

The Irish Catholic

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Schools urged to be vigilant amid reports of targeting by 'cult'

Greg Daly

Catholic schools have been urged to be vigilant when approached by groups offering to speak to students, following claims that a group that has been described as a 'cult' has targeted Cork schools. "It's very important that there is Garda vetting, and that people are sure that whoever is talking is going to respect and promote the ethos of the school," Achonry's Bishop Brendan Kelly told *The Irish Catholic*.

The bishop, who chairs the Church's Council for Education, was responding to reports that speakers from the so-called Church of Scientology have been in contact with schools in the Cork area, under the guise of the 'front groups' Foundation for a Drug-Free World and Youth for Human Rights.

The Irish Catholic understands that representatives of the US-based group, which last October opened a National Affairs Office in Dublin, claim to have spoken before Christmas in Cork schools on the dangers of drugs.

Critics argue that the groups, along with related projects Narconon, The Truth About Drugs, and the Citizens' Commission on Human Rights, are recruitment fronts for the controversial organisation, which was invented by American science-fiction author L. Ron Hubbard in the 1950s. Recognised as a religion in some countries, other countries have denied it such status, with a French government report having described it as a "dangerous cult", and a French court in 2009 finding it guilty of organised fraud.

Material

One Catholic parish is known to have been sent a parcel of material from the group.

One Church of Ireland school is also known to have received material from the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, the school withdrawing the material from circulation after one student alerted a teacher as to its provenance.

The foundation was active last summer seeking translators to render its material into

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Offering a 'céad míle fáilte'

Charlie, Malachi, Conor and Orlaith with their class teacher Mrs Quinn from P5 in St Colmans' Primary School in Annaclone, Co. Down pictured during a celebration to welcome representatives from seven countries to the school as part of the Erasmus+ programme.

DAVID QUINN

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MARTIN MANSERGH

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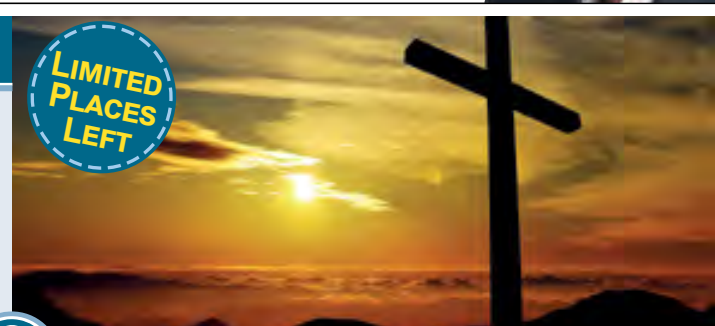
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Faith teaches us we are not the sum-total of our weaknesses

It's hard to get across to younger generations today the enormity of the scandal that was the revelation in 1992 that Bishop Eamonn Casey had secretly fathered a child years earlier.

One got a sense of the impact this week by the fact that the country's largest-selling daily newspaper *The Irish Independent* carried a special eight-page supplement to mark Bishop Casey's death after a long illness on March 13.

There's something strangely fitting that Bishop Casey – a man who spent so much of his time and energy advocating for the rights of young Irish people forced to emigrate out of economic necessity – died in the week of St Patrick's Day. Today, a new generation of Irish chaplains is working with Irish communities in far-flung parts of the world, particularly in the US where the so-called 'undocumented' are facing such uncertainty.

Exposed

When his sin was publicly exposed, many Irish Catholics were scandalised. They winced as many journalists who had long since harboured grudges against the Church delighted in tearing down a once-mighty edifice. Journalists delighted in exposing hypocrisy, and God knows the Church has provided enough examples of hypocrisy over the years.

It was ever thus, of course – the only way not to be a hypocrite is to hold no standards to be judged by. The very fact of trying to live a set of beliefs means that we will be



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

judged for the times we are shown not to live up to these beliefs. It's like the story often told about a non-Massgoer who complains to the parish priest that they don't go to church on Sunday because "the place is full of hypocrites". Knowing the human condition all too well, the parish priest replies: "But, there's always room for one more." Many a theological truth is contained in a one-liner.

“He was greatly loved by the priests and people of the dioceses of both Kerry and Galway”

Thankfully, most of the times when our faith is inadequately lived, it is done so in private and remains in the realm of the confessional. Bishop Casey was a flawed man, and undoubtedly the revelations that he broke his promise of celibacy and kept the matter a secret while progressing up the ecclesiastical ladder did much to damage the Church's public standing.

He was also a man of immense charity and pastoral warmth. Thankfully his tireless advocacy on behalf of struggling Irish people in Britain at a time when little heed was paid to them at home is being well-remembered this week. Likewise,

his campaigns for justice and peace – particularly in Central America and his work with Trócaire is being rightly highlighted. He was greatly loved by the priests and people of the dioceses of both Kerry and Galway. People who ministered alongside of him speak fondly of his charity and outreach.

When this chapter in the history of the Church in Ireland comes to be written, the events surrounding Bishop Casey will prove to be a pivotal moment. It marked a time when the spontaneous trust that many Irish people had in the Church began to disappear. This was further compounded by the scandals around clerical sexual abuse.

In the end though, most people will look on Eamonn Casey with the eyes of forgiveness – it is no more than our faith expects of us.

We are none of us the sum-total of our weaknesses – and, as Pope Francis likes to recall, God never tires of forgiving us...we tire of asking.

Being a 'good Catholic' a 'good Christian' does not mean being perfect. It means having the humility to admit that we are human and, as such, while we strive for the perfect, we often fail but, with God's help, have the strength to get up again... and again...and again.

Anima eius et animae omnium fidelium defunctorum per Dei misericordiam requiescant in pace.

Schools urged to be vigilant of approach by 'cult' group

» **Continued from Page 1**

Irish, as well as arranging photo opportunities with the mayors of Galway, Limerick, and Waterford, but Dr Kelly told *The Irish Catholic* that no evidence has been found to support claims that scientists have been speaking

in Cork's Catholic schools.

"The Cork diocese has conducted a trawl of their schools and they can't find any evidence of it," Dr Kelly said, adding: "The reality is that schools have to be vigilant on all these things. There are some principles that schools know well

about in this area, for example that speakers that come in have to be Garda vetted."

Pointing out that best practice requires boards of management to be consulted before allowing students to be addressed by guest speakers, and that schools would be

aware of this, he said: "It brings home the fact that schools need to be vigilant and need to be conscious of their own ethos; it's very important they make sure that whatever happens is very much in keeping with the fundamental Catholic ethos of the schools."

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Michael Bublé with his wife Luisana and children Noah and Elias.

Recovery of Michael Bublé's son hailed as a 'miracle from God'

The success of singer Michael Bublé's young son's battle against cancer has been described by his family as a "miracle from God".

The singing sensation and his Argentinian wife Luisana Lopilato, were devastated when three-year-old Noah was diagnosed with liver cancer following a biopsy at a clinic in Buenos Aires last year.

Noah began chemotherapy treatment in the US in a bid to shrink the tumour and his parents put their careers 'on hold' to devote time to his recovery.

Bublé cancelled his hosting gig at the BRIT Awards in London in February and recently announced he may pull out of the Juno Awards in his native Canada in April.

Treatment

Last month the couple released a statement saying his son's treatment "has been progressing well" and the doctors "are very optimistic about the future for our little boy".

"We thank God for the strength he has given all of us. Our gratitude to his doctors and caretakers cannot

be put into words. We'd like to thank the thousands of people that have sent their prayers and good wishes to us.

"As we continue this journey we are greatly comforted by your support and love."

Noah's uncle, Dario Lopilato, has told Argentinian newspaper *La Nacion*, "Noah is doing well, very well". "I believe in God and sought comfort in Jesus Christ and a miracle from God came, from the way it was discovered, after the operation, everything," he said.

Lopilato would not confirm reports about his other sister Daniela texting him with the message that "the cancer was gone". He said any official announcement should come from Noah's parents.

"I'd like my sister to be the one who recounts the details. But it was something that has united us a lot as a family. God exists," he said.

Michael and Luisana are also parents to son Elias, who turned one in January.

No political will to tackle asylum process – bishop

Mags Gargan

The Bishop of Elphin has called on the Government to exercise the same energy to help the plight of asylum seekers in Ireland as undocumented Irish abroad.

Bishop Kevin Doran told *The Irish Catholic* he would like to see "a greater energy on the part of the Irish Government" in responding to the issue of asylum seekers living in direct provision "but there doesn't seem to be a political will to do it".

"Every now and then the Irish Government, understandably and rightly, says the US government should be kind to Irish immigrants overseas who are undocumented," he said.

Contribute

"Personally I have great sympathy for them and as a former chaplain in UCD I know a lot of them. For whatever reason you end up between a rock and a hard place and I suppose while you might argue people shouldn't get



Bishop Kevin Doran.

themselves in that position in the first place, some of them are there a long time and contribute to the economy and so on.

"But the problem I have is the Irish Government's approach to that issue needs to be consistent in terms of its approach to asylum seekers here in Ireland, who are in exactly the same situation except many are actually refugees," Bishop Doran said.

"A lot of the people are

waiting a long time for the results of an application for asylum and they are not allowed to work and their children are not allowed to have a normal family environment," the Sligo-based bishop said.

"It's the humanity of the situation, here are people who are undocumented in Ireland and they are not being treated well," he said.

"All they really want to do is live here and make a contribution and they are not being allowed."

Priorities

In a speech at the Famine Memorial in Philadelphia this weekend Taoiseach Enda Kenny said one of his "absolute priorities" in meeting President Donald Trump is "to renew the strong case on behalf of the hard-working, tax-paying Irish people in the United States who for too long now have been living in the shadows, and want nothing more than to continue making their contribution to this great country".

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Reprieve for RTÉ Radio longwave service welcomed

Mags Gargan

The announcement that RTÉ Radio will continue its longwave 252 service until 2019, while it seeks an alternative service to facilitate Irish people in Britain, has been widely welcomed.

RTÉ had previously announced that it would close its longwave service, which includes the broadcast of Sunday Mass, in 2014 as part of a migration to a digital platform. The closure was postponed until 2017 following criticism, including from Irish bishops, that it would “adversely affect” the older, less well-off, living in the North, as well as the elderly Irish in Britain.

RTÉ has announced the service will now continue until June 2019 and in preparation, the broadcaster plans to launch a replacement service on DAB+ digital radio transmitted via a chain of small broadcast networks which cover the main urban centres in the UK.

Patrick Morrison, Chair of Irish in Britain, said he believed “that this way forward represents the ‘happy medium’”.

Sally Mulready of the Irish Elderly Advice Network said the proposals “will succeed because RTÉ engaged with our community in a supportive and imaginative way”.

WMOF collection

The next national collection for next year’s World Meeting of Families in Dublin is due to be taken up in parishes across the country at Masses on the first weekend of April.

The August 22-26 event is expected to attract thousands of Catholic families from around the globe to Ireland.

Pope Francis has chosen Ireland to host the 9th World Meeting of Families on the theme ‘The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World’.

Church leaders here have established a national finance committee to provide advice on the financial planning.

There are three national collections in total to support the hosting of the event, the first of which took place last May.

Blowing his own trumpet



Senan Carty plays his trumpet accompanied by Ashley Gallagher, Eve Imogle and Shaha Ariff, all from St Brigid’s National School in Castleknock, Dublin during a break from rehearsals ahead of the ESB Feis Ceoil taking place from March 27-April 7. Photo: Leon Farrell/Photocall Ireland

Tuam sisters’ silence due to terms of commission

Greg Daly

The religious sisters at the centre of controversy surrounding the Tuam Mother and Baby Home feel unable to comment on the issue due to legal constraints, *The Irish Catholic* understands.

Recent revelations about the excavation of a general grave at St Mary’s Mother and Baby Home have been commented on both by Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam and Dublin’s Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, the latter saying that: “Everything must be done to enable the truth to emerge.”

The home was run by the Bon Secours sisters, and the order has been sharply criticised by media commentators for not issuing a response to the interim report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation.

In his second homily addressing the subject, Dr Neary said he hoped

the commission’s report will enable the truth to surface in a clear and objective manner, “no matter how unpalatable it may be to those on whichever side of the present discussion”.

The sisters, who ran the Tuam home between 1925 and 1961, have refused to comment on the matter, save to say that the order fully supports the work of the commission and is committed to working with it. In 2014, a spokesperson for the order denied that there was a mass grave at the home.

According to a source close to the order, the sisters’ silence is due to its compliance with the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004, Section 11 (3) of which provides that “a person (including a member of the Commission) shall not disclose or publish any evidence given or the contents of any document produced by a witness while giving evidence in private”

except under certain limited and specified circumstances.

It is an offence to disclose any evidence given in private, other than in accord with the specified circumstances.

The source also questioned the propriety of the commission having released a statement about test excavations at the home, rather than withholding such information until the commission had completed its work.

The commission, which is chaired by Judge Yvonne Murphy, was established in February 2015, and is tasked with investigating and reporting to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs about such matters as the circumstances under which women entered 14 mother and baby homes and four county homes, their living conditions, mortality rates and post-mortem practices.

NEWS IN BRIEF

No need for redress after report – order

A religious order that ran two Magdalene Laundries refused to contribute to a redress scheme after examining the findings of the McAleese committee, *The Examiner* has discovered.

Documents released under Freedom of Information show the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity rejected the Government’s view that the congregation had a ‘moral obligation’ to contribute, with regional leader Sr Sheila Murphy saying the decision was based on the committee’s findings, and after considering ongoing responsibilities to residents in the order’s care.

In August 2013 the Government told a UN committee the report had found “no factual evidence to support allegations of systematic torture or ill-treatment of a criminal nature in these institutions”.

24 Hours for the Lord

The Irish bishops have extended an invitation for the faithful to celebrate ‘24 Hours for the Lord’, an initiative that will see dioceses offer 24 hours of continuous Confession in designated churches during Lent. “Continuing last year’s call by Pope Francis during the Jubilee Year of Mercy, dioceses are inviting all Catholics to celebrate in Lent ‘24 Hours for the Lord’ so as to experience the Lord’s loving mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to find opportunities for prayer,” the bishops said in a statement. Details of designated churches will be made available on individual diocesan websites.

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Tributes paid to nuncio as he leaves Irish post

Staff Reporter

Tributes have been paid to the Pope’s representative in Ireland, Archbishop Charles Brown following the announcement that he is to take up a new appointment in Albania in the coming weeks.

The US-born prelate (57) was hand-picked by Pope Benedict XVI when relations between Dublin and Rome hit an all-time-low after the Taoiseach’s controversial criticism of the Vatican in a Dáil speech. The row saw the

Government take the unprecedented decision to close the Irish Embassy to the Vatican.

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Primate of All Ireland said Archbishop Brown had endeared himself to many people in Ireland, “thanks to his ‘down to Earth’ and friendly nature” when travelling “the length and breadth of the island”.

“For me, his energy, courtesy, openness, warmth and cooperativeness have exemplified the style of Pope Francis,” Archbishop Eamon said.

Bishop Kevin Doran of



Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown meeting pilgrims on Our Lady’s Island in Co. Wexford.

Elphin said that Archbishop Brown came among us as a diplomat, at a time when diplomacy was really needed, but he came with the heart of a pastor. Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe said the nuncio’s Irish roots “gave him a deep appreciation for the lived faith experience of the Irish people”.

The Pope has not yet named a successor, meaning 17-months ahead of an expected visit by Pope Francis, there is no papal nuncio in Dublin.

The Deputy Head of Mission, Msgr Piotr Tarnawski, will serve as Vatican *chargé d’affaires*. He has worked in Dublin since October.

Changing, but remembering our roots

What would Ireland be without St Patrick? Before Christianity, the classical world knew almost nothing of Hibernia.

According to Philip Freeman, visiting divinity scholar at Harvard, “the few references to Ireland in classical sources are largely complaints that the island was a land of savages who brought terror to the good people of the Roman Empire with their vicious attempts and pirate raids”.

There were even suggestions the Irish were cannibals.

There were a hundred independent tribes in pre-patrician Ireland, each ruled by its local ‘rí’ or king. Patrick did not unite Ireland, but it can be said that he began the process of a national consciousness of the land of Erin, with a common ethic and a coherent structure.

From Patrick’s evangelisation, there followed traditions of many holy men and women who brought to Ireland a reputation for being ‘an island of saints and scholars’.

Patrick’s example inspired St Brigid, a remarkable woman of energy, piety and peace, whose



Mary Kenny

distinctive cross is still such an everyday feature of Irish life. Patrick was also the direct model for St Brendan the Navigator, who may well have got to America on his famed ‘Voyage’: yet the voyage is also a special metaphor of the journey of a Christian life.

The shamrock is one of the world’s most successful logos, but its origins remain rooted in faith, being an emblem of the Holy Trinity.

Let’s move with the times, but let’s not forget our Patrician roots.



The prospect of a United Ireland

In the wake of changing political circumstances in Ireland – prompted by Brexit and the success of nationalist parties in the North – a United Ireland is now being seriously mooted. And if it can be achieved in peace and in mutual respect, it’s an aspiration worthy of Patrick himself.

Still, there’s currently a car seen in North London carrying a sticker bearing the Red Hand of Ulster flag, and the tag ‘Norn Iron’, a comedic rendering of Northern Ireland. A confederate Ireland may beckon, but ‘Norn Iron’ will always want to affirm its identity, methinks.

Being ‘without character’

Some decades ago, I interviewed the late author Margaret Powell who wrote a successful memoir called *Below Stairs*. Margaret had been a housemaid ‘in service’ in a number of English homes between the two world wars, and she wrote vividly about her experience.

She told me that the one prospect that ‘terrified’ girls in service falling pregnant out of wedlock, or, as Margaret herself put it, “being in the family way”.

In most cases, where it happened, Margaret told me, the maid would be dismissed without a reference (in the phrase of the time ‘without a character’, since a reference attested to an individual’s good character) And without a reference she couldn’t obtain



another job, so a common result was that the young woman ended up in prostitution.

Margaret recalled visiting a friend in Brighton in the 1940s who was thrown out on the street after a pregnancy – she was in dire straits, and working as a street girl.

In some cases, the maid might even have been seduced by the son (or nephew) of the master of the house.

Sometimes, Margaret said, if the family felt they should take responsibility, they might find a suitable husband for the seduced girl, in exchange for a rent-free cottage. And sometimes the baby’s father would ‘do the decent thing’ and marry her. But it was humiliating.

Margaret met a good man, married and had a family. Later, she enrolled at a university course as a mature student. She was fortunate – but always remembered those who met a different fate.



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“Without treatment, his life would be very difficult. We are very happy and very grateful.”

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Peace campaigner priest hopeful of Stormont agreement before deadline

Mags Gargan

A leading peace campaigner in the North has expressed optimism that the political parties will be able to agree a new power-sharing deal at Stormont before the upcoming deadline.

Following the Assembly election on March 3, the law requires a fresh election after three weeks if there is no coalition formed. Fr Gary Donegan CP, former parish priest in Belfast's Ardoyne area, told *The Irish Catholic* that while we are now coming to the end of the second week, "the first part of it is shadow boxing and people feeling things out".

"It will start to work and by the end of this week we will

have a better sense of where things are," he said.

Fr Donegan and other experienced community figures who helped to resolve the Ardoyne parading dispute, have formed the Making It Work Group and met Secretary of State, James Brokenshire as part of talks to restore power-sharing in Northern Ireland.

Responsibility

"The role of the group is taking responsibility to have a civic voice in governance, as enshrined in Article 67 of the Stormont Agreement, rather than sitting back and wringing your hands and blaming politicians," he said.

"We all have a role in this and with the way the elec-

tion turned out we need to be encouraging to make the place literally work.

"There has been an impasse and this group is saying we are not prepared to sit back and let people twiddle their thumbs. We're there to put pressure on people to make this place a workable society," Fr Donegan said.

Christian Church leaders in the North, including Archbishop Eamon Martin, have issued a statement calling for an end to "a mentality of 'us' and 'them' to a truly inclusive society where diversity is celebrated and all can participate in shaping the future".

The Church representatives emphasised that the elected representatives "need our support" if they are "to have the courage to put the most challenging issues at the centre of the current negotiations and take responsibility for finding lasting solutions".

Celebrating Fatima's centenary

A centennial pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima, one of six blessed by Pope Francis, being carried along the Falls Road, Belfast on Sunday led by Sarah, Grace and Gerard dressed as the three children of Fatima, as part of a public procession from St Peter's Cathedral to St Paul's Belfast. Photo: Gerard Smyth



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Tide has turned for Dublin Catholic library, board claims

Greg Daly

The financial situation of Dublin's Central Catholic Library has improved dramatically since library members voted against a plan to place the library in the care of Dublin City University.

The rejection of the plan last September was followed by the resignation of a third of the library's board, who said the library had unsustainable annual losses and needed both substantial capital investment and proper salary and pension provisions for its sole staff member.

Now, however, library secretary David McEllin says the library's situation is "very positive", with publicity having boosted awareness of the institution.

Costs

Treasurer Killian Murphy told *The Irish Catholic* that over the past few months the library has been able to identify €5,000 in costs that can be saved, and has been "very fortunate" with donations, receiving about €5,000 after a fundraising carol service, with a further €10,000 having been pledged. Over €1,000 had been received in smaller donations

intended to defray costs, he added.

