

# The Irish Catholic

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# Pro-repeal group return billionaire's cash after ethics watchdog probe

Greg Daly

A group campaigning for the abolition of Ireland's constitutional protections for the unborn returned a grant of \$24,999 to the US-based Open Societies Foundation after being directed to do so by the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO), *The Irish Catholic* has learned.

According to documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, the Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC) returned the grant, originally worth almost €23,000, maintaining it was doing so "without prejudice" to the findings of the commission, which it rejected.

Under Irish law, it is not permitted to use foreign donations for domestic political campaigns.

## Project

The group received the grant in January 2016 after submitting an application to fund a project directed towards, among other things, the "strategic goal of garnering support for repeal of the Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution".

Documents leaked last

August claimed that OSF, which is bankrolled by billionaire investor George Soros, intended to challenge Ireland's constitutional protections for the unborn by funding the Abortion Rights Campaign, Amnesty International Ireland, and the Irish Fam-

ily Planning Association to work collectively on a campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment.

Despite this, when SIPO asked ARC last August to submit copies of correspondence with the US-based foundation, including its funding application, it said funding

received from the US had not been used for political purposes and was exempt from SIPO oversight.

Claiming that SIPO's approach was "draconian" and impinged their right to freedom of association, the group only furnished the watchdog with the requested

documentation after SIPO's head of Ethics and Lobbying Regulation, Sherry Perreault, informed them that if this did not happen they would refer the matter to An Garda Síochána.

SIPO subsequently informed the group that their application showed that as

they had sought overseas funding for a campaign with a domestic political purpose, they were in breach of the law, and that An Garda Síochána would have to be informed if the donation were not returned. While

» Continued on Page 2



## Kilkenny Cap on the ball

Bro. Terence Harrington, Guardian of the Capuchin Friary in Kilkenny, showing some of the international friars the art of hurling, including Lucjen Zaniewski (left). The international friars are in Ireland as part of an initiative called 'Fraternities for Europe', which sees Capuchin provinces from around Europe pooling resources and personnel to support each other. Photo: Bro. Seán Kelly

MARY KENNY

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BREDA O'BRIEN

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# Facing the reality of the changing face of Irish Catholicism

## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly



**A**rchbishop Eamon Martin recently said that priests and bishops need to get used to "letting go" of the central role in parish communities if faith is to be re-energised.

In many ways, it's not an issue of choice: declining numbers of priests mean that clergy simply cannot be present in the way they were in the past. Parishes that once had three priests, are now reduced to one. When a current generation of Irish priests retire in coming years there will simply be no priests to replace them. Parishes without a resident priest will become the norm since there is no sign that the vocations crisis is abating – despite some sincere attempts to actually promote vocations to the priesthood.

One reaction in Ireland to the declining number of priests has been grouping or 'clustering' parishes in to 'pastoral areas' where maybe five priests have responsibility across seven parishes. In Dublin, it's now common to have 'co-parish priests' covering a number of parishes.

### Pilot project

In Germany, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the Archbishop of Munich, is very hostile to the idea of clustering. He recently announced plans to allow lay people to lead parishes where there is no priest.

He recently told Munich's diocesan pastoral council that it was important to preserve individual parishes as

a way of guaranteeing the Church's presence locally. He reiterated his belief that creating ever-greater parish entities by clustering parishes was not the way forward.

Cardinal Marx said his own pilot project was a reaction to the priest shortage, "but also to the fact that not all priests are in a position to lead parishes".

What the German prelate says matters, because he is an advisor and confidant of Pope Francis. What the cardinal is saying publicly, he is likely discussing with the Pope in private.

## “A new type of Church – more lay-led – will have to emerge”

Referring to the need to prioritise parishes, the cardinal said that “the local Church is most significant”.

“We would waste a great many opportunities if we were to withdraw from our territorial roots. It is a case of remaining visible locally,” he said.

One gets a sense of the scale of the challenge facing Munich in reflecting on the fact that only one candidate for the priesthood had come forward in the archdiocese this year. That's to serve a diocese with some 1,759,896

registered Catholics.

Cardinal Marx said his experiment in Munich would involve volunteers as well as paid administrators (the Church in Germany is extremely wealthy). Paid pastoral workers are not a common thing in the Church in Ireland.

Dublin diocese has pioneered a programme appointing pastoral workers to parishes. Dublin priests tell me it has been a mixed blessing: where it works well, it works very well. Where there are problems, the problems are often huge. Some pastoral workers see their job primarily as answering phones and attending to administration rather than evangelisation.

Some priests, often lacking the experience of managing people, express frustration that the programme doesn't work as well as it might in some parishes.

The future of the Church in Ireland will be very different, the absence of priests in communities will be more acutely felt in coming years. A new type of Church – more lay-led – will have to emerge. It would be heartening to think that we could understand this as baptised people responding to their call to be co-responsible for the Church, rather than filling gaps.

## Pro-repeal group return cash after watchdog's probe

» **Continued from Page 1**  
rejecting this verdict, the group returned the donation in November. Faced with similar requests from SIPO last Autumn, the Irish Family Planning Association said it was not a campaigning body and had used the €132,000 it had received for charitable and educational purposes;

the commission did not pursue the matter further.

Amnesty International Ireland, meanwhile, said the €137,000 it received was used to campaign for Ireland to “bring its law on abortion into compliance with international human rights law and standards”. Amnesty Ireland's executive director Colm

O'Gorman said Amnesty does not generally consider itself to come under SIPO's jurisdiction as work for the “protection and promotion of human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments” does not constitute work for “political purposes”.

This claim was, however, rejected by the Pro Life Campaign, with spokesperson Cora Sherlock accusing Amnesty of “hiding behind ‘human rights’ language instead of openly accepting that they are running a highly political campaign to dismantle the Eighth Amendment”.

See Page 10.

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# 'Factchecker' forced to change verdict on Catholic schools

## Mags Gargan

TheJournal.ie has been forced to change the verdict of its FactCheck on the enrolment policies of Catholic schools following a challenge from the Iona Institute.

Iona's Maria Steen appeared on RTÉ's *Claire Byrne Live* a few weeks ago to debate the admissions policy of denominational schools. Ms Steen said that with regard to certain measures, Catholic schools were more diverse than multi-denominational schools, citing ESRI research about the proportion of pupils from lone-parent families, less affluent households and from the Traveller community.

This was challenged on the programme by Paul Rowe of Educate Together as "palpably not true" and "absurd".

## Initial verdict

The Journal's 'FactCheck' then investigated Ms Steen's claim and its initial verdict was that what she said was 'mostly false'. This was strongly challenged by the Iona Institute which presented The Journal

with the research to back up her claim and FactCheck has now changed its verdict to 'mostly true'.

The report 'School Sector Variation Among Primary Schools in Ireland' was published in 2012, based on data gathered in 2007 and 2008, it was written by the ESRI and funded by Educate Together.

The research compared the religious, socio-economic, Traveling community, and other backgrounds of pupils at three primary school types: Catholic; multi-denominational (mostly Educate Together); and minority faith schools (Church of Ireland, Jewish and Muslim).

It showed that Catholic school pupils had a greater tendency to be from less affluent and lower socio-economic backgrounds, and there was greater socio-economic diversity among pupils at Catholic primary schools.

It also showed that a higher percentage of Catholic school students came from a lone-parent family than students from other types of schools (18% as opposed to 15% and 9%).



Maria Steen.

## Pop star Demi thanks God for changing her life

Demi Lovato.

Singer Demi Lovato has thanked God for breaking the curse of addiction in her life. The star took to Instagram to mark five years of sobriety saying she was "so grateful" and she "couldn't have done it without my higher power (God)".

"It's been quite the journey. So many ups and downs," the 24-year-old wrote. "So many times I wanted to relapse but sat on my hands and begged God to relieve the obsession. I'm so proud of myself but I couldn't have done it without my higher power

(God), my family, friends, and everyone else who supported me."

Originally a Disney star, the singer began her struggles with alcohol, drugs and eating disorders as a teenager. "I couldn't go without 30 minutes to an hour without cocaine and I would bring it on airplanes. I would smuggle it basically and just wait until everyone in first class would go to sleep and I would do it right there," she says of the height of her addiction at age 19.

The 'Skyscraper' and 'Confident'

singer has always credited her relationship with God as supporting her on the road to sobriety.

"I'm not super religious, but I grew up Christian and I believe in God. When I'm in LA, I don't talk about it that much because people are very judgmental, but I just feel like God gave me a voice, not just to sing with," she said.

"He put me through those things, which seemed horrible at the time, but they were so worth it. With the obstacles I've overcome, I can help people."



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# Parishes encouraged to keep the light on for parishioners

Mags Gargan

Bishop Denis Nulty has urged more parishes to answer the call of Pope Francis to have a church open for '24 Hours for the Lord', saying "as Church we need to be present more often".

A number of dioceses across the island of Ireland last weekend took part in the worldwide promotion of the Sacrament of Reconciliation created by the Pope in 2014, where a designated church is open for 24 hours offering the opportunity for prayer, adoration and Confession.

In Kildare & Leighlin, three host churches, Tullow, Portlaoise and Carbury, covering the three ends of the diocese, took part. "The experience was tremendous," said Bishop Denis, who himself offered Confession in Tullow from

11pm to midnight. "It is wonderful for priests and people to be together looking for the mercy of God.

"Being available in 2017 is a huge statement of presence and I think as Church we need to be present more often. The fact that a priest is present – to be available and to have a light on, I think we need to do more of that," he said.

## Message

Fr Andrew Leahy in Tullow said the "symbol of having the doors of the church open was a message that everyone was welcome". "It was the first year we did it in the parish and people liked to have the opportunity to have others with them in their prayer supporting them."

Fr La Flynn of St Patrick's Church in Ballybay told The Irish Catholic people now

see the initiative as "part of the journey of Lent". "The priests across four parishes in the pastoral area between us offered 12 hours availability for Confession and all of us were constantly occupied except for maybe gaps of 10-15 minutes," he said.

Fr Peter McAnenly said 24 Hours for the Lord is now well established in Armagh parish, where it "has become built into the Lenten calendar". "It is growing year on year and any opportunity to bring people to prayer these days is welcome to me," he said.

## Sleep out for Simon



Some of the staff and 28 students from Glenstal Abbey School who took part in a 24-hour sleep out and fast on the streets of Limerick, raising over €2,600 for the Simon Community.

## 'Everyone's a winner' in Wexford parish election

Greg Daly

A charity election campaign that has energised a Wexford parish since January has raised over €72,000 and boosted community spirit, according to a local priest.

Describing the 'Mayor of Barntown' election as "an election in which everybody has won", Fr John Carroll told *The Irish Catholic* a huge debt of gratitude is due to many people locally for the charity election that saw Tom Dempsey elected honorary mayor of the parish, which lies just

outside Wexford town.

"The money is welcome but the community building has been phenomenal," he said, continuing, "It's brought the next generation into parish life in a newer and a deeper way."

## Candidates

Thanking Mr Dempsey and the team who helped elect him as "our first citizen and local leader", Fr Carroll praised the other candidates who, he said, "gave us heart and humour as you put the good of the area before us and strove to bring us closer together

as a curacy and as neighbours".

With money raised by the election's many events going towards paying down parish debt while developing the area, Fr Carroll stressed that each Euro donated counted and had been gratefully received.

"We've a great basis on which to continue to build, grateful for what has been given to us by the good and decent people of the past, and purposeful that we will give to those who follow us something worthwhile and inspiring," he said.

## Renua Ireland becomes pro-life political party

Staff reporter

Renua Ireland has announced it is now officially a pro-life political party, with members expected to take a pledge to support a pro-life position.

Renua chairman, Michael O'Dowd told *The Irish Catholic* that a pro-life stance has now become one of the party's "core principals".

"When the party was founded many people believed this was a central issue but it became confused in the initial days of the creation of the party," he said. "Now we have clarified it and the national board have taken the decision that any member that is elected to any body would be asked to take a pledge to support the pro-life position."

Mr O'Dowd also said the party, which has 300 members, was "not in favour of having a referendum" on the repeal of the Eighth Amendment and would campaign to retain the constitutional protection for "the human rights of unborn as well as the life of the mother".

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# What are we to make of all this ‘gender-bending’?

There was a young woman of my acquaintance who, a couple of years ago, disappeared from view, and then returned as a male, having had a sex change operation. She was always a boyish kind of girl, academically clever and admirably concerned with refugee causes.

It’s a Christian duty not to judge, and even if older people were bewildered by this choice, I heard no one making critical remarks about the situation, though some fell silent from a certain embarrassment.

This young person, identifying as male, has now announced that he hopes to have a baby. The mechanics have not been explained, since, so far as I know, the woman-to-man gender change does not include the production of sperm. But it seems perhaps that enough of the female biological equipment may remain in place to gestate life.

Again, no one wishes to be unkind, but I hear certain sarky remarks about this being “a new definition of having it all – the penis, and then the womb too”.

## Defensive

The transgender lobby is very defensive – and can be aggressive on social media – so most people feel it wise to keep schtum on this subject. Certainly, any critical comments made on social media such as Twitter will be met by a volley of abuse.

But the rise in demands for sex changes can be baffling: British schools are now seeing a considerable increase in pupils saying they are transgender, and counsellors are being hired to facilitate this.

## Scottish independence not in Ireland’s interest

There is said to be widespread sympathy in Ireland for the cause of Scottish independence. Understandable. Yet it’s worth heeding some economists’ views that an independent Scotland would be a rival to Ireland for investment, jobs and trade.

Here’s a nearby Celtic nation which could offer everything that Ireland can offer, plus a stronger tradition of industrial and engineering skills, including oil development



Mary Kenny

In America, there’s a growing movement to expand all definitions of gender, whereby people are neither masculine nor feminine, gay or straight, but ‘intersex’, ‘gender-fluid’, ‘genderless’, ‘demi-girl’, ‘non-binary’, ‘gender variant’ or ‘pangender’.

**I hear certain sarky remarks about this being “a new definition of having it all”**

Twenty per cent of youngsters born around the

millennium now describe their gender as ‘ambiguous’.

There’s also ‘cisgender’ – people who identify with the sexual identity into which they were born – until recently taken as the norm.

Is this movement a sign of something new happening to the human species? Or perhaps the infinite expansion of the concept of ‘choice’? Or just adolescent crazy-mixed-upness carried on into adulthood?

We have to be aware of it, treading that fine line between not judging and common sense.



## Ethics of aerial bombardment

There have been some almost unbearable reports from Mosul by that brave and unflinching Irishwoman, Orla Guerin, BBC correspondent. The agonising cries of children badly wounded from aerial bombing were heart-piercing and surely question the ethics of a military strategy of dropping a huge bomb on a city area to target one sniper – as is occurring.

ISIS must be defeated, but there must be better ways of doing this than shattering the lives of so many innocent families. A sniper should be neutralised by a better sniper, not a 500-pound bomb from the air.

The Catholic Church has always questioned the ethics of aerial bombardment, following Aquinas’ guidelines. Surely, as in Mosul, it’s morally wrong.



experience. Scottish independence is hardly in Ireland’s interest – north or south. I admired Nicola Sturgeon [pictured] until she addressed the Oireachtas last year, when she offered Scotland’s assistance to liberalise Ireland’s abortion law. Some may call that solidarity, but I’d suggest it’s meddling in the jurisdiction of another country where the citizens decide what the law shall be.

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## Bell heralds World Meeting of Families in Waterford



Bishop Phonsie Cullinan and Abigale Betts from Cappoquin at the Cathedral of The Most Holy Trinity, Waterford for the diocesan launch Mass for preparations for the World Meeting of Families 2018, with an icon of the Holy Family and a bell which will visit the parishes of the diocese to promote the event. Photo: John Power

# Vatican commission support 'validates' resignation – Collins

Greg Daly

Expressions of support for Marie Collins from members of the Vatican's child protection commission are a "validation" for her position, the former commission member has said.

Mrs Collins stepped down last month from the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors after almost three months on the body of which she had been a founder member, saying she had grown frustrated with "resistance" from members of the Vatican bureaucracy, with the last straw being a refusal by members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to respond to survivors' letters.

Last weekend the commission expressed support for Mrs Collins, with French child psychiatrist Catherine Bonnet saying, "what Marie has said

is the truth. It is more than the voice of a survivor. She has a general view of what is needed."

Mrs Collins told *The Irish Catholic*: "It's simply that there's been a lot of misinformation put out there from various sources in the Vatican that I don't really understand how the Vatican works," adding: "It's validation for me that the members have come out and said that I was right".

### Objective

"I knew that I was telling the truth," she said, continuing, "for someone else on the commission coming out and saying I was telling the truth is important.

"It takes away all that idea that because I was a survivor I was emotional and couldn't be objective," she added, admitting that even if difficulties with curial resistance may have taken an emotional

toll, she said, "it just didn't get in the way or stop me from doing things objectively".

Commenting on the commission's press release, she said the commission's ongoing effort to push Vatican departments to answer letters further validated what she had said, describing the Vatican's failure to find a way to address survivors' letters as "ludicrous".

Mrs Collins also noted how the commission head, Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley, had said he hoped new mechanisms to hold negligent bishops to account would be successful.

"It shouldn't be down to hope nowadays," she said, continuing, "it should be down in black and white. Either it's going to work and Church leaders are going to be held accountable, or it's not – it can't all be up in the air."

## Good Friday alcohol ban to stay

Mags Gargan

The Minister for Justice has rejected appeals from publicans to lift the ban on the sale of alcohol on Good Friday, saying it would send "mixed messages" in advance of new legislation to address problem drinking.

At a meeting with industry lobbyists last November, Minister Frances Fitzgerald said the "Government needs to avoid...diluting its key message", according to the minutes of the meeting published by *The Sunday Times*.

"Extending the possibilities for consuming intoxicating liquor by removing the Good Friday prohibition risked being interpreted, and portrayed, as a lowering of [the government's] commitment to tackling a serious nation problem."

TDs and senators are currently considering a Public Health (Alcohol) Bill which will introduce minimum pricing and strict rules on alcohol advertising, labelling and off-licence sales.

Donall O'Keeffe, chief executive of the Licenced

Vintners Association (LVA) said he did not accept that the new legislation was a justification for not overturning the Good Friday ban.

"We think the two issues are entirely unrelated. It's just ridiculous in 2017 that pubs and hotels and restaurants are shut on Good Friday. All we're looking for is the option to trade. If people don't want to drink for religious reasons that's their choice," he said.

**i** What do you think? Have your say and email letters@irishcatholic.ie

## Time to face declining clergy reality – Bishop Duffy

Parishes in the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois need to prepare for a future without parish priests, Bishop Francis Duffy has warned. In a letter entitled 'Sustaining our Faith Community', Dr Duffy said while the diocese currently has 53 clergy serving its 41 parishes, by the time children baptised this year are confirmed the diocese is likely to have just 25 active clergy, given the diocese's current lack of seminarians.

"From both a pastoral and a duty of care perspective, it is important that responsibilities our clergy now carry are shared with parishioners even more so than at present," he said, stressing that with a need to focus on the Sunday Eucharist as the heart of the Church's life, consideration should be given to enabling parish faith development and pastoral care to flourish with fewer priests and greater involvement of parishioners.

"This is not about closing churches but about reimagining how we worship and pass on our Christian faith," he said.

## Wexford Council calls for restored saints' titles

A motion calling for the title 'Saint' to be reinstated in all ward names at Wexford General Hospital has been passed by Wexford County Council. Fianna Fáil Cllr John Fleming urged the HSE to reinstate the 'proper title' of the individuals after whom the wards had been named. The wards were renamed after the hospital drew down funding for new signs, claiming to be moving forward while respecting tradition by retaining the saints' names without their titles.

