

# The Irish Catholic

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## Priests warn of death of rural Ireland

### Parishes are urged to fill the gap

**Mags Gargan and Greg Daly**

Parish priests have warned that reports of the proposed closure of up to 80 post offices in towns and villages across the country will lead to the death of rural Ireland.

"The last person out should switch off the lights," said Fr Edward Gallagher, Parish Priest in Kilcar, Co. Donegal, who described the closures as "another sign of the death of rural Ireland".

"Populations are going down. We can see that in our schools and it's in every rural parish in West Donegal. It is going to come down to reduced services.

"All the young people are emigrating but not to foreign places like Australia, they are

emigrating to Dublin. There will be less facilities and less people in the west of Ireland," Fr Gallagher said.

"The Government should make an effort to keep things like post offices and Garda barracks open. If you take away the services then less people are willing to live in the area."

#### Social side

Fr Stephen Farragher in Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo said the post office along with the church and school "represent the heart of the community – and when you remove one of these you remove the heart".

There is "a social side to it for people, particularly old age pensioners", he said, adding that parish pastoral councils "will have to do more and

more just so that people don't feel isolated".

In Kilmovee, Co. Mayo the local post office closed some years ago but services have been maintained through an 'agency' in the parish's community centre.

Parish Priest Fr Vincent Sherlock said the post office has a "huge emotional, parochial, and community value" and it's "a huge loss in any community".

Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon, the head of pastoral studies at MIC, St Patrick's College in Thurles said that the post office closures are "a further death knell".

He said "instead of closing things down in rural Ireland, we have to be innovative and look for new ways to keep

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### Our youngest reader!



At just six and a half months, Summer Hannon from Tallaght, Dublin is probably our youngest reader and her parents Anthony and Margo said she gave the paper a big "thumbs up".

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# The Church and the death of rural Ireland

**"T**he last person out should switch off the lights." That's Donegal-based priest Fr Edward Gallagher's stark reaction to revelations this week that dozens of rural post offices are set to close. Fr Gallagher, parish priest of Kilcar, said it was "another sign of the death of rural Ireland".

It's hard to disagree. Over the years, many rural towns and villages have seen their entire local infrastructure disappear bit by bit. Whether it is the closure of banks, post offices or the last pub in the village, the closures have contributed to increasing rural isolation.

The problem is compounded by the fact that as long-cherished local institutions disappear, so too the people. Younger people feel the need to move to larger urban areas, not just in search of work, but in search of basic facilities that people in large towns and cities take for granted. It also becomes increasingly difficult to attract people such as teachers and doctors to move to rural areas starved of local amenities.

### Problem

I'd like to think that the problem is going to get easier, but it's going to get worse. In many small communities, the only constant has been the local parish church and the resident priest. As it stands, many bishops in Ireland are unable to fill parishes as vacancies occur. At the moment, many parishes



## Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

are in 'keep the show on the road' mode. Priests are overstretched and, as men get older, are asked to take on more and more responsibilities.

Fr Liam Ryan, a Maynooth-based sociologist known to generations of priests trained there, died in 2015. Years earlier, he had noted, half-joking/half-serious, that the future of the Church in Ireland would mirror that of the gardaí. "There'll be two curates in a squad car covering half of the diocese," he said. It's an amusing image that will not quite come to pass, but the truth is unavoidable.

### **"The Church will still continue to work and pray for a flourishing of vocations to the priesthood"**

Some parishes have already experienced the loss of a resident priest. Many more parishes will have to come to terms with this reality.

There will be parishes where it will just not be possible to celebrate the Eucharist as a community on a weekly basis. Lay-led liturgies will become

the norm in many areas. Will those who attend Mass now keep coming to such liturgies? Only time will tell, there's no obligation on Catholics to attend Communion services or other liturgies in the absence of a Sunday Mass.

In some areas, priests from overseas will fill the gap, and, of course, the Church will still continue to work and pray for a flourishing of vocations to the priesthood. Energetic and courageous laypeople and deacons will also step into the breach.

But, at least in the short- to medium-term, the model of the Church in Ireland will alter dramatically. Parishes where Mass has been celebrated unbroken for centuries will no longer have that blessing on their local community. Bishops, forced to deal with scant resources will inevitably (and understandably) concentrate manpower on larger urban areas.

Rural Ireland will be the losers again. The widespread phenomenon of parishes without priests may yet prove to be as much of a cultural shift in Ireland as when we stopped speaking our native language.

## Parishes urged to the gap in rural areas

**» Continued from Page 1** them open. We can't just give up.

"Post offices are part of the social fabric of communities but we have to reimagine communities and reimagine pillars of communities like post offices. Rural Ireland is

definitely worth fighting for," he said.

Fr Fitzgibbon is the organiser of the conference 'Building Rural Community - Lessons from Sport' MIC, St Patrick's College Campus on Wednesday, March 29.

## Fatima statue tours Ireland

A statue of Our Lady of Fatima, blessed by Pope Francis, has begun a tour of Ireland to mark 100 years since the Marian apparitions at the Portuguese village.

The statue was welcomed to the Archdiocese of Armagh, and has now begun its journey to dioceses North and South. The tour is being conducted by the Alliance of the Holy Family International with the Alliance of the Two Hearts Ireland.

Pope Francis blessed six statues to be brought around the world to appeal for prayer and reparation for peace and to promote the sanctity of family life.

**i** For tour information see [www.fatimacometolreland.com](http://www.fatimacometolreland.com)

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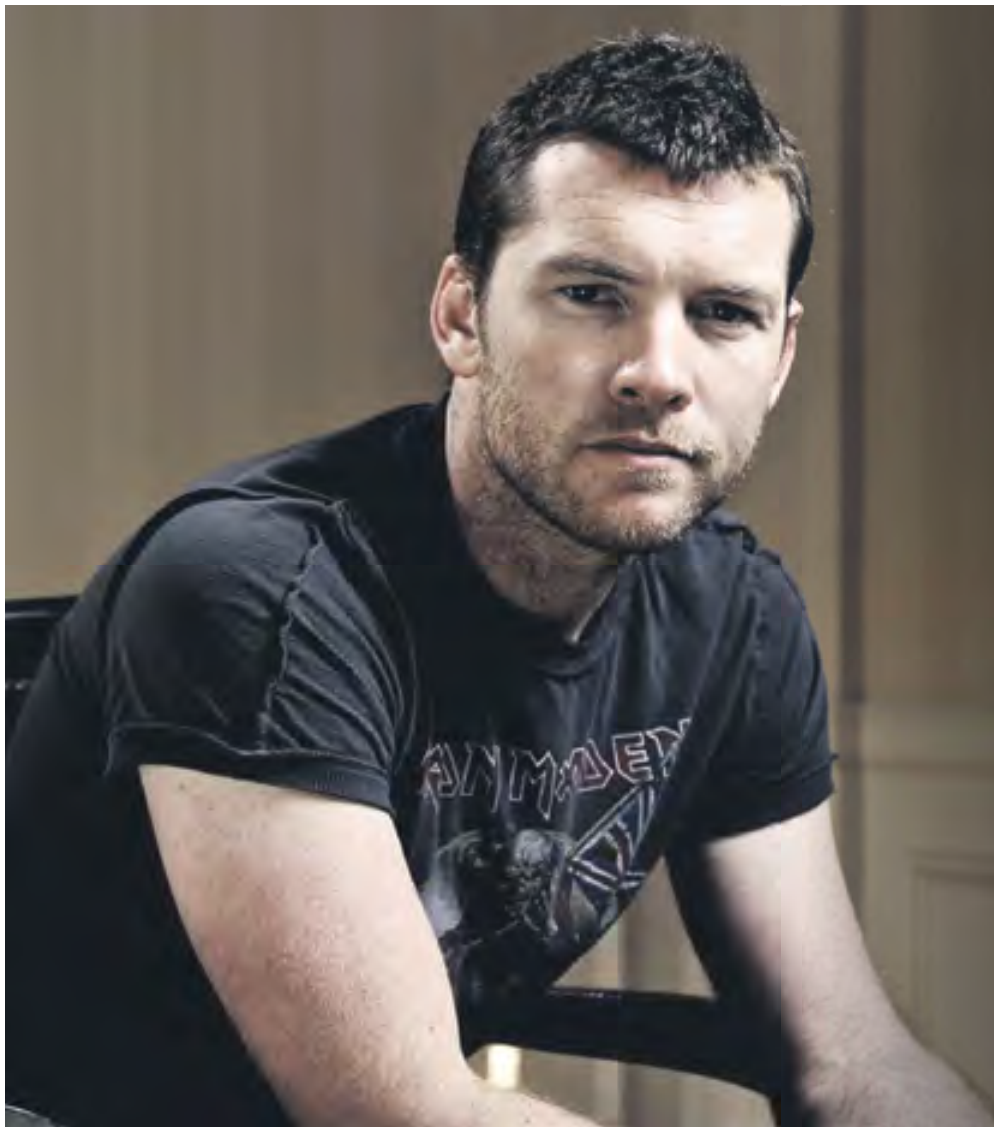
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# New film strengthened Hollywood actor Sam Worthington's faith

Hollywood star Sam Worthington has said that working on his new film *The Shack* helped him to better understand his relationship with God.

*The Shack* is based on the 2007 novel of the same name by William P. Young, which follows the spiritual journey of a father, Mack, after suffering a family tragedy which makes him question his innermost beliefs.

"I'm still on this journey of discovery [myself] and I think part of my journey was getting involved with *The Shack*," the actor said.

"I could see myself in Mack, the arguments he had towards God, towards what happen to him and how frustrated and angry [he was]. In my 20s and

my 30s that's exactly the type of person that I was. I was looking for something and I didn't even know where to begin."

## 'Angry'

The 40-year-old believes everyone could identify with that place of brokenness. "*The Shack* itself is a metaphor of all the pain and the guilt, resentment, anger, frustration that we feel, all these negative things and we do live in them, everybody does.

Everybody carries those kind of burdens. A relationship with God and faith helps you relieve that burden and learn how to let go of them and move forward," he said.

The star, known for

action movies such as *Avatar* and *Terminator Salvation*, said it was a friend who first gave him a Bible back when he was an "angry" young man.

"He was instructed to read it for "guidance".

"[Around that time] I was lucky enough to travel around the world and I ended up going to different churches. I would first notice the architecture but then I started to notice how we're all so connected through faith," he said.

"Now I'm starting to understand my relationship with God and how strong faith can be amongst people," Worthington said.

# Don't unravel the peace process – primate urges

Mags Gargan

The Archbishop of Armagh has urged politicians in the North not to undo the progress made during the peace process following a return to a "language of division" in the run up to the Assembly election last week.

Archbishop Eamon Martin expressed concern that the principles of the Good Friday Agreement "are perhaps not as deeply embedded as we might have hoped".

"There has been a return to the language of division and difference and it is important that everyone in the community gets behind our newly elected representatives and urges them not to unravel the tremendous progress that has been made over the past 20 years," he said.

## Responsibilities

"We all have responsibilities in this regard including the Churches, the business community as well as the British and Irish governments as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement and peace process. We must all avoid

the use of harsh or angry language or the temptation to play the 'blame game' rather than accepting our collective responsibility for the past, present and future," Archbishop Eamon said.

"Our politicians have a precious vocation to work for the common good and exercise their leadership through the careful practice of compromise and agreement."

The primate of All-Ireland said the importance of the Good Friday Agreement cannot be underestimated and that "people around the world look to Northern Ireland as an example of people sorting out their differences".

Recalling his own childhood in Derry "during troubled times and in a troubled and divided city", he said he would be "terribly disappointed" if a new generation of young people who have grown up in peaceful times "would be manipulated into violence". "As a society we have hardly yet begun to tackle the terrible legacy of trauma that the years of violence left behind," he said.

Northern Ireland has experienced

a political shake up after last Friday's extraordinary election saw Sinn Féin surge and unionists lose their majority for the first time in history. A return to power-sharing is now in question, as Sinn Féin has previously refused to rule along with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

## Petition

Sinn Féin, which supports abortion in certain circumstances, now has 27 seats in the Assembly, just one fewer than the DUP which now has 28 seats. The DUP's losses mean it no longer has enough seats for the 30 signatures needed to invoke a "petition of concern", which pro-life groups had hoped would veto a change in legislation proposed by David Ford MLA to allow abortion in the case of fetuses with life limiting conditions.

However, Bernadette Smyth of Precious Life told *The Irish Catholic* that "we don't feel that all is lost" and "we are calling on the SDLP and Ulster Unionist pro-life politicians to ensure that the petition is used".

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# Removal of saints' titles from hospital wards 'disappointing'

Greg Daly

The decision by Wexford General Hospital to remove the word 'saint' from its ward signs has been described as "disappointing" by the local bishop, questioning a tendency to suppress references to religious belief in Ireland's public life.

The hospital revised the ward names after it drew down funding for improved signage after opening a new Accident and Emergency department and additional facilities.

## Policy

Current policy is in favour of more secular ward names, but as a compromise after a 'straw poll' of staff, the hospital decided to retain the original names without the prefix 'Saint'. The wards are now called Catherine's, Joseph's,

Mary's and Aidan's.

"While I understand this was not an initiative of local management it is disappointing to find long established religious nomenclature removed without discussion or consultation," Bishop Denis Brennan of Ferns said.

"I appreciate that naming of public spaces nowadays would need to be approached differently," he continued, "but if we feel we have to retrospectively erase all reference to religious belief in our public places we will end up with a very bland, colourless landscape, and one which does not reflect our evolving story as a society."

The bishop last year called for students of the 1916 Rising to remember the influential role of religious faith in the lives of the rebel leaders, who, he said, gave Irish people the confidence to remember that we "a story to tell, and a des-

tiny to realise".

According to Lily Byrnes, General Manager at the hospital, the move was an attempt to move forward while respecting tradition, and had been met with a mixed response by visitors and staff.

## Proposal

The saints after whom the wards have been named, she told *The Wexford People*, would not be forgotten as there was a proposal to commission artwork containing information about the saints at the entrances to the wards.

Alan Corcoran, of Wexford's South East Radio, told *The Irish Catholic* there had been "a lot of reaction" to the news of the name changes, and said that in a poll of over 400 text responses, "97% of those polled called for the names to be reversed back to the names of the saints".



## Papal Nuncio's tribute to the late Peter Mathews TD

The Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown pictured at the funeral of Peter Mathews TD at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Donnybrook, Dublin. The nuncio paid tribute to the former Fine Gael TD for Dublin South on behalf of Pope Francis, saying he was "an outstanding citizen and a great patriot who possessed a radiant faith". Photo: *The Irish Independent*

## Brutal attack will not stop missionary nun

Mags Gargan

An Irish Columban sister who was violently attacked by a masked assailant in the Philippines, will not let her "terrible ordeal" affect her work, according to her congregational leader.

Sr Kathleen Melia (70), who is originally from Co. Leitrim, has worked as a missionary in the Philippines for over 30 years, in particular campaigning for the rights of the Subaanen people.

According to local reports Sr Kathleen was serving at the San Jose Parish Church in Midsalip town in the Zamboanga region when a masked man tried to cover her mouth and punched her in the face and chest. She sustained multiple injuries and fell to the ground unconscious.

Sr Ann Gray, congregational leader of the Columban Sisters in Ireland, said Sr Kathleen is still awaiting surgery, as she needs a transfer to Manila, "but is being well looked after in the hospital in Ozamiz" and is expected to make a full recovery.

## Ordeal

"It was a terrible ordeal, and she will take some time to recover from the shock, but missionaries are strong," Sr Ann told *The Irish Catholic*.

"No doubt this will not affect her long-term mission – she's been there so long and knows the people so well. She loves the people there."

Sr Ann said she believed the attack was an "isolated incident". "It is the first time anything like this has happened. We don't know the reason for it," she said.

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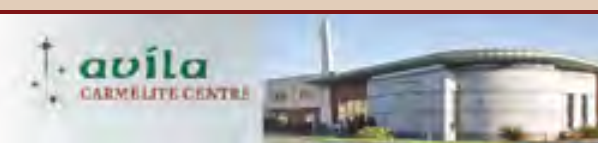
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## Glenamady Ash Wednesday 'drive-thru' a resounding success

The parish priest of a Galway church which hosted a 'drive-thru' Ash Wednesday for busy parishioners has spoken of the phenomenal reaction to the initiative.

Describing himself a "surprised at the number of people" who happily responded to the invitation from Glenamady parish for an Ash Wednesday with a distinct difference, Fr Paddy Mooney told *The Irish Catholic* this week that such was the demand from all modes of transport using the 'drive-thru' facility that four people were kept busy giving out ashes from 8am on the day.

"There was a great number of people," Fr Mooney said, adding, "even one car pulled in on the way to a hospital appointment."



# After Tuam we should all look at our own families' attitudes

It's understandable – and right – that most people are deeply distressed and desperately upset about the uncovering of the Tuam babies' remains. It's altogether a terrible story, and the grief of the mothers as well as the pitiful little lives of the infants and children can only be imagined.

It illuminates the fact that children really need families if they are to thrive. An institution – even a good institution – can never provide a young child with the care and love that requires a family setting. Children nearly always become more sickly and die in institutions, and infections spread like wildfire.

**Paradox**  
Yet the paradox is that the exaltation of 'the family' (especially 'the respectable family') is often what condemns 'unwanted' children – no child should be unwanted, but some have been – to institutions in the first place. And



Mary Kenny



abandons and stigmatises young single mothers for having the children, too. The anger – as bitter as anything I have encountered – is hugely focused on the Catholic Church, and the Church, clergy and nuns, must take responsibility for having authority over a regime which allowed these tragedies.

But I know from my own family background – most people would probably share this – that the values which sustained these mother-and-baby homes and institutions were firmly upheld by the 'respectable family'. My mother, a Galway woman, was the kindest and most charitable person you could meet: but she thought

that having a child out of wedlock was an absolute catastrophe. Anything to avoid it. And if it couldn't be avoided, then anything to keep it hidden or secret. There was a woman in her East Galway town who was an 'unmarried mother'. This woman had kept her child; she wasn't (according to my uncle, whom I later quizzed) cruelly treated, and indeed she and her daughter were given a caretaker's job of some kind. But there was a terrible kind of pity. "Musha, the cratur."

**“This inflated language is a signal of the anger”**

For my family, that fall from respectable status, and to be pitied as “musha, the cratur”, was never to be contemplated. That's the context of the Tuam story, although anyone who makes that point will be called 'a scumbag' and 'an

apologist for Church Nazis' on social media. There is currently a recourse to such extreme comparisons which devoid language of meaning. On Joe Duffy's phone-in last Monday a woman compared the Tuam tragedy to “genocide”, and said the perpetrators were “like Dr Mengele”. (Genocide was the deliberate, planned extermination of an entire people. Mengele performed vivisection on living persons, without anaesthetic, as a medical experiment.) This inflated language is a signal of the anger. Our families did not commit 'genocide': they

did, however, contribute to the social mores which produced Tuam and its ilk. There is another point to be made too. Irish society was punitive to 'unmarried mothers', but strangely lax about making the men face their responsibilities. In Ralph Glaser's memoir about growing up in the Scottish slum, *The Gorbals*, he describes how the local community tracked down lads who had impregnated girls, and forced them to 'do the decent thing'. Sometimes these tactics veered towards the Mafiosi, but you can't help feeling that the Gorbals enforcers were on the right track.

