans as savages – is also the source of its excitement. They provide the threat, forcing these unlikely

allies to ignore their differences and band together.

Their journey leaves them quite alone, with only their guns and wits to defend them as they cross the remarkable landscape of Monument Valley. Appropriately named, this landscape mixes monumental stone structures and vast open spaces, beautiful, austere and forbidding.

Here the 'Indians' spring their trap, with as exciting a chase sequence as any *Fast and Furious* could offer. The stunts are frightening, with riders jumping off horses or falling under a fast-moving carriage, while bullets and spears and arrows whistle back and forth across the screen.

Heart

Will they survive, is the drive of the action; but the heart of the drama are these fraught relationships, between an American lady and a woman-of-the-night; between the egalitarian

outsider and the aristocrat from the South; between a virtuous whiskey salesman and an alcoholic doctor.

At the start of the film, we see all these characters in the context of the times. The alcoholic and prostitute, Dallas, are kicked out of town by stereotypical puritan types; the lady wants to see her husband and the aristocrat wants to protect her; the whiskey salesman is returning home, while a banker with something to hide joins them.

After they leave town, we meet the rugged hero in a famous close up that introduced John Wayne to the world. He is forced on board by the death of his horse, with his mission being to avenge the death of his brother by facing down his murderers.

John Wayne, though he receives second billing, is the undoubted star as Ringo Kid. He's ruggedly handsome, honourable

in a 'man's gotta do' way and the firmest opponent of the narrow social mores the film attacks.

It's he, the drunken doctor and the whiskey salesman – unlikely heroes – who push back against the elitism of the aristocrat, the lady and the banker.

They seek to ostracise Dallas, who is pugnacious and virtuous in her own way. She doesn't want to be as she is and when Wayne's character asks her to marry him, she fears her background will ultimately turn him away.

But Wayne sees past the judgement of her peers. What ultimately inspires his love is seeing her holding the lady's newborn daughter, witnessing her maternal affection and virtue.

His egalitarian actions are linked quite clearly with Christian charity by the character of the whiskey salesman, Mr Peacock. Everyone mistakes him for a reverend, despite his protests, but this is surely not accidental. It is he who encourages his peers to show each other “a little more Christian charity” and who invites Dallas to visit him and his family should she ever be in Kansas city.

Egalitarianism

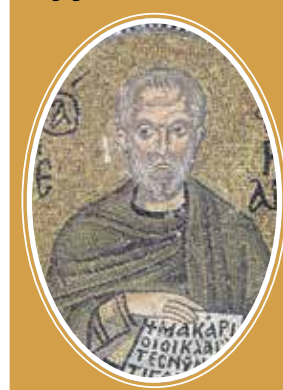
The film pits the elitism of the South against the egalitarianism of the North, expressing the American ideal in a powerful story of charity over prejudice.

In saying this, I gloss over much that the film includes to put such a myth into doubt. The treatment of the Native Americans is one example; Wayne's bloodlust is another; his rugged individualism a third, with he and Dallas riding away from society with all its narrowness, toward America's rugged expanse.

It is America's founding myth, expressed in such a beguiling and exciting fashion, hard to ignore. There are problems with this, to be sure, but I can almost guarantee such concerns will fade away as this beautiful film invites you in.

Saint — of the — week

By Jason Osborne



St Ephrem the Syrian

St Ephrem the Syrian, the most prayerful of poets

One of the host of remarkable men the early Church offers up is St Ephrem the Syrian, who is now known far and wide for his remarkable hymns and poems that offer us a profound glimpse into the Divine.

Probably born in the year 306 in the city of Nisibis (modern-day Nusaybin, Turkey), it's now commonly believed that Ephrem was born to Christian parents, who were part of a small but growing community of faithful in that region. It was against this backdrop that Ephrem grew in both stature and faith, and when the bishop of Nisibis, Jacob, returned from the Council of Nicea in 325 – if you recall, that most important of Church councils, which attempted to articulate the Church's faith as it had lived and professed it to that day, and the result of which we speak every time we say the Nicene Creed at Mass – Ephrem caught his eye.

Ordained a deacon either upon his Baptism or later, Jacob appointed Ephrem as a teacher of Christians, and it was during this time that

Ephrem plumbed the depths of Scripture in order to produce the astonishing hymns, poetry, prayer and prose that he's most widely known for.

He used his gift for words and imagery as part of his educational role, despite the turmoil and tumult of the world around him. Nisibis was surrendered to the Persian army and the Christians were expelled in 363, but undeterred by this, Ephrem continued to shepherd the flock assigned to him in Edessa.

Ephrem saw Christ everywhere, in everything. The wellspring of this vision for him was Scripture, but from there it flowed out into the world. “In every place you look, his symbol is there... For by him were created all creatures and he imprinted his symbols upon his possessions when he created the world,” Ephrem proclaims.

Ephrem embedded the symbols he saw into his hymns and poems, and earned himself the title, ‘The Harp of the Holy Spirit’ as a result. It was quickly recognised by those around him, and still is to this day, that his words were

conveying God's music to the world, which built up the faith of those who heard it.

A contemporary anecdote relates how a ‘holy elder’ once dreamt of Ephrem, and upon waking, heard people speaking of the “fountain flowing forth” from the mouth of the saint. The elderly person connected the dots between Ephrem's reputation and the dream they'd had, realising that the Holy Spirit itself was the guiding force behind Ephrem's words.

Whether or not the anecdote is true, it reveals to us the reputation Ephrem had among the community of faith he was surrounded by. That this reputation continues nearly 2,000 years later indicates that the Holy Spirit indeed stands behind his words, imbuing them with a fire that still speaks to souls today.

On June 9, 373, this Syriac Doctor of the Church, one of the Church's greatest hymnographers, entered the heavenly rest his words had sought to convey. It's on this day that we remember this holy wordsmith.

What does the Eucharist mean for us today?



**Deacon
Frank Browne**

In my local parish we are preparing for the feast of Corpus Christi, when we plan to involve all the children who made their Holy Communion recently. But what does it mean for us when we receive Holy Communion at Mass or venerate the Blessed Sacrament? Perhaps it can mean many things for different people, and these do not have to be mutually exclusive. The Eucharist, our thanksgiving celebration and spiritual food is surely both an object of worship and adoration but also a transformational experience for us individually and together with our parish community. I asked a parishioner who is always available to help anyone in our parish, what the Eucharist means for her? She told me that it means “everything”.

Understanding

Our understanding and how the Church articulates the meaning of this Eucharistic meal has developed over the centuries. It was only from 1264, that the Church celebrated what was referred to as the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ with a solemn procession, usually on the second Thursday after Pentecost but more recently on the following Sunday. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) declared that the Most Blessed Sacrament

of the Eucharist is “the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

Despite what our own understanding of the Eucharist is, it is always important to reflect on the scriptures. We know that the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; and Luke 22:17-20) and in the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (11:23-25). In the words of St Paul, we read how Jesus when he instituted the Holy Eucharist at the last supper, requests his disciples to always: “Do this in remembrance of me.”