# KNOCK

## Celebrating Easter 2017

### Easter Cards

order  
online

**Holy Thursday**  
Morning prayer: 10am;  
Mass of the Lord's Supper 8pm  
(Adoration until midnight)

**Good Friday**  
Morning prayer: 10am,  
Stations of the Cross  
3pm, Good Friday Liturgy: 8pm

**Holy Saturday**  
Morning prayer: 10am,  
Easter Vigil Mass: 9pm

**Easter Sunday**  
Masses at 9am, 10.30am,  
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*He made the storm  
be still, and the  
waves of the sea  
were hushed.'  
Psalm 107:29*

Janette Borac from our partner, Food for the Hungry, consoles Jane Yanga, 23, who lost her two daughters when a storm surge engulfed the building where they'd taken refuge.

Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

# HOPE TO OVERCOME STORMS

Jane Yanga will never forget the day Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines. It was the last day she would ever have with her two daughters.

A storm surge blasted the building where they had sought refuge and a wave of mud engulfed them, filling the room to the ceiling. Jane's daughters, aged two and five, were swept away.

Jane has since tried to take her own life – saved only by her partner. 'I'm so confused. I don't know what I need or what to hope for,' she says.

When disaster like Typhoon Haiyan strike, Tearfund Ireland works with partners on the ground, providing sisterly or brotherly love to people like Jane, helping them salvage hope when it seems impossible.

The relief effort is ongoing and, like all other places around the world where we work, we will stay until hope is restored and transformation takes hold.



Marcus Perkins/tearfund

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**C**ongratulations to Katie Ascough on becoming president of UCD's student union. It is a great victory, not least because she made no secret of her pro-life views or that she is a person of faith.

It gives great hope to other students and young people in general, that Ireland does not always have to be a cold house for students who are Catholic, or pro-life, or both. (The two are not synonymous, despite media propaganda to the contrary.)

It is really important that there are young role models, especially since it requires courage to be one. It requires courage, despite the fact that most students are more animated by issues like not having enough mental health facilities, or even not having enough microwaves, than they are by the abortion issue.

That is not to say that young people are not pro-choice – many of them are. But they are pro-choice because everyone around them is pro-choice, not because they are militant single-issue campaigners.

And yet, since the 1980s onward, students' unions

# It takes courage to stand up, but we need courageous witness now more than ever

## Breda O'Brien

### The View



have been much more aggressively pro-choice than the students whom they claim to represent.

It will be interesting to see how Katie manages to navigate being president of a students' union when she fundamentally disagrees with one of its policies, that is, to repeal the Eighth Amendment.

### Tolerance

It will be a test of the tolerance of the students' union movement and will soon reveal whether it simply pays lip service to diversity and tolerance, or whether it is really in favour of free speech.

It is not just in universities that Catholics feel their society is a cold house. Across the professions, but particularly in medicine, the law and politics, it is astonishing how few are comfortable

with admitting that they are practising Catholics, much less with taking stances on moral issues in public.

**“Why are there so few people willing to take public stands on issues of life and death like abortion?”**

There are the few honourable exceptions, like Mattie McGrath TD, the late Peter Mathews and others who took a principled stand on abortion, like Lucinda Creighton, Terence Flanagan and Fidelma Healy Eames. The latter group were treated abominably by Fine Gael, including Peter Mathews.

Peter's only fault was that he never used one word where 12 were available. He was described by all as a gentleman, which he truly

was. Sadly, his gentlemanly ways were probably not an asset in politics.

He was also acknowledged as having a profound knowledge of banking, and yet once his views on abortion became known, he was treated like a pariah by many in his party and by the media in general.

The first time I met him was at the count where he was elected. He immediately came to commiserate with Eamon Ryan, whose seat he had taken. It was a generous act, one typical of the man.

He had a keen sense of social justice and was particularly outraged by ordinary people who were losing their homes due to the iniquity of what had happened in the banks.

He had a tremendous capacity for friendship and managed to cooperate with people who would occupy a very different part on the political spectrum.

In short, he had many qualities which should have ensured him a long career in politics but because he also had principles that he was

not willing to compromise, and because ill-health intervened, that was not to be.

Why are there so few people willing to take public stands on issues of life and death like abortion?

In a country where the majority of people attended allegedly Catholic schools, why are so few willing to put their heads above the parapet?

**“Many are encouraged by Katie Ascough's courage and enthusiasm”**

It becomes a vicious cycle. Because so few are willing to put themselves forward, those who do receive a disproportionate amount of abuse, which in turn discourages others.

Those who work to encourage and support others also play an important role. Archbishop Charles Brown, who will soon no longer be Papal Nuncio in Ireland but will

instead take up a new post in Albania, played a key role behind the scenes in encouraging a renewal of the Faith in Ireland.

He was willing to go beyond the confines of his role, and travelled the length and breadth of Ireland, encouraging, consoling, challenging.

It meant a great deal to me personally to know that someone I admired for his integrity, courage and decency was praying for me regularly, as I haltingly and stumblingly tried to bear witness to the importance of respect for life at all stages, whether that life be challenged by poverty, injustice, oppression, racism or simply not being recognised as a human being at all.

At this moment, many are encouraged by Katie Ascough's courage and enthusiasm. It would be great if others could manage to find the courage to support and perhaps even join her.

**KNOCK**

**‘Celebrating Family’**

PREPARING FOR THE WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES 2018

## Saturday 8th April 2017

One-day Conference at followed by Mass celebrated by Archbishop Michael Neary DD and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin DD.

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN (5+ years) will be provided by Knock Youth Ministry from 11am – 12.45 and 2pm – 2.45pm

Contact Knock Shrine for further information, t: 094 9388100 w: [knockshrine.ie/faithrenewal](http://knockshrine.ie/faithrenewal)

**Conference, 8th April 2017**

**Venue:** St. John's Rest & Care Centre

**11.00am** Fr Timothy Bartlett, Secretary General for World Meeting of Families 2018

**12noon** Breda O'Brien discussion with families. Breda is a teacher and columnist with the Irish Times

**12.45 - 2pm** Break for Lunch

**2 - 2.45pm** Forum Q & A with Speakers

**3.00pm** MASS in Basilica celebrated by Most Rev. Archbishop Michael Neary, and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin







The voice of faith or religion is not simply for the privacy of our homes and churches, writes **Archbishop Eamon Martin**

**W**e do not enter the public square simply to win arguments through the clever use of reasoning and debate. When we speak, we draw upon both reason and faith and upon an integral vision of the dignity and vocation of the human person linked to the common good. We seek to present in public discourse 'a coherent ethic of life', based on natural law, which includes, for example, our teaching about the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the person, about the centrality of the family, about solidarity and the need for a fair distribution of goods in the world.

Our vision is of a society marked by a culture of justice and care for all, especially the most vulnerable.

The difficulty for us, of course, is the tendency in public debate to relegate to the private sphere discussion about the nature of the identity of the human person and his or her dignity. Society nowadays is inclined instead to prioritise a limited conception of freedom, often understood in a reductionist and limited fashion which doesn't always lead to human flourishing.

### Public discourse

The voice of faith or religion is not simply for the privacy of our homes and churches. The Gospel is meant for mission. It is not to be cloistered away from the cut and thrust of public discourse. Archbishop Rowan Williams cautioned against 'programmatic secularism', a kind of 'exclusive public orthodoxy', in which "any and every public manifestation of any particular religious allegiance is to be ironed out so that everyone may share a clear public loyalty to the state, unclouded by private convictions, and any sign of such private convictions are rigorously banned from public space".

The suggestion here is that faith is a kind of private preference which cannot



stand alongside a "supposedly neutral public order of rational persons".

Since St Paul first stepped into the agora at Athens, many have argued that the transcendent moral norms presented by believing Christians have no place in the public discourse. There is little tolerance nowadays for the idea of absolute moral truths or for stable moral reference points – something which is intrinsic to the content of Christian interventions in the public square.

Rowan Williams prefers to see the Church as part of the 'community of communities' that is the state. It is therefore up to us to be courageous enough to argue our case, to ask awkward questions when necessary, e.g. about the impact of economic policies on the most vulnerable, or to point out contradictions of populism, all the while being careful not to become too sensitive to criticism or always claiming to be offended. We need a broad back in the public square, and, particularly so, on social media where people of faith often have to endure insult or ridicule, or even personal attack simply for being present in the public square at all.

Of course, the Catholic Church in Ireland has seen great damage to its credibility on account of the child abuse scandals and other shameful episodes of our past. Many people feel they can no longer trust our message because they have been hurt and betrayed by their experience of Church. The sins and crimes of sexual abuse in the Church have not only had tragic consequences in the lives of victims and their families, but have also, as Pope Benedict XVI put it, "obscured the light of the Gospel".

When we speak in the public square about the right to life of the unborn, some are quick to point to the child abuse scandals and to shameful stories about Mother and Baby Homes and other institutions. In my view, however, the failures of the past must help us learn

lessons for the present about where Church and society might be similarly marginalising the poor, stigmatising the unwanted or failing to protect the most vulnerable.

We in the Church can tend to react defensively to criticisms – sometimes by denial, claiming unfairness, even conspiracy – rather than being thankful that the lid has been lifted on a terrible and shameful chapter of our history and at last giving a voice to those who for years had been carrying a lonely trauma.

**“The pressure on us to conform is often immense”**

If it seemed at times that the Church was being unfairly targeted or singled out, then so be it. In hindsight this was a price that had to be paid in order to put the safety of children first.

In the early Church people in the public square noticed something different about the 'Christians'.

Two thousand years later, our challenge, as baptised, confirmed, and in some cases, ordained Christians, is to be just as 'remarkable', to be a 'people set apart', known and recognised as people who are not afraid to witness to Christ. Of course, to be like Christ in an increasingly secularised world often means being different, counter-cultural and not easily swayed by the prevailing attitudes and opinions around us. This is not easy. The pressure on us to conform, to become just like everyone else, is often immense and overpowering.

When Pope John Paul II visited Ireland in 1979 he said: "The great forces which shape the world – politics, the mass media, science, technology, culture, education, industry and work – are precisely the areas where lay people are especially competent to exercise their mission. If these forces are guided by people who are true disciples of Christ, and who are, at the same time, fully competent in the rel-

evant secular knowledge and skill, then indeed will the world be transformed from within by Christ's redeeming power".

The problem with this is that it presumes there exists a group of Catholics or Christians out there who have reflected sufficiently on their faith in action and take it seriously enough to feel confident in contributing to debate on public matters.

The reality is that the vast majority of people of faith may not yet be 'intentional disciples'. They are still seeking, still on the way, perhaps not yet able to courageously speak from the conviction of

a deep personal encounter and relationship with the risen Lord. A lot of Catholics, as members of society, find themselves easily drawn to support the liberal democratic culture and politics of the State. The politicians Catholics vote for, the media stories we like to read are not unlike those that the majority of people in the public square seem to want or support. Catholics, precisely as Catholics, need to allow their faith to influence their participation in society and the State.

### Despair

That is why we need opportunities to meet like-minded Catholics and Christians who have begun to question the superficiality of much of what surrounds us. Our faith has a lot to say about the nihilism and despair of a throwaway culture that has driven young people to self-destruction.

Our Church's teachings would seriously question such a limited view of individual rights that would dispute the equality of life of a mother and her unborn baby. Our arguments in these debates must aim to balance charity and truth. They must be at once gentle and patient, but firm and persuasive.

We must beware the temptation to overuse the language of chastisement and condemnation. Most people nowadays are indifferent to condemnations. The accompaniment of people in the public square is what Pope St John Paul II described as being "at the service of love". To those in the public square we say with him: "Do not be afraid, the Gospel is not against you, but for you".

It would hugely impoverish our faith if we were to compartmentalise it or exclude it completely from our conversations and actions in the public square. But I believe that it would also impoverish society if the fundamental convictions of faith were not permitted to influence public debate; it would diminish the understanding of the human person and dilute the concept of the common good. That is why I am convinced of the importance for all of us of speaking out in the public square, and of doing so with compassion and with conviction.

**ⓘ** This is an abridged version of a talk given by Archbishop Eamon Martin at the inaugural conference of The Iona Institute in Northern Ireland last weekend. You can read the full version on [www.irishcatholic.ie](http://www.irishcatholic.ie)

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- Author: Colm Toibin

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- Sunday Times columnist, Brenda Power

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## Greg Daly wonders why the ethics watchdog has sanctioned just one pro-abortion group

That an organisation calling itself the Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC) should ever have denied that it was engaged in political activities seems, on the face of it, absurd, and it is hardly surprising that it was ultimately forced to face this reality. What's more interesting, in some ways, is that Amnesty International Ireland escaped the same fate.

In August 2016, *The Irish Independent* ran a story that the Open Society Foundation



George Soros.

(OSF), a grantmaking network established and funded by the Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros, was providing financial backing to organisations campaigning to widen abortion access worldwide. Among these, according to a leaked document, were three Irish-based groups.

A strategy document for the OSF's Women's Rights Programme stated that among the foundation's strategic aims for the period 2016-2019 was work to "advance sexual

and reproductive rights", adding, as though Ireland's constitutional protections for the unborn had been a recent addition to our law, "Specifically, we will challenge the wave of legislation valuing a foetus 'equally' or more highly than a pregnant woman, like in Ireland's constitutional amendment."

To do this, the document stated: "We will fund the Abortion Rights Campaign, Amnesty International Ireland, and the Irish Family

Planning Association to work collectively on a campaign to repeal Ireland's constitutional amendment granting equal rights to an implanted embryo as the pregnant woman (referred to as 'foetal personhood').

"With one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world," the document continued, "a win there could impact other strongly Catholic countries in Europe, such as Poland, and provide much-needed proof that change is possible, even in highly conservative places. The recent legalisation of same-sex marriage offers valuable and timely opportunities to advance the campaign."

### Difficult position

Assuming the leaked document was genuine and reflected reality, it would seem, therefore, that three Irish-based bodies had at the very least put themselves into a difficult position in terms of Irish electoral law, working as they had allegedly done with a foreign body and with foreign money to change Ireland's constitution.

Under the terms of the Electoral Act 1997, a 'third party' is defined as someone who accepts for political purposes a donation exceeding €100 in value, with all such third parties being obliged to register with the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO).

The act bars third parties from receiving such donations from individuals – other than Irish citizens – who reside outside the island of Ireland or an institution which does not maintain on the island of Ireland an office from which it carries on one or more of its main activities.

The act understands 'political purposes' in four different ways, one of which is the direct or indirect promotion or opposition of "the interests of a third party in connection with the conduct or management of any campaign conducted with a view to promoting or procuring a

particular outcome in relation to a policy or policies or functions of the Government or any public authority."

Of the three organisations named in the *Independent* article, ARC had always looked the least forthcoming: Amnesty International said the funding it had received from the billionaire amounted to €137,000 over two years with this being publicly reported to members and on their website, and having been used for the programme of work outlined in the funding application; the Irish Family Planning Association said it received a support grant of €132,000 to support its "long-standing advocacy to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights in Ireland"; but ARC did not disclose how much it had received, saying this would be included in its financial statements, according to documents released under the Freedom of Information Act.

Faced with SIPO requests from August 2016 to reveal its funding application and other correspondence with OSF, ARC consistently showed a reluctant face, initially stating that funding for political purposes had already been revealed, and that "with respect to the non-political activities of the Abortion Rights Campaign such as education and awareness raising, donations and funds received are held in a separate bank account".

After the request was repeated, ARC cited the European Convention on Human Rights' protections of freedom of association, saying "the autonomy of NGOs is a key component of the right to associate and one which is undermined by your broad and invasive request", and maintaining that a grant of \$24,999 received in January 2016 was not for political purposes, and supplying SIPO with their grant application and other correspondence would violate the ECHR and could raise confidentiality issues.

### At no point did we anticipate that activities of the nature funded by OSF would ever be considered 'political'

They concluded by saying they would be happy to cooperate with "less draconian requests".

Yet again, SIPO wrote to them, saying that if the requested documentation hadn't been submitted by November 11, they would refer the matter to An Garda Síochána.

On November 11, ARC replied, supplying the requested documentation at last, but saying that they

believed the way the law was being applied would interfere with and violate the rights of most charities and NGOs operating in Ireland, noting that when they signed up with SIPO in 2013, "at no point did we anticipate or consider that activities of the nature funded by OSF would ever be considered 'political' or within the confines of restricted activity carried out by a 'third party'".

In its response of November 25, SIPO reiterated the law and noted that ARC's application letter could hardly have been more specific.

In responding to the question, "What are you applying for?", ARC had stated: "Purpose of project – to engage, energise, mobilise and provide self-education opportunities on issues of sexual health, reproductive rights and abortion in Ireland with a strategic goal of garnering support for repeal of the Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution, reducing abortion stigma, and increasing grass roots engagement."

The repeal campaign – even in this extended, indirect sense – clearly falls within the definition of political purpose, and since OSF has no Irish office the law had been broken and the money should be returned.

ARC subsequently informed SIPO that without prejudice to the watchdog's analysis, which it rejected, it had returned the donation to OSF.

What is not clear, however, is why the other two investigated bodies did not ultimately face the same treatment.

Granted, the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) explicitly told SIPO it was not engaged in campaigning relating to the Eighth Amendment, but given how it told the *Independent* that its work entailed "advocacy" to advance what it calls 'reproductive rights', further investigation might have been warranted. The terms of conditions of the grant it received are one thing, but what did the IFPA's funding application say?

Similarly with Amnesty International Ireland, which cited similar ECHR defences as ARC. It supplied SIPO with the grant agreement letter from OSF and a summary of project activities under the grant, including polling and research into law reform, but does not appear to have furnished SIPO with the requested application grant. Given how the application letter had been the 'smoking gun' that caused SIPO to believe ARC was in breach of the law, one wonders why SIPO did not reiterate its request to see the application letter from Amnesty International Ireland to the American billionaire.

## Knock Programme for Sunday 30th APRIL 2017

Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration

### YOU ARE INVITED

The Pilgrimage Theme is based on our Apostolate's Motto:  
'To Jesus through Mary'

- 11.00 Welcome, programme handout, cuppa, in St John's Centre near the Basilica.
- 11.30 Confessions(finish at 2.30) Personal Adoration, Personal Prayer.
- 12.15 Lunch/Sharing time Tea/Coffee available in St John's Centre (bring packed lunch); lunches also available in Café Le Cheile, Knock House Hotel, local restaurants.
- 1.10 Message on Adoration for Children ..... Antoinette Moynihan, in the Basilica.
- 1.20 Message from the Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration ..... John Howard in the Basilica.
- 1.30 Talk: Fr. Bede McGregor OP 'To Jesus through Mary' ..... in the Basilica.
- 2.10 Rehearsals at the altar in the Basilica for all involved in the Mass; Readers, Offertory etc.
- 2.30 Anointing of the sick.
- 3.00 Holy Mass, chief celebrant and homilist is Bishop Denis Nulty, K&L diocese. Choir: In Caelo Choir from Newbridge Co Kildare.
- 4.00 Eucharistic Procession from the Basilica, finishing in the Apparition Chapel for Benediction with a final word from Brendan Cleary, a member of our National Apostolate. Bring your flags and Parish/Apostolate banners to make the procession as colourful and meaningful as possible.

- Adoration in the Adoration Chapel & Confessions in the Reconciliation Centre.
- Many priests are needed to hear confessions and for anointing of the sick.
- Priests are also invited to concelebrate the 3 pm Mass.
- Collect a range of materials for adoration from our stand in St John's.
- Launch of a new Eucharistic Rosary CD.
- People are invited from every parish and other organisations very welcome.
- Spread the word and organise buses and cars ASAP.
- Requests for promotion of Adoration in your parish contact our Apostolate.