**A model of efficiency**  
As a teenager, I was consigned to a Bon Secours hospital in 1960, with a primary TB, for three months. It was a model of medical efficiency, nursing care and spotless cleanliness. I suppose many people imagined that any institution run by these very capable nuns had similar standards.

## Championing the Irish language

It was unwise of Arlene Foster of the DUP to seem to disparage the Irish language, during the North's recent election campaigns. It showed poor judgement in communications, and an under-informed approach to cultural history. A more canny politician might have pointed out that Irish Protestants were often in the vanguard of advancing and reviving the Irish language. The Bible was first translated into Irish by the Church of Ireland

Bishop William Bedel, who died in 1642 – a revised version of his Bible was published in 1685, and it is a beautiful document. Many scholars and champions of the Irish language were Irish Protestants, from Lady Gregory to Douglas Hyde. Edward Carson spoke some Irish and never rebuffed the language. (Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, had been a patron of the Celtic languages revival.) In the 1900s, there were

more Protestants than Catholics studying Irish with Belfast's Gaelic League. Mrs Foster showed she had scant grasp of how to manage information (leave aside the dodgy dossier on the 'cash for ash' controversy, which sparked the dissolution of Stormont), or to own part of a culture to which her tradition can validly lay claim. I say this as someone who supports an ecumenical approach to Northern politics and society.




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# Cardinal Müller's comments on Marie Collins resignation are rejected

Greg Daly

Leading child protection campaigner Marie Collins has challenged claims by the head of the Vatican department responsible for dealing with allegations of clerical abuse.

Cardinal Gerhard Müller, who heads the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), had rejected claims by Mrs Collins that members of the CDF had obstructed proposals for reform recommended by the Vatican's child protection commission, from which Mrs Collins resigned last month.

Interviewed by the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Serra*, Cardinal Müller rejected suggestions that the congregation has resisted the work of the commission, saying: "One of our collaborators is part of it. I can affirm that in these last years there's been permanent contact."

Mrs Collins, however, told

*The Irish Catholic* it has been almost two years since any member of the CDF has been involved with the commission. "There's no member of the CDF on the commission," she said, continuing, "There hasn't been for nearly two years. There was a member who stopped attending immediately after the accountability tribunal was announced, and then officially resigned last year."

*The Irish Catholic* understands that Claudio Papale, a professor who teaches canon law at the Pontifical University Urbaniana, stepped down from the commission last May for personal reasons.

Mrs Collins also challenged how the cardinal said the commission had asked the CDF to write letters to victims assuring them of the Church's closeness to their suffering, saying the commission had merely wanted the congregation to acknowledge letters received.

"Letters from victims and survivors were not being acknowledged," she said, "and the Commission requested that the Congregation change that and start acknowledging letters and that was what was refused. There was no request to send out pastoral letters."

It was the congregation's refusal to send out such simple acknowledgments as would be expected "in normal society" that was the "last straw" leading to her resignation, she said.

She also noted that the cardinal had confirmed that although Pope Francis had approved the commission's recommendation that the Church establish an accountability tribunal for bishops and had sent the proposal to the congregation to be implemented. "I think Cardinal Müller, in what he has said, has confirmed that they didn't implement it," she said.

Mrs Collins said she would be writing to the cardinal.

## Celebrating local schools



Over the weekend the CPSMA (Catholic Primary Schools Management Association) held their annual conference in Dublin, which included a presentation by Minister Richard Bruton, Minister for Education and Skills to the winners of the CPSMA art competition 'Celebrating Local Schools': Rebecca Hynes, Vicki Zimeng Lin, Isabelle Maher, Tashuva Rafiq and Aisling Amponsah. Photo: John McElroy

## 'Great response' to Save Roscrea College campaign

The campaign to save Cistercian College Roscrea is gathering momentum. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* this week, Ronnie Culliton of Save Cistercian College Roscrea (SCCR) said there had been a "great response" since par-

ents and past pupils launched an appeal for funds to sustain the institution into the future.

"There have lots of small donations," he said, "and in one case an offer of support for bursaries at the college."

"There are super people

involved in saving Roscrea," he added, stating he was personally "very encouraged" by the drive to save Roscrea.

The Save CCR campaign has a Facebook presence, and an email for all contact at [saveccr@outlook.com](mailto:saveccr@outlook.com)



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# Dublin welcomes new Catholics

Last Sunday saw Dublin's pro cathedral host the annual Rite of Election and Enrolement for 50 new members of the Catholic Church in the archdiocese.

In the presence of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, 43 catechumens (awaiting baptism) and seven candidates (baptised) attended the ceremony to welcome them to the Church, culminating in each one signing the diocesan Book of the Elect.

The Rite of Election celebrates God's call of the participants to the Easter Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

## Participants

Aged from 13 to 73, those taking part in the celebration were drawn from a host of countries, including Ghana,



Some of the catechumens, family members and well-wishers pictured with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin after the Rite of Election and Enrolement. Photo: John McElroy

Nigeria, Albania, Italy, England, France, India, Poland and the Czech Republic. The largest single group was from	China, with 20 people. Also present at Sunday's event were members of the 21 Dublin parishes that	the participants have now made home. All the new faithful will engage in a full Lenten	retreat ahead of celebrations to mark their Christian Initiation in their parishes at Easter.
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## Persecuted Christians have grounds for hope

This is both a hopeful time and a grim one for those concerned about the persecution of Christians and freedom of conscience, according to an Iranian convert to Catholicism.

Speaking in Dublin's Newman University Church, *Wall Street Journal* editorial writer Sohrab Ahmari said there are grounds for hope, "because the question of the persecution of Christians is on the media and

cultural radar in a way it hasn't been in a very long time".

## Awareness

This awareness, however, has arisen because things are so grave, he said, noting that while the actions of non-state actors like ISIS are the most obvious modern expression of religious persecution, this distracts from persecution by authoritarian regimes in coun-

tries such as Turkey, Iran and Russia.

Mr Ahmari, who had been invited to speak by the Notre Dame – Newman Centre for Faith and Reason, said the church was "a very apt setting for a talk on Christian persecution, since Blessed Cardinal Newman was probably the 19th Century's greatest champion of freedom of conscience".

## Death of Donegal priest

● The death has taken place of Fr Pat Prendergast, parish priest of Glenties in the Diocese of Raphoe. A native of Letterkenny, he was ordained in 1977 and served in a number of parishes in the diocese including Holy Cross College, Falcarragh; Milford, Ballyshannon, Front Town and Glenties.



Nuala O’Loan  
The View



# The old Stormont order has changed, changed utterly

The votes have been counted and Northern Ireland is in something of a state of shock. Last week unionists had a 16-seat majority over nationalists in the Assembly. Now, just over a week later nationalism has a total of 39 seats to unionism’s 40 seats. However the DUP, by a majority of one, has more seats (28) than Sinn Féin, which has 27.

It means the DUP can still nominate the First Minister, and a Sinn Féin MLA will still be deputy First Minister (a position equal to the First Minister). No party has sufficient votes to raise a petition of concern and block legislation, such as same-sex marriage and abortion.

To do this a party needs 30 MLAs, nobody has that number now. Nothing is simple in Northern Ireland!

No one knows what will happen next. The parties could agree to form an Executive, and we could still have devolved government. That is unlikely to happen, though.

### Expectation

The expectation is that Sinn Féin will refuse to go into government with the DUP for a variety of reasons, and they will then be in the slightly unusual position of having delivered Northern Ireland into the hands of British rule, something they have been opposing for as long as I can remember.

Are unionists and nationalists and others, who rightly want to get back to devolved government really going to be prevented from so doing by Sinn Féin whose constant policy has been to secure a united Ireland? Yet British rule is what they will deliver, unless the parties can make an agreement.

Meanwhile, the move towards Brexit is inexorable. Nobody really knows what Brexit might look like, as far as I can see. There is no road map to leaving the European Union. The post-war dreams of a united peaceful



Arlene Foster, leader of the DUP.

Europe, trading in one common market, have been abandoned in the UK.

So it seems likely that Northern Ireland will face months of direct rule government from London at perhaps the most critical time in the history of the European Union. Who will speak for the people of Northern Ireland if we do not have a government to make representations on our behalf?

“There is evidence that people did not realise that they were voting to lose their automatic rights to access all European countries”

Undoubtedly the British government will do its best to ensure that all parts of the UK are treated equally, but Scotland and Wales will have the strong voices of their devolved governments to make their cases. What then of Northern Ireland?

The British government said it would implement the will of the people as articulated in the

referendum on the EU. Now they are doing what they said they would, striking out into the deep almost, it seems to me without any knowledge of where they are going or how to get there. Large parts of rest of Europe is equally bemused.

The UK is a net contributor to Europe, which gains between £7billion and £8.5billion as a consequence of the UK’s membership (it seems it is hard to calculate the figures precisely because the UK gains from, for example, EU academic research grants, EU students studying in the UK and other payments to non-governmental organisations).

Overall it seems that leaving Europe will save Britain some £164m a week. However there will be other costs: of leaving, of negotiating and paying for new trade agreements, of managing the state without all the common regulatory apparatus which now exists in Europe. It is going to be very challenging.

Scotland and Northern Ireland did not actually vote to leave, of course. That was done in England and Wales.

There is a certain amount

of evidence that people did not realise that they were voting to lose their automatic rights to access all European countries, to work there, to study there, to access healthcare there on the same terms as nationals of the European states; that they were voting to leave the protection provided by the European Court of Justice against government and private sector abuses.

### Tariffs

Did the people really realise that they were voting for customs tariffs between the UK and Ireland, and all the other member States of Europe with a significant likelihood of increases in the prices of basic commodities?

How will we ensure that we do not lose the common cultural and societal bonds forged in those critical years after the devastation of World War II?

How will we in Ireland maintain our fragile peace and protect our common interests, unless the European Union manages to recognise the particular sensitivities north and south of the border?

There may be other commercial opportunities

for Ireland as non-EU enterprises seek to use Ireland as a trading base for the rest of Europe. But what of Northern Ireland?

What will it be like for ordinary people, too? Now, when I fly from London into Dublin, I can get access to Ireland with my driving licence. Am I going to have to produce my passport in future, and join that long slow queue for non-EU citizens?

“Irish party politics are also in some disarray and Enda Kenny hobbles towards an iconic moment at the White House”

What of all that European research and development funding? What of collaborative research work between universities in the UK and Ireland? Will UK citizens still be able to decide to go and work in Germany or France just because it seems like a good idea? That seems unlikely.

What is likely is that we will have to join the long queues of people looking for visa entitlement to work in Europe.

So we are in a situation in which the future governance

of Northern Ireland is uncertain, the future of the UK as a whole depends on the strength and resilience of those going into the negotiations and the hope that those negotiations will be conducted by all on the basis of good will to all, recognising the need to protect all our interests as best we can.

British party politics are in disarray as Labour seems totally unable to provide an effective opposition to the Conservative party. Irish party politics are also in some disarray and Enda Kenny hobbles towards St Patrick’s Day and an iconic moment at the White House before he shuffles off. American politics seem to be in disarray too.

The old order really has changed, changed utterly and it continues to change across the world. What contribution will religion make to the creation of this new order?

Will it be lost in the drowning voices of secularism, or will it shine forth with courage, acknowledging its terrible past failings, but recognising, proclaiming and living the truth announced by the man who was the Son of God, and who walked the dusty roads of the Holy Land, healing, challenging and loving until his work of redemption was done?

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# Citizens' Assembly nears 'Decision Day'



**Paul Keenan**

It's all over bar the shouting, so the saying goes. As the Citizens' Assembly moved last weekend from a session of presentations and questioning to a phase of internal debate towards a final ballot on recommendations to be put to the Oireachtas, it is a fairly safe bet that we have not heard the last of the shouting on the emotive debate that forever surrounds the abortion issue.

Some would have it also that a wager just as safe and secure is that on the outcome of the Assembly deliberations. From the beginning of the process commentators have cast a cynical eye on what is perceived as the 'device' of Taoiseach Enda Kenny in keeping his administration at one remove from the decision to finally move on Ireland's abortion laws, and specifically on the Eighth Amendment constitutional protection for the unborn. In the eyes of some, the neatest trick Mr Kenny has pulled is shifting himself from the previous pejorative of 'King Herod' to a helpless 'Pontius Pilate' on abortion.

An attempt to counter pro-life suspicions of imbalance lay in last weekend's invitation to a number of representative groups, including the bishops' conference, to offer their perspective on the debate, in this, the first sitting since political and religious outrage was levelled against the February sitting where pro-abortion medical opinion was skewed 3-1 against the pro-life side.

## **Presentations**

For the record, then, the full list of groups invited to offer 10-minute presentations last weekend is: the Irish Catholic Bishops; The Iona Institute; Family & Life; the Pro Life Campaign; Doctors for Life Ireland; Every Life Counts; Youth Defence; the General Synod of the Church of Ireland; Women Hurt; Doctors for Choice; the Union of Students in Ireland; the National Women's Council of Ireland; Parents for Choice; The Irish Family Planning Association; Amnesty International; the Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment, and Atheist Ireland.

Full marks must go to the bishops in recognising that suspicions and perceptions work both ways, leading to a carefully considered addendum to the Church's pro-life argument on the day.

Presenting on behalf of the prelates – in the company of Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick – Kate Liffey, National Director for Catechetics, and Coordinator of the National Faith Development Team, of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, took time to tackle the "popular misconceptions about Church teaching on the subject of the right to life". (How many of the Assembly's 99 members have had the abortion debate filtered exclusively through the secular press?)

These misconceptions, she said were: "The Catholic Church has never taught that the life of a child in the womb should be preferred to that of a mother. By virtue of their common humanity a mother and her unborn baby have an equal right to life."

"Where a seriously ill pregnant woman needs medical treatment which may, as a secondary effect, put the life of her baby at risk, such treatments are always ethically permissible provided every effort has been made to save the life of both the mother and her baby. Abortion, by contrast, is the direct and intentional destruction of an unborn baby and is gravely immoral in all circumstances. Abortion is not a medical treatment."

**“Behind the glib exhortation ‘Repeal’ is a landscape with no restrictions on abortion”**

"When, sadly, a baby dies naturally in the womb before birth, there is no question of the mother being obliged to proceed with the pregnancy. There is now only one 'patient', the mother. The mother becomes the sole focus of any medical care that is required. Along with the father, the mother is entitled to the best pastoral care that we can offer, as they grieve the loss of their child."

Maria Steen, on behalf of the Iona Institute, meanwhile, in arguing against the holding of a referendum to remove the "fundamental human right" to life, challenged the assembly to imagine "what Ireland would look like without the Eighth Amendment".

"Behind the glib exhortation 'Repeal' is a landscape with no restrictions on abortion, no term limits and no rights for the child in the womb," she said. "Repeal means repealing human



rights. It means turning a blind eye to those who would discriminate against a baby just because she is a girl, or because he has Downs Syndrome, or looking the other way when a healthy child's life is ended because she is not wanted. It means allowing a child to be punished for the criminal acts of her father. It means that a child whose natural life, doctors guess at, might be short can be condemned to die unnaturally despite the fact that it is the only life that baby will ever have."

Perhaps reflecting the attendance in February of the Guttmacher Institute, a 'cheerleader' group for America's Planned Parenthood abortion provider, Ms Steen went on to warn: "Repeal means surgeons killing defenceless infants for money and groups with friends in high places campaigning for the right to do so."

The charges previously levelled from political and religious quarters of an apparent imbalance in the workings of the assembly have not been entirely laid to rest by last weekend's session, however. A spokesperson for The Iona Institute who was present for the latest sitting told this newspaper: "It was very notable that almost all of the challenging questions from the participants on Sunday were directed at pro-life advocates and almost none at pro-choice advocates. If the delegates were truly representative of public opinion, this would not have happened."

## **Final decision**

The proof of all may yet to be found in the final decision of the assembly members regarding their recommendations to legislators. It is to be borne in mind that the assembly now debates in the light of the latest *The Irish Times*/Ipsos MRBI poll which found that just 28% of people in Ireland want the Eighth Amendment protection for the unborn repealed.

It must be acknowledged at the same time that the previous insistence on balance as a "fundamental" element of the process on the part of Justice Mary Laffoy was apparent in the form of legal expert Brian Murray SC, drafted in to lay out the choices now before the assembly members.

## **Direction**

Careful to stress that he was not present to sway the assembly in any direction, but merely to sum up the choice now available to members, Mr Murray said these choices are: retention of the Eighth Amendment protection for the unborn; repeal of the amendment, or retention with further amendments inserted into the Constitution (Mr Murray laid out the varying permutations here also).

The last word, therefore, now falls to the 99 selected members of the Citizens' Assembly.

**“The challenging questions from the participants on Sunday were directed at pro-life advocates”**

A last thought however, is worth considering. It is one offered by Maria Steen in her warning of what Ireland risks losing in this 'first-step' decision to be reached by the assembly.

"Our Irish Constitution," she said, "is a beacon of hope in a world that has become darkened by a trend that elevates choice over justice. Were you to recommend the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, our country would follow that well-worn path towards a culture where human life is cheapened, made dispensable, commoditised. We have a chance – you have a chance – to take a stand and value all human life, to defend a vulnerable minority that is under threat."



