

The Irish Catholic

BORING BORING PAGANISM

Mary Kenny
Page 5



MARRIAGE FURTHER WEAKENED

David Quinn
Page 10



WE ALL NEED SATIRE

Martina Purdy
Page 11



Thursday, May 23, 2024

€3.00 (Stg £2.70)

The-Irish-Catholic-Newspaper

@IrishCathNews

www.irishcatholic.com

Restore goodwill says archbishop as 'panic' among Ukrainians sets in

Chai Brady

There is a need to "restore" goodwill towards refugees while considering "the needs of everyone living in local communities", according to the head of the Church of Ireland, Archbishop John McDowell.

In a joint St Patrick's Day statement two years ago, Archbishop John McDowell and Archbishop Eamon Martin called for parishes to support Ukrainian refugees by identifying properties, opening up homes and more. However, those working with Ukrainian immigrants and have helped settle women and children in local communities, parishes and schools over those two years describe "panic" among families as the Government has started to pull supports and accommodation.

Archbishop McDowell said: "There is a responsibility – across all public services – to plan ahead and ensure stability and support to help people who have come to Ireland as refugees to rebuild their lives.

"Local communities likewise need calm leadership and clear information from leaders, in government and civic life, about how refugees and migrants will be accommodated and supported in their neighbourhoods."

He added: "Within Europe, Ireland has had one of the most positive attitudes to refugees – maintaining and restoring goodwill should involve the needs of everyone living in local communities being carefully considered, with misinformation challenged at the first opportunity."

In a letter to parishes across his diocese for Pentecost Sunday, Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick said that there "is a real risk of a mindset of distrust and disdain taking hold against migrants in Irish society

» Continued on Page 2

Princesses of Denmark



Pupils from Presentation Primary School, Sexton St., Limerick who received their First Holy Communion at St Michael's Church, Denmark St., pictured with Fr Leo Mc Donnell after the ceremony. Photo: James Dormer

Young Catholics need support to start families

Renata Milán

Young Catholics living in Ireland have responded to the Pope's call for more children in Western Europe saying that they need housing and financial support.

A survey of a dozen young people showed that being able to earn enough to provide for a family and have a stable home are the key factors in deciding to have children. For many young Catholics, being able to afford to buy their home comes later in life, often after the time when they would like to start a family.

Many of the young people feel it is up to the Government to support those who want to have families and children because on their own, housing and childcare are out of their financial reach.

See page 6

NIGERIAN ROYALTY VISITS IRISH SISTERS TO THANK THEM

Khalifa Muhammad
Sanusi II PAGE 8



BRAZILIAN CATHOLICS FIND A HOME IN DUBLIN

Renata Steffens
PAGES 14-15



MAKE YOUR VOTE A PRO-LIFE ONE

Eilís Mulroy
PAGE 13



ALL IRELAND Rosary Rally

Saturday June 1st
from 9.30 am,
Knock



Talk, Stations of the Cross, Rosary and Holy Mass

Main Celebrant:
Bishop Phonsie Cullinan
Rosary Talk:
Mother Adela Galindo at 1pm in the Basilica

"A World at Prayer is a World at Peace" - Venerable Patrick Peyton C.S.C



In association with
Father Peyton Centre | Ireland
HOLY CROSS
FAMILY MINISTRIES

To see a list of buses going
from around Ireland, visit
www.allirelandrosaryrally.com

Restore goodwill says archbishop as 'panic' among Ukrainians sets in

» **Continued from Page 1** which flies in the face of Christian values”.

Polling has shown that the Irish public remains one of the most positive in the EU27 regarding their attitudes towards immigration not everyone, Bishop Leahy said, is sensitive to the plight so many have come from, or the contribution they make.

“Of course, I recognise there are challenges. Local communities must be given the resources and infrastructures to ensure refugees and asylum seekers are welcomed and supported. Issues around asylum seekers and direct provision need urgent attention. But at a time when anti-immigration rhetoric is on the rise, we need be careful about how we see, judge and act regarding migrants.

“There is a temptation to blame the rise in migrants, and so to end up blaming migrants and asylum seekers themselves, for a series of woes that are besetting us, such as issues to do with hospital care, the question of homelessness and the cost of housing. We even sometimes hear people say, ‘they

are stealing our jobs’. Some lament the strain on public services or in schools. With growing tensions and riots, rumblings of discontent and marches, as well as social media campaigns, a mindset regarding migrants can take hold resulting in distance from, distrust of and disdain for migrants.”