A parallel programme will be organised through Children of the Eucharist... Antoinette and her team will guide you on the day .. Register at the Hub. Due to growing numbers, could you contact Antoinette at: moynihan.antoINETTE@gmail.com for further info and give an idea of numbers. Children need to be accompanied by parent or guardian and have written permission from parent/guardian to participate and to have photos/videos taken if involved in adoration activities/mass/procession.(that may be used later by the Apostolate).

Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration P:01 6625899 087 2478519  
E:info@eucharisticadoration.ie W: www.eucharisticadoration.ie



# In the eye of the hurricane



Originally from Manila, 37-year-old Dandin Espina had always thought he'd be a minister in his Church, the Pentecostal Church of God, but God, he says, had other plans.

"I was in seminary," he says. "I had thought I'd be a pastor, but realised God called me to do social action, rather than to do theology, hermeneutics, homiletics. There was a real urge to be part of the community, in the Church doing social action."

He turned to study social work instead, specialising in child welfare, and had only been about two months working with a Tearfund partner organisation, the Philippines Children's Ministry Network (PCMN), trying to mobilise action against child sexual abuse, with a focus on helping children empower themselves, when Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November 2013.

Like others, Dandin hadn't paid much attention to warnings of the coming typhoon. He was busy on his project, and ongoing typhoon warnings were a staple of the rainy season anyway.

Although the predicted typhoon was labelled a 'storm surge', the weather had been glorious all day with people enjoying themselves on beaches – evacuation warnings were ignored and few took any precautions other than tying down their boats. "People," he says, "thought it was a fake alarm."

## Contrast

They could hardly have been more wrong. By 2am, winds had reached a speed of 315kph – for contrast, when Storm Desmond hit Ireland and Britain in December 2015, the strongest gust of wind, experienced in Scotland – was 180kph.

The winds tore off roofs, flattened houses, and

## Greg Daly meets a Tearfund 'early responder' on the frontline of crises in the Philippines



destroyed the coconut plantations throughout the poor rural province of Eastern Samar, destroying the region's infrastructure. Roughly 250,000 people were affected, with over 6,000 killed, while some air connections were shut down for two months and the road and rail infrastructure were demolished.



Dandin Espina.

Before the typhoon, people in the area – already one of the poorest in the Philippines – lived off coconuts as well as rice and vegetables, but it's thought it will not be until 2021 that the area's coconut plantations will have recovered to a point where they can be harvested again.

For the first two months after the typhoon, with the area accessible only through governmental air buses and helicopters, people lived off emergency kits and relief goods.

As an 'early responder' to the crisis, during this period, Dandin had a list of 150 children who he was assigned to help.

"At the beginning of the project, we conducted a com-

munity assessment, we tried to identify who was the most vulnerable in every community, and came up with a list of 150 children," he says, continuing, "Most of the 150 children were abandoned by their families because of migration – the mother or father decided to migrate to Manila to look for opportunities, because there were no opportunities in Eastern Samar at that time because of what happened."

Young children had been left behind with grandparents who were sometimes very elderly and frail, he explains, pointing out that there had been an issue with abandonment and overstretched families in the area even before the typhoon, and that problems caused by one parent leaving for Manila became far worse if a second parent left after the typhoon, or was lost during it.

"It's really common there, abandonment, so I just tried to assess who were the most vulnerable, as it wouldn't have been possible to accommodate all of them," he says.

"I did case management, using a multidisciplinary approach. We have partners in the area and in Manila, who were able to help with biomedical intervention – seeing if they needed help with sicknesses or any other health-related help.

"Of course, there were legal issues so we were working with the government and law enforcement, and tried to push cases where, for example, a child had been sexually abused by her father a few months after her mother left to work as a house helper in



Dandin with 14-year-old Antonette, who cares for her six younger siblings and, above left, some of the devastation brought by Typhoon Haiyan.

the nearest city."

Rather than placing the children in orphanages or other institutions, Dandin's aim was to keep these children in their community if this was at all possible, still supported by their relatives, but with extra supports and social work oversight.

**"We gave them livelihood grants, two pigs, male and female, so they could start a piggery business"**

"There are two sisters who had been abandoned by their parents, but were in the custody of their grandparents," he says as an example. "Their home was destroyed by the typhoon, and though their grandparents were still capable of taking care of themselves, they couldn't do more.

"So, instead of sending these two sisters to Manila, we decided to keep them together and give their grandparents a livelihood – we gave them livelihood grants, two pigs, male and female, so they could start a piggery business."

Piggery and poultry farms are good alternative businesses while the coconut plantations are growing back, he explains: "The case management is ongoing: we're still searching for the parents, but unfortunately we haven't found them so far, and of course we've also been supporting the girls' education, buying them school supplies so they can go back to school."

After more than two years in Eastern Samar, Dandin is back in Manila now, where he works in advocacy, doing work on sex abuse awareness with schools, churches and young people themselves, and urging the government of the Philippines to introduce better child protection policies.

## Struggling

"We're still struggling with how we're going to engage our government in our project," he says. "They think that NGOs have their own money and they should not support us because we have our own source of finance, so it's hard for us to engage them and encourage them to adopt and finance our projects. We're struggling – it's a constant dialogue about our project."

Grateful for the support his organisation has received through Tearfund, he visited Ireland in January in order to spread the word of what he'd been doing in the Philippines, thanking people for their support whether by giving radio interviews, addressing school groups, meeting church groups, or visiting youth groups or Tearfund supporters' meetings.

"I've grown closer to God because of what's happened," Dandin says, "I've always believed that everything works together for good. That's how my parents raised us. Everything has a purpose. My faith in God has grown stronger, and at the same time, it affirms my calling that God really wants me to respond to the plight of the poor."

Reiterating that social action is his passion, he says he loves it when the Church is obviously relevant to the community beyond its spiritual role. He emphasises the importance of the Church "responding to the cry of the poor", and says, "whenever I teach young people, I say it's not evangelism or social action – it should be evangelism and social action."



# Towards Peace reconnects survivors to their faith



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**I** feel relaxed, and comfortable with the process...why? –my answer is this because the guilt, blame, confusion, was wearing me down, so with support and guidance, I want to let go, and thus try to move on with my life, being more connected with myself, family, the world and most of all God". These are the words of a client of the spiritual support service Towards Peace.

Towards Peace is a free service offering spiritual support to people who have experienced abuse—physical, emotional or sexual – which was perpetrated by Church personnel, either individually or in institutions.

**“The role of the spiritual companion is to provide support and encouragement to help each person”**

It is one of the three services that are part of the whole Church response (local, institutional, lay, religious and clerical) to abuse in Ireland.

The others two services are: The National Board for Safeguarding Children, which is the independent watchdog for all safeguarding in the Catholic Church, and Towards Healing, a free counselling service.

Towards Peace came later than the other two

**Sr Marianne O'Connor** describes a spiritual support service for survivors of abuse



mentioned above and was a response to a request by survivors themselves, some of whom expressed a need to reconnect with God where that connection had been broken because of their experience.

People who have suffered abuse at the hands of representatives of the Catholic Church have spoken about their struggle with their faith and their relationship with God and the destruction of the possibility of achieving inner peace.

Many victims are so profoundly damaged by the abuse, that they suffer for the rest of their lives, feeling angry, isolated and rejected.

## Accompany

What then has Towards Peace to offer? It is a spiritual companionship service that is available to anyone across the whole island of Ireland, where not only survivors, but also their families, who may also have lost connection because of what happened, may find their own path to God.

'Own path' is important

as each path is individual and occurs at a different pace. That is why the service uses trained spiritual companions, not to get people back to church or to direct how they should go, but rather to accompany them as they carry out their own search step by step.

The idea of spiritual companionship – the Anam Cara – is found in many religious traditions. In the Christian tradition, it offers a safe space for a person to connect with their own sense of God, of the sacred. In our world, today, there is very little opportunity to have a space where you can ask and explore the bigger questions.

**“The pathway of spiritual companionship may not suit everyone”**

The role of the spiritual companion is to provide support and encouragement to help each person to achieve their own sense of wholeness, freedom and hope for a deep inner peace. The spiritual

companions in Towards Peace are men and women, lay people, religious and clergy who are qualified and trained in spiritual direction and have experience in journeying with people from all walks of life and aspects of faith.

It is the hope of the service that Towards Peace will get better known and that those who wish may come forward to avail of what it has to offer.



Success, in whatever way that can be measured, cannot be promised because each one's journey is unique and unpredictable, and the pathway of spiritual companionship may not suit everyone.

But for those who do make contact there is the promise that they will be accompanied and supported as they journey in hope on the path towards peace. That help and support is only a phone call away at 00353-(0) 1 505 3028.

You can also email [towardspeace@iecon.ie](mailto:towardspeace@iecon.ie) or see [www.towardspeace.ie](http://www.towardspeace.ie)

**i** Marianne O'Connor OSU is chairperson of Towards Peace.





## Archbishop Charles Brown was an encouraging presence in Ireland, particularly for young people, writes Niall Guinan

**T**he 37th chapter of Ezekiel contains the famous description of the prophet placed in a "valley of dry bones," a scene of total despair and desolation. There could hardly be a more fitting image for the environment to which Archbishop Charles Brown was sent as Papal Nuncio by Pope Benedict XVI in late 2011.

The Church in Ireland had been shaken by horrific revelations of its shameful and wicked behaviour in the past, and relations between the Holy See and the Government had never been so strained. He now leaves these shores for Albania, another place where the Church has faced great suffering though of a very different kind.

# Let's hope new Nuncio will reach out to the young

It is almost certain that Archbishop Brown is leaving the Church in a better condition than the desperate state in which he found it. One area in which he has been particularly successful is his engagement with young people.

At the World Youth Day in Sydney in 2008, Pope Benedict told millions of young people that the "quest for novelty leaves us unsatisfied" for we are, in the depths of our hearts, "looking for an eternal gift".

Those of us who have rediscovered the pearl of great price that is our faith, having lost it while growing up, will testify that what the modern world offers us is a sham.

### Culture

The consumerist mindset, the never-ending pursuit of material goods and popularity, the obsession with sex which treats our bodies as toys to be used and discarded at a whim, as well as what Pope Francis calls the "throwaway culture" which destroys the dignity of human life, are all a fraud which may provide brief explosions of self-indulgent pleasure but can only ultimately lead to misery and self-destruction.

There is a mistaken and danger-

ous tendency to believe that the Church needs to accommodate herself to the modern world, to be more 'down-to-earth' by changing her doctrines and by banalising and de-sacralising her liturgy.

Some of Archbishop Brown's critics would have the Church become a 'safe space' in which no difficult doctrines should ever 'trigger' or challenge us and in which Jesus Christ is reduced to an inoffensive teddy bear in the corner, the Cross replaced by a tacky Valentine's Day love-heart.

However, Archbishop Brown has consistently shown that he knows what young people are truly crying out for is the "eternal gift" Pope Benedict spoke of, the living water which enabled the Samaritan woman to leave her jar of earthly water behind her and sing the praises of the Saviour of the World to all who would listen. We need a Church that has her feet on the ground, but her heart and her mind in Heaven.

Young people do not need a Church which thinks of itself merely as a glorified self-help club in fancy dress, designed only to make us feel good. We need a Church which helps us in our path to sainthood and to eternal life.

In his homily at the Youth 2000 festival in Roscrea in 2016, Archbishop Brown spoke of the miracles that God was working in the hearts of the young people at that retreat.

He placed before them the example of Blessed Charles de Foucauld who sought happiness in a playboy lifestyle and transitory material pleasures but who ultimately found happiness in prayer as a Trappist monk and a hermit. He also provided them with powerful and much needed encouragement to "shout their faith from the rooftops".

**“We must pray that his successor will encourage young Catholics not to be afraid to proclaim their faith”**

The world we live in would rather young Catholics be neither seen nor heard. Particularly on college campuses, students who openly proclaim their faith have become, in many cases, the targets of hostility and abuse and the butt of jokes.

This is especially acute in the behaviour of the passionate student

movements to repeal the Eighth Amendment who are apparently so insecure in their views that they cannot tolerate even a whisper of dissent.

It is perhaps unsurprising that when Archbishop Brown came to Trinity College last year, the large number of students who gathered to hear him asked him for a blessing on their pro-life witness in that exceptionally hostile environment. The message he brought to us then was, like his message in Roscrea: "Don't be afraid. Jesus has conquered everything."

### Happiness

Whoever Archbishop Brown's successor may be, we must pray that he too will encourage young Catholics not to be afraid to proclaim their faith because, irrespective of how popular or unpopular it may be, it is where true happiness and joy is found.

"They have been with Jesus." These were the words spoken by the Sanhedrin after being confronted by the Apostles Peter and John in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Fulton Sheen, the great American bishop, once said that these words are what people should be saying after meeting and hearing Catholic priests and bishops. It must be said that the people of Albania are extremely blessed because Archbishop Charles Brown has truly "been with Jesus".

# Thank you for Helping Make Miracles

**This past summer**, *The Irish Catholic* launched our first annual appeal with partner, Sightsavers and thanks to the overwhelming support of you, our readers, we raised €16,741 to fund 465 additional cataract operations.

For people living with cataract in developing countries, a life without sight in already difficult circumstances can make lifting themselves out of poverty an even tougher job. Stigma and discrimination, lack of access to the necessary support in education,

and simply being viewed as equal members of society with rights, are all daily challenges faced by people with visual impairments in developing countries. That's why your support of the **'Make a Miracle Together'** appeal can transform people's entire lives and future opportunities.

Thank you for your generosity over the course of the appeal. It has already begun to change the lives of so many including Habibu and Joyce John, whose stories are recounted here.



### Habibu

Habibu is 80 years old and from the Morogoro region in rural Tanzania. Having been blind for 10 years, Habibu needed constant help in order to move around and Peter (9) was his helpful shadow, always there, always helping and guiding him through his daily life. It was only after Habibu had his bandages removed after the surgery that he saw Peter clearly for the very first time. Giving a person like Habibu back their sight and their independence means that a grandchild like Peter won't be taken out of school to care for an elderly family member, so the future is brighter for everyone.

### Joyce John

Joyce John, 40 years of age, from Ugogoni, Mbuyuri, Morogoro. Joyce had bilateral cataract for 25 years. Her sight deteriorated to a point where all she could make out was rough shapes, light and dark shading, but all detail was gone. She explained that she could see the shape of a person but not who they were.

"I am looking forward to seeing my daughter and grandchild and also the doctors who operated on me today. I will be very happy and I will celebrate when I get home. I cannot imagine how it will be tomorrow when I can see again after so long."

"I had faith in God that one day I would

see again. I pray often in church that one day doctors would be able to help me regain my sight. I am really excited to see my grandchildren for the first time and my daughter, Maria."

We met up with Joyce the following day and we were there when her bandages were being removed. The moment her bandages came off the delight on Joyce's face was amazing. She looked around almost not believing what she was seeing but taking it all in.

"I didn't expect that I would be able to see again, I am so very happy. Truly I didn't expect it. God is great. I can see. Oh wow, the world is really like this? Today the world is new!"



Keilah Blohm (left), Advertising, and Michael Kelly, Managing Editor of *The Irish Catholic*, present Catrina Sheridan, CEO of Sightsavers Ireland with the cheque for donations raised during the Make a Miracle Appeal.



**F**resh from a public debate at Trinity College Dublin, where 600 students overflowed from the college's largest lecture theatre and filled three overflow rooms while a further 1,100 people watched online, philosopher and theologian William Lane Craig is adamant that Christian faith is a reasonable thing.

"As I went through my graduate education I became increasingly burdened with presenting the Gospel in the context of giving an intellectual defence of the Christian worldview," he says. "I wanted to help students see that becoming a Christian is an intellectually viable option for thinking people today. I wanted to help them see that you don't need to put your brains in one pocket and your faith in another pocket, and never let them see the light of day at the same time."

Originally from Peoria, Illinois, and now a professor in California's Biola Institute and Houston Baptist University in Texas, Dr Craig had become a convinced Christian in his teenage years, so he aimed to



**Faith and reason go hand in hand, a leading apologist tells Greg Daly**

speaking to people of a similar age to that at which his own life had been transformed.

He explains that his apologetic ministry began in the early 1980s and has been conducted through the internet over the last decade or so, through his website ReasonableFaith.org which hosts vid-

eos of debates in which he's taken part and lectures he's given, as well as podcasts, a weekly column where he takes questions from readers, and an open forum where people can dialogue.

'Faith and reason' had of course been the watchword of Pope Benedict XVI's papacy, but it had also been the subject of a 1988 exhortation by St John Paul, and Dr Craig believes his approach is in line with the late Pope's emphasis.

"He issued a charge for what he called 'The New Evangelisation', and I gave a lecture on this at St Mary's on the Lake seminary, which is the largest Catholic seminary in North America, in 2016. They asked me to address the New Evangelisation, using John Paul's remarks as a springboard, and then to talk about how to effectively share the Gospel on university campuses," he says.

With his emphasis in line with this call to re-evangelise Christianity's old heartlands, he says: "The kind of ministry we carry out is in defence of what C.S. Lewis called 'mere

# Arguing for

**"I wanted to help the students see that you don't need to put your brains in one pocket and your faith in another pocket, and never let them see the light of day at the same time"**

Christianity', that is to say, those cardinal truths that are common to all of the great confessions of Christendom, whether Catholic, Orthodox, Coptic or Protestant, so it's been thrilling for me to see people from all of those confessions grateful for the work that we do and using our materials in their own confession."

Arguments for the truth of Christianity tend to depend on a combination of philosophical and historical approaches with some scientific considerations, he says, explaining how in the late 1970s he had worked on the historicity of the Resurrection as a doctoral student in the University of Munich.

Although he says "the historical component is important", he stresses that "the fundamental ground is philosophical, but then the scientific gets pulled in to that, especially in the field of cosmology, because I find that there is good scientific evidence for some of the key premises in these philosophical arguments for God's existence".

"I don't make a naive claim like 'science proves God'," he cautions, "my claim is that science can furnish evidence that is in support of a premise in a philosophical argument for a conclusion that has theological significance."

## Proof

He says he tries to steer clear of making excessive claims of proof. "I try to avoid that risk," he says, continuing: "The name of our ministry is 'Reasonable Faith', and that's the name of my signature book."

"It's not an immodest claim – it's a claim that we can show that faith is a reasonable step for informed and thinking people to take. I suspect that for many people they don't actually believe because of the arguments, but that the arguments give them the intellectual permission to believe by removing the obstacles and then responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when he moves them."



Although he has debated the reasonableness of Christian belief in many countries, he says he hasn't found that arguments against Christianity vary much from culture to culture.

"In terms of whether or not one hears anything new," he observes, "I have been hearing in more recent years, and particularly in this very tour in the two debates that I've had in Ireland, both of my opponents have challenged me on the idea of the existence of an unembodied mind. I think the materialistic view of human beings is very powerful, so to talk about an unembodied person like God, for many, is a matter which is incomprehensible."

**"The so-called 'New Atheism' has fizzled out since its heyday of a decade or so back"**

"They don't understand how there could be an unembodied person because they think persons are these material objects, these electrochemical machines, biological machines as it were, and so one needs to be prepared to give a defence of soul-body dualism, to say that it is intelligible and comprehensible and defensible to talk about

the existence of a soul which is not identical to the brain."

The so-called 'New Atheism' has fizzled out since its heyday of a decade or so back, with Christopher Hitchens having died, Sam Harris having been drawn into books advocating a kind of spirituality that owes much to Tibetan Buddhism, and Richard Dawkins having become a kind of 'embarrassing uncle' who rants on Twitter. For Dr Craig, however, the arguments and attitudes of such noisy pop atheists are now part of the cultural mainstream.