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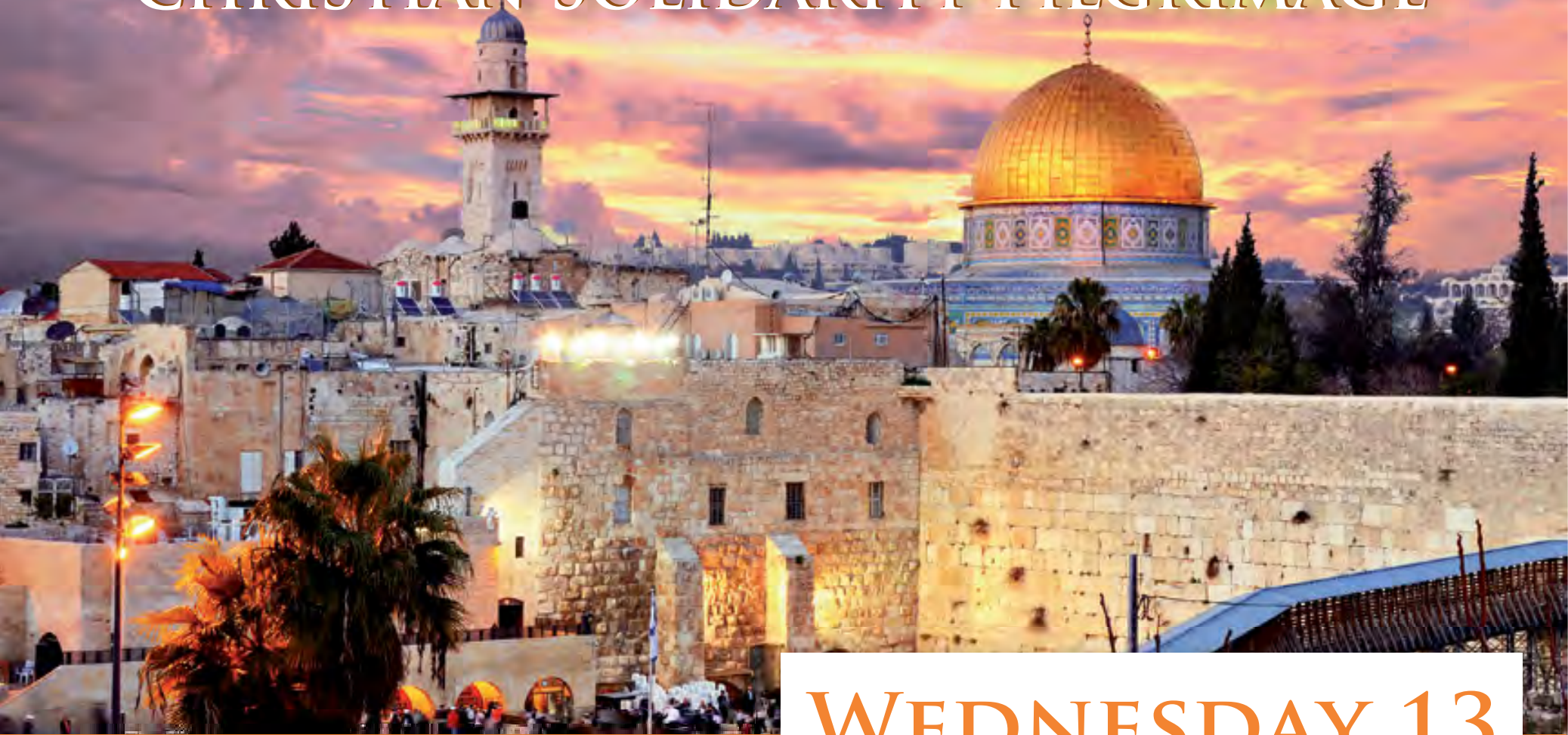
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Investigation of mother and baby homes should proceed apace, writes **David Quinn**

**I**t is very hard, three years after the story first broke, to write again about the Tuam mother and baby home and all the deaths that took place there in the years of its operation from 1925 to 1961. What else is left to say?

I read again what I wrote at the time for this and other newspapers and it still holds up even in light of last week's announcement that a 'significant' number of infant bodies have been found on the grounds of the old home.

# We must discover how and why those children died

The announcement was made by the Children's Minister. It spoke of two underground structures at the site of the old home, the first being the septic tank that dominated news reports three years ago.

The second structure, the one in which a 'significant' number of bodies has been found, is of an undetermined

nature. It is thought it might have been part of a sewage system and if it was that, it is not yet known if it was ever used as such.

In an article for this newspaper that I wrote in 2014, I said (responding to the septic tank claim): "In fact, we don't know exactly where the bodies are buried. It also appears to be the case

that there is a deep burial crypt beneath the ground close to where the mother and baby home was, so perhaps they are in there."

So even three years ago, it was known that there were two structures beneath the surface at the old home.

## No doubt

What was never in doubt is that almost 800 babies died at the home during the years in which the home was run by the Bon Secours Sisters. So, the bodies were obviously buried somewhere and the big outstanding question was, where exactly?

It is probably the case that not all of them are buried in that second structure on the grounds. There is talk that some are buried under a housing estate that now sits on top of some of the old grounds of the old home. Some bodies may never be found, therefore.

**“In Britain, the infant mortality rate also varied by social class”**

Three years ago, when the story first broke, the causes of death of all the babies were published. This was thanks to the work of Catherine Corless, the local historian who first uncovered the number of deaths at the home and raised questions about where the babies were buried.

Measles was an incredibly common cause of death. TB was another common cause. These homes were essentially death traps. If a baby developed measles other babies would quickly contract measles also because they were all packed so close together.

A dozen babies might die

in the space of a fortnight.

Up until the development of vaccines and antibiotics from the late 1940s on, the infant mortality rate in Ireland was incredibly high, something like 20 times higher than today. It was much higher still for the children of unmarried mothers.

*The Irish Times* published a chart in 2014 showing that in 1925 (when the home first opened), about 50 babies out of every 1,000 died in the general population. But among the babies of unmarried mothers, it was more than 300 per 1,000, a horrifying total.

What explains this? One factor is that many of these mothers came from incredibly impoverished backgrounds and were left to fend for themselves. That contributed to the death rate, which was higher in working class and poor rural areas anyway. Extreme poverty is a killer.

Then, many of the babies ended up in the mother and baby homes and county homes where diseases would often run through them like a fire. So it was horrendous.

Why were they buried in unmarked graves? For most of history, the dead have been buried in unmarked graves. Until the 19th Century, often only the very wealthiest could afford a plot of their own and a headstone.

## Unmarked graves

Most of our ancestors are in unmarked graves up and down the country (it is the same all over Europe and elsewhere). Many are buried in consecrated ground in the graveyards of their local parish churches.

Until several decades into the 20th Century, this is how the very poorest were still buried. This is not to excuse

it. It is only to explain it.

Even today there are organisations that arrange for the proper burial of people who no-one has claimed.

Ireland was a desperately poor country in the past, poorer than our nearest neighbours.

That explains why the infant mortality rate was higher here than in Britain, for example. In Britain, the infant mortality rate also varied by social class and Britain also had its mother and baby homes.

**“These homes were essentially death traps”**

But a big added factor was the cruel way many societies, including our own to a terrible extent, treated unmarried mothers. This affected their babies as well.

Shame was used as a weapon, aided and abetted by the Churches. The advent of 'Victorian morality' and notions of 'respectability' seemed to mean that unmarried mothers were treated even more harshly than they had previously been.

We had a desperate wish to be considered 'respectable' and we cast out those who threatened that status, or who was giving us an extra mouth to feed.

The investigation into the mother and baby homes and the county homes should proceed apace. It should be objective, sober, measured and bring in international and historical comparisons where relevant.

Then we should give whatever bodies we can retrieve the burial they deserve.

That will go some way towards establishing a measure of justice.

## Inaugural Conference of The Iona Institute Northern Ireland



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## Greg Daly considers the Tuam burials in light of contemporary funeral customs

**I**f we are to be horrified by what we are learning about the Tuam Mother and Baby Home, we should probably reserve our anger more for how the infant children of unmarried mothers were treated in life than in death.

The Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation has, as we know, conducted test excavations late last year and earlier this year by the site of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, finding two large structures. One was a septic tank that had been decommissioned and filled in, the other being a long structure containing 20 chambers, at least 17 of which contained significant quantities of human remains from infants between 35 foetal weeks and two–three years, all dating from the period when the home was in operation.

Admitting to uncertainty about the purpose of the structure, the commission speculates that it had been built for the containment of sewage or waste water, adding that it does not yet know if it was ever used for this purpose.

Asking for the State authorities to take responsibility for the appropriate treatment of the remains, and stating that the Coroner has been informed, the Commission says it “is shocked by this discovery and is continuing its investigation into who was responsible for the disposal of human remains in this way”.

### Narratives

As yet, there is little in what’s been revealed to suggest that the remains of the dead children were treated other than respectfully, unless the phrase “disposal of human remains” is well chosen; it feeds into popular narratives about the bodies of children being dumped into sewers and septic tanks, and points away from the possibility that the bodies were interred in what would normally be called a crypt or even a catacomb.

It would not be surprising if the vault had once served another purpose, however distasteful, as long as it had been cleaned and – probably – consecrated; the

catecombs of Paris, after all, are repurposed mine tunnels, and I once helped excavate a cemetery in repurposed fortifications.

In 2014, Philip Boucher-Hayes, one of those who has done important work – following, of course, the heroic efforts of local historian Catherine Corless – to explore what happened in Tuam, wrote of how one Mary Moriarty told him that in the 1970s she had fallen into the crypt when the ground subsided.

**“The vault indeed appears to have been a crypt in which large numbers of bodies were interred”**

When she and neighbours investigated, he wrote, “she discovered a large underground space with shelves from floor to ceiling stacked with infant bodies”. She saw, she told him, “in excess of 100 tiny figures swaddled and guessed from the size they were newborn or stillborn”.

Described as such, the vault indeed appears to have been a crypt in which large numbers of bodies were interred, with the shelves and swaddling testifying to this having been done in a manner that was anything but careless.

A 2013 letter from the then head of the Bon Secours Sisters in Ireland wrote of how one child, a

John Desmond who died in June 1947, had apparently died in the home, with his remains “probably being buried at the home itself”, which she said was “located at the back of the home and was operated as a general grave”.

That this general grave was recognised as worthy of respect, however discreet, is pointed to by the simple topography of the area today: a playground lies on the site of the home, while houses have been built on the home’s land, but the site of the vault – or at least of part of it – was carefully segregated from both projects, making it possible for it to be visited even now.

And, of course, since the 1970s it seems local people tended to the site, with one couple having even built a grotto there.

This invites other questions, of course, not least that of why the children had been interred in an on-site crypt rather than in the cemetery across the road from the home.

### Compliance

In this light, it’s worth remembering how prior to the Second Vatican Council, the *Rituale Romanum* called for pastors to ensure that, “in compliance with ancient and praiseworthy ecclesiastical custom, the bodies of little children are not interred in that

part of the cemetery which is used for the general public.

Rather, as far as possible, they should have their own special and separate plot, where none but baptised infants and children who die before attaining the use of reason should be buried.”

Obviously, this did not always happen, but the point behind this principle was that such children, regarded as innocents by the Church, were deemed to have been granted eternal life and as such were – unlike those buried elsewhere – not in need of our prayers. Indeed, there was a clear rite – not a Mass – for the burial of baptised children before the age of reason, explicitly recognising that such children’s salvation was guaranteed.

The funeral records of one Irish town, to take an example, reveal a combined total of 739 funerals for the years 1925, 1935, 1945, 1955 and 1965, with the youngest funeral on record in these years being that of a seven-year-old in 1965.

Even now, while funeral Masses typically focus on prayers for the deceased, those for young children tend to emphasise prayers for the bereaved.

\* \* \* \* \*

The other obvious question lies in why the site wasn’t marked – it’s hard to escape the feeling that

an awful lot of the current horror could have been avoided if there had been an appropriate marker at the site commemorating the children interred there.

After all, 796 children died in the home during the years it was in operation, and even if they were not all buried in the crypt, it seems likely that a substantial number of them were.

The answer to this probably lies in the pathological desire for respectability that blighted Ireland in its first decades of independence, which caused us to hide away anything that might be perceived as disgracing us in the eyes of the world. In the case of the Mother and Baby homes established from 1922 on, this meant unmarried mothers, visible proof that Irish people were not as pure as we liked to claim.

English rule in Ireland had long been justified by casting the Irish as barbarous and drunken savages who held to a idolatrous and superstitious religion and couldn’t be trusted to rule themselves, with Irish people typically caricatured in magazines as brutish apes.

The angry response of nationalists and others in 1907 to the first performances of Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* point to how sensitive Irish people of the early 20th Century had become to the notion of us being seen as anything other than a land of responsible, sober, industrious, chaste people.

**“Poverty became seen as a moral failing, and chastity was a national priority”**

The ugly realities pointed to in Synge’s masterpiece were hardly compatible with the ambitions of a nation edging towards independence, let alone the “august destiny” envisaged by the signatories of the 1916 proclamation.

August destinies were fashionable in the Europe of the day, and Irish intellectuals looked forward to Ireland once again being Europe’s tutor, a reborn land of saints and scholars.

Obsessed with presenting a clean face, independent Ireland carried with it the effects of the long social revolution that followed the Famine and saw Victorian Protestant morality distorting Catholic social teaching, such that poverty became seen as a moral failing, and chastity was a national priority.

The price of this, all too often, was paid by women, the poor, and the children of both.





# Out&About

## Dundrum baby christens new font



◀ **DUBLIN:** Family members of mum and dad, Graham and Suzanne Ryan with their baby Charlie who was baptised by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin in the new baptismal font in Holy Cross Church, Dundrum. Photo: John McElroy

▼ **MAYO:** At the Spring Conference of the Irish Confraternity of Catholic Clergy in Knock are: Fr Damien Lynch, Fr Raymond Donnelly, Fr Thomas McHugh, Fr Luke McNamara OSB (guest speaker), Fr Pat O'Donohue (chairman), Fr Tony Gonoude, Fr Kevin Heery, Fr Pat Gorevan (guest speaker) and Fr Roger O'Neill. For more info [www.confraternity.ie](http://www.confraternity.ie)



**MONAGHAN:** St Macartan's College presents Bishop Emeritus Liam MacDaid with a specially created piece of glass artwork to mark his contribution over 60 years as student, teacher, counsellor, principal, administrator and bishop. The college is represented by, from left, Canon Shane McCaughey, President of St Macartan's, Marion McDonald, deputy principal and Raymond McHugh, principal. Photo: Peadar McMahon

## IN SHORT

### St Ciaran's College success at Knights public speaking

Two teams from St Ciaran's College in Ballygawley, Co. Tyrone travelled to compete in the Ulster Final of the Knights of Columbanus Public Speaking Competition in Newry.

Speaking on the topic of Racism and Hatred, Peadar McCaughey, Karl McGee and Eoin McElroy are now Ulster Champions. The three boys will progress to the All-Ireland Final in Maynooth on March 11.

Last year St Ciaran's students Sean Muldoon, Orlaith McGarvey and Meabh Corrigan were crowned All Ireland Champions in the same competition.

### Bishop Nulty launches new Mass setting

Bishop Denis Nulty has launched a new setting of the Mass by Newbridge composer Padraig Meredith.

The new Mass setting is entitled Mass of the People and it was performed for the first time by local choir In Caelo under the baton of Cora Coffey, musical director in St Conleth's Parish Church, Newbridge, Co. Kildare.

The Mass of the People includes new settings of the pieces sung/spoken at every Mass and also features the first performance by the Fox sisters of a new Psalm entitled 'In God Alone' and the Communion hymn 'Our



Blessing Cup' performed by soloist Teresa Lynch.

### Nine men make next step towards permanent diaconate in Cloyne

Nine men who are preparing for ordination to serve as permanent deacons in the Diocese of Cloyne were instituted by Bishop William Crea with the ministries of Lector and Acolyte in the Church of the Resurrection, Mallow.

The families of the nine candidates were in attendance and their parish priests were invited to concelebrate with the bishop.

Lectors minister by reading the Word of God and announcing the general

intercessions to the congregation at Mass and at other liturgical celebrations, while acolytes serve in the sanctuary and at the altar during Mass and may also assist the priest in the distribution of Holy Communion.

These ministries, which are usually exercised in rotation by lay ministers serving as Mass readers, altar servers, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, are traditionally conferred in a more formal and permanent way by the bishop on men who are preparing for service as deacons and priests, as part of their preparation to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Three of the candidates were instituted as lectors and six as acolytes.



Edited by Mags Gargan  
mags@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**KERRY:** Tralee Pioneers who received long service pins and certificates in St John's Church - Front: Joe McCarthy (gold), Margaret Cahill, Jamsie Cahill (Fr Cullen Medal), Ann Divane (Fr Cullen Medal) and John Lambe (Fr Cullen Medal). Back left: John Griffin, John Trant, Derry Mahony, Teresa O'Hara, Fr Bernard Healy CC, Spiritual Director, John Cleary (Fr Cullen Medal) Celia Cooke and Liam Fitzgerald.



**CAVAN:** Annette O'Rourke, Chairperson of Kingscourt Parish Pastoral Planning team welcoming Bishop Willie Walsh, Emeritus Bishop of Killaloe to the annual Lenten Novena.



**TYRONE:** Barry MacMahon, Supreme Knight with the winning team from St Ciaran's College in Ballygawley of the Ulster final of the Knights of St Columbanus Public Speaking Competition: Peadar McCaughey, Karl McGee and Eoin McElroy.



#### ◀ KILDARE:

Bishop Denis Nulty, Cora Coffey, Padraig Meredith and Fr Paul Dempsey PP pictured at the launch of a new setting of the Mass by Newbridge composer Padraig Meredith in St Conleth's Parish Church.

► **KILDARE:** Seven seminarians were admitted to the Ministry of Acolyte by Bishop Denis Nulty in St Patricks College, Maynooth. The seminarians pictured with Bishop Denis and college staff are: Thomas Small (Kilmore), Shane Costello (Tuam), Daniel Sheils (Kerry), Darren Baldwin (Kildare & Leighlin), Ronan Sheehan (Cork & Ross), Martin Shanahan (Killaloe) and Christopher Quinn (Down & Connor).



## CLARE

Talks for adults and young people during Lent every Sunday and Wednesday at 7.30pm at Ennis Parish Centre hall by Fr Ger Fitzgerald and lay people from the Neo-Catechumenal Way.

International centennial pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima (blessed by Pope Francis) is coming to Ennis Cathedral on Friday, March 24 for 10am Mass and consecration of Killaloe diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

## CORK

Catholic Bible teaching with Br Johnson Sequeira on Tuesday, March 21 in Leahy's Farm from 6-9.30pm; Wednesday, March 22 Glounthaune Parish Hall, 10.30am-4pm; Friday, March 24 Leahy's Farm 10am-1pm; Saturday, March 25 Mitchelstown Parish Hall 10.30am-7pm; Sunday, March 26 Glounthaune 11am-9pm.

## DUBLIN

Lenten talks with Seán Goan in the Church of Our Lady Immaculate, Refuge of Sinners, Rathmines, on 'The Bible for Grown-ups' on Wednesdays, March 15 and March 22 at 7.30pm.

The pilgrim statue of Our Lady at Fatima blessed by Pope Francis for the centenary year will visit Sacred Heart Church, Yellow Walls, Malahide on Wednesday, March 15 at 7.30pm.

'Monday at the Monastery' series of talks at the Presentation Brothers' house in Glashule, continue from 7.30-9pm: March 13, George Hook; March 20, Maria Steen; March 27, Marianne Quinn. Booking is advisable by emailing events@PresentationBrothers.org

Divine Mercy Mass 7.30pm every Tuesday in St Saviour's Church, Dominick Street followed by holy hour. Also prayers of Divine Mercy every day at 2.30pm at the shrine with the relic of St Faustina.

