

DON'T FORGET THE 'TRIBE OF WIDOWS'

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REFERENDA TO REMEMBER

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Thursday, March 14, 2024

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

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'Pay back to carers the money you wasted' – Senator

Chai Brady

An Irish senator has called on Government to pay the amount spent on the referendum to carer/disability charities, as they have been "cavalier with public monies".

Senator Rónán Mullen, one of the few politicians who campaigned for a No/No vote in the referendum, said the Government should "come under pressure" to direct €20 million to those they claimed would be better off following changes to the Constitution – a proposition voted down by more than 70% of people.

Senator Mullen said: "The cynicism with which they tried to keep people in the dark for as long as possible to prevent the scrutiny of the controversial wording and get it through with a fast campaign and the gimmick of doing it on International Women's Day, the irresponsibility of that and the misuse of taxpayers money is why I'm calling for pressure to be put on the government to give back that €20m to carers and the people they care for."

Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín TD told *The Irish Catholic* that people must get politically active to challenge the "bubble" of Government and opposition parties as well as NGOs who spearheaded the failed 'care' and 'family' referenda.

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Ireland of the welcomes prepares for St Patrick



Late Late Show presenter Patrick Kielty prepares for his role as the Grand Marshal for the 2024 National St Patrick's Day Parade, along with fellow participants. Photo: Leah Farrell/RollingNews.ie

PRIESTS THREATENED WITH AXE IN BURGLARY

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OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW

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'Quick fix' married priests solution won't tackle vocations decline – bishop

Chai Brady in Knock

Commitments between family and parish can cause "a battle in one's

heart" for married priests, the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore said, warning against the "quick fix solution".

Bishop Phonsie Cullinan, who is Chairman for the Council for Vocations of the bishops' conference, spoke to *The Irish Catholic* in Knock, Co. Mayo at an event which brought together vocation directors from across Ireland to the national shrine.

Bishop Cullinan said: "A lot of people put that out there as a solution, but you have to sit down and think about that very carefully. In my own discussion with a Protestant clergywoman, she said that in every marriage of a Protestant minister there is always a conflict between family and parish commitments. He asked: "What do

you do when the son or daughter wants to be brought to sports and there's a church event at that time? So you have a dilemma straight away. You have that battle in one's heart, giving yourself entirely to your parish or giving yourself entirely to your family.

"As well as that of course, how many marriages are breaking up now? Do we seriously think that if priests could marry they will be any different? What do you do then if you have somebody who is separated from his wife and who is trying to minister to a parish? There is all of that. To put out a

quick fix solution might seem logical, but when you delve a little bit deeper..."

The Diocesan Vocation Director's Conference took place from March 7-8 with Cardinal Lazzaro You Heung-sik of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Clergy addressing the conference.

Bishop Cullinan announced a Year of Vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood on April 30, which concludes on April 25, the Feast of St Mark the Evangelist. He said: "The fact of the matter is that the vast majority of priests, when you drill down, they're actually happy. That is a key element in this whole

question, they have devoted their lives to their parishes, to their ministry and to their people and it is a very fulfilling life and it is a life worth living and a life worth promoting.

"We have been very privileged throughout this year to have had so many events. Very many of them small that is true, but yet at the same time, connecting with people, getting the message out there..." the bishop said, adding that he hopes the momentum of the year promoting diocesan vocations will continue.

'Pay back to carers the money you wasted' – Senator

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Mr Tóibín said: "It'll be in the interest of that bubble that this story goes away and that this referendum is forgotten about as soon as possible but I think really what this has done is brought into sharp focus for many people the difficulties that exist in Ireland.

"Those bread and butter issues have to be focussed on and I believe the best way to keep the Government and the political bubble in check is for people to get active and politically involved," he said, adding his party will "build on that energy for the local and European election. The issue at the heart of the Government defeat actually still exists and that is the political establishment not listening to people".

Following the "massive defeat", barrister and campaigner Maria Steen said people understood the Government's proposals and

what was at stake, "a further step in the erasing and degradation of women and of motherhood, and an attack on the home and marriage. Not alone that, but we could all see that the suggestion that the proposal was designed to do something for carers and those with disabilities was as insincere as the wording was ineffective".

Writing in this paper, Ms Steen also said: "The resounding defeat tells a story: people are fed up with the stifling consensus among the political elites, in which any voices that dare to oppose the establishment line is ridiculed, rejected or ignored – or portrayed as a 'basket of deplorables' or more colloquially, 'prophets of doom'.

"The result was a rejection of a political body that is out of touch with the people, rather than what the media would like to portray: a people out of touch with their political betters."

'Neutral' ethics plan dropped from primary curriculum

Ruadhán Jones

The head of the Catholic Education Partnership has welcomed the dropping of plans for a 'neutral' ethics programme at primary level, as a new round of consultation opens.

The State previously sought to introduce education about religion and beliefs (ERB), which was supposed to be a neutral approach.

"We have long argued this is based on a falsehood," CEO of the CEP Alan Hynes told *The Irish Catholic*. "We are happy that the State has listened to us and this has been

withdrawn."

Mr Hynes' comments come after the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) released draft primary curriculum specifications for wellbeing and social and environmental education, among others.

While formal religious education (RE) will drop from two and a half to two hours a week, Mr Hynes said the topic of world religions will now be dealt with under history and geography, rather than RE.

In addition, the hours allotted to wellbeing is "suited well" to a Catho-

lic setting, with Catholic schools treating the wellbeing of the whole person for decades, said Mr Hynes.

The draft propose small changes around sex education, including teaching about puberty to third and fourth class. Mr Hynes said this reflects the fact that children are coming to primary school later and therefore are older when they reach these classes.

The consultation period is now open and remains open until June. Mr Hynes encouraged parents to make their views known, saying "parents' voices ought to be key".

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

ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,

Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandford,

Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Printed by Webprint, Cork.

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Tributes paid for 'brave' former RTÉ journalist Charlie Bird

Chai Brady and Ruadhán Jones

Tributes have poured in following the death of celebrated former RTÉ journalist Charlie Bird, remembered as a "great man" and an example to all those suffering.

Following his death aged 74 on Tuesday, Sr Stan said Mr Bird "had faith and that helped him" following his motor neuron disease diagnosis in 2021.

"Since he got ill, he has been amazing in the way he has lived with it, accepted it, dealt with it while continuing to live to the full, continued to contribute to society in every way he could," Sr Stan told *The Irish Catholic*. "For anybody who is suffering, he is a great example of somebody who had pain and suffering and lived with it."

Mr Bird covered some

of Ireland's biggest stories including the Stardust fire, the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US, banking scandals and more.

Mr Bird led the charitable 'Climb with Charlie' campaign in April 2022 which saw thousands of people climb peaks across Ireland and abroad in solidarity with the journalist as he made a personal pilgrimage up Croagh Patrick. The campaign raised €3.4 million which went towards several charities including the Pieta House and the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association.

The former Administrator in Westport Co. Mayo, who had responsibility for Croagh Patrick, Fr Charlie McDonnell was in close contact with Mr Bird at the time.

He said: "I think it [the hike up Croagh Patrick] meant a lot to him... The momentum that came

behind the climb with Charlie – the one thing he singled out was Mass cards, that wasn't just to me... he kept mentioning Mass cards. He spoke that he felt a presence with him, he knew he wasn't alone, there was someone watching over him. All of that began with visiting Croagh Patrick and hiking the Reek," he said.

Speaking on RTÉ 1's Today with Claire Byrne on Tuesday morning singer Daniel O'Donnell said he was "so impressed by Charlie's bravery" and that he "inspired people".

Mr O'Donnell spoke of how he handed Mr Bird his own personal set of Rosary beads while they were on the Late Late Show in October 2022.

He said: "A couple of nights after the Late Late Show he told me it just meant the world to him, and I felt so grateful that



Sr Stan meets Charlie Bird in Dublin. Photo: John McElroy

I did what I did. I wasn't trying to push religion on him or anything, it was just something that was impor-

tant to me that I could give to him hoping he would get strength from them, I just never imagined it would

mean so much to him – and I know it did because he told me every time we talked..."

Bishops reaffirm commitment to helping asylum seekers – call on Govt to do more to integrate

Brandon Scott

At their recent Spring Meeting in Maynooth, the Bishops' Conference highlighted the "exceptional work" being done by parishes, schools and religious communities around the country to accommodate asylum seekers and refugees by extending their hand of friendship but also reminded Government that it must fulfil their commitment to integrate

people coming to Ireland.

The bishops discussed how Ireland "welcomes immigrants, refugees and people seeking asylum" and that they're grateful "to the many people in communities across the country, including those in parishes, schools and religious communities, who are doing exceptional work in extending the hand of friendship to people who have had to escape from war and oppression or for reasons of economic necessity".

The bishops also expressed the need for greater efforts to integrate people coming to Ireland and that Government and those with responsibility need to do more to fulfil their commitment to integration.

The bishops reported that each diocese in Ireland has appointed a Diocesan Liaison Person for immigrants, and these will meet for the first time at a national level during the month.

Former Presentation Brothers students wins Oscar

Ruadhán Jones

A former Presentation Brothers student Cillian Murphy scooped the best actor award at the Oscars on Sunday, March 10.

His old school's community were delighted for Mr Murphy, with the principal of Presentation Brothers College Cork saying he "absolutely" expects students to be inspired by the Cork man's Oscar win.

The Cork-born actor received the award for his starring role in *Oppenheimer*, directed by Christopher Nolan.

"Presentation Brothers College are delighted for Cillian and his family on his success in winning the Oscar," Principal David Barry told the PA news agency. "We're so proud to have one



Cillian Murphy stars in the movie *Oppenheimer*. Photo: OSV News/Melinda Sue Gordon, Universal

of our past pupils so successful on the world stage.

"The whole community is delighted and we want to congratulate Cillian on his

fantastic success.

"Hopefully when he's back in Cork he might be able to visit us."

Asked whether students

would be inspired by his win, Mr Barry said: "Oh absolutely.

"The students here have always been big fans of him, even before *Oppenheimer*."

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Co. Louth priests threatened with axe in aggravated burglary

Ruadhán Jones

Two Co. Louth priests were left traumatised when four raiders broke into their house and confronted them with hammers and an axe on Saturday, March 9.

The burglary comes less than a month after the parochial house in Athy, Co. Kildare was burnt down in a suspected arson, while the Diocese of Kerry has had to ask parishes to beef up security after a spate of thefts.

Kilcurry PP Fr Vinod Kurian said the experience was “upsetting”, describing how he was

confronted by one man armed with an axe, while another confronted Fr Oliver Stanfield with a hammer. Two other men were trying to break into the safe with hammers.

“I managed to push him out from getting into my room, I locked the door and opened the window and started shouting for help, but no one heard me,” Fr Kurian told *The Argus*.

“I took out my phone and started to ring the Gardai, but by this time he had broken through the door and told me to give him the phone.”

Fr Kurian was taken down-

stairs to the safe and told to give them the keys, which he did, but they had already damaged the lock to the safe and couldn't get in.

“They kept hammering at the safe and got in to take the weekly collection money and some sterling donations from the shrine,” he continued.

“Then they sprayed bleach on the two of us and around the office and left.”

It is the second time that intruders attempted to break into the safe, after a similar incident in 2022, Fr Kurian said.

The theft on March 9 came hot

on the heels of a break-in and suspected arson of the parochial house in Athy, Co. Kildare.

The property was badly damaged and a man faces a criminal damage allegation.

Garda Ken McDonald alleged that James Rowan (45) stole cash and items, before causing hundreds of thousands of euro worth of damage to the premises. Mr Rowan has not admitted the offence.

Meanwhile, the Diocese of Kerry has had to tell parishes to beef up their security after churches in the region were targeted in a spate of burglaries.

“Some of our parishes have experienced recent burglaries and break-ins,” a spokeswoman for the diocese told *The Irish Catholic*, adding that the diocese's property department have advised parishes to ensure “reasonable precautions are in place to protect parish property”.

Parishes were reminded that it they are required to protect their property under their parish insurance policy.

Suggested precautions include the installation of CCTV systems, install a security alarm system and establishing key and alarm code procedures.

TG4 explores the holy wells of Ireland

Staff reporter

The Irish-language broadcaster TG4 is set to dive into the history, myths and legends associated with Ireland's holy wells in a six-part documentary series.

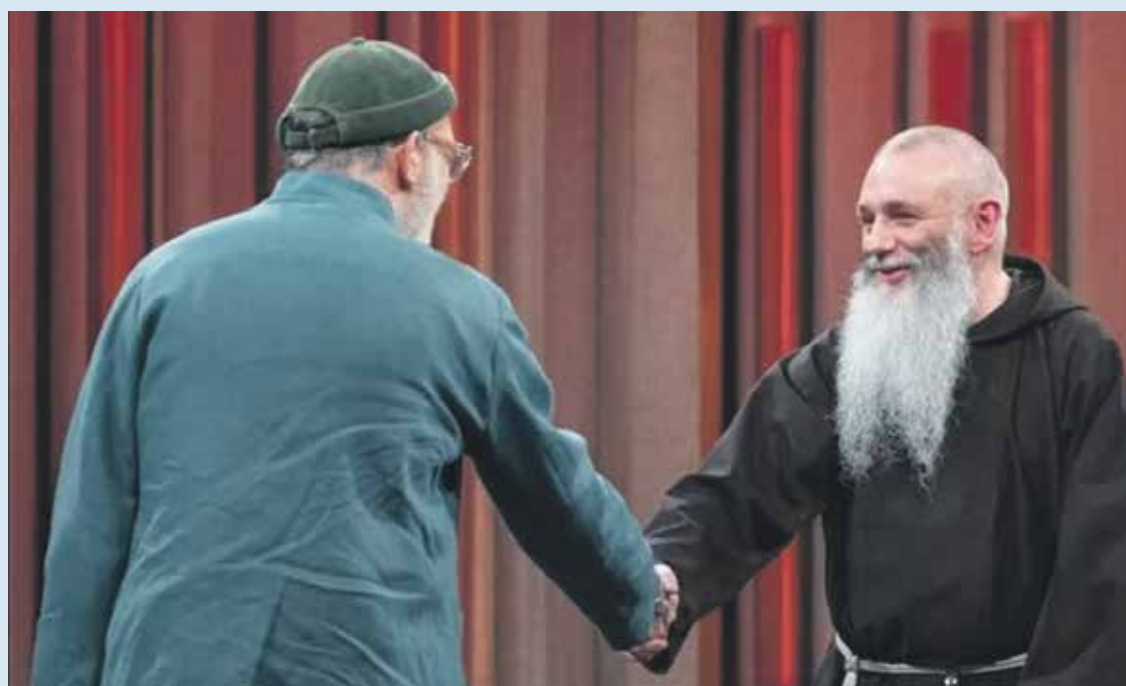
In *Ag Triall ar an Tobar*, presenter Manchán Magan will uncover holy wells that have been sites of worship and prayer for centuries and are still visited today for those seeking comfort and peace, a spokesperson for TG4 said in statement.

“Ordnance Survey Ireland claimed there were as many as 3,000 holy wells in Ireland – more than in any other country in the world,” they said. “This 6-part series is a new format which fuses the exploration of Christianity and pagan customs with historical record and local knowledge to take us on a journey through some of Ireland's undiscovered sacred places.”

Presenter Mr Magan warned that “without the efforts of the community, there's a chance these places would be gone”.



Presenter of *Ag Triall ar an Tobar* Manchán Magan is pictured at one of the many holy wells in Ireland. Photo: TG4.



Viewers in awe of the Capuchin charism

Brandon Scott

Viewers were left captivated as comedian Tommy Tiernan interviewed Capuchin Franciscan, Br Richard Hendrick on his popular Saturday night talk-show last weekend. The highly praised interview saw the pair discuss the eclectic topics of religion, love and Franciscan brewers.

The brother-priest, who lives

and works in Dublin, shared with Tommy that he was drawn to the ways of St Francis after reading a book about him in secondary school and that there is no doubt in his mind there is a soul.

“I worked for quite a number of years as a chaplain in a hospital,” Br Richard told Tommy Tiernan when asked if he believed in a soul.

“There is no doubt in my mind after attending hundreds and hun-

dreds of death beds that it is not just a stopping. Something leaves.

“From what I have seen and experienced, there is something that leaves in that moment. There is a very distinct moment of having a living, breathing human in the room and having the physical remains of a living, breathing human. I think in that moment it is that the essence of that person is no longer with us.”

SVP report estimates that 914,000 people are experiencing deprivation in Ireland

Staff reporter

Responding to the latest data from the Survey of Income and Living Conditions, published last week, the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) says while temporary measures delivered by the Government supported household incomes, far too many households are struggling to make ends meet given the scale of the cost of living crisis.

“The temporary measures

supported household incomes, meaning fewer people had incomes below the poverty line, but this has not translated into an easing of financial difficulties as the data shows deprivation has risen,” SVP have said. “This is because the scale of the cost of living crisis means households continue to have to cut back on essentials they simply can't afford.”

The figures from the Central

Statistics Office show that just over 913,000 people were experiencing deprivation in 2023, up from 16.6% in 2022 to 17.3% in 2023. In addition, 6.4% of households had great difficulty in making ends meet in 2023, compared to 5.5% in 2022. This rises to 17.9% for one parent households and one in five one parent families have gone into debt to meet ordinary living expenses in 2023.

Don't overlook 'the tribe of widows'

There has been, obviously, much discussion about the role of women in the national sphere recently; but one of the groups drawing least attention is what we might call 'the tribe of widows'.

When I was involved, with others, in forming the Irish Women's Liberation Movement in 1970, the position of widows was one of our key concerns. They were often discriminated against in pension rights, and sometimes socially marginalised.

Nature differentiates between the sexes, and one benefit that generally applies to women is that we tend to live longer than men. There are individual exceptions, but the average female lifespan is everywhere longer than the average male one. There are nearly always more widows than widowers.

Widows

Widows felt the need to be included in a feminist movement which sought to improve the lot of women generally, and their lobby was very much part of the 1970 mission. But today, are widows somewhat omitted from the picture?

Were widows more visible when they routinely donned 'widows' weeds'? Maud Gonne, though she wasn't really very happily married to John MacBride, wore black for the rest of her life as a tribute to her late husband's patriotism. That practice of widows wearing black continued in the Mediterranean countries up till modern



Mary Kenny

“Widows have made an immense contribution, over the ages, to the building and adornment of churches and the funding of altars and monuments”

times.

Have widows usually been associated with poverty or penury? The smallest monetary contribution mentioned in the New Testament is 'the widow's mite' – but deemed to be just as valued as any greater one.

“It wasn't unusual, in the Middle Ages, for widows to join or found convents”

And have widows been symbolically linked with loneliness? When print was composed by hot metal, a word sitting alone at the end of a paragraph was called 'a widow', by sub-editors, and deemed suitable for deletion or editing.

Yet, there is also the more cheering tradition of *The Merry Widow*, as musical-

ised by Franz Lehar. And in Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* the Widow Quin is among the friskier of the females portrayed in a rural Irish setting.

In France, at least three champagne houses have been founded by widows, the most famous being La Veuve Clicquot. Many is the time I heard an imbibitor request 'a glass of the Widow'.

Contributions

Widows have made an immense contribution, over the ages, to the building and adornment of churches and the funding of altars and monuments. It wasn't unusual, in the Middle Ages, for widows to join or found convents, like St Brigid of Sweden.

In Ireland, widows like Olivia Mary Taaffe, who launched St Joseph's Young Priests' Society, were often important patronesses in the education of priests.

Widows who might not have had time for religious

practice in their family life – or perhaps felt restrained by a spouse's influence – often return to involvement with the church in widowhood. James Joyce's widow, Nora Barnacle, returned to Catholic practice after the great writer died.

“It's probable that the majority of women will at some point experience widowhood”

Perhaps widows aren't given a special place in the feminist canon today, as they are more likely to be grouped with a broader definition of single women. And perhaps conditions – like pensions – have improved for many.

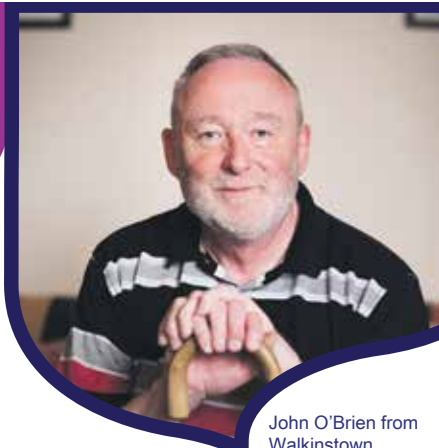
But don't overlook the tribe of widows. It's probable that the majority of women will at some point experience widowhood.



St Brigid of Sweden, a widow who founded a religious order. Photo: CNS.

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Perhaps success is the best revenge...

A leading Scottish judge, Her Honour Lady Rita Rae, recently appeared on the BBC's legendary *Desert Island Discs* and, in telling her story, brought much illumination to recent social history.

When Lady Rae first became a young lawyer in the 1970s, solicitors were often reluctant to engage a woman barrister. She was told that women were 'emotionally unsuitable' for court

work – in 1974! (Had they never heard of Shakespeare's Portia?)

She also encountered anti-Catholic bias, in the Scottish law, and within her own family. Her mother was an Italian Catholic, her father a Glasgow Protestant.

When her father told his own family that his wife was expecting a baby, his father commented bitterly – “you're proud to bring another Roman Catholic into the world?” The grandfather

never accepted his Catholic grandchildren.

When Rita was studying for the bar she heard many anti-Catholic jibes; she always spoke up and disclosed she was a Catholic, since her mother was Italian. “So you're not a Fenian bastard, then?” smirked one of the budding silks.

She became a much-respected judge and Rector of Glasgow University. Perhaps success is indeed the best revenge.

I am more driven by shame than by pride: the endeavour was not to achieve a houseproud appearance, but to avoid a shaming one. I was expecting visitors and it mortified me to think they might spot grime on the kitchen surfaces. And it seemed a suitable purging Lenten ritual anyway...

Mr de Valera, principal author of the Constitution, might have commended me last weekend for spending long hours attending to 'domestic duties'.

I scrubbed, cleaned, spritzed, blitzed, dusted, vacuumed, mopped, polished, shampooed and vaporised in a frenzy of domestic spring-cleaning.

Risks posed by assisted suicide are ‘enormous’ says doctor

Brandon Scott

Commenting in response to the recent decision made by the Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying to recommend legalising assisted suicide and euthanasia in Ireland, Dr Miriam Colleran, consultant in palliative care at Naas Hospital and a member of the Hope Ireland group, a coalition of medical professionals and disability rights advocates who aim to bring informed perspectives to the debate around euthanasia and assisted suicide in Ireland, has said that the risks posed by assisted dying are “enormous”.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Dr Colleran said that she was “surprised” that the committee had dramatically deviated from the analysis of other European counterparts. “We’re surprised that the majority of committee members have taken such a different opinion to the Danish Ethics Committee which recently published a report compiled by 16 of 17 members that safeguards could not be introduced to make assisted dying, euthanasia and/or assisted suicide safe.”

Dr Colleran also voiced her concerns in relation to how the provision of assisted suicide and euthanasia

may add increased pressure on those who are ill or disabled as there may be an expectation on the person to opt for them because they feel they might be a burden on family members. “The evidence shows that people seek assisted dying in particular because of feelings of burden,” she said. A compassionate society gives supports and is also aware of risks. The risk with assisted dying is the inappropriate death of a person. That’s an enormous risk. We are concerned about people feeling pressurised overtly, subtly or from within themselves to avail of assisted dying, euthanasia or assisted suicide.