“I would urge all candidates to act responsibly and with sensibility and sensitivity to the plight of people coming to our shores as they seek election.”

CEO of the Irish Immigrant Council, Brian Killoran, has highlighted the “panic” that the announced cuts are “spreading throughout the Ukrainian community” last week.

“It disproportionately risks impacting women, children, the elderly. It disproportionately risks raising poverty levels among the community.”

Another campaigner for immigrants and refugees, who preferred to remain anonymous, said the Government’s announcement is undoing all the work which had been done to help people feel welcome and integrate.

Brazilian Catholics bring vibrant faith to Ireland

Renata Steffens

With a majority of young people and young families, the Brazilian Catholic community in Ireland are bringing a more vibrant way of living faith to Ireland. This is according to Fr Severino Pinheiro da Silva Neto, chaplain to the Brazilian community in Dublin. Fr Neto says the biggest contribution of the Brazilians is “their testimony and inspiration to Irish youth to live their Catholic faith.”

Mass in Portuguese occurs every Sunday afternoon in the St Mary of the Angels Church, Smithfield in Dublin, with over 400 attendees. Of these, the vast majority are young adults who came to Ireland for work or to learn English.

Fr Neto mentioned to *The Irish Catholic* that Brazilians have a very particular way of living their Catholic faith, with elements of their culture inserted into their way of celebrating Mass and living in the Church as a way of life.

For Fr Neto, having an active Brazilian community in Ireland “is also a way to contribute with the local parish. Always collaborating and bringing our particularities to the local community, at the same time we are open to learning the ways of the local Church.” For him there are two important elements in the relationship of the Brazilian chapel and the Irish parish: “to contribute and to receive.”

See pages 14-15

Deputy Editor: Chai Brady, chai@irishcatholic.ie

Multimedia Journalists:

Renata Steffens, renata@irishcatholic.ie

Brandon Scott, brandon@irishcatholic.ie

Renata Milan, renatamilan@irishcatholic.ie

Gareth Foyne, gareth@irishcatholic.ie

Newsroom: news@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874026

Books Editor: Peter Costello, books@irishcatholic.ie

Advertising: advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874027

Accounts: accounts@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874095

Magnificat: magnificat@irishcatholic.ie 01 6874024

Shop: shop@irishcatholic.ie

Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €199. Airmail €320. Six months €105.
ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic,
Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandford,
Dublin 18, D18 K277.
Printed by Webprint, Cork.

Place an Advert

Phone 01 687 4027 or advertising@irishcatholic.ie

Church robberies remain an ongoing issue as Donegal takes most hits

Gareth Foyne

Church robberies have been a feature of news emerging from multiple parish offices across the country recently. From Kerry to Donegal, thieves have targeted churches in order to seize money that may be present in the candle boxes. While robberies have been taking place across churches throughout the country, Donegal has been the target for nearly half of the recent robberies.

Priests in the affected parishes have been unable to identify any reason why the county has been honed in on other

than the remoteness of some churches. Fr Francis Bradley of the Fahan parish said he ‘had no theory’ as to why Donegal churches have been targeted, including Fahan. He did however, believe it to be a “mindless” attack given that the effort to break into a candle donation box was so high compared to the often small amount of change in the box.

Priests told this paper that parishioners benefit from a church being open seven times a day and most of the day by doing their prayers in a more private manner, can perhaps derive more spiritually when doing so in a church set-

ting. This does leave the churches more open to robberies. Fr Johnny Moore of Dungloe would like parishioners to still have these benefits but says that they still plan to take things more seriously in terms of security. He believes that St Crona’s Church in Dungloe was targeted given that it is in quite a rural area relative to other areas in Ireland.

Overall, many priests feel indignant that some people would target the local church, a charitable organisation. Fr. Francis said that “even people of a low faith would have a sense of common decency to not steal from a charity”.

A miraculous day in Lourdes



Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin stands with Niamh, who received her First Holy Communion, and her parents during the Diocese of Dromore’s pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Capuchin Day Centre for the Homeless People

29 Bow Street, Dublin 7



Every day The Capuchin Day Care Centre provides
1000 hot meals for people who are homeless and each
week 1400 Food Parcels for those on the poverty threshold.

Help Fr. Kevin Kiernan to continue
providing this caring service.