Presentation Brothers are running their 10th Alpha series in Glashule on Tuesday evenings from 7.30pm for 10 weeks throughout February and March. For more information, email alpha@PresentationBrothers.org

## GALWAY

Our Lady's School of Evangelisation, Unbound Programme of Healing Prayers with Fr Benny McHale and John McCarthy from 8-10pm on March 13, 20 and 27 at Abbey Hall, Newtownsmith. Contact 087-9980525.

## KERRY

Series of Lenten talks organised by Kerry diocese continue Monday, March 13 at 8pm with Richard Moore in St John's, Tralee; Tuesday, March 14 at 7.30pm with Fr Dan O' Riordan & Fr Noel Spring, in Parish Church, Castleisland.

## KILDARE

Traditional Latin Mass at 2pm, Saturday, March 18 in Parish Church of the Sacred Heart and St Brigid Kilcullen, organised by the Catholic Heritage Association.

## LIMERICK

Ignite: Every second Thursday, (next meeting March 16), the Dominican Sisters will be offering talks on various topics about the Faith at St Saviour's Dominican Church at 7pm.

Each Friday in Lent, St Saviour's Dominican Church will have a soup lunch after the 1pm Mass which will benefit Mary's Meals. All welcome.

Janice and Moss Carrig will hold a prayer meeting in the Desmond Hall, Newcastlewest on Sunday, March 12.

## LOUTH

Lenten Prayer for Healing 2017 at St Joseph's Redemptorist Church, Dundalk, 7pm, Sunday, March 12. Shane Martin is the speaker on the topic 'Are we ever at home?'

## MAYO

The next Latin Mass in the Old Rite (Tridentine) will take place on Sunday, March 12, at 5.30pm in the Parish Church Knock. The April Mass will take place on Easter Sunday at 5.30pm.

## OFFALY

Catholic Bible teaching with Br Johnson Sequeira ([www.jcilm.info](http://www.jcilm.info)), Church of the Assumption, Tullamore, on Saturday, March 18 from 10.30am-6pm and Sunday, March 19 from 2-6pm. Further details from: Chris 085-2392207.

## TIPPERARY

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

## WATERFORD

Monthly intercession for marriages and families in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament: Friday, March 10 from 6-7pm in the Edmund Rice Centre, Waterford.

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

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

## WESTMEATH

A programme of events to mark the centenary of the appearance of Our Lady at Fatima continues at the church of Saint John the Baptist Whitehall, in the parish of Coole on Friday, March 10 at 8pm with The First Secret of Fatima by Fr Shane O'Neill CC, Tramore.



# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Jews donate funds to rebuild mosque in Florida

● Following last week's news that Muslims in the US had raised funds to repair a vandal-damaged Jewish cemetery in the state of Missouri, it has now been revealed that Jews have been making donations in Florida towards the rebuilding of a mosque hit by arsonists. The revelation came after the man behind the fundraiser to repair the Islamic Society of New Tampa, Adeel Karim, became confused by the figures of individual donations to his drive, coming in as multiples of \$18, from \$36 to \$90 and over.

"I couldn't understand why people were donating in what seemed like weird amounts to the cause," Adeel explained on his Facebook page. "Then I figured out after clicking on the names Avi, Cohen, Goldstein, Rubin, Fisher....Jews donate in multiples of 18 as a form of what is called 'Chai'. It wishes the recipient a long life."

According to Shia.com: "In Judaism, the word 'chai' is numerically significant and the number 18 is universally synonymous with this word. Numerically, the words consists of the eighth and tenth letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Chet and Yud, adding up to 18 which is also the word 'Chai'."

### Hindu radicals storm mixed wedding

Hindu radicals in India have stormed a Christian church in order to disrupt a wedding between a Christian bride and Hindu groom. Allegedly linked with the right-wing Hindu Vahini group, the men interrupted the ceremony taking place in the central province of Madhya Pradesh, claiming that Christians were

attempting to convert the Hindu man being married. It is illegal to engage in forced conversion of Hindus in Madhya Pradesh. It has been reported that police arriving on the scene did nothing to remove the activists.

In order to end the standoff, the couple postponed their wedding.

### Report suggests agreement close between Rome, SSPX

● There are rumours that the breakaway Society of St Pius X (SSPX) may be close to reconciliation with the Vatican following a report that the group is set to purchase a property in Rome that could serve as its headquarters.

According to a report in the Italian daily *Il Foglio*, the SSPX is close to agreeing the purchase of Santa Maria Immacolata all'Esquilino in the heart of the Italian capital, described as being halfway between the Victor Emmanuel monument and the basilica of St John Lateran. The *Il Foglio* report goes so far as to claim that Pope Francis had a hand in the yet-to-be finalised property agreement.

Archbishop Guido Pozzo, the secretary for the Ecclesia Dei commission, who has been leading talks with the SSPX, confirmed in February that these negotiations were aimed towards the SSPX becoming a personal prelature recognised by the Church.

### Inquiry demanded into lay worker's murder

Church leaders in The Philippines have demanded a government investigation into the circumstances around the death of a Catholic lay worker on Mindanao island.

Wilerme Dorado Agorde was shot dead, apparently as a result of a land dispute on February 19, but suspicions remain that Agorde's work as a co-ordinator of an agrarian

reform programme backed by Caritas was the real reason for his assassination.

Father Gariguez, executive secretary of the social action secretariat of the Philippine bishops' conference, said Agorde's death "is interpreted by the community as a way to silence the leaders who are defending their land rights".

### Pastors, followers arrested

● A Christian pastor and four of his congregants have been arrested in Nicaragua after a woman they alleged was possessed by the devil was thrown onto a bonfire and died. Church minister Juan Gregorio Rocha Romero of the Assemblies of God Church had reportedly led an exorcism of the woman, Vilma Trujillo Garcia, during which she was stripped naked before being thrown into the flames. She died five days later in hospital.

## Tomb of Jesus restored in time for Easter ceremony

Restoration work on the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre will be completed in time for the celebration of Easter Sunday, April 16, it has been announced.

Following nine months of refurbishment on the Edicule sitting atop the central site of the Christian world, the National Technical University of Athens, which has led the restoration project has announced that its work is nearly complete and that the Edicule is now stabilised. Authorities for the Holy Sepulchre have revealed that an ecumenical celebration to mark the official end of work will take place on March 22.

Damaged by years of water seepage and an earthquake in 1927, the Edicule – itself dating from at least 1555 – was braced by the British authorities in 1947, offering the stone and metal look that has been the facade of the site ever since. This changed at the end of February when the old metal braces were at last



The Edicule pictured before the removal of the 1947 steel braces.

removed, returning the Edicule to its former glory.

The nine-month restoration saw an historic moment last November when, for a brief period, the covering slab of the actual tomb within the Edicule was lifted for a brief period in order to offer researchers access towards assessing the extent of damage caused across the years.

Witnessed by just a handful of figures at the time, the moment was captured on camera by a team from National Geographic as part of what will become a television documentary on the project.

With the Edicule and tomb secured, the Athens team now turns its attention to the surrounding floor space.

"Under the Edicule there are excavations, tunnels, sewage and groundwater, and [all are] rising up and threatening the structure. The foundations must be stabilised," said Prof. Antonia Moropoulou, the Athens team leader.

The next phase of work will see the existing drainage system excavated and repaired.

## Muslim leaders in Egypt condemn Christian killings

Leading Muslim groups and figures in Egypt have denounced the targeting of Christians by so-called Islamic State (ISIS). As Christians continue to flee the Sinai region after seven murders of community members, leaders of religious and political authorities have issued statements in support of their Christian countrymen and critical of the militants.

Among them is the ultra-conservative Salafist al Nur political grouping which stated unequivocally that the actions of ISIS in Sinai "go against the teachings of Islam". Meanwhile, Dar al Ifta al Misryah (House of Fatwa), the highest body for resolving Koranic disputes in Egypt, which is chaired by the nation's Grand Mufti Shawki Ibrahim Abdel-Karim Allam also attacked the ISIS campaign, denouncing the murders of Christians

and warning that the terrorists' goal was division in Egypt.

### Statement

The Muslim Brotherhood also issued a statement denouncing the targeted killings.

"The Muslim Brotherhood is closely following the dangerous developments and the deterioration security and social conditions in the Sinai, and strongly condemns the killings and displacement of Christian civilians of the Sinai," the group said, while going on to launch a political attack against the regime of President Abdel Fattah al Sisi.

It is reported locally that the head

of the Coptic Church, Pope Tawadros II [pictured], has been in contact with Prime Minister Sherif Ismail to discuss an emergency response to the flight of Sinai Christians.

Meanwhile, Christians reaching the city of Ismailia on the Suez canal have offered accounts of the fearful atmosphere now pervading in al Arish, the Sinai's largest city.

In testimonies gathered by *AsiaNews*, Christians have spoken of finding death threats daubed on their homes, along with the words 'Go' and 'Crusaders'. One Christian said: "We have started to be afraid of our own shadows. We are afraid of being followed and shot in the back. It's dreadful that Christians are targeted."



## South Sudanese prelates appeal for peace, trust

The Catholic bishops of South Sudan have stressed that they are not taking sides in the conflict currently affecting the nation and causing a growing famine.

While continuing to denounce violence on all sides which has now reached depraved extremes, the bishops have been at pains to stress that they are "not against the government" and committed to assisting in any

peace initiative it proposes.

In a message issued to the *Fides* news agency, the bishops acknowledge that some "elements of the government appear to be suspicious of the Church", but that Church figures have mediated peace deals at the local level which will be undermined if such suspicion continues and grows.

Reemphasising the urgent need for peace to

allow for desperately needed humanitarian aid to reach the worst affected areas of the nation, the bishops state: "Our country is gripped by a humanitarian crisis – famine, insecurity and economic hardship. Our people are struggling simply to survive."

"The Church is not for or against anyone, neither the government nor the opposition. We are for all good things – peace,

justice, love, forgiveness, reconciliation, dialogue, the rule of law, good governance – and against evil – violence, killing, rape, torture, looting, corruption, arbitrary detention, tribalism, discrimination, oppression – regardless of where they are and who is practising them.

"We are ready to dialogue with and between the government and the opposition at any time."





Edited by Paul Keenan  
paul@irishcatholic.ie

## Forced to flee



Displaced Egyptian Christian families, who used to live in the north of the Sinai Peninsula sit near their belongings after arriving at a church in Ismailia. Catholic churches in Ismailia, with help from Caritas, have helped Coptic Orthodox fleeing Islamic State attacks in North Sinai. Photo: CNS

## Croatian prelate launches renewed criticism of Medjugorje phenomenon

The bishop whose diocese includes the parish in Medjugorje has reiterated his belief that no apparitions have ever taken place at the site.

In the wake of news that Pope Francis has appointed a special delegate to examine the pastoral situation at the famed Bosnia-Herzegovina site, Bishop Ratko Peri of Mostar-Duvno issued a message on the diocesan website to state: "Considering everything that this chancery has so far researched and studied, including the first seven days of the alleged apparitions, it can peacefully be affirmed: The Madonna has not appeared in Medjugorje!"

"This is the truth that we support, and we believe in the words of Jesus: The truth will set us free."

Bishop Peri goes on to note that a

number of commissions have looked at events in Medjugorje without reaching a judgement that anything supernatural lies behind the alleged apparitions – at diocesan level in 1982-84 and 1984-86; in 1987-90 by the Croatian bishops' conference, and from 2010-14 and again from 2014-16 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

### Transcripts

Citing further the transcripts of interviews conducted by Church authorities with the Medjugorje seers in the first week of the alleged apparitions, Bishop Peri declares that the contents of these "with full conviction and responsibility, expose the reasons why the non-authenticity of the alleged phenomena is evident".

Going on to question the figure of the Virgin Mary as described by the seers, the prelate concludes that a claim that she has allowed herself to be touched by them leaves him with "the feeling and conviction that this is something unworthy, inauthentic and outrageous".

The bishop's latest attack on Medjugorje is set to anger the many thousands of pilgrims who continue to flood the small town every year as a result of the claims of ongoing apparitions. It was this particular group which led to Pope Francis appointing Archbishop Henryk Hoser of Warsaw-Prague as his special delegate to the site, specifically to identify the needs of pilgrims and pastoral initiatives that might be put in place for them.

## China increasing pressure on 'foreign' faiths – report

China has been accused of increasing its interference in some faiths, including Christianity, in a drive to thwart 'foreign' religions.

According to a new report, 'The Battle for China's Spirit', from Freedom House, a US-based advocacy group for political and human freedoms, China is increasingly acting against

followers of Christianity and Islam while at the same time promoting faiths viewed as more in tune with the state, such as Buddhism and Taoism. The same report notes that warming relations between Beijing and the Vatican has led to a measure of optimism among China's Catholic population.

It is to be noted that,

for some observers, this growing closeness has been interpreted as representing a dangerous compromise to state rules on the part of the Vatican.

In 'The Battle for China's Spirit', researchers note: "Since early 2014, local authorities have intensified efforts to stem the spread of Christianity amid official

rhetoric about the threat of 'Western' values and the need to 'Sinicize' religions. Persecution of Protestants—at both unofficial and state-sanctioned churches—has especially increased, while warming relations between Beijing and the Vatican has led some Catholics to be optimistic about the faith's future trajectory in China."

## Vatican roundup

### Pope prays for persecuted Christians

The prayer intention of Pope Francis for March 2017 is "that persecuted Christians may be supported by the prayers and material help of the whole Church".

In a monthly reflection on the papal prayer intention, the Apostleship of Prayer notes that Pope Francis has asked for special prayers for persecuted Christians during one month each year, and this year's request falls at the start of Lent, "a good time to include fasting and almsgiving for them".

The reflection goes on to observe that there are two sorts of persecution experienced by Christians today: the "clear, explicit type of persecution" in which believers suffer and die for the faith; and what Pope Francis called "polite" persecution, "disguised as culture, disguised as modernity, disguised as progress."

### Pope to receive European Union leaders

The Holy See Press Office has announced that Pope Francis will receive the heads of state and government of the nations of the European Union in a March 24 audience. The leaders will be in Rome to commemorate – on March 25 – the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community, the organisation that

eventually developed into the EU.

The audience will be the third meeting of this kind after the Pope's visit to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in November 2014 followed by the 2016 audience with the leaders of the European institutions, along with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, where Pope Francis received the Charlemagne prize.

### Pontifical Council offers Confession guide

The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation has issued a guide for the '24 Hours for the Lord' initiative, for individuals preparing for the full day of Confessions around the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

The 63-page downloadable guide offers answers to questions on why one should go to Confession as well as reflections on the sacrament. There are also two plans for *lectio divina*, containing suggestions on how to examine one's conscience and how to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

The pastoral guide '24 Hours for the Lord' can be downloaded at: [www.osv.com/24hoursfortheLord](http://www.osv.com/24hoursfortheLord)

### El Salvador submits 'Romero miracle' to Vatican

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints has received the findings of a Church of El Salvador investigation into a "presumed healing" attributed to Blessed Oscar Romero [pictured].

In a move that could bring the assassinated prelate closer to canonisation, the submission from El Salvador contains medical records of Cecilia Maribel Flores, a woman believed cured by his intercession.

The documentation will now be studied by a six-strong commission of theologians, a seven-strong panel of medical experts, and the 14 cardinals making up the Congregation for the Causes of Saints before any final submission is forwarded to Pope Francis for his decision.





# LENTEN AND EASTER

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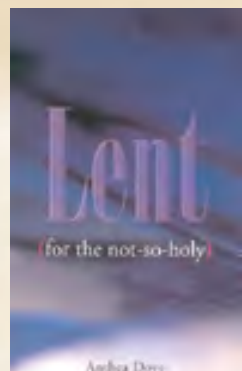
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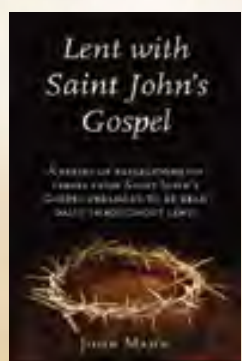
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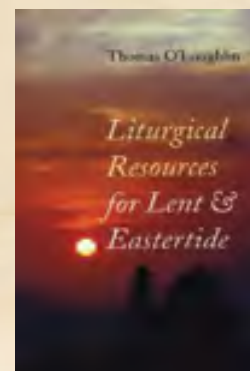
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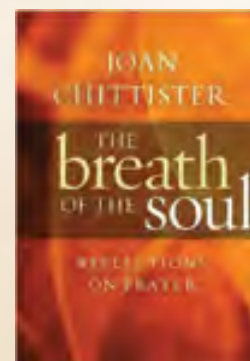
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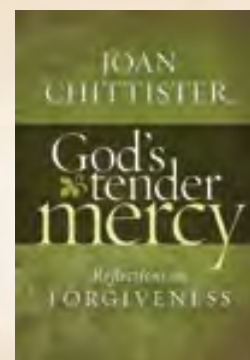
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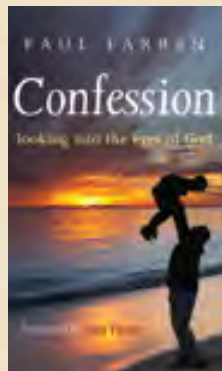
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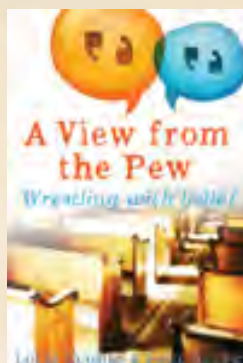
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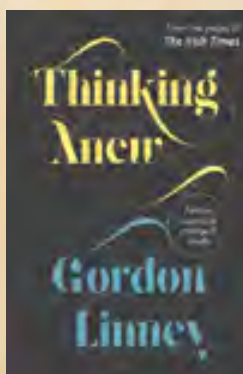
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# Letter from America



Those questioning Pope Francis are causing much disquiet, writes **Michael W. Higgins**

Many of the 50% plus white male Catholic voters in the last US election who helped elect Donald Trump were not unaware that this was a president who would shake things up—big time. After all, that was a major part of his appeal.

But life on the Potomac is more turbulent than expected, in-fighting among the team widespread, unpredictability sundering credible leadership, contradictions and back-pedaling more signs of disintegration than disruption.

Many of these same voters must be even more dismayed by the turbulence on the Tiber. Pope Francis, the ecclesiastical disruptor *par excellence*, is also facing in-fighting among the team, charges of ambiguous messaging, and festering resentment over his atypical leadership style.

When the newly-appointed papal ambassador to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, spoke at my own university following the convocation that awarded him an honorary degree, he was asked if the Church was on the cusp of schism because of the *dubia* posed by four cardinals.

## Option

His questioner was earnest and polite and the nuncio was measured, as befits a diplomat, in his response: no need for panic, and schism isn't an option. But he didn't dispel the unease felt by many.