"People seem to be responding to positive news, and a positive story," he said, noting how library membership had increased by 10% since September's AGM, and there were reports of members who have hitherto paid a discounted membership rate switching to the full-cost membership, in an attempt to support the library.

"We think we have a system where we can identify a number of ways of increasing membership in Dublin and nationally," he said.

Northern Ireland police crackdown on online abortion drug sales

The Police Service in Northern Ireland (PSNI) has moved to tackle the online sale of abortion drugs in the region. The PSNI confirmed that it had "carried out a number of searches in relation to illegal purchasing of prescription medications on the internet".

In relation to the raids,

Detective Superintendent Bobby Singleton explained that offences under anti-abortion legislation had underpinned the actions.

"These offences can reasonably be suspected in circumstances where persons order prescription medications which are known to be used or advertised as suitable

for inducing an abortion," he said.

"Ingesting such drugs or ordering and providing them to another person may constitute a criminal offence." He added that "many drugs purchased via the internet have not been produced in controlled, clinical laboratory conditions.

"Such products pose a real risk to health."

Welcoming news of the raids, the Precious Life group said in a statement: "It must be reiterated that abortion drugs are not healthcare. Research has shown, time and time again, that abortion drugs endanger women's lives."

Martin Mansergh

The View



Who gave the Church the power to police society?

Many Irish Christians will have felt sadness and sympathy when Cardinal Desmond Connell died last month. While secure in his convictions, he was faced as Archbishop of Dublin with mounting difficulties, to which past practices provided few answers.

He bore his office with courtesy and dignity, and tried to carry out his responsibilities to the highest standards. It is nearly impossible to stand steadfast in a howling storm, even assuming that were the right response, and, as we are experiencing today, such weather events are recurring with increasing frequency.

I met Desmond Connell on several occasions, mainly social. He was always supportive of the peace process, in which the Church played a vital role. I sat beside him at a State dinner in Dublin Castle for President Mário Soares of Portugal on June 2, 1993, when Albert Reynolds was Taoiseach.

A short note of the conversation at the time states: "We soon discovered a mutual interest in France. He quizzed me on yesterday's bicentenary, and while it was clearly some event in the French revolution I couldn't put my finger on it. It was the fall of the Girondins. He said the French revolution had had a bad influence on the modern state in abolishing intermediary powers (an idea derived from de Maistre). He had also studied Descartes and Malebranche."

Reconstruction

Unfortunately, the Taoiseach's speech at the banquet, which I would have edited, referenced the famous 18th-Century Portuguese statesman and Enlightenment figure, the Marques de Pombal, who supervised Lisbon's reconstruction after the devastating earthquake of 1755, but who also, following a failed assassination attempt on the king in 1758, banned the Jesuits from the country, which led by chain reaction to their suppression by Pope Clement XIV under pressure from the Bourbon powers in 1773 (except in Prussia and Russia, where the cynical pragmatism of Frederick the Great and Catherine the



Great trumped irreligion).

The order was promptly restored by Pope Pius VII on his release from French captivity after the fall of Napoleon in 1814. Connell protested that the Taoiseach would not have the slightest idea about Pombal. I definitely experienced a belt of the crozier!

It was striking, even shocking, to find in French private and public papers of the 18th Century the animus against the Jesuits even amongst many of the élite that were educated by them, which was partly a resentment of their influence in the final years of Louis XIV, who persecuted not just the Huguenots but the Jansenists. I have always felt that there are parallels to Ireland today, where resentment against the Church mostly relates to the power it once exercised increasingly long ago, the underside to which continues to be uncovered.

“Was the Church not part of society, rather than in any meaningful sense separate from it?”

As a sometime French historian, I could not but smile, when two or three years previously Archbishop Connell had stated in an interview with *The Irish Times* that his model for Church-State relations was such as existed in France before the revolution. Did he ever consider the occasions in the 18th Century when the inflexible Archbishop of Paris Christophe de Beaumont was 'exiled' by Louis XV to his country property in an attempt to keep peace between

an ultra-montane Church leadership and Jansenist-sympathising magistrates in the Parlement of Paris, whom the king needed to register and implement his laws?

One of the truest lines written was by Fr Micheál Mac Gréil in his 2011 book *Pluralism & Diversity in Ireland*: "One of the functions of leaders (political, religious, business, etc.) is to become scapegoats for major failures in society."

Fate

That unfortunately was the fate of Cardinal Connell in relation to child sex abuse scandals within the Church, now amplified by the scandal of the mother and baby homes on top of the Magdalen Laundries. As any student of French revolutionary upheavals would know, an order of things underpinned by religious and social consensus can change drastically in a short space of time to being regarded as deeply pernicious, with plenty willing to cry 'à la lanterne', metaphorically speaking, at individuals and institutions deemed to blame.

Who gave the Church so much responsibility for running and policing large parts of the social order, if not the State and society? Was the Church not part of society, rather than in any meaningful sense separate from it? Even before independence, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) in 1901 successfully resisted attempts under a Bill to amend the Factory Acts to subject the Magdalen Laundries to inspections, on the grounds expressed by Willie Redmond MP that "no scandals had occurred in these institutions; no such scandals could occur",

and that the owners could not continue to operate them, if they were subject to government inspection. (Indeed!)

In 1909, in a fit of righteous bourgeois parsimony pre-Home Rule, the IPP also successfully lobbied to exclude laundry

inmates from eligibility for old-age pensions.

Irish governments post-1922 carried on in similar vein for a long time. Evidence of scandal, when known or believed, was, with rare exceptions, suppressed by all concerned.

Public focus is concentrated on those who ran mother and baby homes and other such institutions, on the unfortunate inmates and on babies who died prematurely, and who apparently did not need a father or a mother. Mothers and babies were too often treated as lives less cherished. Nevertheless, there must have been some caring souls. How many

fathers, who abandoned girls they had made pregnant and who provided for neither mother nor a sickly child, have come forward belatedly to accept any responsibility? How are such people let off the hook?

Apart from struggles now being commemorated, the world of early to mid-20th Century Ireland, where large and impoverished families were often crowded into one or two rooms, is unimaginably distant. The Church does and must play its full part in repairing the damage, but it should be wary of rapacious forces who want to leverage the scandals to execute a second 'dissolution of the monasteries'.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Derry Youth Community seeks volunteers

Derry Youth Community (DYC) is recruiting for young volunteers to take part in the project next year. DYC is a group of committed young people (aged 18-25) who live in community in the heart of Derry city and who serve the spiritual needs of thousands of their peer group in the Diocese of Derry. They live in a structured, secure environment from where their ministry reaches out to their peer group with faith-based activities and pursuits.

For those interested in giving a year to the very real challenges of this initiative, more information is available on www.derryyouthcommunity.com or by emailing dyc@derrydiocese.org

Parishes called to share the 'Joy of Bells' for migrants

The Catholic bishops are calling on parishes across Ireland to peal their bells this March 19 as a show of solidarity with migrants and refugees.

Responding to an invitation from the Church of Ireland Cathedral of Waterford to be part of the 'Joy of Bells', the prelates issued a message of support at the end of their quarterly meeting in Maynooth. "[The] bishops encourage parishes to ring church bells on Sunday 19 March (at 11am if possible) so that, in ringing, they proclaim our Christian witness and proclamation of faith, trust, love, reconciliation and joy and that every migrant is welcome!"

On the continuing migration crisis, the bishops reiterated the message of Pope Francis for the 2017 World Day of Migrants and Refugees to "to help those who, for various reasons, are forced to live far from their homeland and are separated from their families".

Death of Fr Edmund Maguire

The death has taken place for Fr Edmund Maguire of the Diocese of Clogher.

A native of Clones, Co. Monaghan, Edmund was ordained to the priesthood at St Patrick's College, Carlow on June 9, 1962. Apart from a short period in Manchester, England, Fr Edmund was to spend his priestly ministry in Co. Monaghan. Following service in Ballybay (Tullycorbet parish), Threemilehouse (Kilmore & Drumsnatt parish) and Clontibret, he was appointed PP of Aughnacullen East in 1989 until 2002 when he became PP of Donaghmoynce. He retired in September 2007 to his native Clones.

Bishop Eamonn Casey – a leader who helped millions



Paul Keenan

A man "full of energy, full of life [and] of dynamism" has been lost in the passing of Bishop Eamonn Casey, who died on March 13 at the age of 89.

This was the assessment offered by long-time friend Fr Dermot McCarthy for one of Ireland's most high-profile prelates who would be recalled in his lifetime less for his championing of human rights and social justice than for the affair that ended his bishopric of Galway in 1992.

A native of Co. Kerry, Eamonn Casey was born on April 24, 1927. Educated in Limerick before entering St Patrick's College, Maynooth, he was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Limerick in 1951. Over the following nine years he worked as a curate in Limerick parishes before being appointed to the Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy Service in England.

Between 1960 and 1969 Fr Eamonn worked on behalf of Irish migrants, pioneering on their behalf the provision of housing; in 1963 was appointed national director of the Catholic Housing Aid Society by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Ordained

He was ordained Bishop of Kerry in 1969, and went on to become the first chairman of the Trócaire aid agency, at its foundation by the Irish bishops in 1973. It was via Trócaire that his passionate advocacy for social justice gained a higher profile.

He was subsequently appointed as Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfe-

nora in 1976.

It would be in Galway where Bishop Casey would again prove his social justice credentials when, at a time of straitened national finances, he established not only the Meitheal Programme – allowing individual parishes to borrow development finance from a central fund at a nominal cost – but also the Galway Social Services as well as outreach services for members of the Travelling Community and prisoners at home and abroad.

It was through his work with Trócaire that Bishop Casey would find himself thrust dangerously into the heart of the violent atmosphere pervading in El Salvador in 1981.

“One report places Bishop Casey at the doors of the cathedral guiding people to safety”

Present in San Salvador to attend the funeral of his friend, the murdered Archbishop Oscar Romero, Bishop Casey was among mourners in the Metropolitan Cathedral when the building and environs were raked by gunfire from surrounding buildings in an attack that was to leave 50 dead. One report from the time places Bishop Casey at the doors of the cathedral guiding people to safety. He would subsequently minister to the injured and dying.

Perhaps propelled by this experience, in addition to his wider work in Latin America, Bishop Casey would vocally oppose the 1984 visit to Ireland of US President Ronald Reagan due to his country's foreign policy in the region.



Bishop Casey with a soldier during his work for Trócaire in central America. Photo courtesy of Trócaire



Bishop Eamonn Casey speaking with reporters on the steps of the Cathedral in San Salvador following the massacre at Archbishop Romero's funeral in 1981. Photo courtesy of Trócaire

Beyond such issues, Bishop Casey will also be remembered as a driving force behind Ireland's hosting of St John Paul II on September 30, 1979, and specifically the youth gathering at Ballybrit Racecourse in Co. Galway where the late Pontiff addressed and prayed with 300,000 young people from all across the country.

The issue that was, for many, to override all others came in 1992 when Bishop Casey resigned amid revelations that he had fathered a son in 1974 with an American woman, Annie Murphy, and had used IRE70,000 in diocesan funds to support her. The funds were subsequently repaid by donors.

Departing Ireland amid the ensuing scandal, Bishop Casey was to become a missionary priest in Ecuador until, in 1998, he transferred to a parish in the English Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

In 2006, he returned to Ireland, settling in Shanaglish near Gort, Co. Galway and later Carrigoran Nursing Home in Co. Clare, where he died peacefully on Monday.

Tributes that followed the announcement of Bishop Casey's passing were led by the Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin who said of his fellow prelate: "Bishop Casey's inspirational leadership of Trócaire pioneered a very significant pastoral outreach from this country towards the most vulnerable people in the developing world, while at the same time he energetically raised awareness of overseas development issues at home in Ireland...Both as priest and bishop, Bishop Casey's ministry on behalf of Irish emigrants is well known and was of immense significance in particular to the Irish in Britain."

Sadness

Having learned "with great sadness" of Bishop Casey's death, President Michael D. Higgins said: "After his attendance at the funeral of Bishop Romero who was assassinated in El Salvador, Irish awareness of the sources of conflict in Central and South America was significantly increased."

"While serving as mayor of Galway I was asked by Bishop

Casey to visit, with other parliamentarians, El Salvador and to speak to the religious and others who were reporting on human rights and the killings that were taking place. Other aspects of his life were the source of pain to others, for which Bishop Casey has apologised and expressed his deep regret, and he himself had the experience of pain visited on him in later life."

“He spoke out in defence of persecuted communities”

Trócaire's current chairman, Bishop William Crean, hailed the work of Bishop Casey with the agency, stating that it had benefited millions of people around the world.

"Bishop Casey spoke out courageously in defence of persecuted communities overseas and was willing to place himself in danger in order to do so. His campaigning, both at home and overseas, raised awareness of grave injustices and helped to bring about positive change."

In addition to this, the prelate's extended family described the man they knew as "a great source of love and support, making himself available to celebrate and to empathise with us in all our important family occasions".

In the end, the duality that was Bishop Casey's life and ministry was best summed up by Annie Murphy when she learned of his death.

"It's the passing of an important individual in your country and my son's father," she said.



The good the orders did must be offset against the harm, writes **David Quinn**

The legacy of Ireland's institutions continues to haunt us, whether they be industrial schools, mother and baby homes, or Magdalene homes. Can the mental hospitals be far behind?

Women considered 'fallen' ended up in institutions, so did their babies. Children guilty of delinquency ended up in reformatories. Children whose parents could no longer look after them ended up in industrial schools.

The institutions were for the most part established in the 19th Century and we continued them long after independence in 1922. We kept them open longer than they were kept open in Britain, under whose laws they originated.

As we now know, terrible abuses often took place in these institutions, whether of a physical, emotional or sexual nature.

In the case of the industrial schools this led to the setting up of the Redress Board, announced by then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, in 1999.

A report from the Comptroller and Auditor General (whose function it is to monitor public spending) found that up to the end of 2015, over €1.5 billion has been paid out by the Redress Board, with more to come.

Average payment

As at the end of 2015, €970 billion had been paid out to 15,579 former residents who received an average payment of €62,250 each. The rest of the €1.5 billion was spent on legal fees, the running of the Redress Board etc.

When the Redress Board was first established, the then Government under Bertie Ahern negotiated with the 18 religious orders that ran most of the country's more than 200 industrial schools and reformatories, how much they should pay in compensation as an alternative to victims having

Balance needed on the issue of redress



to go to court.

It was estimated at the turn of this century that the cost of the compensation scheme would be around €256 million. The 18 orders agreed to pay half of this, or €128 million, in cash and property transfers.

According to the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, €21 million of this is still outstanding.

In 2009, the Ryan Report was published. This investigated what happened in the institutions and confirmed the widespread abuse that went on in them. Sixteen institutions had their own dedicated chapters in the report. An institution had a separate chapter devoted to it if the Ryan Commission received more than 20 complaints about it. These 16 institutions were the ones most of the abuse took place in, out of the more than 200 institutions. This is partly because they were so big.

“More than €700 million had been paid to victims and after including legal fees”

The publication of the Ryan Report was greeted by another outpouring of public rage and the 18 religious orders were put under pressure, including by people within the Church itself, to make a bigger contribution to the redress scheme. By this point, more than €700 million had been paid to victims and after including legal fees and so on, the total cost of the

redress scheme already exceeded €1 billion.

It struck many people as very unfair that the orders had agreed to pay only €128 million given how the cost of the scheme had gone massively beyond the original estimate.

The cost had gone far higher than originally estimated in part because former residents were able to receive compensation of a certain sum by virtue of having been in an institution at all. Very few former residents have been refused a payment.

In any event, the 18 orders agreed to up their contribution to €353 million in cash and property, but the Comptroller and Auditor General said only €85 million of this has been received as at the end of 2015.

Public outcry

This means the total amount of cash and property received by the State from the 18 orders amounts to a little over €200 million so far, which is 13% of the €1.5 billion so far paid out.

The publication of the Comptroller and Auditor General's report coincides with the public outcry over the Tuam mother and baby home. These two things have combined to increase the pressure once more on the 18 orders, and especially on two biggest ones, the Mercy Sisters and the Christian Brothers, to up, or at least meet, their promised payments.

Education Minister, Richard Bruton (whose department negotiated the original deal with the orders)

has been principally leading the charge on this, but he has been joined by Taoiseach, Enda Kenny and Health Minister, Simon Harris.

On Sunday, Simon Harris

echoed the call by John Kelly of 'Survivors of Child Abuse' for Pope Francis to intervene.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has said the orders need to keep to their commitment of 2009.

What seems clear is that the Government is extremely frustrated with what they see as foot-dragging by some of the 18 orders.

Several orders, it needs to be said, have met their full commitment, for example the Dominicans and the Oblates. This is partly because their commitments were relatively small.

“The orders could end up being faced with a bill of over €800 million. Would they have the ability to meet such a payment?”

In the end, it is mainly the Mercy Sisters and the Christian Brothers, the two congregations that ran most of the institutions, who have the major financial commitments outstanding.

In statements issued last

week, both of these orders indicated frustrations of their own. The sticking points between them and the Department of Education seem to have come down to what properties the department will accept for transfer and how those properties should be valued.

Liquidation

Many people are demanding that the orders pay half of whatever the Redress Board finally pays out.

This means the orders could end up being faced with a bill of over €800 million. Would they have the ability to meet such a payment? Would such a sum drive them into liquidation? Is the good the orders undoubtedly did down the years to count for nothing in the balance?

In the end, we need a balanced approach to this issue. Yes, the orders should meet the commitment they made in 2009, and yes, the good that the orders have done, and are doing, should also be taken into consideration when declaring our verdict upon them.

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Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Alban Maginness
Archbishop Eamon Martin
Baroness Nuala O'Loan
Tracy Harkin
David Quinn

Out&About

Killucan rosary walk



◀ WESTMEATH:

Forty hardy parishioners from Killucan braved the elements to take part in a canal rosary walk as part of a parish retreat weekend.

▼ DUBLIN:

During a visit of the centennial pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima to DCU are: Gerard O'Reilly (permanent deacon, Donamead parish) and Fr Séamus McEntee (chaplain DCU) and members of the Alliance of the Holy Family International.



CORK: Recent graduates in a newly developed course for church cantors and choir directors held in St Mary's Dominican Church. Front row: Laura O'Donnell, Rev. Dr Fergus Ryan OP (course director) and Stephanie Sheehan. Back row: Rosemary O'Connell, Cherie O'Sullivan and Dan Twomey.



CORK: Student members of the Friends of Nano group from Scoil Christ Ri, Portlaoise at a special day of reflection in Ballygriffin, birthplace of Nano Nagle, founder of the Presentation Sisters.



KERRY: Cian Lawless, 6th class Scoil Eoin, Balloonagh, was confirmed at Our Lady and St Brendan's Church, Tralee by Bishop Ray Browne, and is pictured with his parents Helen and Declan Lawless, Bishop Browne and Fr Padraig Walsh PP. Photo: John Cleary

Edited by Mags Gargan
mags@irishcatholic.ie



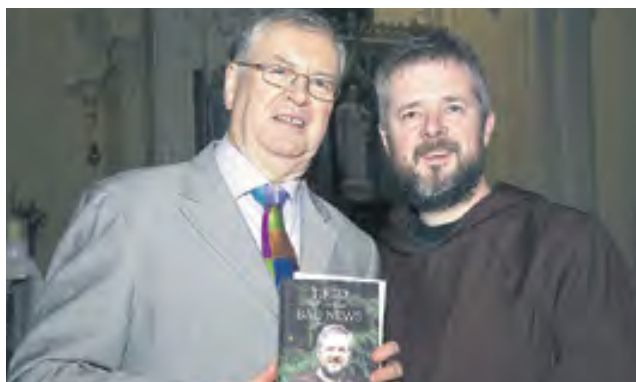
Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



OFFALY: Fr Peter McVerry visited the Cistercian College Roscrea to speak to all third year students about his work with homeless youths. The third years will be completing their Junior Cert religion project on the life and work of Fr McVerry over the coming weeks.



WATERFORD: Eurovision winner Dana and Rosary priest Fr Jim Kelleher on a visit to St Paul's Parish in Lisduggan to promote the Holy Rosary with Fr Pat Fitzgerald PP.



DUBLIN: RTÉ's Joe Duffy with Fr Bryan Shortall OFM Cap. at the launch of his book *Tired of all the Bad News*, which took place in St Michan's, Halston Street. Photo: Florence Grehan



▲ **WATERFORD:** Marking the retirement of Mrs Essie Collins after many years of service as sacristan in Sacred Heart Church, Ferrybank with Canon James Crotty PP, Fr Raymond Dempsey CC and Fr Liam Griffin OMI.

◀ **DUBLIN:** A group of young adults with John McAreavey and his wife Tara, following John's appearance at the Monday at the Monastery series of talks in Presentation Brothers, Glashule, in front of over 200 people.



ANTRIM

Fr Patrick Devine of the Shalom Centre for Conflict Resolution & Reconciliation in Kenya to deliver public lecture in Queen's University Belfast on Wednesday, March 22 at 4.30pm on 'Inter-Ethnic Conflict Transformation Methods: Applications in Eastern Africa'.

CLARE

International centennial pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima is coming to Ennis Cathedral on Friday, March 24 for 10am Mass.