Fr. Kevin or Monica 01 8720770
www.capuchindaycentre.ie

Support our Catholic Journalism and help us evangelise

For less than a cup of coffee a week, you could support our journalism and faith development campaign while strengthening one of the last independent Catholic newspapers in Ireland and the UK.

When you become a ‘Friend’ of *The Irish Catholic* we give you exclusive access to our premium newsletters and podcasts interviewing a wide range of interesting Catholic leaders plus discounts on books and on upcoming events.

Email garry@irishcatholic.ie to sign up today, or call 01-6874028. We greatly appreciate your support. Thank you.

Damning housing report indicative of ‘fundamentally flawed’ housing policy

Brandon Scott

Speaking in the aftermath of the Housing Commission’s report calling for a “radical strategic reset of housing policy” and which identified substantial deficits concerning the provision of housing, longstanding homelessness campaigner Fr Peter McVerry said that the report, which was publicised on Tuesday, is indicative of a housing policy that is “fundamentally flawed” and that progress in tackling the mounting problem is “painfully slow”.

Agreeing with the report’s findings, Fr McVerry said that he “would go along with the report. Clearly the number

of homeless people keeps increasing so whatever we’re doing with housing is certainly not decreasing the numbers of homeless people. So housing policy is fundamentally flawed, no question about that.

“We’re not building enough houses – the rents keep going up, the house prices keep going up. I see no sense of urgency in the Government’s response to the housing crisis and the housing policy is not working.”

A veteran of the consequences of substandard government housing policy, Fr McVerry conceded that the lack of urgency is frustrating but he’s well accustomed to it at this stage.

“It’s frustrating but nothing new,” he said. “Everybody working in the area of housing vulnerable people is well aware that we have a crisis that isn’t being adequately addressed. The primary problem is the reliance on the private sector – we’re totally reliant on it to provide housing.

“I think we need to start seeing Government itself providing social and affordable housing and while they’re committed to that, the progress is painfully slow.”

Concerning solutions, Fr McVerry called for the Government to immediately implement the Kenny report, devised over 50 years ago, to ensure that the flaws of Government’s housing policy are remedied – although he points out that many in the country have a particular resistance to do so.

“We need the introduction of the Kenny report,” he said. “It came out 50 years ago and recommended controlling the price of building land – one of the major contributions to the lack of housing is the cost of the land.

“If we introduced the Kenny report, we could immediately reduce the cost of housing by 1/3. But the Government doesn’t want to do that – they don’t want to see the price of housing coming down because most of their votes are homeowners.”

MIC lecturer calls theology appointment ‘unconscionable’

Chai Brady

A senior lecturer in Mary Immaculate College has written a letter of protest to the Irish bishops over the apparent appointment of a senior priest in Limerick to the head of the theology department of Mary Immaculate College.

Dr Catherine Swift writes: “Pope Francis has written more than once that lay people must bear witness to Christian values in the secular world, including in the workplace. As was recognised recently in the Oireachtas by the then Taoiseach, Catholic religious institutions have played a crucial life in Irish life, especially in healthcare, education, housing addiction services and poverty alleviation.

views for third level positions funded by the state as public service posts. For bishops to do so, while at the same time, publishing in the Irish Catholic Directory (in both 2023 and 2024) that they are awarding the position (without interview) to their Vicar-General appears to me, as a Catholic laywoman, unconscionable.”

Dr Swift adds: “I am writing to protest such behaviour as likely to cause damage to the reputation of the Catholic Church in Ireland. I include a copy of a letter written to the authorities of my college, the HR manager and my union representative.”

Until now, the head of the department of theology in Mary Immaculate had been vacant for two years.

The Irish Catholic contacted the Bishop of Limerick regarding the letter but did not receive a response before going to print.

Eurovision winner Dana honoured with papal award



Dana pictured with her husband Damien and children Ruth and Robert after the Mass of Investiture.

Staff reporter

Former MEP and 1970 Eurovision winner Dana has been awarded the Order of St Gregory by Pope Francis in recognition of her services to the Church.

Dana became a Dame of the Order of St Gregory at a ceremony at her parish church in Claregalway, Co. Galway, surrounded by family and friends.

She thanked Bishop Michael Duignan, Bishop of Galway and Confert, who bestowed the honour during

Mass, and also her parish priest Fr Ian O’Neill.