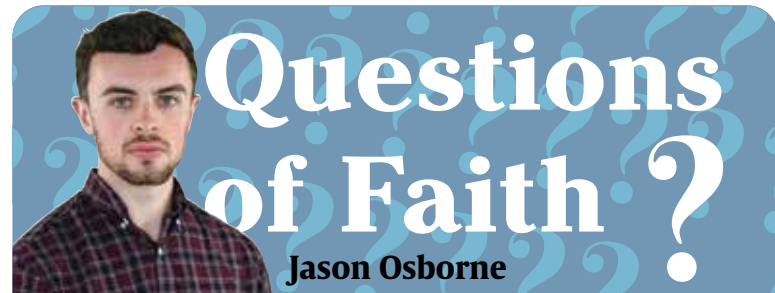
“After the consecration at Mass, Christ is present whole and entire in his physical ‘reality’ corporeally present, although not in the manner in which bodies are in place”

The first Christians regularly celebrated the Eucharistic meal together, and we know that St Paul wrote to the Corinthian community in about 55 AD, when abuses had arisen in the celebration, as it had become an occasion of drunkenness. St Paul reminded them that the Eucharist was a new covenant, where they were proclaiming Jesus’ death with the promise that he will come again. The Eucharist was originally celebrated every Sunday, but by the Fourth Century it was celebrated daily. It was not until the beginning of the Middle Ages that the theological debate began and

resulted in the definition of the doctrine of transubstantiation at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was a significant person in the further development of that doctrine, arguing that a complete change occurred in the “substance” of each of the species of bread and wine, while the “accidents,” or what was referred to as the “outward appearances,” remained the same. During the subsequent Christian Reformation, when this doctrine was challenged by the reformers, the Church countered and the doctrine articulated by Thomas Aquinas was reaffirmed by the Council of Trent in (1545-63). Finally in 1965 Pope Paul VI in his *Mysterium Fidei* stated that after the consecration at Mass, Christ is present whole and entire in his physical ‘reality’ corporeally present, although not in the manner in which bodies are in place. Christ is present in the bread and wine even if they smell and taste the same.

Today

But what does the Eucharist mean for us today? I love the famous phrase by Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), “the Church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the Church,” meaning that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, so Lubac concluded Christ is mystically present and at work when the Eucharist is being celebrated, an understanding that was developed further within the documents of Vatican II. Sometimes you come across an old copy of an out-of-date book, that touches both your mind and heart. At the closing down of Clonliffe College, the Dublin seminary, last year, there was an opportunity for priests and deacons of the diocese to pick up old books from the library. Among the pile I brought home was a copy of Tad W. Guzie, S.J.’s *Jesus and the Eucharist*. The take home message of the book for me was that the Eucharist is a “Sacrament of union and reconciliation accomplished in Jesus, but not yet accomplished in us”. He argues that if we forget the future implications of our Eucharistic celebration, we simply remember the past and take comfort in the present moment of the Mass, but our hope for what it will bring in our lives is missed. The saving work of Jesus cannot leave us passive and unchanged. No matter what our theological understanding is about the Eucharist, I wonder is the real question to consider, how does the Eucharistic celebration affect us in our daily life? Does the Eucharist mean everything?



What does conversion really mean?

Too many of us have too limited a conception of conversion. We often think of it as something for other people, maybe especially for people who adhere to other faiths than Catholicism. This is certainly an element of conversion, and possibly the form we’ve read the most about. After all, history is full of peoples and cultures “converting” from one set of beliefs to another.

Salvation

I wonder, though, how many people are familiar with the fact that conversion is for everyone, committed Catholics included, and that it’s one of the key themes of the Bible, of salvation history itself. The story of salvation is one of God continually calling first his people, then all nations, to re-adjust their course, to set their sights on him, to yield up their hearts of stone that he might give them the hearts of flesh he intended them to have from the beginning, as the prophet Ezekiel puts it.

The story of God’s relationship with humanity is one in which we break off friendship with God by doing that which he explicitly tells us isn’t good for us, coming to regret it, before re-establishing friendship with God, entirely through his help. This is the essence of conversion: turning away from those things that distract us and lead us away from God, in favour of God himself.

We can see this in the etymology of the word, ‘conversion’ – it comes from the Latin *conversio*, which means ‘to turn around’. This makes it closely tied to the concept of repentance, which in the New Testament is *metanoia*, a Greek word meaning a ‘change of heart’.

I’ve heard humans described as “aiming creatures” and there’s quite some truth in that. We’re always facing in some direction, spiritually speaking, something

is always occupying us over and above everything else. The trouble is, our faith argues, that to be occupied in your heart by anything other than God is going to result in unhappiness and dissatisfaction in the long run, even if it doesn’t seem like it initially.

This is a trap both Catholics and non-Catholics can fall into; it’s why the Sacrament of Confession exists. We fallen humans have a tendency to choose that which is immediately appealing, but doesn’t serve too well as long-term fuel for a meaningful and happy life.

Convert again

This is what conversion is for, and it’s why we all need to convert again and again throughout this life. Both those within the Church and those without are sinners, and sinners perpetually need to turn from those things distracting them from God and his loving ways back to that which is good for them and for others – God. Thought of this way, conversion is a daily choice to turn our hearts back to God, and to subject our thoughts, words and actions to him. It is not a once-off jump between faiths.

One of the most dramatic conversions, and most famous, in history must be the conversion of St Paul on the road to Damascus, as captured in Acts chapter nine. Saul was blinded by his hatred and persecution of the early Church, and it was only in being blinded and hearing Christ’s voice that he changed course and became that most famous of apostles.

Most of us don’t undergo such dramatic conversions, but that’s because we don’t need to. A quiet, sincere acknowledgment that we’ve strayed from God and an earnest attempt to follow him more closely are all we need to convert. His grace is positively waiting to meet us, just as it was for Saul on the road to Damascus.



Blessing others as the endgame of sexuality



Although not too many people might recognise this, the #MeToo movement is, in essence, a strong advocate for chastity. If chastity can be defined as standing before another with reverence, respect, and patience, then most everything about the #MeToo movement speaks explicitly of the non-negotiable importance of chastity and implicitly for what our sexuality is ultimately meant to do, namely, to bless others rather than to exploit them.

“How different things would be today both for those women and for those men”

What #MeToo has helped expose is how sex is often used as power, power to force sexual consent, power to either allow or block someone from advancement in her life and career, and power to make someone's workplace a place of comfort and safety or a place of discomfort and fear. This has been going on since the beginning of time and remains the sexual tool today of many people in positions of power and prestige: Hollywood directors, television personalities, university professors, famous athletes, employers, spiritual leaders, and persons of every kind who wield power and prestige. Too often, persons with power and prestige let themselves (however



Fr Rolheiser

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unconsciously) be taken over by the ancient archetype of the king, where the belief was that all the women in the land belonged to the king, and he had sexual privilege by divine right. The #MeToo movement is saying that this time in history is over and something else is being asked from persons in power, authority, and prestige. What's being asked?