‘Historic’ election of woman as Pioneer Association’s president



Fr Robert McCabe, new Pioneers president Frances Egan and outgoing President Matt Boylan are pictured after Ms Egan was appointed the Pioneer Association’s first woman president on Sunday, March 10. Photo: John McElroy

Ruadhán Jones

The election of a woman as president of the Pioneers for the first time in the apostolates’ 125-year history has been described as “historic”.

The election of Galway-based mother of four, and grandmother of three, Frances Egan, was announced on Mothers’ Day, Sunday, March 10, with Ms Egan stressing the ongoing importance of the Pioneers’ witness in Ireland.

“The Pioneers has a huge influence on society,” she told *The Irish Catho-*

lic. “I think we’re needed now more than ever.”

Ms Egan encouraged all Pioneers to wear their pins so that people “know we are the people who are praying and helping them along and then obviously we abstain from alcoholic drink”.

The spiritual director to the Pioneers Fr Robert McCabe, expressing his joy at Ms Egan’s election, also highlighted the importance of Pioneer witness.

Fr McCabe noted that a report issued by Alcohol Action Ireland released around the time of Ms

Egan’s appointment shows how “very timely” her election is. The report warned of the increase in alcoholism among women.

Concerns have been raised over the alcohol industry’s marketing campaigns in Ireland which increasingly target women, especially through sport.

It is estimated that alcohol causes at least 200 breast cancers every year in Ireland, but only 21% of women were aware of the connection between alcohol consumption and the risk of developing breast cancer.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Milltown cemetery goes digital

The largest and most historic Catholic burial site located in the City of Belfast has digitised its handwritten burial records dating back to 1866.

Milltown Cemetery’s new digital database will offer electronic access to details of over 200,000 burial records and over 36,000 graves located within this 55-acre landmark graveyard.

The cemetery management team also announced plans to establish a columbarium – a place to house cremated remains – on the grounds of the cemetery.

Fr Martin Graham, Administrator of Milltown Cemetery, said “The announcement of these projects are an indication that the trustees of Milltown Cemetery are committed to the ongoing maintenance and modernisation of the cemetery to protect and secure its heritage, to serve the pastoral needs of parishes across Belfast and to engage the local community who visit this historic sacred location.”

Environment Minister Ryan hears how Catholics are combatting climate change

Brandon Scott

The *Laudato Si’* Working Group (LSWG) held an online meeting with Minister for Environment, Climate Action, Communications and Transport, Eamon Ryan last month where the role of local faith groups in their efforts to combat climate change and other environmental issues with state agencies was discussed.

During the meeting the LSWG highlighted the commitment of the Irish

bishops to restoring 30% of church grounds to nature by 2030 and requested access to grants for parish groups as well as the support of climate action/biodiversity officers to faith communities.

Minister Ryan acknowledged that the Church has a key role in promoting climate justice and referenced the publications of *Laudato Si’* and *Laudate Deum* in this regard. He also spoke of possibilities for Church and State for continued collaboration on climate issues.

Fun at the friary...



The Franciscan novices celebrate Bro. Vianney’s birthday in the international novitiate in Killarney Friary.

It is time to put disability rights at the centre of Ireland's overseas aid



Dualta Roughneen

Six months into my role as CEO of Christian Blind Mission Ireland and I am still finding out how much I have to learn about the rights – and the lack of fulfilment of those rights – of people with disabilities.

I was invited to the launch of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters report *Towards harmonisation of national legislation with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in January where the lack of progress in Ireland was laid out in no uncertain terms.

This is Ireland. We are one of the wealthiest countries in the world, living at a time in history of unparalleled prosperity. Yet, we struggle, as a society, to create systems and structures that make it possible for people with disabilities to contribute fully as citizens.

I am not saying it is easy. But it is possible. Through a shared social contract reasonable accommodation and universal access for people with disabilities should be affordable to Irish society as a collective through the responsibilities delegated to the State. Yet, somehow, despite a relatively abundantly resourced government budget, investment in people with disabilities seems to be low on the list of priorities.

Situation

This is the situation in Ireland. Imagine how it might be for someone like Reena, an 11-year-old girl from Biratnagar in Nepal, who developed cataracts and was losing her sight? Even with the best will in the world, Nepal is not resourced to the extent Ireland is,



Reena (11) had a visible cataract in her right eye and her sight was saved after a successful surgery in CBM supported Biratnagar Eye Hospital.

to provide the type of care necessary for girls like Reena, and all the other children who have a disability or who are at risk of preventable disability.

Cataract surgery in Ireland has become a bit of a political football with many people travelling to Northern Ireland as waiting lists in Ireland for the intervention continue to delay people getting the help they need. When we have this problem in Ireland, it is not surprising that the situation might be much worse in the isolated, mountainous regions of Nepal.

“Girls like Reena cannot wait for systems to change and services to improve. They need surgery immediately. The work of our team and partners in places like Nepal makes this possible”

This is where the work of CBM Ireland really makes a difference. We work with governments to try to improve systems, we support organisations of people with disabilities to lobby for their rights,

but girls like Reena cannot wait for systems to change and services to improve. They need surgery immediately. The work of our team and partners in places like Nepal makes this possible.

Darfur

As International Wheelchair Day just passed on March 1st, I was prompted to think about wheelchair access in Ireland by a wheelchair user who is about to join our Board of Directors. Drop-kerbs are increasingly ubiquitous on Irish streets. They make it possible for wheelchair users to move about the city much easier. Yet they benefit wider society just as much. Parents with push-chairs, people with shopping trolleys – even cyclists illegally mounting footpaths – benefit from this accessibility measure.

Then I thought about my time living and working in Darfur. El-Geneina is the capital of West Darfur. It doesn't have paved roads. Anywhere. It doesn't have footpaths. Its roads are not the type of roads we would be used to even going to the bog to bring home the turf. And I never once, working as an aid worker, thought about how impossible it must be for a wheelchair user to get around. The thought never crossed my mind.

As an engineer, I was responsible for organising a well-drilling programme, installing hand-

pumps for water collection in rural villages. The design never considered whether the pump could be accessed or used by someone with a mobility disability.

Yet, due to war and conflict, lack of access to preventative treatment, the number of people needing wheelchairs in places like Darfur, is much higher than in Ireland. At the same time, drop kerbs are not really a problem because most people who need them do not even have wheelchairs.

War and poverty have that effect on disability. It is a vicious cycle. People with disabilities do not have the supports they need in many countries in the world. War deprioritises investment in disability inclusion. Poverty means already limited resources to be invested in the first place. War means increased poverty and less development. Poverty exacerbates conflict over ever more scarce resources.

“Reaching the furthest behind first is a key component of Ireland's overseas aid policy, A Better World. Yet, disability hardly gets a mention”

When I was responsible for organising large distributions of food and other basic necessities for people who were forced to flee war, I was oblivious to how or whether someone with a disability would be able to get to the distribution site, never mind how they might carry a 50kg bag of cereal home with them. Building toilets in schools in North

Korea, our designs had none of the basics – no ramps, no wide doors, no handrails. Building schools in Afghanistan, I do not remember any access ramps in my designs.

To be honest, I probably thought there was enough to do without those extra considerations. As an aid worker, I always had a very tight budget to work with. It never stretched far enough for all that was needed and it costs less to be disability exclusive. What I was blind to is that the people who needed assistance the most, are the ones who are harder to reach.

That is the reality of the contexts that CBM Ireland works in. And often the metrics for accessing funding are viewed through the lens of raw numbers. How many people can you reach? What is the cost per person? Aid agencies of course have to be accountable and when we are spending tax-payers money, or generous donations from our supporters, we should always consider value for money.

But it shouldn't be the defining consideration. Reaching the furthest behind first is a key component of Ireland's overseas aid policy, A Better World. Yet, disability hardly gets a mention. Here at CBM, we feel strongly that, as part of Ireland's overseas aid commitments, a disability strategy is necessary to ensure that proper consideration of the rights of people with disabilities and the costs of meeting those rights are factored into how we deliver Irish aid.

Strategy

That strategy also needs to adopt a twin-track approach highlighted by the Disability Matters Committee. Mainstreaming disability (which I failed to do when organising my food distributions) so that all overseas aid is disability inclusive is one track to help prevent inexperienced aid workers like myself from falling foul of their unrecognised blind spots; and the second track should be funds for dedicated projects focused on disability issues, that benefit girls like Reena and the millions more like her.

Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2018. The UNCRPD calls for States to ensure all its international cooperation is inclusive of people with disabilities. The Disability Matters Committee made it clear that Ireland has work to do to fulfil that commitment. There is no time like the present. Girls like Reena cannot wait.

i Dualta Roughneen is the CEO of CBM Ireland, an international disability rights organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and those at risk of disability, in low-income regions of the world.
i www.cbm.ie/donate/ : Please visit here if you'd like to donate

“As an aid worker, I always had a very tight budget to work with. It never stretched far enough for all that was needed and it costs less to be disability exclusive. What I was blind to is that the people who needed assistance the most, are the ones who are harder to reach”

The Irish Catholic

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**WOMEN DON'T WANT TO BE FORCED AWAY FROM
THEIR BABIES TO PUT BREAD ON THE TABLE**



Maria Steen



Senator Rónán Mullen

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Govt must do better for families, carers and those with disabilities



Maria Steen

Last Saturday morning at 9am, the counting of votes began on the 'family' and 'care' referendums held the day before. Soon results started to trickle through from count centres around the country. By 10am political journalists were calling it: it was a No vote in both referendums.

Following the announcement of the massive defeat, the handwringing started, with RTE journalists asking politicians: "Where did it all go wrong?" The answers varied: the government campaign was lacklustre, and didn't get the message out properly; the people did not understand what they were voting for; the 'far-right' were to blame.

Dishonest

The truth is that government ministers were engaged in lots of debates in the run up to the referendum, and as against the No side, their messaging was widespread and clearly backed by ready funds: posters, leaflets, and social media advertising for the Yes side were plentiful.

As for voters, they understood all too well what the government was proposing, and what was at stake: a further step in the erasing and degradation of women and of motherhood, and an attack on the home and marriage. Not alone that, but we could all see that the suggestion that the proposal was designed to do something for carers and those with disabilities was as insincere as the wording was

ineffective.

And as for the 'far-right', it would seem they now comprise 70% or so of the electorate.

The Yes campaign shone a light on all that is wrong with Irish politics: downright dishonest campaigning in which 'facts' were twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools; easy, empty gestures by a Government more interested in social media 'likes' than the difficult business of governing the country; and the elevation of so-called 'progressive' causes over the bread-and-butter issues that are actually affecting the lives of Irish citizens.

“The result was a rejection of a political body that is out of touch with the people”

The resounding defeat tells a story: people are fed up with the stifling consensus among the political elites, in which any voices that dare to oppose the establishment line is ridiculed, rejected or ignored – or portrayed as a 'basket of deplorables' or more colloquially, 'prophets of doom'. The result was a rejection of a political body that is out of touch with the people, rather than what the media would like to portray: a people out of touch with their political betters.

The Irish people saw through it all and chose to reject the mindless, de-gendered, so-called progressivism on offer. Their No vote was also a rejection of the NGO class which, funded by public monies, fell in lock-step

with the politicians who write the cheques that pay their salaries. The National Women's Council of Ireland, which pressured for this referendum, deserves a special mention here. Never has an organisation supposedly representing women done so little for so few, yet its influence over government policy is disproportionately large, purporting, as it does, to be the voice of women.

Thankfully, the women of Ireland rejected this proposal. A *Sunday Independent* exit poll suggested that almost 75% of women voted no to the 'care' referendum. Anecdotally, I can say that following the Primetime debate in which I took part, I was inundated with messages from women from all walks of life and of all political hues, expressing – some with great emotion – their vehement opposition to the proposal to erase mothers from the constitution.

Women

But the No vote was not all doom and gloom, as Micheal Martin might say. It was also a positive statement by the Irish people of gratitude and love.

It was an expression of gratitude to women for the work they do in their homes without which, most people recognise, the common good cannot be attained. It was an expression of love for mothers and the unique and irreplaceable role they play in the lives of their children and families, and a demand from mothers that the State do more to support them in their wish to care for their own children in their own homes.

It was also a demand, motivated by love, that the government do better, not just by mothers and their children, but by families and carers and those with disabilities.

And it was a recognition

that the permanent, public commitment of two people to each other and to their children in marriage continues to deserve special recognition in the basic law of our country.

One friend told me that after hearing the debates, and thinking of how precious short a time we have with our children while they are small, she decided to put in a request for a career break. Would

that we had a society where children could be cared for by their own parents in the comfort and security of their own home without their parents being penalised for it in our tax system. Would that we had a society where women were respected rather than being de-gendered and erased. Would that we had a society where those with disabilities and those who care for them were given

real supports.

Message

The electorate has sent a clear message to politicians that they should spend taxpayers' funds on providing resources to those in need, rather than on NGOs and political virtue-signalling exercises that appeal primarily to their own narcissism. The political elites would do well to take note.

“The No vote was not all doom and gloom, as Micheal Martin might say. It was also a positive statement by the Irish people of gratitude and love”





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“It was also a demand, motivated by love, that the government do better, not just by mothers and their children, but by families and carers and those with disabilities”

A 'horrible vision of society' rejected in Friday's referenda



The Irish will never want to remove 'mothers' from the Constitution, writes **David Quinn**

No-one expected such resounding defeats of the two referendums put before the Irish people by the Government, proposals that were backed by every party in the Dail aside from Aontu with its one TD, and Independent Ireland with its three.

The referendum aimed at removing the word 'mother' from the Constitution was beaten by a massive three to one, and the referendum aimed at introducing the nebulous term 'durable relationships' into the text was defeated by two to one.

In other words, almost the entirety of the political (and media) establishment found themselves at odds with an overwhelming majority of voters.

Scale

To put the scale of the defeats for our political class in context, same-sex marriage was passed by a 24-point margin, repeal of the 8th Amendment by a 33-point margin, but the 'durable relationships' proposal was beaten by 34 points and the one on 'carers' by an absolutely stunning 48 points.

The big majority in favour of repealing the pro-life amendment was a big disappointment for those of us who believe all human life should be valued from the womb to the tomb. Most of us probably believed after



Family members attend the Festival of Families in Croke Park stadium in Dublin August 25, 2018. Photo: CNS

this that the public appetite for further liberal changes to the Constitution would persist. So, clearly, did the Government.

The Government hoped it would be able to frame the debate as another contest between Catholic Ireland and modern Ireland, between the Ireland of de Valera and John Charles McQuaid, and the 'bright, tolerant, and all-inclusive new Ireland' (as the Government would see it).

“His liberal credentials could not be denied. He was no representative of Dev's Ireland. His legal credentials could not be denied either”

But things did not work out like that at all. A major spanner was put in the works early on by Senator Michael McDowell, the former Justice Minister and former Attorney General who

voted for same-sex marriage in 2015 and to repeal the 8th in 2018.

His liberal credentials could not be denied. He was no representative of Dev's Ireland. His legal credentials could not be denied either.

Then, various commentators who also voted Yes in 2015 and 2018 emerged such as Brenda Power and Sarah Carey. Embarrassingly for the Government these were women, and they weren't buying the line that the section of the Constitution on mothers was totally sexist and should be ditched.

They did agree that some of the language was out-of-date but not the basic sentiment to try and protect mothers from being forced out of the home by economic necessity.

Usual suspects

Some of the 'usual suspects' did take part in the debate. I appeared on a couple of programmes, as did Senator Rónán Mullen. Maria Steen appeared on three RTÉ programmes during the campaign, including the last major debate on RTÉ television.

This was Prime Time on the Tuesday night before the vote. Maria appeared on the show with Tánaiste Micheal Martin.

“He is supposed to be a seasoned professional. He looked anything but that night”

I actually wondered in advance whether Martin would try to paint her in the colours of 'old Ireland' to try and warn the middle ground off her, and he did indeed try to do it, but it backfired very badly.

He accused her of being a "prophet of doom" in past referendums such as the ones on marriage, abortion and divorce. But as she pointed out, she was too young to take part in the divorce debate. She said she was proud to take part in the other two.

However, Martin accused her in such a snide, peevish and contemptuous way, that it came over very badly. He was like a desperate boxer who knew he was being out-pointed took a last, lunging swing at his opponent, missed, and fell to the canvass instead.

He is supposed to be a seasoned professional. He looked anything but that night.

In any given referendum

on social issues, you can count on about a third of people to vote for the 'conservative' position, a third for the liberal position and the rest will be the middle. It is obviously crucial to land the third in the middle.

Split

What is interesting about the last few referendums is that the third in the middle all come down on one side or the other in the last days and do not split. This is what handed a heavy defeat to the pro-life side in 2018 and has handed an even heavier defeat to the Government this time.

Where does this leave us? I don't think it means Ireland is suddenly about to embrace the Church again, not by any means.

But there is clearly a limit to the public appetite for being asked to constantly move in a more liberal direction, and especially when even the Government wasn't clear on what they were asking. They could never explain properly what a "durable relationship" is.

I think that if the Government asked people to give some kind of Constitutional recognition to non-marital families, they might have voted for that, dependent on the wording.

For example, on this point the German Constitution

says: "Children born outside of marriage shall be provided by legislation with the same opportunities for physical and mental development and for their position in society as are enjoyed by those born within marriage."

“We want to see motherhood given a special place in this country, even if our political establishment does not”

But I don't see any way the Irish people will ever delete the word 'mother' from the Constitution. They might opt for a less old-fashioned version of the so-called 'woman in the home' provision, but not one without the word 'mother' in it.

We want to see motherhood given a special place in this country, even if our political establishment does not.

Since the results came out, mothers have continued to be almost totally ignored by the Government and main opposition parties and, be it noted, by the National Women's Council which receives almost €1 million per annum from the State to represent the voices of all women, but clearly represents the voices of only some women. It certainly does not represent mothers.

Mothers are easily ignored because they are not politically mobilised. They are too busy doing other things.

The Government only pays them attention in the form of extra money for daycare even though most mothers don't want to put their children in daycare and would prefer to mind them at home if they had the economic freedom to do so.

Any smart political party will develop policies aimed specially at mothers. Aontú and Independent Ireland are the most likely to do that.

The main parties will not because they don't want to protect mothers from being forced out of the home by economic necessity.

They want them all in paid work and all their children in daycare. What a horrible vision of society. As we can now see, it is not one shared by the public.

“There is clearly a limit to the public appetite for being asked to constantly move in a more liberal direction, and especially when even the Government wasn't clear on what they were asking”



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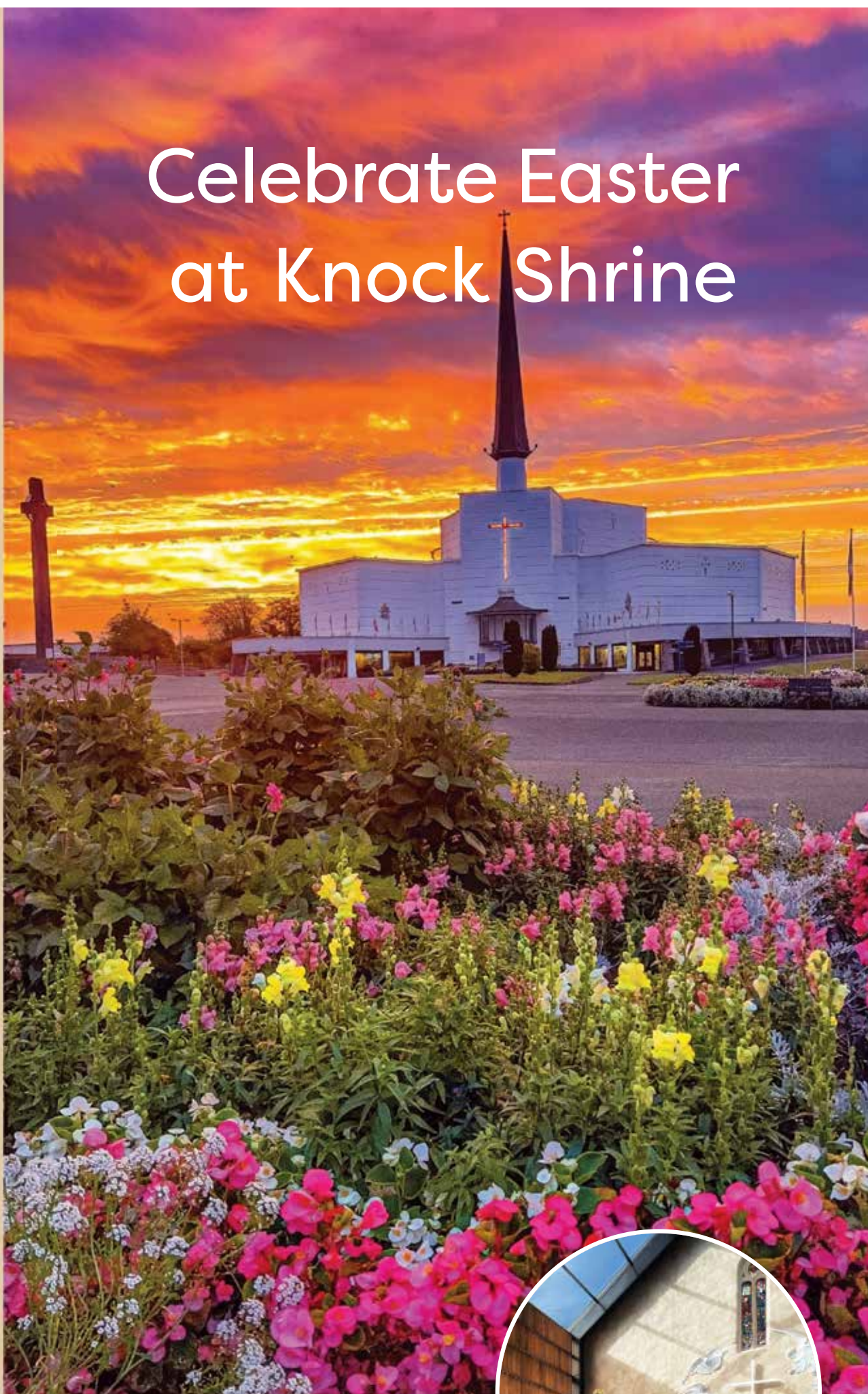
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Knock Shrine – A Sacred Place of Peace and Renewal

Referendum result damning for political leadership class



The Government and the main opposition parties have a lot to think about. They should start by apologising to the people today, writes **Rónán Mullen**

The people of Ireland have had their first chance in four years to give their view as an electorate on the way they are being governed. This referendum result is their verdict on the political leadership class and it is a damning one.

Faced with secretly drawn-up proposals to dilute the significance of marriage for family life, and to dishonour women and motherhood by removing the only direct reference to their interests in Bunreacht na hÉireann, and observing the ruthless way in which debate on these proposals was suppressed in the Dáil and Seanad, the people have – I think it is fair to say – snapped back. They weren't confused. They knew what they were voting for. They didn't like it. And they rejected it massively. The Irish people can be led. But they won't be pushed. The arrogance, secrecy, insiderism, and sometimes duplicity, that characterised the selling of the so-called 'Family' and 'Care' referendums, not just by the Government and their allies in State-funded NGOs but also by the main opposition parties, Sinn Féin and the parties of the Left, has got the response it deserved. This arrogance and insiderism has characterised the Government's handling of a whole range of issues in recent years – from aspects of public health management during the pandemic, to controversies in recent times around migration and gender and the pushing of

“That culture wars and ideology are the Government's focus, not the real challenges that people are facing in their lives”

ideology at children in schools. In all these areas, we see a Government that seems to be in a propaganda war against its own people, unwilling to face up to or even acknowledge the existence of hard questions, mainly backed up by opposition parties who largely share their point of view that the people are not to be trusted, and a media that seems too often worried about biting the hand that feeds it.