CORK

Catholic Bible teaching with Br Johnson Sequeira (www.jcilm.info) from 7-10pm with Maranatha prayer group on Saturday, March 25 in Mitchelstown Parish Hall from 10.30am-7pm and Sunday, March 26 in Glounthaune from 11am-9pm. Contact: Chris 085-2392207.

DUBLIN

Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver will hold their annual Spring Sale of Work at St Joseph's Parish Hall in Terenure on Sunday, April 2 from 10.30am-3pm in aid of Fr Anthony Reddy from the Karimnagar Parish in India. Tel: 01 490 93 60

Lenten talk with Seán Goan in the Church of Our Lady Immaculate, Refuge of Sinners, Rathmines on 'The Bible for Grown-ups' on Wednesday, March 22 at 7.30pm.

'Monday at the Monastery' series of talks at the Presentation Brothers' house in Glashule, continue from 7.30-9pm: March 20, Maria Steen; March 27, Marianne Quinn. Booking is advisable by emailing events@PresentationBrothers.org

The Encounter: Join other young adults for a night of live acoustic music from Ríaghán O'Callaghan, reflective prayer in adoration, with guest speaker Donncha McKenna, followed by pizza & refreshments on Friday, March 24 at 8pm in St Paul's Church, Arran Quay. st.pauls@dublindiocese.ie

GALWAY

Our Lady's School of Evangelisation, Unbound Programme of Healing Prayers with Fr Benny McHale and John McCarthy from 8-10pm on March 20 and 27 at Abbey Hall, Newtownsmith. Contact 087-9980525.

Two-day visit to Emmanuel House of Providence, Clonfert of pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima from Wednesday, March 22 at 11.30am to Thursday, March 23.

KERRY

Series of Lenten talks organised by Kerry diocese continue Monday, March 20 at 8pm, Fr Peter McVerry, Boherbue Community School; March 20 & 21 UN Gift Box, all day, Manor West Shopping Centre, Tralee.

Traditional Latin Mass at 2pm, Saturday, March 18 in Parish Church of the Sacred Heart and St Brigid Kilcullen, organ-

ised by the Catholic Heritage Association.

LIMERICK

The Dominican Sisters are hosting a day of reflection for women at St Saviour's Priory on Sunday, April 2 from 2-8pm (option of 1pm Mass at St Saviour's Dominican Church). RSVP by March 25 to limerick@op-tn.org or 085 2255796.

LOUTH

Lenten Prayer for Healing 2017 at St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk, on Sunday, March 19 at 7pm with Angel Marsden speaking on the topic 'Sowing the Seeds of Faith'.

MAYO

A celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord in Knock Shrine organised by the Apostolate of Atonement for Mercy on Saturday, March 26: 9pm-11pm, Adoration, Benediction & the Veneration of Precious Relic from the Holy House of Loreto. Mass at 11pm with Fr Freddie Warner, SMA & Fr Bernard McGuckian, SJ. Contact (094) 93 88100 or email: info@knock-shrine.ie

OFFALY

Special 10th anniversary St Patrick's Day Prayer Vigil in Cluain Chiarán, Clonmacnois for the renewal of faith life in Clonmacnois and the re-evangelisation of Ireland on Friday, March 17. Mass at 9pm. Adoration and Prayers follow until 2.15am. Contact Dave 085-7746763.

TIPPERARY

Traditional Latin Mass at 3pm, Saturday, March 25 for the feast of the Annunciation, in the Parish Church of the Annunciation, Bansha, organised by the Catholic Heritage Association.

The Fatima Apostolate is holding a three-hour vigil in honour of the feast of the Annunciation in the Pallottine Chapel, Thurles commencing at 7.30pm on Friday, March 24 and concluding with Mass.

WATERFORD

New Beginnings in Faith: A series of talks given by members of the Neo Catechumenal Way each Sunday and Wednesday at 7.30pm in St Paul's Parish Centre, Waterford.

Taizé prayer in Good Counsel Chapel, New Ross from 8.15-9pm every Friday during Lent, concluding with 'Prayer around the Cross' on April 14.

WESTMEATH

A programme of events to mark the centenary of the appearance of Our Lady at Fatima continues at the church of St John the Baptist Whitehall, in the parish of Coole on Friday, March 24 at 8pm with Fr Noel Weir CC, Mornington.

WICKLOW

Taize prayer at the Carmelite Monastery, Delgany every Wednesday from 8-9pm during Lent.

The Irish tradition of 'vernacular theology'

As we celebrate the feast of our national patron, St Patrick, at this time of year, you may hear some discussion of the need to separate the Patrick of history from the Patrick of legend, the latter figure oftentimes being better known than the former.

This, of course, is a worthwhile and necessary endeavour if we are to correctly identify the flesh-and-blood saint and, indeed, learn anything from his own life experience. In saying that, however, legends also have their place, and they can sometimes serve as valuable and, indeed, fascinating windows into the beliefs and world-views of their disseminators.

There is one particular genre of material in which St Patrick often features as a central character: the Irish religious folktale. Many (although not all) of the stories I will be discussing were edited by the Co. Kerry folklorist and archivist with the National Folklore Commission, Seán Ó Súilleabháin, in his *Scéalta Cráibhtheacha* published in 1952, and have since been translated and published as the collection *Miraculous Plenty* in 2011.

What Irish folktales often succeed in doing well is domesticating the divine. Biblical figures and well-known saints speak in the everyday cadences of the Irish who both relate and hear these tales.

Place-names

The place-names associated with the various incidents in the tales are Irish ones, and, indeed, often local to the particular region in which the version of the folktale emerges. The incidental details found in such tales often reveal much about the contemporary social and religious context, and lay bare many of the preoccupations of the period.

At the same time, how-

Irish folktales can help make sense of complex questions, writes **Prof. Salvador Ryan**



ever, they also attest to the enduring relevance of universal themes; questions such as the problem of evil, for instance, and why suffering and death are part of the human condition. They also address themes such as what it means to be charitable, and how one should best practise one's faith.

Even if the conclusions drawn from some of the tales will sit uncomfortably on modern ears, a close reading of them can provide a useful insight into what one could call a 'vernacular theology', that is, a way of making some sense of significant religious questions through the lens of the everyday.

One of the most enduring of questions for all human beings is the reality of suffering and death. A disturbing tale collected in Co. Kerry in 1936 attempts to address this question by recalling the saying that "a ship-full is drowned on account of one man".

“Not long ago you were finding fault with God for drowning a whole ship-full on account of one man”

The tale relates how the Lord and his apostles were walking by the shore when they noticed that a ship that had set sail in terrible weather had disappeared from view. When Peter asked Jesus what had happened to it, he replied: "She has sunk

and all that were on her are at the bottom of the sea." When Peter remonstrated with the Lord on why he had failed to save the passengers, the Lord replied that there was nothing he could do, for the ship had to sink on account of [the sin, presumably, of] one man.

Peter expressed his displeasure once again and the Lord nonchalantly replied: "Well it's done now anyway."

As they walked along they came upon a hive of bees and Jesus asked Peter to bring him a fistful of bees with his bare hands.

Peter complied, but as he was withdrawing his hand, with the fistful of bees, one of the creatures stung him, leading Peter to lose his temper and destroy every last bee in the hive.

The Lord chastised Peter for bringing him back a fistful of dead bees and asked why he hadn't brought them back alive. Peter explained that one bee had stung him, causing him to become so disorientated that he killed the lot in response. "Why didn't you just kill the one that stung you?" the Lord asked, and, pressing his point, continuing, "not long ago you were finding fault with God for drowning a whole ship-full on account of one man. It was exactly the same with you."

Vivid tale

This vivid tale, with its very troubling image of a God who loses his patience with a group of human beings because of the offence of one of their number is almost the inverse of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 18 that



● 'Saint Patrick' as depicted in an oil painting by Catholic artist Stephen B. Whatley – painted with prayers on St Patrick's Day 2016.

Whatley depends on the Holy Spirit, energy from whom he particularly felt whilst developing the interpretation of the shamrock, which St Patrick often used in his evangelisation as a symbol of the Holy Trinity.

The artist regularly feels what he describes as a 'Divine push' to pay tribute to Jesus, Our Lady and the saints, with dependence on the

Holy Spirit, often on feast days – and a selection of his tribute paintings formed his exhibition 'Paintings from Prayer' staged throughout the Chapels of St Andrew and St Patrick in Westminster Cathedral, London in 2013.

The work of Stephen B. Whatley is in collections including The Royal Collection of Queen Elizabeth II and Newman University, Birmingham; whilst his 30 paintings commissioned by the Tower of London are permanently reproduced outside Tower Hill Station.

"for the sake of 10 just men" he would not destroy the city.

Unsettling as the tale may be, it testifies to a particular view of God that was prevalent at the time, and, indeed, which persists among some to this day.

* * * * *

Sometimes, though, folktales can communicate surprising lessons for their time.

One tale, collected in Co. Kerry in 1933, relates how a young priest leaving home encouraged his mother to attend Mass every day and to drop a stone in a specially-prepared box every time she went, so that her son, who obviously enjoyed spiritual book-keeping, could count the number of times she had been when he next returned.

The lady complied with her son's wishes and turned

up at Mass on time every day, logging her attendance by dropping a stone in the box on each occasion. However, one day she noticed that some cattle had escaped and were trampling her neighbour's potato field.

At first she didn't want to go back to warn her neighbour for fear of being late for Mass, but she eventually thought better of it and turned back to help out, and, indeed, was late for Mass afterwards.

When her son next returned home, his mother told him that she had been at Mass every day since, except for one occasion when she was late because she chose to help out a neighbour.

Upon opening the box, the woman found that it contained only one stone. Her son explained, "the Mass you

heard that day was the only Mass you heard properly since I was here last".

Here, then, we have a story that, in this instance, emphasises the horizontal aspect of the Eucharist ('be Eucharist to one another') over and against a sole concern with its vertical aspect, essentially inviting its hearers to 'live your Mass'.

The Mass is the subject of another folktale, collected in Co. Galway in 1936, and in this instance, we have a vernacular treatment of a controversy that first raged in the North African Church of the 4th and early 5th Centuries.

Known as the Donatist controversy, it concerned the question of whether sacraments administered by sinful clergy could be deemed to be effective.

St Augustine had stressed



Members of the Celtic Friars Pipe Band of St Anthony's High School march in the New York St Patrick's Day parade.

that the sacraments were God's work and were, therefore, not dependent on the worthiness or moral probity of the person who administered them. The message was: when Peter baptises, it is Christ who baptises; when Andrew baptises, it is Christ who baptises; when Judas baptises, it is Christ who baptises. Or, in another image, it matters not the person who brings a vessel of water to a man dying of thirst in the desert; what's important is not the quality of the bearer, but the quality of the water that is carried.

“One of the hallmarks of many Irish religious folktales is the invitation to thank God in every circumstance of life”

The Co. Galway story takes this controversy, which reappeared in many guises over the centuries, and pronounces upon it in a variation on the theme.

It relates how a man who had fallen out with a certain priest resolved never to attend that priest's Mass again and had already missed two or three Sundays in a row.

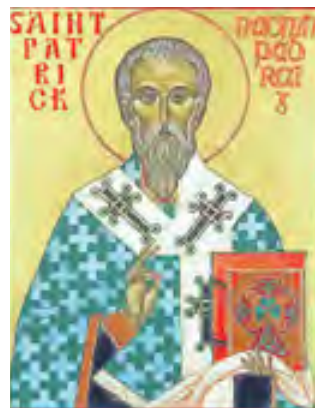
On the fourth Sunday a stranger visited him and asked why he wasn't attending Mass which was starting around that time. When the man explained his reasons, the stranger invited him out for a walk up a nearby hill.

After some time, coming to a stream, the man bent down for a drink of water and declared that it was the sweetest water he had ever tasted, inviting the stranger to have some himself. The stranger refused and declared that, if it was all that sweet, he should perhaps investigate

where the water was coming from.

The man agreed and they traced the stream up the hill to its source where they found a drowned dog lying in a bog-hole. The water the man had tasted downstream had obviously passed through the dead dog. “Now”, declared the stranger, “if you knew that that was the water you were drinking, would you drink a drop of it?”

The man admitted that he wouldn't. This leads the stranger to continue: “Well, when you and the priest were exchanging bitter words with one another, even if the priest was as rotten as the old dog in the bog-hole, and if his soul was as black as coal with sin, the words that come out of his mouth, the words of God, are as sweet as the water you drank from the stream.”



A traditional icon of St Patrick.

One of the hallmarks of many Irish religious folktales is the invitation to thank God in every circumstance of life. Gratitude was highly prized and, by contrast, ingratitude often severely punished.

One tale relates how a saint, who was fed on a daily basis from Heaven, learned this lesson the hard way. One particular day he emerged from his cell to find that it was a wet, miserable morning. “It's a cold, wet morning, this morning,” he rather inno-

cently declared, before drawing his head back into his cell. However, as a result, no food arrived to him that day and, when he couldn't figure out why, eventually a voice from heaven explained that he hadn't thanked God for the previous day and thus went hungry.

Remedy

To remedy the situation, the voice told him, he would have to stand in the middle of an icy river with his staff until green moss grew on it. He agreed to do so and soon after encountered a robber who was crossing the river and enquired regarding the saint's strange vigil.

When the saint explained that he was doing penance for ingratitude, the robber was suddenly struck with remorse; not so much for robbing and looting initially, but for his ingratitude in not thanking God for all his success at robbing and looting! He voluntarily joined the saint in the strange penance and, in the meantime, resolved to give up his thievery.

* * * * *

The importance that was given to affirming God's creation, even if that creation didn't always appear pleasant, is effectively communicated in the tale which relates how Our Lord (it is said) saw good in everything when he was on earth.

One day, when walking along a road with his disciples, they came across the body of a dead dog. “Surely”, said one of the disciples, “our Lord will have nothing good to say about the dog.” Just then, the Lord remarked, “what lovely white teeth the dog has!”

A beautiful tale from Waterford, collected at the turn of the 20th Century and associated with St Patrick, affirms the dignity of the human body in death.

The story relates how the Lord instructed St Patrick to visit a dying old man in a remote region, who hadn't had access to a priest to give him the last rites. Patrick duly visited the man's house and anointed him. The man died before Patrick departed, and the saint was allowed to see the soul leave his body.

However, the behaviour of the departing soul was curious; three times, it made for the door and then doubled back to the corpse, and, on each occasion, kissed the corpse tenderly. Patrick, perplexed by what he saw, later asked our Lord the reason for this. He replied, “the soul was sad to leave the faithful, decent body which had kept it so clean, without sin in this life”.

This, then, is an interesting tale in which dualistic tendencies, which often influence portrayals of the body and soul, are absent. Indeed, it is rarely enough that the body gets such good publicity.

The figure of St Patrick doesn't always come off so well, however. One tale from Co. Kerry taps into long-running grievances regarding clerical greed.

“Irish religious folktales can sketch humorous scenarios in making their point”

While Patrick is watching a hurling match, he spots a pagan passing by on the road and proceeds to ask him if he would be baptised. After some time, the old man relents and consents to baptism, after which he immediately dies (this would have been regarded as a great grace, preserving him from any future sin that would sully his newly-cleansed soul).

As his soul flew like a bird

to Heaven, his clothes and bones fell in a heap on the ground along with a big purse of gold and silver. Patrick, satisfied, went on his way, but soon after turned back to take some coins from the man's purse.

When our Lord later challenged him on this, he admitted that he had taken a little money (essentially a ‘sacramental fee’!). This leads our Lord to declare that “the mind for the money would follow the priests ever after”!

Irish religious folktales can sometimes sketch humorous scenarios in making their point. In the following instance, it appears that God's ways are, indeed, not always our ways.

One day, Our Lord and his mother, Mary, encounter a blind man on the roadside and, as was the case in Cana, Mary draws attention to the need for a miracle. Our Lord proves willing, but also points out that the man's wife is “above in the wood” with another man. One can imagine the glint in Our Lord's eye when he continues, “I'll give him back his sight so he can see her”.

“Oh well”, replies his mother (who traditionally

has a soft-spot for sinners stuck in compromising positions), “if you're going to do that, find some excuse for the poor woman”.

Inspiration

When the blind man recovers his sight, he looks all around him and finally spots his wife. She hastens down to him to try to explain. “You were inside in the wood with that man”, her husband begins to accuse her. “But,” she retorted (clearly in a flash of divine inspiration), “if I wasn't there, you wouldn't have got your sight back.” And the tale ends with the remark: “And that's the reason why women can always find an excuse down to the present day!”

While endlessly entertaining, the Irish religious folktales remains an under-utilised, but hugely valuable resource for understanding the religious mind-set of those who have gone before us.

❶ Salvador Ryan is Professor of Ecclesiastical History at St Patrick's College, Maynooth. He has recently edited *Death and the Irish: a Miscellany* (Dublin: Wordwell Press, 2016).



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Preaching from the choir



Greg Daly learns about a new project for music and liturgy in Dublin's city centre

I don't think the archbishop asked us here to maintain the *status quo*," says Steven Warner, associate director of the Notre Dame Newman Centre, based since last autumn at the University Church on Dublin's St Stephen's Green. "I can't speak for his mind, but I certainly think that he did not intend to have things remain the same – he wanted us here to help add to the landscape."

Born in New England, but an adoptive Midwesterner after 35 years at Indiana's University of Notre Dame, Steven's role at the centre is focused on music and liturgy.

"We call this the Centre for Faith and Reason," he says. "I've been working on the faith-liturgical front, while Fr Bill [Dailey] is working on the lecture/reason/philosophical side of things. To that end, he's bringing in speakers starting this year, and will highlight philosophy and contemporary issues in the Church, the way Newman would have wanted this place to be – a place where people can have articulate, adult conversations about things that are going on in the contemporary world."

Composition

From a liturgical viewpoint, the centre aims to draw together Irish and American musical composition in way that involves the whole congregation with sensitivity to the church's history and living reality, and a constant eye to the Mass of the day.

"Music is a sign of hospitality, and if there's any culture that understands that better than most, I'd say it'd be the Irish," Steven says. "What we're trying is to say is that your voices are welcome here – your singing voices, your praying voices – and we do that through a variety of ways, choosing music that we



think the assembly will resonate with."

Cantor Sharon Lyons has been involved with the church for the past six years, and says since the establishment of the centre, "The church has moved from a very small parish-like congregation and choir to a much bigger scale." Noting the differences driven by a new priest and director of music, she says, "there's always been a sense of community in this church, but the changeover has been very pastorally sensitive, and it has worked very well."

“This has been a very instructive period, and I don’t think that instruction will ever end”

It's been a priority for Steven to study Irish sacred music and familiarise himself with the Mass settings people know well, rather than coming in as "a loud American, and bringing in a lot of American music". Explaining how as director of music

he hopes to blend continuity and innovation, he says he was already familiar with Ireland's liturgical composition scene through visits as director of the Notre Dame folk choir, with his new role allowing him to step much more deeply into it.

"Partly, Sharon's been a great guide for that for me, and also a conduit of talent," he continues. "For instance, we have a St Patrick's Day Mass coming up, and the way you do a St Patrick's Day Mass in America is not the way you do a St Patrick's Day Mass in Ireland. There are definitely songs that must be done here. For instance in America you would rarely hear 'Hail Glorious St Patrick', and over here... it would be a *faux pas* not to include it! For me this has been a very instructive period, and I don't think that instruction will ever end."

Hawthorn-born Sharon says years working in the Archdiocese of Dublin and a long experience of the Irish church music scene have given her a good sense of what's going on in terms of church music here.

"I suppose the biggest difference in what's happening here is there's a support system in place, there's an actual defined role for a musical director that gives it value and purpose and leads into the preparation and execution of a very rounded liturgy."

Support

Many local parishes lack that kind of support, she says, pointing out that not every parish has access to musical equipment or can afford to print out beautiful music sheets for the congregation every week. "To see what's possible here is great. It's a lovely model, and maybe it might encourage or inspire more change," she says.

A major challenge, of course, is to encourage congregations to sing, which Sharon sees as largely a matter of habit. "If it's continually encouraged, and musically speaking in keys that are friendly for people to sing in – it's impossible for people to sing too high or too low – people appreciate that. I think if it's consistent, people will sing," she says, adding, "I

know lots of parishes where congregational singing is happening, but it's from a consistent effort."

Roscommon-born organist and tenor Derek Mahady says resources for congregations make a real difference. "Sometimes the cantor can just get them started, give them a note or two, and then let them go," he says. "Resources come in many forms. Having a cantor, having something of an invitation like a leaflet going in, and I think even the addition of the music, not just the words is important too."

Describing this as "another invitation as well", he says, "It's almost giving the congregation respect, recognising that they are more intelligent, and they are able to get involved and get engaged."

Agreeing that basic music reading is quite intuitive, Sharon adds, "If you listen while you're watching, you can figure it out."

Such an emphasis on musical literacy may not have been quite what Blessed John Henry Newman had in mind when he called for a well-educated laity, but it



Director of music Steven Warner, cantor Sharon Lyons and organist Derek Mahady.

definitely can help active participation in the Mass.

Disagreements about music can often be a source of tension in parishes, but Steven says this isn't surprising. "When you think about the phrase 'those who sing pray twice', that means there's a lot on the line, and if there's a lot on the line, people have strong feelings about it."

"I don't think it's lost on any of us, that the pieces that we choose are really in a sense the furniture that goes into the spiritual house, and so it's not just picking up a tune, it's affecting their spirituality. And so we take that responsibility with a tremendous amount of weight."