In a word, blessing. What God and nature ask of power is that it bless rather than exploit, use privilege to enhance rather than harass, and create a space of security rather than a place of fear. Imagine, for example, if in every one of those high profile instances where a Hollywood producer, a television personality, a star athlete, or a spiritual leader was indicted for harassing, exploiting, and assaulting women, those men, instead of wielding power and prestige, had

used that power instead to help those women gain more access to security and success rather than (pardon the terminology) hitting on them. Imagine if they had used their power to bless those women, to simply admire their beauty and energy, make them feel safer, and help them in their careers. How different things would be today both for those women and for those men. Both would be happier, healthier, and have a deeper appreciation of sex. Why? What's the connection between blessing and sex?

To bless a person is to do two things: First, it is to give that person the gaze of non-exploitive admiration, to admire him or her without any angle of self-interest. Next, to bless someone is to use your own power and prestige to help make that other person's life safer and secure and help that person flourish in his or her dreams

and endeavours. To bless another person is to say to him or her: I delight in your beauty and energy. Now, what can I do for you that helps you (and isn't in my self-interest)? To bless another in this way is the highest expression of sexuality and of chastity. How so?

Sexuality is more than having sex and chastity is more than abstinence. Sexuality is the drive inside us for community, friendship, wholeness, family, creativity, play, transpersonal meaning, altruism, enjoyment, delight, sexual fulfilment, being immortal, and everything that takes us beyond our aloneness. But this has developmental stages. Its earlier stages focus on having sex, on emotional intimacy, and on generativity, on giving birth and nurturing. Its later stages focus on blessing, on admiration, and on giving away so that others might have more.

Dare I say this? The most mature expression of sexuality on this planet is not a couple making perfect love, wonderful and sacred though that is. Rather, it is a grandparent looking at a grandchild with a love that is purer and more

selfless than any love he or she has ever experienced before, a love without any self-interest, which is only admiration, selflessness, and delight. In that moment, this person is mirroring God looking at the initial creation and exclaiming: It is good; it is very good! What follows then is that this person, like God, will try to open paths, even at the cost of death, so that another's life may flourish.

“Would that those in power indicted by #MeToo had admired rather than exploited”

God and nature intended sex for many purposes – intimacy, delight, generativity, community, and pleasure – but this has many modalities. Perhaps its ultimate expression is that of admiration, of someone looking at another person or at the world with the sheer gaze of admiration, with everything inside of that person somehow saying: Wow! I delight in you! Your energy enriches this world! How can I help you? The higher integrates and cauterises the lower. There are no temptations to violate the beauty and dignity of the other when we can give her or him the sheer gaze of admiration.

Admiration and blessing are the endgame of sexuality. Would that those in power indicted by #MeToo had admired rather than exploited.

“God and nature intended sex for many purposes – intimacy, delight, generativity, community, and pleasure – but this has many modalities”

The mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ



June 11 – Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ

Dt 8:2-3, 14b-16a
Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20

1 Cor 10:16-17
Jn 6:51-58

Years ago, I heard the story of a priest who was getting ready for Sunday Mass. While puttering around in the sacristy, he reached into a storage cabinet, took a plastic container of unconsecrated hosts, and started pouring them into a gold ciborium. One of the hosts fell on the floor. The priest picked it up, held it between his thumb and forefinger, and before tossing it in the trash sighed and said, “Oh, to think of what you could have become!”

Corpus Christi

There we see the wonder of Corpus Christi, the late-spring feast when we honour the astounding fact that, in the hands of the priest, a sliver of bread becomes the Body

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon
Greg
Kandra



of Christ. In many parishes, there are processions and prayers – monstrances elevated and paraded through streets, as bells ring and *Tantum Ergo* echoes and the world stops to look and stare and sometimes even, in wonder and adoration, kneel.

“But we should also take this moment to reflect on where we are in the liturgical calendar”

Surveys tell us again and again that only a minority

of Catholics, about a third, understand that what is being shown, what is being blessed and broken and shared, is the Real Presence of Jesus Christ.

Power

With that in mind, I’m not sure we sufficiently appreciate the full magnitude of this Sunday. Sometimes the pageantry and pomp can overwhelm its meaning and power. The reading from St John’s Gospel seems to underscore the mystery of it all:

“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?,” the Jews asked. And Jesus replied, “My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.”

Among other things, the scriptures for this Sunday remind us that ours is a God of bewildering

creativity, a God who gave manna in the desert and even now enters our lives through loaves of bread and the “cup of blessing”.

We should be humbled by all that this implies. But we should also take this moment to reflect on where we are in the liturgical calendar.

“Centuries before Christ, Elijah discovered that God didn’t come in fire or a roaring wind or an earthquake”

Across the last few weeks, we’ve rejoiced in Resurrection, embraced Divine Mercy, celebrated the Good Shepherd, welcomed the Holy Spirit

and marvelled at the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Now, after Easter, Corpus Christi Sunday is in some ways the grand finale – the last big Sunday feast for several weeks. We slip at last into the ordinariness of Ordinary Time. But there is still this glimpse of the extraordinary: Christ’s Real Presence, still among us, under the appearance of bread.

If we take nothing else away from this feast, we should remember how God in his greatness continues to dwell among us in the smallest of things.

He came to us once as an infant in a manger. He comes to us now as a crumb of bread.

Miracle

While this feast celebrates the continuing miracle that is (to use a big word) transubstantiation, it also reminds us of another miracle, the generosity and enduring love of our God, one so great, yet who comes to us as something so

humble.

Centuries before Christ, Elijah discovered that God didn’t come in fire or a roaring wind or an earthquake. He came in a whisper.

So, too, he comes to us today in a whisper – a sliver of a host, a sip of a cup. It is a mystery of our faith: how God can take the insignificant – the small, the broken, the easily overlooked – and dwell within and make it sacred.

He does it with bread. He can do it with each of us.

As St Augustine once famously put it, “We become what we receive”. How could any of us not be overwhelmed, to consider what we receive in the Eucharist, and to think of what we can become?

i Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog, “The Deacon’s Bench.” He serves in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.

“How could any of us not be overwhelmed, to consider what we receive in the Eucharist, and to think of what we can become?”

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Going ballistic over gender in Sussex

Not that long ago people would have been amazed and puzzled at the way some elements in society today are going ballistic over gender.