## Influence

"I do not think its influence has gone," he says. "As I talk with university students, I think that the shadow of the New Atheism still persists in the minds of many students. This is especially evident on the internet, where the sort of internet infidel subculture is very modernist, very scientific, and I think still looks to people like Dawkins and Harris and others as their guiding lights."

"So, although these folks have been roundly denounced by academics and intellectuals, I think in popular culture they still remain very influential."

Not, he adds, that those with whom he debates have necessarily come under their sway, pointing to how his

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# a reasonable faith



Above (l-r): Dr William Lane Craig, a portrait of St Bonaventura and former Anglican bishop of Durham N.T. Wright.



debating opponent at Trinity, Prof. Daniel Came from the University of Hull, is “an atheist and a substantive philosopher and thinker” who is “very critical” of the New Atheists.

Asked whether he thinks that public debates run a risk of being exercises in cheerleading, Dr Craig agrees this can be a problem. “Oh I certainly do,” he says, “and that’s why I think it’s really important in these debates to instruct the audience to hold their applause until the end, because otherwise, if you allow the students to be cheering and applauding for the things they agree with, it does turn into a raucous environment.”

“I’ve experienced that in Australia and in Canada at the University of British Columbia,” he continues, “and I think the decorum that characterised the debate last night was very positive. The applause was held to the end, it was an academic exchange with civility and cordiality – that’s the way they ought to be constructed.”

## Debates

One might equally wonder whether public debates really do anything to change minds, but Dr Craig believes they definitely have a part to play.

“I think it’s unlikely that many would change their minds in the space of an hour and a half, though it does happen,” he says, “but it’s a cumulative effect of what the apostle Paul called sowing and watering over time. We get a steady stream of emails from people who tell us that they have either come to

Christian faith or have come back to Christian faith – after deserting it in secondary school or university – because of watching these YouTube videos or reading articles, listening to podcasts – so the cumulative effect is undeniable and testified.”

Even in the recent past, he says, books and articles would have been key to apologetics and evangelism in this way, but with many of today’s students having a more visual sensibility, YouTube and other videos are crucial.

**“I can handle that philosophical challenge, but emotionally it’s very powerful”**

Asked what he finds the most difficult subject to tackle in debates, he highlights what C.S. Lewis called ‘the problem of pain’. “I think it would be the emotional problem of suffering,” he says. “On an intellectual level I can handle that philosophical challenge, but emotionally it’s very powerful, and I think that if the atheist tries to move the audience’s emotions by describing horrible suffering and pain and how pointless it seems, then the philosophical answers can seem arid and unmoving, so in an audience-style debate, controlling the emotional mood is the biggest challenge.”

Answers to questions of suffering tend to relate to ultimate meaning and to how Christ shares our pain, so an obvious question is whether there is a danger of his confusing his philosophical and

evangelical hats – are they distinct things, or one thing with two manifestations?

“I would say one thing with two manifestations,” he says. “Early on I determined that I would produce first-rate scholarship to the best of my ability, but that I would then take that same material and distill it down to the popular level for the man in the street. My inspiration in this was none other than Emmanuel Kant. Kant wrote his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which no one could understand, so he wrote a popular-level abbreviation called *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, and this is what I determined to do.

“So, I wrote for example, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, but then I wrote a little popular-level book called *The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe*,” he continues, “and with each of the areas that I have worked on I’ve followed that same pattern: I’ll publish a scholarly book with an academic press, and then I’ll write a popular-level book with a popular press for the lay person, and in that way I am working on both levels.”

The Kalām argument, for which he’s famous, is a streamlined and superficially Aristotelian thesis that follows the pattern of everything that comes into existence has a cause, and the Universe came into existence, therefore the Universe has a cause, which we call God.

“It has a long history that goes right back to the 4th Century in the response of early Christian commentators to Aristotle, and his doctrine of the eternity of the

Universe, so it has a long history,” Dr Craig says, continuing. “It was highly developed in medieval Islamic theology, and that’s when the name derives – Kalām is the Arabic word for medieval Islamic scholasticism – and then this was inherited back into the West again through Jewish thinkers in Muslim Spain.

“People like Bonaventure and others began to appropriate this, Aquinas interacted with this tradition, so the Kalām argument came back into western theology after having been eclipsed for a time but preserved in Islam.”

## Arguments

While Aquinas believed the universe had a beginning, he believed this through faith, as he did not believe it was possible to prove this uncon-

trovertibly; nonetheless, he thought the argument unnecessary, as he believed that even if the universe had always existed it would still need an uncaused cause.

“That’s exactly what he would say,” says Dr Craig. “He always wants to argue on the more difficult supposition that the world had no beginning, because he says if motion and the world had a first beginning then it’s obvious that it has to have a cause that brought it into being – I agree with him on that – but he thought that you could only give probabilistic arguments for the beginning of the Universe, and he wanted his arguments to be demonstrations, to be airtight, and not just probabilistic.

**“The Kalām argument came back into western theology after having been eclipsed for a time”**

“Well, very few – really, no – philosophers today would think that a good argument has to be demonstrative in order to be good. Probabilistic arguments are really the best that we can hope for, and so a probabilistic argument like the Kalām argument is, I think, a valuable piece of natural theology.”

Such arguments from natural theology are typically the first stage in apologetics, explains Dr Craig, mapping out a standard apologetic outline: “You do your natural theology first, and that gets you to a generic monotheism that is common to Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Deism.

“And then you ask whether this creator and designer of

the world has revealed himself in some more specific way, and that requires us to look at the person of Jesus of Nazareth, especially the facts surrounding his alleged resurrection from the dead.”

It’s at this point, he says, that historical analysis enters the process. “Now, what I discovered as a result of my work in Munich on this, is that there are three facts that are accepted by the majority of historical Jesus scholars today that undergird the inference to Jesus’ resurrection,” he says, continuing: “These would be the empty tomb, the post-mortem appearances of Jesus and the origin of the disciples’ belief that God had raised him from the dead.”

He identifies *The Resurrection of the Son of God* by N.T. Wright, the former Anglican Bishop of Durham, as “the fullest development of that third point, namely how do you explain the origin of this belief and this movement in the middle of the 1st Century”, pointing to how Dr Wright believes the empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances constitute the best explanation of the early Church’s existence and belief in the Resurrection.

“I think of this, however, as a three-legged stool – empty tomb, post-mortem appearances, origin of the disciples’ belief – that can be independently established of each other, and therefore you have a very powerful support for the inference to the Resurrection,” he says, continuing, “Wright has developed only one leg of the stool, I’ve tried to develop the other two as well, and the three of them together provide a powerful cumulative case for the resurrection of Jesus.”

Whether he’s right or not is, of course, open to debate. And it’s a debate that Dr Craig doesn’t shy away from.

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# Out&About

## Our Lady of Fatima in Yellow Walls



### ▲ DUBLIN:

Fr Frank Reburn and the organising committee, led by Rita Daly, with the pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima on its visit to Yellow Walls Parish, Malahide.



**MAYO:** Volunteers at the launch of the Pink Link Challenge, a human hand chain up Croagh Patrick to raise funds to fight breast cancer on Saturday, April 8. Register or show support at [www.pinklinkmountainchallenge.ie](http://www.pinklinkmountainchallenge.ie)



### ◀ WICKLOW:

From left to right: Gret Fitzpatrick, Bridie Ryan and Kevin Ryan on the occasion of Bridie receiving her Diamond Pioneer Pin at Mass in Tomacork Church, Carnew.

## IN SHORT

### John Paul II Awards presented in Cavan

Ten students from St Aidan's Comprehensive School in Cootehill were presented with their Pope John Paul II Awards for 2016 at a special ceremony in the Kilmore Diocesan Pastoral Centre in Cavan.

The awards were presented by Fr Ultan McGoohan, Diocesan Director of Pastoral Services, assisted by Carina McGinnell, Diocesan Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

A bronze award was presented to Conor McComish. Silver awards were presented to Emer Fitzpatrick, James Quinn, Kelan Smith and Shane Smith. Gold awards were presented to Niamh Cassidy, Conor Deery, Jesse Holland, Rosalynd Lavery and Saidbh O'Grady.

The ceremony was also attended by Mary Ann Smith, the school principal; Gabriel McQuillan, the school chaplain;

representatives from the local Knights of St Columbanus; and Seán Coll, Director of the Kilmore Diocesan Pastoral Centre.

### Jesuit spiritual direction in 2017

In September 2017, Manresa Jesuit Centre of Spirituality in Dublin is once again offering their well-established Diploma in Spirituality (Spiritual Direction). The course is also offered at the Jesuit Centre of Spirituality and Culture in Galway and Drumalis Retreat & Conference Centre in Larne.

The diploma, which is spread over a period of two years, is steeped in the Gospels and the wisdom of St Ignatius. Ongoing supervision allows participants to develop and deepen their skills and to discern the ways of God.

The course is accredited by St Patrick's College, Maynooth and the closing date for all applications is April 30. For all further

information see [www.manresa.ie](http://www.manresa.ie) or contact 01 833 1352.

### Pioneers celebrate 21st National Ball in Athlone

The 21st Pioneer National Ball takes place on Saturday, April 8. The event commences with Mass at 6.30pm in St Mary's Church, Athlone, which will be celebrated by Bishop Francis Duffy. The ball continues with dinner in the Sheraton Athlone Hotel, followed by music and dancing. The guest speaker on the night will be racehorse trainer Jim Bolger.

As this year's event marks a significant milestone since the first one in 1997, which was organised by the Kiltelly/Dromkeen (Limerick) Young Pioneers, it will be a good opportunity for a reunion of Pioneers who have attended the ball over the past 20 years.

Tickets are €30 each and are available by contacting Brenda Lynch 087-6189411 or Dermot Fagan 085-7201646.

### Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration national pilgrimage

The Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration invites people from every parish in Ireland to join them in Knock Shrine this year on Sunday, April 30 on the occasion of the National Adoration Pilgrimage.

The Apostolate is an association of lay adorers of the Blessed Sacrament which aims to assist dioceses and parishes to establish and maintain viable weekly adoration in conformity with the teaching of the Church and in obedience to the bishops and priests. Their vision is to have a nucleus of people in every parish formed, by sitting every week at the feet of Jesus, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Over 5,000 people attended the pilgrimage last year and details for 2017 are available on [www.eucharisticadoration.ie](http://www.eucharisticadoration.ie)



Edited by Mags Gargan  
mags@irishcatholic.ie



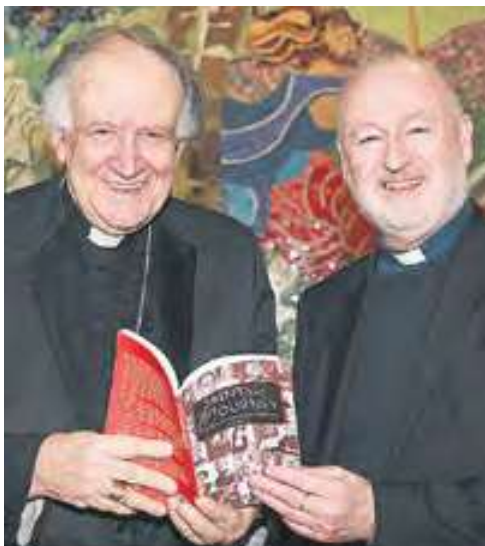
Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**CAVAN:** Pope John Paul II Award winners from St Aidan's Comprehensive School in Cootehill, accompanied by principal, Mary Ann Smith (left, back row) and Gabriel McQuillan, chaplain (right, back row) with Fr Ultan McGoochan, Diocesan Pastoral Services Director and Carina McGinnell, Diocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry Director (front row).



**ROME:** At the official re-opening of the Irish Chancery to the Holy See are Minister Charlie Flanagan (centre) flanked by Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Holy See Secretary for Relations with States; Ireland's Ambassador to the Holy See, H.E. Emma Madigan, her husband, Mr Laurence Simms and their son Cormac.



**DOWN:** Auxiliary Bishop of Down & Connor, Anthony Farquhar helps Fr John Murray PP of St Patrick's church, Downpatrick to launch his new book called *Saints for the Journey*. Photo: Bill Smyth



**LIMERICK:** Bishop Fintan Monahan with members of the Maranatha prayer group in Limerick.

## ANTRIM

The First Saturday Devotions will take place each month in St Matthias Church, Glen Road, Belfast. Adoration/Confessions and Consecration to Our Lady at 3pm, Mass at 4pm. All welcome.

## ARMAGH

Eucharistic Adoration in St Malachy's Church, Armagh daily from 6am to midnight, and all night on Wednesdays.

Adoration chapel, Edwards St, Lurgan, adoration weekdays, 9am-9pm.

## CLARE

Fr Richard McAlear, a healing priest from the USA, is celebrating Mass on Monday, April 3 in Ennis Cathedral at 7.30pm followed by healing service.

Candlelight procession from Abbey St Carpark, Ennis on Friday, April 7 at 8.30pm to the cathedral for Mass of remembrance, 'Rising against cancer' in conjunction with the Sláinte an Chláir 48hr fast.

## CORK

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

## DUBLIN

Gospel and Culture: Soiscéal agus Cultúr: bilingual talk on the spirituality of the early Irish monks: Friday, April 7 at 7.30pm at 13 Geraldine Street, (off Berkeley Road), Dublin 7. Organised by the Legion of Mary.

At Church of the Holy Name, Beechwood Avenue - A Lenten Reflection on Ministry, led by Sr Una O'Neill on Monday, April 10 at 10.45am and repeated at 7.30pm.

Ewe Thina: We Walk God's Way. Want to get fit? Embrace God in nature and build true friendships? Join other young adults (20's & 30's) for reflective hikes around Dublin area. Monthly event. Contact: siobhan.tighe@dublindiocese.ie, <https://www.facebook.com/wewalkgodsway>

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

## FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Wednesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7.30pm. All welcome. [www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly](http://www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly)

Divine Mercy Devotions every Monday night in St Nails Church, Kinawley beginning with Mass at 7pm, Divine Mercy holy hour 7.30-8.30pm, followed by blessing with first class relic of St Faustina.

## KILDARE

Carbury Parish - Adoration in the Church of the Holy Trinity,

Derrinturn takes place each Monday from 10.30am until 12 midnight. Adoration for priestly vocations takes place every Thursday at 8.45pm. [www.CarburyParish.ie](http://www.CarburyParish.ie)

## 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](mailto:limerick@op-tn.org) or 085 2255796.

## LOUTH

Lenten Prayer for Healing 2017 at St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk at 7pm on Sunday, April 2. Theme: Whenever two or three gather in my name (Matthew 18:20). A representative from Women's Aid will speak on topic: 'When Home Hurts'.

## MAYO

On Saturday, April 8, Knock Shrine will welcome Archbishop Michael Neary and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin for a family day entitled 'Celebrating Family: Preparing for World Meeting of Families 2018' with Mass at 3pm. For information contact (094) 93 88100 or [www.knockshrine.ie](http://www.knockshrine.ie)

## MEATH

Trim Prayer Group meeting every Thursday evening, 8-9pm, in Trim Parish Centre.

Christ the King Prayer Group, Enfield, meeting every Monday evening, 7.30-8.30pm, Enfield Parish Centre.

## TYRONE

Life in the Spirit Seminars over seven weeks in St Mary's Church, Killyclogher beginning on Thursday, April 20 at 7.30pm with Fr Pat Collins.

## WATERFORD

Annual Cúrsa SPioradálta do Ghaeilgeoirí in Mount Mel-leray April 1-2. The theme for this year is "Dóchas Linn - An Tiarna". Information from Aine on 086 2227533 or [annanif@eircom.net](mailto:annanif@eircom.net)

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 31 at 8pm with Fr John Walsh OP and Friday, April 7 with Fr John Nally PP, Ballynacargy.

## WICKLOW

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



# World Report



Edited by Greg Daly  
greg@irishcatholic.ie

## IN BRIEF

### Mexican archdiocese: Companies that work on border wall are 'traitors'

An editorial in a publication of the Archdiocese of Mexico City condemned Mexican companies wishing to work on the proposed wall being built on the US-Mexico border as "traitors" and called on authorities to castigate any company that provides services for fencing off the frontier.

"What's regrettable is that on this side of the border, there are Mexicans ready to collaborate with a fanatical project that annihilates the good relationship between two nations that share a common border," said the March 26 editorial in the archdiocesan publication *Desde la Fe*.

"Any company that plans to invest in the fanatic Trump's wall would be immoral, but above all, their shareholders and owner will be considered traitors to the homeland," the editorial continued. "Joining a project that is a grave affront to dignity is like shooting yourself in the foot."

President Donald Trump ran on a promise of constructing a wall between the US and Mexico and has signed an executive order to begin building the barrier on the nearly 2,000-mile US-Mexico border.

● **POLICE HAVE** used tear gas to disperse an angry mob of Muslims approaching Christian homes in southern Egypt. The clashes injured four policemen and seven of the Muslim villagers. The trouble in the Moheidat district south of the ancient city of Luxor began when Muslim villagers suspected

that a Christian teenager who allegedly converted to Islam was being held captive by her family as punishment. Her relatives deny the charge.

Similar incidents had in the past ignited sectarian violence or caused long-term damage to relations between Muslims and Christians.

### German plan for laypeople to lead parishes with no priests

● Cardinal Reinhard Marx has announced plans to allow laypeople in his Archdiocese of Munich to lead parishes where there are no priests. In doing so, he has opted not to 'cluster' several parishes relying on one priest.

He told the diocesan pastoral council that it was important to preserve individual parishes as a way of guaranteeing the Church's presence locally.

He said the archdiocese will introduce a pilot project in the autumn with new models of parish leadership. Specifically, he said full-time and voluntary lay personnel would take over parishes.

He reiterated his belief that creating ever-greater parish entities by clustering parishes was not the way forward.

### Russian Church to add more western saints

The Moscow Patriarchate has said it will continue adding names of the saints venerated in the West in its calendar.

"This process is not completed, it has only started," head of the Synodal Department for External Church Relations Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk said

on the *Church and the World* programme on the Rossiya-24 TV channel.

As was reported, in early March the Moscow Patriarchate included in its calendar St Patrick and 15 ancient saints honoured in the countries of Europe before the Church schism of 1054.

### Pope asks Confirmation children to make anti-bullying pledge

● Pope Francis asked 45,000 children preparing for Confirmation to promise Jesus they would never engage in bullying. Turning stern during a lively and laughter-filled encounter at the weekend, Pope Francis told the youngsters he was very worried about the growing phenomenon of bullying.

He asked them to be silent and reflect on if there were times when they made fun of someone for how they looked or behaved. And, as a condition of their Confirmation, he made them promise Jesus that they would never tease or bully anyone.

## Cardinal Burke re-iterates threat to 'correct' the Pope

Cardinal Raymond Burke once again has promised to "correct the situation" over what he believes to be confusion surrounding Pope Francis' controversial 2016 document on marriage and the family, *Amoris Laetitia*.

The American cardinal was speaking during a Q&A session after a presentation at Saint Raymond of Peñafort parish in Springfield, Virginia in the US.

Burke, formerly the head of the Vatican's highest appellate court until removed by Francis, currently serves as the patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, although that position is largely nominal at the moment given the Pope's appointment of a personal delegate to the order.

### Clarification

Four cardinals – Burke, Italian Carlo Caffarra, and Germans Walter Brandmüller and Joachim Meisner – sent five 'dubia' [yes-or-no questions] asking clarification on *Amoris Laetitia*, particularly on the matter of divorced-and-



Pope Francis greeting Cardinal Raymond Burke during a meeting with members of the Roman Curia in December.

remarried persons receiving Communion, to Francis and Cardinal Gerhard Müller, the head of the Vatican's doctrine office.

After Francis didn't respond, the cardinals made their questions public, and Burke said they would present a "formal correction" of

the Pontiff if the questions remained unanswered.