After all, an editorial in *The Tablet* of London, published in the week of the nuncio's response starkly noted that "there is an exceptional level of turbulence in the Roman Catholic Church, and it arises from resistance to Pope Francis's leadership".

The *dubia* are a series of questions seeking doctrinal clarification on matters relating to the Pontiff's perceived weakening of Church teaching on divorced and remarried Catholics receiving

## A papal challenge without precedent



The dome of the Vatican is struck by lightning.



Cardinal Raymond L. Burke.



Steve Bannon.

Communion and constitute a public challenge to papal authority that knows no precedent.

**Burke was identified as a cleric warmly cultivated by Steve Bannon**

These cardinals – Walter Brandmüller, Carlo Caffara, Joachim Meisner, and Raymond Burke – are retired, in one case demoted, prelates, of waning influence but bold tenacity of view.

They have directly confronted Pope Francis in a public way – not the usual *modus operandi* of those in the hierarchy – demanding that he responded to their questions. They have support from a small but vocal body of conservative priests and academics and they are driven by a sense of urgency.

The *primum mobile* or instigator of this defiance is the American canonist Burke, whose capital in the Vatican is as low as it can get.

Removed from his position as the Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura – the highest court in the

Roman orbit – and now humiliated as patron of the Knights of Malta by his bungling intervention on a personnel matter, Burke has been emboldened to take on the Supreme Pontiff with a vigour that is Trumpian in its temerity.

In a recent investigative piece in *The New York Times* Burke was identified as a cleric warmly cultivated by Steve Bannon, chief strategist for President Trump, unreconstituted ideologue of the right, deft media *meister*, and a Catholic of Mel Gibson-like fervour and truculence.

Whether Bannon's courting of Burke presages a 'holy alliance' or not, it does demonstrate that Catholic traditionalists not only worry about the direction in which Francis is taking the Church they are prepared to do something about it that goes beyond praying.

## Latitude

Whereas Burke and his allies have been allowed considerable latitude in expressing their unhappiness with this Pope, no such breach of conformity and deference customarily accorded papal teaching would have been tolerated by Francis's two immediate predecessors.

One could imagine both Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI summarily dismissing and dispatching these dissident clerics to the ecclesiastical equivalent of Vladivostok in the dead of winter.

But not Francis. Whereas Trump places a high premium on personal loyalty to him, Francis prefers fidelity to the Gospel. Loyalty is a secondary virtue.

Rome will no more have a schism than Washington an impeachment. Still, there is turbulence in the very idea of such developments, a pervasive disquiet not easily exorcised.

**1** Michael W. Higgins is Distinguished Professor of Catholic Thought, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut.





Paul Keenan

In a case of 'better late than never' President Donald Trump used the occasion of his first major speech to the US Congress to address the wave of anti-Semitism currently afflicting the United States.

"Recent threats targeting Jewish community centres and vandalism of Jewish cemeteries... remind us that while we may be a nation divided on policies, we are a country that stands united in condemning hate and evil in all its forms."

Some might judge that to be somewhat weak, if at all a personal condemnation, but Mr Trump's words were the strongest yet he has offered since assuming office on the surge in threats to the Jewish community and acts of vandalism against properties associated with that faith. The president has previously ducked the issue when pressed by journalists, in one case – during that now infamous presidential press conference of February 15 – barracking an Orthodox Jewish reporter for daring to ask him to condemn anti-Semitic attacks outright.

## Response

Putting this lacklustre response from the American leader into the context of threats throws into stark relief what some are interpreting as a massive disregard of an issue that could all too easily shift from sinister phone-calls to outright violence against American Jews.

Just 24 hours before President Trump assailed the reporter seeking a clear denunciation of anti-Semitic incidents, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) moved to detain one Benjamin McDowell at Myrtle Beach in South Carolina.

# Trump talks big but fails to act on anti-Semitic attacks



Men work to right toppled Jewish headstones after a vandalism attack on Cheshed Shel Emeth Cemetery in Missouri. The incident at the cemetery near St Louis was repeated in Pennsylvania on February 26 when gravestones were destroyed at a Jewish cemetery there. Photo: CNS

to date is the laudable coming together of Americans of all traditions to restore the damaged cemeteries and in other simple acts of solidarity that have been shown; The Muslim Student Associations of the Universities of Florida State and Florida A&M gave bouquets of flowers to Jewish organisations on their campuses and local synagogues after the cemetery attacks.

## “We give him credit for doing the right thing”

Conversely, the measure of Jewish disappointment at the president's lacklustre words to Congress on February 28 is best captured by Steven Goldstein, executive director of the Anne Frank Centre for Mutual Respect, an anti-discrimination network.

In a statement after the address, Mr Goldstein said, "After weeks of our organisation having to plead, cajole and criticise this president to speak out against anti-Semitism, we give him credit for doing the right thing tonight by beginning his speech to address anti-Semitism and other hate. But his suddenly dulcet tones weren't matched by substantive kindness. The president didn't say exactly what he would do to fight anti-Semitism – how he could have stayed so vague? We've endured weeks of anti-Semitic attacks across America and we didn't hear a single proposal from the president tonight to stop them."

Looking back on the campaign that brought him to the White House, one has to ask when 'substantive' was ever a part of Mr Trump's armoury. It appears what was true then is true now, and just as vague.

But today the stakes are much, much higher, and the consequences of talk over action could well prove horrendous.

The 29-year-old white supremacist was arrested after he met with an undercover agent and purchased a firearm with the intention, according to FBI testimony, of emulating Dylann Roof – the church shooter who murdered nine worshippers at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. The target of McDowell's fatal aspiration was Temple Emanu-El Conservative Synagogue in Myrtle Beach.

McDowell's arrest is, however, but one of a growing number of Jewish-connected incidents since the start of 2017.

In the first two months of the year, law enforcement officials have recorded 102 bomb threats against Jewish community centres, schools and the headquarters of the community watchdog, the Anti-Defamation League.

No less disturbing, there have also been two incidents of mass vandalism against Jewish cemeteries, in St Louis Missouri on February 20, and in Pennsylvania on February 26.

## “The level of threats and incidents is astounding, and must not stand”

And while newswires and television networks have made much use of images of headstone after toppled headstone, these were accompanied by a wave of telephone bomb threats; on the day of the Pennsylvania vandalism, there were threats and mass evacuations of Jewish sites in Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, New

Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Virginia.

Reacting to a February 27 threat to the ADL offices in San Francisco, the organisation's CEO, Jonathan A. Greenblatt said: "One threat or evacuation is one too many, and yet we've now seen more than 20 incidents in a single day not just to ADL, but to children's schools and community centres – and more than 90 incidents since the start of this year. The level of threats and incidents is astounding, and must not stand. We will do everything in our power to combat this wave of anti-Semitism."

The ADL subsequently used this quote on its own website in calling on President Trump to launch a "plan of action to address the scourge of threats aimed at Jewish institutions".

What action there has been

# Filipino police have 'licence to kill' – rights watchdog

The voices led by the Catholic Church in the Philippines against the murderous anti-drug tactics of President Rodrigo Duterte gained an important boost last week.

On March 2 the international rights group Human Rights Watch (HRW) released the results of its own 'sample study' into the phenomenon of extrajudicial killings being laid at the door of the nation's police; allegedly unleashed by Mr Duterte in his drive to wipe out drug dealing and dealers in his country, the police stand accused of direct participation in and the guiding of the bulk of 7,000 fatal shootings since mid-2016.

According to HRW's



People hold photos of their family members, killed because of their alleged involvement in illegal drugs, in Manila.

Licence to Kill report, which is a study of 24 cases involving 32 fatalities, police records of the slayings are greatly at odds with the testimony of witnesses.

The report summary offers a flavour: "On the

afternoon of October 14, 2016, four masked gunmen stormed the Manila home of Paquito Mejos, a 53-year-old father of five who worked as an electrician on construction sites. An occasional user of shabu, a methamphetamine, Mejos had turned himself in to local authorities two days earlier after learning he was on a 'watch list' of drug suspects.

"The gunmen asked for Mejos, who was napping upstairs. 'When I saw them with their handguns going upstairs,' a relative said, 'I told them, 'but he has already surrendered to the authorities!' They told me to shut up, or I would be next.'"

"Two gunshots rang out. Police investigators arrived

moments later and were assisted by the gunmen.

In their report, the police referred to Mejos as "a suspected drug pusher" who 'pointed his gun [at the police] but the police officers were able to shoot him first hitting him on the body causing his instantaneous death'.

They said a shabu packet was found along with a handgun. "But Paquito never had a gun," said his relative. "And he did not have any shabu that day."

## 'Evidence'

HRW goes on to detail similar cases where police allegedly planted guns and incriminating 'evidence' to bolster their cases, and,

several cases where arrested suspects already in custody who were found dead were re-classified as 'found bodies'.

Not unexpectedly, the Duterte administration, even as its leader calls for the slaying of drug dealers, has been quick to dismiss the HRW report as mere 'hearsay'.

More sinister than this hard-nosed dismissal (and those repeatedly offered to the appeals of the Catholic hierarchy locally to end the killings) was the move launched by the authorities on February 24 to arrest Mr Duterte's fiercest lay critic in the war on drugs, senator and former justice minister Leila de Lima.

The charge? That Senator de Lima received drugs money from imprisoned dealers while she was minister for justice.

(At the time of writing, Filipino politicians were engaged in furious denunciations of the exclusion of the senator's protection detail from the police facility holding her.)

Thus it appears that silencing opposition voices is now part of the Duterte drugs strategy. This is a truly worrying development for those, such as Church leaders and supporters, who dare to speak out on human rights violations in their country.

❶ The Licence to Kill report can be found at: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)



# 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

### Time to cut the Bon Secours sisters some slack

**Dear Editor,** Following the revelations last week that “significant quantities” of human remains had been discovered at the site of the former mother-and-baby home in Tuam, Co. Galway, one could almost hear the deafening noise of knuckle-cracking that resulted from the universal epidemic of hand-wringing that spread throughout the land. “How could this happen?” some queried, while others said that they were “shocked and traumatised”.

Katherine Zappone said the find was “very sad and disturbing news”, while Enda Kenny, stated that the treatment of mothers and babies in Church-run homes was “an abomination”, adding that for decades women who had children outside marriage were treated as “an inferior sub-species” in Ireland.

All these responses are very predictable. And throughout this sorry narrative, the Bon Secours sisters

have come in for a hammering – and unfairly so, I say. It so easily fits in with the anti-Church bashing all too frequent in this country in recent years. Yes, Church personnel were culpable – just as other authorities of the day, both local and national, were equally culpable; one has only to read current reports in local newspapers in the ‘20s, ‘30s and ‘40s to realise how good a job the sisters (and brothers) actually did considering the paucity of resources available to them at every turn.

The local people in Tuam in the 1920s voiced their opinion that the former soldiers’ barracks shouldn’t be used as a mother and baby home, but rather it should be used to generate employment for the local population – just like the good people of Ballaghadereen didn’t want Abbeyfield Hotel to be turned into an emergency reception centre for Syrian refugees.

The commission stated “These remains involved a number of individuals with age-at-death ranges from approximately 35 foetal weeks to two-three years”. Catherine Corless’ tireless and meticulous work (for which the country owes her an enormous debt of gratitude,) revealed death certificates for 796 children with no indication of where they were buried.

That fact alone sounds callous, even heartless; but, perhaps, considering the circumstances of those dark decades, and burying between 20 and 30 children per year, they couldn’t afford the ‘luxury’ of marking individual graves (something we take for granted nowadays). I say “perhaps” because I simply don’t know; but I think the sisters should be cut some slack until we see this tragic scenario within its full and complex context.

*Yours etc.,  
Kevin McEvoy fsc, Dublin 10.*

### We should refuse to pay our TV license

**Dear Editor,** Fr Kevin McNamara (IC 23/02/2017) is rightly concerned about the dismissive response he received from *The Late Late Show* producer. The same producer claims he wants fresh faces and yet two weeks later, he recycled Fr Brian D’Arcy to regale us with his regrets that he did not marry.

It is understandable that those who do not comprehend the significance of what happens at Mass might openly question the mystery behind a central Catholic belief. What is less understandable is the ignorance and total lack of respect that leads to people mocking the sacred beliefs of others and I include Ryan Tubridy and his producer in this. And

then they feel competent to tell us that what they did was not sacrilegious.

Why should we continue to pay a TV license fee to pay inflated salaries to self-appointed celebrities who are only too happy to insult their paymasters? However one looks at it, the term ‘haunted bread’ is nothing other than insulting.

Sadly the vaunted powers at RTÉ are blind to their anti-religious prejudices including their willingness to distribute sex aids “for every member of the audience”.

*Yours etc.,  
Alan Whelan,  
Killarney,  
Co. Kerry.*

**Dear Editor,** In relation to the ongoing saga about the ‘provocative’ remarks made on *The Late Late Show* which has many readers and viewers quite rightly exercised, may I make a simple suggestion? I’m wondering if there is a precedent by which people could refuse to pay their TV license on the grounds of being insulted and discriminated against? (I firmly believe that many Catholics now find themselves part of a minority group who are ridiculed, bullied and discriminated against at every opportunity, particularly by some sections of the ‘national broadcaster’!)

It’s just a thought but possibly might have a little more impact than entering into a war of words with people who neither have the ability nor desire to distinguish between what is ‘provocative’ and just downright insulting!

*Yours etc.,  
Fr Dominic Meehan,  
Templemore,  
Co. Tipperary.*

### Society needs to learn from past mistakes

**Dear Editor,** From the death of Cardinal Connell, to the resignation of Marie Collins, to the report by the Commission of Investigation in to Mother and Baby Homes, over recent weeks we have had to face once again the terrible subject of child abuse and Church failures.

The Church in Ireland neglected its moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable, that is indisputable. However, Irish society was a harsh place to live for anyone not conforming or perceived to be stepping outside the line. Our treatment of unmarried

mothers and their children as a society was appalling. Our treatment of abuse victims as a society was appalling. Really our treatment of children in general was terrible. My mother could make my skin crawl when she recounted her experience of being savagely beaten by a lay male teacher in primary school in the 1950s.

We must learn from our mistakes. I don’t think it is healthy or that it serves any purpose to have politicians and media commentators wringing their hands about the past. What we need

from them now is action to ensure that as a nation and a society that we do not make the mistakes of the past, or the next scandal will be the treatment of children of asylum seekers growing up in direct provision, the children of Travellers facing a shorter life span than their peers or the treatments of children growing up within the scourge of drug addiction.

*Yours etc.,  
Maureen Scanlon,  
Drogheda,  
Co. Louth.*

### Parents fighting to save Roscrea school

**Dear Editor,** I was glad to see the report that the parents of pupils at the Cistercian College in Roscrea are fighting to retain the school

(‘Parents’ campaign offers Roscrea possible lifeline’ IC 02/03/2017). It would be such a shame to see an institution of that calibre come

to an end. Besides, with such eminent past pupils as Brian Cowen, Conor Brady and Dick Spring, surely it would not be that difficult for them

to rustle up a few bob to save their old *alma mater*.

*Yours etc.,  
John Rogers,  
Swords, Co. Dublin.*

### Parishes are reaching out in modern ways

**Dear Editor,** Well done to Glenamaddy parish in Co. Galway for thinking outside the box and offering a ‘drive-thru’ Ash Wednesday service and Lenten box (IC 23/02/2017). It obviously captured the nation’s imagination with all the media coverage it received last week, but more importantly it also attracted good numbers to avail of the service.

This follows on from previous parish initiatives elsewhere where priests offered Confession in shopping centres. I have also noticed from social media that a few parishes this year offered a simple lunch of soup and bread after Mass on Ash Wednesday with all donations going to charity.

I am delighted to see priests and parish councils coming up with these innovative projects, which reach out to people and adapt to the modern pace of life.

*Yours etc.,  
Brid Hennessey,  
Tallaght,  
Dublin 24.*

### Young people do not understand Confession

**Dear Editor,** Fr Iggy O’Donovan was recently quoted as saying that Confession has declined because people have “thrown off the shackles” in their rejection of the idea that sex is a sin and that he is pleased about that.

This is too simplistic because the rejection of the idea of sin is not solely confined to the area of sexuality.

The younger generation simply do not know what constitutes sin – they do not feel they need to avail of the Sacrament of Reconciliation because they do not understand. It is a sad state of affairs.

*Yours etc.,  
Mary Gallagher,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin 3.*



### 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



**IRAQ:** An Iraqi soldier carries an injured woman during a battle with the Islamic State group in Mosul. Photos: CNS

**BRAZIL:** Revellers participate in a Carnival procession in Rio de Janeiro.



**IRAN:** A Chinese and Ukrainian compete in the final of the Women's World of Chess Championship in Tehran.



**VATICAN:** Pope Francis greets a child during his general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican.



**UNITED STATES:** A Muslim woman adorned in an American flag listens as President Donald Trump delivers his first address to a joint session of Congress in Washington DC.



**WEST BANK:** Israeli settlers are seen on a rooftop of a house in the West Bank settlement of Ofra. The residents are being evicted by the Israeli police because the house was built on private Palestinian land.



# The flavour of God's energy

All things considered, I believe that I grew up with a relatively healthy concept of God. The God of my youth, the God that I was catechised into, was not unduly punishing, arbitrary, or judgmental. He was omnipresent, so that all of our sins were noticed and noted, but, at the end of the day, he was fair, loving, personally concerned for each of us, and wonderfully protective, to the point of providing each of us with a personal guardian angel.

That God gave me permission to live without too much fear and without any particularly crippling religious neuroses.

But that only gets you so far in life.

Not having an unhealthy notion of God doesn't necessarily mean that you have a particularly healthy one. The God whom I was raised on was not overly stern and judgmental, but neither was he very joyous, playful, witty or humorous. Especially, he wasn't sexual, and had a particularly vigilant and uncompromising eye in that area.

## Grey

Essentially he was grey, a bit dour, and not very joyous to be around. Around him, you had to be solemn and reverent. I remember the Assistant Director at our Oblate novitiate telling us that there is no recorded incident, ever, of Jesus having laughed.

Under such a God you had permission to be essentially



## Fr Rolheiser

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

healthy, but, to the extent that you took him seriously, you still walked through life less than fully robust and your relationship with him could only be solemn and reverent.

Then, already a generation ago, there was a strong reaction in many churches and in the culture at large to this concept of God. Popular theology and spirituality set out to correct this, sometimes with an undue vigour.

What they presented instead was a laughing Jesus and a dancing God and while this was not without

its value it still left us begging for a deeper literature about the nature of God and what that might mean for us in terms of a health and relationships.

That literature won't be easy to write, not just because God is ineffable, but because God's energy is also ineffable. What, indeed, is energy? We rarely ask this question because we take energy as something so primal that it cannot be defined but only taken as a given, as self-evident.

We see energy as the primal

force that lies at the heart of everything that exists, animate and inanimate.