Gender Wars (Channel 4, Tuesday) tried to get to grips with the issue, but I suspect viewers were still amazed and puzzled. The main focus was on philosophy lecturer Kathleen Stock who was hounded out of her job at Sussex University because of her 'gender critical' views. She is a lesbian feminist, but has been labelled 'transphobic' by her chanting critics. We saw trans activists, masked (Covid? Covert?), screaming for her to be removed from her post and others protesting at a meeting she addressed at the Cambridge Union. I thought one of the protesters' placards captured the state of affairs – 'I'm offended... what now?'.

Another one of these TERFs (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists) was Julie Bindel, long time campaigner for women's rights and in particular safe spaces for women – spaces that were designed to exclude biological men (tautology?).

A variety of transgender people also contributed, though I suspect they found the programme more heavily weighted in favour of Ms



Stock's views. Some were activist students – we saw Kas (they/them) declaring 'disgust' with Stock during that Cambridge debate. Others used the familiar "we are not up for debate" – line, as if those raising questions about gender theory were involved in hateful personal attacks – Stock emphasised this was not her approach or intention. Katy Jon was more moderate and laid back – thought moderation didn't do so well as some campaigners were so "invested in the fight".

'Self ID' was mentioned in the Scottish context, but

I'd like to have heard more about the implications of such legislation, and there was nothing at all about the teaching of highly controversial gender theory in schools.

The following morning didn't start well – on **Morning Ireland** (RTÉ, Radio 1, Wednesday) there was an item about Marie O'Shea's recent report on abortion 'services'. Her upcoming address to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health had been "seen by RTÉ News" and it was grim. As regards her reported recommendations, the glaring omission was a

complete lack of awareness of or compassion for the living unborn baby involved. All the suggestions were aimed, effectively, at making the terminations easier to access.

On **Newstalk Breakfast** (Friday) Shane Coleman quizzed Health Minister Stephen Donnelly on why he abstained on the abortion bill that won a vote in the Dáil in its initial stages. He said he wanted to respect the intended process (Health Committee etc) and not influence it unduly (as if people weren't free to do something other than what the minister recommended). Shane Coleman suggested the bill would have meant "the most liberal abortion regime in Europe" and was not what people voted for. The minister agreed – he said it went "miles beyond what people voted for".

Not unrelated, the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Wednesday) did yet another item on assisted suicide. Dr Regina McQuillan of the Irish Palliative Medical Consultants Association said it would be too hard to protect the vulnerable from overt and covert pressure. Assisted suicide legislation would change patients' relationship with doctors. She said we should look to other countries – e.g. Canada,

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE SIMPSONS

Channel 4 Sunday June 11, 9am

A cool priest (Liam Neeson) convinces Bart and Homer to become Catholics. Fun and stereotyping!

SUNDAY MORNING LIVE

BBC One Sunday June 11, 10.30am

Sean Fletcher and Holly Hamilton return for a new series of the show that brings faith and ethics to the topics of the day.

BRAVERY UNDER FIRE

EWTN Sunday June 11, 9pm

This original EWTN docudrama presents the life and ministry of Fr Willie Doyle SJ, an Irish Jesuit priest who was killed in action during World War I.

where now euthanasia is available for any serious illness, and there are proposals to allow it in case of mental health problems. Senator Ronan Mullen also spoke against the legislation, while Gino Kenny, the bill's sponsor spoke in favour. But, in a typical emotion vs reason approach, more than half the report featured a Motor Neurone Disease patient, Brendan, arguing in favour, tending to put those against in a less favourable light.

On the edges of the culture wars the **Angelus** (RTÉ One) gets criticised sometimes, but RTÉ's audience research shows strong support for it. Last Thursday they launched a new series of films to accompany the

chimes. The first featured a family pilgrimage to Oileán Mhic Dara in Carna, Gaillimh. On Saturday we had inspiring scenes from the Field of Dreams horticultural centre for Down Syndrome adults in Curragheen, Cork. On Sunday we saw artist Aideen Connolly getting inspiration at Ballindoon Abbey in Sligo. Produced by Kairos Communications these are well filmed, and while the religious content is present it is muted as the films are aimed at providing reflection opportunities for those of 'all faiths and none', an approach that raises questions I may return to.

Music

Pat O'Kelly



Bold musical ventures that will bear fruit

Last week the National Symphony Orchestra and Royal Irish Academy of Music announced a joint venture entitled 'The NSO Concerto Project'. While that may be a slight misnomer, the idea behind the enterprise is, and hopefully will continue to be, a fruit bearing amalgamation.

Under the baton of Gavin Maloney, the inaugural event had four young artists, already highly qualified academically, on the threshold of their performing careers taking part – flautist Rachel Nolan, mezzo Emma Power, soprano Lauren McCann and pianist Kalle Peura. Their programme at the NCH brought Nielsen's Flute Concerto, Ravel's song cycle *Shéhérazade*, Mozart's *Exultate*, jubilate motet and



Finnish pianist Kalle Peura

Rakhmaninov's *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini*.

The young musicians had been chosen following two competitive rounds of auditions before NSO general manager Anthony Long and RIAM's

director Deborah Kelleher together with the four heads of the Academy's keyboard, strings, vocal studies and combined wind, brass and percussion faculties – a formidable group indeed.

DUBLINER Rachel Nolan made light of the complexities of the Nielsen concerto. In her programme note she described the piece aptly as 'quirky' with its streaks of belligerence balanced against stretches of pastoral calm. Her interpretation captured these opposing characteristics extremely well.

Waterford-born Emma Power used the flexibility of her splendid voice, which has a particularly fine range with a Wagnerian depth, to capture the exotic atmosphere of Ravel's sensual *Shéhérazade*.

Coming from Co. Down, soprano Lauren McCann showed coloratura freshness in Mozart's teenage motet. The music here needs an interpreter with a particularly confident upper range, something Lauren McCann supplied to remarkable effect.

Finnish pianist Kalle Peura's brilliant technique was essential for his full-blooded account of the Rakhmaninov *Rhapsody*. With all the virtuosic trappings the music demands, maybe his playing became somewhat brash but nonetheless his commanding performance was marvelously secure.

'Sublime' is not a word in my usual written or spoken vocabulary but I think it fits the bill perfectly in describing

English clarinetist Michael Collins and his accompanying Wigmore Soloists playing of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet – the principle work in the penultimate recital in the NCH's Spring 2023 International series.

With immaculate phrasing, astonishing breath control and engaging sensitivity, Collins enticed his ensemble to coalesce precisely with him in the captivating call of the composer's masterpiece. The interweaving rapport between the musicians also gathered the spellbound audience into the overall 'other worldly' experience. For me this was pure musical magic.

The Dublin International Chamber Music Festival, which opened yesterday and

runs, at various venues, until June 12 brings an eclectic mix of music and musicians from home and abroad. The latter includes, among others, the Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective in the Windmill Quarter this evening June 8 and South African cellist Abel Selacoe and his Bantu Ensemble in Dublin Castle to-morrow June 9.