In Virginia, Burke reiterated he "sincerely hoped" the Pope would eventually respond to the dubia.

"Until these questions are answered, there continues to spread a very harmful confusion in the Church, and one

of the fundamental questions is in regards to the truth that there are some acts that are always and everywhere wrong, what we call intrinsically evil acts, and so, we cardinals, will continue to insist that we get a response to these honest questions," Burke said.

The cardinal said he wanted to make "very clear" he and the other three cardinals did not mean to be disrespectful or arrogant, but said presenting dubia to a Pope "is a traditional way in the Church of seeking clarification in times of confusion".

Burke reiterated that if an answer does not come, he and the other cardinals "simply will have to correct the situation".

The publication by the cardinals of their private letter to the Pope last November caused controversy, and Müller said he was "amazed that this became public, essentially constraining the Pope to say 'yes' or 'no'. I don't like this".

## Pope approves Fatima canonisations

Pope Francis has approved the recognition of a miracle attributed to the intercession of two of the shepherd children who saw Our Lady of Fatima in 1917, thus paving the way for their canonisation.

Pope Francis signed the decree for the causes of Blesseds Francisco and Jacinta Marto during a meeting March 23 with Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, the Vatican said.

The recognition of the miracle makes it likely that the canonisation ceremony for the two children will be scheduled soon. The cardinals and bishops who are members of the congregation must

vote to recommend their canonisation and then the Pope would convene the cardinals resident in Rome for a consistory to approve the sainthood.

Many people are hoping Pope Francis will preside over the canonisation ceremony during his visit to Fatima May 12-13. The pilgrimage will mark the 100th anniversary of the Marian apparitions, which began May 13, 1917, when nine-year-old Francisco and seven-year-old Jacinta, along with their cousin Lucia dos Santos, reported seeing the Virgin Mary. The apparitions continued once a month until October 13, 1917, and later were declared worthy of belief by the Church.

A year after the apparitions, both of the Marto children became ill during an influenza epidemic that plagued Europe. Francisco died April 4, 1919, at the age of 10, while Jacinta succumbed to her illness February 20, 1920, at the age of nine.

Francisco and Jacinta's cause for canonisation was stalled for decades due to a debate on whether non-martyred children have the capacity to understand heroic virtues at a young age.

However, in 1979, St John Paul II allowed their cause to proceed; he declared them venerable in 1989 and beatified them in 2000.

## No date yet for Blessed Romero canonisation, archbishop confirms

While documentation regarding an alleged miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Oscar Romero [pictured] is being studied at the Vatican, there is no date scheduled for his canonisation, the archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador, said.

"I must say, in all sincerity, that there is no date. And we understand it well because it involves a process. Blessed Romero's cause is at a decisive phase that is necessary for his canonisation,"

Archbishop Jose Luis Escobar Alas said on March 23 during a memorial Mass for Blessed Romero in Rome.

Archbishop Escobar, along with the other bishops of El Salvador were making their *ad limina* visits to Rome and the Vatican and anticipated the 37th anniversary of Blessed Romero's death with Mass at Rome's Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere.

Blessed Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador, was assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass in

the chapel of a local hospital one day after calling on the government to end its violation of human rights against the population.

During his homily, Archbishop Escobar thanked Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life and the official promoter of Blessed Romero's sainthood cause, for his work throughout canonical process.

The alleged miracle involves a pregnant woman in El Salvador who was in in



danger of dying, Archbishop Paglia said. "Several friends of this family prayed to Blessed Oscar Romero. And in a short time, the baby was born and the mother is well."

Archbishop Paglia said that officials at the Congregation for Saints' Causes had opened the documentation concerning the alleged miracle.





# Letter from Rome



John L. Allen Jr

## Rome summit marks launch of 'African Catholicism 2.0'



In the classic film *The Princess Bride*, the Inigo Montoya character late in the movie is faced with the challenge of recounting the storyline up to that point. He says, "Let me 'splain...No, there is too much. Let me sum up."

I've got a similar sensation in the wake of a March 22-25 summit of African Catholic leaders in Rome titled 'African Christian Theology: Memories and Mission for the 21st Century', sponsored by the Centre for Ethics and Culture at the University of Notre Dame.

The event brought together four cardinals, a gaggle of bishops, scores of priests and religious, as well as numerous theologians, laity, activists, students, and other movers and shakers in the Catholic Church in Africa. (To be honest, I found myself wondering who was running things back home, since the entire power structure of the African Church seemed to be in Rome.)

After four days, 46 presentations, 14 discussion periods, and an avalanche of verbiage, any attempt at a comprehensive summary is a fool's errand. But in the spirit of trying to sum up, here's a stab at it: I think what we saw Wednesday through Saturday was the emergence of what one might call 'African Catholicism 2.0'.

### Keeping pace

For much of the post-colonial period, the Church in Africa was consumed with two primary challenges. The first was keeping pace with astronomic rates of growth; and the second was facing the mind-numbing social problems of the continent, such as armed conflict, chronic poverty, environmental degradation, ethnic and tribal conflict and HIV/AIDS.

By no means has either challenge receded. However, what emerged from the Rome summit is a sense of growing maturity, a conviction that African Catholicism has passed out of childhood and adolescence into adulthood and is ready to enter a new phase.

What are the defining traits of African Catholicism 2.0? Based on the past week

in Rome, at least three suggest themselves.

One feature of the adult African church is a sense that it's got a contribution to make not just in Africa, but to the entire world and the universal Church.

Bishop Tharcisse Tshibangu of the Democratic Republic of Congo insisted that African Catholic theology needs to be part of the global conversation. "It's not just a question of African theology for Africans," Tshibangu said on Wednesday, "but a theology that's valid for one and all."

In a *Crux* interview, Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria, a long-time Vatican heavyweight who's now retired, said that the emergence of African prelates as protagonists in the global Church, including the key roles they played in the two recent Synods of Bishops on the family, was an organic result of the growth of the African Church.

**If Africa wants to be taken seriously as a player, Africa has to be honest about itself**

"Bishops and cardinals get more experience of what the Church is, and so they're bound to contribute more," he said. "It's just a normal development of divine providence."

Part of the picture may be that vast numbers of African priests and religious are now serving abroad, so there's already a sense that the universal Church needs Africa. Part of it too may be a sense that African Catholicism has generated a deep body of both theological reflection and pastoral practice, of which it's rightly proud.

In any event, there was a strong sense in Rome that an

'African moment' in the Catholic Church has arrived. Without retreating from Africa's challenges, the Church on the continent appears ever more ready to play a lead role on the global stage.

In the past, African Catholic leaders often would become defensive about any perceived criticism of the Church on the continent, worrying that it would feed perceptions of Africa as dysfunctional and immature.

Today, however, precisely because of a growing sense of self-confidence, African Catholics seemed more inclined to honestly acknowledge their failures and shortcomings, knowing that there's sufficient strength in their churches to weather the storm.

Nigerian Father Paulinus Odozor, the organiser of the summit, makes the point: "You have to be prepared to wash your dirty linen in public, where everyone can see," he said. "If Africa wants to be taken seriously as a player, Africa has to be honest about itself."

"We don't just want people to hear the wonderful things we're doing. We also want people to hear the terrible things we're doing, and the things we're not doing that well," he said.

That point was reinforced throughout the event, as the following examples attest.

Bishop Godfrey Onah of Nigeria nevertheless lamented that while ancient Africa produced great fathers of the Church, today it's best known for faith healers and miracle centres.

Fr Ludovic Lado, a Jesuit from Ivory Coast, reported that some Catholic priests in Africa not only practice witchcraft, but actually cast spells against one another.

Sr Maamalifar Poreku of Ghana not only complained

that women in the African Church are often reduced to doing no more than cleaning parish linens, but that the Rome summit itself hadn't really given her much hope things would change.

Whatever one makes of those points, the people delivering them had no apparent sense that doing so would somehow damage African Catholic prospects. The unstated premise seemed to be, "We've accomplished enough that talking these things out isn't going to fundamentally change the equation."

When African Catholicism was first taking root, there was an understandable sense that evangelisation was fragile, and hence, at times, a strong hostility toward anything or anyone that seemed to threaten Catholicism's hold on its flock.

**What people call Christian-Muslim conflict, there's nothing inevitable about that**

In the African context, that generally translated into a keen rivalry with two expressions of the religious 'other': Islam and Pentecostalism.

While many Catholics today remain wary of both, and not without good reason, that's increasingly matched by a capacity to acknowledge the good on the either side of the fence, and even to grudgingly admit that competition for hearts and minds may actually be healthy.

Bishop Matthew Kukah of Sokoto in northern Nigeria, an overwhelmingly Muslim part of the country, has emerged as one of African Catholicism's primary interlocutors with Islam, making the point that peaceful co-existence is

actually the African norm and violence the exception.

"What people call Christian-Muslim conflict, there's nothing inevitable about that. I think the Western media has constructed this, and it's very popular," he said. "What we really call violence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria is the failure of law and order," he said. "A lot of the issues that have led to violence have had very little to do with religion per se."

### Pentecostals

As for Pentecostals, there was a good deal of talk at the Rome summit about the way they 'lure' people away from the Catholic Church – giving them jobs, running dating services to provide them with spouses and touting seminarians and priests who defect.

On the other hand, several participants also conceded that the Pentecostal challenge is actually healthy, because it's forcing Catholicism to "wake up".

"It's made us understand that we can't take our people for granted," said Obiageli Nzenwa, a Catholic lay woman and independent human resources consultant in Abuja, Nigeria.

She said she hopes the Pentecostal boom may drive Catholicism to give more attention to the importance of forming and assisting women, since they form the backbone of the African Church.

'African Catholicism 2.0' would appear to profile as more self-confident, more honest about itself, and less given to snap judgments about the other.

Given all that the 1.0 version has accomplished, including shaping the most dynamic and enthusiastic Catholic community anywhere in the world, it'll be fascinating indeed to track how the 2.0 version plays out.

John L. Allen Jr is Editor of *CruxNow.com*

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# 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

### Abuse of poor contrary to Catholic teaching

**Dear Editor,** Thank you so much for your article 'Children of the Famine' (IC 23/03/2017) about the mindset that sustained the networks of social control independent Ireland inherited and developed from the British.

Too often commentators act as though our clergy and religious were Vatican shock troops parachuted into Ireland, despite these supposed agents of a foreign power being the children, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins of Ireland's laity. They arose from Irish society – they weren't imposed on it!

What's more, the values they encouraged had originally been inculcated in them by the society in which they themselves had grown up and that served crucial social functions.

That poverty was a marker of moral failure in newly independent Ireland is especially important: it's remarkable how few commentators acknowledge how utterly contrary this once commonplace notion is to Catholic teaching, let alone consider what this disconnect might mean.

The idea of the 'undeserving poor' derived ultimately from Elizabethan attempts to justify helping only some of England's poorest. However, it was not until after the Industrial Revolution and the Evangelical movement jointly transformed Britain's middle and working classes and gave them a fetish for respectability that this distinction became legally calcified.

This explicitly punitive Poor Law

Amendment Act 1834 aimed to cut costs and curb supposed abuses by denying aid save through workhouses where dire conditions would deter all but the most desperate.

Effectively absolving men from responsibility for pregnancies among unmarried women, a streamlined version of the law was introduced in Ireland soon afterwards.

Thomas Davis may have looked forward in the 1840s to Ireland being a nation once again, but it would take decades for independent Ireland to shake off the Victorian values of the British province it long was.

Yours etc.,  
**Margaret Kelly,**  
Cork City.

### British soldiers were initially welcomed as protectors

**Dear Editor,** In Fr Joe McVeigh's tribute to the late Martin McGuinness (IC 23/03/2017), he refers to the British reaction "militarily" to the civil rights campaign. But it must be borne in mind that the initial reaction to the civil rights campaign came from the RUC when they baton-charged the peaceful demonstration and it was on this occasion that the TV cameras revealed world-wide the injustices endured by the Catholic people in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, as a result of the peaceful and moral force rising up, mob violence was perpetuated on the besieged Catholic citizens.

The first encounter these people had with the British soldiers was as protectors and were greeted as such. Sadly, they later became 'legitimate targets' when the aims of the civil rights movement were seen to be achieved solely by other means.

Yours etc.,  
**Patrick Fleming,**  
Glasnevin, Dublin 9.

## No ambiguity over papal authority

**Dear Editor,** Michael Higgins' claim (IC 09/03/2017) that the Dubia regarding *Amoris Laetitia* constitute an unprecedented challenge to papal authority is quite fanciful. Protestant historian Rodney Stark in his book, *Bearing False Witness*, outlines a 1686 Holy Office ruling concerning the Spanish-Portuguese slave trade. It models the 'yes/no' structure of the Dubia

submitted to the Pope.

"It is asked:  
"Whether it is permitted to capture by force and deceit Blacks and other natives who have harmed no one: Answer 'No.'

"Whether it is permitted to buy, sell or make contracts in their respect Blacks and other natives who have harmed no one and been made captives by force or deceit? Answer 'No.'

"Whether the possessors of Blacks and other natives who have harmed no one and been captured by force or deceit, are not held to set them free? Answer 'Yes.'

"Whether the captors, buyers or possessors of Blacks and other natives who have harmed no one and been captured by force or deceit, are not held to make compensation to them. Answer 'Yes.'

"Nothing ambiguous here." (Page 173) Clarity banishing confusion!

Whatever about indulging Higgins' historical unawareness, is not disseminating his gratuitous unfounded slander of Popes Benedict, John Paul and of Cardinal Burke rather tabloid? Answer: Alas, yes.

Yours etc.,  
**Neil Bray,**  
Cappamore, Co Limerick.

## Time is right for public act of atonement

**Dear Editor,** The more we cover it up, excuse it, turn a blind eye to it, psychologise it, relegate it to pre-Vatican II or the medieval church, lock up our confessionals against it, or hurry it through in a fast moving penitential service queue, yet, so the more the Church continues to be bedeviled by it.

I am of course referring to sin and its awful consequences for us all whether bishops, priests, religious or laypeople. As the Catholic Church continues to lurch from one scandal to the next and seems unable to free herself, I believe the time is right now for a public act

of atonement by our bishops gathered together in Lough Derg. Could we not also fix a national day for Confession for all our priests and all our religious?

Pope Francis has already asked for a 24-hour availability of Confession for the people during the Lenten period. This year, the centenary year of the Fatima apparition, calls the Church to "repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15). Pope Saint John Paul II tells us that, "The message of Fatima is, in its basic nucleus, a call to conversion and repentance, as in the Gospel" (Fatima 1982).

People need to actually see our religious leaders make a public act of repentance, not as a Lenten exercise and not simply to mark the centenary of Fatima, but rather as a turning together, as Church, to the Gospel which can set us free. Such a unified act of atonement to God for the sins of the Church would raise, I believe, a great cry to Heaven for the intervention of Divine Mercy and for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Yours etc.,  
**Fr Freddy Warner SMA,**  
Portumna,  
Co. Galway.

## McGuinness' legacy could be to highlight rare disease

**Dear Editor,** I was saddened at the news of Martin McGuinness' death, and despite the variant views appearing in the media, one aspect of this that resonated with me was the human side of his passing having suffered with the rare degenerative disease that I also am being treated for since 2013, Amyloidosis.

This basically attacks all the vital organs of the body. It is incurable but is treated with chemotherapy and other drugs such as Thalidomide, which I have to take 21 days each month on top of kidney dialysis three days a week in the Ulster Hospital.

I recently sent a card to Martin McGuinness informing him that there were people in Bangor praying for him. I have no idea if the card, addressed to Stormont, would have got to him on time, but I hope it did. Amyloidosis is a difficult disease and there is little public awareness about it. Maybe one last legacy of Martin McGuinness will also be to help shed more light and public attention on this debilitating and serious illness.

Yours etc.,  
**Colin Nevin,**  
Bangor,  
Co Down.

### Don't tar all with the same brush

**Dear Editor,** I was, of course, appalled at the latest terrorist incident on Westminster Bridge in London. I agree it is important to condemn the crimes of Islamist terrorists without painting all Muslims with the same brush, although I do think it is important that Muslim leaders acknowledge the fact that there is something within Islam, or with how it is being taught, that is leading to radicalisation.

I also can't help but wonder at the double standards at how Catholics are treated in the media. Barbs at the Catholic Church are not just targeting the Vatican or the bishops, they affect all people of faith, whether it is in the context of religion in schools or repealing the Eighth Amendment, yet there is never the same call for calm or sensitive language.

Yours etc.,  
**Bernie Flynn,**  
Drogheda,  
Co. Louth.



## Letters to the Editor

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

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

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



# Around the world



**ISRAEL:** An Orthodox priest waits in line to view the restoration work on the Edicule, the traditional site of Jesus' burial and resurrection, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Photos: CNS



**USA:** Rosildo da Silva, a Chauwandawa leader in western Brazil, was part of a Pan-Amazonian Church Network that visited Washington last week.



**PERU:** Agents of the Peruvian National Police rescue people from floodwaters near the Rimac and Huaycoloro rivers in Lima.



▲ **USA:** A tractor-pulled wagon bearing the body of retired Bishop John McRaith of Owensboro, Kentucky is seen outside St Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro. The tractor had been a gift some years ago from the people of the Diocese of Owensboro for Bishop McRaith, who grew up on a farm in Hutchinson, Minnesota.

◀ **VATICAN:** Pope Francis walks with Chantal Biya, wife of Cameroonian President Paul Biya, at the end of a private audience at the Vatican.



**ITALY:** An Italian police officer with a dog checks the area in front of the Milan Cathedral the eve of Pope Francis' visit to Milan.



# Committing violence *in God's name*



**Fr Rolheiser**

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

**B**laise Pascal once wrote: "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from a religious conviction." How true; this has been going on since the beginning of time and is showing few signs of disappearing any time soon. We still do violence and evil and justify them in God's name.

We see countless examples of this in history. From the time that we first gained self-consciousness, we've done violence in God's name.

It began by sacrificing human persons to try to attain God's favour and it led to everything from actively persecuting others for religious reasons, to waging war in God's name, to burning people for heresy at the Inquisition, to practicing capital punishment for religious reasons and, not least, at one point in history, to handing Jesus over to be crucified out of our misguided religious fervour.

These are some salient historical examples; sadly not much has changed.

Today, in its most gross form, we see violence done in God's name by groups like Al-Qaida and ISIS who, whatever else might be their motivation, believe that they are serving God and cleansing the world in God's name by brute terrorism and murder.

The death of thousands of innocent people can be justified, they believe, by the fact that this

is God's cause, so sacred and urgent that it allows for the bracketing of all basic standards of humanity, decency, and normal religion.

When it's for God's cause, outright evil is rationalised.

Happily, it's impossible for most of us to justify this kind of violence and murder in our minds and hearts, but most of us still justify this kind of sacral violence in more subtle modes.

## Purposes

Many of us, for instance, still justify capital punishment in the name of divine justice, believing that

God's purposes demand that we kill someone. Many, too, justify abortion by an appeal to our God-given freedoms. Not least, virtually all of us justify certain violence in our language and discourse because we feel that our cause is so special and sacred that it gives us the right to bracket some of the fundamentals of Christian charity in our dealings with those who disagree with us, namely, respect and graciousness.

Our language, in both the circles of right and the left, is rife with a violence we justify in God's name.

On the right, issues like abortion and the defence of dogma are

deemed so important as to give us permission to demonise others.

On the left, issues of economic and ecological injustice, because they so directly affect the poor, similarly give us permission to bracket respect and graciousness. Both sides like to justify themselves with an appeal to God's righteous anger.

There's a story in John's Gospel, delicious in its irony, which helps expose how we are so often blind to the violence we do in God's name.