“The goal here is not just to keep it amongst ourselves but to spread it out”

One of the things the centre hopes to do is to help other church communities develop their liturgy, Steven says, explaining that Sharon is not merely a cantor but a vocal coach too. "That's very important because we're also going to be bringing in other singers down the road, and Sharon is going to be the mentor for them," he says. "The goal here is not just to keep it amongst ourselves but to spread it out."

First, though, there's the St Patrick's Day Mass, to be televised on RTÉ, where the centre is taking advantage of its proximity to the National Concert Hall to include a string quartet along with a guitar and organ and such cultural emblems as the harp and uilleann pipes.

"The way I see it, it's a musical feast for the day," says Steven, saying the centre wants "to give it back to the nation in nothing but admiration and prayer".

Pilgrim Pathways

To the heart of the pilgrim journey

From the earliest times, journeying has been a key part of the experience of people of faith. Abraham, the father of Israel, was called by God to leave his father's house and go forth to the land of Canaan to raise up a new people.

The history of the Israelites is one of possession, exile and repossession. But, whether the captivity in Babylon, or the exile in Egypt, each dispossession led to a new journey that led to an even more intimate relationship with God.

Closeness

Jesus too left his home in Nazareth and, with his followers, spent three years journeying around Galilee before making the ultimate journey to Jerusalem. Christians immediately

embraced the idea of *peregrinatio pro Christo*, originally for the spreading of the Gospel and, in time, to experience those places of special closeness to God. The Second Vatican Council speaks of "the pilgrim Church".

“Nearly every parish in Ireland has a story of a holy well, a place made sacred”

The pilgrim journey can be a search for a new intimacy: a new realisation of God's presence in our lives. Often it is seeking a new direction or fresh impetus.

Often, in pilgrimage, people see God in a new way or see themselves and their life with fresh eyes. The poet T. S. Eliot captures some of this when he writes:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Pilgrimage has always played a vital part in Christianity; this was particularly true of the early Irish Church.

Nearly every parish in Ireland has a story of a holy well, a place made sacred by the lives of the saints, or a penal Mass rock where God's consolation was sought and received in troubled times.

Over these pages, we explore places of pilgrimage in Europe as well as places closer to home. As you read, sit with the experience of being a pilgrim – understand that it is of the essence of the Christian experience and understand too, that the journeying is as important as the destination.

A seven-page review of pilgrimage destinations and how such journeys have transformed the lives of many people • Pages 15-21

Thousands expected to rediscover their Christian heritage during Pilgrim Paths Week

April 11 – 18, 2017

Over the coming Easter period large numbers are expected to retrace their ancestral heritage as they take to Ireland's ancient pilgrim paths to celebrate National Pilgrim Paths Week. This new Easter Festival will see a nationwide series of pilgrim walks taking place on Ireland's medieval penitential trails. Knowledgeable local guides will lead each event, allow time for personal contemplation, outline the story of the route and explain how medieval penitents coped with their arduous journeys.

The medieval pilgrimage was originally a journey combining prayer and sacrifice – with an element of physical discomfort – by which the pilgrim could become closer to God. In recent times, there has been a renewed interest in following the footsteps of pilgrims past and over the last number of years, Pilgrim Paths Ireland has worked to re-develop the Irish Pilgrim



The destination point for pilgrims ascending Cnoc na dTobar pilgrim mountain, Co Kerry.

routes for the enjoyment of walkers and pilgrims alike.

Speaking at the launch of the festival, Chairman of Pilgrim Paths Ireland, John G. O'Dwyer said: "National Pilgrim Paths Week was created to raise

awareness and use of Ireland's historic pilgrim routes. The event is targeted, not only at those who enjoy exploring Ireland's ancient tracks, but also the growing numbers seeking to escape the daily grind of life and take time out to reflect while

enjoying the outdoors. Pilgrim Paths Week 2017 has already attracted much interest and already we have a considerable interest in the event from overseas."

Copies of the new pilgrim

Pilgrim walks are scheduled to take place at each of Ireland's Pilgrim Paths including:

- Tochar Phadraig, Co Mayo;
- St Kevin's Way, Co Wicklow;
- Rath/Dysert Pilgrim Path, Co Clare;
- Cosán na Naomh, Co. Kerry;
- St Finbarr's Pilgrim Path in Co. Cork; and
- St Declan's Way in Co. Waterford.

passport for Ireland will be available during Pilgrim Paths Week events taking place on: St Kevin's Way, Co Wicklow; Cnoc na dTobar and Cosáin na Naomh, Co Kerry; the Tochar, Co Mayo and St Finbarr's Pilgrim Path Co Cork. The passport offers a unique opportunity to walk 125 km of Ireland's foremost medieval Paths and then receive a Teastas Oilithreachta, (Completion Certificate) from Ballintubber Abbey, Co Mayo.

To find out more about National Pilgrim Paths Week go to www.pilgrimpath.ie or email info@pilgrimpath.ie



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Sat 27th, Sun 28th, Mon 29th.

AUGUST

Sun 20th, Mon 21st, Tues 22nd, Wed 23rd, Sat 26th,
Sun 27th, Mon 28th, Tues 29th.

SEPTEMBER

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Island of Quiet Miracles



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Over many generations, Lough Derg has been a place where families have felt the closeness of God and their lives have been healed and enriched in the process.

It is when we come apart from the everyday life that we have the chance to establish perspective on what really

matters and on Lough Derg, one can find a peaceful, gentle silence to listen with the heart and reflect.

If you have thought about coming to Lough Derg but never managed to get here or if you have been here in the past and thought you will come back some day – let that someday be this year.

To find out more about the programme of Retreats and Pilgrimages visit www.loughderg.org or contact the Lough Derg team on 071 9861518.

2017 Season at a glance...

ONE DAY RETREATS

One Day Retreats enable more people to enjoy the serenity of this Island made sacred through centuries of Pilgrim Prayer.

One Day Retreats typically run during the months of May, late August and September – usually on Saturdays & Sundays and on a number of weekdays.

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THE PILGRIMAGE OF A LIFETIME HOLY LAND

Follow in the footsteps of Jesus

The Holy Land allows you to see the Scriptures come alive and see where Jesus began his ministry.

A Pilgrimage to The Holy Land is on the bucket list of many and there is little reason to wonder why. For believers and non-believers alike the events that took place on this land have shaped our world for over two millennia and continue to do so to this day.

For those of us who read and listen to the scriptures these events are truly familiar and resonate within us. It is little wonder there is a longing to experience the sights, sounds and smells that Jesus once did – to follow in his footsteps – to venerate the many blessed sites through the land.

Now ever more accessible and affordable, more and more people have fulfilled their dream, Marian Pilgrimages alone bringing over 3000 pilgrims from Ireland in the last 3 years. Each joining a group of like-minded pilgrims following a fully escorted itinerary designed to maximise the pilgrim's fulfilment.



The silver star that marks where Christ was born

With Marian Pilgrimages most pilgrims begin a 9 day pilgrimage where Jesus began his life, the little town that we train our focus on each year at Christmas, Bethlehem. Here Jesus was born "...laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them". Today pilgrims visit the Church of the Nativity, a large basilica built over the cave-like manger Jesus was born in. Here each is afforded the opportunity to visit the most blessed of sites, marked by a silver star, the opening to the manger beneath. In The Chapel of St. Joseph the group celebrate their first Mass. After they visit the Milk Grotto and the Shepherd's Fields, the group travel to Ein Karem to visit the Churches of the Visitation and St. John the Baptist.

Jerusalem

With its vast importance most give two days of their pilgrimage to visit and experience as much as possible of Jerusalem and surrounding area. Here pilgrims visit the Mount of Olives, the Ascension Chapel where Jesus ascended into heaven, the Church of Saint Peter in Gallicantu where Peter's triple rejection of Jesus took place "... before the cock crows twice", the Garden of Gethsemane, Assumption Church and Grotto.

To some of the Pilgrims one of the most important and meaningful journeys they will undertake is in the Old City Of Jerusalem, here they will walk the Via Dolorosa, the route Jesus took while carrying his cross to his crucifixion. Beginning near the Lions Gate and ending at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is an important Christian pilgrimage site and is venerated as Calvary where Jesus was crucified and



Pilgrims wait to enter The Ascension Chapel

also contains the place where he is said to have been buried. Also within the vicinity of The Old city of Jerusalem pilgrims visit Mount Zion where the Church of the Dormition, Tomb of David and the Room of the Last Supper can be found.

The Sea of Galilee

From Bethlehem and Jerusalem pilgrims travel north to Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee to follow Jesus through his adult life and see the sites of many of his miracles. On their way the group take time to see the Inn of the Good Samaritan, the Dead Sea and Jericho where they see the Mount of Temptation and the Sycamore Tree of Zacchaeus.

While in Tiberias pilgrims visit the Mount of Beatitudes to celebrate Mass and listen to a reading of the great Sermon on the Mount. They visit the

site of the multiplication of the Loaves and Fish and take a boat trip on the Sea of Galilee where Jesus walked on water. Married couples get the opportunity to renew their wedding vows at Cana where Jesus preformed his first miracle by turning water into wine.

In Nazareth the group can celebrate Mass in the hugely impressive Basilica of the Annunciation after which they can see the cave home of the Holy Family, St Joseph's workshop and Mary's Well. A drive up Mount Tabor to the church of the Transfiguration provides spectacular views of the Valley of Armageddon; here the group can celebrate its last Mass together. After a long and busy pilgrimage many pilgrims look forward to the opportunity to renew their baptism vows in the River Jordan before returning home after an exhilarating experience that will never be forgotten.



Renewal of Baptism vows, River Jordan

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Join in the celebrations of the 100

May 13th will see the centenary of the famous apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima celebrated by pilgrims and clerics from all over the world. Fatima became one of the most important destinations on the Catholic map thanks to the miraculous apparitions in 1917. It was in a place called Cova da Iria, where the Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children, Lucia Santos and her cousins Jacinta Marto and Francisco Marto. After this first appearance, the Virgin Mary then appeared to the children on the 13th of every month from May until October. Our Lady of Fatima or Our Lady of the Rosary, as the apparition identified herself to the three children, told them that she had been sent by God with a message for every man, woman and child. She promised that Heaven would grant peace to the world if her request for prayer, reparation and consecration were heard and obeyed.

My recent trip to Fatima was such a wonderful experience. It's obvious that a lot of thought & care goes into planning these pilgrimages

- Oliver, Co Waterford

As word of these apparitions spread, people began to travel to Fatima in their thousands. In 1917 up to 70,000 people came in the hope of seeing the apparition. These days thousands of pilgrims visit the Sanctuary of Fatima each year, including numerous pilgrims travelling from Ireland and the UK. The Vatican has confirmed that Pope Francis will visit Fatima to mark the 100th Anniversary of the Marian



apparitions of Fatima. Ireland's leading religious tour operator, Joe Walsh Tours, has prepared a comprehensive pilgrimage programme including special masses, ceremonies and processions to commemorate the anniversary.

Pilgrimage Programme

The 100th anniversary of Our Lady of Fatima will be celebrated with a wide-ranging programme, the high point of which will be the presence of His Holiness, Pope Francis, on the 12th and 13th of May. Apart from the regular pilgrimages and religious

celebrations, the 100th anniversary will be celebrated until 13th October 2017 with a wide-ranging cultural programme including a number of exhibitions, concerts of sacred music, performances relating to the apparitions, conferences, summer courses and the International Congress of the Centennial of Fatima which will be held in June. As part of the Joe Walsh Tours programme, you will attend religious events in the Sanctuary Square including special Masses in the Chapel of the Apparitions, an open air international mass followed by "Adeus" and Eucharistic Processions"

You will also enjoy a guided tour of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary where the remains of Blessed Francisco, Blessed Jacinta and Sister Lucia lie. The comprehensive programme also includes escorted trips to Aljustrel & Valinhos in luxury air conditioned coaches. In Aljustrel you will visit the Fatima Parish Church and attend Mass where the three shepherd children were baptised. Valinhos is a renowned pilgrim location as this is where Our Lady appeared to the children in August 1917.

You will also visit the Loca Do Cabeco, where the angel appeared

twice in 1916, as well as the homes of the visionaries. You're given the option to visit Santarem & Lisbon. In Santarem you will visit the Church of the Holy Miracle, home to a famous Eucharistic Miracle in the thirteenth century & the monument of St. Irene, who is believed to have had associations with Cova Da Iria in Fatima. In Lisbon, you will visit the Church of St. Anthony and also the crypt which contains the very room in which the Saint was born.

You also visit the Church of Jeronimos, the most beautiful example of Manueline Architecture in Portugal.

There will be ample opportunities to take part in the special centenary processions and celebrations along with pilgrim groups from all over the world.

Joe Walsh Tours is offering numerous weekly departures from Dublin between the months of March and October to celebrate the centenary of the Apparitions of Our Lady. Due to huge demand we advise that you book well in advance to secure your place.

JOIN THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS FATIMA 100TH ANNIVERSARY



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th Anniversary of Fatima



Expert guides

Joe Walsh Tours ensure that pilgrims receive the highest standard of service and orientation at all times. Their guides are highly trained & experienced and Joe Walsh Tours are known for providing an intensive level of service to pilgrims. In Fatima, there are three established representatives – Elsa Silva, Carina Vieira and Ana Godinho who were all born & raised in Fatima and are deeply passionate about the message of Our Lady.

These three ladies have been guiding pilgrims for decades & preparing itineraries to meet the needs and wants of pilgrim groups. Joe Walsh Tours receive such positive feedback & reviews on a regular basis about their wonderful guides in Fatima.

“Our local guide Carina was just fantastic. Her knowledge of Fatima & her lovely warm personality made her exceptional.”
- Annette, Co Dublin

Combine Fatima with other sacred pilgrim paths

Joe Walsh Tours comprehensive Shrines of Europe pilgrimages take you on a journey of faith around the most holy and renowned shrines of Western Europe. These once in a lifetime pilgrimages allow you to experience the sites of Lourdes, Santiago de Compostela (or Salamanca & Garabandal) and Fatima all in one beautiful spiritual journey. Meandering across Southern France, Northern Spain and Northern Portugal, these 8 to



10 night itineraries cross borders in luxury and style, while expert guides and pilgrimage coordinators assist each group along the way, sharing treasures of information, anecdotes and insider tips collected from years of living and working locally. Devotion, attention to detail and a passion for pilgrimage sites are the strengths of the Joe Walsh Tours team, and they make it their mission to pass this onto those they meet. Be prepared to fall in love with each and every shrine, just as much as they have.

Lourdes, the world's most beloved Shrine

Lying in the foothills of the Pyrenees, the small town of Lourdes is famous for the Marian apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. It is the largest Catholic pilgrimage destination in Europe which is known as a place that offers hope and consolation to all who are in need of healing and peace.

Joe Walsh Tours have been organising pilgrimages to Lourdes since 1961, with early pilgrims travelling by bus and boat before flights from Ireland were introduced shortly afterwards. A full religious pro-

gramme will be organised for your time in Lourdes and is led by a spiritual director.

The processions in Lourdes include the Blessing of the Sick, the Blessed Sacrament and the Torchlight Procession.

You will also visit the most important places associated with St. Bernadette, her birthplace (Boly Mill) the Cachot, Saint Bernadette's Hospice and the Sacred Heart Parish Church. There is an introductory tour of the Grotto Domain in Lourdes, visiting the Grotto, Baths, Basilicas and the Stations of the Cross.

Walk with us along the Way of St James

You'll then continue on to Santiago de Compostela, known as the culmination of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route, a world renowned UNESCO site. Explore the city's Cathedral, the final destination of the ever popular ninth century medieval pilgrimage, The Way of Saint James (Spanish: Camino de Santiago).

Featuring magnificent Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque buildings, the old town of Santiago conserves a valuable historic centre worthy of being one of Christianity's greatest

holy cities.

In Santiago de Compostela you visit places associated with St. James such as the tomb of St. James, the Palace of Gelmirez, the Church of Santa Maria del Sar, the Royal Hospital and the Monastery of San Martin Pinario.

Substitute Santiago for Salamanca & Garabandal

Their multi-centre Shrines of Europe itineraries will allow you to substitute Santiago for the breath-taking Salamanca & Garabandal if one wishes. Salamanca, with a history dating back to the Celtic era, is known for its ornate sandstone architecture and the old centre is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

On the other hand, San Sebastian of Garabandal is the quintessential image of rugged peacefulness sitting near the Picos de Europa Mountains.

On the 18th June 1961, four girls from the village were playing on the outskirts of the town when they suddenly heard a loud, thunder-like noise and saw before them the bright figure of the Archangel Michael.

Continuing to appear to them over the following few days, the Angel announced that on July 2 the girls will see Our Lady.

This was the beginning of the Garabandal events... in Garabandal you'll follow a daily religious programme arranged by Joe Walsh Tours leader and Spiritual Director and you'll visit the Apparition sites and Stations of the Cross.

Spaces are filling up fast on these once in a lifetime pilgrimages. We advise you contact Joe Walsh Tours well in advance to secure your place. Phone 01 241 0800 for more info.

Additional Shrines of Europe:

Medjugorje | San Giovanni Rotondo

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● **Shrines of Italy**
Rome | San Giovanni Rotondo | Assisi | Padua | Benevento | Alba Adriatica | Loreto

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● **Shrines of Portugal**
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- Full itinerary of **masses, tours & excursions** in **Fatima, Salamanca, Garabandal & Lourdes**

LOURDES | SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA | FATIMA | 9 NIGHTS

- Direct flight from Dublin to Lourdes, returning from Lisbon
- Daily **breakfast** and **dinner** served at hotels; **lunch** also included in Lourdes and Fatima
- Full itinerary of **masses, tours & excursions** in **Fatima, Santiago de Compostela & Lourdes**

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ADDITIONAL SHRINES »

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Rome | San Giovanni | Assisi | Padua | Benevento | Alba Adriatica

Shrines of Poland
Warsaw | Czestochowa | Zakopane | Krakow

Medjugorje, rediscovering the mysterious apparitions

In this era of human despair & religious conflicts, pilgrims are feeling the call to rediscover the mysterious spiritual dimension that is far from our understanding.

Medjugorje is the name you will continuously read across these five books, along with the words "supernatural apparitions". The site today is considered sacred and a pilgrimage destination for millions of people every year looking to see Our Lady, Queen of Peace. The role of the six children, now visionaries, has brought importance to the site as their message has obtained international reach.

Meeting with our Lady of Medjugorje
by Finbar O'Leary
(Columba Press, €9.99)

In 1981, Our Lady, Queen of Peace appeared to six children in the village of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Through these visionaries

and locutionaries, Our Lady continues to communicate her loving messages of peace, prayer, fasting and the sacraments to the world.

This book gives great insight into these messages and the happenings in Medjugorje through in-depth interviews with the visionaries, as well as rare and intimate interviews with two locutionaries. Throughout these beautiful interviews we hear Our Lady's messages concerning our modern world and the simple and loving message to help us become closer to the Divine.

Vicka, Her Story
Edited by Finbar O'Leary
(Columba Press, €9.99)

In the interview that led to the book, Vicka, the eldest of the Medjugorje visionaries, gives the fullest account

yet of her story and extraordinary experiences with Our Lady. In her conversation with Finbar O'Leary, Vicka tells of her special relationship with Our Lady and relays many messages. Vicka also discusses her own physical and mystical sufferings and the journeys on which Our Lady has brought her.

This book also contains an interview with Vicka's mother, Zlata, who speaks for the first time about the family, prayer and the Apparitions.

“What an incredible book about the love of the Blessed Mother for her children. My dear friend Wayne has captured that love in the pages of *The Last Apparition*. I pray that everyone will read this book and accept the great blessing bestowed on us by allowing the Mother of God to come to us in apparition”

Immaculee Ilibagiza, author of *Led By Faith* and *Our Lady of Kibeho*, on *The Last Apparition*



A group of people at the Medjugorje Shrine's Apparition Hill in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Medjugorje, What It Means to Me

Edited by Louise Hall
(Columba Press, €11.99)

Discover the personal call of Medjugorje in this collection of Irish citizens' testimonies, which tell of how these pilgrims came to discover the village of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The village has now welcomed over 40

million visitors since the first apparitions in 1981.

The deeply personal stories detail how these individuals found themselves visiting the holy place, their experiences and encounters with God whilst there and the impact it has had on their lives today. It is recommended for both those who know of Medjugorje and those who are unfamiliar with this sacred destination.

Medjugorje and Me

by Louise Hall
(Columba Press, €11.99)

Contributions for *Medjugorje and Me* come by individuals from all walks of life, including a Dublin man paralysed from the neck down at the age of seventeen, another young man facing a prison sentence and a former priest who had a journey from "sin to salvation" in Medjugorje. We hear about a Jewish man's unlikely

conversion to Catholicism and a young Englishman who gave up a prosperous career to become a priest after feeling called. We also hear the stories of Mark Lenaghan, an ex-IRA member, who credits Medjugorje for his conversion and Sr Colette, Mother Abbess with the Poor Clares in Galway, who discovered her vocation in Medjugorje.

The Last Apparition: The World Will Never Be The Same

by Wayne Weible
(Columba Press, €14.99)

Medjugorje: The Last Apparition takes you beyond the basics of the most important event happening in the world today. It presents a close examination of what will be the last apparition of the Mother of Jesus and how it will change the world forever.