French artists David Grimal, violin, Anne Gastinel, cello and Philippe Cassard, piano bring trios by Brahms and Schubert to Killruddery's Orangery on Saturday evening June 10 and the celebrated Quatuor Ébène closes the festival in the National Botanic Gardens on Monday evening June 12 with music by Ravel and Schumann.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



New light on dark days in the Vatican

The Pope at War – The Secret History of Pius XII, Mussolini and Hitler,
by David I. Kertzer
(Oxford University Press,
€29.00/£25.99)

Dermot Keogh

The decision in 2019 of Pope Francis to open the Vatican archives for World War II and beyond, becoming operational on March 2, 2020, is a significant milestone on the long road of *aggiornamento*.

Had this decision been taken decades earlier, it would have helped scholars frame their arguments about the pontificate of Pope Pius XII based on 1,300,000 documents (the figure given by a Vatican archivist in 2020) instead of having to rely upon the 11 worthy volumes of documents selected by Fr Pierre Blet and his Jesuit team published between 1970 and 1981 (see *Actes et Documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, available on line at www.vatican.va/archive/actes/documents/Volume-1.pdf).

Having to rely on that series of documents was anomalous for historians as the diplomatic archives of most countries for World War II and the Cold War had been open under a 30 and 20-year rule.

“Pius XII clung firmly to his determination to do nothing to antagonise either man. In fulfilling this aim, the Pope was remarkably successful”

David Kertzer's latest book is among the first scholarly studies to appear using those newly-opened Vatican archives. His industry and scholarship are to be congratulated as, no sooner had the Pius XII files opened in



Opening the wartime records of Pius XII to historical inquiry

2020 than Covid hit and the Vatican reading room closed as did also international travel. In spite of that setback, his 41 chapters and 90 pages of footnotes, together with maps, photos, biographical cast of characters and very helpful index, totals 621 pages illustrate his industry and skills as a researcher.

Characteristic

Prof. Kertzer's style in this volume, characteristic of his other monographs, is accessible, and his thesis is clearly framed and cogently argued.

However critical this text is of Pius XII, the author's argument does not support the thesis in John Cornwell's book that Pope Pius XII was 'Hitler's Pope'. The new evidence reinforces the view that a Germanophile Pius XII was no supporter of Hitler or Nazism.

Thanks to Pope Francis,

we are now at a new phase in historical scholarship – a documents-based analysis of the pontificate of Pius XII with access to Vatican archives. Prof. Kertzer has presented a thesis critical of Pius XII and the Roman Curia. The final paragraph in his study reads:

“If Pius XII is to be judged for his action in protecting the institutional interests of the Roman Catholic Church at a time of war, there is a good case to make that his papacy was a success. Vatican City was never violated, and amid the ashes of Italy's Fascist regime the Church came out of the war with all the privileges it had won under Fascism intact. “However, as a moral leader, Pius XII, must be judged a failure. He had no love for Hitler, but he was intimidated by him, as he was by Italy's dictator as well. At a time of great uncertainty,

Pius XII clung firmly to his determination to do nothing to antagonise either man. In fulfilling this aim, the Pope was remarkably successful.”

Support

In support of his thesis, Prof. Kertzer describes back channel contacts Pope Pius XII had with Hitler through an intermediary, Prince Philipp von Hessen. They began as Berlin was finalising plans for the invasion of Poland. So secret were those contacts that the information was not shared with the German ambassador to the Holy See.

This has been reported as being one of the most dramatic discoveries in this book. Let me give a few examples from the text which the author cites to support the thesis of the silent pope: one, his refusal to condemn Hitler's invasion of Poland as requested by the country's

bishops; two, his refusal to condemn the spread of the German war of aggression in the West of Europe and the occupation that followed; and three, for his remaining silent despite well-grounded reports on the Holocaust reaching the Holy See.

Prof. Kertzer's chapter, entitled 'The Pope's Jews', analyses the events in Rome on October 16, 1943. It was the Sabbath and the third day of the holiday of Sukkot, when 100 SS officers marched in a double line on a cold, wet morning into Rome's old ghetto while another 265 SS, with lists of Jews, fanned out through different parts of the city. Some 1,259 Jews were caught in the dragnet.

Taken to a military college compound “a few hundred metres from the Vatican”, 363 men were separated from their families, leaving

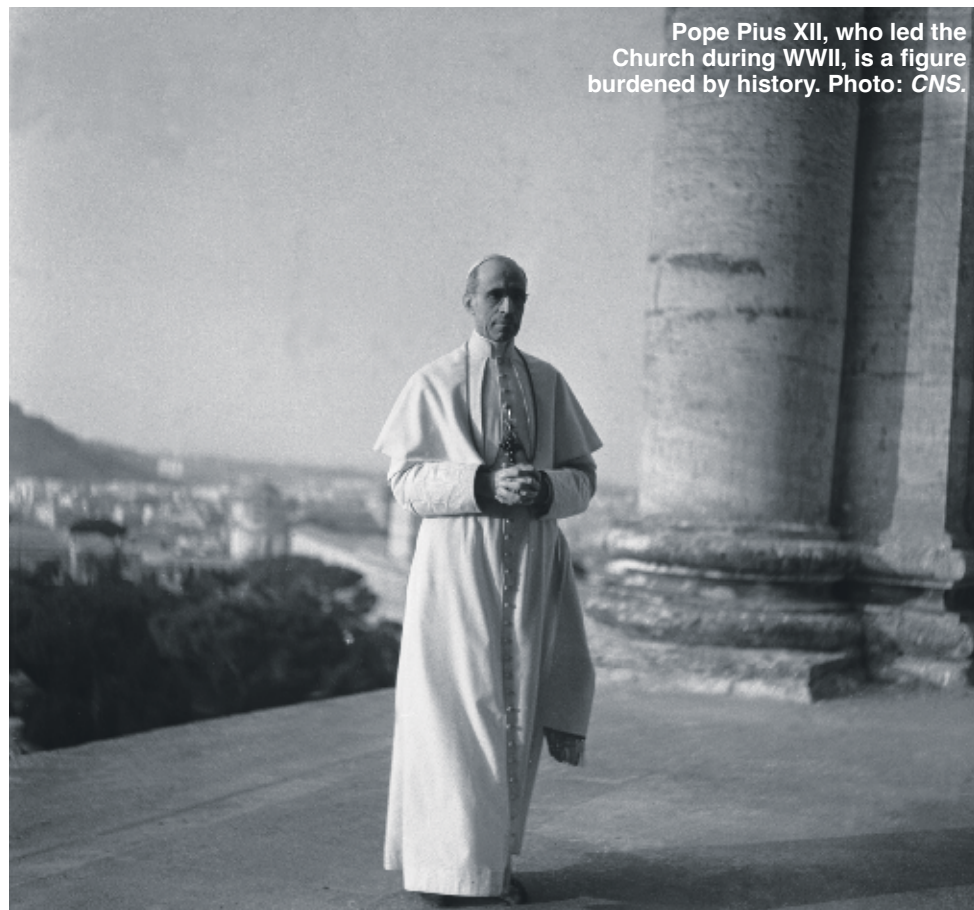
207 children and 689 women alone together. The shock was so great that one woman went into labour and gave birth – making 1,260 Jews captured and detained. Prof. Kertzer argues that Vatican officials confined their interventions to securing the release of not only former Jews who had been baptised, but also those Jews married to Christians: “This was Rome, not Poland or Russia, and the Germans did not want to unduly provoke the Vatican,” writes Prof. Kertzer.