Moreover, we feel energy, powerfully, within ourselves. We know energy, we feel energy, but what we rarely recognise its origins, its prodigiousness, its joy, its goodness, its effervescence, and its exuberance. We rarely recognise what it tells us about God. What does it tell us?

**“The challenge of our lives is to live inside that energy in a way that honours it and its origins”**

The first quality of energy is its prodigiousness; it is prodigal beyond our imagination and this speaks something about God. What kind of creator makes billions of throw-away universes? What kind of creator makes trillions upon trillions of species of life, millions of them never to be seen by the human eye? What kind of father or mother has billions of children?

And what does the exuberance in the energy of young children say about our creator? What does their playfulness suggest about what must also lie inside of sacred energy? What does the energy of a young puppy tell us about what's sacred? What do laughter, wit, and irony tell us about the God?

No doubt the energy we see around us and feel irrepressibly within us tells us that, underneath, before and below everything else, there flows a sacred force, both

physical and spiritual, which is at its root, joyous, happy, playful, exuberant, effervescent and deeply personal and loving. That energy is God. That energy speaks of God and that energy tells us why God made us and what kind of permissions God is giving us for living out our lives.

When we try to imagine the heart of reality, we might picture things this way: at the very centre of everything there sit two thrones, on one sits a king and on the other sits a queen, and from these two thrones issue forth all energy, all creativity, all power, all love, all nourishment, all joy, all playfulness, all humor and all beauty.

All images of God are inadequate, but this image hopefully can help us understand that God is perfect masculinity and perfect femininity making perfect love all the time and that from this union issues forth all energy and all creation.

Moreover that energy, at its sacred root, is not just creative, intelligent, personal and loving, it's also joyous, colourful, witty, playful, humorous, erotic and exuberant at its very core. To feel it is an invitation to gratitude.

The challenge of our lives is to live inside that energy in a way that honours it and its origins.

That means keeping our shoes off before the burning bush as we respect its sacredness, even as we take from it permission to be more robust, free, joyous, humorous, and playful – and especially more grateful.





# Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, March 9, 2017

**Personal Profile**  
Ossory's  
Diocesan Pastoral  
Coordinator  
**Page 26**



## The Art of Public SPEAKING



**F**or as long as I can remember I have heard people saying that Mass is boring, as an explanation or an excuse for not attending. I was an altar server for eight years and would often get myself into trouble in school speaking up for the Church when I would hear classmates saying such things.

Of course I never stopped to think back then, that while I was serving at Mass, I was actually doing something and didn't have time to think if they might be right. To me, going to Mass was an obligation, a duty that I had signed up for, having received First Holy Communion and Confession, and it was not right to question anything.



**Like any audience, a priest has to know his congregation when delivering a homily, writes Darragh McGann**

When I finished as an altar server, I joined the Cathedral Folk Choir and I loved it. The music was very uplifting and the Mass was packed out the door. As I reflect back on it, there was a real feel-good factor going on with upbeat music and there was a great engagement by the priests too. You could sense that even their spirits were uplifted. It was at this time that the laity was invited to proclaim

the Word of God and also the distribution of Holy Communion as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. We really were a vibrant parish with a lot of involvement by the congregation.

### **Seminary**

By the time I entered seminary to study for the priesthood in 1991, I had already become a reader at Mass and I have to say, I really enjoyed it. I would

spend a lot of time preparing the readings, getting to know their meaning so that I could do justice to the author in proclaiming the message that each reading contained.

In fact with some of the readings, I might never have to look at the lectionary as I was so familiar with them. I preferred to make eye contact with people or at least let the people think I was looking at them.

I only stayed in seminary for a year because in my heart I wasn't ready to make that commitment, but when my bishop suggested that I might study a diploma in Sacred Liturgy in Carlow, I jumped at the chance. I loved everything to do with liturgy and to be able to study it, was like a

dream come true. The greatest highlight of that year was when I chose to do my thesis on the Ministry of the Word. I spent many hours studying the Old and New Testaments and Gospels getting to know the writers and learning about how to best deliver the message that each one contained.

Accepting that each reading was in essence, The Word of God, I wanted to present a thesis that put the emphasis on what God was trying to teach his people through the spoken word in the readings that he inspired.

I wrote at length about pronunciation, using abbreviations, breathing techniques, placing emphasis

**» Continued on Page 25**



## Children's Corner

ERIN FOX



### A rainbow wreath for St Patrick's Day

**S**t Patrick's Day is next week and you'll no doubt be getting ready to collect your shamrocks after Mass, before attending your local parade. While the shamrock is the most popular symbol associated with St Patrick's Day, there are lots more symbols that mark the occasion, such as rainbows, leprechauns and pots of gold. Make your own luck with this rainbow wreath. You can make it a week ahead so you'll enjoy it coming up to St Patrick's Day.

You will need sheets of felt in the colours of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, white and purple, and also pins, dark green felt, scissors, chocolate coins and one polystyrene wreath in any size you like.

Take the sheets of felt in the rainbow colours and cut rectangles from each sheet, long enough to wrap around the ring.



Pin them all around the wreath overlapping each colour until you have worked all the way round the wreath.

Once you're happy with the positioning, glue them into place, and remove the pins.

Next make your shamrocks. Make a shamrock template from the cereal card and pin this to the dark green felt. Cut around the template and repeat until you have as many shamrocks as you need. One on either side of the cauldron will be enough but you can add more if you wish. Leave them to one side while you make the pot of gold.

**“The wreath will look just as great without the pot of gold”**

Again, use the cereal card to make a cauldron template. Pin this to the black felt and cut around it; glue this to the centre of wreath at the bottom.

Next cut out the coins from the gold card and glue these near the opening of the cauldron and place a few near the cauldron feet. Glue the shamrocks on either side of the cauldron. Tie some ribbon to the top of the wreath for hanging.

Style the wreath differently if you like. The wreath will look just as great without the pot of gold. Instead you can space more shamrocks all around the wreath. Just make sure you space them apart so that you can still see the rainbow base.

Make a four-leaf clover from the remaining dark green felt and hide it among the shamrocks. Use felt in different shades of green for the base of the wreath and make a St Patrick doll to attach to it.

# Talking Lent in teens' language



**I**t's not until something goes wrong or breaks that we realise how much we miss it. This week everything in our house seemed to be giving up the ghost: the heating packed in with a worst case scenario of some sort of expansion tank having burst; we failed our NCT and, disaster of all disasters – the broadband mysteriously stopped operating as well.

Of course the weather had also taken a turn for the worst and any journey outside the one room we were keeping warm was decidedly chilly. It wasn't the icy atmosphere that forced my 17-year-old daughter to pack up and abandon ship. She could have coped with us all huddled around a plug-in heater snuggled in blankets and winter woollies, but surviving without broadband was a step too far.

So, off she went to stay with my son and daughter-in-law to enjoy their warmth and broadband.

Left with three children and no internet access, it became obvious that so many aspects of people's lives are connected to how connected they are to what's going on online. It's not only young people. I have to admit that I spend a substantial amount of time every day on the internet.

### Contact

Some of the time is well spent; it's a great way to keep in contact with friends and family, post positive comments on important issues and a vital modern way to evangelise. That's the theory anyway! If I'm perfectly honest, I have to admit that it's also a way to waste endless hours: scrolling down through posts, being dragged into pointless discussions or taking part in the most



## A parent's perspective Maria Byrne

ridiculous quizzes.

Who really needs to know what household appliance represents their personality?

With Lent approaching, my eldest daughter came up with the bright idea of having one internet-free day a week.

I've spoken at length about how children spend too much time on devices, how parents need to monitor children's internet usage and how important it is to lead by example.

However, when a day without devices was suggested, I wasn't overly enthusiastic. Maybe I'd just stick to giving up chocolate and cutting down on my coffee intake. Who knows what I could miss if I was offline for a whole 24 hours.

**“It's about facing up to how much we focus on our relationship with God”**

My reluctance to embrace something too difficult really made me focus on what Lent is all about. It's not just a secular season that provides an opportunity to quit smoking or to kick start a new health regime. It's really about looking at our lives under the microscope and honestly facing up to how much we focus on our relationship with God. What really matters in our lives? As the hymn says “Where your

treasure is, there your heart will be”.

I heard a great homily recently given by a Dominican priest where he got to the heart of what Lent should be and it's not about patting ourselves on the back for shedding a few pounds but what we should be trying to achieve is a journey towards a better relationship with the God who loves each one of us.

Trying to put this into practice and coming up with some unique new ideas to make our Lenten efforts more fruitful might require a few helpful suggestions and resources.

### Safe options

I found a fantastic list on LifeTeen.com of ‘102 Things You Should Really Give Up For Lent’ which contains plenty of novel ideas.

The list is geared to teenagers but any age could dip into it. It moves away from the usual safe options and gets more into changes that are more challenging and life-changing and speaks in a language that young people can identify with.

I loved the creativity behind the list. Some ideas focused on lifestyle changes like giving up Instagram filters or “using emojis to avoid talking about your true feeling”. I hadn't heard those ones before.

Other suggestions are designed to encourage teenagers to stretch themselves

spiritually and move outside their comfort zones. Are they avoiding going to Confession because it's scary or failing to invite friends to faith-based events? Do they refuse to see God in their family members, even if they find them annoying at times? Is a busy schedule used as an excuse not to take up a fuller devotion to all things spiritual like saying the Rosary, going to daily Mass more often or praying more?

The teen's list also had new approaches to building virtue. To combat greed during Lent and think of one's poorer neighbours, there's a suggestion that spending be confined to essentials only or that a young person could volunteer in a soup kitchen for Lent.

**“Lent is also a time of reaching out to do something for our neighbour”**

I loved the idea of giving something away during every day of Lent and this is not confined to material things, but also the giving of our time and support.

I think one of the best Lenten efforts could involve No.102 on the list: “Hiding your faith from those around you. It's Lent. Share what God is doing in your life these 40 days.”

A US bishop I admire, Bishop Frank Caggiano, said that Lent is a time of denying ourselves but also of reaching out to do something for our neighbour. If parents and children pray more, have more faith and show more love and charity this Lent, a true spiritual transformation will occur that goes beyond refusing that extra few chocolates.



» Continued from Page 23



Pope Francis delivers a homily. Photo: CNS

on the key messages to be made and above all, getting to know what the reading meant before actually delivering it. In truth, the point I was trying to make is that we all need to respect The Word of God and to be given the opportunity to proclaim that same Word is indeed an honour in and of itself.

But with that comes great responsibility as the reader must remember that the people to whom they are proclaiming to, have themselves come to be inspired, have their burden lightened, have their fears calmed, be given hope in time of trial and to experience the great love, understanding and mercy of God.

### Knowledge

As I now reflect back on the studies I completed and the knowledge I have gained and tried to put into practice, I am also conscious that the same responsibility of proclaiming to the people also applies to priests.

The Catholic Church in Ireland has taken quite a hit in recent years and people have started straying away, questioning their own faith. I believe priests too have been finding it difficult to remain enthusiastic about the message they are delivering.

**“I truly believe what will touch their hearts and souls is a warm welcome, firstly at the beginning of Mass”**

Yet I am reminded of a quote from Luke Chapter 24 when the two disciples are walking on the road to Emmaus and Jesus walks with them. They of course do not recognise him but he asks what they are talking about. It is clear from this passage that the spirits of these disciples have been broken and maybe they have even lost faith in what they were doing, but it is later at the breaking of bread that their eyes are opened and their faith restored.

After Jesus had left, one of the

disciples commented “Did not our hearts burn within us as he explained the scriptures to us?”

I know in recent years that I have had days when I found it difficult to find hope, yet when present before the Blessed Sacrament, I knew that Jesus understood and he is all the time reaching out to me and this is made manifest for us all through the words, actions and witness of the priest.

Sadly for a lot of people, their only attendance at Mass might be at Christmas and Easter and also maybe a funeral or wedding liturgy. But even if it is just at Christmas, I truly believe what will touch their hearts and souls is a warm welcome firstly at the beginning of Mass and then a great delivery



of a homily that is based on the celebration itself and is filled with hope for tomorrow.

Unfortunately, I have witnessed too many priests producing a written text for a homily and reading directly from the script without even once looking at the congregation. Often times I can't even understand what is been said as it's over before it's begun. Sometimes the homily itself bears no reflection to the message of the Gospel reading. How many times have you left the church after Mass and you can't even recall a message from the homily?

### Audience

Like any audience, a priest has to know his congregation and as a

priest whose responsibility it is to proclaim the Gospel and deliver the homily, it is vital that thought and preparation must go in to touching the hearts and souls of those who have come together for the Eucharistic celebration and, whose desire it is to be fed, not just with the body of Christ but also by the Word of God.

**“No one ever said that standing up in front of people and speaking was easy”**

With good support and encouragement from the laity, I believe that priests can regain that confidence to speak from the heart and share the message that God wants his people to know, one of the reasons that he chose these disciples to minister as his representatives on Earth.

No one ever said that standing up in front of people and speaking was easy, it's far from it. But when you have done your preparation, you know your congregation and ultimately believe in what you want to say, well, God will do the rest, as nothing is impossible to him.

Just as Jesus sent out the 72 disciples to bring God's message of love and mercy, let us all renew ourselves in his love and go out there, bringing hope, healing and love to his people, especially to those who have forgotten that God loves them.

I believe it is imperative that we as the lay faithful reach out and support our priests and assist them every day in embracing the art of delivery of God's love and mercy for his people and show them that we appreciate the great sacrifices that they themselves have made in answering God's call to become persons of Christ.

**i** Darragh McGann is a singer/songwriter and lector.

# Dad's Diary

Rory Fitzgerald



**T**his morning, our toddler woke me at 3am. While she drifted off again at about 6am, I've been awake ever since. Yesterday, I had a relative lie-in as she only woke me at 5am. That's two nights in a row of around four hours sleep.

At two-and-a-half years of age, most toddlers have started sleeping through the night, but not our little girl. As my wife was working a night shift in Accident and Emergency, there was nobody to share the burden of coaxing an active little mind back to sleep. Therefore, I have truly entered the land of sleep deprivation.

It is a strange but familiar place. Everything is slightly hazy. You forget things. You find yourself staring at a wall because your brain has randomly shut down. I'm writing this article now, but I wouldn't be altogether surprised if I woke up and this was a dream.

Everything seems vague and dreamlike, and that sensation can sometimes be strangely pleasant, but when you're busy with lots on, being sleep deprived can make you cranky and stressed, as even small tasks seem utterly insurmountable. No wonder sleep deprivation has long been used as a method of torture.

**“I can function fairly well on three or four hours sleep nowadays”**

The most dangerous aspect of it is perhaps that it definitely impairs your reactions and judgement when driving. There is also plenty of research about how a long-term chronic lack of sleep can damage health and even relationships.

I've become so used to being sleep deprived over the past eight years that I can function fairly well on three or four hours sleep nowadays, whereas I never could when I was younger. I just plough on in a daze and hope for the best. Luckily, most of my colleagues in work have kids and so they nod sympathetically when I explain why I've lost my train of thought mid-sentence, or why I've left my ultra-strong cup of

coffee on top of the photocopier again.

Caffeine is my greatest ally in this battle and copious amounts of it are used medicinally each morning. Sugar is the other great crutch for the sleep deprived and, after a bad night, I've been known to stumble voraciously towards the cake trolley for an unhealthy but welcome energy boost.

### Interruption

Even a good night these days means six or seven hours of sleep at most, usually interrupted by a bedwetting incident, a bloody nose, a dirty nappy, a bad cough, a vomiting incident or some other child-related catastrophe, dealt with inexpertly while stumbling about in the dark on half-conscious parental autopilot.

Being low on sleep quickly becomes the norm. Indeed, this new normality only becomes apparent when something strange happens. Just occasionally, when all the planets are aligned just



so, and the moon is in the correct phase, and we have momentarily evaded all the viruses that like to prey on small children, something very unusual – almost miraculous – happens. We might go to bed at 11pm and sleep

uninterrupted until 7am.

That has only happened about three or four times a year, but each time is like a day release from prison. You feel like someone has crept in during the night and injected you with steroids and amphetamines.

Some skillful surgeon has replaced your worn-out and malfunctioning old brain with a new, shiny, high-speed model, capable of rational thought and with a fully-functional short-term memory.

There is a sense of calm as you know you have the wherewithal to face whatever the day throws at you. Tasks take half the time they usually do. You feel about 10 years younger.

But then, by the evening of that happy day, there is once again evidence of a nascent cough, or someone has napped for too long and can't sleep, and so the familiar fog of sleep-deficit normality returns once again.





## Mags Gargan speaks to the Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator in Ossory

Personal  
PROFILE

If anyone is qualified to take the pulse of the Church on the ground in Ireland, it would be someone in Gemma Mulligan's position. As Diocesan Pastoral Coordinator, the core part of her job is to visit parishes in the Diocese of Ossory on a daily basis, talking to priests and pastoral councils and addressing congregations at Sunday Mass. The good news is that although she is very aware of the challenges the Church faces, her diagnosis is that the future of the Faith is bright.

"I feel really positive because when I'm going around parishes I see every week the amount of people actively involved. The numbers are small in comparison with the past, but in their own right there are still large numbers of people coming out every weekend to worship and celebrate with their friends and neighbours.

"I was at a meeting recently and a man said to me that parish is like the beating heart in their community. People that I am meeting are really willing and active and want to be there participating," she says.

### Active in faith

Now living in Tulloroan with her husband and five children, Gemma is originally from St Patrick's parish in Kilkenny, where faith became an important part of life from early on.

# Parish is the beating heart of the community



Gemma Mulligan.

"My mother was very active in her faith", she explains. "She was always welcoming people in the house and she really lived out her faith. We were always encouraged to get involved in things."

At about the age of 14, Gemma joined the folk choir and from there became involved in the liturgy

group, Taizé and "all kinds of youth ministry programmes".

After completing a degree in Theology and Philosophy in Milltown Institute, Gemma worked for Catholic Youth Care in Dublin for a number of years in the area of evangelisation. "I was also part of the World Youth Day (WYD) team,"

she says, "which involved bringing young people to WYD but also huge spiritual preparation. I went to WYD in Rome and Canada. It was an incredible experience, on a personal level, to see our Church so alive and away from what you were used to. There was an incredible sense of the universal Church."

When Gemma started her family she left her job to take care of her children full time but "stayed involved all the time with the parish". She says even when she had her hands full with small babies in her house, "it was always important to me to be connected to my parish in an active way, doing something to help in any way", and ultimately this led her to her current role.

Gemma became involved in her Parish Pastoral Council in Tulloran. She was appointed as the rep for her parish on the deanery pastoral council and subsequently became the deanery chairperson. After a number of years in this role the job of co-ordinator came up and "I decided to go for it".

**"We need to learn to work more together as a diocese and with neighbouring parishes"**

Taking up the position last August, Gemma has been busy travelling the diocese to prepare parishes to implement the diocesan pastoral plan.