Dana said it was an honour to receive the award which she shared with those who have inspired her throughout her life, adding: “I know it is rarely given to a woman and so I share it with the wonderful women who have been such an inspiration and support to me and I guess the first one was my mother, my grandmother and my great aunt Mary.”

Dana and her husband Damien co-wrote ‘Our Lady of Knock’ and she recently

recorded a new song for St Patrick, ‘Light The Fire’.

Bishop Duignan spoke of Dana’s “tireless work to promote Catholic faith, and Catholic values.”

Speaking on the Feast of St Brendan, Bishop Duignan continued: “Like St Brendan, Dana, you too have discovered that pearl of great price and you too have given everything in pursuit of its possession. Over decades now, you have tirelessly held up the Christian faith as a sure wisdom for the journey of life.”



Annual Novena in Honour of St. Anthony

4th - 13th June

12 Noon & 7pm


National Shrine to St. Anthony
Franciscan Friary
Adam & Eves,
Merchants Quay

Preacher: Fr. John Walsh OP

4th June, 7pm
Celebrant: Archbishop Dermot Farrell

Feast of St. Anthony, 13th June, 7pm
Celebrant: Archbishop Luis (Mariano) Montemayor
Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland
Blessing of children at 4pm
Blessing of Lillies at both Masses

All are Welcome



Rise in children experiencing deprivation reflected in rates of calls to homeless services

Brandon Scott

In response to the Children's Rights Alliance report, published last Monday, which reveals one in five children are experiencing enforced deprivation, an 18.8% increase when compared to the figures established in 2022, CEO of the Capuchin Day Centre, Brian Friel, said that the figures contained in the report almost exactly match the increased volume of requests for help that the Capuchin Day Centre has received between the same timeframe.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* he said that "the percentage (18.8%) aligns almost exactly with our own in that we saw an increase in service provision between 2022 and 2023. 2023 showed an increase on the previous years. Those who come to the service include families so we have a dedicated fam-

ily area in the Capuchin Day Centre and we provide support on an ongoing basis to hundreds of families."

Mr Friel said the service continues to offer support to families with young children but the increased demand on its provisions is leading to resources and attention being stretched.

"One of our primary interventions is the provision of food and addressing food poverty so we provide formula milk and nappies to support families who are trying to make ends meet," he said. "The centre has never turned anybody away so we find ways in order to meet the demand as it presents. It just means stretching what we have as far as we can."

In response to the report, Dr Tricia Keilthy, Head of Social Justice and Policy at the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, said that the findings come as no surprise

as the charity is dealing with thousands of cases that involve children being deprived of the basics due to chronic poverty.

"Child poverty is a core issue of concern for SVP as last year we received over 250,000 requests for assistance and almost 70% of those requests were from families with children," Dr Keilthy said.

"Unfortunately, it is no surprise that nationally one in five children are experiencing deprivation. The reality behind these figures as seen by SVP are children spending childhoods going without basics like secure housing, healthy food and suitable clothing and will be excluded from participating in school and other everyday activities that other children and families take for granted."

Nigerian royalty visits Cork to thank OLA sisters for education

Chai Brady

A well-known Nigerian religious leader and member of royalty visited the OLA sisters in Ardfoy convent in Co. Cork to thank the congregation for their work, but one sister in particular for showing "so much love to a Muslim boy".

Sanusi Lamido Sanusi is a spiritual leader in the Tijanniyah Sufi order of Nigeria. He is a member of the Dabo dynasty and the 14th Emir of the ancient city-state of Kano.

During his time at St Anne's School in Kaduna

founded by OLA sisters, he spoke of his headmistress Sr Katherine, whom he described as "quiet, tender, caring, gentle" and that all his classmates "continue to have fond memories of her, each in a special way".

Recalling a memory he has of the sister, he said: "I had malaria at one time and was extremely ill with a high temperature. I was weak and unable to do anything. I thought I was about to die."

"Sr Katherine came round to the dormitory to see me. She wrapped me up and took me in her arms. With another sister they drove

me to St Gerard's hospital where I had my injections and returned me to school. She kept checking on me until I fully recovered."

Mr Sanusi continued saying: "It may sound like a small thing but for a young boy the love and care at that point was so touching, and the care continued until I left. She did not have to do that herself."

"Now why is all this important? Sr Katherine was a Catholic sister who showed so much love to a Muslim boy. She showed me the kind of care and concern I would expect from a mother."