Tiburtina

On October 18, 1,007 Jews were loaded into trucks and taken to Tiburtina train station. Locked in sealed wagons, they journeyed through Italy and arrived in Auschwitz on October 23. There, they were met by the camp's doctor, Josef Mengele. The young, the old and the

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.

Pope Pius XII, who led the Church during WWII, is a figure burdened by history. Photo: CNS.



sick were sent directly to the gas chambers. Of those who survived the Mengele selection, only 16 were alive when the camp was liberated.

This most compelling and sad chapter – based in part on the newly released archives – will help reframe the scholarly debate on the Holy See's reaction to the round-up of Roman Jews. In that context, a monograph on the wartime relationship between the Pope and his Cardinal Secretary of State, Luigi Maglione, together with others in that dicastery [Giovanni Battista Montini and Angelo Dell'Acqua] would be most welcome.

“Nearly half of the citizens of the enlarged German Reich were Catholic, and millions of them were avid supporters of Hitler”

Pierre Blet, the Jesuit scholar mentioned above, is described by the author as being “one of the best-informed and most sophisticated defenders of Pius XII”. I find it hard to accept that when he and his team edited the 11 volumes of documents that they wilfully omitted mention of the file on Pius XII's back channel

‘negotiations’ with Hitler. I would start from the premise that they were never made aware of the relevant file.

(The history of the writing of that project would be a worthy subject in itself of historical analysis. Was there conflict over documents they wanted to publish but were prevented from doing so?)

Explanation

Fr Blet's explanation in 1997, according to Dr Kertzer, for the Pope's silence was that he had “given thought to the possibility of public statements” but decided not to speak out in the end. This was based on the Pope's conclusion that, one, “protests gain nothing, and they can harm those whom one hopes to assist”; and two, any public papal statement would furnish ammunition to Nazi propaganda to claim Pius XII as being an enemy of Germany.

Prof. Kertzer counters by stating that “nearly half of the citizens of the enlarged German Reich were Catholic, and millions of them were avid supporters of Hitler”. Denouncing Hitler up to 1942 would “risk losing their [Catholic] allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church”. He argues further that while that stance made sense in the early part of the war when Hitler was conquering France and threatening to invade Britain, the Nazi invasion of Russia changed the course of the war and, with the US a belligerent since December 1941, the

Third Reich's days were numbered.

Why, then, did Pius XII not speak out about the Holocaust? Why did he not denounce the extermination of the Jews even at the risk of a backlash against Catholics and even the occupation of the Vatican state?

Dr Kertzer puts forward the argument that the Pope “realised that many of the loyal Nazi citizens in the Reich had been raised in the Church and indeed continued to see themselves as Catholics.... [the absence of a denunciation] was motivated as well by his fears that denouncing the Nazis would silence millions of Catholics and risk producing a schism in the Church.”

While many readers of this paper will take issue with Prof. Kertzer's thesis outlined in this book, few will doubt his industry and commitment to scholarship spread over a lifetime of investigation. I repeatedly asked myself when reading this challenging monograph what would have happened had Pius XI been pope during the war years?

It is a question to which we will never know the answer but I would like nonetheless to hear Prof.

i Dr Dermot Keogh is Emeritus Professor of the established Chair of History, University College Cork, and author of *Ireland and the Vatican* (Cork University Press, 1995)

Getting lost for words

Index, A History of the – A Bookish Adventure from Medieval Manuscripts to the Digital Age, by Denis Duncan (Allen Lane/ Penguin Books, €15.50/ £10.99)

Peter Costello

Dennis Duncan, who lectures in English at the University College

London, is a man of many parts and a writer of diverse, bookish interests. His most entertaining book, which deals as much with human folly, as with intellectual wisdom, is a rich brew, which those persons who in the past enjoyed *Caught in the Web Words* about John Murray and the making of the Oxford English Dictionary, or HL Mencken's vast three volume treatise on *The American Language* (which everyone concerned with the nature of North American history should know something about) should enjoy.

But what I find disconcerting is that this serious, yet amusing book, should be published at a critical time for culture. For Duncan, in celebrating the utilities of the index, is writing in a time when the index itself is actually disappearing from many kinds of books. This may seem hard to believe, but it is true. Look next time you are in a book shop.

When I began publishing books, some five years after leaving college, it was taken for granted by my London publisher that I would do the index. And so I did, equipped with the handbooks I had acquired dealing with the making of books and their parts, and a large pack of index cards. Naturally I bore the cost in the publisher's eyes, which was mainly in my time, for it was seen as part of my book.

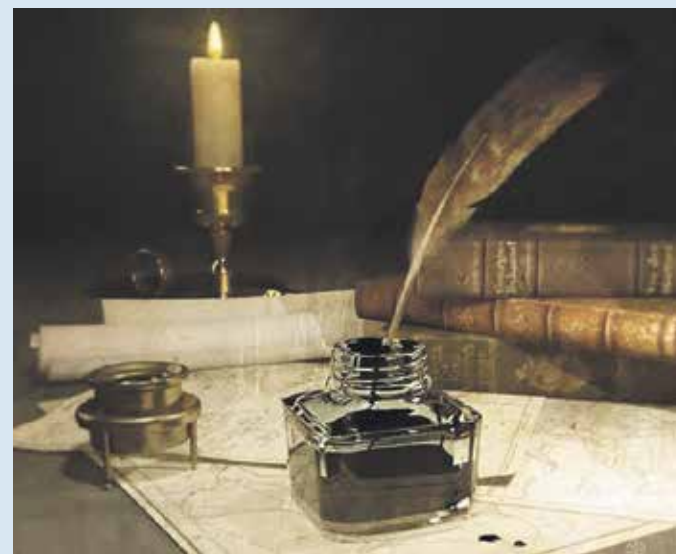
Changes

However, publishers found that with changes in the kinds of people writing books, many of whom would not do indexes, the publishers would have to do them, engaging a professional indexer, and passing the cost on to the author, say about £500 or more.

It seemed to some authors that everyone engaged in publishing was making fees out their books except those who wrote them. Of course, a professional index maker does an excellent job and is worth the money in terms of cost and efficiency. But the publisher does not want to carry it. Duncan says his index which runs to 30 pages out of the 339 in the book, is the creation of Paula Clarke Bain, “who is a personal indexer and a human being”.