"The plan has nine strands and I am concentrating on strand two at the moment which is 'Re-imagine parish leadership in light of today's reality'. So I am preparing people for parishes without resident priests. We are starting this conversation where I suppose we are all trying to get our heads around the changes that

are taking place, that's the first part. The second part is looking at ways we can be prepared, and parishes can continue to be strong faith communities, where people can continue to worship and come together to celebrate," she says.

"A huge part of my job is to try to encourage more lay people to take on leadership roles, rather than leave it to others. That through their baptismal call people will recognise the need to step up and be trained if necessary in leading lay lead liturgies or maybe some formation."

### Vocations

For Gemma the only way we can face the changes taking place in the Church, from the decline in vocations to the secularisation of society, is to work together. "We need to learn to work more together as a diocese and with neighbouring parishes, because that is the way it is going to have to be. We have to be move outside of ourselves a little bit," she says.

After having such a positive faith upbringing herself, Gemma is driven in her work by a desire to secure a vibrant and active faith for her children. "The work can be difficult sometimes but I do it for them, so there is a future in their parish or in our Church for them," she says.

"I feel that the Church that I see and meet is a very authentic Church. The people are there because they want to be. That only has to be a good thing. I am very optimistic. I think ultimately people want to continue having faith communities and want a future for their children but also for themselves. They want to keep their Church and Faith going."

[www.ossory.ie/services/ossory-diocesan-pastoral-plan/](http://www.ossory.ie/services/ossory-diocesan-pastoral-plan/)



## Green Fingers

Paul Gargan

## Spring really begins in the garden during March

It's generally in mid to late March that the sun and wind start to dry up the ground and spring really begins in the garden. Soon soil temperatures will begin to rise and growth will start.

Now is the time to tidy your beds and borders. This will get them back in shape, ready for another growing season. Go through them, forking out any weeds and cutting down any dead stems of perennial plants left standing. Cut as close to the base as possible, without damaging emerging buds or young foliage. Perennials grow from the centre out. They need to be divided to keep them young, healthy and flowering.

Depending on the plant this usually needs to be done every three to six years after planting. You will know when it needs doing, the centre may have died, the plant has outgrown its space or it is just not flowering to its best. Dig up and divide

by cutting with a spade into three or four pieces.

Replant one piece in the hole with lots of well-rotted garden compost. Plant the rest elsewhere or give it away.

Starting at the back of the bed or border, fork over the ground between the plants to loosen it up. Work your way forward, so as not to walk on your work. Clean up any debris as you go, as well as any slugs and snails.

### Compost

Mulch after you have finished.

The best mulch is your own homemade garden compost. Empty your bins, ready for the new season. Mulch should be a minimum of 5cm (2in). You should mulch every year as it benefits the garden in many ways. It will save you work, as it covers annual weed seeds, preventing germination. It adds

humus to soil you can't dig because plants are growing in it. It also encourages worms, who will benefit your soil.

Prune modern shrub roses - that is Hybrid Teas and Floribundas. Start by taking out any dead or diseased shoots. Then any that are crossing the centre of the bush. Stop and stand back. Take a good look at what is left. Pick four or five of the strongest looking shoots. Cut out all other shoots to their base. The four or five you have picked should be cut back to approx. 30cm (1 foot) above ground level, about 1cm (0.5in) above an outward facing bud using a sloping cut away from the bud. The finished bush should be wine-glass-shaped. This will allow air movement, which helps prevent blackspot, while giving each stem the maximum amount of sunlight.

Dogwoods that are grown for their winter stem colour should be pruned by cutting stems back to 15cm/30cm (6in/12in) above ground level. This will encourage regrowth of new stems which have the best colour.





# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Message lost in over-the-top coverage of life issues

There were so many instances of classic media bias. It started with **The Pat Kenny Tonight Show** on TV 3, Wednesday of last week, when the topic was the Eighth Amendment, a debate prompted by last weekend's meeting of the Citizens' Assembly.

First off there was a soft interview with a pro-choice woman who had a termination in Liverpool for a baby with a life-limiting condition – thus the debate was immediately put on an emotional, personal story basis.

This was not balanced by a personal story giving an opposing perspective, so straight away those proposing pro-life arguments were at an immediate disadvantage.

Then, when the first pro-life person made an argument, Kenny referred to her as “kind of absolutist”, not quite a term of endearment. Thankfully she made the point about the lives saved by the Eighth, a matter generally ignored by the media.

Kenny did get that point but then referred back to the previous woman's position – “there was never going to be a life” – another loaded comment that defies biology – there already was a life!

A pro-choice campaigner who wanted easier access to abortion for ‘pregnant people’ spoke of women being ‘forced’ to go abroad for abor-



Maria Steen featured on *The Pat Kenny Tonight Show*.

tions, but this went unchallenged.

Kenny understood the danger of women carrying babies with “foetal abnormalities” being pressurised into abortions, and did refer to the “child in the womb”, but in introducing Maria Steen of the Iona Institute fed into the dominant media narrative by asking if she wasn't “trying to push a boulder uphill” on this issue.

### Minority

Steen expressed her unease at a referendum to vote away the rights of a vulnerable minority and re-iterated Kenny's statement that the Eighth Amendment gave equality to mother and child, asking

reasonably and rhetorically “What's wrong with that?”

Clare Daly TD maintained that women here have a “constitutional right” to an abortion in another jurisdiction, bizarre interpretation of the law I think – surely the travel clause just gives a freedom, ensuring that the Eighth doesn't stop women from travelling.

When she made her point about “bodily autonomy” Steen reminded her that there was a separate body involved – that of the baby. Daly regarded the baby at the early stages of gestation as just a “clump of cells”, and not deserving of “equality of esteem” with “a sentient fully grown woman”. And where

does that leave young female born babies and children, or even fully grown women with dementia?

Steen rightly challenged Kenny on his use of the term ‘absolute’ in relation to her own position and that of the earlier woman in the audience, getting him to accept that he was absolutist when it came to killing born children. Even more so she took issue took issue at Kenny's use, in a question, of the word ‘property’ in relation to the unborn child.

The media bias got worse. On Friday morning, the latest *The Irish Times* opinion poll on the issue was discussed on Newstalk's **Breakfast Show**, when we had a reaction from Ailbhe Smith, a prominent pro-choice campaigner – why no-one from the pro-life side?

Later on **The Pat Kenny Show** (also Newstalk), and the only person on the show to discuss it was another prominent pro-choice cam-



Kate O'Connell TD.

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

**BBC 1, Sunday, March 12, 5pm**

For Lent, Dr John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, discusses the subject of forgiveness, with music to celebrate St Patrick's Day and a performance Sir James Galway.

#### AN MISEAN SA tSÍN

**TG4 Monday, March 13, 7.30pm**

The often forgotten story of Irish missionaries in China between 1920 and 1954 – times of political chaos, famine, floods and war.

#### MASS FOR ST PATRICK'S DAY

**RTÉ 1, St Patrick's Day, 11am**

From Newman University Church, St Stephen's Green, Dublin with Principal Celebrant Archbishop Charles Brown, Papal Nuncio to Ireland.

paigier Ivana Bacik. In the same show, we heard from Fine Gael's Kate O'Connell TD, also strongly in favour of repealing the Eighth. She was invited to speak on the issue by Kenny just as they were running out of time, but Jack Chambers (FF), also in studio and known to be pro-life, wasn't.

### Unsavory facts

Later in the morning that story was blown away by the latest heart-breaking developments in the Tuam babies controversy – with unsavory facts on the News programmes and touching personal stories on Liveline (RTÉ Radio 1).

Some of the reaction was way over the top – I heard suggestions last weekend of “mass murders” (Newstalk's

**Down To Business**), “concentration camps” (RTÉ Radio 1's **Saturday With Clare Byrne**) and “infanticide” (on the Citizens' Assembly live streaming). And this was despite official causes of death having been published in 2014. Children's Minister, Katherine Zappone rightly expressed her upset about the finding of these baby bodies, including some bodies of unborn children – yet she campaigns for easier access to abortion, which will lead to more of these bodies ... and will these aborted babies be given the respect, the naming and the burials that they deserve?

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



Aubrey Malone

# Film

## Dystopian fable rounds off Wolverine franchise

### Logan (15)

They say there are really only a half dozen plotlines. Everything else in film (and literature?) is an exemplification of these templates. Old wine, new bottles.

And so it is here. For all the blood-spattering, when we get down to it this is really just another tale of crime and punishment, of righting the wrongs of a society gone mad at the core.

Such thoughts were going through my mind when the three main characters in this X-Men spin-off signed into a hotel room for a brief respite from the demonic villains on their tail a third of the way through.

What film comes on the television when they do so? George Stevens' classic western *Shane*. Just at the point where Elisha Cook Junior is gunned down by Jack Palance. Afterwards the Wyoming homesteaders say the Our Father over his grave.

This inclusion is no accident on the part of director James Mangold. Because in this, the third and final outing for the mutant hero played by Hugh Jackman, he's created a *Shane* for the modern era.

It's also why, at the end, we get wild child Laura (Dafne Keen), the young girl Jackman is entrusted to protect, delivering Shane's farewell speech to Brandon de Wilde about the impossibility of



Good  
★★★

Hugh Jackman stars in *Logan*.

him shedding his gunfighter past. Because, “like a brand, it sticks”.

It sticks to Jackman, too. Like *Shane*, he's an angel of death. But while *Shane* is a benign saviour, Jackman is more akin to an Old Testa-

ment demagogue dispensing fire and brimstone. He softens towards the end when he's called upon to engage in the token filial bonding with Keen but this is largely tokenistic.

What nods there are towards genuine gentleness

in the film are reserved for Patrick Stewart, the cheery professor who exudes a strong Beckettian edge in the arid desert outpost he inhabits with Logan – and the jabbering outcast Caliban – along the Mexican border.

### Wall

It's 2029 but the Trump wall still hasn't been built. This means that their enemies (Boyd Holbrook, Richard E. Grant & Co.) can ambush them any time they like. They're mainly searching for Laura, whose ill-fated mother cottoned on to Grant's warped genetic scheme to turn mutants into killing machines.

It's all a bit like *Mad Max* in *Armageddon*. Jackman acts

– and looks – like Mel Gibson crossed with Johnny Depp from *Edward Scissorhands*, mowing down anyone in his path by swiping them with the blades that emanate from his knuckles (at least until he comes up against his doppelganger).

The violence is sickening at times, and all the more sickening when we see it being perpetrated by an 11-year-old. But what a great little actress Ms Keen shows herself to be, especially in the film's later stages when she swaps her snarls for tears.

It's too crude to approximate towards epic status though its 135-minute running time suggests certain pretensions in this regard.



# BookReviews

**Peter Costello**



## To the ends of the Earth for the Faith

### Going Global for God: A Portrait of Ballyheigue's Missionary Movement

by Micheál Ó hAlmhuráin  
(Ballyheigue History and Heritage Group; phone: (066) 7133110 (during office hours only), email: ballyheigue@dioceseofkerry.ie)

**J. Anthony Gaughan**

**T**his is a splendid tribute to the men and women from the small parish in Ballyheigue in Co Kerry who spent their lives on the missions at home and abroad.

The book is beautifully shaped, and provides a local microcosm of Ireland's national missionary activity over the recent centuries.

At the outset there is an account of the five priests who served in the home diocese of Kerry. Then there were the Ballyheigue natives who served in Dublin. Fr Paddy Kelly, a member of the archdiocese, was renowned for his dedication to the poor and the sick. His sheer goodness and saintliness was recognised by his colleagues.

A standard joke among



them was that, if ever there was to be an apparition in South Wicklow, where Paddy ministered, it would be of Paddy to the Blessed Virgin rather than the reverse!

### Appointments

Frs Cornelius (Jody) Crowley and Luke Delaney were members of the Passionist order. Both held a variety of appointments at home and abroad. During World War II, Fr Crowley was chaplain to the Parachute Regiment, serving in Norway and Palestine.

He was awarded 'The Red Beret', but returned it with his

British credentials to the War Office in London in protest after the Regiment's involvement in 'Bloody Sunday' in Derry in January 1971.

Twenty-four Sisters from the parish served in convents throughout Ireland. Most of them spent some 50 years teaching in and managing schools or caring for the poor and the sick. They provided the sinews and substance of the educational and medical services of the Irish Free State across almost three generations.

**“The Ballyheigue missionaries provided much-needed support for our exiles”**

For their total commitment to the well-being of Ballyheigue's 'Going Global for God' is to be seen in the context of the country's overall missionary movement overseas. While European countries were carving out and maintaining empires, Irish priests and religious were establishing what was

described as 'a spiritual empire'.

Ballyheigue's participation in that 'empire' was remarkable. The record shows that priests and religious from the parish ministered abroad as follows: Africa (Br 1, Srs 5, Ps 2), Asia (Sr 1), Australia (Srs 13, Ps 5), Britain (Srs 9, Ps 5), Canada (Br 1), Mainland Europe (Br 1, Ps 2), South America (Srs 2, Ps 2), US (Srs 31, Ps 21). The success of their evangelisation is evinced by the manner in which the convents, communities, hospitals, schools and parishes, where they ministered, flourished.

Apart from spreading the Gospel, the Ballyheigue missionaries provided much-needed support for our exiles, particularly in Australia and the US. They were also to the fore in promoting Irish cultural pursuits and past-times in their colleges and schools.

Ballyheigue was the 'heimat' of 11 long-serving members of the Irish Christian Brothers.

They spent their lives teaching in primary and secondary schools throughout Ireland as well as in Gibralt



tar, Newfoundland and South Africa. Their primary outreach, like that of their colleagues, was to ensure that education was accessible to the poor and the underprivileged. Despite tight schedules, they also found time to play a major role in popularising our Gaelic games.

**“Their primary outreach...was to ensure that education was accessible to the poor and the underprivileged”**

All those Brothers, Sisters and priests from the area are

listed together with their family factfiles. In setting the context of their various commitments the author provides a mine of information on the Catholic Church in Ireland and seminaries, as well as on the dioceses and the congregations and orders to which those priests and religious belonged.

Every element of this volume – art-work, paper, printing, design, colouring, layout – merits a superlative. It has a priceless collection of illustrations. Reading it is far from just a literary exercise. It is an enhancing experience.

Congratulations and thanks are due to the author and all who contributed to this truly *magnum opus* which highlights our glorious missionary heritage.

## The papists among the Protestants

### The Catholics: The Church and its People in Britain and Ireland, from the Reformation to the Present Day

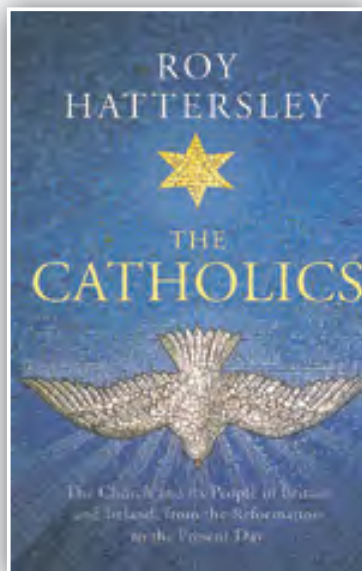
by Roy Hattersley  
(Chatto and Windus, £25.00)

**Peter Hegarty**

Roy Hattersley prefaces his congenial history with a fascinating autobiographical fragment in which he recalls the ease with which his father could translate Latin inscriptions during their frequent visits to historic churches.

After his death he discovered that his father had once been a priest. During his ministry he had instructed a young woman for admission into the Church in anticipation of her marriage to a young collier, which he performed. Two weeks after the ceremony priest and bride ran away together.

The Catholics, a popular narrative rather than an academic treatment, opens in the 16th Century amid the clamour for reform of the Church. Then as now



most priests lived simple lives, but too many were corrupt, venal and ignorant. This period was also the dawn of nationalism, an age when European sovereigns were becoming increasingly likely to defy papal authority. One, Henry VIII of England, established a national church after the Pope

refused to dissolve his marriage to pious Catherine of Aragon. Henry wished to cast her aside for not having borne him a male heir.

Henry had no great theological differences with Rome but English Protestantism soon acquired an intolerant streak. Zealous converts were given to iconoclastic rage and righteous persecution. To suppress the new faith Catholics resorted to rack and pyre. But even then both sides were learning to coexist.

### Old beliefs

Hattersley, politician turned historian, makes the good point that people, always and everywhere, “will ‘float with the tide’”. Catholics went to Protestant services, paying attention to those elements that derived from the old beliefs, and ignoring reformist innovations. But they remembered their martyrs and were determined to defend their faith.

A pattern set then, in the 16th Century, would repeat itself often over the next 300 years.

Anti-Catholic pogroms and riots would follow revelations of papist plots, or the passing of legislation slightly improving the lot of Catholics, or Spanish sabre-rattling. But these paroxysms of violence merely interrupted long periods of leniency, during which the penal laws were ignored, and Catholics worshipped openly.

Toleration even temporarily gave way to sympathy for the priests and nuns expelled from revolutionary France. And the decline of Spain further smoothed the hard edges of anti-Catholic prejudice.

**“Anti-Catholic pogroms and riots would follow revelations of papist plots”**

With the age of cheap steamboat travel, large-scale Irish emigration to Britain began, and British Catholics regularly came across their Irish co-religionists. Enjoying their hard-won

acceptance in society, loyal and industrious, they felt little affinity with the tatterdemalions wandering the streets lamenting their misery in their strange language, begging and prostituting themselves.

The British were protective of their faith, acutely aware of the need to keep it alive through prayer and attendance at mass. The emigrant Irish largely lacked their fervour, and were much less observant.

Hattersley praises the welcome the Church in Ireland and Britain has given to the migrants who have arrived in great numbers in the last fifteen years or so, and reinvigorated Catholicism in both countries.

One of the intended consequences of Britain's vote to leave the EU will be a significant reduction in the numbers of migrants entering Britain; an unintended consequence of the vote to leave the EU will be enervation of the Church in Britain.



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.

## Revolution wafting o'er the Atlantic

**Ireland's Allies: America and the 1916 Rising**  
edited by Miriam Nyhan Gray  
(UCD Press, €40.00)

**Felix M. Larkin**

In August 1886, speaking at a gathering of Irish-Americans in Chicago, Michael Davitt said: "It is very easy to establish an Irish republic by patriotic speeches delivered three thousand miles away, but we could not do it on the hills and plains of Ireland."

Not for the first, or last, time were Irish-Americans pushing Irish nationalists to act in ways that seemed imprudent and too extreme to those at the coalface at home.

But the 1916 Rising and its aftermath were to prove Davitt wrong.

A substantial measure of Irish freedom was won "on the hills and plains of Ireland" 35 years later – albeit after much loss of life and at the price of partitioning the island of Ireland.

The underlying thesis of this book is that the 1916 Rising was in large measure inspired and financed by Irish-Americans, especially the Irish diaspora in New York City – in other words, by precisely the kind of people whose revolutionary ardour Davitt had tried to restrain in 1886.