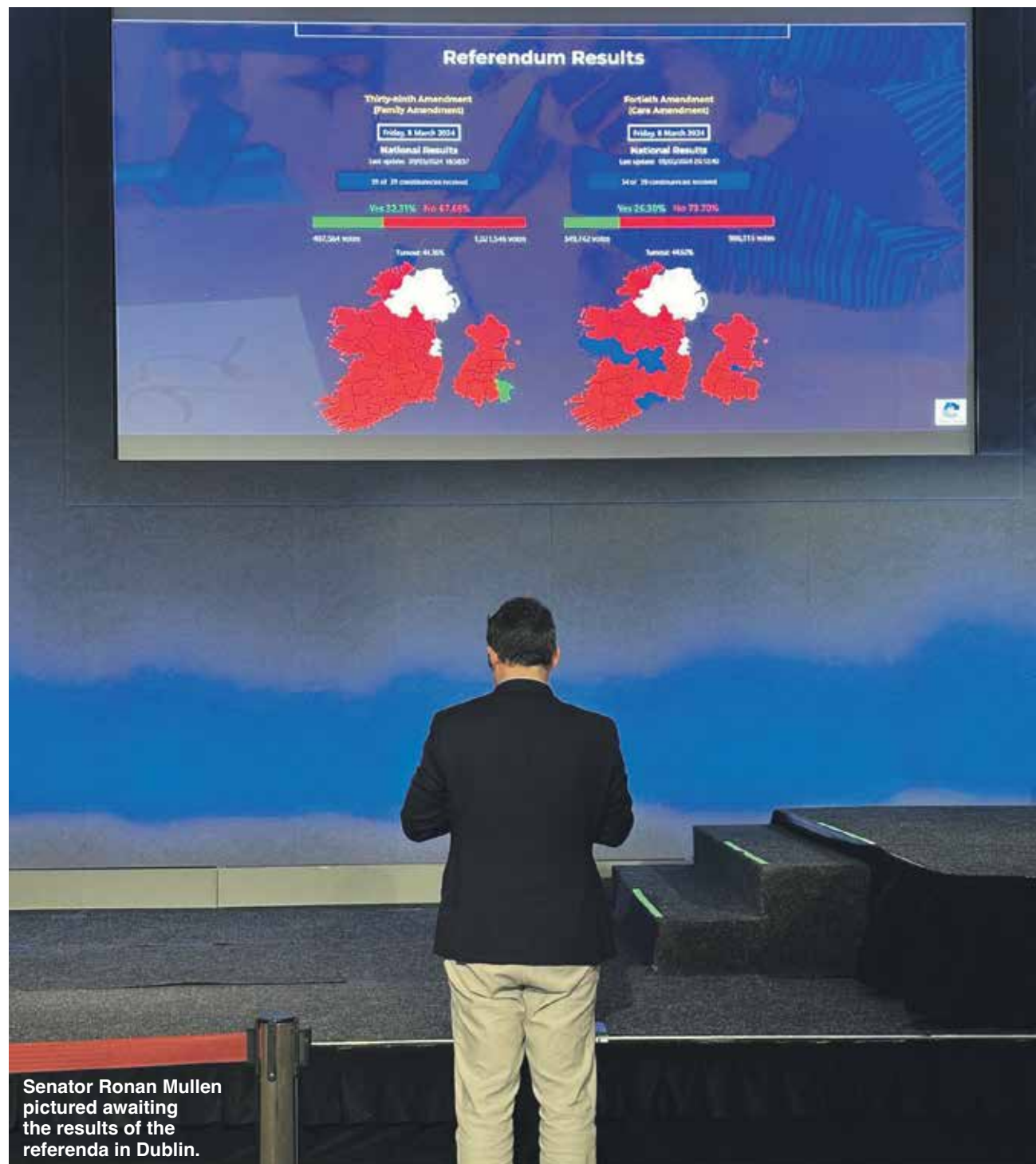
“The Government must apologise to people on this specific point and the main opposition parties should acknowledge their complicity in this”

The result is a loss of faith among many ordinary people in our democratic institutions. And to the rise of the citizen journalist and the citizen politician. Because the people do not want faceless people, with names we don't know and no accountability to us, shaping our destiny. Today we see a resounding defeat for the Government, Sinn Féin and other parties (with the honourable exception of Aontú). There are lessons to be learned:

– You can't put referendum questions to the people without properly teasing them out in the Oireachtas first. The Government must apologise to people on this specific point and the main opposition parties should acknowledge their complicity in this.

– You can't hijack the apparatus and resources of the State to push through your own ideological agenda. In that context, the three Government parties should be pressured to fundraise to pay back between €15m and €20m of taxpayers' money that they squandered on a standalone referendum.

– You can't ignore for years the importance of promoting marriage as the bedrock of a stable society and then try to get rid of the only Constitu-



Senator Ronan Mullen pictured awaiting the results of the referenda in Dublin.

tional incentive to marriage. The Government must now, in the light of today's result, commit to policies to promote marriage as an institution that serves our society well.

– You can't use a promised recognition of care as the carrot to entice people to get rid of the only bit of Constitutional support that's there for mothers and the vital work they do for us all. The Government must reflect on what it must do in future to promote recognition for fathers and carers without diluting the special Constitutional pledge to support motherhood.

Groupthink

The Government must stop playing ideological games. The resounding reaffirma-

tion of family life, marriage and the role of mothers, and the rejection of NGO-sponsored groupthink means the Government should press the pause button on its culture war policies, including to name three:

“Right now, the Independents and Aontú are the only show in town telling the truth to people”

– Its controversial hate speech legislation, with its lack of definition of hate and its strange new definition of gender; this bill threatens our political freedom of expression.

– The abuse of the education system to promote gender ideology.

– Any legislation that would try to underpin surrogacy, which turns children into commodities. Right now, the Independents and Aontú are the only show in town telling the truth to people. That culture wars and ideology are the Government's focus, not the real challenges that people are facing in their lives.

Concerns

Finally, there are two major concerns that have arisen in this campaign. One is the extent of mistruths peddled at the highest levels of Government. This brings politics into disrepute and

cannot go unchallenged. Number two is the apparent abuse of the McKenna judgement principles which forbid the spending of public money on advocating one side of a referendum. When an organisation like the National Women's Council, which gets 95% of its staffing costs from the State, is leading one side of a referendum campaign without any consultation with ordinary women across the country, you see another blatant case of insiderism and the abuse of taxpayers' money.

The Government and the main opposition parties have a lot to think about. They should start by apologising to the people today.

Referendum shows it's time to let NGOs sink or swim



Taxpayer-funded lobbyists have had far too much influence for too long, writes Michael Kelly

One of the standout moments for me in the national count centre in Dublin Castle on Saturday afternoon was a brief exchange between Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín.

The referendum result hadn't been called yet, but the mood music from early morning was indicating that the Government's proposals were going up in smoke.

At the castle Mr Tóibín came darting down the staircase, smiling from ear-to-ear as he finished a phone call evidently bringing more good news from a local count centre.

As he reached the bottom of the staircase, he noticed the Taoiseach huddled in a corner with his kitchen cabinet.

His glee uncontrollable, Mr Tóibín went right to the heart of the gathering and extended his hand saying, "hard luck, Taoiseach". Mr Varadkar congratulated the leader of the winning side with a pained smile.

Priorities

An hour or so later, I was at the top of the same staircase with barrister Maria Steen – who so comprehensively defeated Tánaiste Micheál Martin in one of the last debates in the campaign – when the hierarchy of the National Women's Council of Ireland arrived.

Maria warmly smiled a greeting as Orla O'Connor and her disciples passed by, but there wasn't even a side glance from the funereal procession of long faces.

You have good days and bad days in politics, and for those considered outsiders by the political Establishment like Deputy Tóibín and Mrs Steen Saturday was a

good day.

And it was an extremely bad day for Mr Varadkar and Mr Martin, and an even worse day for Ms O'Connor, the National Women's Council of Ireland and the hugely bloated NGO sector that threw its considerable weight behind the referendum campaign.

The message doesn't seem to have been lost on the Government. Minister of State Peter Burke was on RTÉ radio on Saturday afternoon saying that his Fine Gael party was going to have to see just how in-touch with ordinary people the NGOs they had listened to on this campaign are.

“Start listening to the people, stop talking down to them and stop listening to the out of touch Greens and NGOs”

Fianna Fáil veteran Willie O'Dea went further, taking to social media to insist that his fellow Soldiers of Destiny need “to get back to basics and abandon the Hate Speech Bill etc. Focus on housing, health and law and order and stop playing to the woke gallery.

“Start listening to the people, stop talking down to them and stop listening to the out of touch Greens and NGOs,” he said on X, formerly Twitter.

Will it have an effect on the body politic? Well, only time will tell. But it's certainly heartening that a long-overdue debate has begun about the role and influence of non-governmental organisations and lobbyists on Government policy.

According to the most recent figures, a staggering 164,922 people in Ireland are employed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a combined turnover of €13.9 billion. Some €6.2 billion of that comes from the taxpayer.

To put that in perspective, NGOs – lobby groups, advocacy organisations and

“Many NGOs are little more than well-oiled lobby groups that spend their days at taxpayers' expense meeting politicians and senior civil servants to try to influence policy and social change without any democratic scrutiny”



Young Aontú members and candidates celebrate the result of the March 8 referendum at Dublin Castle.

charities – employ roughly the same number of people as the agri-food sector in Ireland.

The Government spends almost as much public money funding NGOs as it does on housing, and more than the budgets of the Department for Justice and the Department for Transport combined.

Some NGOs provide invaluable services in the international aid sphere or in disability services, and the State funding they receive has a real impact on people's lives.

But many NGOs are little more than well-oiled lobby groups that spend their days at taxpayers' expense meeting politicians and senior civil servants to try to influence policy and social change without any democratic scrutiny.

Re-evaluation

There needs to be a full and immediate review of the funding and relevance of NGOs and their highly-paid executives. If these bodies are so important, why can't they raise funds from the public for their survival rather than nursing off the taxpayers?

NGOs and lobby groups have had far too much influence over our Government for too long. Most of them should be defunded.

This is, perhaps, one of the reasons why the Government

was content to railroad the family and care referendums through the Dáil and Seanad.

Both proposals were accepted by every political party except Aontú without the basic pre-legislative meetings that are normal where TDs and senators can question experts on the proposed laws.

So confident in the proposals was the Government that it even side-stepped normal Oireachtas procedures and forced the legislation through without debate in a rarely-used process known as guil-lotining.

For the Government, these referenda were a done deal, but on the day the people wrecked everything and stole from Taoiseach Leo Varadkar a valuable moment to prove to the world that he is modern.

That's also why International Women's Day was chosen and the upper courtyard at Dublin Castle prepared for the repeal-like victory celebrations.

But it wasn't to be, and the spin doctors of this out-of-touch Government turned to nightmares.

Picture the scene as I arrived at Dublin Castle on Saturday. There were dozens of gardaí there to greet the few bewildered tourists who were set on visiting the former stronghold of British rule in Ireland.

I made my way in to the heavily-fortified count centre, and the security guard on duty seemed pleased at my arrival since opening the gate gave him something to do and momentarily eased his boredom. “It's the quietest I've ever seen,” a cleaner inside told me.

Peadar Tóibín cut a confident figure in contrast to the grim long faces of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Green Party, Sinn Féin, Labour the Social Democrats and People Before Profit.

“Mainstream parties are hurting, and they don't like being challenged”

Without friends in the media or any State funding, his Aontú party had spear-

headed this David and Goliath effort and succeeded against the might of the entire political establishment.

Of course, it will suit the media to hand the victory to Independent Senator Michael McDowell who, sitting on a university senate seat, poses no threat to the current order.

Aontú on the other hand will be running candidates going up against establishment parties in every corner of the country.

Mainstream parties are hurting, and they don't like being challenged – expect attacks on Aontú to intensify.



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The 'special position' some NGOs have has been challenged ... now let's go one further



Eilís Mulroy

It happened to be at one of the count centres last Saturday morning as ballot boxes opened and early tallies showed what was in store in the 'family' and 'care' referendums. Looking at the results rolling in, one 'No' voter remarked to me that he recently read about how much funding the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) get from the State and how out of touch they are when it comes to representing the views and concerns of Irish women.

The NWCi campaigned heavily for a Yes/Yes vote in the referendums. Over 85% of the funding they receive comes from taxpayers like you and me. It's something we've known for years but as the results poured in on Saturday, for the first time, it started to be talked about more openly, not just in count centres but on the national airwaves as well.

After Saturday's result where the No vote was close to 68% in the 'Family' referendum and almost 74% in the 'Care' vote, the Government, who misjudged the public mood very badly themselves, cannot credibly stand in the way of a serious examination of the funding of certain NGOs who clearly are not representing the wishes and concerns of the people they are supposed to be representing. A special Oireachtas committee should, at the very least, be convened to look at the issue and propose reforms.

Influence

Groups like the NWCi have also had a grossly inflated influence over government policy on abortion, particularly in recent times in relation to shaping the three year review of the abortion legislation. At the same time, the NWCi have ignored the voices of women who hold an opposing view on abortion, including women who have opted for abortion and

“Senator Gavan said that Together for Safety ‘drew up its own Bill and I was very proud to introduce it in the Seanad’ and went on to say, ‘all credit for this legislation belongs to Together for Safety’. By his own admission, Together for Safety were the authors of the Bill”



A number of women supporting the pro-life cause hold a vigil outside of the Dáil. Photo: Pro-Life campaign.

subsequently regretted the decision.

Speaking of NGOs influencing the abortion debate, a less well known group called Together for Safety has exerted an inordinate influence over the Minister for Health with regard to his so called 'Safe Access Zones' bill. Together for Safety it should be said has a dreadful record when it comes to making accurate public statements.

“To date, CUMH has not received any complaints from patients regarding the protests”

Two University Hospitals were forced to issue public statements setting the record straight following claims made by Together for Safety. In one statement, University of Limerick Hospitals Group took issue with claims that there had been

"intimidatory" anti-abortion protests outside its facilities.

And a spokesperson for the Cork University Hospital told *The Irish Examiner* last year that "to date, CUMH has not received any complaints from patients regarding the protests". The spokesperson also explained that alleged protests are very "infrequent" and "typically consist of between two and four [people]".

None of this stopped the Minister for Health from leaning on the group for advice. In July 2022, Stephen Donnelly issued a statement paying tribute to Together for Safety with the following words: "I wish to acknowledge the helpful public discussion on safe access zones over recent months, and in particular the work of the Together for Safety group in informing the development of legislative proposals".

Seanad

The bill in question is currently before the Seanad and will, if passed, create sprawling exclusion zones

of 100-metres around every hospital and GP clinic in the country. The Bill would not just prohibit organised 'protests' but also criminalise any action which might be seen as an attempt to 'influence' a woman's decision to have an abortion. This is a sweeping category which covers many forms of constitutionally protected rights with regard to peaceful assembly and expression.

“They've also been contacting TDs to lobby them, meeting them in person to lobby them, and arranging photocalls at Leinster House to push for the draconian new law”

Though Together for Safety don't appear to be State funded, there is still an onus on them to register with the Standards in Public Offices Commission (in accordance with the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015) if they are lobbying public representatives to achieve

political change.

It's clear from what has been said on the record by Stephen Donnelly and several other Oireachtas members that Together for Safety has not just lobbied politicians but in fact has helped draft the first attempt at 'safe access zones' legislation which was introduced in the Seanad by Sinn Féin Senator Paul Gavan in 2021. They've also been contacting TDs to lobby them, meeting them in person to lobby them, and arranging photocalls at Leinster House to push for the draconian new law.

In September 2022, Senator Gavan said that Together for Safety "drew up its own Bill and I was very proud to introduce it in the Seanad" and went on to say, "all credit for this legislation belongs to Together for Safety". By his own admission, Together for Safety were the authors of the Bill.

Lobbying

Despite mounting a considerable lobbying campaign that has been widely acknowledged, Together for Safety, which has its provenance in the Limerick Feminist Network, does not appear to be registered

with the Register of Lobbying (Lobbying.ie) maintained by the Standards in Public Office Commission.

“All women's voices should be represented and listened to, not simply those of a cabal of activists”

This simply adds to the impression that the tail is wagging the dog when it comes to government policy on abortion. The fact that such intensive lobbying has been carried out raises serious questions about the ethics of the behind-the-scenes lobbying which underpinned this Bill's introduction.

All women's voices should be represented and listened to, not simply those of a cabal of activists who have the ear of senior and influential members of the political class. It's high time that the funding of and the level of influence these type of organisations have over government policy is scrutinised.

i Eilís Mulroy is Chief Officer and spokesperson for the Pro-Life campaign.

Pope takes a swipe at gender theory, says it 'cancels humanity'



Elise Ann Allen

When he was elected Successor of Peter in 2013, Pope Francis asked the pontifical academies to study the phenomenon of human trafficking, making the fight against it one of the first and most enduring hallmarks of his papacy.

Now, it appears the Pope has set a new topic in his sights: So-called "gender theory", saying it "cancels differences" and therefore "cancels humanity" in an audience with participants in a March 1-2 conference titled, "Man-Woman Image of God: For an Anthropology of Vocations".

Francis has repeatedly condemned gender theory throughout his nearly 11-year reign, calling it at various junctures "ideological colonisation", a "mistake in the human mind", an expression of "frustration and resignation", a "war on marriage", and "nefarious".

In his traditional New Year's speech to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, which this year took place January 8, the Pope again condemned gender theory, calling it an "extremely dangerous" phenomenon that threatens genuine human rights.

Lamented

Pointing to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Pope Francis in that speech lamented that "in recent decades attempts have been made to introduce new rights that are neither fully consistent with those originally defined nor always acceptable".

"They have led to instances of ideological colonisation, in which gender theory plays a central role; the latter is extremely dangerous since it cancels differences in its claim to make everyone equal," he said, saying, "these instances of ideological colonisation prove injurious and create divisions between states, rather than fostering peace".

In his meeting this month with participants in the "Man-Woman Image of God: For an Anthropology of Vocations" conference, Francis in a brief off-the-cuff greeting said that the event held great importance, "because today the ugliest

danger is gender ideology, which cancels differences".

"I asked that studies be done about this terrible ideology of our time, which cancels differences and makes everything the same," he said, saying that to cancel differences is "to cancel humanity". He then, as he often has, referred to twentieth century novel *Lord of the World* by Robert Benson, an apocalyptic work centering on the reign of the antichrist, calling the book "prophetic, because it shows this tendency to cancel all differences".

Francis had his prepared remarks read aloud by an official of the Vatican's Secretariat of State, saying he is still suffering from the effects of a cold that make it difficult to deliver long speeches, but he offered a spontaneous greeting and farewell to the group.

Gender theory is not a new topic for Pope Francis, who spoke of "ideological colonisation" as early as 2015, on his return flight from the Philippines, nor for the Roman Curia"

The two-day conference, which has drawn scholars, theologians, philosophers, and other experts from around the world, was organised by the Centre for Research and Anthropology of Vocations (CRAV), established in 2020 by Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect emeritus of the Vatican's Dicastery for Bishops, who serves as its president and is widely considered to be a close papal aide.

Jesuit Cardinal Gianfranco Ghirlanda, an expert in Canon Law and a close papal advisor, is a member of CRAV, as is Italian Sister Linda Pocher, who has addressed the past two sessions of the Pope's Council of Cardinals advisory body, speaking on the topic of women in the Church, and who recently said Pope Francis is in favour of the women's diaconate.

Gender theory is not a new topic for Pope Francis, who spoke of "ideological colonisation" as early as 2015, on his return flight from the Philippines, nor for the Roman Curia. In 2019, the then-Congregation for Catholic Education, which has since been folded into the Vatican's Dicastery for Culture and Education, published a document titled, "Male and

female he created them: For a path of dialogue on the issue of gender in education".

The text was offered as a tool for educators on how to address the topic of human sexuality and gender amid the increased prevalence of so-called gender theory in schools, as well as academic institutions and environments.

In 2021, gender theory became a hot source of debate as the Vatican and the Italian government feuded over a draft bill that would have made gender theory a mandatory part of the curriculum in schools.

The so-called "DDL Zan," named for openly gay parliamentarian Alessandro Zan who introduced it, was a proposed anti-discrimination bill which sought to impose legal penalties for discrimination based on sexual orientation, and which strove to incorporate gender theory into school curricula, including an annual anti-homophobia day at schools.

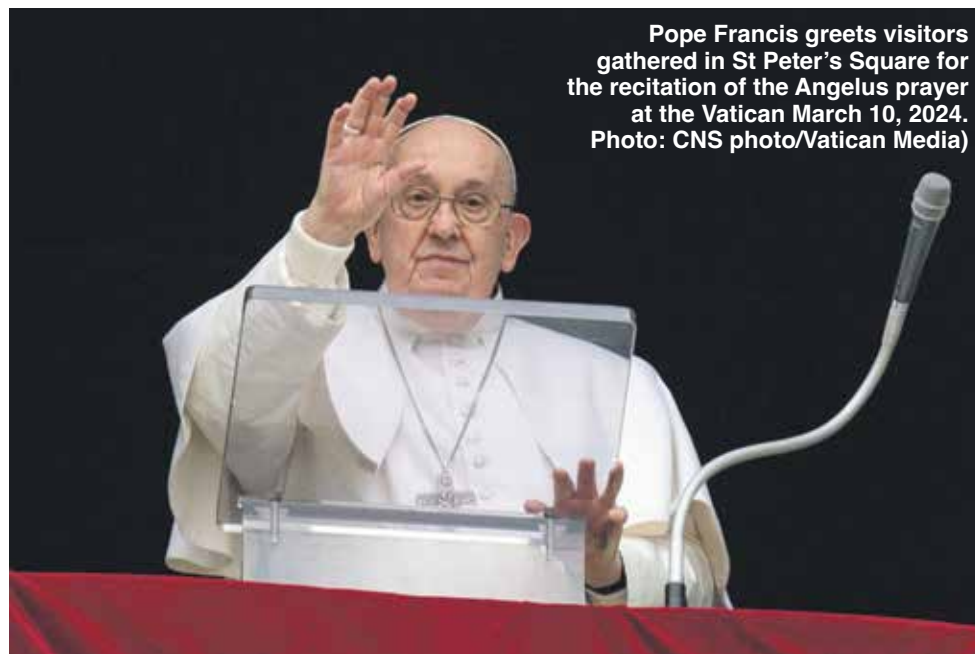
Unprecedented

In an unprecedented move, the Holy See intervened at the state level, issuing a nota verbale, meaning a formal diplomatic communication, to the Italian government in objection to the bill. In the nota verbale, the Vatican for the first time invoked the 1929 Lateran Pacts, which established Vatican City State as a sovereign entity and which governs relations between Italy and the Holy See, to oppose the bill on grounds that it would criminalise Church teaching on marriage and the family, thus violating constitutional guarantees of religious freedom.

Both the bill itself and the Holy See's objections were a source of intense public debate for months, however, the bill was eventually defeated in the Italian senate and a new version has not been presented.

In his speech, Pope Francis highlighted the goal of the conference to explore the "anthropological dimension" of every vocation, which implies an evaluation of vocation for both men and women. Pope Francis when speaking about the various life vocations in the Church, such as the priesthood, consecrated life, and marriage, has stressed the need to value the differences between men and women, invoking Swiss priest and theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar's "Petrine" and "Marian" principles, which explore the Church's ministerial and mystical dimensions.

Francis has often referred to these principles when speaking about the role of women in the Church, specifically the Church's ban on women priests, noting that for von



Pope Francis greets visitors gathered in St Peter's Square for the recitation of the Angelus prayer at the Vatican March 10, 2024. Photo: CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Balthasar, Mary held a higher place in the Church than Peter, using this as an example of how women in the Catholic Church can have a more significant role than men, even if they are not ordained.