In all this bustling change there is a hint of a development I do not care for. There are other kinds of indexes aside from those at the back of books.

For much of my writing activities I have depended on newspaper indexes, at first in college on the index of the *New York Times*, later on the *Official index of the Times* of London and the index of the *Glasgow Herald* on the open shelves in the British Library, the National Newspaper Library and Trinity College here in Dublin. But now these monuments of the



Index making from pen and ink to computer.

Indexers' skills have been banished into “dark storage”, a sort of intellectual perdition from which these printed objects will perhaps never emerge. Those librarians now devoted to digitalisation feel they are not needed, as the *London Times* is now available online. But such a search engine does not replace the columns of print.

Take say the *Times Official Index* for 1923. Looking up Ireland one finds something like four very closely printed pages in two columns divided into two parts, into *Ireland, Northern and Ireland, Southern*. One was visually able to see forming over the pages an epitome of a year's history on this island in a difficult period through which you could follow the social, political and physical developments on this island, spread out before your very eyes.

You simply cannot do this by word search. So computerisation, in my opinion, rather than advancing the processes of research, are hiding them. Your word search item is torn out of its annual, local and international context, and often made meaningless.

This I am told is an outdated point of view. But it seems to me that those who remove the index volumes are the real Luddites, wrecking a long established ‘weaving frame’ of historical and intellectual research.

Dennis Duncan's book explores whole centuries of investigation and deep inquiry. The human folly is part of the story. But then so are the mad vagaries of the present day internet.

Authors and readers hang onto you indexes as long as you can. They may well be the only things to save your minds in the years to come. Meanwhile, three cheers to the enterprising Dennis Duncan for such a lively recreation of an essential strand in Europe's intellectual past.

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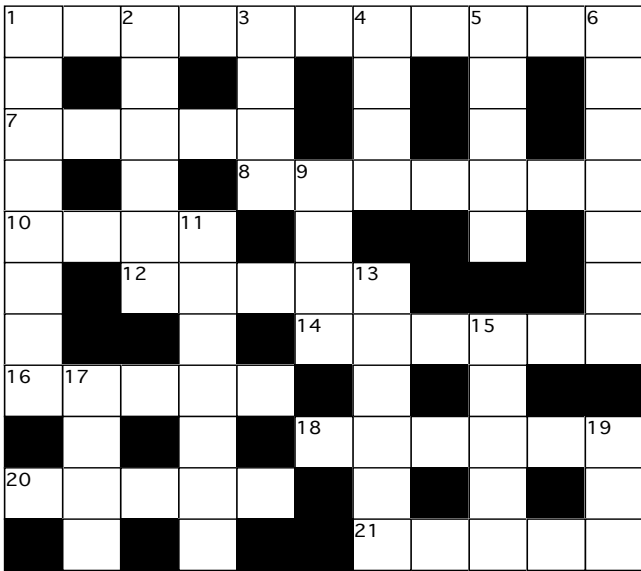
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 486



Across

- 1 In a railway, the parts the locomotive travels on (5,6)
- 7 Intended (5)
- 8 Green jewel (7)
- 10 Use it to tidy up the garden (4)
- 12 The 'orange' traffic light (5)
- 14 Pill (6)
- 16 Used a pen or pencil, perhaps (5)
- 18 Out of the country (6)
- 20 This ancient Greek gave us many fables, such as 'The Hare and the Tortoise' (5)
- 21 Flavour (5)

Down

- 1 The day after today (8)
- 2 The largest state in America,

up in the Arctic (6)

- 3 Piece of paper money (4)
- 4 It's grown in a paddy field (4)
- 5 It's richer and sweeter than milk (5)
- 6 You might see this on the floor of a carpenter's workshop (7)
- 9 When you are introduced to someone, you might say "Pleased to ____ you" (4)
- 11 A very strong feeling, like love or hate (7)
- 13 Bunny (6)
- 15 Has a peep (5)
- 17 You'll find this plant beside water (4)
- 19 You can change the colour of hair or material with this (3)

SOLUTIONS, JUNE 1

GORDIUS NO. 613

Across – 1 Hum 3 Right-angled triangle 8 Church holiday 9 Listened 10 Later 11 Dwelt 13 Brawl 15 Ensnare 16 Krypton 20 Hoard 21 Yukon 23 Plaza 24 Downpour 25 Brogue 26 Purple patch 27 Eat

Down – 1 Huckleberry 2 Mounties 3 Racer 5 Noted 6 Linnet 7 Did 12 Transparent 13 Birch 14 Lured 18 Sangria 19 Skewer 22 Nepal 23 Porch 24 Dip

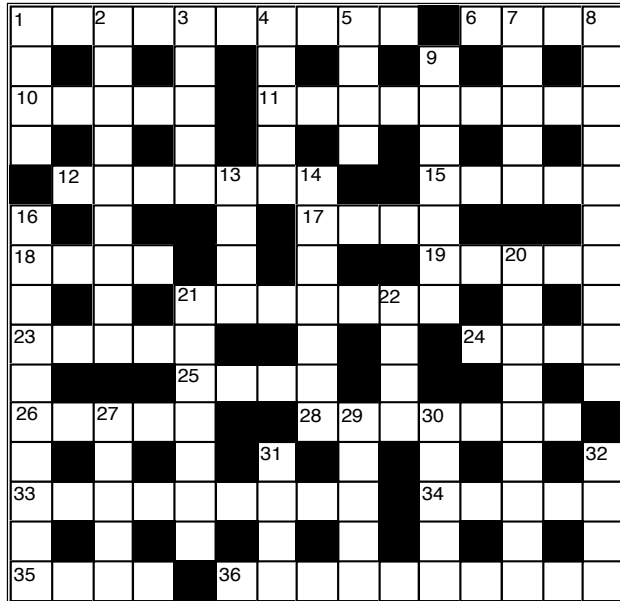
CHILDREN'S No. 485

Across – 1 Roadblock 6 Laptop 7 Photo 9 X-rays 10 Early bird 12 Got 14 Cupboard 17 Rowed 18 Egypt

Down – 1 Relaxing 2 Alphabet 3 Books 4 Cash 5 Allowed 7 Play 8 Ordinary 11 Round 13 Oslo 15 Bee 16 Dot

Crossword

Gordius 614



Across

- 1 Having achieved a favourable outcome (10)
- 6 A subtle addition of colour (4)
- 10 Japanese rice dish with raw fish (5)
- 11 Carry documents etc in this (9)
- 12 Notable journeys, especially by sea (7)
- 15 Snarl (5)
- 17 Member of the British Conservative party (4)
- 18 Jump (4)
- 19 Slang word for a car crash (5)
- 21 Item of jewellery (7)
- 23 Sorceress (5)
- 24 Fish related to the cod (4)
- 25 River that flows through Bath and Bristol (4)
- 26 Oak nut (5)
- 28 Mathematical proposition that needs to be proved? Here, Tom is confused! (7)
- 33 Oven that heats food quickly (9)
- 34 Harvest what other harvesters have left behind (5)
- 35 Uncommon (4)
- 36 Small house in which one might somehow moisten tea? (10)