'No pension priest' to challenge religious order over stamps

Staff reporter

A returned missionary priest who doesn't qualify for a state pension is to speak with his religious order, the Society of African Missions (SMA) to find out why apparently no stamps were paid on his behalf while he was a missionary in Ghana for 31 years, which he claims was a paid employment where he received an allowance.

Fr Patsy Lynch told this paper that he is two years short of stamps to qualify for the contributory pension. He believes that those stamps could be paid in order for him to qualify.

The non-contributory pension is means-tested and because he is a working priest in the Diocese of Kerry he doesn't qualify, earning over the threshold limit.

"It would be very easy to retire in six months and get the pension but I love the work and being out and about here in a

beautiful part of Kerry" he said. He said he had got a lot of publicity and was going on 'Prime Time with Miriam' and was confident that a good resolution could be found.

Returned Irish missionaries receive a non-contributory state pension and have access to health benefits such as nursing homes *The Irish Catholic* has been told. However this is only if they don't work.

Sources in the missionary community said they never heard of a missionary being refused the state pension and another missionary source said that missionaries received the non-contributory pension.

"They don't receive the contributory pension because they have not been contributing to it" said the source adding that the difference between the two pensions was not huge and that health resources were available to returned missionaries. However Fr Lynch said these missionaries come home to retire but he hadn't.

Gift of tongues in Foxrock



The Foxrock Parish Liturgy Group invited parishioners to represent their countries of origin at a Mass to celebrate Pentecost Sunday. Five parishioners, dressed in their native costumes, formed the entrance and recessional processions, read the Prayer of the Faithful in their own languages and presented the offertory gifts. Pictured are Oksana Creed, who spoke in Ukrainian, Fr Gerry Kane PP Foxrock parish. Front row: Nidhi Biju who spoke Malayalam, Linsy Prasanth, Hindi, Una O'Callanain, Gaeilge, Sr Rionach from the liturgy Group and Claire O'Flynn who spoke French. Fr Gerry wore vestments which were a gift from Kerala India.

The Irish Catholic

MAY 30
2024

LEGACY SPRING EDITION

Prices:

Living on in others

On May 30, *The Irish Catholic* Spring Legacy Edition will demonstrate the importance of making a will and the lasting difference that can be made through making a legacy donation.

The Irish Catholic provides a direct channel to 90,000 readers who are ideally placed to consider planned contributions through bequests. This bi-annual edition of the newspaper provides a respected platform through which your organisation can highlight the good work that can be carried out as a result of receiving a legacy donation. Our readers have shown time and time again that they are conscientious, socially concerned and very generous.

If you would like to feature in this special edition and let our readers know how a legacy bequest could help benefit your organisation, please contact us by phone or email.

@advertising@irishcatholic.ie 01 687 4027



FULL PAGE ADVERT



FULL PAGE ADVERTORIAL

€1000 FULL PAGE

€500 HALF PAGE

*Prices exclude vat



HALF PAGE ADVERT

Boring boring paganism

Tony O'Reilly, who died at the weekend, did a lot for Ireland, quite beyond inventing the "Kerrygold" butter brand, although that is a noteworthy success. It was also about rebranding Ireland itself, as a country where people could thrive. In his unstinting work for the Ireland Funds, he advanced the Peace Process and worked consistently to attract jobs and investment into this country.

Entertain

He used to entertain at his stately home, Castlemartin, by Kilcullen in Co. Kildare, to which American business folk would be invited, so as to convince them that Ireland was a peaceful society worthy of support. I was present at some of these dinners – not as an entrepreneur



Mary Kenny

but because Tony liked to include writers and journalists in his entourage. Unlike Tony O'Reilly himself, who was interested in everything from politics to sport to painting to literature, some of these overseas entrepreneurs had rather narrow fields of interest. But he was engaging to them.

“Tony was a practical Irish patriot. He wanted to see Ireland thrive”

He may have enjoyed the bauble of being dubbed a knight by HM Eliza-

beth II, (and his second wife Chryss was friendly with Queen Elizabeth on account of a shared passion for horses), but to me, Tony was a practical Irish patriot. He wanted to see Ireland thrive – that was why he spent hundreds of millions trying to save Waterford Crystal. It was an Irish brand of classical tradition. The problem was that young people weren't offering crystal glass as wedding presents any more: fashion moves on.