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Pilgrimage to Ireland's National Marian Shrine

Whether making a pilgrimage for spiritual reasons, as a challenge or to experience its unique culture and beauty, Knock Shrine is the perfect place to escape the demands of everyday life, immerse yourself in the peaceful surrounds and experience the tranquillity of this unique place.

Made famous by the Apparition of 1879, Knock could easily claim to have one of the most interesting histories of any place in Ireland. This rich and fascinating history and has been shaped by a number of remarkable people, not least of all the fifteen people that witnesses the Apparition on that dark, wet August evening.

Early pilgrims coming to Knock came predominantly in search of healing - physical, spiritual and emotional, which was well documented by Archdeacon Cavanagh who was Parish Priest at the time and kept a detailed 'Diary of Cures' from 1879-1880.

A place of welcome for pilgrims from all over the world

Over the years, Knock Shrine has grown into one of the most visited sites in Ireland and an international place of pilgrimage and prayer. Each year over 1.6 million visitors come to the Shrine, from returning pilgrims to school groups to families, tourists and the 'culturally curious' - who come to learn more about this unique place; admire the impressive chapels, art and

Retreats, Music & Events
Today, Knock Shrine is carving a new pilgrim path through strong and inspired leadership an ethos of openness, listening and co-creation with pilgrims through the development of Faith Renewal events which includes a mix of concerts, workshops, retreats and events to inspire and encourage people to connect with their faith. Recent concerts in the Basilica have included the RTÉ Concert Orchestra and a wealth of talent from across the country.

sculpture; or stroll through the many meandering walks while taking in the beautiful gardens and tranquil atmosphere.

A Day for Family Saturday 8th April

The current series of events includes 'Celebrating Family; Preparing for World Meeting of Families 2018', a day for families at Knock which will include speakers Fr Timothy Bartlett and Breda O'Brien and will also include powerful testimonies from families. Mass will be celebrated by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin at 3pm in the Basilica.

There are also a number of enrichment days for Parish Ministry, a Workshop for Choirs and a sacred concert entitled 'Mary-An Oratorio' which will take place on Saturday 20th May in the Basilica.

Ireland's National Marian Shrine, Knock, Claremorris, Co. Mayo, F12 Y226, Ireland
T: (094) 93 88100 • E: info@knock-shrine.ie



Knock Basilica – ‘A Beacon of Light and Hope’

One of the most visited placed in the Shrine is the newly refurbished Basilica, which houses the spectacular Mosaic depicting the Apparition scene. The Mosaic comprises 1.3 million individual pieces and is the largest of its kind in Europe, comprising 1.5 million pieces of individual mosaic tiles. It was crafted in Spilimbergo, Italy by Travisanutto, Artisan Mosaic makers by renowned Irish illustrator, PJ Lynch.

The entrance halls to the Basilica are glazed with beautiful painted glass scenes by Róisín de Buitléar on the theme of Pilgrimage. They represent both the physical and spiritual journey of pilgrims to Knock. The walls of the entrance halls display specially selected quotations from scripture.

“As every pilgrim leaves the Shrine, they carry with them a part of the experience of their personal journey and in this, every visitor to the Shrine is forever represented in these windows” – Róisín de Buitléar



RÉITÍGÍ BÓTHAR AN TIARNA Prepare a Way for the Lord	IS LAINDÉAR DO BHRIATHAR Your Word is a Lamp to my Feet
DÉANAIGÍ DÍREACH A CHASÁIN Make His Paths Straight Mark 1:3	A SCALANN LÓCHRANN AR MO BHEALACH And a Light to my Path Psalm 119:105

Faith and Families

The 'HUB – Hear, Understand, Believe' is a summer programme for young people visiting Knock Shrine and includes daily programmes, a kids club and drop-in centre.

It is a bright, welcome and happy space for young people to spend time and facilitates parents who want to attend Mass or have time alone to pray. The HUB also run summer camps and volunteer programmes throughout the year.

What pilgrims said.....

“Sacred space”
“I have visited Knock Shrine on several occasions. My most recent visit was January 2017. It is a perfect place to visit for some time out from the mad world around us. Peace and tranquillity prevails within the grounds. A perfect spot to meditate and pray. I found the time I spent in the Apparition church in the quite of the evening very special.”

“An Experience of Calm & Peace, A Refreshing Escape From Today's World”
An entire day could easily be spent at this national shrine! The Basilica alone is beautiful beyond words...regardless of which side of the amazing altar you are on. The grounds are impeccable and display flowers with brilliant colour.

“Outstanding”
“Totally amazing, beautiful and very peaceful it's surroundings where out off this world and feeling surrounding this Shrine was amazing.”

“A place of peace and reconciliation”
“I was born about 6 miles away and visited this July for a very beautiful ceremony of rededication of the Basilica – I felt very proud of the Basilica and Shrine grounds and facilities that have had recent renovations – it's all just great.
“It has one of the largest mosaics I've ever seen above the main entrance of the Basilica, which shows the apparition of the Blessed Mother with St. Joseph, St. John and the lamb, in August 1879. 15 witnesses saw the apparition and gave sworn testimonies to a commission of inquiry. That and the many miraculous cures there over the years gives Knock status as one of the world's leading pilgrimage places.
“You can't help but feel at peace there whatever your religion or beliefs.”

Your pilgrimage to Knock Shrine...

Take the Guided Tour

Stroll around the meandering 100 acre grounds and learn the fascinating history of the Knock Apparition with experienced guides.

Daily Masses

As one of the most sacred places in Ireland, there are daily ceremonies and confessions year round. From April to October, there are daily outdoor processions, and candlelit public ceremonies and anointing of the sick.

Attend Confessions

The beautiful, subterranean Reconciliation Chapel, with its grass roof, is a peaceful place of prayer and reflection, with Confessions available year round.

Guided prayer

During the pilgrimage season, there are daily guided prayer sessions in the Prayer Guidance Centre. Take some quiet time out of the

busyness of everyday life and recharge the spiritual batteries. No previous experience of prayer is required.

Bookshop

The Bookshop at Knock Shrine is located opposite the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and stocks an extensive range of religious books and gifts.

Day retreats, talks and workshops

Each spring and autumn, there is a programme of day retreats, talks and workshops, exploring a diverse range of topics and issues with a religious or spiritual theme. The programme of upcoming events is available at www.knockshrine.ie/faithrenewal.

Step back in time at Knock Museum

The award-winning Knock Museum tells the

compelling story of the Apparition and profiles the 15 official witnesses. It also gives a good insight into life in rural Ireland in the 19th century. Audio guides are available in seven languages and groups are always welcome.

Pilgrimage season

The official pilgrimage season starts on Sunday 23rd April to 8th October. There are daily Masses in five different chapels and outdoor public ceremonies, including a rosary procession and blessing of the sick.

The National Novena

As many as 150,000 people descend on Knock Shrine over nine days from August 14th to 23rd for the National Novena to Our Lady of Knock. There are daily ceremonies and talks on various social and religious topics and beautiful candlelit processions each night, attended by thousand

World Report



Edited by Paul Keenan
paul@irishcatholic.ie

IN BRIEF

Venezuelans driven to searching bins for food

Increasing numbers of people in Venezuela are foraging for food in bins as the country's economic deterioration continues, a prelate in the nation has said.

Archbishop Ulises Antonio Gutiérrez Reyes of Ciudad Bolívar said the Church locally is working against daily increases in the number of people driven by desperation to seek out discarded food.

"We are not talking about homeless people or beggars, but of men, women and children looking for food," Archbishop Gutiérrez said. "I recently met a gentleman who was looking for food in the garbage, and chatting with him he told me he works, but his salary does not allow him to feed his children."

The prelate added that the site of the Ciudad Bolívar diocesan headquarters has become the go-to location for ordinary citizens seeking to barter medicines between themselves as stocks dwindle in pharmacies.

Ash Wednesday saw the launch of a Church-backed 'Share' campaign in Venezuela towards bringing food to those most in need.

EU bishops call for 'workfree Sunday'

The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) has issued a 'Call for Action' towards making Sunday work-free across all EU states.

On the group's website, the bishops state: "In Europe, the proportion of workers reporting working

Sundays increased between 2010 and 2015. COMECE believes that a work-free Sunday is an essential pillar of the European social model. Together with the European Sunday Alliance, we launch a call for action to show the need for a common EU-wide regulation."

Nuns die in Ethiopian accident

Four members of the Congregation of the Daughters of St Anne have died in a car crash in Ethiopia.

The sisters were travelling as part of a group of eight from their community to a funeral in the city of Hawassa when they were apparently forced off the road by an overtaking truck. Three other sisters were critically injured in the ensuing crash.

Three of the dead have been identified as Sr Weinshet Gebru, the provincial superior and head of a formation house; Sr Motu Baba, former administrator of Guder Girls' Orphanage; and Sr Hanna Bekute, former director of Guder Catholic School.

The president of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, Msgr John Kozar said of the sisters killed: "I know the Church of Ethiopia has lost some very devoted servants."

Prayers for kidnapped priest in Yemen

Prayers have been offered for missing Indian Salesian Fr Thomas Uzhunnalil on the first anniversary of his abduction by Islamic militants in Yemen.

On March 4, Catholics in India joined in praying for the safe return of the priest, who was snatched by gunmen during a murderous attack on a clinic run by the

Missionaries of Charity. Cardinal Baselios Mar Cleemis, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, said: "We cannot blame the government as the situation in Yemen is still volatile and India has no fully-fledged diplomatic mission there. What we can do at this juncture is to pray to God."

Beatification process for martyrs

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea has announced the start of the process of beatification for 214 martyrs from two periods of persecution in the country.

The first group consists of 133 lay people who died for their faith during Catholicism's fledgling years in Korea, that is between the years 1785 and 1879, during the Joseon dynasty, while the remaining group of 81 consists of those martyred across the 20th Century, including during the Korean War of 1950-'53.

This latter group includes two bishops, 48 priests, three seminarians, seven sisters and 21 lay people.

Top European court rules against religious symbols in the workplace

Europe's top court has ruled that employers can bar workers from wearing religious symbols in the workplace.

The judgement handed down by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) states that internal company rules can be shaped so as to require 'neutral dress' on the part of employees.

The case was centred on the experiences of two women, Asma Bougnaoui in France and Samira Achbita in Belgium who were fired by their companies in relation to the wearing of Muslim headscarves. Samira Achbita, a receptionist, was sacked from her post in 2006 when, after three years with her company, she began to wear a Muslim headscarf while at work.

Discrimination

Ms Achbita claimed she was being discriminated against on the grounds of discrimination, though it emerged in court that the company at the heart of the case had an unwritten rule banning all



Cross necklace.

and any overt religious symbols in the workplace. When a Belgian court subsequently referred the case to the ECJ for full clarification, it was this latter element the European judges referred to in reaching their judgement, finding that as the rule covered "any manifestation of beliefs without distinction", there was no discrimination against the plaintiff.

Ms Bougnaoui, meanwhile,

was fired after a customer complained of her wearing a Muslim headscarf during meetings. "An employer's desire to project an image of neutrality towards both its public and private sector customers is legitimate," the judges stated, cautioning that such a right on the part of an employer is only guaranteed where rules around neutrality are imposed equally on all employees.

In short, the ruling means that a Christian employee can now be barred from wearing, for example, a cross necklace or lapel pin on the grounds of neutrality.

Faith groups have been quick to criticise the ruling, with the president of the Conference of European Rabbis, Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt warning "This decision sends a signal to all religious groups in Europe".

Caritas 'SOS' for South Sudan

A Caritas director in one Catholic diocese in South Sudan has warned that "the humanitarian situation... is getting to a catastrophic stage".

Writing after the official announcement of famine in the country, William Okot de Toby, who oversees the work of the Church's development agency in the Diocese of Torit in the far south-east, said: "Hunger is the order of the day and the worst is expected."

Blaming a combination of drought and the ongoing conflict for extreme food

shortages, Mr de Toby said the numbers of malnourished children in the diocese is increasing every day.

"The current situation is worse than compared to the past," he added. "Both the fighting and lack of food are having a deep impact. At least in the past people had coping mechanisms but this time there is nothing. Many have left to take refuge in the neighbouring countries but the situation in the camps has forced some of them to come back with a feeling that it is better to die at home than in a foreign land."

Church critical of Philippines vote to re-introduce capital punishment

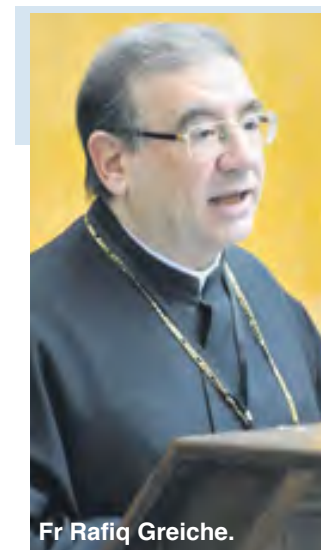
The Catholic Church in the Philippines has lamented the passage of a vote to reintroduce the death penalty.

On March 7, legislators voted 217 to 54 to bring back capital punishment, a victory for hard-line President Rodrigo Duterte. The vote means the legislation moves to the nation's Senate for final approval, though this is almost assured as Mr Duterte's party holds a majority there.

Responding to the vote, the president of the bishops' conference, Archbishop Socrates Villegas, expressed disappointment but stressed that he and his fellow prelates "do not feel defeated [nor] will be silenced".

A statement from the conference said: "In the middle of Lent we prepare to celebrate the triumph of life over death, and while we are saddened because the House voted for death, our faith assures us that life will triumph."

A tool of the Marcos dictatorship from 1972-'81, the death penalty was outlawed in the Philippines in 1987.



Fr Rafiq Greiche.

Egyptian Church praises Muslim efforts for displaced Christians

The Church in Egypt has lauded the efforts of Muslims to assist Christians fleeing Sinai. Spokesman Fr Rafiq Greiche said: "Ordinary Muslims are kind and try to help however they can. They're often first on the scene, rescuing the injured."

Fr Greiche spoke as so-called Islamic State (ISIS), which is behind the drive to oust Sinai's Christian community, upped its terror campaign in that region.

Families escaping the region have related how the group has begun to demand that Christians convert or pay a tax to continue living there, a tactic employed by the group previously in both Syria and Iraq.

Meanwhile, Egypt's Minister of Awqaf (Minister of Endowments), Prof. Mohamed Mokhtar Gomaa has stated that the current attacks on Christians in the country are "attacks

on all of us" and defending Christians and their places of worship "is part of the doctrine of the Muslim faith".

Pointing out that the growing violence in Sinai is not limited to Christian, Prof. Gomaa was critical of media coverage which suggested that events in Sinai were anti-Christian persecution fomented by the wider Muslim population.



Paul Keenan

Christian growth in India brings new concerns

Can good news for a community be, simultaneously, bad news for that same community? It seems that this is possible if one is living within the Christian population of India.

By way of elucidation we must look back one week, and to news reports of Christian fortunes in the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, both bordering Myanmar in the country's north-east. In both of these territories, it transpires that Christian numbers have exploded, with the 2011 census revealing that, since 1971 in Arunachal Pradesh, the faith community has jumped from 1% to over 30% of the state population; in Manipur, and since 1961, the growth has been from 19% to 41%.

What local Church would not want to be able to boast such demographic returns?

The worrying truth is, though, that it was not any local prelate who drew attention to the dramatic figures, but one Kiren Rijiju, a junior minister of Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and one of that party's most prominent figures in the Indian north-east.

Census reality

Minister Rijiju offered a far different spin on the census reality, tweeting earlier that the "Hindu population is reducing in India because Hindus never convert people".

Thus a quick switch to negativity from otherwise positive reportage.

Whether the growth in Christian figures is as a result of conversions, as alleged by Rijiju, or through migration, is a demographic unknown, pointing at once to the agenda lying behind the minister's words.

Never mind that the entire Christian population in India continues to hover around the 2% mark, Rijiju's message quickly reached a recep-



No longer alone: A woman prays in front of the statue of Christ on Good Friday 2016 in a church in Kolkata, India. Photo: CNS

tive audience among fundamentalist Hindus.

Reporting on the tweet, *The Hindustan Times* quoted a figure of the right-wing Hindu grouping Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as stating: "As the census figures show, there is a huge disparity in the way the Christian population has grown and the Hindu population has shrunk. There is no denying the role of missionaries who convert people in this."

Long before news of the Christian growth emerged, India was on a path towards countering any threat to the hegemony of Hindus in India, a nation where Hindus, with over 827 million adherents, account for

80% of the population, Muslims, at just over 138 million, 14%, and with far smaller communities of Sikhs and Buddhists, among others.

“Today, it appears, the new sensitivities of hard-pressed Hindus must be catered for”

The rise of the BJP to power in 2014 saw an instant uptick in attacks on Christians and Muslims across the country, with Hindu eyes peeled for signs of reviled conversions from their faith. Readers of *The Irish Catholic* will recall last week's coverage of the storming of a mixed marriage

in Madhya Pradesh in order to 'safeguard' the Hindu groom from forced conversion in marrying a Christian bride.

Such incidents have occurred in parallel with the growing practice of Ghar Wapsi ('Homecoming'), also previously dealt with in these pages.

Despite Minister Rijiju's contention that Hindus do not convert others, Ghar Wapsi is a practice which, being aimed at returning to the fold those who had left the faith, is also easily utilised to bring new Hindus in; Indian fundamentalists would rail at this description as many of the more extreme elements contend that all Indians are Hindu, and any other existence is the result of the

'cursed conversion' tactics of others.

With a strictly secular constitution, freedom of religion is dealt with under four distinct sections of the founding document: Article 25 - Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion; Article 26 - Freedom to run religious affairs; Article 27 - No person shall be compelled to pay any tax for the promotion or maintenance of any religion, and Article 28 - Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.

Specifically Article 25 (1) states: "Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion."

Belief

Such was the belief in 1949, when the constitution was drawn up for the newly independent nation. Today, it appears, the new sensitivities of hard-pressed Hindus must be catered for.

Take by way of example another story from last week, that of the ousting of the US charity Compassion International from Indian territory.

Present in the country for the past 48 years, during which time it has helped feed and educate countless impoverished children, the charity ended operations after it was accused of funding conversions. The charity has strongly denied this and criticised the Indian authorities for offering no forum or time in which to mount a defence against the charge. Other, religious, charities, are now watching events closely.

The flourishing Christian community might well do the same.

Asia Bibi lives in hope of 'mercy' and renewed legal appeal

A new request for a hearing in the case of Asia Bibi is to be presented to Pakistan's Supreme Court at the end of March, supporters of the imprisoned Christian woman have revealed.

The announcement came following an update on Mrs Bibi's condition as she continues to languish in Multan prison, Punjab, where she has been held since her 2010 death sentence for blasphemy. She is reportedly held in an isolation wing of the prison, comprising four cells, three of which are currently empty.

The latest update was made possible after Mrs Bibi managed to send a message to her husband, Ashiq, requesting a visit.

That meeting took place on March 6, with Ashiq accompanied to Multan by Nadeem Joseph who is linked with the Renaissance Education Foundation of Lahore,

a non-profit help group which is currently providing for the needs of the Bibi's children and paying her legal fees.

Speaking later to *Vatican Insider*, Mr Joseph said: "Asia is doing fairly well. Her vision has dropped and she needs glasses."

Mercy

Mr Joseph went on to describe a woman who remains strong in her Christian faith, and, like Christians everywhere, is marking Lent; this she does with the repeated prayer, "Lord, have mercy on me" as she spends time alone in her confinement - she has a Bible which she studies constantly - or in the periods of exercise she is granted outside her cell.

Central to Mrs Bibi's visit, naturally enough, was the question of her repeatedly stalled appeal,

now suspended twice by a judiciary apparently reluctant to be linked with a case that provokes the strongest emotions among Islamic fundamentalists.

In this, Mr Joseph was able to report that "we will present by the end of March the request for a new hearing before the Supreme Court. We hope it will happen by April. Asia's acquittal would be the best Easter gift".

In preparation for the appeal, the Renaissance Education Foundation has begun fundraising towards the inevitable increase in legal bills if and when the hearing finally gets underway.

In addition, Mr Joseph said: "We ask for the uninterrupted prayer of the faithful and of all those who care about Asia Bibi's case", adding that "[Mrs Bibi] is convinced that the Lord will hear her prayer."



Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
23 Merrion Square North, Dublin 2,
or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Music at Mass – and especially weddings – is too often simply inappropriate

Dear Editor, In this era where rights overshadow responsibilities and when personal preferences shout louder than Christian doctrine, it may seem churlish to point out that sacred music offered at Mass and especially during Communion should be (a) sacred and (b) appropriate.

Indeed, at the beginning of March, Pope Francis, speaking at a gathering organised by the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Pontifical Council for Culture around the theme 'Music and the Church', said: "The encounter with modernity and the introduction of [vernacular] tongues into the liturgy stirred up many problems: of musical languages, forms and genres."

The Pope encouraged the various actors in the field of liturgical music to do their best to contribute to the renewal of sacred music and liturgical chant, especially as far as the quality

of sacred music is concerned.

Recently, I sat bewildered during a wedding Mass when the singer unleashed a resounding version of 'The First Time Ever I Saw your Face' as people approached the altar to receive Communion. While there is nothing wrong with the Ewan MacColl-penned song and while Roberta Flack's version is most amicable, I cannot see what it has to do with Communion (or Mass).