Down

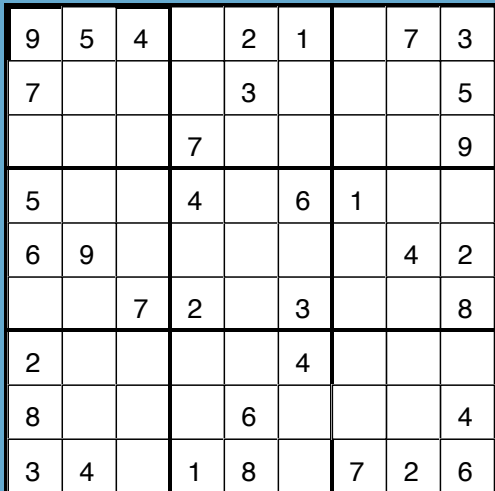
- 1 Mediocre, merely adequate (2-2)

- 2 Russian space traveller (9)
- 3 Musical based on the life of Eva Peron (5)
- 4 Type of sword (5)
- 5 A single thing (4)
- 7 American state, capital Boise (5)
- 8 & 9 Dreadful inflictions visited on the pharaoh's country before Moses led the Israelites to the Promised Land (3,7,2,5)
- 13 Stare with one's mouth open (4)
- 14 Scholar (7)
- 16 You can use it both to drive in and to lever out nails (4-6)
- 20 Astonishment (9)
- 21 Ghost - of the opera? (7)
- 22 Identify (4)
- 27 Happen (5)
- 29 Pays attention to (5)
- 30 Musical instrument most associated with church music (5)
- 31 Molten rock from a volcano (4)
- 32 Bet made before cards are dealt (4)

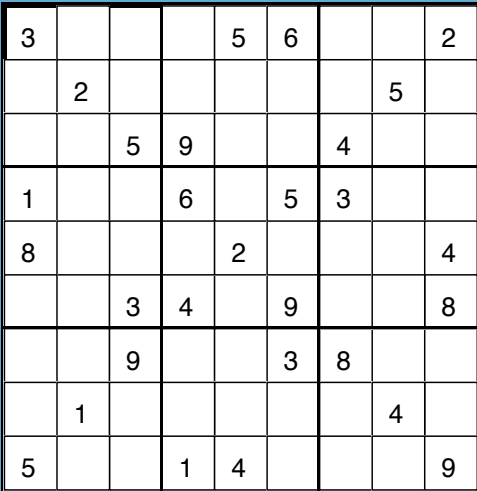
Sudoku Corner

486

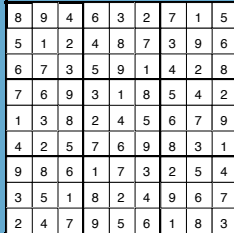
Easy



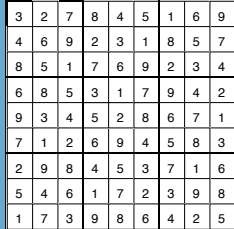
Hard



Last week's Easy 485



Last week's Hard 485



Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



Serious conversations about 'bouncy castle Catholics'

Another First Communion and Confirmation season has come to an end. I will again beat my lonely drum in the hope that we might begin a serious and honest conversation around what is happening with these sacramental encounters in every parish in Ireland.

Earlier this year we had four Confirmation ceremonies in the two parishes I now have responsibility for. During the month of May we had four First Communion Masses. Taken together, those eight celebrations perhaps involved something close to 250 children and young people along with their parents and families. I could not even begin to estimate how much money was spent around those occasions. If the media coverage is to be believed, an average of close to €1000 can be spent on clothes, parties, and entertainment for any one family celebrating either a First Communion or Confirmation. That does not take account of money spent on gifts given to candidates for either Sacrament. We could be talking of somewhere close to half a million euro in our two parishes alone.

Since those celebrations have



ended, I would be at my most optimistic if even 10% of the 250 children, young people or their parents have been to a weekend Mass or contributed in any way to the life of our parishes.

Many months ago, each of the candidates and their parents were invited to enrol and freely choose to celebrate the Sacrament. In the intervening time of preparation for both of the sacraments and indeed in the ceremonies themselves there was a clear message and understanding that to celebrate First Communion or Confirmation involves making a choice, a commitment to a Faith and some visible expression of that commitment. Public promises were made by both the candidates and their parents regarding a

commitment to their faith but now sadly, I'm left to wonder did those promises mean anything.

On reflection, I must conclude that the Church's understanding of what a Sacrament is and what it asks of the person who freely enters into it, is diametrically opposed to what the vast majority of Confirmation and First Communion candidates and their parents understand as they mark these milestones in their lives and spend significant amounts of money doing so. In the words of one newspaper journalist, most of the families who present their children for First Communion are probably best described as "bouncy castle Catholics".

Some time ago I came across an article about a group called The Ethical Celebrants Society which provides milestone ceremonies as an alternative to both Communion and Confirmation rituals. The article suggested that each

milestone ceremony is unique to families but includes many of the features of a religious Confirmation or Communion. The significant difference is that with such a milestone ceremony there is no pretence that those taking part are committing to something long term. It is simply a ritual to mark a rite of passage.

Having read the article I wondered was there more integrity in that approach than the situation that we find in almost every parish in Ireland.

So, despite the fact that nobody is really listening and if they are they may even be upset at the sound of my drum, I think of the story about the anthropologist visiting a primitive society. One night, he hears drums beating in the distance. Concerned, he asks one of the tribesmen what's up with the drums. The native says, "Drums ok, but if drums stop very bad – run away."

Priorities

● A teacher was giving her students a lesson in logic. "Here is the situation," she said. "A man is standing up in a boat in the middle of a river, fishing. He loses his balance, falls in, and begins splashing and yelling for help. His wife hears the commotion, knows he can't swim, and runs down to the bank. Why do you think she ran to the bank?" A girl raised her hand and suggested: "To draw out all his savings?"

Happy birthday Sr Mary

Sr Mary Tighe is a native of Rathdowney Co. Laois. Mary is a St John of God sister and on June 14 she celebrates her 100th birthday. Sr Mary currently lives at the St John of God community in Sallyville in Wexford Town but spent almost all of her teaching career in England. The oldest of four sisters who joined the St John of God congregation, Mary is the only one surviving and thankfully is blessed with wonderful mental and physical health. Throughout her religious life Mary has touched the lives of so many people and remains a wonderful inspiration to all those who meet her and share community life with her.



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



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

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

Can you spare a small gift to build this chapel?

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



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

MISSIONARIES NEED YOUR MASS OFFERINGS

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