**“Before giving Moses the Commandments a second time, God also gave him a lecture: don't stone people with the Commandments!”**

It's the famous incident of the woman who is caught in adultery. They bring her to Jesus and tell him that they caught her in the very act of committing adultery and that Moses commanded, in God's name, that women like this be stoned to death. Jesus, for his part, says nothing. He bends down and writes with his finger, twice, on the ground and then tells them the one among them who's without sin might cast the first stone. They understand the gesture: why he is writing twice and what that means. What does it mean?

Moses went up a mountain and God, with his finger, wrote the Ten Commandments into two tablets

of stone. As Moses approached the Israelite camp on his return, carrying the two tablets of stone, he caught the people in the very act of committing idolatry.

What did he do? In a fit of religious fervour, he broke the Commandments, literally, physically, over the golden calf and then picked up the fragments and threw those stones at the people.

So here's the irony from which to draw a lesson: Moses was the first person to break the Ten Commandments. He broke them in God's name and then took the fragments and stoned the people. He did this violence in all sincerity, caught up in religious fervour.

Of course, afterwards, he had to go back up the mountain and have the Commandments written a second time.

However before giving Moses the Commandments a second time, God also gave him a lecture: don't stone people with the Commandments! Don't do violence in my name!

We've been very slow to grasp this mandate and take it seriously. We still find every sort of moral and religious justification for doing violence in God's name. We are still, like Moses, smashing the Commandments on what we consider idolatrous and then stoning others with the fragments.

This is evident everywhere in our religious and moral discourse, particularly in how we, as Pascal might put it, in God's name, "completely and cheerfully" bracket charity as it pertains to graciousness and respect.

A police officer places flowers given by a member of the public along Westminster Bridge following last week's terrorist attack.





# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, March 30, 2017

## Personal Profile

Belfast nun  
spreads love and  
hope in Kenya

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## Caring for our aging parents



**I**n all honesty, the first time our family was suddenly made responsible for caring for someone we loved, we didn't do a very good job. We did, however, learn a lot. Some years later, we had another chance to serve an elderly family member we loved dearly, and we put to use the lessons we had learned to do a better job – and what a world of difference that made (to us and to our loved one) the second time around.

The irony in caregiving is that to do it well, we need practice. Lots and lots of practice. Though it sounds rather callous, the hard truth is that unless we do something time and time again, we can't master the skills required to do it effectively. This



**Aging is difficult and caring for our elders is a skill many people are never taught, writes Michele Howe**

theory applies to serving those we love no matter what the individual circumstance looks like. It really didn't matter how much passion we put into serving when we first attempted to take care of our elderly relative – and in all honesty, we did our heartfelt best. We stumbled, we fell, and we routinely came up short in the process. Looking back, it was disheartening.

Our story began about 10 years

ago when we were suddenly (and quite unpreparedly) thrust into caring for our elderly neighbour/relative.

At that time, my husband and I were still parenting our four teenagers and life was hectic.

Between running around to our children's never-ending events and caring for their ongoing needs in the home, I felt I couldn't have taken on any other responsibility large or small

and done justice to it. But the Lord had other plans (doesn't he always?).

We had spent the last 27 years of our married lives settled in the country (in my husband's grandparents' home) and we loved it.

As folks who value the wide-open spaces, we also treasured the fact that we had only one neighbour and he was a gem.

### Neighbour

Bill, my husband's elderly second cousin, was an only child, as well as a lifelong bachelor with no children of his own. He was also our neighbour and had pretty much adopted our four kids as his own grandchildren from early on. He was an honest-to-

goodness genuine farmer, game hunter/fisherman, live-off-the-land type of guy.

Bill was independent, self-sufficient, and had loads of friends. We loved him. Our kids loved him. Bill was always there if we needed anything and vice versa. It was a very companionable relationship that we shared.

Bill's health remained robust until he turned 70. Then during the next five years, he was in and out of the hospital more times than I care to remember.

This once healthy outdoorsman contracted seemingly every major illness under the sun. It all started with colon cancer, then diabetes,

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## Children's Corner

ERIN FOX



### Some ideas to welcome Jesus on Palm Sunday

**L**ent is flying by and Easter is getting closer and closer. Next weekend is Palm Sunday, the last Sunday of Lent. Throughout Lent, Easter Sunday is the main day we look forward to, but Palm Sunday is just as exciting as it marks the start of Holy Week.

Palm Sunday commemorates Christ's entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey while welcomed by the crowds who waved palm branches, before his arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection. It's a day when people were overwhelmed with joy to see Jesus; much like his disciples were overjoyed when he rose again on Easter Sunday.



Next Sunday, after you get your palms at Mass, come up with different ways to make the most of them this Easter. After Easter time has ended, you can return the palms to your local church as they can burn them for ashes next Ash Wednesday.

In some countries they are displayed in windows and doorways to welcome Jesus and all people of good faith. Keep the palms from Mass and display them in your home for the Easter period. Remember to take only a few palms; one per family member, to save some for your fellow parishioners.

You can start making your own palm crosses this weekend, so they are ready in time for the following Sunday. Use these for different Easter-themed crafts. Don't worry if you can't get real palms to make them, some paper will do.

**Remember to take only a few palms; one per family member, to save some for your fellow parishioners"**

To make your own palms you'll need a long strip of paper and some scissors.

Fold the long strip of paper in half but not equally, so that one side is shorter than the other. To make the arms, fold the long side back at a 45 degree angle for the first arm of the cross.

Keep in mind that you're folding back-wards. Now fold it again all the way round the body of the cross back to the original 45 degree fold. This makes the second arm of the cross. You should now have a simple cross shape. Now glue everything into place to secure the cross.

If you're making an Easter wreath, Palm Sunday is the perfect time to start making one, so include some of your homemade palm crosses to fix onto the wreath.

## How to solve baby sleep problems



### Parenting Matters Lucy Wolfe

**I**am a sleep consultant and mum of four children. I work with families and children from birth to six years of age to establish positive sleep associations in the early days and to address frustrating sleep problems from six months onwards – without leaving a child alone to cry.

First of all, it's important to emphasise that not all sleep challenges require intervention or 'fixing'. Infant sleep is highly complex and not at all organised and so what feels like a problem may well be just what your child's sleep looks like at this early stage. However, as time evolves and your child gets older and more robust, most sleep challenges will benefit from adjustments and intervention.

From around six months of age, the character of your child's sleep has locked into place neurologically and the originally disorganised nature of infant sleep starts to become more organised.

At this stage it more or less looks like adult sleep, except the young child needs more sleep than an adult and they dream more, too. Essentially, your child will start to have to cycle through their natural sleep phases and this is where issues can start to arise.

#### Factors

There are two major contributory factors to most sleep issues in babies aged six months and over. The first might be described as a parental dependency in the context of your child's sleep. This means that if you are involved in getting your child asleep or partially asleep, your child is not yet independently able to go to sleep themselves.

When a child of six months and older who has been helped to sleep starts to cycle through sleep, the brain will periodically have a 'partial arousal'. This is a bit like a 'check-in' system, where the brain checks to see if everything's okay – 'is everything the same as it was when I first went to sleep?' If

it is, your child will more than likely roll over into their next phase of sleep, unless they are hungry and require a feed.

Unfortunately, if there is a level of dependency at this age and stage, when the brain checks in and things are not the same – the bottle/dummy/breast/parent is no longer present – or the child has been transferred to the cot or bed already asleep or very sleepy, this partial arousal becomes a complete arousal and your child will call, cry and look for you to help them into their next phase of sleep.

**“Going to sleep when you are overtired often means that the brain is in a heightened state of neurological arousal”**

The second part of many sleep struggles, and one that is more significant for some families, is all about the internal body clock – your child's circadian rhythm. This rhythm will not be completely set until after the age of around four years, but it is of enormous significance from birth.

Your child needs lots of sleep, including daytime sleep, and they also have what I would describe as an ideal time or optimum time to be awake and an optimum time to be asleep. Young children who are not in sync with these times may find it more difficult to either go to sleep or stay asleep or, for some, a bit of both.

Timing for sleep is everything and although in the early days I endorse flexibility, at this age I would perhaps become more prescriptive. Often families that I work with have timing issues and nothing else. This makes the

sleep issues no less challenging, but they can often be the reason why parents feel they have 'tried everything' and nothing has worked.

What does your child do when they start to get tired? Perhaps they get cranky, whiney, fussy, moany? These obvious signals usually indicate an overtired child: intense eye rubbing; wide yawns; stretching limbs; clenching fists; arching the back; becoming agitated, a little bit impatient, unreasonable and non-compliant; wanting to get up with you, then wanting to get down again; not really knowing what they want.

Going to sleep when you are overtired often means that the brain is in a heightened state of neurological arousal. This means that your child sleeps lightly and everything wakes them – a flush of the toilet, creaking stairs, for example. You may be experiencing frequent nighttime arousals directly after bedtime, or maybe long wakeful periods overnight, perhaps some early rising and/or short and varied nap durations. All of this can be a sign that your child's naps or bedtime, or both, are happening when they are already overtired. Sometimes it can be as little as 10 minutes too late!

The premise of the bedtime routine is to bridge the gap between wakefulness and time for sleep and I suggest that you not only do this at bedtime, but for nap time as well. When you have an order of events at bedtime and follow the same procedure every night, it is a great sleep cue for your child – 'this is what happens to me when it is time for sleep'.

#### The perfect bedtime routine

**1.** Quiet the house an hour before bedtime. Turn off the

television/computer. Spend one-to-one time with your child.

**2.** Finish any feeds in the living room or kitchen, so that you work towards weakening a potential feeding-sleeping association.

**3.** Consider a soothing bath to round off the day if you have the time. Alternatively, do a quick face wash and teeth brush and then go to your child's bedroom for the rest of the bedtime sequence.

**“Say the same words over, so that they can learn the words that you say before lights out”**

**4.** In the bedroom, dim the lights, pull the curtains and consider using white noise in the background, at the volume of a shower, to help regulate your child's heartbeat and relax them. Turn this off before they are asleep.

**5.** Get your child ready for bed: change the nappy, put on the pyjamas and get them into their sleeping bag if you use one.

**6.** While getting your baby ready for bed, sing a particular song and say the same words over, so that they can learn the words that you say before lights out – 'sleep time now, Harry, it's night now...'

**7.** Do some quiet reading or story-time with your child.

**8.** Provide a 20-30-minute wind-down. Build a process that you can add to as your child grows up.

**9.** Have an end to your routine; a certain phrase, turning off the lights or an 'I love you' ritual that signals the end of the routine and the start of your child needing to go off to sleep.

**10.** Then place your child in their cot – relaxed but awake – and use the stay-and-support approach if required.

**1** Lucy Wolfe is the author of *The Baby Sleep Solution* published by Gill Books.



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then Parkinson's, then open heart surgery, and then another cancer. Add to these the personal (and lingering) indignities of almost constant urinary issues that required catheters, and you can imagine how difficult it became for this once proudly independent man to handle his health problems and continue to live in his home alone.

### Aftermath

In the aftermath of each of Bill's health crises, we took on different roles in caregiving for him. At first, Bill's primary recovery from his first cancer surgery was spent in a rehab facility. We were close enough that we visited him almost daily. Between my husband and me, we took care of his home, his dog, his bills, his medicines, his groceries and so on. After each recovery, Bill repeatedly returned to live in his own home, even though at times this wasn't the safest of environments for him.

### “Between my husband and me, we took care of his home, his dog, his bills, his medicines, his groceries and so on”

Back and forth, between the hospital and a rehab/nursing home, Bill rallied from one illness to another for five painful years. Then, during a relatively minor medical procedure, Bill passed away quite unexpectedly in the hospital. After he died, we did a lot of reflecting about what we did right and what we did wrong. In truth, there were more 'wrongs' than 'rights'.

When I say 'wrong', I mean that some of the caregiving choices we made out of inexperience and naivete caused much upset in our marriage and in our immediate family.

In our desire to help Bill, we neglected to think through other possible options that would have prevented burnout on our part and still met his needs. We did 'right' in wanting to help Bill the best way we knew how, but we did 'wrong' in

some of our methodology.

The Lord, however, sometimes gives us second chances for do-overs. Several years after Bill passed away, we found out that my father-in-law, James, was ill. I still recall sitting at the after-funeral dinner for my husband's grandfather when my husband's father announced that he had been given the dire news of esophageal cancer.

Too quickly, James was in daily radiation treatments, and attending a myriad of doctor appointments, all while his pain level escalated rapidly.

As we grieved what we knew was coming because he had been given only a few months to live, my husband and I took stock of the all the mistakes we had made with Bill and tried to choose more wisely this time around.

Born of our prior exhausting experience, we now had knowledge and information to better prepare a smoother caregiving plan for my dying father-in-law.

### Responsibilities

Thankfully, as soon as the family heard the news of his illness, everyone offered to help divide up the caregiving responsibilities. Nobody had to take on the solo role of 'hero caregiver' and manage his

care 24/7.

Rather, we all did our part, and I truly believe James rejoiced in the amount of attention and love he received during those last precious months of his life. He passed away a brief five months after being diagnosed, but during those final weeks, I saw a formerly fearful man transformed from the inside out.

As I was able to spend a good deal of time in waiting rooms with him, I even now consider those last conversations we shared as some of the most precious in our over 30-year relationship.

### “Older people lose their independence, physical strength and mental acuity”

God was able to pack much love, goodness, and healing into those months. Maybe one of the most lasting treasures is that we all recall those moments with him without any of the regret that had tainted our last memories of cousin Bill.

Let's be honest: aging is difficult for everyone. Older people lose their independence, physical strength and mental acuity, and often their emotions lack their former stability.

All in all, it is hard to age, suffering a multitude of declines. It's equally hard for their younger family members to watch it happen and feel helpless to lessen the impact of their family member's suffering. But God is there for us.

Through it all, in the low times and in the high times, God draws close to give us exactly what we need to cope with that day's specific challenges.

He never leaves us on our own to handle life's toughest days. Like every other season in life, the Lord wants us to embrace these challenges with confidence that he will be with us, strengthen us and enable us.

**i** Extract from *Caring for our Aging Parents* with permission from Hendrickson Publishers.



## Faith — IN THE — family

Bairbre Cahill



**D**oes it seem odd to say I am enjoying Lent? We often think of Lent as an austere time when we are challenged to pray, fast and give alms. The image of sackcloth and ashes may not be far from our minds.

It is true that Lent can be difficult. I am struggling without my usual caffeine to refuel me. More than that though, I am aware of Lent as a journey laced with simple acts of love.

I was working recently on days of retreat with groups of fifth and sixth class students who are preparing for their Confirmation. They were all off something for Lent, from chocolate to YouTube to pizza.

What really impressed me though was what these children were taking up for Lent. Some

were helping more around the house. Others were trying not to fight with brothers and sisters. Some were visiting

grandparents more regularly and, importantly, spending their time talking to their grannies and granddads rather than playing on their phones!

Others were taking more time to pray every day. The positive impact these children's Lenten practices were having really struck me. We talked about how wonderful it was that Lent was helping them to bring love and happiness into the lives of the people around them. In a very real way these children are being Good News for others through simple acts of love.

### “The motivating force behind it all is love, love that challenges”

As a young adult I struggled with the language of sacrifice. To speak of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross seemed to me to suggest an image of God the Father as an angry, vengeful God whose wrath had to be subdued with a blood sacrifice.

That clashed hugely with my image of God. I had read enough Seamus Heaney poems about Tollund Man and the Bog Queen to know something of human sacrifice. I had grown up in Northern Ireland at the height of the Troubles where human life was

sacrificed on a regular basis. And so to speak of Jesus' death on the cross in terms of sacrifice seemed wrong.

It took time for me to realise the deeper meaning and how appropriate it is to speak of sacrifice. The cross is about sacrifice, not because God demands a pound of flesh but because it is Jesus himself who hands over his life. It is an act of utter and complete love. It is love that prompts Jesus to remove his robe and kneel down to wash the dusty, calloused feet of his friends.

It is love that empowers Jesus to place himself utterly in the hands of those mixed up, anxious friends at the Last Supper. It is love that gives him strength to go beyond his own fear in the Garden of

Gethsemane. Love is his purpose and his reason.

And so he allows himself to be taken, condemned and crucified.

Jesus is not a passive victim. He hands over, sacrifices his own life to proclaim that nothing is stronger than God's love, not even death.

What began the change in my understanding of the depth and complexity of sacrifice? I think it was the experience of being a parent. There is something about parenthood that demands a depth of loving and giving that we could never before have contemplated.

It is there in the big moments but it is there too in all the small, daily, unnoticed acts of love. Every parent has known those days when they feel they have nothing more to give – and yet somehow they keep giving. Parents, tired and stressed from the busyness of life, have sat up at night with sick children or waiting for sociable young adults to come home in the small hours of the morning. Parents have scraped and saved to educate their children. The motivating force behind it all is love, love that challenges, that costs, that demands more of us.

So those fifth- and sixth-class children with their simple acts of love remind me that Lent is an invitation to love more. It is in our loving that we will glimpse what the cross – even amidst thorns and nails – is truly about.





# Belfast nun spreads love and hope in Kenya



## Sr Patricia Speight shares her faith journey with Mags Gargan

One of the iconic images from Pope Francis' trip to Kenya in 2015 was of an overjoyed Irish Franciscan Missionary Sister for Africa taking his picture from the crowd. Belfast-born Sr Patricia Speight found herself appearing in newspapers across the globe, but it was not her first brush with fame.

Earlier in the year a documentary, *Nurtured by Love*, following her work supporting people with HIV/AIDS, was nominated for the Kenyan version of the Oscars, and in 2008 she was the face of the Mission Sunday promotional material in Ireland. However, Sr Patricia's average day in Nakuru is far from glamorous, but a life of prayer and service among the poorest and most vulnerable.

"I have spent seven years in Zimbabwe and 19 years now in Kenya, and after spending all these years in Africa I can still say there is not one day passes that I don't get a shock," she says. "I am always shocked by the extreme poverty, the one-tiny-roomed houses that the people live in, at times no furniture – only stones to sit on, no beds but a very unclean sponge type mattress on the floor, for many to share while sleeping at night."

"People that we care for don't have cookers, they use charcoal fires in the house, they don't have what Ireland has like fridges, microwaves etc. Approximately four latrines in an area, two male

and two female, to serve so many people. Many don't use these at night, they use a plastic bag instead. During the days when we are walking in the slum area where we serve, we have to 'duck' the 'flying toilet'. Jumping over open running sewers."

Sr Patricia is the director of the Love and Hope Centre, an integrated HIV/Aids programme which she began together with a volunteer called Genevieve Oloo in 1998. "Since then the programme

has really grown according to the present day needs in Nakuru," she says. "My day is spent with so many people in the heart of the deep rooted poor in the slum setting. We also have many programmes going on within the centre which includes giving holistic development programmes, group therapies, counselling to young women from the ages of 15-24 years. These young women have either been raped or they are using commercial sex working for

a business so that at the end of the day or night they can earn 200 Kenyan Shillings, the equivalent of €2, to help them feed their children and themselves."

Sr Patricia first heard her calling to religious life at the age of 16. "I heard a quiet whisper deep within my heart, 'Patricia come and follow me'. This is very hard to describe but it was very real for me and I carried this within my heart deeply," she says.

### "I loved his humility and his love for unity in the Church of Christ"

She was heavily involved with the Legion of Mary which took her to the Mater Hospital every Sunday to visit sick patients. "It was here that I met Sr Margaret Josephine Boyle, a Franciscan Missionary Sister for Africa. She was doing her training at the time and she asked me if I ever thought of becoming a sister. She offered to take me to visit Mount Oliver, our Mother House in Dundalk, Co. Louth," Sr Patricia recounts.



The iconic picture of an overjoyed Sr Patricia seeing Pope Francis on his visit to Kenya.