Pocher, who spoke to the Pope's Council of Cardinals in

December and in February, weighed in on these principles in an interview with a Spanish magazine after the December session, saying there is no "rigid" separation between men and women in applying these principles, and that "both the Marian

principle and the Petrine principle belong to men and women, and are carried out differently in each person".

Elise Ann Allen currently works as a Senior Correspondent for Crux in Rome.

The Irish Catholic

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Out&About

Goin' Gospel...



TIPPERARY: Bishop Fintan Monahan joins Borrisokane's gospel choir as they celebrated the first Sunday in Lent.



BELFAST: Trócaire's Lent campaign 2024 is launched at St Teresa's Parish Belfast as Primary 4 pupils received Trócaire boxes from Miss Mary Hardy.



CORK: Attending the Lenten Gathering to mark Trócaire's work on Climate Change and Water Justice at Wilton Parish Centre are Fr Damien O'Mahony, Trócaire Diocesan Representative; Janet Twomey, Centre and Volunteers Officer; Salome Mumba, Irrigation and Natural Resource Manager Trócaire Malawi; Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin; Dr. Gertrude Cotter, School of Education UCC; and Jane Mellett, Church Outreach Manager Trócaire. Photo: Mike English.

IN SHORT

All Ireland rosary rally to take place in June

The annual All Ireland rosary rally will take place in Knock Marian Shrine on Saturday, June 1, with organisers aiming to top the 10,000 attendees in 2023.

"The last few years, with so much unrest, violence, and of course the pandemic, have awoken many to the need for and the importance of prayer, and to especially turn to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary," said one of the organisers Fr Marius O'Reilly.

The rally will begin at 9.30am with a Marian Conference in the St John's Centre with keynote speakers including missionaries and religious from across the globe.

At 11.30am, pilgrims will be able to meet apostolates from around the island including Marian Pilgrimages, Radio Maria, the Legion of Mary, the Irish Dominicans and more.

At 1pm, the foundress of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary Mother Adela Galindo will give a talk on the rosary in the Basilica, followed by a rosary process and Mass celebrated by Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan.

Irish missionary who survived Biafran war dies

Fr Tony Byrne CSSp., an Irish missionary who worked in Nigeria during the Biafran war, died on February 23 at the age of 92.

Ordained in 1958, Fr Tony took was appointed to Nigeria's Archdiocese of Onitsha, where he was director of development.

One of a number of Spiritans centrally involved in relief work during the Biafran War, he served with Caritas International in Rome and then as its director of relief airlifts into Biafra from the island of São Tomé.

He featured prominently in media coverage of the unfolding tragedy in Biafra, including through programmes like Radharc on RTÉ.

Irish bishops embrace ecumenism at conference

Bishop Brendan Leahy was one of five bishops from three Churches who represented Ireland

at the 40th Ecumenical Conference of Bishops from February 26 to March 1.

They gathered at the invitation of Bishop Bertram Meier on the occasion of jubilee year in Augsburg, Germany, celebrating its patron saint, St Ulrich.

The 60 participants came from every corner of the globe with 27 nations represented in all, and 29 Churches, including Orthodox, Anglicans, Methodists, Evangelicals, Catholics of the Latin rite and of various Eastern rites.

Representing Ireland were Bishop Leahy, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh John McDowell, Bishop of the Moravian Church Sarah Groves, former Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe Trevor Williams and former Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh Richard Clarke.

Edited by Ruadhán Jones
Ruadhan@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



CORK: John Ryan and Mary Harte of Carrigtwohill Parish Pastoral Council, along with Fr Patrick Winkle PP, welcome Michael Kelly to the parish to open their series of Lenten talks on Tuesday, February 20.



TYRONE: Pupils from some of the schools in Termonmaguirc Parish come together for a special celebration for young people on the final day of their Parish Mission.



KILDARE: Current and former volunteers for Newbridge parish food bank, Share Food, are pictured with Fr Ruairí Ó Dómhnaill PP after a Mass in Cill Mhuire celebrating the charities 10th anniversary.



KERRY: Sean Murphy is pictured after being ordained a deacon for the Diocese of Kerry on January 28 in St James Church Glenbeigh.



TIPPERARY: A Mass of farewell and thanksgiving for the presence of the Christian Brothers in Nenagh since 1862 was celebrated recently, with Sr Essie Hayes, Primary School Religious Advisor for Killaloe schools joining Bishop Fintan Monahan to mark the occasion.

ARMAGH

Any young adult aged between 18 and 28 who would be interested in joining a new initiative in St Patrick's Cathedral aimed at encouraging youth participation are asked to contact Fr Barry Matthews or leave their name in the parish office.

CARLOW

Parish Biblical Studies Group with Dr Amelia Fleming, take place each Friday 10.30am-12pm in the Cathedral Centre.

CAVAN

Bishop Martin Hayes will be the principal celebrant of a Mass to commemorate a milestone anniversary in the Cathedral of Sts Patrick and Felim on Saturday, March 16 at 11am.

CORK

Frankfield/Grange children's rosary group meets second Saturday of every month at 6pm in front of Our Lady's Shrine at the Church of the Incarnation, Frankfield.

DERRY

'The Demons and the reality of spiritual combat' a talk by Fr Cajetak Apeh OCD takes place in the Carmelite Retreat Centre, Termonbacca, April 18.

DUBLIN

The feast of Divine Mercy will be celebrated on Sunday, April 7, in St Vincent De Paul church in Marino. Holy hour from 3-4pm followed by Mass at 4pm. Confessions will be available from 3-4pm. Collection to Capuchin Day Centre.

Rosary of reparation and conversion takes place first Saturday every month at 2pm on North Earl Street.

GALWAY

A Lenten Bible study led by Fr Benny McHale on St Mark's Gospel to take place on the Monday nights of Lent in the Athenry Pastoral Centre at the Church of the Assumption, Athenry. Next session takes place March 18 at 8pm.

LAOIS

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place each Sunday of Lent from 5-7pm and concludes with the rosary.

LOUTH

Fr Willie Doyle SJ prayer group takes place in Holy Family Church, Drogheda every Thursday at 7pm. Includes Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and a prayer for vocations.

Testimony by All-Ireland winner and current Louth GAA manager Ger Brennan in St Mary's Church Knockbridge on March 18 at 7.30pm. Includes Eucharistic Adoration and prayer and worship music.

MEATH

'Light the Fire' event organised by the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal takes place St Patrick's Day, Sunday, March 17, with vespers on Hill of Slane at 5pm followed by procession and Mass in St Patrick's Church Slane.

MONAGHAN

Rosary for Lent – the rosary is recited each Wednesday evening at 6.50pm and each Sunday morning at 10.20am before Mass in Corduff and Raferagh.

TIPPERARY

The upper room gathering for young professionals takes place in Holy Family Mission, Glencomeragh, E91H584 takes place every second and fourth Monday of the month. Begins 6pm with supper, ends with Mass at 8pm. RSVP to info@holymission.ie

Holy Face hour takes place Tuesdays 7-8pm in Our Lady and St Kevin's Church, Littleton, E41 HD90, including rosary, Holy Face prayers, Divine Mercy chaplet and Eucharistic Adoration.

WATERFORD

The Focolare Spring Gathering will take place from April 4-7 in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. For more information contact Gerard at 086 2243631 or focolare.ireland@focolare.org

WESTMEATH

Caná couples event takes place on Sunday, March 24, in Ceili Community House, Kilbeggan, N91 NY28. For more information contact canaireland@gmail.com

Hate speech bill – out with the old and in with the new?



Theo McDonald

In September 2020 Trinity College's Historical Society, or the Hist, rescinded an invitation to prominent Atheist and religion sceptic Richard Dawkins because the "comfort of members" of the centuries-old society was, apparently, at stake.

Having "read his Wikipedia page and researched him briefly" the auditor of the supposedly illustrious society, founded in 1747, stated that she, "regretfully... didn't look further into him before moving forward with the invitation" citing his views on Islam, inter alia, as a reason for the cancellation.

Dawkins had hitherto incurred the wrath of the progressive elements of society due to his no-holds-barred scathing critiques of various shibboleths, especially religion.

But while his attacks on Christianity and Judaism are deemed acceptable and reasonable by most, Islam is apparently beyond reproach among the Abrahamic faiths.

In the past Dawkins has described Islam as a "force for evil" and, following the Charlie Hebdo attacks in France when Jihadists murdered 11 journalists and security personnel who parodied Islam and other faiths, he stated, "They shouted 'We have avenged the Prophet Muhammad'... Some useful idiot will claim it had nothing to do with religion."

Several members of the university's staff were quick to remind the sensitive students what college life is supposed to be about.

Discussion

Economics lecturer and former member of the Hist Ronan Lyons mentioned, "College life is supposed to be a time where you are out of your comfort zone and where you are challenged by ideas that might be different to your own," adding: "The idea of 'comfort' just doesn't come into it."

As an avid debater and former Irish Times Debating Finalist, this writer finds the idea of students narrowing discussion down to the 'comfort' of others as an affront to what it means to be a debating society.

The whole point of a debate is you

engage in a robust discussion of ideas that may be uncomfortable and, for some, beyond the pale but hopefully provide the participants and observers with a clearer understanding of their view and the views of others.

This helps society at large to reach closer to the truth.

This isn't the only egregious example of cancel culture on a college campus.

“The vagueness and undefined nature of the term ‘hate’ has caused concern among free speech advocates and certain politicians”

In 2017, Katie Ascoug was removed from UCD's Student Union after she prevented information on abortion from being published in a magazine aimed at first-year students.

Ascoug was behaving within the parameters of the law as this occurred before Ireland legalised abortion.

However, her colleagues reacted with venom and used the opportunity to oust her as president of the UCDSU.

Unfortunately, in modern Ireland, what some thought confined to histrionic youths at the Hist and UCD, the State is slowly but surely clamping down on debate seeking to impose a thought crime statute on the masses.

The Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022 is set to be enacted later this year having passed the Dáil but currently suspended in the Seanad.

The Bill seeks to replace the current Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.

Under the putative legislation, people with "protected characteristics" which include race, nationality, sexual orientation, and religion among others will be granted new legal protections against violent or non-violent 'hateful' acts.

The vagueness and undefined nature of the term 'hate' has caused concern among free speech advocates and certain politicians.

Senator Michael McDowell has stated that a failure to define hate could, "allow ordinary citizens the right to make that judgement and use violence themselves to detain a person they think is using hate speech against them", which he fears could lead to "public disorder".

But while hate is not defined the promoters of cancel culture, such as those at the Hist and UCD, and proponents of the Bill have made clear exactly what they mean by 'hate' – views they find challenging and uncomfortable.

The Bill also seeks to criminalise possession of supposedly hateful material "with a view to the material being communicated to the public or a section of the public".

All it takes is one member of An Garda Síochána to authorise a search warrant of the home of the possessor of such material allowing them to demand their password and seize their devices. If one refuses to comply a year-long jail sentence can be imposed.

Would possession of Richard Dawkins material constitute hate?

Certainly, a sizeable number of students at Trinity think so.

And given hate is, de jure, deemed subjective rather than objective under the Bill and is ultimately down to what others 'perceive' as such it is highly likely Dawkins content or pro-life sentiments could fall under the realm of hateful material.

Regression

This Bill is a socially regressive piece of legislation which puts to rest the notion of Ireland as a progressive and more tolerant society.

While we like to view ourselves as a more enlightened people with the dark days of Church dogma confined to the dustbin of history many people in Ireland today feel uncomfortable with expressing their true beliefs for fear of reprimand.

The new religion of progressivism has created a new caste of enlightened at the top and heretics at the bottom to be punished.

This in spite of the fact that there is an acknowledgement that our old censorious ways were wrong.

In 1918 the Irish public overwhelmingly approved the 37th Amendment of the Constitution removing the "publication or utterance of blasphemous matter" enacted in 1937.

Like the current hate speech bill, blasphemy was not defined but in Ireland back then most people understood what blasphemy meant.

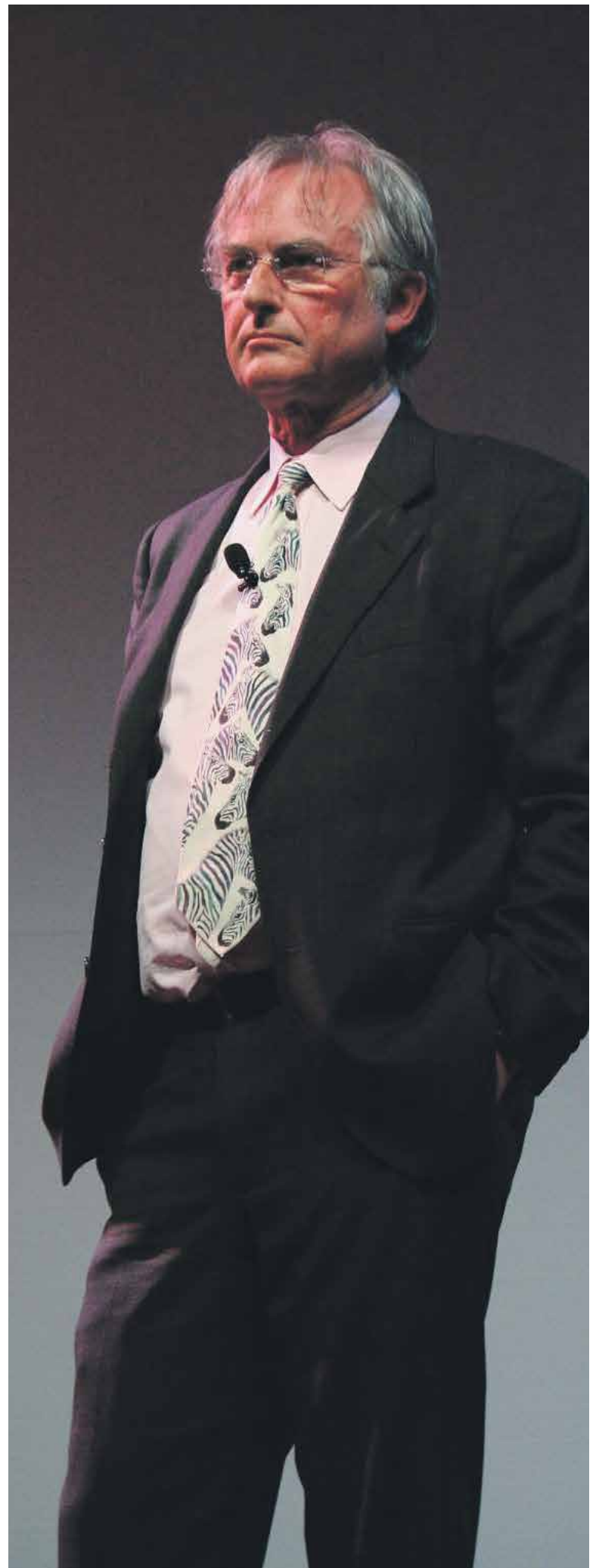
The purpose of the amendment was to create a chilling effect around what people felt they could and could not say.

When comedian Stephen Fry fell afoul of the amendment by referring to God as capricious, mean-minded and stupid the Gardaí confirmed they were investigating the offence but dropped the case after failing to find enough offended people.

This was the final nail in the coffin that catapulted the 'medieval' amendment to be repealed and replaced.

But as Ireland taps itself on the back for disregarding its old orthodoxies it seems it is now ushering in new ones.

① Theo McDonald is a freelance journalist.



Richard Dawkins fell afoul of new orthodoxies when his speech at Trinity was cancelled. Could his books be considered 'hateful material' under Ireland's new hate speech bill? Photo: Shane Pope

“College life is supposed to be a time where you are out of your comfort zone and where you are challenged by ideas that might be different to your own”



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

I OFTEN COMPARE A REFUGEE TO A MATCH

PENELOPE MIDDLEBOE

PAGE 20-21



IRISH NUNS AT THE HEART OF A HUMANITARIAN MISSION IN UGANDA

PAGE 22



Synod delegates urged to tackle scourge of domestic violence

Elise Ann Allen

Clinical psychologist and specialist in intimate partner violence Christauria Welland has long asked that Church leaders pay more heed to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, and she is now making a special appeal to participants in the upcoming Synod of Synodality to address the issue.

In a letter sent to dozens of delegates at last year's October session of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality, Ms Welland said, "We can no longer turn a blind eye to these insults to the rights and the sanctity of the human person!"

It is time, she said, "to be outraged, to break the silence, to follow in our Holy Father's courageous footsteps, to denounce what we all know is evil, and to take collective and effective action".

Ms Welland has been a clinical psychologist for 25 years and a catechist for over 50 years.

She and her husband Michael Akong for two decades have travelled the world educating pastoral agents, professionals, and couples on the reality of domestic abuse and offering resources in treatment prevention for survivors and those who abuse their partners.



Participants in the assembly of the Synod of Bishops exchange a sign of peace during Mass as part of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops presided over by Congolese Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo of Kinshasa at the Altar of the Chair in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican October 13, 2023. Photo: CNS/ Lola Gomez

In 2014, they founded the Pax in Familia organisation dedicated to the prevention of violence and abuse in Catholic families, seeing an opportunity given Pope Francis' repeated condemnations of violence against women.

Together they give online courses through their organisation and travel the world, mostly Latin America, Africa and

Asia, offering workshops to families, priests, bishops, religious, and lay people to raise awareness of the problem of so-called Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Catholic homes and to teach prevention skills.

They were among the speakers at the World Meeting of Families in Rome in 2022 and in Philadelphia in 2015. Ahead of the synod's second session, set for Octo-

ber of this year, Ms Welland is reiterating her appeal to synod delegates.

In her letter, Ms Welland said she wanted to reach out to synod participants on behalf of "the silent, the unheard, the neglected and marginalised victims and survivors of domestic violence". Drawing on her decades of expertise as a catechist and as a psychologist, Ms Welland said she

has heard many hundreds of tragic stories from Catholic men, women, and children who experience violence in the home, most of whom "received little or no support from their parish".

Many victims choose not to speak out due to either shame or ignorance, she said, saying some have been blamed for the violence and have been told to simply

bear it. "May their cries for help not remain unheard in this great gathering! May the serious threat that domestic violence is to the well-being of Catholic families be acknowledged and included in your prayer and your discussions," she said. Ms Welland asked that pastoral responses to domestic violence and preventative measures be both comprehensive and compassionate.

NEXT WEEK: AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH GHANAIAN SYNOD PARTICIPANT NORA K. NONTERAH

‘I often compare a refugee to a match’



Penelope Middelboe

I often have coffee with Mary, who is now in her late 80s. Last time I met her she told me about the winter boxes she had been packing at her church.

It had all been so different when she was younger. Then, she says, all the wives fortunate to have husbands with well-paid jobs willingly gave their time to the church - doing the flowers and the cleaning, running the tombola for the fete, visiting the sick, preparing children's liturgy, baking for the Cafod cake sale, and selling Traidcraft. The backbone of the Catholic Church. There'd been the other jobs in the community. Before her sciatica made it impossible, Mary used to do life-saving work for Home Start, basket-weaving with the blind, and seats on both civil parish councils and pastoral parish councils.

This time, in the now much less well cleaned back of the church, Mary resorted to using her walking stick to create some sort of order amongst the hastily deposited packages on the floor. Once the new chairman of the Pastoral Parish Council (who'd brought along his wife and daughter to show willing) joined in they eventually managed 50 boxes for male asylum seekers between them.

"I was late for my bridge game," she told me. "I told them I had been packing winter boxes for asylum seekers."

"Oh you don't want to do that, Mary," said her host. "It will only encourage them!"

Boxes

We wondered where these rather hurriedly conceived boxes might end up. Maybe some might go to the 300 men on the Bibby Stockholm barge in the middle of a bleak, abandoned naval base, Portland Harbour, on the south coast. Ever since Napoleonic times they've kept prisoners there. My husband knows, he grew up there. The Bibby Stockholm is itself one vast floating wintry accommodation box repurposed in 1972 to contain 200 single little cabin-boxes. It's been all over Europe as some form of detention centre. The men currently on board in England have to suffer airport-style security and body searches simply to step outside for a cigarette, and the only way out of your box-within-a-box is by bus for daily exercise. The British government's dream is for the



Bibby Stockholm detention centre for men seeking asylum in Britain.



Bibby Stockholm being brought by tugs to Portland.

barge box to eventually hold 500 male asylum seekers.

These men are seeking asylum. They have applied for protection as refugees and are waiting for their request to be processed. Many have been tortured. The 1951 Geneva Convention recognises that people fleeing persecution may have to use irregular

means in order to travel for the specific purpose of seeking asylum. There is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker. The latest figures from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees for the end of 2022 - before the war in Gaza - showed 108.4 million forcibly displaced. Some of them are being sheltered

“These men are seeking asylum. They have applied for protection as refugees and are waiting for their request to be processed. Many have been tortured”

in the world's poorest nations. Most want to stay as close as possible to their home.

Refugee

Mary had brought a book for me. *Refugee for Life*. She told me it was written by a man in Malawi she had got to know after he married a close friend. Innocent Magambi is now in his 40s. He has spent almost all his life as a refugee in countries close to his own.

I discovered that Innocent was born in the Congo to refugees from Burundi - a country plagued with the same Tutsi-Hutu ethnic cleansing as its neighbour Rwanda - and for

good reason was given the nickname Innocent in his birth camp. His wife, Florisa, a professional NGO worker originally from Italy, describes their first meeting in Malawi. "I saw Innocent briefly in 2004, on a visit to Dzaleka Refugee Camp. He looked like anyone else there - a match in its matchbox. I recall nothing remarkable about him apart from his hot pink windbreaker, which my mzungu (white person) eyes thought slightly odd for a man."

But as Florisa discovered, and Innocent's book makes plain, Innocent is no match in a matchbox. In fact, people

come to him because he has always thought out the box. By the time he was 27 years old he'd lived in five different settlements or camps around Lake Tanganyika - in Congo, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi.

Teenage Innocent was ambitious for education, and every time his right to study was cancelled he would run into the woods and howl his anger at God. But now Innocent is convinced that his ordeal was been God's way of preparing him for his work today. Through it he's acquired a unique set of tools to help others living in refugee camps. "The good-



INUA team at Dzaleka camp.

“Anyone who discovers a match outside the matchbox will try to put it back in. Anyone who discovers a refugee outside the refugee camp will try to put him back in”

ness that was done to me,” he writes, “if it ends with me it is a broken chain. If I touch someone I command them to touch someone else and to continue that chain.”

“They assist people to develop the skills needed to help other refugees. It’s a living chain”

Mary told me that now Innocent has a degree and a passport and is the founder of two organisations in Malawi working with refugees – a not-for-profit to empower through education, and an advocacy organisation to fight for rights so that no refugee is trapped in statelessness. The non-profit, *There is Hope*, was deliberately located just outside the camp so that they could offer higher education and income generating activities annually to about 250 people from both the camp and their host community in Malawi. They assist people to develop the skills needed to help other refugees. It’s a living chain.

“I often compare a refugee

to a match,” Innocent says. “A match is expected to be in a matchbox. Anyone who discovers a match outside the matchbox will try to put it back in. Anyone who discovers a refugee outside the refugee camp will try to put him back in.”

Challenges

But everything has suddenly become much more difficult for Innocent and his family, Mary went on. Productive refugees, many of them given new skills by *There is Hope* and long-integrated in society after encouragement from the government, have now been violently forced back into the already overcrowded camp. Many of the women have been raped. The camp was built for 12,000 and now holds over 52,000. Most recently the government has banned Innocent’s advocacy society from operating inside the camp. Once Innocent never thought he’d get out of the camp, now he’s not allowed back in.

I found him on Facebook. Two days before, he had written, “Despite the fact that we are not allowed to work in the camp, our stance has not and

will not change. We will continue to demand accountability from the government and all other institutions working for the welfare of refugees in Malawi.”