I've heard that 'She Moved Through the Fair' is another popular wedding song which is odd considering that according to the lyrics the subject of the song, the bride, actually dies before the 'wedding'.

And at funerals, who hasn't heard 'In the Arms of an Angel' (or, to give it its proper title, 'Angel') performed with gusto; yet this song was written about the death from drug overdose of a musician and has as the genesis of its origins a suggestion that we should

not take responsibility for anyone else's problems.

All these are fine songs and I don't criticise them, but timing is important and surely doctrine is everything. If some priests are too politically correct to intervene and try to educate people about what is and what is not sacred music, perhaps church singers might strive to enhance their reputations by pointing out that church ceremonies are opportunities to celebrate great sacred music and are not a reason to delve into one's playlist of 'favourite songs of all time'?

After all, what bride chooses 'Sweet Sacrament Divine' as the first song they dance to at their wedding reception?

There is a time and a place for everything.

Yours etc.,
Declan Rankin,
Donnycarney, Dublin 9.

Ireland was a very different place at the time of Tuam Mother and Baby Home

Dear Editor, Some 796 bodies of babies/children are believed to have been buried on the site of the Tuam Mother and Baby Home that operated between 1925 and 1961. The average would have been 23 per year.

In 1925, when the Bon Secours Sisters took charge of the home, Ireland was coming out of the struggle for independence, a civil war, economic depression and another failure of the potato crop leading to a severe famine.

The West was particularly affected. "75% of the people had now no potatoes, their chief diet for the last two months and the harvest prospects were never worse in living memory. There is no employment." (*Freeman's Journal*)

The charity Queen Victoria's

Jubilee Nurses saw an increase in maternity and child welfare cases from 51,106 in 1924 to 67,295 in 1925.

Today in Ireland – a modern country where there is no famine, no epidemics, no typhoid and with all the modern technology and medical facilities – there have been 700 stillborn births in Irish maternity hospitals in the last two years and an average of 500 deaths of babies per year, at or around the time of birth. In 1984, there were 134 cot deaths and we can imagine these numbers to have been much higher in earlier years.

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

Dear Editor, Many are jumping on the bandwagon of condemnation of nuns for the alleged scandal in Tuam and other places from the comfort of Irish society in 2017.

Ireland in 1925 and for many years was more akin with third world countries of today. Thousands of families lived in slums in Dublin and in every town in Ireland, poverty was rife, infant mortality even at home was high, medical services were under funded, social services were non-existent, entitlement for single mothers did not exist. Who helped? The nuns.

People in the media now blame the nuns for 'forced adoptions'. A poor mother had no other option but to give her child for adoption. Her family was ashamed and unwilling in the culture of the time to accept her. It was adoption or face a lonely, hungry road.

Yours etc.,
Fr Con McGillicuddy,
Raheny, Dublin 5.

Catholic hierarchy needs to speak up

Dear Editor, The response from the Catholic hierarchy to recent attacks on the Church and its institutions has been weak, pathetic and mostly non-existent! The rise and ruthless bias of atheist, anti-Church, anti-religion groupings and their very effective use of social media/political pressure has been met with silence. Apologies and a total acquiescence to these pressures have left ordinary clergy and Christians open to ridicule and abuse.

The Tuam media coverage, known for years, is used now by pro-choice. Opportune! Politicians, judiciary and society were the culprits and used religious orders to contain, at the time, a social taboo. Young girls, boys, parents, Garda and other authorities were all complicit and initiators in this communal cover up.

A very cruel and myopic approach, regardless of the intention.

How does this compare in scale, barbarity and savagery with thousands of baby remains that are thrown into skips at the rear of British hospitals?

Atheists are taking over our schools and the media daily ridicule our Church and clergy. It is becoming uncool to attend Church ceremonies.

Pray by all means but please stand up and defend our Church and its teachings. Use all means to counteract the internationally-funded atheist pressure groups. Use the strength of the silent majority of Catholics to turn this very regressive tide.

Yours etc.,
Bill Spencer,
Malahide,
Co. Dublin.

Sad to bid farewell to papal nuncio

Dear Editor, I was very disappointed to hear the news that papal nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown will be moving on from his post here.

Since arriving in Ireland he has been a real breath of fresh air in the Church, travelling the length and breadth of the island and meeting parishioners face-to-face. I couldn't name any of the previous nuncios during my lifetime or remember them ever attending any Church event.

Archbishop Brown is so friendly, approachable and down-to-Earth that for the first time I felt someone from the Vatican was actually listening to the views of ordinary Catholics. I think being Irish-American has also meant the nuncio had a certain insight or understanding of our culture and could fit in very well with the Irish Church.

His departure will be the end of an era as I can only assume his replacement will be another bland bureaucrat who will only leave the comforts of the nunciature when he really has to.

Yours etc.,
Laura Murphy,
Navan, Co. Meath.

Loyalty to Pope Francis and Holy See is as firm as ever

Dear Editor, It is generally accepted that criticism is worthwhile. But Michael W. Higgins' criticism of the intervention of Cardinal Burke and others with regard to *Amoris Laetitia* is overblown (IC 09/03/2017). It should be noted that all they requested was a doctrinal clarification, which every bishop, including the Bishop of Rome, is required *ex officio* to provide.

Professor Higgins' assertion that this has caused a grave level of turbulence in the Catholic Church is something of an exaggeration. While this turbulence may be found in some rarified academic circles, throughout the Church loyalty to the Holy See and Pope Francis is as firm as ever. And long may it continue to be so.

Yours etc.,
J Anthony Gaughan,
Blackrock, Co. Dublin.



Letters to the Editor

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

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

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

Abortion should cause as much outcry as Tuam

Dear Editor, All decent people were horrified at the news of the discovery of the remains of babies and children buried on the site of the former St Mary's Mother and Baby Home in Tuam. Oughtn't the prospect of aborting babies for any reason, if the Eighth Amendment is repealed, cause as much of an outcry as the discovery of the remains in Tuam? I assume the babies and children buried in Tuam were not murdered but died of natural causes, but abortion is murder.

Yours etc.,
Pauline Corry,
Duleek, Co. Meath.

Around the world



▲ **VENEZUELA:** A doctor measures the arms of a child attending the local SAMAN nutrition clinic, a partnership between the Sisters of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception of Castres and Caritas Internationalis. Photos: CNS

◀ **HONDURAS:** Women in Tegucigalpa, protest the 2016 murder of environmental activist Berta Caceres.



MEXICO: Mexican Coadjutor Bishop Enrique Diaz Diaz of San Cristobal de Las Casas blesses a new shelter for migrants on the border with Guatemala. The shelter will house families seeking asylum in Mexico.



WEST BANK: Palestinian men examine the remains of a house after Israeli bulldozers demolished a home near the Kiryat Arba settlement in Hebron. The house was demolished because Palestinians do not have Israeli building permits.

ZIMBABWE:

A woman in a makeshift camp in Tsholotsho, shows how she and her child escaped flooding that has ravaged her country since December. About 900 people are living in temporary shelters provided by nongovernmental organisations.



VATICAN: Shahrazad Houshmand, an Iranian theologian and member of a group of female consultants to the Pontifical Council for Culture, speaks during a media opportunity. In 2015 the Pontifical Council for Culture formed a group of 37 female consultants from around the world to advise it on matters ranging from neuroscience to sports.



NOTHING is *ever* really ours

Everything is gift. That's a principle that ultimately undergirds all spirituality, all morality, and every commandment. Everything is gift. Nothing can be ultimately claimed as our own. Genuine moral and religious sensitivity should make us aware of that. Nothing comes to us by right.

This isn't something we automatically know. During a class some years ago, a monk shared with me how, for all the early years of his religious life, he had been resentful because he had to ask permission of his abbot if he wanted anything: "I used to think it was silly, me, a grown man, supposedly an adult, having to ask a superior if I wanted something."

"If I wanted a new shirt, I would have to ask the abbot for permission to buy it. I thought it was ridiculous that a grown man was reduced to being like a child."

Reasons

But there came a day when he felt differently: "I am not sure of all the reasons, but one day I came to realise that there was a purpose and wisdom in having to ask permission for everything."

"I came to realise that nothing is ours by right and nothing may be taken as owned. Everything's a gift. Everything needs to be asked for. We need to be grateful to the universe and to God just for giving us a little space. Now, when I ask permission from the



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

abbot because I need something, I no longer feel like a child. Rather, I feel like I'm properly in tune with the way things should be, in a gift-oriented universe within which none of us has a right to ultimately claim anything as one's own.

This is moral and religious wisdom, but it's a wisdom that goes against the dominant ethos within our culture and against some of our strongest inclinations. Both from without and from within, we hear voices telling us. If you cannot take

what you desire then you're weak, and weak in a double way: first, you're a weak person, too timid to fully claim what's yours.

“It's a wisdom that goes against the dominant ethos within our culture”

Second, you've been weakened by religious and moral scruples so as to be incapable of seizing the day. To not claim what is yours, to not

claim ownership, is not a virtue but a fault.

It was those kinds of voices that this monk was hearing during his younger years and because of them he felt resentful and immature.

But Jesus wouldn't echo these voices. The Gospels make it pretty clear that Jesus would not look on so much that is assertive, aggressive and accumulative within our society, despite the praise and envy it receives, and see this as admirable, as healthily seizing the day. I doubt too that Jesus would share our admiration of the rich and famous who claim, as by right, their excessive wealth and status.

When Jesus states that it is harder for a rich person to go to Heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, he might have mitigated this by adding: "Unless, of course, the rich person, childlike, asks permission from the universe, from the community, and from God, every time he buys a shirt!"

When Jesus tells us that children and the poor go to Heaven more easily he is not idolising either their innocence or poverty. He's idolising the need to recognise and admit our dependence. Ultimately we don't provide for ourselves and nothing is ours by right.

When I was in the Oblate novitiate, our novice master tried to impress upon us the meaning of religious poverty by making us write inside of every book that was given us the Latin words: *Ad usum*. Latin for: For use. The idea was that, although this book was given to you for your personal use, you

ultimately did not own it. It's was just yours temporarily.

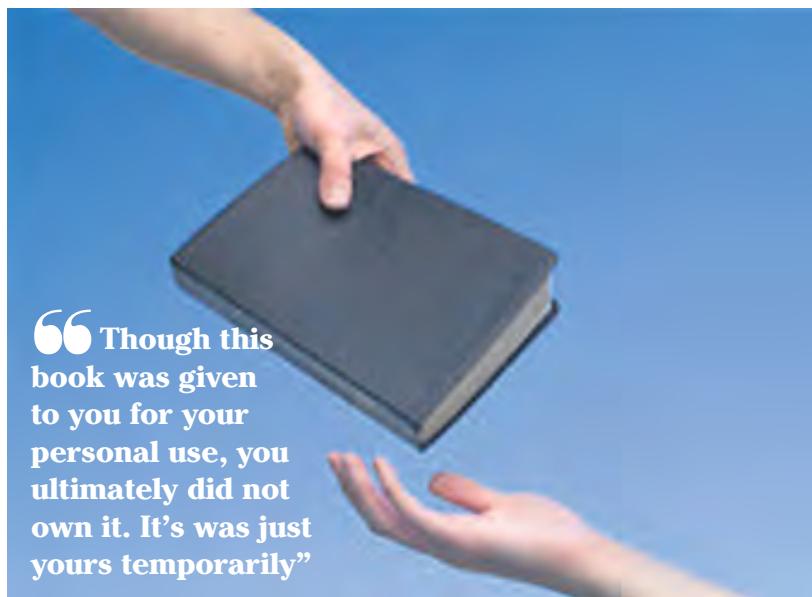
We were then told that this was true of everything else given us for our personal use, from our toothbrushes to the shirts on our backs. They were not really ours, but merely given us for our use.

“That principle our novice master taught us is just as valid for me in the world as it is for any professed religious”

One of the young men in that novitiate eventually left the order and became a medical doctor. He remains a close friend and he once shared with me how even today, as a doctor, he still writes those words, *Ad usum*, inside all his books: "I don't belong to a religious order and don't have the vow of poverty, but that principle our novice master taught us is just as valid for me in the world as it is for any professed religious."

"Ultimately we don't own anything. Those books aren't mine, really. They've been given me, temporarily, for my use. Nothing belongs to anybody and it's good never to forget that!"

It's not a bad thing as an adult to have to ask permission to buy a new shirt. It reminds us that the universe belongs to everyone and that all of us should be deeply grateful that it gives us even a little space.



“Though this book was given to you for your personal use, you ultimately did not own it. It's was just yours temporarily”

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, March 16, 2017

Personal Profile

Blanaid Murphy:
Sacred music is a
window to the divine

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More than man's best friend



Imagine a boy who never plays. A boy who never talks. Who never laughs. Who has no friends. A boy who never hugs anyone, or shows any expression of love. That boy is Conor Lynch. Or rather, it was...

Conor was locked in a world of his own. Diagnosed with severe autism when he was three, Conor was trapped inside a kind of inner world for the first nine years of his life. He never spoke. He was unable to communicate his feelings or his needs to anyone. And his parents were unable to communicate with him.

"I first realised Conor was not coming on properly when he was about 18 months. He never started talking, he never started



Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind are celebrating 40 years of helping the blind, vision impaired and families of children with autism, writes Mags Gargan

doing things that other kids that age would do. He was just in a world of his own," his mum Gillian says.

"As he got older, he would sit on his own for hours and hours just flicking through a magazine. He was just not aware of anything that was going on in the world around him.

"He loves going to school. He loves the routine. But on school holidays his behaviour changes.

You can tell when he's not happy, because he cries and whinges. He doesn't do that when he's happy. That's the only way you know how he's feeling," she says.

Impossible

A normal social life was impossible for the Lynch family because of Conor's mood swings and behaviour when he was away from the routine of home. Family gatherings, holidays, even

a simple trip to lunch as a family was impossible.

But ever since a big white retriever called Toby came into his life, things have begun to gradually change in Conor's world. As though Toby had found the lost Conor trapped inside, and bit by bit, he's bringing him out.

Conor laughs at things he finds funny now, which began with laughing at Toby. He has made a friend at bedtime recently, Conor beckoned his brother Jamie into his room, put his arms around him and hugged him. It was the first time Conor had ever shown love or affection for another person.

Conor is now calmer. More grounded. He 'focuses' on Toby,

and takes pride in being with 'his' dog.

"Conor used to watch telly jumping up and down, screaming, waving his arms in the air, like he just didn't know what to do with himself," Gillian says. "But now, Toby comes in, lies on the floor, and Conor lies down and put his head on his belly and he watches telly like that.

"Toby has changed our lives massively. And not just for Conor. He's changed things for the whole family. For all of us."

This is just one of the many success stories for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind, Ireland's national charity dedicated to helping people who are

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Children's Corner

ERIN FOX



A floral display for Mother's Day

When St Patrick's Day is past, you will be getting ready for Mother's Day next weekend (March 25). While you are making your card and planning a breakfast in bed menu, brainstorm some original ways for presenting a bunch of flowers to your mum.

You can cut stems short and fashion a brooch out of tiny daffodils and crocuses, or press flowers to use for a home-made card. And you can have a go at making this floral chandelier to hang from the ceiling for mum to enjoy.

You will need: One 12-inch metal ring, floral wire or string, secateurs, tiny glass bottles or jam jars, spring flowers such as tulips, daffodils, crocuses, primroses and grape hyacinths.

If you're using the floral wire, ask an adult to cut the wire with the secateurs as it can be very tricky doing it yourself.



If using the string: Cut four equal lengths of string and tie these around the ring. Bring each piece to the centre, and tie in a knot, leaving enough length left to tie another knot for hanging the chandelier. Cut another eight pieces of string to attach the jars and bottles. Tie two pieces of string around each jar, and then tie the other ends to the wreath. Repeat with the remaining jars.

If using the wire: Cut four equally long pieces of floral wire. Space them apart around the wreath and then tie them to the ring.

Bend the pieces towards the centre and then twist them so they are bound together. Bend the top of the wire into a hook so you can hang it up. Hang the chandelier from the ceiling and then start attaching the glass jars.

“Hang eggs shells and chicks from the ring to make it more seasonal for Easter”

Cut a long piece of floral wire and wrap one end tightly around the rim of the glass jar or bottle. With the other end, tie this to the metal ring. Repeat with the remaining glass jars.

Fill a jug with water and pour a little water into each bottle and jar. Take your flowers and place them in the mini vases, trimming each stem to fit the vessel.

Replace the flowers whenever you need to. This also makes a brilliant Easter centrepiece. Hang eggs shells and chicks from the ring to make it more seasonal. And place twigs and fern leaves on top of the ring to make it look like a bird's nest.



Don't put off eye checks

Decline in vision is common from our midlife onwards and may prompt us to go and get our eyes checked out. Overall, it is estimated that 70% of sight loss in older adults is due to cataracts and refractive errors can that be corrected relatively easily.

Indeed, the first sign of visual change can occur from as early as the age of 40 when it is common to start to develop difficulty with reading due to presbyopia. This occurs due to stiffening of the lens in the eye preventing it from changing shape so as to focus light from close images. In mild cases, over the counter reading glasses work well though when more advanced, prescription lenses are likely to be better particularly if you already have spectacles.

Cataracts start to develop in most people after the age of 65, but will initially have little effect on your vision. They result when changes in protein in the lens leads to it becoming cloudy and blocking out light.

Unfortunately, over time cataracts become denser, increase in size and can ultimately cause blindness.

Hazy

Vision may be blurred or hazy and light from sunshine or lamps and headlights of cars at night may cause a glare. In addition there may be dimming of vision and need for brighter light for reading, fading or yellowing of colours, seeing halos around light and occasionally seeing double vision in one eye.

Cumulative damage from ultraviolet radiation from sunlight over the years (which may be avoided by wearing

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



protective sunglasses) may contribute to cataracts. Several other factors appear to cause cataracts including medications like steroids and it is also more common in those with diabetes, a family history, previous eye injury and if you are very short-sighted or smoke.

Prescription lenses and adjusting light levels may help, though in general when vision is affected to the point of interfering with your quality of life or driving, surgery is recommended.

Cataract surgery is the one of the most frequently performed of all surgeries and is highly successful at restoring vision. It is done as an outpatient under local anaesthetic and involves replacing the lens with a new clear artificial one. There is usually mild discomfort for only a few days with full healing after eight weeks.

“Age related macular degeneration (ARMD) is a progressive condition”

Glaucoma is a leading cause of irreversible visual loss with a sharply rising incidence with

age, affecting about 5% of adults aged over 65. Indeed, the level of glaucoma is set to rise by 33% in Ireland over the next decade. It is due to an elevated pressure in the eye causing damage to the optic disc and nerves and leads to a peripheral loss of vision. In the majority of cases, there are no symptoms and it is slowly progressive, often only being picked up incidentally on a routine eye examination.

A formal diagnosis will be made by an ophthalmologist on finding an elevated intraocular pressure in association with damage to the optic nerve and/or loss of part of the peripheral visual fields.

As early detection is key in preventing further visual loss, routine eye testing should be considered every two years after the age of 40, particularly in those where there is a family history (20% cases).

“A reduction in tear production can occur simply with age”

Fortunately, glaucoma can be controlled using eye drops that are carefully titrated to lower eye pressure and prevent further damage. In more difficult to control cases, laser surgery can also be used.

Age related macular degeneration (ARMD) is a progressive condition that leads to central loss of vision. It's incidence rises exponentially with age affecting up to 15% of those over 80.

It occurs when there is damage to the macula (central part of retina) on which visual images are projected.

It can cause a dramatic decline in visual acuity, visual distortions, blurred

and central loss of vision and difficulty discerning colours. Unfortunately, the most common variant (dry type) has no treatment.

However, the 'wet type' which is more likely to cause a sudden change in vision and is due to leakage of fluid from blood vessels in the retina, can be treated by laser therapy and/or medications.

A supplement called lutein (similar to vitamin A) may also help slow down progression of ARMD.

Poor quality tears

Dry eye syndrome affects about 10% of adults with a prevalence of up to 30% in those aged over 65. It occurs when there is insufficient or poor quality tears that cannot provide adequate lubrication for the eyes.

This can give rise to a sensation of grittiness, stinging or burning, sensitivity to light, redness, watery eyes, eye fatigue, blurred vision and difficulty driving at night.

but also with a variety of medical conditions. Sometimes, exposure to wind or dry air, eyelid problems and reduced blinking (due to prolonged periods of reading) can cause dry eyes by leading to excessive tear evaporation.

When symptoms are mild, over the counter artificial tears work well but investigations for other medical causes may occasionally be needed.

If you have ongoing visual symptoms or change in vision, make sure to get your eyes checked out!

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

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Staff and volunteers with the Irish Guide Dogs.

blind or vision impaired and families of children with autism to achieve improved mobility and independence.

Now celebrating 40 years, the charity creates between 60 and 70 partnerships with highly trained dogs each year and works with over 180 guide dog owners and 270 assistance dog owners regularly through on-going after care supports totalling over 900 home visits. It also provides over 30 different classes from guide and assistance dogs to independent living and gardening skills at its centre in Cork each year.

"It begins and ends with the dog," says CEO, Padraig Mallon, as he describes the process from breeding all their own puppies at the centre in Cork to matching them up with the clients.