Sr Patricia Speight with clients at the Love and Hope Centre in Nakuru, Kenya. Photo: Trócaire

Personal  
PROFILE

"I felt so much at home, at peace, a feeling of joy and simplicity radiated in the faces of the sisters and they were so welcoming and happy to have me spend the weekend with them."

At 16 years she was too young to join the congregation and so went to train in nursing and was accepted at Westminster Hospital in London at 21 where, "to my surprise", she was declared 'Nurse of the Year'.

She returned to Ireland and continued nursing at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast before joining the order and travelling to Kenya as a young professed sister in 1984.

### Radiant colours

"When I first arrived I was struck to see such beautiful and radiant colours that the women wore together with the blooming and colourful trees and flowers," Sr Patricia says. But at the same time she was shocked to see the sheer poverty – "small round huts used for houses, no running water, no toilets but latrines".

Today she says she loves to be out at the heart of the community, in the homes of the sick and suffering. "God has called me to care for the sick and dying. To give life, love, joy and bring compassion to the sick who are lying just waiting for someone to listen to their painful stories of suffering and despair. I do my best to comfort them and whisper a little prayer into their ear," she says.

Sr Patricia says Pope Francis' visit strengthened her calling as a missionary "amongst his lovely people in Nakuru". "I have asked the Kenyan people how significant was his visit and the responses are; I loved his humility and his love for unity in the Church of Christ. During that time the country experienced a relatively peaceful period. Everyone experienced this sense of peace, even the politicians. People talked and shared with each other like sisters and brothers."

## Sweet Treats

Erin Fox



## Forest cake is a seasonal centrepiece for teatime

This woodland cake is just the centrepiece for a springtime afternoon tea. It also makes a great cake for Easter Sunday. Just add a few mini eggs and chicks to the cake if you want to make it more seasonal. You will need:

### Cake

- 175g self-raising flour;
- 1tsp baking powder;
- 50g cocoa powder;
- 225g butter softened;
- 225g golden caster sugar;
- 4 eggs;
- seeds of half a vanilla pod.

### Syrup

- 150g caster sugar;
- 150ml water;
- half of one scraped vanilla pod'

### Buttercream

- 200g butter;
- 250g icing sugar;
- 50g cocoa powder.
- three 15cm cake tins or two 20cm cake tins greased and lined with baking parchment.



Preheat oven to 160 degrees and grease and line the cake tins. Sieve the flour and baking powder into a large bowl. Mix the cocoa with two tablespoons of boiling water and leave to cool. In another bowl, beat the butter with the sugar and vanilla seeds until pale and fluffy. Add the flour and eggs and mix until combined.

Divide the mixture in half and then mix the cooled cocoa mixture into one half. Divide the chocolate mixture between the three tins and then pour the remaining vanilla batter on top.

Use a fork to swirl the cake batter to create the marbled effect. Bake in the oven for 30-35 minutes or until a skewer emerges clean.

While the cakes are baking, make the syrup. Place the sugar, scraped vanilla pod and water in a pan over a medium heat. Bring to the boil to dissolve the sugar and then remove the pan from the heat. Leave aside to cool.

When the cakes are out of the oven, prick the tops with a wooden skewer and then brush over the syrup. Leave the cakes in their tins for 10 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool.

Once they're cooled completely, place them in the fridge for 30-60 minutes before icing.

Meanwhile, make the buttercream. Beat the butter, vanilla, cocoa and icing sugar together for five minutes on a high speed.

Trim the tops off the cake and layer with the buttercream. Using a palette knife, spread the rest of the buttercream over the top and sides of the cake. Dip the spatula in hot water and then smooth the icing all around the cake. Place the cake in the fridge for 30-60 minutes before you add another layer of buttercream.

To create the log effect, use a very fine palette knife to make marks all around the cake. Make a spiral on top of the cake.

Next add your decorations. Sprinkle some of the ground pistachios on tops of the cake and around the bottom for the moss.

Place the primroses and fern leaves at the bottom of the cake, and the toadstools and ivy on top.

See how the decorations are made online at [www.irishcatholic.ie](http://www.irishcatholic.ie)



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Welcome media focus on gambling

**A**part from alcohol dependency, gambling has to be one of the most destructive addictions in this country, and one that we're way too ambiguous about.

And so it was a welcome awareness-raising exercise when stand-in presenter Dr Ciara Kelly interviewed Maebh Leahy, CEO of the Rutland Centre, on Newstalk's **High Noon** last week. The specific focus was on how women were becoming more involved in gambling largely because of the increased availability of online gambling through various apps and websites.

Traditionally gambling was associated with men, and the bookie's shop was not a female-friendly place, but now things had changed and a surge of female addicts was expected at treatment centres. The male association with gambling made it harder for women to come forward and seek treatment.

While gambling was often a competitive thing with men, women were offered escape, relaxation, social life, but of course this was the initial offering that led to a very different reality once the addiction took hold. And of course as it worsened there was deceit, manipulation, excessive borrowing, and in some cases the loss of almost everything.

Kelly instanced one person

Al Porter listening to Eithne Shortall on **Brendan O'Connor's Cutting Edge**.



she knew who had lost the family home twice.

Leahy had concluding advice – for those conscious of the addiction she recommended seeking treatment, with the GP as a good first port of call and she urged politicians to push forward with the Gambling Control Bill, in the pipeline since 2012.

### Parenting

Another useful conversation took place on Newstalk's **Breakfast** the next morning when Shane Coleman interviewed family psychologist John Rosemond.

He had created a stir in a recent column in support of what might be called traditional parenting. He favoured families being adult-centred rather than child-centred, as he believed this encouraged respect in children, for their parents and others. In recent

years the focus had shifted to families being centred around the 'supposed needs' of children, who were getting lots of attention and lots of 'stuff', but co-incident with that, he said, was a dramatic decline in the mental health of children – 10 times worse than in the 1950's.

Coleman seemed sympathetic to Rosemond's views but did say to him that some would regard those times as involving a colder, sterner, type of parenting, with 'children seen and not heard'. Rosemond disagreed, saying that in those days children were like students in adult company, listening and learning. He was critical of mental health professionals who demonised this style of parenting.

Coleman agreed with Rosemond's contention that one of the most important

things was bringing up children to be responsible citizens. Rosemond cited a US high school survey that found the students thought their parents were more interested in their achievements as students than in their characters.

Rosemond said he still found parents who valued the traditional ways and left us with the idea that good parenting strengthens cul-



Dr Ciara Kelly.

ture, and that parents have an obligation to the culture, not just to their kids. More of this at [johnrosemond.com](http://johnrosemond.com)

### Falseness

And finally, another conversation, this time only fitfully interesting and frequently irritating, was on **Brendan O'Connor's Cutting Edge**, back on RTÉ One on Wednesday night when the guests included former senator Fidelma Healy Eames, journalist Eithne Shortall and comedian Al Porter.

Religious matters surfaced a few times. Healy Eames praised Pope Francis for challenging young people to be aware of falseness in social media, to write their own reality and make their own stories. This led to a few digs from the others – Porter said the Church was pretty good at re-writing its own story, while presenter Brendan O'Connor was sarcastic – suggesting that social media will be finished after the Pope's comments.

Shortall said the Pope isn't the one the young people would be listening to (has she seen any World Youth Day coverage?). O'Connor accepted that Francis was popular 'as Popes go', while Porter compared him favourably to Benedict XVI, but said it was like having "a better shine on an old boot".

*The Angelus* on RTÉ was discussed later, when we

### PICK OF THE WEEK

**MY COUNTRY, MY FAITH: IRELAND**  
EWTN Saturday, April 1, 10.30pm

Fr Owen Gorman talks with Fr Bede McGregor about *Servant of God*, Frank Duff's intense love of the Eucharist.

**WOULD YOU BELIEVE?**  
RTÉ One, Sunday, April 2, 10.35pm

One Hundred Thousand Welcomes. This week's programme examines the welcome extended to Syrian refugees in Ireland.

**THE LEAP OF FAITH**  
RTÉ Radio 1, Friday, April 7, 10.02pm

Topical religious affairs with Michael Comyn.

heard of a survey showing a majority (62%) in favour of keeping it. Healy Eames pointed out this was across all age groups. Shortall and Porter seemed iffy about it but Healy Eames, in response to anyone wanting it gone, suggested we were in danger of "throwing out everything that ever meant anything to anyone". A timely warning.

✉ [boregan@hotmail.com](mailto:boregan@hotmail.com)



Aubrey Malone

# Film

## Romanian doctor drawn into web of deceit

### Graduation (PG)

You won't see a better film about abortion than *Four Months, Three Weeks, Two Days*. It should be used as a resource by anyone campaigning against the repeal of the Eighth Amendment. Now Cristian Mungiu is back with another equally absorbing moral parable. Again he uses the same lingering scenes to depict the slow pace of life in the grubby backstreets he presents with such chilling accuracy.

Romeo, a doctor, lives with his wife Magda and daughter Eliza in the town of Cluj, Romania. His marriage in tatters, he's been having an affair with a single mother for the

past year.

After he drives Eliza to school to do an exam one day, she's assaulted and is traumatised by the experience. The reward for performing well is a scholarship to a prestigious British university – Romeo's holy grail. Fearing she'll falter, he starts pulling strings to 'enhance' her grades.

He's involved in other shady activities too. By 'putting in a word' with a medical colleague he attempts to have a friend who needs a liver transplant 'bumped up' the queue. This is the way things seem to be done generally in Cluj. Favours are bestowed in return for backhanders. But can such practices go on indefinitely?



Adrian Tutieni and Lia Bugnar in *Graduation*.

This is a wonderful film, a modern-day epic of the ordinary. As I listened to the uplifting choral music that punctuates many of the scenes the term 'soap opera' came to mind. It's a term that's been devalued by television. Here it seemed literally relevant. Humdrum lives become elevated to the level

of art by Mungiu's transformative direction.

Romeo is a fundamentally decent man who's been driven to desperate acts by his reduced financial circumstances. The film doesn't judge him and perhaps we shouldn't either. All too often we see the mote in other people's eyes rather than our

own, a point the film itself makes. All the performances are top-notch. Playing the beleaguered doctor, Adrian Tutieni carries an air of near-permanent dementedness as he tries to 'fix' all the many things that are broken in his life.

### Happines

As Magda, Lia Bugnar seems locked in a world of her own for most of the time. Happiness has passed her by long ago. Now she merely goes through the motions of her days.

She's aware of Romeo's affair and also of his attempts to interfere in Eliza's education. She protests, but with an air of defeatism. Dejectedly

dragging on cigarettes she watches the values she inculcated in Eliza being steadily eroded.

Maria-Victoria Dragus is equally compelling as Eliza. Like her mother, she becomes more and more disenchanted with Romeo when his scams escalate.

As in all great films – and life – none of the central issues are really resolved. It ends with the eponymous graduation, offering us only a tenuous nirvana. This is as good as it gets for the damaged denizens of a godforsaken community slouching towards a very compromised peace.

*Graduation* will glue you to the screen.

Excellent  
★★★★★



# BookReviews

**Peter Costello**



## Recent books in brief

### **Stations of the Cross Then and Now**

by Denis McBride

(Redemptorist Publications, £15.00)

As Easter approaches Denis McBride's new book is perhaps the sort of contemplative book which many Christians will want to read, in which the Via Dolorosa is explored and exemplified in modern terms, though it would be true to say that the terms of cruelty, torture, and execution have an universal nature which transcends time.

Each station of the way is treated in the same way. The description of the passage from the gospels, to this is added a reflection, an instance from our own times, and a prayer. Each provides patterns of devotions for either church or home. The general aim is to reduce the distance between us and the Passion, for often the kinds of art works used in churches place a sanitising barrier between us and what actually happened. The examples bring home in their different ways the full nature, the full inwardness, of what the gospels tell us.

This is an excellent little book, which ought to inform understanding and faith for many readers.



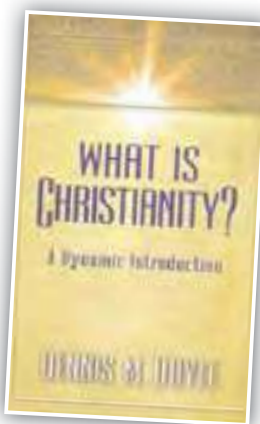
### **What is Christianity: A Dynamic Introduction**

by Dennis M. Doyle

(Paulist Press / Alban Books, £21.99pb)

The author, Dennis M. Doyle, is a distinguished Catholic writer on theology with some 30 years teaching experience. With its ecumenical basis, this book is designed as a class text, which is its primary purpose, for it is fitted out with revision points, summaries, and questions.

But with many people now taking early retirement wishing to still keep their minds alive it would prove ideal either for private reading, or as an adjunct to a group endeavour, to reintroduce people to the nature of the faith in which they presume to believe. It is all too easy for adults to try and get by on what they learnt at school. But the true faith of a mature Christian should be a mature Christian faith. If religion is a community affair, learning about it should also be a shared experience. The aim of an adult must not be to confirm themselves in their prejudices, but to deepen and expand what they can know.

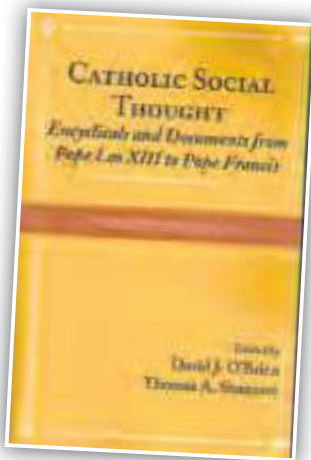


### **Catholic Social Thought: Encyclicals and Documents from Leo XIII to Pope Francis, Third Revised Edition**

edited by David J. O'Brien & Thomas A Shannon  
(Orbis Books / Alban Books, £29.99pb)

The editors of this book are retired professors of religion. Their important collection, now revised for a third edition, will prove essential for anyone wishing to survey and understand the development of Catholic social teaching since the end of the 19th Century, when such a focus can first be found taking a leading part in Catholic teaching.

In the light of today's evermore more complex social interrelations, vertically within in a single society, and horizontally between different traditions, this is an area in which every Catholic should attempt to have some grounding, for it affects in the lives of all people who profess to be Catholics. This is also a book which all school and college libraries should possess a copy of.



# For good or evil: Marconi and the making of our global world

## **Marconi: The Man Who Networked the World**

by Marc Raboy

(Oxford University Press, £25.00)

**Peter Costello**

**T**he Vatican is said to be slow to communicate its views on issues, due to its own bureaucracy. But this is only partially true. *L'Osservatore Romano*, for instance, was founded in 1861 to propagate the claims of the Vatican under threat of extinction by the Kingdom of Italy in the drive towards unification.

So it was that soon after the Vatican City had come to terms with the new, now Fascist Italy, the Vatican through Guglielmo Marconi established in 1931 Vatican Radio, whose worldwide broadcasts reached a far wider audience than the paper did. As it had for de Valera in establishing the first Irish station at Athlone in 1933, radio enabled the seemingly besieged Church to speak directly to the world, providing the Church (if I can adapt de Valera's words when he opened his station) with "a bridge" between the Pope in Rome and his adherents around the globe.

The connectivity of radio and its propagation by Marconi is the main theme of this very large biography. When I first read of Marconi at the age of eight it was in a context of "the inventor" of radio. This he was not in any true sense. Scientifically speaking he built on the work of Hertz, Branly and others. What he



did do, as an astute businessman, was to develop its commercial potential.

## **Publicity**

The publicity attached to such early incidents as the arrest of Dr Crippin and the sinking of the Titanic, in both of which radio messages, then called 'Marconigrams', played a significant part.

A decade or so later radio was well established, as a

government venture in some places and pure business in the USA and elsewhere.

But here again, as with the printing press and the internet, the new medium moved rapidly far beyond what Marconi had originally envisaged.

It is an exaggeration to say (as the author does) that Marconi was "the man who networked the world" – that distinction belongs to the original telegraphic network

which influenced the late 19th century dissemination of news and opinion. Less easy to study is the social effect of radio – though the famous Orson Welles 'Martian invasion scare' (1938) gave some indication of just what it could do to spread hysteria and fear – and in the outcome – hatred.

But this is a biography and it follows the personal life of Marconi. Here in Ireland we always hear of him in the context of early experimental broadcasts, and the station near Clifden. His mother was a Jameson of the distilling family, and her family house is the mansion which still stands in front of the RTÉ premises at Montrose.

**“There was a time when Marconi would be referred to in those round-up articles on ‘Catholic scientists’”**

But by far the most novel part of this book, the real meat of the matter, is the exploration of the last decades of Marconi's life – he died in 1937 – and such topics as his commercial schemes worldwide and his relations with the new Fascist regime in Italy.

There was a time when Marconi would be referred to in those round-up articles on "Catholic scientists" – but his relations with religion and the Church were not simple. He was happy enough to call

## Haunting memories

### **A Single Headstrong Heart**

by Kevin Myers

(Lilliput Press, € 20.00)

**Peter Hegarty**

On the cover of this affecting, beautifully-written memoir is a photograph of young Kevin Myers, a parrot on his shoulder; beside him, smiling cautiously, is his father Willie, who was a GP. They were on their way to the Cup Final at Wembley when a street photographer snapped in passing.

Willie was about 60 at the time but looks much older. He was a troubled man.

He suffered from depression and hypochondria. He was lonely. A calamitous event had defined his life. The Fianna Fáil government had given his job to a party placeman in the 1940s, forcing him to leave Ireland for Britain to find work.

He seems to have incurred the party's wrath by placing a death notice for a relative who had died while serving with the British Army.

He hadn't long to live when the photograph was taken.

Father and son loved each other, but they rowed. The last words they exchanged were in angry ones. His son's

continual mockery finally provoked the old man into striking him. Kevin flew out of the house.

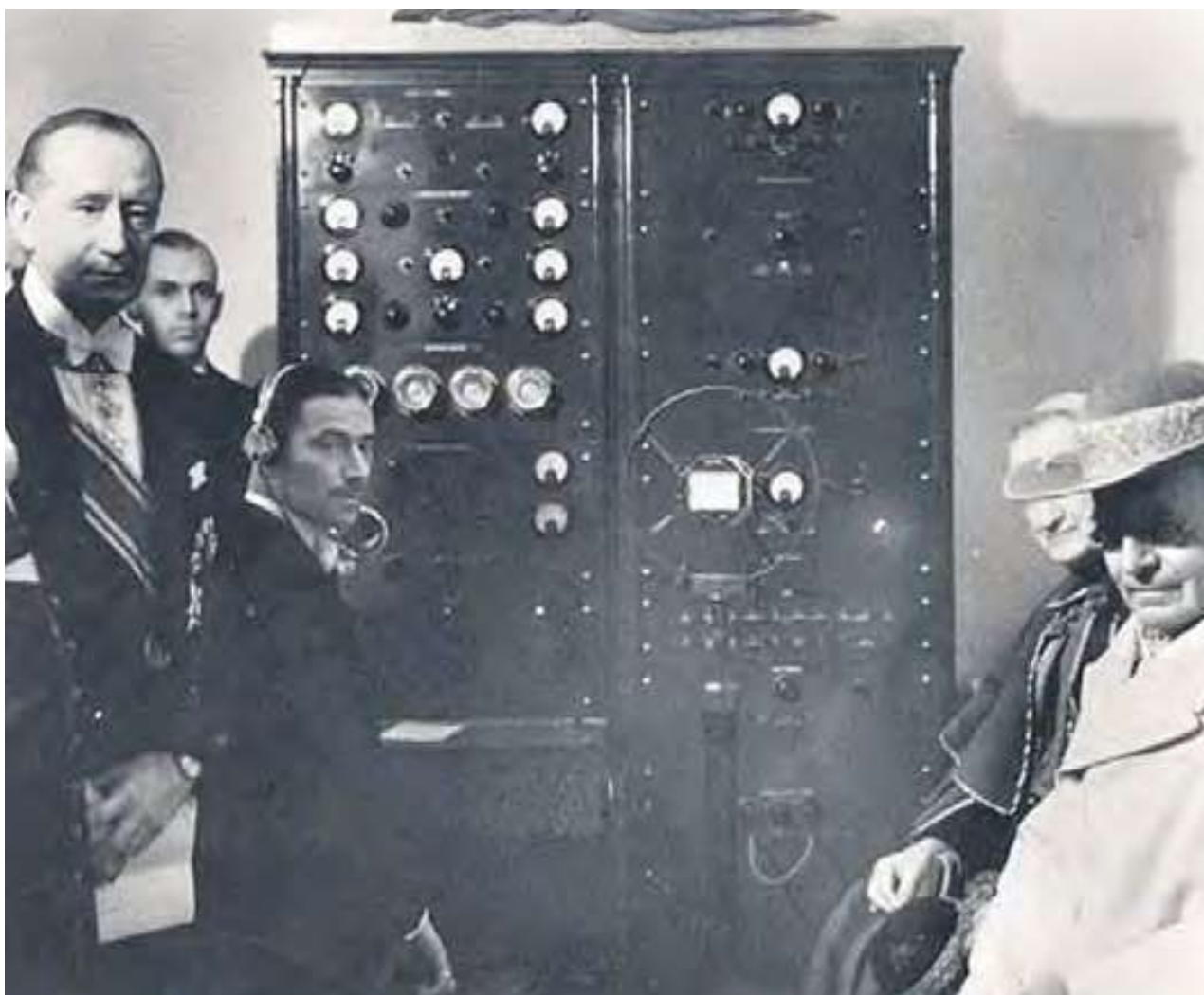
He never said goodbye to Willie, who died shortly after that incident; regret and guilt have haunted him since.