The new priest in Mary’s parish happens to be from Africa. He is trying to put Mary and her fellow parishioners back into a pre-Vatican II box: pay, pray, obey. The result is that most of them are leaving. Mary never ever imagined it would come to this but is being forced out. “I don’t like to talk about it,” she tells me, “because it bothers me.” Ever the master of under-statement.

Mary is resourceful in a very different way from Innocent, but she shares his compassion. He will keep being a beacon of hope. She will find somewhere else to shine her gentle light. But just how many Marys can the Church afford to lose, without impacting directly on human suffering?

i Refugee for Life. My journey across Africa to find a place called home by Innocent Magambi with David Aeilts (2015). *There is Hope - thereishopemalawi.org*. INUA Malawi - inuaadvocacy.org

i On 17 November 2023, after exhibiting signs of distress for several hours about being treated as an ‘animal’ on board the Bibby Stockholm, 27 year old Albanian national Leonard Farruku, took his life.



Innocent Magambi, Chief Exec. Officer of INUA Advocacy.

How four cows are helping support nuns in Uganda



Jean Callanan, Chair of Irish Hospice Foundation with Sr Jane Frances.



The Little Sisters of St Francis farm in Uganda.



Sr Dr Sybil Magan MMM sees a patient in Tanzania in 1960.

Jean Callanan

Have you ever met someone and known you had to help? That's the way I felt when I met Sr Jane Frances on a visit to Uganda last summer. And thanks to the generosity of the Irish farming community Ireland has been able to offer some help.

Sr Jane Frances is CEO of the Naggalama Hospital, and I met her at a meeting with the African Palliative Care Association in July 2023. Sr Jane Frances was reporting on two pilot projects, one on palliative care and one on bereavement, both of which are funded by the Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) international aid fund. I was on a personal visit to Uganda, but as Chair of the IHF I was taking the opportunity to learn firsthand about these projects.

Difficulties

During our meeting Sr Jane Frances told me of the difficulties she faces as Regional

Superior of the Little Sisters of St Francis in the Central Region in Uganda. She is responsible for the well-being of 250 nuns living and working in 35 communities. Some of the nuns are very elderly and she talked eloquently about wanting to give a good end of life to these women, who had spent their lives nursing, teaching, running orphanages, and caring for the aged and for physically challenged children. She talked about the lack of medicine and nutritious food, about the struggles to give them a decent life in what she called 'the late evening of their lives'.

I had a visceral and personal response to Sr Jane Frances' plea. My grand-

mother, Sr Sybil Magan, was a nun (she had been a GP in rural Ireland for 25 years and when widowed joined the Medical Missionaries of Mary) and had worked in similar hospitals in Africa to those in which Sr Jane Frances and her colleagues work. How could women who had worked so hard all their lives to help others be left almost destitute in their final years? The injustice struck me hard.

Connection

There was another factor striking a chord – a powerful Irish connection. The Little Sisters of St Francis and the Hospital that Sr Jane Frances manages were both founded by an Irish woman, Mother Kevin Kearney, who

“How could women who had worked so hard all their lives to help others be left almost destitute in their final years? The injustice struck me hard”

was born in Arklow in 1875. Mother Kevin had a massive and inspirational impact on Ugandan healthcare, so much so that Ugandans often refer to Hospitals or Hospices as “Kevina”. Mother Kevin's work has been recognised by the church and she has been declared to be a ‘Servant of God’, the first step to being canonised.

The formidable Mother Kevin set up two religious orders, the Little Sisters of St Francis (of which Sr Jane Frances is a member and which was set up for African nuns) and the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa (many readers will be familiar with them in Mount Oliver, Dundalk and Sandymount, Dublin). The two orders are quite separate and while they used to work alongside each other in many countries, including Uganda, there is no financial connection between them.

The struggle to give the Sisters in her care a good life in their old age and a good death, weighs heavily

on Sr Jane Frances. A small number of the community are in salaried positions – but the vast majority are either working in unpaid positions or have retired having worked hard all their lives, with no pensions. One of the community's sources of funds is a farm. They have seven cows at the Motherhouse, piglets and chickens as well as growing crops. With the livestock and crops they can provide some nutritious food for the Sisters, as well as selling some products for cash.

“We hope to be able to buy more and provide other supports to make the convent's farm more viable”

It was when Sr Jane Frances told me the difference it would make if they could increase the number

of cows they have, that I thought of the farmers of Ireland, who have a long tradition of generosity. I reached out to my cousin (and a grand nephew of Sybil Magan) farmer Mike Magan from Co. Longford and with his support we contacted *The Farmer's Journal*, and other farming organisations who have got behind our appeal.

To date our GoFundMe page ‘Sybil Magan Farm Fund to Support Nuns in Uganda’ has raised money to buy four cows, and we hope to be able to buy more and provide other supports to make the convent's farm more viable. It would be wonderful if some readers of *The Irish Catholic* felt moved to contribute to supporting Sr Jane Frances and her community.

i Link to Sybil Magan Farm Fund to Support Nuns in Uganda <https://www.gofundme.com/f/sybil-magan-farm-fund-to-support-nuns-in-uganda>

Letter from Ukraine

Pope faces civil, ecclesial backlash for Ukraine 'white flag' remarks



Elise Ann Allen

After Pope Francis made remarks in a recent interview implying that Ukraine ought to raise a "white flag" and open negotiations in its ongoing war with Russia, his remarks were met with fierce backlash from both Ukrainian civil and ecclesial authorities.

Speaking while making a visit to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic parish of Saint George in New York, Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) said in response to the Pope's remarks, "in Ukraine no one has the possibility of surrendering".

"Ukraine is wounded but undefeated. Ukraine is exhausted but remains standing," Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk said, telling those who are sceptical about Ukraine's ability to continue resisting Russia's military offensive to "come to Ukraine and see!" Similarly, the Ukrainian Embassy to the Holy See said that "it is very important to be consistent".

"When we speak about a third world war, which we have now, it is necessary to learn from the second war: did anyone then seriously talk about negotiating peace with Hitler and the white flag to satisfy him?" the embassy said. The lesson to be learned, then, they said, is "if we want to end the war, we must do everything to kill the Dragon!" On Saturday, a new papal interview was published on Swiss broadcaster RSI that was recorded February 2, and which is expected to be broadcast in full on March 20 as part of a new cultural programme.

Negotiate

During the interview, Pope Francis made waves when asked about the debate between those who say Ukraine ought to raise a "white flag" and surrender as it has not been able to overcome Russia forces, and those who argue that doing so would legitimise Russia's actions. In response, Francis said he believes "the strongest one is the one who looks at the situation, thinks about the people and has the courage of the white flag, and negotiates".

"The word negotiate is a courageous word. When you see that you are defeated, that things are not going well, you have to have the courage to negotiate," he said, noting that many countries, including

Turkey, have voiced a willingness to mediate. The Pope's remarks were the first time he had used the term "white flag" or "defeated" in reference to the Ukraine war, sparking immediate blowback from Ukrainian authorities and allies who have supported Ukraine for past two years, since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

"Ukraine's flag 'is yellow and blue'. 'This is our flag with which we live, die and conquer. We will never raise other flags,' he said"

In response to the Pope's remarks, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba authored a post on social media platform X saying Ukraine's flag "is yellow and blue". "This is our flag with which we live, die and conquer. We will never raise other flags," he said, and voiced gratitude to Pope Francis for his continual prayers for peace in Ukraine, saying he still hopes the Pope will be able to visit Ukraine to support local Catholics and those impacted by the war.

Kremlin spokesman Maria Zakharova spoke to Italian media following the Pope's remarks, saying the pontiff was not speaking to Kyiv, but to the West, which she said is using Ukraine as "an instrument" of its "ambitions".

"The way I see it, the Pope is asking the West to put aside its ambitions and admit that it was wrong," she said, saying, "every expert, every diplomat today understands" that the situation in Ukraine "is at a dead end" and that many countries and international leaders have asked for negotiations.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni attempted to smooth things over after the backlash, issuing a statement Saturday saying the term "white flag" had been used by the interviewer, and that Pope Francis had simply repeated it "to indicate a cessation of hostilities and a truce reached with the courage of negotiations." "His hope is a diplomatic solution for a just and lasting peace," Mr Bruni said.

"Ukrainians cannot surrender because surrender means death. The intentions of Putin and Russia are clear and explicit. The aims are not those of one individual,"



Pope Francis greets a group of Ukrainian children at the end of his weekly general audience February 22, 2023, in the Vatican audience hall. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

However, Pope Francis has also faced pressure from his own flock and from other Christians for the remarks. The Christian Association of Ukrainians in Italy called the Pope's remarks "shocking, embarrassing, and deeply offensive".

Similarly, in a March 10 statement, the bishops of the Permanent Synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, who are currently meeting in the United States, also weighed in, voicing concern but appearing to offer the pontiff the benefit of the doubt.

Resilience

In their statement, the synod noted that the Pope's remark about the "white flag", according to Mr Bruni, was a summons to negotiation and not surrender, and that Francis had also spoken of the war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. In this sense, they said Ukrainian citizens are "wounded yet unbroken, tired yet resilient".

"Ukrainians cannot surrender because surrender means death. The intentions of Putin and Russia are clear and explicit. The aims are not those of one individual," they said,

saying 70 percent of Russian citizens are "clear and explicit" in their support for "the genocidal war against Ukraine".

"For Putin, they said, 'there is no such thing as Ukraine, Ukrainian history, language, and independent Ukrainian Church life'"

Both the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate and its patriarch, Kirill, they said, support the war and back Russian President Vladimir Putin's ambitions. For Mr Putin, they said, "there is no such thing as Ukraine, Ukrainian history, language, and independent Ukrainian Church life. All matters Ukrainian are ideological constructs, fit to be eradicated... The ideology of Ukrainian identity, according to Mr Putin, is 'Nazi'".

"By calling all Ukrainians (who refuse to be Russians and accept Russian rule) 'Nazis,' Mr Putin dehumanises them," they said, saying Ukrainians are seen as a people "to be annihilated, killed", and that

alleged war crimes in cities such as Bucha, Irpin and Izium prove it. They also argued that Russian occupation of Ukrainian territory has led to "the eradication of the Ukrainian Catholic Church" and of an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church, as well as the suppression of other religious traditions and institutions that do not support "Russian hegemony".

"Ukrainians will continue to defend themselves. They feel they have no choice. Recent history has demonstrated that with Mr Putin there will be no true negotiations," they said, noting that Ukraine in 1994 negotiated away its nuclear arsenal, at the time the third largest in the world, and in return received guarantees of territorial integrity.

However, that memorandum, signed by Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom, they said, "is not worth the paper on which it was written. So it will be with any agreement 'negotiated' with Mr Putin's Russia".

In light of suggestions from Pope Francis and other world leaders that Ukraine open itself to negotiations, the synod said that regardless of these calls, "Ukrainians will continue to defend freedom and dignity to achieve a peace that is just". "They believe in freedom and God-given human dignity. They believe in truth, God's truth. They are convinced that God's truth will prevail," they said.

Elise Ann Allen is a Denver native who currently works as a Senior Correspondent for Crux in Rome.



World Report

IN BRIEF

Bishop rules on supposed apparitions of Virgin Mary in Italy

● After an investigation by a group of experts, “fervent” prayer, and “attentive discernment”, an Italian bishop has decreed that the alleged apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Trevignano Romano, a town about 30 miles northwest of Rome, are not supernatural.

A statement issued March 6 by the Diocese of Civita Castellana explained that “the bishop of Civita Castellana, Marco Salvi ... after an appropriate period of careful discernment, having listened to the testimonies coming from the [diocesan] territory and making use of a commission of experts, made up of a Mariologist, a theologian, a canonist, a psychologist, and with the outside advice of some specialists, having considered the figure of Mary in the Tradition of the Church and in the living faith of the people of God, after fervent prayer, decrees the events in question to be non-supernatural”.

Coptic Church cuts dialogue with Catholics; says blessing gays ‘unacceptable’

● One of the most influential Oriental Orthodox Churches has suspended theological dialogue with the Catholic Church and reaffirmed its opposition to “all forms of homosexual relationships”, in the latest blow to a recent Vatican document which sets a way for blessing members of same-sex relationships.

The declaration – *Fiducia Supplicans: On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings*, was published

December 18 by the prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández.

Now the Coptic Church in Egypt has “decided to suspend the theological dialogue with the Catholic Church, re-evaluate the results that the dialogue has achieved since its beginning 20 years ago, and establish new standards and mechanisms for the dialogue to proceed”.

St Thomas Aquinas’ relics carried in procession for 750th anniversary of his death

● On the eve of the 750th anniversary of St Thomas Aquinas’ death, a skull revered as a relic of St Thomas Aquinas was carried in a solemn procession through the cobblestone streets of the southern Italian town of Priverno.

Bishop Mariano Crociata led the procession to honour the medieval philosopher and theologian widely considered one of the greatest thinkers in Western civilisation who died in the nearby Fossanova Abbey on March 7, 1274.

The relic has been venerated in the town’s 12th Century cathedral since it was found in the altar of nearby Fossanova Abbey in 1585 with notarised documents indicating that it was the skull of the Angelic Doctor.

‘God is the people’s only defence’: Mexican bishop in the face of gang violence

● Bishop Cristóbal Ascencio García of the Diocese of Apatzingán in Mexico, one of the regions hardest hit by organised crime and where a church was recently forced to close its doors “for security reasons”, said that “in the face of the helplessness” the residents are experiencing, the people “find their only defence in God”.

In a statement to ACI Prensa, CNA’s Spanish-language news partner, Bishop Ascencio commented on disturbing developments at Santa María de Guadalupe Parish in the town of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, also known as La Ruana, about 30 miles west of Apatzingán.

On February 28 the parish announced on social media the suspension of religious services, stating that “we are in a risky situation; let us pray for peace for our people”.

Argentine President Milei: Abortion is aggravated homicide



Pope Francis and Argentine President Javier Milei share a laugh during a private audience at the Vatican February 12, 2024. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

The president of Argentina, Javier Milei, says abortion “is murder aggravated by the bond” between mother and child and condemned the so-called “voluntary interruption of pregnancy”, a euphemism for killing the child in the womb.

The statement was part of a March 6 speech at the beginning of classes at the secondary level at Cardenal Copello School in Buenos Aires, where Mr Milei was a student.

In Argentine penal law,

“homicide aggravated by the bond” is a degree of murder in which the killer and the victim are related by blood or intimate relationship.

The president, who during his election campaign had pledged that he was going to repeal the country’s permissive abortion law, also took aim at the “murderers with green neckerchiefs”, referring to the neckerchiefs imprinted with the message “legal, safe, and free abortion” that were worn or displayed by

activists during their campaign to get abortion legalised in 2020 at the start of President Alberto Fernández’s term in office.

“For me, abortion is a murder aggravated by the bond and I can demonstrate that from a mathematical and philosophical perspective, from liberalism and also from a biological perspective,” the president said before an auditorium full of students and teachers at the school.

“What politicians do,” Mr

Milei continued, “is party and pass the bill to generations that haven’t even been born, and some politicians, who also try to kill, are the murderers with the green neckerchiefs”.

Although Mr Milei’s government has expressed its opposition to abortion on numerous occasions, in his first three months as president he hasn’t introduced any specific bill. In Argentina, a bill can also be introduced in congress by the executive branch.

US President Biden promises legal abortion nationwide

US President Joe Biden last week promised to support a law that would legalise abortion nationwide in response to the repeal of Roe v Wade two years ago.

The US president said during his 2024 State of the Union address that if he is re-elected – and if Congress is in control of pro-abortion politicians – he will restore the nationalised abortion standards that were established in the US Supreme Court’s Roe v Wade decision in 1973.

“If you, the American people, send

me a Congress that supports the right to choose, I promise you I will restore Roe v Wade as the law of the land again,” Mr Biden said.

The Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June 2022, allowing states and the federal government to substantially restrict abortion for the first time in about five decades.

Democratic lawmakers introduced the Women’s Health Protection Act last year to codify Roe’s abortion standards into federal law. The pro-

posed bill would prohibit states from restricting abortion after the point of viability, which is when the preborn child can survive outside of the womb.

The bill fails to impose a specific week-based limit to define viability, which pro-life advocates have warned could allow abortionists to define viability any way they want, effectively legalising abortion until the point of birth.

Haiti archbishop says country on verge of civil war

Haiti is approaching a civil war, according to Archbishop Max Leroy Méssidor of Port-au-Prince, President of the Haitian Bishops’ Conference. “The armed gangs act like an organised army ... The police cannot keep up with them,” he told Aid to the Church in Need (ACN).

The archbishop told the Catholic charity that the Church’s charity work is “very badly affected”. The terrifying violence as anti-government gangs battle police in the streets has crippled the fragile economy and made it extremely difficult for many of the country’s most vulnerable to feed

themselves.

The main port Port-au-Prince closed down, stranding scores of containers full of food and medical supplies at a time when UN officials say half the country’s more than 11 million inhabitants don’t have enough to eat, and 1.4 million are starving.



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A 'Super Tuesday' tussle



People vote at the San Francisco City Hall voting centre during the Super Tuesday primary election March 5. Photo: OSV News Loren Elliott, Reuters

New Zealand Cardinal denies allegations amid Vatican investigation into alleged abuse

The Vatican is launching an investigation into a claim of historical sexual abuse against New Zealand Cardinal John Dew, according to a public letter published by the Archdiocese of Wellington on Thursday.

Addressing the Catholic community of the country in the Pacific Ocean, Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, of Wellington on March 7 that the Church inquiry into allegations against Dew was launched after a police investigation concluded without charges.

The allegations date back to the 1970s and involve an alleged incident at St Joseph's Orphanage in Upper Hutt, roughly 20 miles northeast of Wellington, where Dew, then an assistant priest, is accused of abusing a 7-year-old boy.

Police investigated claims made by a man who alleges Dew sexually abused him — then an assistant priest — at St Joseph's Orphanage when he was 7 years old.

Despite the absence of charges, Cardinal Dew, who retired as archbishop of Wellington at the age of 75 last

May, continues to refrain from participating in public ministry pending the outcome of the Church's own *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* investigation.

"Inquiries by the Church are not run concurrently to those being undertaken by the police. Now that the police investigation has concluded, Cardinal John continues to stand aside while Church inquiries proceed," Martin stated in his letter to the nation's estimated 400,000 Catholics.

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Pro-abortion activists aggressively harass peaceful pro-life prayer vigil in Germany

Tomislav Cunovic, lawyer and executive director of 40 Days for Life International, denounced a March 1 attack by abortion activists on a group of people peacefully praying for an end to abortion in Frankfurt, Germany.

In a statement, Mr Cunovic said the attack was carried out by about 20 indi-

viduals "from the extreme left" who harassed, threatened, and insulted a group of people who were praying the rosary about 100 feet from the facilities of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in the Palmengarten area, a distance established by law for this type of peaceful demonstration.

"Despite threats of physical violence, the vigil participants refused to disperse. Some assailants wearing hoodies approached them and shouted in their faces, harassing them, mocking them, insulting them, provoking them, and intimidating them with aggressive behaviour," the pro-life leader said.

Vatican roundup

Pope Francis: Women are 'builders of humanity'

● On the day before International Women's Day last week, Pope Francis addressed participants of the international conference 'Women in the Church: Builders of Humanity' at the Vatican.

The conference highlighted the witness of 10 women noted for their holiness: Sts Josephine Bakhita, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Mary MacKillop, Laura Montoya, Kateri Tekakwitha, Teresa of Calcutta, Rafqa Pietra Choboq Ar-Rayès, Ven. Magdeleine de Jesus, and Bl. Maria Beltrame Quattrocch.

"All these women, at different times and in different cultures, each in her own distinct way, gave proof through initiatives of charity, education, and prayer of how the 'feminine genius' can uniquely reflect God's holiness in the midst of our world," the Pope said in his address.

Anonymous Cardinal 'Demos II' proposes agenda for next Pope

● In March 2022, the late Cardinal George Pell published an at the time anonymous critique of Pope Francis' pontificate under the pseudonym 'Demos'.

Now another cardinal, who identifies himself as 'Demos II', has published another anonymous screed. The anonymous cardinal published his text, titled 'The Vatican Tomorrow', in six languages on the Italian *'Bussola Quotidiana'* (*'Daily Compass'*) website.

Demos II observes that there are aspects of the

current pontificate that are positive, such as the concern Pope Francis has for the weakest and poorest, along with environmental issues, but that "its shortcomings are equally obvious".

Those shortcomings include "an autocratic, at times seemingly vindictive, style of governance; a carelessness in matters of law; an intolerance for even respectful disagreement; and — most seriously — a pattern of ambiguity in matters of faith and morals causing confusion among the faithful".

Pope names retired judge to investigate sex abuse charges against Canadian cardinal

● The Archdiocese of Quebec in Canada has announced that Pope Francis has appointed a retired judge to lead an investigation into the accusations of sexual abuse against Cardinal Gerald Lacroix, charges that the cardinal "categorically" denies.

In a March 4 statement, the Archdiocese of Quebec said that it was informed "last February 8 that Pope Francis has commissioned André Denis, a former judge of the Superior Court of Quebec, to conduct an investigation" into the accusations against Cardinal Lacroix.

Cardinal Lacroix, the archbishop of Quebec and member of the Council of Cardinals that advises Pope Francis, has been accused as part of a lawsuit against his archdiocese of abusing a 17-year-old girl almost four decades ago. The cardinal has previously denied the accusation.

Priests suspend YouTube programme after making 'bad' comments about Pope

● Fr Francisco José Delgado, a Spanish priest who hosts 'La Sacristía de la Vendée' ('The Sacristy of the Vendée') programme on YouTube, announced the suspension of the program "until further notice" following the controversy sparked by a "comment in bad taste" made about Pope Francis by one of the priests during a recent episode.

During the February 22 broadcast of the programme, a priest said he will "pray a lot for the Pope, so that he can go to heaven as soon as possible". Another priest replied: "There are many of us with that intention". It was then that Fr Delgado added: "Well, perhaps we'll be praying harder".



Letter from Hungary

Hungarian Catholics defend Church record on tackling abuse



Jonathan Luxmoore

Prominent Hungarian Catholics have defended their Church's record on tackling sexual crimes by clergy after a top-level government abuse scandal led to the appointment of a new national president of the country.

"This sin exists here, as everywhere in the world – we don't see any specific pattern which would distinguish Hungary from other countries," said Péter Zachar, co-president of the 3,000-member ecumenical Association of Christian Intellectuals, or KÉSZ.

"But our Church is doing a lot in this area – with a centralised system initiated from the Vatican, careful handling of reports, and full cooperation with the investigating authorities according to canonical and local standards," he said.

The lay Catholic made his comments as Tamás Sulyok, Hungary's Constitutional Court chairman, assumed office as president after being elected by members of parliament February 26 to replace Katalin Novák, who resigned for pardoning a man convicted in a child abuse case.

Controversy

In an *OSV News* interview, Mr Zachar said the controversy had shown Hungary boasted an "extremely strong and active media", competently reporting on "fundamentally important social issues". The association is headed by a Greek Catholic priest, Fr Ákos Makláry.

"It's a welcome development that new legislation and stronger protection systems can now be created by social consensus," said Mr Zachar, a history professor at Hungary's National University of Public Service and chairman of the Foundation for Hungarian Evangelisation.

"But the Catholic Church has been the first to act, setting an

authoritative model for prevention, reporting and investigation which governmental institutions have looked to," he added.

Ms Novák, Hungary's first female head of state, resigned and apologised in a February 10 TV address, after an online news site, 444.Hu, revealed she had pardoned a senior staffer at a children's home in Bicske in April 2023 after he was convicted of covering up abuse.