Training unit

The pups are given to a puppy walker for their first year to train on basic commands as well as toilet training and socialising. They then come back to the early training unit to begin to learn the necessary skills for their work. They are ready to be matched with a client when they are 20 months old.

When the clients apply to the charity they are initially assessed to make sure they will care for the dog and they also receive training to prepare them to work with the dogs.

“A guide dog needs to be outgoing, to want to take on responsibility”

"What is critical then is the matching and making sure the dog we place is suitable for that person. If I'm living in Dublin and take the Luas and bus every day I need a dog who has a certain level of robustness, and if I'm Ballinrobe and only walk to the shop every so often I need a different type of dog," Padraig says.

"Relationship is hugely important. This is their companion and friend who works alongside them and there is a high level of friendship."

When the match has been made the client comes to the centre for up to three weeks residential training. When they then leave with the dog they will continue to receive support in the community.

‘Heroes’ fundraising campaign

The Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind annual fundraising campaign “Heroes” starts on March 31 and aims to create awareness among people about the services the charity provides and to raise money to continue to provide these services. The campaign aims to shine a light on the heroic behaviour of the dogs, share client stories and show the public the difference that their donations can make to people’s lives. Volunteers will be collecting on street and in shops right throughout the country in April, coinciding with World Autism Awareness day on April 2.

Any dogs who don't complete the training for whatever reason have a waiting list of people hoping to home them, and guide dogs who reach retirement age are also popular for rehoming because they are so well trained.

Most of the dogs bred by the charity are a labrador crossed with golden retriever because of their "adaptable, pleasant and happy" character, according to Martin Falvey, a guide and assistance dog instructor.

"A guide dogs won't work effectively if it's not happy or doesn't want to do it," he explains. "A guide dog only works about 10% of the day, then they are under the desk at work or college or they are at home. An assistance dog works a lot more. It is important that parents get the dog out and about during the day as well, but at home he is a companion dog for the child. The parents are the master but because they are very sensitive dogs there is almost an understanding for the child or a different level of tolerance for the child."

"The two programmes complement each other because your best guide dog would make a rubbish assistance dog and the best assistance dog would make a rubbish guide dog. The difference is a guide dog needs to be outgoing, to want to take on responsibility whereas you want your assistance dog to be more laid back and sensitive," Martin says.

Volunteer

Martin has been with Irish Guide Dogs for 16 years, originally starting as a volunteer in secondary school, and he says it is a "self-motivating job". "I love to work with dogs and it's great to work with the clients as well. We are all responsible for the end product but to be delivering the

end product is very rewarding."

Padraig agrees that it is "very rewarding when you see the impact of the work". "In terms of our staff, they are very committed. We have a great team of staff and volunteers who love working with dogs and people, and making that opportunity to improve the quality of life for people."

All of the charity's services and support is provided free of charge and Padraig says one of their challenges is "that we have finite amount of resources and a very strong level of demand, particularly with the autism service".

“Up to about €80,000 a week is required to sustain the organisation”

"Our capacity is limited by the supply of dogs available and our funds. We raise up to 85% of our funds through fundraising and voluntary donating and 15% through statutory agencies. Up to about €80,000 a week is required to sustain the organisation, so are so pleased that we have such great volunteer resources around the country raising funds for the service," he says.

"We have a very connected relationship with a lot of clients. Some are on their 7th or 8th dog. That's what we do, we work with people for some or all of their life. It is very positive work for the person who gets the dog, the improvement in their quality of life is quite profound and the results of our work are clearly visible."

i For information about volunteering contact 1850 506 300 or email volunteer@guidedogs.ie Or to make a donation see www.guidedogs.ie

**Faith
— IN THE —
family**



Bairbre Cahill

A group of 35 young adults. Three are given tickets to sit at a table where there are cans of lemonade and chocolate muffins. Five are given tickets to a table where there is orange squash and digestive biscuits.

The other 29 get no tickets and are left at tables with dry crackers and a jug of water.

A discussion opens up. Some of those on dry crackers want to know why some are more privileged than others? Why did those people get picked? The random nature of it annoys them.

One of the young people at the table with juice and digestive says he's happy enough with what he's got although he'd quite like those chocolate muffins. Then the moment of decision – will the three with the lemonade and muffins give them up so that everyone can get juice and digestive biscuits? Two different groups over two days. The first group say yes and give up the treats. Today the group vote two against one and keep the goodies, leaving most of the others with dry crackers.

Was I simply trying to cause a riot? No, I was actually working with groups of 17 and 18-year-olds on retreats about solidarity and Catholic social teaching. Interestingly when I did an exercise with the group to tease out their opinions it became clear that the majority of students believed that the Church has little worthwhile to say about issues like justice, workers' rights, access to clean water, education, a liveable home and the dignity of each human being.

“It is a challenge to live simply just so that others can simply live”

Somehow Catholic social teaching appears to be one of our best kept secrets.

Catholic social teaching is rooted in the belief that we are each created in the image and likeness of God, and that through baptism we become part of the body of Christ. That means that we have a responsibility to each other.

That is what solidarity is about. Solidarity is demanding.

The reality is that the resources of the Earth are limited. This is where the idea of the muffins, digestives and crackers came from. There aren't enough resources to give everybody muffins and lemonade, but if that small and privileged group are willing to let go of some of their privilege there may be enough to give everyone juice and biscuits.

Empathy

Solidarity invites us to empathy, to understand the experience of others as deeply as we can and to stand with them, supporting them.

The students were asked to work in small groups to explore who they feel called to stand with. It was interesting to see what came up. There was a lot of emphasis on supporting charities but somehow solidarity demands that and more. It is that challenge to live more simply so that others can simply live. It is about living a responsible relationship with the environment so that the world we pass on to future generations can sustain their lives. That's where it gets uncomfortable. There is an onus on us to change our habits and reflect on our choices.

Lent, a time of conversion and transformation is a good time to open up these conversations at home. Trócaire puts the challenge of solidarity clearly before us. We are invited to simplify our lives, maybe giving up alcohol, sweets or the marmalade on our toast not just for the benefit to our health but so that the money we save can make a real difference to the lives of people living in poverty. But this is not just something for Lent. This is what we are called to day in, day out. This is what it means to be Christian, to be the body of Christ. Solidarity may take shape through reducing waste, going out of our way to welcome the stranger, seeing beyond negative labels to the humanity of the person or simply sharing your chocolate muffin with the person who only has dry crackers.





Mags Gargan speaks to the Director of the Palestrina Choir

He who sings prays twice," is the often quoted line from St Augustine, and this would be the experience of Blanaid Murphy, after nearly 15 years at the helm of the Palestrina Choir.

"Sacred music gives you a glimpse of something beyond yourself, a window towards the Godly," she says. "If you go to a Mass that we sing at, of course there are parts where the congregation sing, but a lot of the time the most special part for people is when the choir sings, because they get transported to a higher experience and that helps them pray and brings them closer to God."

The Palestrina Choir has its origins in a boys' choir formed in the 1890s by Dr Vincent O'Brien, then a music teacher at St Mary's Place Christian Brothers School in Dublin. It came to the attention of Edward Martyn who wanted the Catholic Church in Ireland to have music of an equivalent standard to the great cathedrals of Europe and he offered an endowment for a choir to be established at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral in 1903.

Over 100 years later, Blanaid is now the choir director and it was the same love for liturgical music that attracted her to the choir.

Flourished

"It is the most revered Catholic choir in the country and I had always wanted to be director, so when the position came up I went for it," she says. Since then the choir has

evolved and flourished in many ways. Perhaps viewed as a choir for the more well-heeled families, the Palestrina operates an inner city programme, visiting 20 schools each year. A girl's choir was also formed in 2009 to provide girls the same opportunity to be involved in the music and liturgical life of the pro-cathedral.

So now there are about 90 children in the music rooms four times a week, sharing a love of music that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Blanaid herself started in music at an early age. She learned piano at four and started playing the

organ in local churches from the age of 10. She grew up in Notting Hill in London with Irish parents – from Longford and Omagh – and she always identified as Irish. She studied music in Cambridge University and then in Germany, where she continued to play in Catholic churches.

“There are a lot of resources needed to maintain the choir and I think they really do value it”

Blanaid moved to Ireland in 1993 and became director of music in Kilmacud church and then in Donnybrook church in Dublin. She was also involved in RTÉ Cór na nÓg, before taking up the position at the pro in 2002. "I was always very interested in singers, not singing myself, but in playing with singers and getting singers to sing together," she says.

Over the years Blanaid has travelled extensively with the choir and performed at many prestigious events including a papal Mass for two Popes.

In 2013 the prestigious Sistine Chapel choir invited the Palestrina to sing for Pope Benedict at a Mass in St Peter's Basilica on the Feast of the Epiphany.

Papal Mass

At the time they were only the third choir in history to receive the invitation following the Westminster Cathedral and Westminster Abbey choirs. Last November they were invited again by the Sistine choir to join them at a papal Mass with Pope Francis.

However, for Blanaid the highlight of all the choir's performances under her directorship was a little closer to home. "It was a concert during the Eucharistic Congress. We premiered a new Mass by Colin Mawby which had been commissioned and we also did it

with Vivaldi Gloria. We put it on as a kind of fringe event and we had a massive turn out. This new Mass involved people joining the last movement, the *Gloria Hallelujah*, and for me it was very uplifting and a very special evening," she says.

When pushed to pick her favourite piece of music, Blanaid goes back to the origins of the choir and the *Palestrina's Missa Papae Marcelli*, the performance of which first caught the attention of Edward Martyn in 1898.

“Parents who mightn't go to Mass come to listen to the music”

"I love *Palestrina Papae Marcelli*," she says. "The piece is considered one of the most splendid, powerful piece of music. That piece has a certain bit of magic to it but there are loads of others I love doing with the choir."

While Blanaid might be the driving force behind the choir, she emphasises the importance of team work. "The choir is a real team," she says. "We get very good support from Canon Damian O'Reilly and all at the pro, and the diocese is very supportive. There are a lot of resources needed to maintain the choir and I think they really do value it."

"The choir is a real example of family involvement and commitment too. Parents who mightn't go to Mass come to listen to the music. A lot of people who help at pro had boys in the choir many years ago and stayed on as stewards and readers. The sense of family is very strong and it is the backbone of the choir."

i Blanaid Murphy will lead a Gregorian chant workshop on March 18 in Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mourne Road, Drimnagh, Dublin 12.



The Palestrina Choir.

Personal
PROFILE



Blanaid Murphy.

Does my boyfriend's pal have to be mine too?

I can't stand my boyfriend's best friend. For the life of me, I can't understand why they are friends as they have nothing in common. I love my boyfriend and we are talking about getting married, so his friend could be permanently in my life. What can I do?

One challenging element of all relationships is that you have two different people, with two sets of friends. Some of them you will get along with and others you won't. You have to ask yourself, why don't I like this person? Is it a personality clash or are their deeper issues at play, such as jealousy. Is your dislike justified?

It is, of course, a different situation if this person is genuinely bad for your boyfriend. Make sure you haven't judged too quickly, based on only a few meetings. If it is just that you don't have a lot in

common then you have to take the time and effort to find some common ground. If you can't find any then it's time to create some. Of course, the one thing, and the most important thing, you have in common is your boyfriend. It is really important that you don't suppress your feelings – you need to talk to your boyfriend. The worst thing you can do is ignore the issue. This person is important to your other half, so you have to make an effort to explain why you feel the way you do, but also show the commitment you have to trying to working it out.

Negativity

Describe your feelings and, together, consider and agree the best way to move forward. If you don't then negativity and bitterness will creep in and badly affect your relationship. It's not about attacking his friend, it is simply and maturely accepting that there are some people you don't

click with and that's okay, but that you're going to work at it as best you can. This is not about having an argument, just sharing how you feel.

It's fine to ask your boyfriend to limit your time around this person, let them spend time together without you always being included. This situation will provide you with the chance in your relationship to compromise.

Your future marriage will not weather the many storms that life throws at you, if you cannot learn to put your partner's desires ahead of your own sometimes.

If the situation doesn't improve, it might be a good idea to talk to the friend.

After all, you both care about the same person. Have a healthy dialogue and lay it out respectfully to try and figure out a way of moving forward together. You're not asking to be his best friend also, but simply for a way to try and get along. The best you can do is commit to being civil, this might be challenging but it is the mature thing to do.

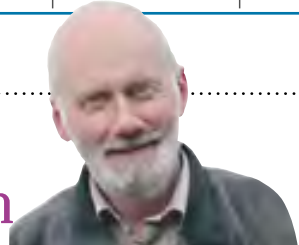


Love
Notes

Wendy Grace

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Accusations and uneasy accounts of the Tuam story

Prompted by the Tuam babies controversy there were more and more harrowing personal stories, testifying to times that were less compassionate and often more cruel than today. Referring to the culture of the times helps our understanding but doesn't provide justification – Church-run institutions should have been counter-cultural, should have set a much higher standard.

Much of the discussion on the media was not marked by understanding, but by prejudice, aggression and even hatred towards the Catholic Church, as tragedies of the past were used to vent the prejudices of the present. This was particularly true of text reaction on many of the discussion programmes.

I was critical of Pat Kenny last week, so I'll give credit this week, as he hosted two of the more nuanced and reasonable treatments of the issue. On **The Pat Kenny Show** last Thursday, he interviewed Brendan O'Neill of Spiked-Online, following an article of his in that morning's *Irish Times*.

O'Neill was no apologist for the Catholic Church, was an atheist in fact, but was critical of the "media moralising...virtue signalling...mawkishness...narcissism". He performed a useful service by injecting moderation, balance and perspective into the debate, but thought it was difficult to have a rational dis-



Olivia Colman and David Tennant star in ITV's *Broadchurch*, which is also broadcast on TV3 on Monday evenings.

cussion, and thought it better to look at facts as we currently have them rather than "dark imaginations about things we think might have happened".

Magnanimous

On the same show last Friday morning, there was a rational discussion. MEP Brian Hayes (Fine Gael) thought there was no evidence of any criminal offence, and was even magnanimous towards Fianna Fáil politicians of the past!

Homelessness campaigner Alice Leahy was upset by the

sad stories from Tuam but sought understanding. Ironically it was David Quinn of the Iona Institute (and this parish) who was most critical of the Church of the past, with its overemphasis on sexual sins and tendency to be "throwing stones with gusto". Kenny's chairing was level headed and fair. At one stage he said he wouldn't describe the burial area in Tuam as a 'septic tank' as we didn't know whether it was ever used for that purpose.

That afternoon's **Liveline**

(Radio One) was an uneasy affair. Two women, one a religious sister and one a former nun tried to offer some balance – for example criticising families and boyfriends of the women who ended up in baby homes, but their efforts didn't go down too well with some listeners.

Lazy

One angry caller rightly wanted the dead babies to be given dignified burials but then threw in lazy generalisations, along with Nazi and Gulag comparisons and called for deceased nuns to be put in the sewer. Stand-in presenter Damien O'Reilly broke all records for understatement, suggesting that this idea might be "a bit unfair".

Some of the reaction continued to be over the top. Chris Donoghue on **Newstalk Drive** spoke (on the Tuesday) of "bodies all over the place" in Tuam; Ray D'Arcy (also Tuesday) connected the controversy even to the Angelus on RTÉ; on Wednesday's **Morning Ireland** Bríd Smith TD spoke of the Bon Secours "private health empire" built "on the bones of these dead babies" – and yet the same day she was, in my opinion, trivialising the deaths of other babies by wanting to reduce the penalty for abortion to a token €1.

We got a similarly breathtaking inconsistency from Ruth Coppinger TD, on last weekend's **Saturday With Claire Byrne**, when she was

critical of babies being taken from their mothers in Tuam, but supporting easier access to abortion by repeal of the 8th Amendment!

Anyway, with such downbeat stories in the news some fictional drama was welcome. **Broadchurch** has returned for a third season (TV3 and UTV, Monday nights) and while it's not as good as the first season, I still enjoy the prickly chemistry between



Claire Byrne.

Detectives Miller (Olivia Colman) and Hardy (David Tennant) – it's a great double act.

The story is slow moving so far, centring on a sexual assault case. The story writers, and the fictional cops, handle the crime sensitively, but there's lot of graphic descriptions, and a sense that we are being subtly preached at as to how such cases should be handled – preaching does not mix well with fiction.

PICK OF THE WEEK

LATE LATE MOVIE: THE TREE OF LIFE

RTÉ1 Saturday (night), March 18, midnight (2011) Brad Pitt, Sean Penn. Director: Terrence Malick. The story of a family in Texas in 1956. The eldest son witnesses the loss of innocence and struggles with his parents' conflicting teachings.

BRENDAN O'CONNOR'S CUTTING EDGE

RTÉ1, Wednesday, March 22, 9.35pm

Cutting Edge returns for a new season with Al Porter, Fidelma Healy Eames and Eithne Shortall.

SYRIA'S DISAPPEARED

Channel 4, Thursday, March 23, 10pm

The story of the tens of thousands who've been disappeared by the Assad regime into clandestine detention centres.

Last week there was a touching scene with the local clergyman agonising over his role in the parish, while other characters from the earlier series are blended in quite well.

1 boregan@hotmail.com



Aubrey Malone

Film

The good, the bad and the ugly – new movie offerings

The adorable Emma Watson proves there's life after Harry Potter in Disney's latest version of *Beauty and the Beast*.

This time the beast (Dan Stevens) can only be freed from his wolf-like guise by the love of Watson, who's distraught at being imprisoned in his enchanted castle until she begins to realise his heart is in the right place whatever about his physical features.

The rest of the cast read like a grocery list of household names – Ewan McGregor, Luke Evans, Ian McKellan, Stanley Tucci, Kevin Kline. Music is also added to the mix in what promises to be one of the major box office hits of the year.

Another trip down Mem-

ory Lane occurs with *T2: Trainspotting*, the sequel to the film of the same name which made Danny Boyle's reputation back in 1996. He's at the helm again here, and again re-uniting with the busy Ewan McGregor, returning to the drug-ridden world he left 21 years ago for more excess and abandon.

Kong: Skull Island deals with a team of explorers who travel to an uncharted island in the Pacific unaware that they're about to encounter a myriad of monsters. Again the film has a 'beauty and the beast' element, this time with overtones of another iconic movie, *King Kong*, which provides it with some of its more violent aspects.

A scene from *The Salesman*.



The Belko Experiment has a group of Americans locked in their high-rise office in Bogota, Colombia and ordered by an unseen person whose voice comes over an intercom to kill their colleagues or be killed themselves. The hor-

rific premise gets ratcheted up to even scarier degrees when they refuse.

Adult film

The Salesman is an adult film featuring a theatrical Iranian couple whose relationship

goes downhill while they're appearing in a performance of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in Tehran. They're forced to leave their apartment and move to a shabby one. One night a stranger calls, enquiring about the previous tenant, and violence ensues.

The film won this year's Best Foreign Film Oscar. Its director, Asghar Farhadi, snubbed the ceremonies in protest at what he called Donald Trump's 'inhuman' recent law banning the entry of immigrants to the US.

Moonlight, the film that won the Oscar for Best Movie of the year overall, is still showing in some cinemas. It's the story of the traumatic life

of a black man growing up in a rough area of Miami. Again it's an adult film with themes of homosexuality and drugs.

No doubt you're aware of the mix-up that had *Moonlight's* Oscar mistakenly given to *La La Land* in one of the most embarrassing gaffes of Oscar history.

The accountant who gave the wrong envelope to presenter Warren Beatty took the rap but my own belief is that the right one was stolen by Bonnie and Clyde – Beatty and his co-presenter Faye Dunaway.

Clearly, the two gangsters are still up to their tricks 50 years after their landmark movie.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Who we are and what we want to be

In a Landscape Redrawn

by Bishop Donal Murray
(Veritas, €10.99/£9.35)

Though it is not presented as a Lenten book, Donal Murray's latest book is very much the sort of book which will provide readers with many insights in the way things are.

He is writing very much for those who find the 'redrawn landscape' of morality to which his title alludes, and find it more like a trackless wilderness. But in some seven densely-packed chapters, he explores this dilemma.

He begins very appropriately with the question "who are we?", seeing that everything else he might have to say and that his readers might come think, depend on a response to that query. He says, as Christians always have been, that we as individuals are restless until we rest in God. But he emphasises that we are also a part of creation.

“As Christians always have been, that we as individuals are restless until we rest in God”

There would be many today who would see all moral relations and decisions as arising from an appreciation that we live not only in society, but also in the midst of creation, of which we are a part not a master.

He alludes elsewhere to St Francis as addressing "inanimate nature" as Brother Sun and Sister Moon (in the famous canticle), but Francis does not see these brothers and sisters this way, but as very active agents, noncognoscent perhaps, but far from inanimate. Only when we can fully enter into that feeling of the saint can we hope to see everything around us in proper relation to God the Creator.

But this is only an example of how much that Donal Murray says in these (as I say) densely packed pages arouses thought and reflection. I was particularly struck



Bishop Donal Murray.

by his last chapter. he remarks that Desmond Fennell (whose challenging autobiography has just appeared) says that there is no such thing as substantial body of work that we might call 'Irish thought' – much of what passes for thought here is in fact a pale reflection of other cultures.

In a recent stay in a hotel, Donal Murray recounts how he stumbled on among the TV channels he was offered what I take to be a panel of French philosophers discussing social and political subjects.