**“An old man revealed that his father had served in the IRA”**

A lucky break – an offer of a place at UCD – rescued him from the aimlessness and emotional chaos of his young adulthood in his home town of Leices-



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.



himself a Christian, and the Roman Rota was pleased to annul his marriage when he divorced his wife – but then to get such a verdict is often merely a matter of a deep enough pocket and good connections.

But when Marconi passed away *L'Osservatore Romano* reported he had had died “a Christian death”. He was said to have breathed his last while a priest who had been called to his bedside recited the Pater Noster. All this was quite false.

How can we be so certain? “Thanks to the Church’s obsession with having its secret record of the true story, we know what really happened,” Professor Raboy writes. Despite what the

Vatican paper had reported, a week or two later both the priest and Marconi’s nurse, interrogated by the Vicariate of Rome, agreed that he was already dead when the priest came back at 3.45 “and had died without receiving the last rites”.

### Details

These details of Marconi’s last hour, supported too by his Fascist Secret Police file, fill nearly two pages. But the anecdote illustrates the nature of Roboy’s extraordinary research, which has been not only intensive but widening.

He illuminates the career of a remarkable Hiberno-Italian in such rich detail that the book also casts in a search

**“It reminds us that what our great inventors provide quickly becomes something very different to what they intended”**

light in many areas of life in the early 20th Century, both social and political.

But it reminds us that what our great inventors provide quickly becomes something very different to what they intended. Rather than an instrument of peace and prosperity, radio when Marconi died, had become already an instrument of conflict.

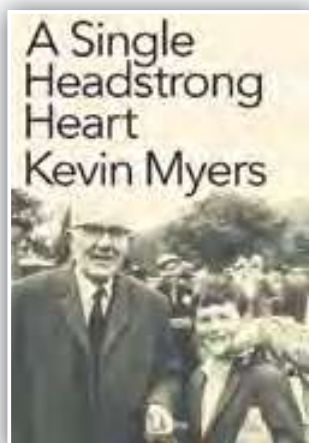
It was, as Catholic philosopher Marshall McLuhan observed, a “hot medium” that was essential to the creation of the initial impulse towards Arab nationalism under Nasser, which has now grown into Islamic terrorism through the internet.

Would that we could all see the ultimate outcome of our actions.

ter. He determined to make something of himself, immersing himself in the study of history, his interest in which Willie had awakened with his stories about the Irishmen who had fought in the First World War.

### Answers

He was an established journalist and controversialist when an old man revealed that his father had served in the IRA, and more specifically, in the battalion to which Collins’ Squad had often subcontracted its grisly chores. He had been close to Charlie Dalton, a notorious killer.



The news posed questions for which Myers may never find answers: had his father killed people?

Had he chosen to study medicine, the science of curing and treating illness, as a way of making amends for harming or killing others?

Had he been driven by that same sense of righteousness – that same headstrong heart – that led his son to denounce malefactors at his boarding-school, causing them to be expelled on their last day there?

Had he, Kevin Myers wonders in this compelling memoir, ruined lives as his father may have done before him?

## The World of Books

# Are the people always right?

Joe Carroll

**H**illary Clinton won more popular votes than Donald Trump in the US Presidential election but he won more Electoral College votes under the system devised by an 18th-Century intellectual elite, some of whom were slave-owners. So is he the democratically elected President?

Eamon de Valera did not believe the Irish people had the right to be wrong when the First Dáil narrowly accepted the Anglo-Irish Treaty which he rejected in 1922.

You could argue that the six counties of Northern Ireland was an inherently undemocratic entity as it was deliberately chosen to produce a two-thirds unionist majority.

How can majority/minority disputes be solved rationally? In 2004, a financial journalist on *The New Yorker*, James Surowiecki, wrote a book called *The Wisdom of Crowds* (Abacus, £9.99pb), subtitled *Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few*. It was highly praised for its analysis of decision-making in the worlds of business, science, stock-markets and politics. Except for the last category – politics – the author was able to demonstrate, often statistically, that “under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them.”

He points out dangers that can undermine this group intelligence. There can be a tendency to “follow the herd” or to “group think”. Examples would be the way the Celtic Tiger era was dominated by the rush to get into property at any price because the price could only go up.

**“One could argue that it was in the public interest to have water charges so that the future supply could be safeguarded”**

This was preceded by the “dot-com bubble” in the US in the late 1990s when it was enough for a company to announce that it was specialising in information technology for its shares to go through the roof. Belatedly it was realised that the valuation put on many of these companies before they ever made a profit was crazy.

But aberrations aside, the arguments for “group intelligence”

can be proved “under the right circumstances” such as experiments in laboratories and in universities with guinea pig students.

When it comes to democracy and politics, left to the last and shortest chapter in the book, the author concedes that the “wisdom of crowds” can be a dubious concept but not altogether to be ruled out. He refers to the work of two political scientists in the US, James Fishkin and Bruce Ackerman, who argued 14 years ago after the election of George W. Bush as president that something dramatic needed to be done to “stop the hollowing out of American democracy.”

As the professors saw it, “Americans are increasingly isolated from each other and alienated from the political system, public debate is becoming coarser and less informative, and the idea of the public good is being eclipsed by our worship of private interest.”

### Private interest

That was 14 years ago. Has the election of Donald Trump shown things have got any better? What about our own situation? Water charges were a major issue in last year’s general election. Was this an example of “the idea of the public good being eclipsed by our worship of private interest”?

The author goes on to show that it is extremely hard to define “public interest”. In the Irish election, for example, one could argue that it was in the public interest to have water charges so that the future supply could be safeguarded (apart from the argument that not having charges could leave Ireland open to heavy EU fines).

But opponents of water charges could point to Britain where in some areas the water supply has been privatised leaving it vulnerable to exploitation and what was to stop that happening here if a centralised water authority were set up?

Irish politicians when faced with an election result which has gone wrong for them, often say resignedly: “The Irish people in their wisdom have...” What they really mean is that in this case the Irish people have acted stupidly. They have put self-interest before the common good. But who is to say what really motivates the voter in the privacy of the voting booth? He or she might actually be voting for the common good, and if a good government is the overall result you could say it is an example of the “wisdom of the crowd”.









# Leisure time

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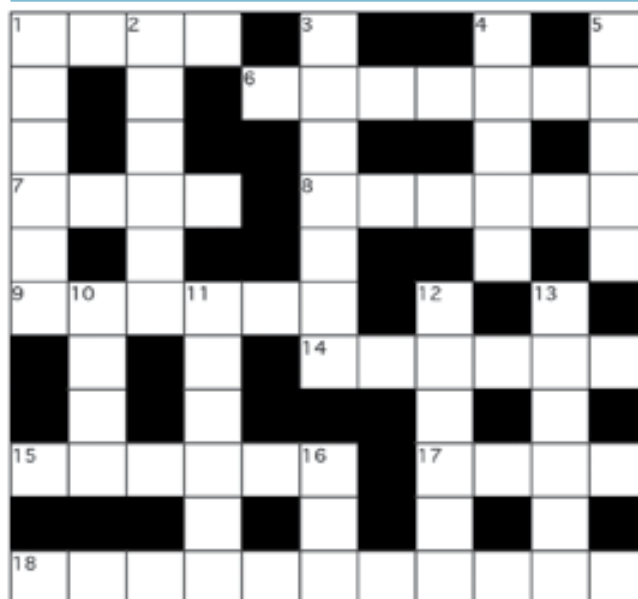
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## Crossword Junior

Gordius 175



### ACROSS

- 1 Secret language used by spies (4)  
6 More clever (7)  
7 Ache (4)  
8 Aries and Leo are signs of the \_\_\_\_\_ (6)  
9 The capital of England (6)  
14 Stringed instrument (6)  
15 They might be cheese and onion flavour (6)  
17 Removed (4)  
18 Use it to make your fingers and toes more colourful (4,7)

2 Pattern (6)

3 Astounding (7)

4 Mark made by spilling something on material (5)

5 How much you must pay to buy something (5)

10 Above (4)

11 Lorries run on this kind of fuel (6)

12 Type of glove (6)

13 Very well known (6)

### DOWN

1 Small church (6)

16 Ocean (3)

## LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

### GORDIUS No.291

**Across** – 1 Defamation 6 Chat 10 Preen 11 Antipasto 12 Adamant 15 Teach 17 Orca 18 Ohms 19 Radii 21 Inspect 23 Safes 24 Mark Twain 25 Owed 26 Idyll 28 Overlap 33 Near thing 34 Clint 35 Easy 36 Fever pitch

**Down** – 1 Dupe 2 Freedom of Conscience 3 Minim 5 Oats 7 Hosta 8 Toothpicks 9 Upstart 13 Alan 14 Torpedo 20 Dramatist 21 Isolate 22 Cure 27 Years 29 Vogue 30 Recap 31 Wise 32 Itch

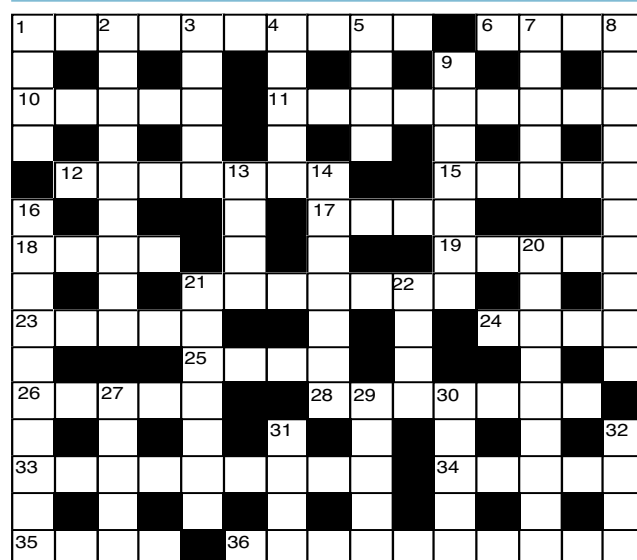
### CHILDREN'S No.174

**Across** – 1 Microwave 6 Draw 7 Raging 9 Cigarettes 11 Pebbles 13 Eggs 16 Sheep 17 Garage 18 Dew

**Down** – 1 Medicine 2 Changing 3 War 4 Vegetables 5 Cage 8 Trip 10 Steeple 12 Easel 14 Glad 15 Soap

## Crossword

Gordius 292



### ACROSS

- 1 & 34a Some golden spot there allows one offer one's hand in marriage (6,4,5)  
6 Small glass container (4)  
10 Herb often used in recipes involving tomatoes (5)  
11 A floral container might be welt-proof (9)  
12 The last part of a game of chess, or the title of a Beckett play (7)  
15 Showing less colour (5)  
17 Type of pastry (4)  
18 Wading-bird seen in the hibiscus (4)  
19 Shade of brown (5)  
21 Contrition about an Oxford detective (7)  
23 Divide in two (5)  
24 & 27d Maoris run around some stars (4,5)  
25 Religious faction one may select heartlessly (4)  
26 Recapitulate that a mathematical problem has arisen (3,2)  
28 The shoulder blade (7)  
33 Get 28 across to part of Asia for porcelain (4,5)  
34 See 1 across  
35 Organs of hearing (4)  
36 A devil-may-care mate for Jill the lass, presumably (4,3,3)

### DOWN

- 1 Bars (4)  
2 Vital (9)  
3 Concentration camp from the old USSR (5)  
4 Third World charity that occupies part of a box, famously (5)  
5 Greek god of love (4)  
7 Urge forward (5)  
8 That strange lilac rug - it is relating to worship (10)  
9 Tailor-made (7)  
13 Saint who was the mother of the Blessed Virgin (4)  
14 Strong attempts (7)  
16 A Star Wars weapon destroyed the sable, right? (5,5)  
20 One made to feel silly on a particular date (5,4)  
21 Esteem (7)  
22 It flies in part of gorgeous Kuala Lumpur (4)  
27 See 24 across  
29 Fissure (5)  
30 Play sports here - quietly, with irritation (5)  
31 A type of slightly-leavened bread (5)  
32 Part of dreariest Huddersfield - how dull it sounds! (4)

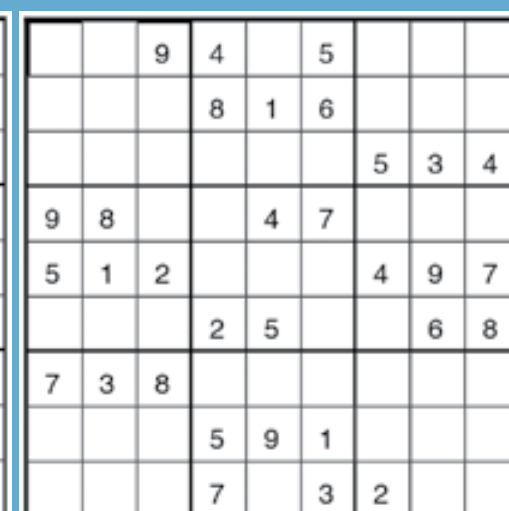
## Sudoku Corner

175

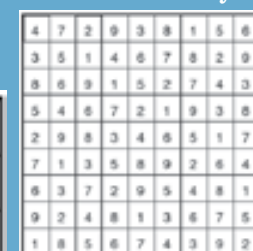
### Easy



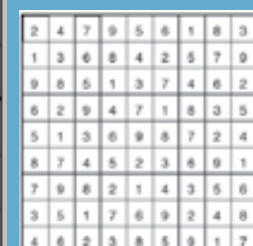
### Hard



### Last week's Easy 174



### Last week's Hard 174





Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



# Religion is constantly undermined in Irish public life

**ONE OF THE** country's large general hospitals recently made a small but very significant change. It renamed all of its wards. Previously the wards had saints' names: 'St Michael's Ward', 'St Brigid's Ward', etc. Such names were commonplace in many hospitals around Ireland and I suppose the practice of naming wards – and indeed whole hospitals – after saints underscored the Christian ethos of those institutions.

Interestingly, the change made to the ward names in the hospital mentioned above simply involved dropping the 'St' from the title, so now the wards are known as 'Michael's Ward' and 'Brigid's Ward', etc. I understand that this name-changing exercise, which came when the hospital drew down funding for new signs, cost in the region of €35,000.

One is left to wonder and speculate about the thinking and motivation behind the move. Had there been some complaint from patients or staff from other faiths? Did they feel discriminated against by having to be treated or work in a location with such an explicit Christian name? Is the name change motivated by a desire to be more 'inclusive'

or is it simply another example of a creeping secular agenda which seeks to chip away at our Christian heritage? Whatever the motivation one wonders how the hospital authorities can justify a spend of this proportion when there is such an acute shortage of money in the health service budget for the provision of beds and staff to treat patients.

The hospital name-changing exercise is just one more example of the apparent relentless campaign to not only undermine our Christian heritage, but also to relegate the spiritual and religious aspects of Irish community life to the margins.

It is interesting to note that

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in her Christmas speeches goes out of her way to speak about the story of Jesus and even invokes Catholic saints as she did last Christmas.

However, our current president seems equally determined to avoid using specific religious language in his Christmas and St Patrick's Day messages.

In his recent message for our national feastday, President Higgins [pictured] described St Patrick as being an immigrant, as being trafficked, as coming back to Ireland but absolutely no mention of the faith or religious dimensions of his mission.



Ironically, when the president travels abroad, as he did recently to South America, he invariably meets up with Irish missionaries who have made such an enormous contribution to the development of so many countries. There is a growing feeling among many Irish Catholics and indeed, people of faith in general, that our president contributes significantly to the undermining of the religious dimension of our nation.

## Reaction

A final example is the reaction to the recent death of Cardinal Desmond Connell. Desmond Connell was the first cardinal in Dublin since Edward MacCabe died in 1885. His recent death merited only a one sentence expression of sympathy from Áras an Uachtaráin. The president was not alone among our national leaders who shunned the cardinal's funeral. Contrast that with the effusive presidential eulogies for poets and footballers not to mention the canonisation of Fidel Castro.

For the millions of people of faith in this country, who

## THE PREACHER'S DILEMMA:

Last Sunday we celebrated Mothers' Day and one parish priest decided he would preach about the glories of motherhood. Having delivered what he considered was an eloquent homily for the occasion the priest was confronted at the door of the church after Mass by a very irate woman who was obviously also a mother: "Father, I wish I knew as little about being a mother as you do!"

incidentally also pay their taxes and contribute to the funding of our schools, hospitals and pay for our public representatives and our public broadcasters, will someone somewhere shout 'stop' to this constant undermining of that which is precious to us?

## A Lenten prayer for the Christian Community

Lord,  
Take us on our journey  
From where we are to what you want us to be;  
So that we become a community  
Where all are welcomed and no one is excluded,  
All are valued and no one is made to feel inadequate,  
All are forgiven and no one is ashamed to belong,  
All are encouraged and no one is too hurt to come among us...  
Let us go gladly on the journey towards Easter-  
The journey towards death and resurrection.  
Let us journey in the peace and power of the Spirit.

– Ruth Harvey



## YOUR LENTEN GIFT CAN RELIEVE FAMINE IN AFRICA

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.

## The church is uniquely positioned to deliver help.

Your donations to The Little Way Association are **sent intact** to clergy and sisters in Africa, so they can feed the starving people.

**Please be generous.**



## LITTLE WAY HOUSE IN FATIMA AVAILABLE FOR GROUPS

Would you like to take a group to Fatima for the Centenary celebrations? Casa Little Way is available for parish or group bookings.

The house is about 20 minutes' walk from the Shrine and can accommodate up to 22 pilgrims in shared rooms.

You would need to book your own flights but transport can be arranged between Lisbon airport and Fatima for groups.

**Ph: 00 44 207 622 0466**

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION**  
**Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR**  
**(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466**  
**[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)**

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

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€..... **NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**

€..... **HOLY MASSES** (Please state number .....)

€..... **LITTLE WAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

**Name** (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

**Address**

To donate online go to  
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**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**