Hungary's former justice minister, Judit Varga, who endorsed the pardon, also stepped down February 10, after preparing to lead the campaign by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party in the June 6-9 European Parliament elections.

The head of Hungary's Calvinist Reformed Church, Bishop Zoltán Balog, a former Fidesz government minister, also quit under pressure February 16 after being implicated in the scandal, but in his resignation speech, he accused opposition politicians of staging a "political witch hunt".

Hungarian media accused Ms Novák of using the Pope's April 28-30, 2023, Hungarian pilgrimage as pretext for the pardon.

“Abuse and mistreatment of children are serious sins and crimes, regardless of where they occur”

However, Zoltán Kovács, state secretary for public diplomacy, rejected any involvement by Pope Francis or the Vatican, confirming Hungarian presidents could "grant pardons on special occasions".

The Hungarian bishops' press office told *OSV News* on February 29 Church leaders had heard from the media about the presidential pardon, which it said was not done in consultation "with the Apostolic See, Holy Father or Catholic Church".

The office added that the Church's Catholic Pedagogical Institute was running a programme to ensure all Catholic schools and communities operated child protection teams with "customised strategies

“But our Church is doing a lot in this area – with a centralised system initiated from the Vatican, careful handling of reports, and full cooperation with the investigating authorities”



Pope Francis meets with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at Sándor Palace in Budapest, Hungary, April 28, 2023. The Pope was beginning a three-day trip to Hungary's capital with meetings with government officials. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

and protocols", and said the bishops' conference was committed to ensuring "the next generations can grow up in a secure environment".

"If any cases come to their attention, Hungarian Catholic organisations, in collaboration with the Vatican, conduct investigations based on stringent rules," the press office added. "The Hungarian Church's position is entirely clear: Abuse and mistreatment of children are serious sins and crimes, regardless of where they occur."

Hungary's Catholic Church, traditionally made up of over 60% of the population of 10 million, has faced accusations that it is subservient to Mr Orbán, who has headed Fidesz since 1993 and served as head of government for 18 years, attracting domestic and international criticism for close ties with Russia and alleged high-handed governance.

Learning

Hungary's opposition Democratic Coalition has demanded a government committee to investigate alleged abuse in the Catholic Church, and to expose inaction and "systemic shortcomings" by Church leaders.

However, Mr Zachar, the KÉSZ co-president, said only a "small proportion of abuses" had happened in ecclesiastical settings, making it unfair to focus attention on the Catholic Church.

"Cases within the family, in edu-

cational and training institutions, in sporting and arts education shouldn't be kept quiet – we must learn from the Church's experience," said Mr Zachar, whose association, founded in 1989, includes Catholics and Protestants and has 70 groups nationwide.

“Those responsible didn't try to explain away or cover up their wrong decisions – they accepted the necessary consequences”

"The Church has provided manuals and practical procedures, becoming a flagship in child protection. Its documents make clear that prevention, information and care should form a single comprehensive package," he said.

Hungary's Catholic bishops issued anti-abuse guidelines in 2014, and set up a system for reporting abuse in 2019 after a papal *motu proprio*, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*.

Speaking in mid-February, Mr Orbán, a non-practicing Calvinist, said he would amend Hungary's 2011 constitution to bar convicted child abusers from receiving pardons in the future.

In a March 4 communique, Hungary's Reformed Church backed premier Mr Orbán's plans to tighten anti-abuse rules, and said "psycho-

logical fitness tests" were obligatory for all Church staffers working with children.

Media reports said the resignations of senior figures linked to the prime minister could undermine his long-standing claims to be defending Christian values in Europe and protecting Hungarian children from gender ideology and sexual deviancy.

Mr Zachar denied this, saying that opposition attempts to "make political capital" by implicating Mr Orbán in the pardon scandal had not been "backed by evidence".

"Those responsible didn't try to explain away or cover up their wrong decisions – they accepted the necessary consequences, and if this credibility is carried forward, the current crisis of confidence could provide an opportunity to avoid such mistakes in future," the KÉSZ co-president told *OSV News*.

Responsibility

In a February 19 statement, the Association of Christian Intellectuals praised Novák and Reformed Bishop Balog for "showing moral and political responsibility by resigning".

Zachar told *OSV News* he hoped the new president will "build a national consensus on rights and values".

i Jonathan Luxmoore writes for *OSV News* from Oxford, England.

Letters

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

Letter of the week

Public speaking teachers needed for laity

Dear Editor, The Synod on Synodality is occupying the centre stage in the Catholic media at present, so it is important not to miss matters relating to day-to-day problems needing swift resolution.

In this context the 'Notebook' on the back page of *The Irish Catholic* is always worth reading. Fr Martin Delaney's contribution 'Poorly proclaimed readings lose richness of God's word' [*The Irish Catholic* – February 22, 2024] highlights a serious problem which needs

to be addressed.

He wrote: "I know I may insult and upset a few people by saying this but in my experience the quality of reading or proclaiming the Word of God in many Irish churches is pretty dismal. If there is one area of ministry where we as priests must beat our breasts in repentance it must be the selection and preparation of lay-readers or lectors."

As more parishioners are being asked to volunteer for a number of

lay-ministries, where they are needed to support the diminishing number of priests, so it is essential that their training be of the highest quality. The services of professionally qualified teachers of public speaking should be obtained as this will improve the communication of the Word of God in the liturgy.

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

Terrifying situation when doctors kill unborn and infirm

Dear Editor, I am writing this letter on Mother's Day. It was a severe blow to our government that the 'No' vote won the referendum resoundingly. We treasure our mothers in this country and didn't want their importance diminished.

A much more serious and disturbing proposal is the Oireachtas committee's recommendation that assisted suicide and euthanasia be legalised here if a person is terminally ill and has six or twelve months to live. Meanwhile, Pieta House is doing all in its power to protect vulnerable people from committing suicide. The hospice for the dying is dedicated to helping very sick people and protecting their dignity. I can see a situation arising where dying vulnerable people will feel under pressure to end their lives rather than feel a burden on the state and their families. Will the same apply to the old and feeble?

Will a terrifying situation arise in the future when we see doctors as people who sometimes kill unborn babies and the old, sick and infirm?

A truly horrific and terrifying thought. What is happening to our country?

Yours etc.,
Anthony Redmond
Drimnagh, Dublin 12

Protesting deaths in Gaza despite differences

Dear Editor, David Quinn raises some valuable points in his article [*The Irish Catholic* – March 7, 2024] 'A strange march for nuns to take part in'. Those concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza should be aware of those using the issue to promote anti-Semitism or deny Israel's right to exist. Such anti-Semitism is never acceptable.

Nevertheless David Quinn would seem to suggest that we cannot work with people on one issue, if we do not agree with them on all issues. This seems strange given that he has welcomed contributions by Helen Joyce on issues related to gender, even though she is a strong proponent of assisted suicide in some circumstances.

Insisting on complete agreement on all matters would seem a dangerous road to go down.

Maybe the Dominican nuns, like the LGBT people on the march, were simply looking for an outlet for their horror at the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. Many of the protesters may know that they would not survive in a Hamas-run Gaza but they may still wish to protest against the deaths of children.

Whether going on this particular march was right or not, I like to think the best of the Dominican nuns in question and assume they were motivated by love of neighbour.

Yours etc.,
Joe Curran
Artane, Dublin 5



Referendum defeated in a mature society

Dear Editor, A homeless man came into the church across the road from the polling station, looking for the priest.

Amazing coincidence to find a man in need of care but with no family, when the referendum was going just on the other side.

What was this Government proposing for care to a man like this in the referendum?

What could Peter McVerry or the Simon community have done in their NGO caring capacity for the homeless with the nearly 20 million wasted euros in a rushed referendum designed in a "student union politics" way (in the very appropriate words of Michael McDowell) that of course was meant to be defeated in a mature society?

Is the Government going to take full responsibility, fundraise and give that tax payer money to all the people who do the care in our society, in families and other?

Yours.,
Conchita Legorburo
Dalkey, Co. Dublin

Not needed, not wanted, and no further

Dear Editor, Three thoughts to the 'wokies' regarding the two referendums: Not needed; not wanted; and this far and no further. It's about time social conservatives found their voice.

Yours etc.,
Brid Fitzpatrick,
Terenure, Dublin 6W

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.

Misinformation, disinformation and plain old lies

The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) was campaigning for a No vote in the referendum even though the McKenna judgement prohibits state funded bodies from spending state monies. If the NWC was using 'non-state' monies as it has claimed it should publish the amounts raised, and from where and how they were spent, in the interest of democracy, transparency.

Writing in *The Irish Times* before the vote its director Orla O'Connor wrote: "It [a No vote] gives the State the oppressive role of keeping women from careers or employment of our own...". How does *The Irish Times* allow such misinformation to be perpetuated in its pages? Ms O'Connor has also been recently appointed as an expert adviser to the new Electoral Commission, a position that seems far from tenable in the wake of the referendum defeat but as we have seen in the case of RTÉ, the same faces get appointed over and over to the most influential jobs.

And how does the Government tally its recently set up National Counter Disinformation Strategy Working Group when it, in the form of its ministers and many others in the political establishment, go out on the Leinster house plinth and tell porkies to the media and don't even have the decency to blush when doing so?

What the referendum campaign has clearly demonstrated to the Irish people is that under this government, misinformation is a one-way street and just as almost the entire opposition in the Dáil, even with their doubts and misgivings about the language proposed in the referenda, rowed in with the government and establishment, so too did the media for the most part. Even after the result the media brought on the same old talking heads who re-ran the Yes arguments and in some cases blamed the far-right. Why not insult the electorate one more time!

The truth is unsavoury in modern elitist Ireland. NGOs were told in no uncertain terms by Minister for Equality Roderic O'Gorman that they would have to explain why they want to maintain

the 'status quo' if they campaign against a Yes vote in the referendum. Threat received loud and clear and the NGOs all rolled over. This is modern bully Ireland, funded by the tax-payer.

What perplexed many was why the NGOs were in such a rush to endorse a Yes/Yes vote even before the wording was settled. The old maxim, who benefits is the key question here.

Lois McLatchie writing in *The Critic* says that for the progressive left and the woke brigade the Irish Constitution upends the norm of the modern West to displace traditional views of families and motherhood. "Where most countries have forgotten to value women in all their unique capacities, the Irish were phenomenally progressive in attributing social recognition and legal protection to the caregiving roles that a majority of women have at least some hand in."

Article 41.2 of the Constitution she writes contains "progressive provisions that many British women would give their right arm for. Decades of so-called UK 'maternity policy' has been geared towards getting us back in the workplace as soon as possible after birth. An unforgiving family-unfriendly tax system puts pressure on both parents to work every hour available, outsourcing child-care. More than a third of UK working mums with children under four would prefer to stay at home full time; and in Ireland, it's two-thirds. The Brits ultimately fail to provide women the choice to focus on motherhood at a crucial point in their life and that of their baby's. The Irish do protect this choice; at least in theory. They should advance this in practice."

On International Women's Day Ireland defended the right of Irish women to choose whether or not to be full-time mums. The NWC says on their website that "We are active in ensuring that no woman is left behind in our journey to achieve true equality". The truth is that Irish women have left the NWC behind and the rest of the Irish 'elite' in defending a universal truth that cannot be erased, that of womanhood and motherhood and thank God for it.

Irish-Canadian remembered as Canada's most consequential PM



Susan Korah

When St John Paul II arrived in Ottawa in 1984, the first pontiff to visit this country, greeting him in Ottawa was Canada's 18th prime minister, Brian Mulroney, one of 10 Catholics who have held that office since 1867.

The "little guy from Baie Comeau," raised by Irish Catholic working-class parents, had come a long way from his childhood job of distributing advertising flyers to receiving dignitaries of the pope's stature.

From 1984 to 1993, Mulroney led the country as the Progressive Conservative prime minister, after steering his party to a landslide victory and breaking 26 years of consecutive Liberal rule (minus the short-lived government, 1979-1980, of Canada's 16th prime minister, Joe Clark, and his Progressive Conservatives).

But now the booming baritone voice that famously broke into the song 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' with US President Ronald Reagan has been stilled forever, and the smile that charmed friends and political opponents alike will become a distant memory.

Memory

The flag on Parliament Hill in Ottawa has been flying at half-staff since Mulroney's death February 29 at age 84 shook the nation. An outpouring of condolences and tributes is still flowing in from across the country and around the world, while a state funeral in Montreal is being planned. No date has been set.

"We join with so many from throughout Canada who are deeply saddened to hear of the passing of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. As with all those who are called to the vocation of political life, we give thanks to the Lord for his many years of service to our country, most notably as the 18th Prime Minister of Canada," read a statement from Toronto Archbishop Francis Leo.

Mulroney's religious and personal identities were

forged by his upbringing as a Catholic of Irish descent. Born and raised by working-class Irish Canadian parents in Baie Comeau, a small, isolated town about 260 miles north-east of Quebec City, daily life in his childhood home centred on the Catholic faith.

The first school young Brian attended was the Académie St Amélie, a Catholic primary school run by nuns, within easy walking distance of his home. An honour student, he also was an altar boy in his parish.

At age 14, he was sent to Catholic-run St Thomas College in Chatham, New Brunswick, and he later attended St Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, where he excelled at public speaking and debating.

After graduating with a degree in political science, he went to law school at Quebec's Laval University where he built a network of friends who would play a prominent role in Canadian politics for years to come.

He achieved success as a lawyer and businessman before he was elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, leading the party to one of the biggest landslide victories in Canadian history in the 1984 election.

“Riding a wave of popularity, particularly with Quebec voters, he won a second majority government in 1988”

Winning 211 of 282 seats in the House of Commons, including more than three-quarters of the seats in Quebec, was a remarkable breakthrough for the Progressive Conservatives. Riding a wave of popularity, particularly with Quebec voters, he won a second majority government in 1988.

But shortly before the election of 1993, unpopular measures such as a Goods and Services Tax and the failure of an accord intended to include Quebec in the constitution, had seen his approval rating plummet to an all-time low. He resigned and handed over power to Kim Campbell, and the Progressive Conservatives were reduced to two seats.

Throughout his career, as he moved from political and professional success to defeat and disappointment, Mulroney remained a steadfast Catholic in his private and family life.

He did not, however, indulge in overt displays of



Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who forged close ties with two Republican US presidents through a sweeping free trade agreement that was once vilified but is now celebrated, died at age 84 February 29, 2024. He is pictured in July 21, 2020. Photo: OSV News photo/Mathieu Belanger, Reuters

his faith in his public life or allow his religious beliefs to override what he thought was good for the country.

"Compared to some other prime ministers, whatever faith he had was pretty private. John Turner was known to take his faith seriously, prioritising attending Mass for example, and I think the same can be said of Paul Martin," Jonathan Malloy, a political science professor and expert on prime ministerial leadership at Ottawa's Carleton University, told *The Catholic Register*, Canada's national Catholic newspaper based in Toronto. "Pierre Trudeau was also a person of faith, though somewhat more in an intellectual sense."

Values

Malloy added that Mulroney's approach to keeping his religion more as a private matter is best illustrated in how he approached abortion.

"Like his Catholic contemporaries Pierre Trudeau, Joe Clark, John Turner, Jean Chretien and Paul Martin, he felt that religion and politics were mostly separate and should remain that way," he said.

"This is best seen in how each approached abortion;

“Mulroney will be remembered as one who sought the common good, and in so doing, changed the economic and social landscape of Canada”

in most cases expressing personal hesitancy and yet being more or less pro-choice politically. Mulroney was the only one that actually pursued abortion legislation, but only because the existing law was struck down; he pursued compromises that satisfied no one and eventually abandoned them."

Aside from abortion and euthanasia, also central to Catholic social values are peace, social justice, and care for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed.

His actions in these areas included supporting Nelson Mandela's fight against apartheid in South Africa; launching the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, created in 1991 created to help "restore justice to the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada; and backing the Acid Rain Accords aimed reducing

pollution on both sides of the border.

US President Joe Biden in a March 1 statement called Mulroney "fearless" and "not afraid to stand up for causes he cared about."

“What we need is a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good”

Biden said he got to know him when he served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "I saw firsthand his commitment to the friendship between our two nations, as well as his abiding love for Canada and its people," he said.

"Politicians have a unique

opportunity: they can help individuals, yes, but they also have the power to create the very conditions by which people can flourish, which has a much larger impact," Pope Francis wrote in his 2020 encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. "What we need is a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good."

Measured against this standard, Mulroney will be remembered as one who sought the common good, and in so doing, changed the economic and social landscape of Canada.

He is survived by his wife, Mila, and four children: Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas.

i Susan Korah is Ottawa correspondent for The Catholic Register, Canada's national Catholic newspaper based in Toronto.

Your Faith

10 tips for First Communion

Dr Joseph White

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The Irish Catholic, March 14, 2024

Radically Catholic: Dorothy Day fought poverty, injustice

These saints pictured on the mural December 18, 2023, represent the diversity of the southwest Detroit community and include an image of Dorothy Day. Photos: OSV News.

In one of his more snarky stories about clerical life – it's called *The Forks* – the American Catholic writer JF Powers capsulises the fraught relationship between a stuffy, self-important pastor and his young curate in a single, prickly sentence: "He found Fr Eudex reading *The Catholic Worker* one day and had not trusted him since."

There was a time when many Catholics, not just stuffy pastors, held the same view of Dorothy Day and her group: dangerous. Some still may. But the Church is thinking of declaring her a saint.

Day was co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement and longtime editor of the penny-a-copy newspaper of the same name. From the mid-1930s to the early 1980s, she preached radical



**The Catholic Worker
co-founder went from a
danger to souls to future
saint, writes Russell Shaw**

Christianity and no less radical social activism to a sometimes appreciative, sometimes puzzled, sometimes angry audience of American Catholics. The Gospel according to Day was a heady mix of the inspiring and the infuriating.

Historian Charles Morris says she "transformed the social conscience of a whole generation of young clergy". To which one might add: lay intellectuals, writers and journalists, too. The effort to have

her canonised is moving, slowly but apparently steadily, ahead.

This ex-communist who had an abortion and several love affairs might not have entirely welcomed that. "Don't call me a saint," she once said. "I don't want to be dismissed so easily."

Dorothy Day was born November 8, 1897, in Brooklyn. Her parents had been married in an Episcopal ceremony but seldom went to church. Her father, a

sportswriter, moved the family to San Francisco to take a job with a newspaper, but the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 wiped out the paper and the elder Day's job, and the family shifted to Chicago.

There the young girl showed her first interest in religion and was baptised and confirmed in the Episcopal Church. Around this time, too, she got what she later called her "first impulse toward Catholicism" – the sight of a Catholic friend's mother kneeling in her bedroom at prayer.

"For many a night after that," Day writes in her 1952 autobiography *The Long Loneliness*, "I used to plague my sister with my long prayers... So we began to practice being saints; it was a game with us."

At age 15, she started having doubts about religion. On the one

hand, she saw churchgoers who were well off. On the other, she saw the poor. "I did not see anyone taking off his coat and giving it to the poor. I didn't see anyone having a banquet and calling in the lame, the halt and the blind."

At the University of Illinois, Day joined the Socialist party. Leaving the university after two years, she headed back to New York, where she wrote for Socialist publications, was active in radical causes that included feminism and free love, and pursued a Bohemian lifestyle among artists and activists. In 1917 she was arrested for picketing for women's suffrage at the White House and spent 15 days in jail.

Her friends at this time included playwright Eugene O'Neill and prominent communists, with one of whom she had an affair. After

“Day’s principal lasting influence on American Catholicism may have been to show a faith-based alternative to secularist progressivism”

still another affair, around 1920 or 1921, she had an abortion. Thereafter, she married briefly, published a semi-autobiographical novel whose screen rights she sold to Hollywood for \$2,500, and bought herself a Staten Island beach cottage where she lived from 1925 to 1929 with a man named Forster Batterham.

In 1926, Day gave birth to a daughter whom she named Tamar. Now her old interest in Catholicism not only revived but intensified. She met a nun named Sr Aloysia, had her baby baptised and studied the faith. Forster didn’t like it, and the two split. On December 28, 1927, Day was received into the Church with Sr Aloysia as her sponsor.

“God always gives us a chance to show our preference for him,” she later wrote. “With me it was to give up my... life with Forster. You do these things blindly, not because it is your natural inclination – you are going against nature when you do them – but because you wish to live in conformity with the will of God.”

Conforming to God’s will was now central to Day’s life, but that didn’t necessarily mean giving up old convictions and commitments. On the contrary – finding and living a practical synthesis between faith and radical social causes now was a growing concern for Day.

Great Depression

The turning point came early in the Great Depression. Working as a journalist, Day covered a jobs demonstration in Washington organised by communists, then later prayed in the crypt church of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. There she offered “a special prayer, a prayer which came with tears and anguish, that some way would open for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, for the poor”.

Returning to New York, she found waiting for her a slightly disheveled French peasant who was also a radical Catholic and a self-taught social thinker. His name was Peter Maurin, and he wanted to share his vision with Day. It wasn’t long before the Catholic Worker movement was born.

With Day as editor, the first issue of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper appeared May 1, 1933. It sought to be an alternative to the communist *Daily Worker*. That first issue asked: “Is it not possible to be radical and not atheist?” For the next half-century, Day worked hard at showing how that could be done.

She supported the labour movement, racial justice and the California farm workers led by Caesar Chavez. She opposed the Nationalist side supported by most Catholics in the Spanish Civil War. She was an uncompromising pacifist.

“We love our country, and we love our president,” Day wrote after the United States entered World War II. But even so: “We are still pacifists. Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount.” When the United States dropped the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, Day’s voice was one of the few Catholic ones raised in public protest.

During the Cold War, Day often joined other pacifists in peace demonstrations. On one occasion, she served a month in jail. She praised Fidel Castro’s social revolution in Cuba while deploring its anti-religious policies.

A few years later, she opposed the Vietnam War. While terming the Christmas season visits by New York’s Cardinal Francis Spellman to American troops overseas “brave”, she also wrote: “What are all those Americans doing all over the world so far from our own shores?”

Day was intensely loyal to Church doctrine but didn’t hesitate to skewer Church leaders when she thought they were wrong. During a gravediggers’ strike at New York Catholic cemeteries in 1949, she criticised Cardinal Spellman for bringing in seminarians to fill in for striking workers.

In 1951, the archdiocese told *The Catholic Worker* either to stop publishing or remove the word “Catholic” from its name. Day did neither, and the archdiocese dropped the matter.

Though never large in numbers, over the years *the Catholic Worker* movement expanded to include houses of hospitality in several cities along with a Catholic Worker farm. Day lived in a Catholic Worker house in New York. It was there that she died, of a heart attack, on November 29, 1980.

“The Lord comforts restless hearts, not bourgeois souls who are content with things as they are”

The first steps toward her possible beatification and canonisation were taken in 2000 by the late Cardinal John O’Connor of New York. Efforts have continued under Cardinal Timothy Dolan. At his urging, the US bishops in November 2012 voted to endorse her cause. The cardinal called her “a saint for our time”.

While remaining a lifelong admirer of the idealistic communists who’d once been her friends, she criticised the evil means communism used to achieve its ends. Whether she was unacceptably naive about communism is, and probably will remain, in dispute. Many also think she should have shown more concern about the harm inflicted by the self-indulgent hippie culture of the 1960s and 1970s.

Day’s principal lasting influence on American Catholicism may have been to show a faith-based alternative to secularist progressivism. In 2023, Pope Francis wrote the foreword to a new edition of Day’s 1938 memoir about her conversion to Catholicism, *From Union Square to Rome*.

Of Day, he wrote, “The Lord comforts restless hearts, not bourgeois souls who are content with things as they are.” At present, she has the title Servant of God.

i Russell Shaw, a veteran journalist and writer, is the author of more than 20 books, including three novels.



Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, is pictured in an undated photo.



Martha Hennessy, granddaughter of Dorothy Day, looks at a dedication plaque aboard the Dorothy Day ferry boat at the St George Ferry Terminal in Staten Island, New York, prior to its maiden voyage April 28, 2023.

10 ways to prepare for first Communion day



Joseph D. White

A child's First Communion is an important and exciting milestone in the life of a Catholic family. As the first and most important teachers of their children, parents present their children for baptism and guide them toward Christ as they are initiated into the church community.

Handing on our faith to the next generation can feel like an awesome responsibility. We may sometimes wonder if we 'know enough' or are 'good enough', but God gives parents all the grace they need to raise their children to know and love him.

Here are 10 ideas for spiritual and practical preparation to help you and your child as you anticipate this important day.

Spiritual preparations

1. Talk to your child about his or her baptism. All sacraments are necessarily related to baptism, the first sacrament we celebrate. Most children, having been baptised as infants, won't remember their baptism. Take out your child's baptismal candle and pictures and talk about the important day he or she was welcomed into the family of God. Discuss how First Communion is an extension of that day, as now they are welcomed to the family meal.

2. Talk with your child about your own First Communion experience. Try to remember as much as possible about your own First Communion day and share this with your child. Encourage other family members (such as brothers and sisters) to talk about their experiences as well. Take out first Communion photos if you have them.

3. Celebrate meals together as a family. Unfortunately, our society's hectic pace has made sitting down to meals as a family less common; yet, the family meal is an important opportunity for sharing and becoming closer to one another. It's difficult for children to understand the Eucharist as the family meal of the Church if they have no experience with eating together with their families at home – the 'domestic church'. If you don't already, make it a point to eat together at the table with no television on several occasions before your child's First Communion. It's a practice you may decide to continue.



Children are pictured in a file photo carrying the gifts during their First Communion. OSV News

4. Spend time in family prayer. In Pope St John Paul II's *Letter to Families*, the pope called prayer the source of all renewal of family life. Spend some time praying together, asking God to prepare your child to receive Jesus in the Eucharist and thanking him for this wonderful gift. You may even want to pray a First Communion novena during the days leading up to your child's First Communion celebration.

5. Help your child understand and participate in the Mass. Encourage your child to pay attention to the Mass, singing and praying the responses along with you. Special children's missals and books about the Mass often include both the prayers of the Mass and pictures. You may also wish to practice the prayers of the Mass with your child at other times. For example, say, 'The Lord be with you', and encourage your child to respond appropriately.

6. Attend Holy Thursday Mass and Eucharistic adoration as a family. The Holy Thursday liturgy, which typically precedes First Communion on the parish calendar, can be a wonderful learning experience for

“We may sometimes wonder if we ‘know enough’ or are ‘good enough’, but God gives parents all the grace they need to raise their children to know and love him”

children preparing for Eucharist. It recalls the story of the first Eucharist, Jesus' Last Supper with his apostles, and closes with the transfer of the Eucharist and Eucharistic adoration. Some parishes also have other times for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Stopping by for a short time of prayer can help children better appreciate Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

Practical preparations

7. Plan the wardrobe. Several weeks in advance, involve your child in deciding what he or she will wear on First Communion day. Spring fashions are generally in the stores by late winter, so if your child is celebrating in the spring, February or

March is a good time to shop. More traditional First Communion attire may include white dresses with veils for girls and black or white suits for boys. However, at some parishes, nice Sunday clothes are the norm. The most important part of choosing what your child is to wear is to make sure his or her attire reflects the dignity and joy of the occasion.

8. Invite friends and extended family members. Be sure to let friends and family members, and especially his or her godparents, know as soon as possible about your child's First Communion celebration. You may want to enlist your child's help in writing invitations to attend.

9. Involve cultural and family traditions in your first Communion

preparations. Find out if there are First Communion traditions that are specific to your family or cultural group, and involve these traditions as much as possible in your preparations for your child. This will highlight the fact that he or she is joining the family at the Eucharistic table.

10. Find a meaningful gift to mark the occasion. While First Communion isn't about getting gifts and money, it's helpful for your child to receive something concrete to help remember this important milestone. Spiritual articles make especially good First Communion gifts.

i Dr Joseph White is a clinical psychologist who writes on catechesis, ministry and other topics.

In praise of singing



Laura Kelly Fanucci

The first thing I noticed about our parish was the music. Everyone sang. From the moment the opening hymn began, the sanctuary was filled with a robust chorus. I looked around and couldn't believe my eyes (or ears) – adults, children, women and men were all singing at full voice. I grew up in a typical Catholic church where the congregation mostly listened to the choir or cantor, so I came to assume the same whenever I'd visit a new parish.

You might find beautiful instrumental music or an exceptional choir, but rarely would the people in the pews respond with more than a mumbling 'Amen'. But now our parish has changed my mind.

It's a foretaste of heaven to look around Mass and witness the full participation of the people of God.

Turns out, the wider Church agrees.

Voices

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy issued by the Second Vatican Council, we find robust encouragement for active participation: "Religious singing by the people is to be intelligently fostered so that in devotions and sacred exercises, as also during liturgical services, the voices of the faithful may ring out according to the norms and requirements of the rubrics" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 118).

What's more, this vocal participation in the liturgy becomes a means for grace: "And the people reply to God both by song and prayer... when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer him their rational service and more abundantly receive his grace" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 33).

All this makes me wonder: are we teaching younger generations of Catholics how to sing? Few sports fans would refuse to stand and sing for the national anthem or 'Take Me Out To The Ball Game'. Many drivers belt out their favourite tunes on the radio in the car. But do we bring the same enthusiastic participation to Mass?

Few sports fans would refuse to stand and sing for the national anthem or 'Take Me Out To The Ball Game'. Many drivers belt out their favourite tunes on the radio in the car. But do we bring the same enthusiastic participation to Mass?

“Music makes us human. From the first rhythms of our mother’s heartbeat in the womb, we grow attuned to the world through song”

Of course, context matters. Worship is meant to be reverent, not raucous. But full and active participation in the liturgy means not just silent respect but singing, too.

The cantor or choir are meant to be the leaders we follow, not the soloists we watch. We are not spectators but participants in these sacred mysteries.

My high school choir director often quoted St Augustine that "singing is praying twice". Sacred song sinks into our bones, giving God glory. We don't need to be professional singers or have perfect pitch, only to raise our voices in

praise and thanksgiving together.

If your own singing has lagged as an adult, what a perfect practice to add to your Lenten observance: singing more at Mass. Remember that your children, grandchildren and all young people in the pews are watching. What are we teaching children by the way we sing?

You might start by singing more at home. Growing up, my family added a sung grace after the traditional 'Bless us, O Lord' prayer. Today my own family sings a short hymn before dinner to match the liturgical season.

Each night I get to hear voices, old and young, warble 'Lord, Who Throughout These 40 Days' and remember how Christ came for all of us, from toddlers to teenagers to tired adults – and everyone in between.

Music makes us human. From the first rhythms of our mother's heartbeat in the womb, we grow attuned to the world through song: lullabies, childhood ABCs, birthday celebrations, and holiday favourites.

Enthusiasm

But if we stop singing in worship – out of insecurity, boredom, habit or sheer laziness – we miss what full participation in the liturgy means: the grace it brings us and the glory it gives to God.

In its ancient roots, the word 'enthusiasm' means to be inspired or inhabited by God. This Lent, let us bring our enthusiasm to Mass and pray together in song, that we might all be filled with God's Holy Spirit, from generation to generation.

Laura Kelly Fanucci is an author, speaker, and founder of Mothering Spirit, an online gathering place on parenting and spirituality.



Choir members sing during the Archdiocese of New York's annual Black History Month Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Photo: OSV News

Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

For those who avoid meat anyway, is there another Friday penance?

Q: Now that we are in Lent, most Catholics I know are doing 'fish on Friday' to conform to the fasting and abstinence requirement. But if I typically avoid meat or eat fish most days anyway, should I do something different for Lent, or just stay the same? I've heard some Catholics give up chocolate or sodas for Lent, and a priest recently told me I could even set aside a little extra time each Friday for private prayer and meditation. Could you comment?

A: The short answer is no: during Lent, a Catholic cannot substitute another form of penance for Friday abstinence from meat. Canon 1251 of the Code of Canon Law tells us: "Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the Episcopal Conference, is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday." In some countries, such as England and Wales in the United Kingdom, Catholics are required to refrain from consuming meat every Friday year-round.

In the United States specifically, the local Episcopal Conference (the US Conference of Catholic Bishops) issued a *Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence* in 1966.

This document gives Catholics the option to substitute some other form of penance – such as giving up some other food or taking on additional prayer time – for the canonically required abstinence from meat on Fridays outside of Lent, in accord with their own personal discernment.

The 1966 *Pastoral Statement* shares some of your reasoning when it notes that: "Changing circumstances, including economic, dietary, and social elements, have made some of our people feel that the renunciation of the eating of meat is not always and for everyone the most effective means of practicing penance."

"Meat was once an exceptional form of food; now it is commonplace. Accordingly, since the spirit of penance primarily suggests that we discipline ourselves in that which we enjoy most, to many in our day abstinence from meat no longer implies pen-

ance, while renunciation of other things would be more penitential." However, the *Pastoral Statement* still requires American Catholics to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays. As the document states: "in keeping with the letter and spirit" of *Paenitemini*, the apostolic constitution by Pope Paul VI, "we preserved for our dioceses the tradition of abstinence from meat on each of the Fridays of Lent, confident that no Catholic Christian will lightly hold himself excused from this penitential practice." Part of the value of this mandatory Lenten Friday abstinence for all Catholics, even those Catholics who wouldn't normally be craving a meat-based meal, is not only the subjective sense of doing penance but also the solidarity and witness-value of a communal penitential practice.

When we abstain from meat on Fridays in Lent, we are practicing a penance alongside our brothers and sisters in the Church around the world.

On those occasions when we may need to visibly refuse meat or otherwise choose a fish or vegetarian option on a Friday, we are also demonstrating the importance of our faith to each other and to non-Catholics. This all being said, if you personally feel that Friday abstinence during Lent is not enough of a sacrifice to be spiritually beneficial for you, you are certainly free to incorporate another penitential practice in addition to abstinence on Fridays. And while the only strictly binding Lenten obligations for Catholics are abstinence on Ash Wednesday and Fridays, and to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, it is customary, albeit not required, for Catholics to choose some additional spiritual practice for Lent at their own discretion.

Traditionally, we speak of Lent as a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, so any penance falling generally into one of these categories would be appropriate.

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

Forever ahead of our souls

Sometimes there's nothing as helpful as a good metaphor.

In his book, *The God Instinct*, Tom Stella shares this story: A number of men who made their living as porters were hired one day to carry a huge load of supplies for a group on safari.

Their loads were unusually heavy and the trek through the jungle was rough. Several days into the journey they stopped, unshouldered their loads, and refused to go on.

No pleas, bribes, or threats, worked in terms of persuading them to go on. Asked why they couldn't continue, they answered: "We can't go on; we have to wait for our souls to catch up with us."

Awareness

That also happens to us in life, except mostly we never wait for our souls to catch up. We continue without them, sometimes for years.

What this means is that we struggle to be in the present moment, to be inside our own skin, to be aware of the richness of our own experience. Too often our experiences aren't very soulful because we aren't present to them. I cite myself as an example:

For the past 25 years, I've kept a journal, a diary of sorts. My intent in keeping this journal is to record the deeper things that I'm aware of throughout each day; but mostly what I end up actually writing



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

down is a simple chronology of my day, a daybook, a bare, no-frills, recounting of what I did from hour to hour.

“There wasn't a lot of soul there, just routine, work, and hurry”

My diaries don't much resemble Anne Frank's diary, Dag Hammarskjöld's *Markings* or Henri Nouwen's *Genesee Diary*. My journals resemble more what you might get from a schoolboy describing his day at school, a simple chronology of what happened.

Yet when I go back some years later and read an account of what I did on a given day, I'm always amazed at how rich and full my

life was on that day, except that I wasn't much aware of it at the time.

While actually living through those days, mostly I was struggling to get my work done, to stay on top of things, to meet expectations, to carve out some moments of friendship and recreation amid the pressures of the day, and to get to bed at a reasonable hour. There wasn't a lot of soul there, just routine, work, and hurry.

I suspect that this is not atypical. Most of us live most of our days not very aware of how rich our lives are, forever leaving our souls behind. For example, many is the woman who gives 10 to 15 years of her life to bearing and raising children, with all that entails, tending constantly to someone else's needs, getting up at night to nurse a child, spending 24 hours a day on constant alert, sacrificing all leisure

time, and putting a career and personal creativity on hold.

And yet often that same woman, later on, looks back on those years and wishes she could relive them – but now, in a more soulful way, more consciously aware of how privileged it was to do precisely those things she did within so much tedium and tiredness.

Appreciate

Years later, looking back, she sees how rich and precious her experience was and how because of the burden and stress how little her soul was present then to what she was experiencing.

This can be multiplied with a thousand examples. We've all read accounts wherein someone shares what he or she would do differently if he or she had life to live over again.

Mostly these stories rework the same motif. Given another chance, I would try to enjoy it more, that is, I would try to keep my soul more present and more aware.

For most of us, I fear, our souls will only catch up with us when, finally, we are in retirement, with

diminished health, diminished energy, and no opportunity to work.

It seems we need to first lose something before we fully appreciate it. We tend to take life, health, energy, and work for granted, until they are taken away from us. Only after the fact do we realise how rich our lives have been and how little of those riches we drank in at the time.

“We all need, regularly, to lay down our burdens for a minute so our souls can catch up with us”

Our souls eventually do catch up with us, but it would be good if we didn't wait until we were in assisted living for this to happen. Like the porters who dropped their loads and stopped, we need to stop and wait for our souls to catch up.

Early on in his priesthood, when Pope Francis was principal of a school, he would at a certain point each day have the public address system cut in and interrupt the work that was going on in each classroom with this announcement: Be grateful. Set your horizon. Take stock of your day.

We all need, regularly, to lay down our burdens for a minute so our souls can catch up with us.

“Most of us live most of our days not very aware of how rich our lives are, forever leaving our souls behind”

Something is coming – are we ready?



Calvary is on the horizon as we reach the fifth Sunday in Lent. Photo: OSV News

Fifth Sunday in Lent
Jer 31:31-34
Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15
Heb 5:7-9
Jn 12:20-33

Whatever else we may be thinking about in these last days of Lent, the readings for this fifth Sunday make it clear: Something's coming.

You can't help but feel that the winds are shifting.

The reading from Jeremiah promises, "The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel."

The letter to the Hebrews describes Christ's "prayers and supplications... to the one who was able to save him from death".

Foreboding

And in the Gospel from John, we find words of unmistakable foreboding, even dread. "The hour has

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon
Greg
Kandra



come," Jesus says. "I am troubled now ... but it was for this purpose that I came to this hour."

We know, of course, where this is leading: to palms and hosannas, washed feet and broken bread, betrayal and suffering and heart-rending, unavoidable tragedy.

The 'something' that's coming is Calvary.

We can only imagine what Christ was thinking as he scanned the skies and marked the days and braced himself for what was about to happen.

But what about us? Where have these days taken us? And what have we taken from them? Are we changed?

We've been expecting this for weeks. But now this is a moment for taking stock. Lent has been about that, really –

it's a season for penance and prayer, letting go and looking within. But these last days before the week we call 'holy' are a good time for reflecting more prayerfully on where we have been and where we need to be.

Journey

We started this journey with ashes on our brows and 'Be merciful, O Lord' on our lips. We skipped desserts and slipped money in the poor box and showed up on Friday nights to follow the Way of the Cross and sing the Stabat Mater.

Maybe we ran our fingers over the dry, empty fonts and saw again and again the purple vestments at Mass

and were reminded that this is no ordinary time.

If we were paying attention, we felt a holy longing, the strange absence of familiar things. It was as close as we could get to spending time in the desert.

It's worth asking ourselves: What has this time taught us? Are we seeing the world differently?

Are we engaging more deeply in conversations with the Lord, in prayer and meditation and reflection and sacred silence?

Are we giving ourselves to others more generously and joyfully? Are we striving more purposefully to see Christ in the stranger – and

to be Christ to those in need?

It's not easy, I know. We all have lives, families, jobs, obligations, responsibilities, deadlines. We try to be holier, to seek opportunities to be the saints we think we can become, but the world keeps intruding. Let's face it: Nobody does Lent perfectly.

But we need to keep trying.

Miracle

And we need to look beyond the hill to be climbed, to the miracle that comes after. The very word 'Lent' comes from an ancient Middle English word meaning 'springtime'. This is a time for renewal

and growth.

Jesus understood as much. Even facing his own death, Jesus offered this resolute hope:

"Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit."

Maybe we don't realise it, but each of us is part of that harvest. We are the fruit of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection – the Christian faithful who, all these generations later, continue to spread his Good News, in ways large and small.

Lent should help deepen our awareness of that extraordinary fact – and help us understand more deeply what was given for us, and what we have to give to others.

Yes, something's coming. Are we ready?

“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit”

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

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Comprehensive defeat for two 'dud' amendments

'Tis a tale of two days I have for you – a Saturday and a Thursday. If Ireland had beaten England at Twickenham last Saturday it would have been the icing on the cake, after that day's stunning win for the No side in the referendum. But the cake is more important than the icing (unless it's carrot cake) so that victory was sweet.

On **Saturday with Colm Ó Mongáin** (RTÉ Radio 1) the news report spoke of a "definitive trend" and of the proposals being "comprehensively defeated". The presenter described it as "a bad day for the Government and *most* [italics added] of the opposition".

Indeed, apart from Aontú and some independents, the so-called 'opposition' has questions to answer though they spent much of their post-result media time slamming the Government for a bad campaign with bad wording.

One of the quirkiest aspects of the day was the presence of miraculous medals in the ballot boxes. Only in Ireland! Colm Ó Mongáin said it was more a case for St Jude for the Yes side.

Strangely the panel was comprised entirely of Yes supporters, though No campaigners Senators Michael McDowell and Tom Clonan were interviewed later. Minister of State Peter Burke



A woman arrives with children at a polling station on the day of a referendum on changes to the Irish constitution called the Family Amendment and the Care Amendment, in Dublin, March 8. Photo: OSV News/Reuters, Clodagh Kilcoyne

(FG) described the result as "a strong blow to the body politic" and raised questions about whether some NGOs were "reflective of the communities we live in".

Later Sen. McDowell referred to "two dud amendments" while Sen. Clonan spoke of a "huge moral victory" for people with disabilities and their carers (unlike Sen. McDowell he had not campaigned on what became known as the 'family referendum').

I'd suggest that these senators, along with other independent voices, swung the middle ground for the No vote, while commentators like David Quinn, Sen. Rónán Mullen and Maria Steen ensured a No vote from more

traditional or conservatively minded voters.

On the **TV News at One** (RTÉ One) reporters spoke from various count centres. Mary Regan said there was no majority for Yes anywhere in Munster. I wasn't surprised at an earlier report that the result was on a knife edge in Greystones while the rest of Co. Wicklow went for a double No.

On the **Referendums 2024** (RTÉ One) programmes that day, the trend towards No was analysed to the hilt. Sen. McDowell queried the late leaking (by the Government side, he believed) of the Attorney General's advice – too late for scrutiny in the broadcast media because of the moratorium.

The Saturday vote was a victory for those of a socially and/or constitutionally conservative disposition, but there are other clouds ahead. The previous Thursday RTÉ reported that the Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying is set to recommend that both assisted suicide and euthanasia be introduced in Ireland. Both! The full report is due in late March, so you'd wonder about this revelation and whose agenda this advance news served.

Drivetime (RTÉ Radio 1, Thursday) was one of many shows that covered it. Janie Lazar, End of Life Ireland chairperson, welcomed the news but obviously thought it didn't go far enough – honest but something of an own goal.

PICK OF THE WEEK

VOX NOSTRA WITH VLAD SMISHKEWYCH

RTÉ Lyric fm Sunday March 17, 7am

A special St Patrick's Day Vox Nostra ahead of Early Music Day brings over a millennium of stunning music to your ears this Sunday morning.

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday March 17, 11.30pm

To celebrate St Patrick's Day, Claire McCollum is in Northern Ireland meeting Christians inspired by the saint's extraordinary story and following in his footsteps.

DISCOVERING PATRICK - SAINT OF IRELAND

EWTN Thursday March 21, 9am

Fr Nathan Cromly leads a group of Catholic pilgrims on an inspirational pilgrimage to the Emerald Isle where they trace the path of Ireland's patron, St. Patrick, recalling his life and missionary zeal.

If limitations are set, she argued, what about the people who don't meet the criteria? What about, even years ahead of any expected death, their quality of life is "unacceptable", and pain can't be relieved – whether physical, mental or even spiritual? Would that really be fair? That was pretty broad – beware any dark nights of the soul.

Prof. Des O'Neill, consultant geriatrician, found the proposals disturbing. He believed the "whole impulse of care" would be undermined. It would alter how we view caring, aging and dying. He questioned if, as part of their "repertoire as doctors", they should be prepared to "kill people" (a spade called

a spade).

Ms Lazar wanted the debate brought back to the individual and choice but Dr O'Neill saw this as a neo-liberal approach, valuing autonomy over everything else. He said we have to consider such matters in the light of what it does to the rest of society, see it on the broader canvas.

A similar point was made earlier in the day by a young fella called Brendan on **Lunchtime Live** (Newstalk). Adjusting an old saying, he suggested that hard cases make bad laws which in turn make more hard cases. There was quite a variety of views from callers for and against – well worth listening back to that discussion.

Music

Pat O'Kelly



Richard Strauss: 'the greatest genius of the age'

Thanks to its intrepid artistic director, Fergus Sheil, Irish National Opera is currently midway through its latest production – Richard Strauss' single act *Salome* at Dublin's Bord Gáis Energy Theatre.

A concert performance in Wexford's National Opera House on March 3 preceded the fully staged production by Bruno Ravella that opened at BGET last Tuesday. Further performances are scheduled for tonight (Thursday, March 14) with the final one on Saturday, March 16.

Sinéad Campbell-Wallace undertakes the highly taxing title role with Munich tenor Vincent Wolfsteiner as Herod, Imelda Drumm as Herodias and Icelandic baritone Tómas Tómasson as John the Baptist.

There is, of course, an Irish connection to the opera in that it is based on Oscar Wilde's French play *Salome*

first seen at the Comédie-Parisienne in Paris on February 11, 1896. Greatly impressed by what he saw, Strauss asked his friend poetess Hedwig Lachmann to translate the libretto into German. The end result brought *Salome* to Dresden's Opera House on December 9, 1905.

It is interesting that the composer, working with musicologist Romain Rolland in 1907, wrote an alternative French setting that required some revisions to his score, but this version lapsed into relative oblivion albeit it had revivals in Lyon in 1990 and Liège in 2011.

Wilde himself felt his play's formal structure was well suited to musical adaptation remarking that it contained "refrains whose recurring motifs make it so like a piece of music and bind it together as a ballad".

Early performances were not without controversy. The original

soprano, Marie Wittich, refused to perform the lascivious Dance of the Seven Veils with her place in this scene being taken by a dancer. Indeed, anytime I have seen the opera abroad this has been the case with the most recent in Salzburg finding the prima donna doing nothing as the Vienna Philharmonic wallowed in Strauss' extravagant score.

Following its Dresden premiere *Salome* quickly found its way into the repertoires of some 50 opera houses. However, Vienna was adamant. There would be "no *Salome* here". Even Mahler failed to gain the Viennese censor's consent and it was 1918 before the Austrian capital heard the piece.