The eminent Irish historian, J.J. Lee – now based in Glucksman Ireland House, New York University – is thus quoted on the book's dust jacket as follows: "No America, no New York, no Easter Rising. Simple as that."

The book arises out of a conference held at Glucksman Ireland House in April 2016 to mark the centenary of the Easter Rising. The editor, Miriam Nyhan Gray, and the publisher, UCD Press, are to be commended on getting the volume out in record time – and for producing such a handsome volume.

### Introduction

It comprises 24 separate chapters by a variety of scholars, both Irish and American – and, as stated by Nyhan Gray in her introduction, these chapters "provide an array of voices that help us understand what it meant to be interested in Ireland from the vantage point of New York circa 1916".

One of the strengths of the volume is that the chapters are linked by cross-references as appropriate, so that the volume has an overall coherence that is rarely found in essay collections. Another noteworthy



John Devoy welcomes Roger Casement to the US.

thy feature is the well-chosen illustrations.

Most of the chapters focus on particular individuals, and these chapters fall into two categories. The first concerns leaders of the Rising who had visited the US and the influence that the US, and specifically Irish-America, had had on them.

Five of the seven signatories of the 1916 Proclamation spent time in the US, as did Casement – and indeed Tom Clarke was actually an American citizen.

Pearse was converted to "extreme republicanism" on his lecture tour of the US in early 1914 to raise funds for his school, St Enda's.

**“There are also valuable chapters on the decline of Irish-American support for the Home Rule movement”**

The chapters in the second category are about influential Irish-American figures, most of whom were born in Ireland, but had settled in America.

Many of them are now largely forgotten. John Devoy is the best known, but among those also profiled in this book are O'Donovan Rossa's wife, Joseph McGarrity, Judge Daniel Cohalan, John Quinn, Bourke Cockran, and Cardinal John Farley of New York.

The chapter on Cardinal Farley is complemented by a fascinating chapter on the attitude of the Catholic press in America towards the Rising.

Whatever about the response of rank-and-file Catholics, it is clear from these two chapters that the Church establishment was careful not to risk its position of growing respectability within American society by over-zealous support of those who had rebelled against America's

staunchest ally when that ally was engaged in a desperate war – even though America in 1916 had not yet entered the war. America would never be Ireland's ally against Britain, and to that extent the title of the volume is somewhat misleading.

### Tendency

There are also valuable chapters on the decline of Irish-American support for the Home Rule movement – which, it is argued, was already evident before the Rising – and on the coverage of the Rising in the US press generally.

Inevitably, there was a tendency in the popular press in America to see the Rising through the prism of the American revolution – and the author of the relevant chapter, Robert Schmuhl of Notre Dame University, writes that "Americans in 1916 ... heard echoes of their own past wafting across the Atlantic".

One omission from this otherwise comprehensive volume is any analysis of Irish-American attitudes towards Ulster unionists.

Irish-America indulged in ritualistic condemnations of unionist obstruction of Home Rule and of the prospect of partition, but there is no evidence adduced in any of the chapters that Irish-America had any real understanding of the problem of Ulster – or any ideas about how to address it.

### Oblivious

Irish-Americans were oblivious to the irony that the unionists whom they regarded as interlopers on the island of Ireland had been here for about as long as European settlers had been in North America – and that the model of 'liberty' that the Irish had imbibed in America was not one that would be celebrated by Native Americans deprived, like the so-called 'native Irish', of their ancestral lands.

## WebWatch

# Social media as much a challenge as it is an aid

**T**he advantages of social media as a tool for evangelisation or – arguably – an environment in which evangelisation can take place are discussed on a regular basis nowadays, but the difficulties of maintaining a coherent, timely and appropriate social media presence aren't always acknowledged.

This was demonstrated all too sharply last weekend, when the American Diocese of Tulsa tweeted a link to a [catholicculture.org](#) article entitled 'The

role of the Holy Spirit in papal elections' and sniped of the cardinals in the 2013 conclave that "they ignored it".

Villanova University theologian Massimo Faggioli picked up on this very quickly from [@MassimoFaggioli](#), commenting: "I think the Catholic [@DioceseofTulsa](#) has some explaining to do for its latest tweet."

"I am more worried for use of social media by some Catholic organisations and institutions: they are supposed to have some '*sensus Ecclesiae*,'" he said, adding that he was sure that the Oklahoma diocese's bishop was unaware of the "disturbing tweet" that had come from the diocese.

### Account

He suitably thanked the diocese when it deleted the offending tweet, saying, "Our account has

apparently been hacked and an unauthorized tweet sent out about Pope Francis. We are working to secure our account," though he seemed dubious that this was a genuine hacking even if it was a hijacking of sorts.

Commenting that "the schism of the [@DioceseofTulsa](#) last just a few hours", he added that "tears for a 'para-schismatic' US Catholic[ism], are basically a problem of nutty social media handlers" and it was time for "a big cleanup".

### Face value

He noted also that the New York State Diocese of Syracuse had also tweeted oddly that night, taking on face value spurious claims by President Trump – seemingly acting off claims from online media sites such as the alt-right Breitbart rather than based on intelligence from US intelligence agencies – that his phones in Trump Tower had been tapped ahead of November's election by President Barack Obama.

Wondering who was "hacking" Syracuse's Twitter account, he said, "about the recent 'hackings' of Catholic diocese accounts: there is an ecclesiology of social media vastly underestimated by Church leaders".

"Who believes that these strange Catholic tweets are hackings and not tweets coming from authorised personnel with a bad sense of the Church," he asked, retweeting someone else's claim that he had received an email from 'Priests for Life' asking for support for President Trump, and papal biographer Austen Ivereigh's response to a tweet from Breitbart Vatican correspondent Thomas D. Williams challenging an article by Ivereigh distinguishing between Pope Francis and the current American President.

"As [@Pontifex](#) calls for bridge-building," Wil-

liams had said, "[@austeni](#) insists on building WALL between Pope and [@POTUS](#)."

Faggioli's definitely not for everyone, but he's an author definitely worth engaging with for all that, and in light of political developments in the US, it's well worth reading his [commonwealmagazine.org](#) article 'Teaching American Catholicism on a green card', in which he explains how, after living in the US since 2008, the early days of the Trump presidency have changed how he sees the American Church, as well as his duties as a theologian.

It's a fascinating and in some ways terrifying take on what he describes as a "mutation" within American Catholicism, one which he fears has neutralised Catholicism's historical capacity to act as an antidote to American exceptionalism and nationalism.

**“Opponents of the Pope will continue to challenge the Church's visible source of unity”**

Much of this, of course, has seen expression in opposition to Pope Francis – just as Britain has seen a vocal if small-scale blooming of vocal Catholics who scorn the Pope while championing English nationalism under a British guise.

It leaves Michael Sean Winters' [nconline.org](#) enlightening and perceptive piece claiming the "debate on *Amoris Laetitia* is over" looking ludicrously optimistic.

He may be right about the mainstream Catholic media, but in the margins the war will continue, with opponents of the Pope continuing to challenge the Church's visible source of unity, claiming to do so on behalf of the papacy and of unity.



Massimo Faggioli.



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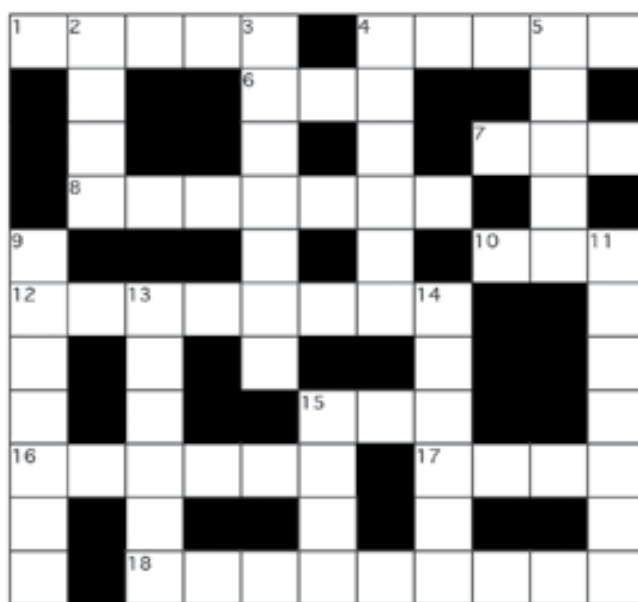
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## Crossword Junior

Gordius 172



### ACROSS

- 1 It's on your hand, as well as your fingers (5)  
4 You move this part of the bike with your foot (5)  
6 It's usually the best card (3)  
7 Noah's ship (3)  
8 Runs as fast as a horse possibly can (7)  
10 Harry Potter's pet, Hedwig, is this kind of bird (3)  
12 Press (8)  
15 A bone in your side (3)  
16 Two-piece swimsuit (6)  
17 Bart Simpson's saxophone-playing sister (4)  
18 Insect that is named after a

fire-breathing creature (9)

### DOWN

- 2 You \_\_\_\_\_ a painting on the wall (4)  
3 Be careful it doesn't burst when you blow it up! (7)  
4 You might put salt and \_\_\_\_\_ on your dinner (6)  
5 It's shot from a bow (5)  
9 Tumbling circus performer (8)  
11 Song to help an infant sleep (7)  
13 Chose, selected (6)  
14 Ireland's capital city (6)  
15 You wear it on your finger (4)

## LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

### GORDIUS No.288

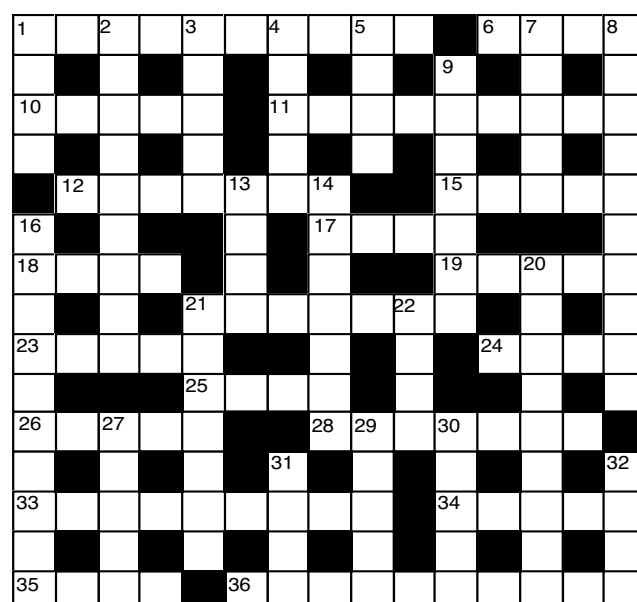
- Across** – 1 Get all your ducks in a row 3 Bad-tempered  
8 Exotic 9 Equipped 10 Spine 11 Medoc 13 Geese  
16 Citadel 21 Torso 23 Crawl 24 Broadway 26 Disgraceful  
**Down** – 1 Greasepaint 2 Tropical 3 Brine 4 The Suez Canal  
5 Prism 6 Rapids 7 Did 12 Cauliflower ear  
13 Gourd 14 Emits 17 Disagree 18 Acolyte 19 Brooks  
22 Older 24 Bed

### CHILDREN'S No.171

- Across** – 1 Greyhound 6 Locket 7 Make 8 Tumble  
9 Rang 11 Near 13 Log 15 Cycle 17 Sofa 18 Lions  
19 Began  
**Down** – 1 Galaxy 2 Exciting 3 October 4 Number  
5 Seeing 10 Anchor 12 Acorn 14 Once 15 Calf 16 Easy

## Crossword

Gordius 289



### ACROSS

- 1 A tweaking of the commercial, giving fair chaps character (10)  
6 Unpleasantly abrupt (4)  
10 Chelmsford is in this English county (5)  
11 Type of choreographed performer, such as Fred Astaire or Shirley Temple (3,6)  
12 Put it on the road to make a snake stop (7)  
15 Western warmth produces cereal (5)  
17 Sparkling wine (4)  
18 Shades, colours (4)  
19 At no time did Verne change (5)  
21 & 27d A pope locking up a Bramley, perhaps (7,5)  
23 Item of cloth repair work (5)  
24 Murder (4)  
25 & 32d This plant can be seen around the area, love (4,4)  
26 Tests (5)  
28 Cardinal the heartless editor rebuked (7)  
33 Oh, tipping like this can make things very heated! (6,3)  
34 Fit with glass; apply a glossy finish to food (5)  
35 On which to wind fishing

line (4)

- 36 Pantomime heroine who is careless with footwear (10)

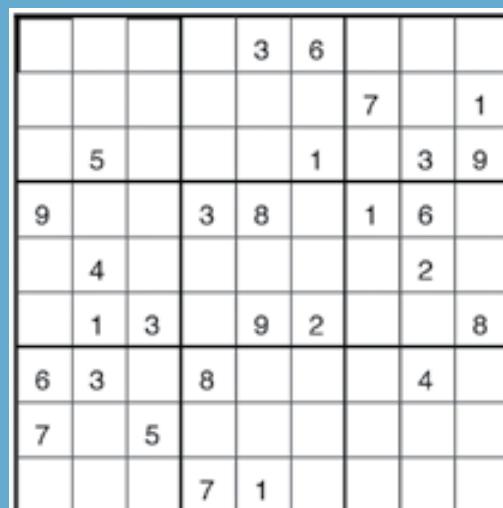
### DOWN

- 1 With a kiss, the editor gave one the chop (4)  
2 Just sweep up the Bible's shortest verse (5,4)  
3 Being an ordinal number, this somehow manages to involve ten (5)  
4 Copper or lead, for example (5)  
5 Snoozes (4)  
7 Male relative (5)  
8 A way to get El Trut will make one capsized (4,6)  
9 Plover, peewit (7)  
13 River which flows through Florence (4)  
14 Nail Leslie with sporting challenges (7)  
16 Retail trader (10)  
20 Voila! Mice can provide a telephone facility (9)  
21 Pursuing (7)  
22 This emperor was known to be on the fiddle (4)  
27 See 21 across  
29 Quoted a new edict (5)  
30 Type of beer (5)  
31 Siamese (4)  
32 See 25 across

## Sudoku Corner

172

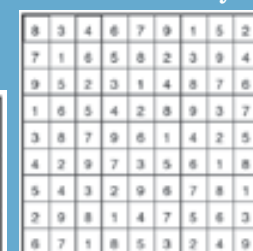
Easy



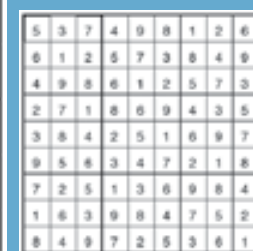
Hard



Last week's Easy 171



Last week's Hard 171







# Notebook

Fr Conor McDonough OP

## It's all so blindingly obvious

**AS CATHOLICS WE** all surely felt our faith was disrespected last month when the comedian David Chambers ('Blindboy Boatclub') described the Eucharist as 'haunted bread' on *The Late Late Show*. The celebration of the Eucharist is the *raison d'être* of the priesthood, so as a newly-ordained priest I felt particularly keenly the sting of this barb. My first reaction was defensive: how could RTÉ, the State broadcaster, air this ridicule? And regarding Chambers himself, my first thought was that he went too far in the search for a cheap laugh.

When I watched the clip in a more recollected mood, I had a different reaction: it wasn't that Chambers went too far, but that he didn't go far enough. When he opined that "they're asking us to eat the ghost of a 2,000-year-old carpenter", he underestimated the surprise of Christian orthodoxy. In fact, 'they' are asking us to believe not that there is just a ghostly, spiritual presence inhabiting the Host, but that the Host is the living, risen body of Jesus. 'They' are asking us to believe that this body is the turning point of human history. And 'they' are asking us to believe that our senses – sight, touch, taste – are confounded in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

But the only reason 'they' would

ever dream of asking us to believe such a thing is because 'he' did so first.

Just have a read of John 6, where Jesus describes eating his flesh and drinking his blood as a way of remaining in him. We're used to speaking in these terms, but Jesus' first hearers were not: "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him" (Jn 6:66).

### Astounded

If we have lost the ability to be astounded by Jesus' teaching on the Eucharist it's perhaps because the near-universal practice of the Catholic faith in many parts of Ireland up until relatively recently had the side effect of making Christianity seem obviously and uncontroversially true, thus domesticating the dynamite of

Christian orthodoxy. While it's sad that unbelievers like Chambers and his colleagues ridicule the faith, isn't it just as sad that we believers often accept the faith as true but not particularly interesting, and sometimes view the Mass simply as part of the furniture of our lives?

C.S. Lewis once said that one of the reasons he believed in Christianity was that it was "a religion you could not have guessed": "If it offered us just the kind of universe we had always expected, I should feel we were making it up. But, in fact, it is not the sort of thing anyone would have made up."

This is not to say that the truth we believe is somehow irrational. Rather it is hyper-rational, so blindingly true that our minds react to it like blinking owls in sunlight, struggling to take it all in, amazed at this excess.

Thus, among the basic attitudes of the Christian believer ought to be wonder at the extraordinary mysteries of creation and redemption. When Tubridy and his panellists snickered about the Eucharist being 'a scary concept', they were certainly far from faith-filled wonder, but even in their unbelief they may have struck on something we believers should never forget: the truth of Christianity is unexpected, ever-new, and not to be tamed.

Catholics should certainly protest Chambers' ill-mannered sneers, but there's another road we should not neglect to take: to turn again to John 6 and Jesus' teaching about his bodily, sacramental presence to us in the Eucharist, to hear these words again as if for the first time, and to make our own the faith-filled, awestruck words of Peter: "Lord, you have the words of eternal life."

One of the problems of thinking of the Christian faith as obviously true is that it makes theology redundant in the life of the Church.

Theologically ill-informed public discourse is partly a symptom of an impoverished intellectual life within the Church. Chambers claimed at one point in the discussion that the Church doesn't want us to think critically. This impression is widespread among my

peers, and it explains in part why so many counter-cultural believers of my generation have been drawn to the Dominican Order, which has, for 800 years, sustained a tradition of critical, but reverent, study of the mysteries of the faith.

Prayer, thought, careful reading and charitable debate: these elements of a medieval tradition are just what we need in 21st-Century Ireland.

### No wonder with mindfulness

Mockery often places us on the defensive, but it's always worth pro-actively interrogating the worldviews of our interlocutors as well as defending our own. Besides mocking Christianity, here's what Chambers proposed in its place as activities in which young Irish people find meaning: mindfulness and exercise. These are fine so far as they go, but aren't they terribly mundane?

These activities rarely strike out towards the transcendent, and they shrivel into nothing at the limit of our earthly existence, death. And because of their this-worldliness, they are both easily appropriated by companies who install gyms and run meditation classes to fine-tune the cogs in their corporate machine.

Mindfulness and exercise: a religion we could have guessed.



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