It would have been "unthinkable" on Irish TV, he adds – but then it is striking how very differently the French media as a whole reflect Catholic culture.

Subtheme

That I think illuminates the major sub-theme of this book: we need to reflect on who we are and what we are doing in the world in a way that passes beyond pious platitudes and mere moral legalism

If readers wish to begin that task, which lies at the heart of all social, moral, and political, even financial matters, they could not do better than by reading Donal Murray's excellent little book in the coming weeks, completing it before April 16, so as to be ready for a new beginning.

Raqqa: From inside the city under attack



Living – and dying – under a black flag

The Raqqa Diaries: Escape from Islamic State
by Samer, edited by Mike Thomson
(Hutchinson, £9.99)

Peter Hegarty

In almost unbearably graphic prose, Samer – a pseudonym – describes a place in which atrocities are everyday, and life barely tolerable. Children walk to school past crucifixes from which decapitated bodies hang. Food is becoming scarcer and more expensive; electricity is rationed; rubbish piles up on the deserted streets.

Raqqa is an isolated place. IS destroys satellite dishes, intercepts landline calls, can trace mobile phone calls, and strictly supervises internet cafes. Unauthorised discussions with journalists are

punishable by death.

We know what we know about life in Raqqa because political activists like Samer risk communicating with the foreign media.

Before his escape Samer would regularly visit an internet cafe and, under the noses of IS supervisors, send out encrypted reports for translation and broadcast by the BBC.

Informed

He and his fellow activists are determined to keep the world informed about events in Syria, mindful of 1982, when Hafez al-Assad killed as many as 20,000 people in the city of Homs, in what may be the most under-reported massacre in history.

IS is as hypocritical as it is cruel, with one set of rules for itself, and another for those whom it governs. Fighters punish civilians found guilty

of engaging in homosexual acts by throwing them from the tops of tall buildings, while jihadis guilty of similar sexual offences receive only a lashing.

Militants flaunt their relative prosperity amidst the deepening poverty.

“Raqqa's hospital is closed to civilians, such are the numbers of fighters requiring treatment”

They receive a good salary, live in decent accommodation – often in houses hurriedly vacated by Christians and Shia as the jihadis swept in – and have access to cars. Samer describes a host of fighters descending on a cafe and buying the best the place has to offer, while he munches

on humble fare he can barely afford.

The relentless bombing terrifies fighters and civilians alike. Raqqa's hospital is closed to civilians, such are the numbers of fighters requiring treatment. IS is forcing children to go to the front lines as the end approaches.

Relentless

One day Samer learns that his name is on a list: IS has begun arresting people who took part in the demonstrations against Assad, fearing perhaps that the activists could become the nucleus of an uprising as the jihadis prepare to make a last stand.

The courageous young man escaped the city, moving along back roads and bluffing his way past IS checkpoints; the friends and relatives he has left behind face a future of siege and starvation.

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.

End of an era in Blackrock is well marked

Monody for a Much Loved Bookshop

by Louis Hemmings

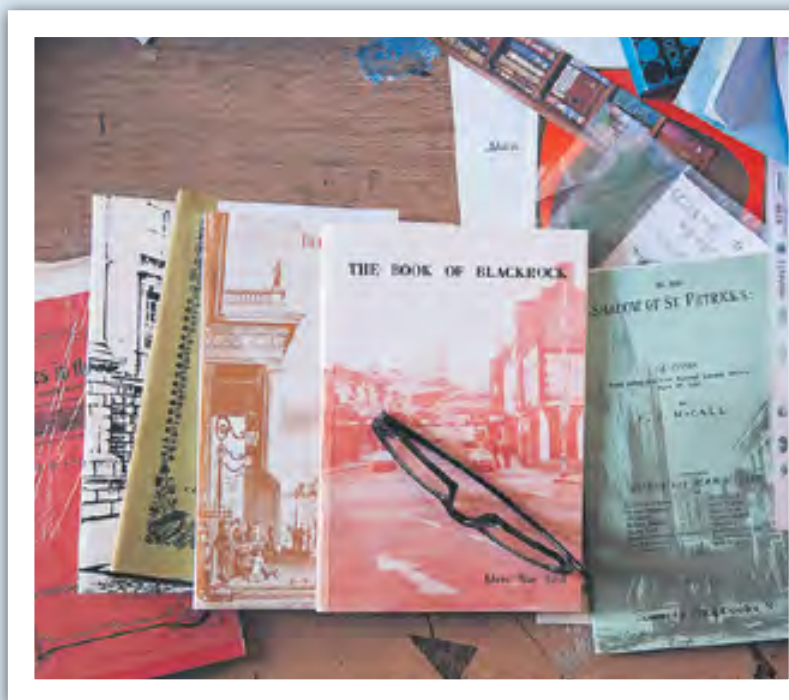
illustrated by Dora Kazmierak

Carraig Books, a long-established bookshop in Blackrock village, is to close soon, certainly before the end of the year.

It is one of the few second-hand bookshops that carry a large stock of philosophical and religious books, but as the owner explained to me recently, these subjects do not sell as well as they once did. Much of his trade is in other areas of literature, and Irish history, and these will in future be sold online from a warehouse.

For customers this will provide a continuing service, but for wandering and curious bibliophiles – let alone restless philosophers – the tactile sensation of old books will be lost.

Long-time customer and bibliophile poet Louis Hemmings laments the shop's demise. – **Books Editor**



Slightly stiff opens windowed door;
worn linoleum reveals wooden floor;
hesitantly many enter this bookshop
tentatively on tiptoe, silent pin-drop.

Dream-delightful, sentimental scent,
thoughts slowly over time ferment;
full calf covers, sunned pages:
book lover bounty from differing ages.

Hidden train tickets, often old stamps,
some books pristine, others foxed-damp,
some underlined or margin annotated,
autodidacts pencilled opinions stated.

Piled passages, book blocked,
some texts slightly worm-pocked,
covers warped, spines detached,
imperishable authors unmatched...

Wooden ladders stand angled,
there's little in this shop new fangled
but books galore, differing typefaces,
stories to transport us to distant places.

Opulent leather scents, pungent old ink,
paper perfume, gilt edges wink;
phrases underlined, pencilled persistence,
books celebrate our very existence.



The World of Books

By the books editor

The rhetorician and his neighbours

The primacy of the word, what the Greek philosophers called *logos*, has been for many the only way in which both good and bad can be distinguished. Yet one has, in this day and this age, to doubt some whether this is always so.

Take these words – they are from a cradle Catholic, whose mind and imagination were filled with the aberrant lore of Catholics in Austria and Germany about many aspects of life and history; ideas which alas still circulate among so many wishful thinkers.

Wishing to explain his ideas, the writer, who would soon come to dominate the lives of countless millions around the world, wrote: "I know that fewer people are won over by the written word than by the spoken word, and the growth of every great Movement on earth is due to great speakers and not to great writers."

Though the thought might be applied to Jesus, these are the words of Adolf Hitler, in the foreword to *Mein Kampf* (1925/26), his account of his political struggle to that date. It was written in jail after he was convicted after the failed Munich *putsch*.

This is a surprising sentiment in a way for a man who was writing what was to become a major 'best seller', whose book still sells remarkably well in Turkey, Pakistan, India and in the United States. (Banned since 1945 in the Federal Republic of Germany until a recent date, it is now available there in a two-volume scholarly edition, published by the Institute of Contemporary History in January 2016, in which all the assertions made by the author are subjected to careful scrutiny and rebuttal.)

I see from my copy of the English edition, slightly abridged, that the book was first published in London in October 1933 – Hitler had been elected Reichskanzler in January – that the this copy itself is from the 25th printing of November 1938. Some 92,000 copies in total, of just the British edition alone circulated in these islands. Though at 18 shillings the first edition was expensive, this is the mass-market, cheap edition.

So it cannot be said that Hitler's aims were not clearly known to all who could read. He often spoke about the lying press, the conspiracies of "International Jewry", and his intense loathing for Judaism – and for Christianity, especially the Catholic Church, which he believed was enfeebling the manhood of the Aryan race – are made clear from the very first pages.

Aside from international editions, in Germany itself after the National Socialists were elected by popular vote to put their views into operation, every couple on their marriage was presented by the state with a free copy.

Master speaker

Now Hitler was a master speaker. His powers enthralled the millions over the years who attended his rallies – like some modern politicians he saw the rally as the ideal form for a true leader. His powers can be detected even in the brief newsreel clips that are often shown on TV, but which can be fully appreciated in Leni Riefenstahl's remarkable film documentary *Triumph of the Will* (1935) – an instance of where the skills of a great artist were put into the service of a tyrant.

He was almost the inventor of the 'big lie' and 'alternative facts'. Yeats, writing at the same period, claimed: "The rhetorician would deceive his neighbours, / the sentimentalist himself." We are most of us, in Yeats' sense, sentimentalist, who all too easily fall under the sway of powerful rhetoric.

The world is now beset by sentimental nationalists, who see some better country in the past that they wish to restore: "Make America great again." The power of mass rally rhetoric is once again on display. We have before us another leader who believes he will change the world by mere spoken words rather than the laboured study of books. By the power of his words, too, he manages to throw the settled order into chaotic confusion, in the hope of rebuilding on the ruins.

But, as with those first readers of *Mein Kampf* in the 1920s, we cannot say we have not been warned.



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PILGRIMAGE

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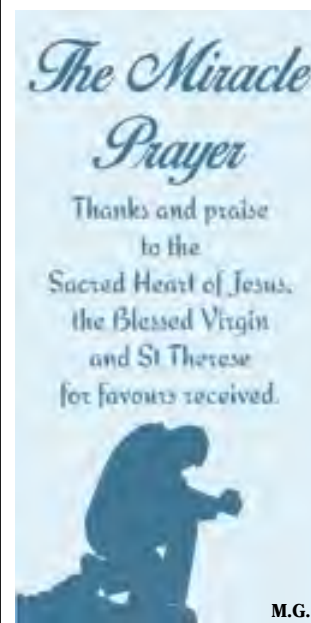
MEDJUGORJE PILGRIMAGE, 9 nights, May 8. €599 pps. Pat & Phil, 087 223 8911.

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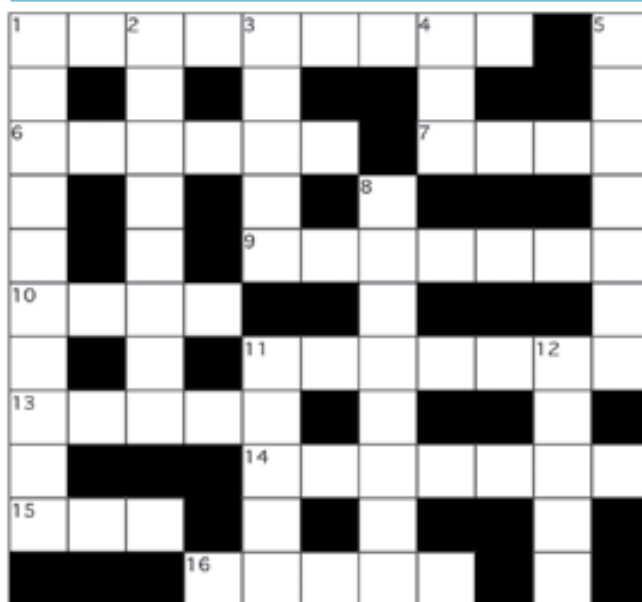
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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 173



ACROSS

- 1 Repairs to a street or highway (4,5)
 6 Pay no attention to something (6)
 7 In the nursery rhyme, it ran away with the spoon (4)
 9 A 'banger' you fry or grill (7)
 10 One-hundredth of a Euro (4)
 11 One of Jesus' twelve special friends (7)
 13 You'll find these plants beside water (5)
 14 Tomato sauce (7)
 15 It shines from the sky on a nice day (3)
 16 Thoughts (5)

DOWN

- 1 Thick-skinned, horned animal (10)
 2 Declare, tell publicly (8)
 3 You may use them as fishing bait (5)
 4 Baby goat (3)
 5 Person who trains to run, walk, jump or throw (7)
 8 Refreshing hot drink (3,2,3)
 11 Enquired, made a question (5)
 12 Chuckle (5)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.289

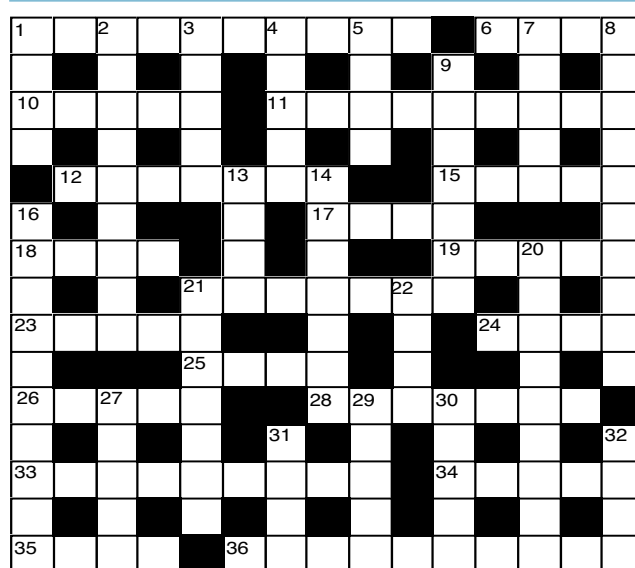
- Across** – 1 Adjustment 6 Curt 10 Essex 11 Tap dancer
 12 Asphalt 15 Wheat 17 Asti 18 Hues 19 Never 21 Cooking
 apple 23 Patch 24 Kill 25 Aloe vera 26 Exams
 28 Scolded 33 Piping hot 34 Glaze 35 Reel 36 Cinderella
Down – 1 Axed 2 Jesus wept 3 Sixth 4 Metal 5 Naps
 7 Uncle 8 Turn turtle 9 Lapwing 13 Arno 14 Tackles
 16 Shopkeeper 20 Voicemail 21 Chasing 22 Nero
 29 Cited 30 Lager 31 Thai

CHILDREN'S No.172

- Across** – 1 Thumb 4 Pedal 6 Ace 7 Ark 8 Gallops
 10 Owl 12 Cupboard 15 Rib 16 Bikini 17 Lisa 18 Dragonfly
Down – 2 Hang 3 Balloon 4 Pepper 5 Arrow 9 Acrobat
 11 Lullaby 13 Picked 14 Dublin 15 Ring

Crossword

Gordius 290



ACROSS

- 1 & 8d A beginner hives things off to create a gospel song (8,2,3,7)
 6 Leave undone (4)
 10 The colour of some of those pianos (5)
 11 Raise the stakes (2,3,4)
 12 Offensive, distressing (7)
 15 Breadth (5)
 17 Get Jolson to sing in this voice (4)
 18 Require (4)
 19 One of the Normandy Beaches features in a diploma Harvard instituted (5)
 21 Had a conversation (7)
 23 Sorceress (5)
 24 When this evangelist gets warm, it's not so hot! (4)
 25 Precipitation (4)
 26 The region around Rome is named in a novella Zionists have written (5)
 28 What a character says regarding channels (7)
 33 Not constrained to solving the bun riddle (9)
 34 Veracity (5)
 35 Fraudulent stunt (4)
 36 Did Handel compose this for the barrel-organ? (5,5)

DOWN

- 1 Employer (4)
 2 Rash as a dim punter may be (9)
 3 The American soldier leads one from the colony? That's big of him! (5)
 4 Pacific Island country involved in Argentina-Uruguay negotiations (5)
 5 Some Ontario taxes (just a tiny bit) (4)
 7 Excavated (5)
 8 See 1 across
 9 The Sequoia tree (7)
 13 One hooked on angling! (4)
 14 Durable (7)
 16 Vehicle used for clearing roads of wintry precipitation (10)
 20 Tanks for 13 down (9)
 21 Such a disease has a long duration (7)
 22 Small island found by some Monterey otters (4)
 27 Striped quadruped (5)
 29 Some Cajun duels may be uncalled-for (5)
 30 Looks like the Native American carving can add 'em up (5)
 31 Insect which can leap great heights and distances (4)
 32 Fashionable (4)



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Sudoku Corner

173

Easy



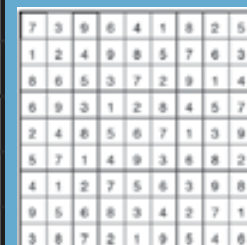
Hard



Last week's Easy 172



Last week's Hard 172





Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough OP

Making a virtue from necessity

AS PART OF THEIR 2017 celebrations, Dublin's St Patrick's Day Festival commissioned a poem, 'My Ireland', by Stephen James Smith, available now on YouTube. It's a kaleidoscope of incongruous impressions of contemporary Ireland and its various mythologies, with some very moving parts and powerfully complemented by the accompanying music and images.

For this listener, however, the piece is somewhat marred by the entirely predictable nature of its perspective on the Church.

Alongside the obligatory references to Archbishop McQuaid, and Sinéad O'Connor ripping up a picture of the Pope, the poet declaims: "My Ireland wonders if it's a sovereign people still under the shadow of a steeple."

Presence

The idea that Church activity and institutions are an unwelcome colonising presence – rather than, for example, an exercise of sovereignty and agency on the part of Christian believers – places this poem squarely in line with the attitude of much of the arts establishment.

In Irish poetry, visual art and theatre, positive or even merely nuanced engagement with Christianity is rare. Exceptions

exist, of course (John F. Deane's work, for example, or Dennis O'Driscoll's 'Missing God') but contemporary Irish art typically represents the Church as oppressive, devious and insincere.

One might imagine St Patrick's Day should be an opportunity for our creative artists to question this hackneyed narrative, yet what we find more often is its unreflective reinforcement – parades and festivals around the country are usually utterly inoffensive, but where there is engagement with Christianity, it is often treated as a source of mild amusement, while pre-Christian Ireland is venerated as somehow more liberated and

authentically human. Given this, what should Christian believers do? One approach is simply to resent our exclusion from official Ireland and the arts establishment, and adopt a sullen silence.

But there is another way: faith communities could make a virtue of how they are on the fringes, and cheerfully organise their own events and celebrations.

Approach

This was the approach of the theatrical troupes who inaugurated the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in the 1940s: they weren't invited to participate in the rather stuffy Edinburgh International

Festival, but they came along anyway, and happily performed in unusual venues.

From these humble beginnings the festival on the fringes grew, and now dwarfs the festival from which it was originally excluded.

So how about it? If the Gospel that enflamed St Patrick is not a welcome element at your local St Patrick's Day celebrations, why not decide next year – as families, parishes and other faith communities – to be a creative minority on the fringe?

Celebrations could centre on a dignified celebration of the Eucharist, of course, but there are all sorts of other possibilities: public readings of the Confession (available on confessio.ie), picnics, pilgrimages, fancy-dress parties, concerts, crafts workshops...

St Patrick wrote his Confession because he could not keep silent about the blessings of the Lord. Yet nearly 1600 years later, many Irish men and women eagerly desire the Church's silence.

Our response should be to follow Patrick, to refuse to be silent, and to sing, paint, dance and feast in honour of the Lord who blessed Patrick, and blesses us.

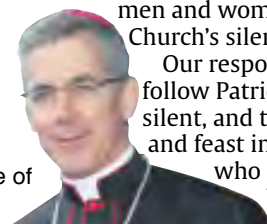
WHAT A BREATH of fresh air it was to hear that Katie Ascoug, an intelligent, confident young Catholic, was elected president of the UCD students' union last week. Anyone who knows the hostility to the Church on Irish university campuses will understand how significant this victory is.

We can all learn something from her campaign: without reneging on any of her principles, she refused to be framed as a culture-war candidate, and instead focussed on issues which concern ordinary students (including the availability of microwaves!). Then she and her team threw themselves into the hard work of knocking on doors and encouraging support. The result: she topped the poll at every polling station on campus.

A model campaign, whose success encourages us all to keep working for a just society and a culture of life.

ALONG WITH MANY others, I was disappointed to hear that our Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown [pictured], will shortly be leaving us for a new appointment in Albania. His cheerful, enthusiastic presence has encouraged many, and his legacy will be manifold, but there's one aspect of that legacy that struck me as particularly redolent of St Patrick: of the new bishops in whose appointment Archbishop Brown has been involved, three at least have invited new congregations of female religious into their dioceses (the Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia in Limerick, the 'Hogar de la Madre' sisters in Elphin and the Apostles of the Sacred Heart in Waterford).

St Patrick's writings tell us of Irish women enthusiastically taking on religious consecration, and ever since then female religious have been central to the life of our local Church. Thanks in part to Archbishop Brown and his new brothers in the episcopate, the future of this ancient heritage looks brighter now than five years ago.



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Famine is afflicting the people of Africa, and the Little Way Association needs to send urgent relief to priests and religious who are helping the poor and destitute. Fr Peter Ndegwa CSSp of Garissa Diocese, Kenya, writes: "There are tales of households suffering, desperation, hopelessness and imminent loss of life here. We are in a state of hunger leading to famine and a looming disaster of untold magnitude. The residents are boiling leaves of trees to use as vegetables. Livestock have died in big numbers." Kenya is just one of several countries affected. The United Nations speaks in terms of millions at risk of starvation. The disasters are partly man-made, partly natural. The Catholic bishops of South Sudan warn that the church is being targetted for attacks. There are problems also in Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen.

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