The authorities in Graz were more amenable with *Salome* played there in 1906. Berg, Puccini, Mahler and Schönberg were among the audience. London also proved difficult with

the Lord Chamberlain's office banning the opera mainly because of its depiction of biblical scenes on stage. The veto was eventually lifted in 1910 when Thomas Beecham conducted the work at Covent Garden.

Salome had had its first Metropolitan Opera NY performance in 1907 to mixed reviews. One in favour was impressed by "the power displayed by the composer" while another against considered the opera "repugnant to Anglo-Saxon minds". When Elgar, visiting New York at the time, had been requested to lead the objections to *Salome* he refused stating that Richard Strauss was "the greatest genius of the age".

Under pressure from wealthy patrons, on whom the Met depended for almost all its revenue, further planned performances were cancelled and *Salome* was not staged there again until 1934.



Portrait of Richard Strauss by Max Liebermann (1918).



BookReviews

Peter Costello



The uniqueness of St Patrick

Peter Costello

This Sunday the whole world, it seems, will for a few hours become Irish, or at least recover enough of their nominal 'Irishness' to join in the fun.

President Biden, in the name of the American people, will accept yet again a giant bowl of flourishing shamrock, and avow his Irish roots.

Streets around the world will be filled with parades, with begowned boy bishops with crooked mitres, with raucous leprechauns wearing green tops hats and bushy red beards.

But in all the craic and laughter, something important will be overlooked, something very important: St Patrick himself.

This is really strange, for St Patrick is unique among Irish saints of early times: he has actually told us about himself in his own words in a direct and vivid manner.

Consider for a moment the Three Patrons of Ireland, St Patrick, St Columba and St Brigid. What do we know about them and how do we know it?

For St Brigid we have a set of traditional lives in both Irish and Latin. These are about the lady already becoming a figure of legend, even myth.

For St Columba we have an informative life by Adomnán, a near contemporary, who had access to oral sources now lost. It is the man himself at a remove so to speak, but already becoming a pious legend. (Adomnán of Iona's *Life of St Columba* is in print in an accessible scholarly edition from Penguin Classics, £8.99.)

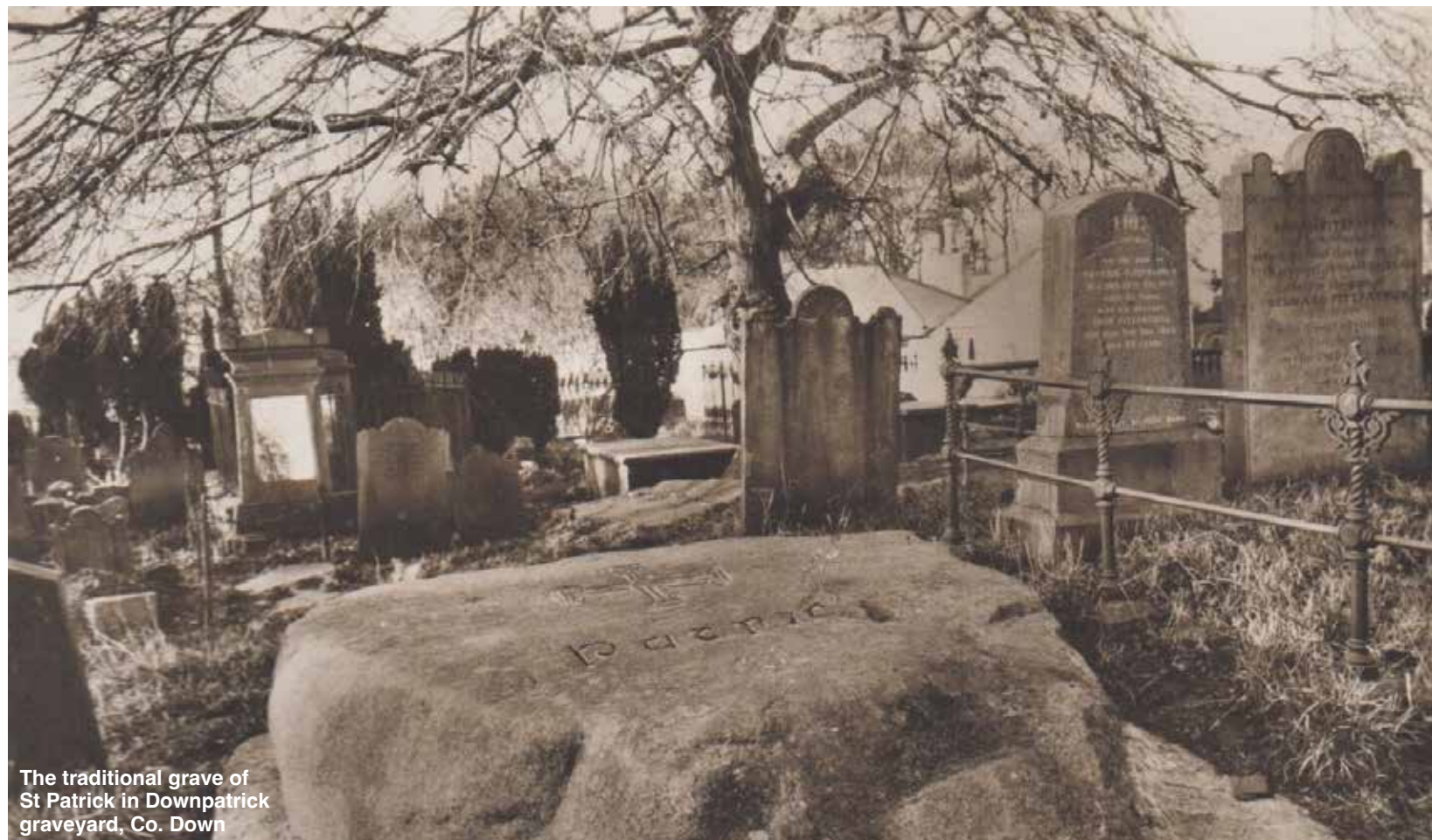
By sharp contrast we have two documents attributed to St Patrick himself, his *Confession* and *The Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus*. The second is a plea to a Scottish band who had kidnapped some Irish Christians, whom he wanted returned, a document filled with outrage and a passion for justice and religion.

However, the *Confession* is his own personal account of his life, his own justification of his actions before man and God.

Unique

This is unique. It gives the actual sound, tone, and tenor of a passionate man who has dedicated his life to God's mission to the Irish.

In the annals of Irish hagiography there is nothing like it. But this unique voice that we hear from Patrick is not, ironically enough, an Irish voice. It is the voice of a Latin speaking Roman, not in the sense of



The traditional grave of St Patrick in Downpatrick graveyard, Co. Down

a 'Roman Catholic', but in the sense of St Paul in Acts (22:28): a freeborn Christian citizen of the *pax Romana*.

But Patrick left his childhood home, perhaps somewhere in Somerset, and his family to go into wild and savage Ireland, where the people did not even use money.

“My advice is to hear the man himself first, and then move on to see what those attempting to elucidate him have to say”

But to encounter St Patrick readers might be best advice to read a straightforward edition of the plain text – a new edition appeared last month, can be bought from Amazon, and there are many others. In this way if read first without commentary readers will encounter the man himself in all his complexity.

Naturally, as with many other books, this will leave much unfathomed. But my advice is to hear the man himself first, and then move on to see what those attempting to elucidate him have to say.

Dr Healy, the archbishop of Tuam, had a good dictum

worth following. In 1905 he published a biography of St Patrick in which he proposed a test for the materials in the traditional lives of the saint: do they conform to the man whose character is revealed in the *Confession*. If not, he said, they were apocryphal.

Of this second class of books, the most recent and perhaps most interesting, is that by the Columban father Aidan J. Larkin, *The Spiritual Journey of St Patrick* (Messenger Publications, €14.99). His approach is to elucidate the references in St Patrick, to delve into his own reflected view of himself in the context of his time. This is an enlightened procedure, making this perhaps the most valuable recent book on St Patrick.

It is when one might turn to those writers that attempted to explore the political, social and topographical information in the Irish lives in Latin and Irish that the figure of St Patrick becomes more confused and controversial.

Controversy

It is hard to write a book about St Patrick without arousing controversy, as instanced by David N. Dumville's *St Patrick* (Boydell and Brewer, £26.99), which shifted the narrative to the later traditional date of death of 493 – not the date they taught us school, as people say.

Then there is Dr Roy Flechner of UCD, who in his book *St Patrick Retold* (Princeton University Press, £22.00), casts Patrick in the role, not of a slave, but a slave trader, marketing his father's stock of slaves at home to Irish buyers.

“History often does not provide ‘simple truth’ of any kind, and certainly not about St Patrick”

But what some, perhaps many readers, want is 'the simple truth'. Well, history often does not provide 'simple truth' of any kind, and certainly not about St Patrick.

If readers wish to begin trying to come to terms with the man, who, whatever way you rebrand him, has had an immense influence on Irish ideas about themselves and their country, the first step must be to read his own account of his life and then to try to understand the spiritual basis for his beliefs.

But to come to terms with what annalists, scholars and modern academics, not to speak of manipulative rulers and clergy over the centuries, have made of him is a very different day's work.



The popular 1958 biography by Paul Gallico showed St Patrick as a young missionary, a most unusual image by British artist Donald Green. One can imagine this man writing *The Confession*.

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.

Coming to terms with the way we live today

Bruno Latour: How to Inhabit the Earth, Interviews with Nicholas Truong (Polity Press, £12.99 pb / £40.00 hb)

Frank Litton

We learn two things from history. Assumptions quite different from those that frame our world shaped the actions of our predecessors. The second follows from this. World views do change. They are human constructions that endure for long periods.

We might think of them as buildings, but if we do, they are buildings in constant need of repair, extension, refurbishment as weaknesses are uncovered, new demands are made, challenges faced.

Foundations

Most of the time the work proceeds on the basis that the foundations are sound. It can happen that they give away under the pressure of accumulating difficulties. So attention

turns to them, new foundations are fashioned, and laboriously, a new 'building' emerges.

This is the story of our own world view whose origins can be traced to the 16th Century and the intricate concatenation of circumstances that unfurled – wars of religion, a scientific revolution, new modes of production, voyages of discovery that revealed new modes of human existence, new problems for philosophy.

The question arises: have we reached a point when the foundations of this world come into question? Is the 'house' in which we have made ourselves at home in the world, a commodious home with many benefits let it be said, tottering, its foundations shaking?

If this were the case what should we expect to see? I suggest at least three indicators: serious problems, a lack of vitality in the intellectual efforts to deal with them and an increasing interest in foundations. All three are evident. Consider the problems.

A new geological epoch has been named: the Anthropo-

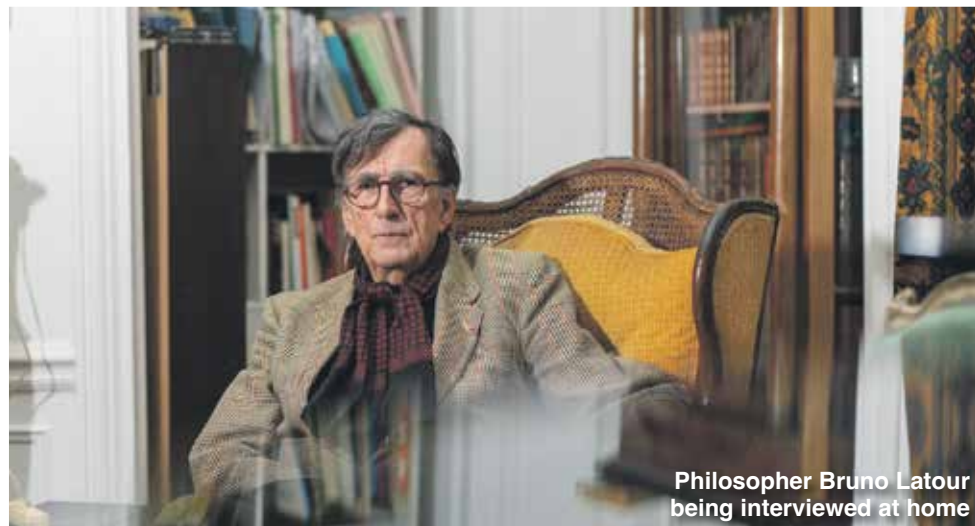
cene. We humans who up to now supposed that we played no role in the dynamics that drive the history of our planet are now revealed as significant players. And our actions are deleterious, damaging the intricate balance that sustains life on earth.

Economic forces that nation-states, more or less successfully constrained in the common interest have escaped the leash, inequalities deepen and power flows to large corporations.

Democracies

We move towards democracies without the politics that allowed citizens to believe that their interests were recognised, educating them in the 'big picture' while managing deeply rooted conflicts of interest. No doubt the list could be extended.

The worrying thing is that the 'maintenance crews' – the economists, the sociologists, the historians, the philosophers, that populate our universities



Philosopher Bruno Latour being interviewed at home

and 'feed' the commentator contribute so little.

When they do address the problems, they are incapable of motivating us towards solutions. Of course, I paint with a broad brush. There are exceptions.

Prominent among them, Pope Francis whose encyclical *Laudato Si* draws on Catholic teaching to encourage the reorientation required to meet the climate crisis.

Future historians will, no doubt, mark it as an important contribution to our efforts to rebuild a home on earth that respects the interdependencies that bind us together and to our God-given earth.

No one thinker has contributed more to the understanding of our plight than Bruno Latour who died, aged 75 last October. A practicing Catholic and a philosopher, his publications range across

disciplines. Their worth was recognised in two prizes, the Holberg and the Kyoto, both seen as the equivalent of Nobel Prizes in the humanities and social sciences.

Crisis

In recent years his attention focused on the ecological crisis resulting in scholarly works and popular treatments. He dealt with the political dimension in *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences Into Democracy* (2004) and the cosmological in *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* (2017). *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (2018) aimed at the general reader, argues for a new view of politics.

He presented his philosophical framework in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the*

Moderns (2013). His analysis of the foundations of the modern world view can be read in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993).

These and other volumes illuminate all the important aspects of the world we moderns have constructed for ourselves, offered not in a spirit of demolition but reconstruction. These defy easy summary. Happily I do not have to attempt this, thanks to this new book, *Bruno Latour: How to Inhabit the Earth*.

This records a series of interviews with Latour broadcast on French television in 2022. They give an accessible introduction to his work, and indeed to the man. He presents the challenges of our time, indicates a response and inspires us to pursue it. His views are there: how will the world at large respond.

A Dublin celebration of the Irish Diaspora

A St Patrick's holiday visit to EPIC on Custom House Quay

Peter Costello

St Patrick's day sees the arrival of great numbers of visitors from abroad, many of them part of, or deeply interested in the Irish diaspora.

This seems an appropriate moment then to visit the EPIC presentation down on Customs House in the Dublin Financial Centre. EPIC stands for Irish Emigration Museum, by the way. This is undoubtedly what Ed Sullivan would have called 'a really big show'; and it has been named Europe's leading tourist site three years in a row.

Unusual

The location is very unusual. On ground level there is a wide open concourse with refreshment booths, a book and gift shop, advice centre and other facilities aimed at visitors.

But the show itself is downstairs, in an underworld of vaults and passages, the residue of the former bond store where dutiable imports were lodged by the customs.



Inside the EPIC audiovisual experience in Dublin's Docklands

Some visitors might be advised that the environment is not for those made anxious by enclosed spaces or who are affected by amplified sound and flashing images. This is not an exhibit of relics or of pictures. It is an audiovisual show of a very up-to-the moment kind.

The presentation is in some 20 sections, divided into three parts. The first part presents a résumé of Irish history and the

reason for emigration: famine, poverty, persecution. This is all done very briefly and correctly, an Irish point of view is taken, but not too stridently.

Quibble

There are some points that some quibble at. The intended audience seems to be largely North American, which is understandable. But the presentation of the Irish world shows places where Irish people

undoubtedly went, but made no large settlement.

For instance on the world routes South Africa is shown, though Irish people went there the settlement was small. But there are no illustrations of Argentina, where there was a huge Irish settlement, which is still influential, still Catholic, but this is ignored, as are the Irish settled in Chile.

North American visitors are clearly thought to have little

interest in Latin America.

However, the second part covers music and dance through science, sport, and political and social influences – all very well done. The third part gets down to the details of the Irish mentality and imagination, food, design and creativity, storytelling through book and film, winding up to end with a celebration of all things Irish and their global connections.

So quite a lot to see and take in, so you will need to take your time especially if you have children. The varied entry charges may seem steep, but they are on a level with theatre tickets, and kids go free.

As I say the presentation is aimed mainly at North Americans – there is far less emphasis on Europe – but others interests are not ignored. I think it is a place that many Irish people, young and old, will enjoy and be enlightened by.

Recommended

So a visit is recommended. By the way, the activities of Irish missionaries and medical professionals in Africa, Brazil and Peru is not ignored, but celebrated.

But nuance may be lost in these kinds of shows. EPIC highlights a great many things, but visitors will still need to read not a book or two, but a good number, if they are really to come to terms with the Irish and Irishness, to really understand the Diaspora. Books at any time are the real road to understanding.

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Leisure time

Crossword

Gordius 654

Across

1 Resignation to an unpleasant new state of affairs (10)
6 Skin irritation (4)
10 Black and white bear (5)
11 Bank facility (9)
12 An order to appear before a court (7)
15 Waterlogged, overflowing (5)
17 Urban area (4)
18 Fence running at the side of a racetrack (4)
19 Items of luggage (5)
21 Quiver (7)
23 Clerical accommodation, especially in the Scottish Presbyterian Church (5)
24 Starch used to make a dessert (4)
25 Such horse has white hairs intermingled with those of another colour in its coat (4)
26 Candle (5)
28 Track and field competitor (7)
33 Saint who went to Iona (9)
34 Portable light (5)
35 A chair or bench, perhaps (4)
36 From the Latin for 'from the chair', delivered with great authority (2,8)

Down

1 Snakes (4)
2 Turmoil (9)
3 Holy song attributed to King David (5)
4 Oak nut (5)
5 Ship's complement (4)
7 Jewelled headgear (5)
8 Satisfied one's hunger (3,3,4)
9 Go forward (7)
13 This East European river flows through Ostrava and Wrocław (4)
14 One's ability to keep going (7)
16 Cooked chicken legs (10)
20 Distributed widely (9)
21 Row of houses (7)
22 Whip (4)
27 Bohemian dance (5)
29 Eighth letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
30 Lift it to open a door (5)
31 Electrical cord (4)
32 Islamic sect (4)

SOLUTIONS, FEBRUARY 22

GORDIUS No. 653

Across

1 Hob 3 Philosopher 8 Mishap 9 Uncommon 10 Irish 11 Relic 13 Fiend 15 Butcher 16 Panacea 20 House 21 Doll 23 Riser 24 Pedigree 25 Asleep 26 Pie in the sky 27 The

Down

1 Humming bird 2 Bassinet 3 Peach 4 Lourdes 5 Odour 6 Homily 7 Ran 12 Catastrophe 13 Fresh 14 Drake 17 Crescent 18 Austere 19 Noodle 22 Lagan 23 Risky 24 Pip

Sudoku Corner

524

Easy

Hard

Last week's Easy 523

Last week's Hard 523

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



Create a room at home that reflects your faith

He was in the other room

when I walked in. I knew the door would be unlocked so just gave a quick tap, said hello and walked in. "Who's there?" he asked and when I said it was me, he said that he'd be with me in minute. He walked in, carrying a mop and I said, "You were doing a bit of a clean-up – it will be lucky for the woman that gets you?"

"Ah, that day has passed", he smiled and so it began...

A 'First Friday' call, when we visit the sick and housebound of the parish, is an opportunity to meet people, spend a bit of time and say a prayer. There's a routine around them but always a bit of time for a chat. Some priests spend longer at it than I, but it is an important part of the ministry and one that I generally enjoy. You see the best of good people; life has moved on for most of them and their activities might be less than they had been, but there is something very wholesome about meeting them. It is an honour to feel so welcome in people's homes.

Reverence

We stood in front of the fireplace, shared a prayer and the Eucharist was received in the reverence of an oft-repeated



"Amen". As I chatted with him, I looked to the fireplace and the mantelpiece above it. No fuss or clutter there – a Sacred Heart Picture with its ever-present lamp and, behind the lamp, a recently blessed St Brigid's Cross. Under the picture was

a Crucifix and to the right of it, a statue. As I looked at this 'Sacred Space', my heart and Soul, were moved. I feel certain he doesn't call it a 'Sacred Space', but it is not by accident these items adorn his home – it is out of choice and in faith, they have found their place.

Mixed sense

I drove away from his home with a mixed sense of joy and sorrow. Joy, that faith has accompanied this man through the decades of life. Sorrow, that what I had just seen could so easily be written off and dismissed alongside the WB Yeats' words: "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone; it's with O'Leary in the grave." Many would or could scoff at the simplicity of it all and yet, there is a depth of faith in so many homes and hearts, that deserve to be recognised, admired and cherished. Ironically just a few hours later, I noticed photos on-line, from a locally produced drama and the Sacred Heart picture was there alongside religious imagery of the time the play reflected – most likely the 1950s. Yet, that

same day, I was awe-struck by their presence not on stage but in the real, day to day, drama of life in a country home and in the heart of a man not afraid to let his faith be seen.

“She wore a cardigan and it was festooned with medals of all shapes and sizes. The Miraculous Medal took pride of place but was not alone”

This leads me to reflect about our homes and their decorations. Is there still room for some religious imagery? Has the Holy Water Font a place inside the door anymore?

How comfortable are we with religious imagery in our homes? I was thinking lately of a lady I visited many years ago, on another round of First Friday calls. I always enjoyed

seeing her and, though she was quite ill and incapacitated, she was a joy to meet. She wore a cardigan and it was festooned with medals of all shapes and sizes. The Miraculous Medal took pride of place but was not alone. I looked at her one day and said: "You are like a stall in Knock" – we laughed and I can still hear the laugh but, jokes aside, she was happy in her place and valued the presence she encountered in her medals.

Encouraging

I am not saying we should be "Stalls in Knock" but am encouraging you to make a little room in your home that speaks to your faith, reflects it, and maybe gives a visitor something to ponder on as he or she drives away.



Please help the destitute this Lenten season



Missionaries are deluging the Little Way Association with heart-breaking descriptions of their people's sufferings and impassioned appeals for us to help them.

Just one of the many projects we are financing is supporting destitute elderly people being cared for by the Divine Word Providence Sisters in south-west Ethiopia. Sr Etalem Getahun has written to us asking for our help. "We are running a project at Gassa Chare town to provide food, clothing, healthcare, shelter and burial costs for destitute and marginalised individuals.

"Every Thursday more than 100 aged men and women come for a nutritious lunch and will take home 5kg bowls of cereal or flour for their weekly consumption. We treat those with minor ailments at our clinic. The more serious cases we transport to the government hospital.

"We shall be very grateful if you will enable us to continue with this much-needed project for another year. May God bless you and all the benefactors of the Little Way Association.

Every penny you donate will be forwarded without deduction

This Lent, we urge you to give alms to our fund for the hungry, sick and deprived. Without any kind of deduction for administration, this fund is used to support missionaries providing life-sustaining assistance to destitute families and individuals.

As well as donating by post, you can email contact@littlewayassociation.com for details of giving via the internet and standing order via our AIB account in Dublin. Please be generous in supporting the world's poorest people this Lent.



In 1893, St Therese of Lisieux wrote to her sister Celine:

"Jesus wills that we give alms to him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give to Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight."

The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving

The Catechism says: "Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God."

In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving

The Little Way Association uses the world's network of missionaries to help those in direst need. Priests, Sisters and Brothers work in some of the world's poorest areas and in political trouble-spots. Our policy is never to deduct anything from donations earmarked for the relief of poverty or for missionary work.

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