Impact

He had a stellar career as sportstar, business magnate and media baron: his fortunes rose and fell, but none can gainsay the impact he made on the world. And I am certain

that he ascribed the achievements of his life to his Jesuit education at Belvedere College in Dublin. He talked fondly of the encouragement he received at Belvedere, and how the priests “saw something” – his potential – in him as a young boy.

“Tony O'Reilly always remained loyal to the Jesuits”

They also treated with discretion an aspect of his life which would have been stigmatised in the 1940s: he was born out of wed-

lock, essentially because his father was already married when he formed a union with his mother. It was the Belvedere priests who explained this to Tony as a teenager in a way that helped him cope with what was then an unorthodox situation.

Jesuits

Tony O'Reilly always remained loyal to the Jesuits. Whether he was a religiously practising Catholic is not for others to judge. He installed a private chapel at Castlemartin; and he told me that “on the whole, the Catholic Church was admirable”. He didn't agree with all its tenets, and may have been

somewhat “a la carte”. He was, as the writer Charles Lysaght noted, “unmonogamous” by nature, and his first marriage crumbled thereby.

“He attained an old Irish aspiration “bás in Éireann”

But I think he was, basically, within the fold; and it is specially beautiful that he attained an old Irish aspiration “bás in Éireann.”

“In his unstinting work for the Ireland Funds, he advanced the Peace Process and worked consistently to attract jobs and investment into this country”

Who is the Michaelangelo of Pagan art?!



Michaelangelo's statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius in the Campidoglio or Roman Capitol in the heart of Rome.

I was in Nenagh in North Tipp last week, and how lush and beautiful were the fields and the blossoms in the countryside.

The white blossom which I took to be hawthorn abounded, but I was informed that this was actually blackthorn, which flowers in May. There's an old superstition that it's unlucky to bring the blackthorn plant into the house for it belongs to the fairies.

This notion also existed in the English countryside. When my husband was a youngster in Wiltshire, he broke his arm; his mother

was told by local people – “that's a punishment for bringing the thorn flower into the house”.

These old folk *pishógs* endure, and I regard them as harmless fancies. And I accept them as country lore.

Legacy

But I am less amused by reports of the expansion of Paganism. In Britain, Paganism has grown, as a formal religion, from 44,000 in 2001 to 74,000 in 2022 (and 1.4 million now in the U.S.) It's all to do with environmentalism, feminine power, tarot cards, witchcraft, Druidry,

etc. (Colette Colfer linked this last week with Bambi Thug).

It's not that I consider Pagan spirituality necessarily wicked, but it is mostly very boring. Where are the cathedrals? Where are the exquisite manuscripts? Who is the Michaelangelo of Pagan art? Who is the Mozart of its music? Where are the philosophers, the theologians, the intellectuals? Where are the saints?

A few interesting-looking rocks at Newgrange or Stonehenge are hardly to be compared with Notre Dame, Chartres, or Canterbury cathedral.

Speaking of art, the exhibition of portraits at the National Gallery, “Turning Heads” is well worth a visit. It focuses on the stunning portraiture developed in the Low Countries from the 17th century, like Rubens, van Dyck, Vermeer.

Rubens' “Saint Peter Finding the Tribute Money” (1617-18) is such a vivid narrative showing Peter retrieving a coin from the mouth of a fish, as Christ directed him.

SUMMER PILGRIMAGES



PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

FROM DUBLIN | 5 JUNE | 5 NIGHTS | From €869pps

FATIMA & LISBON COAST

FROM DUBLIN | 20 JUNE | 7 NIGHTS | €989pps

PILGRIMAGE TO MALTA

FROM DUBLIN | 26 JUNE | 7 NIGHTS | €1239pps

DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

GALWAY DIOCESE | FROM SHANNON | 26 JUNE | 5 NIGHTS | €899pps

KILLALA & ACHONRY | FROM KNOCK | 18 JULY | 5 NIGHTS | €929pps

BENEVENTO, SAN GIOVANNI, MONTECASSINO & FIUGGI

FROM DUBLIN | 27 JUNE | 7 NIGHTS | €1170pps

TO BOOK VISIT JOEWALSHTOURS.IE

info@joewalstours.ie | 01 241 0800 | 89 Harcourt St, D02 WY88

Tours are operated by Petriwa Limited t/a Joe Walsh Tours who are licensed by the Irish Aviation Authority TA 0804 TO 273.



Young people agree with Pope – more babies will need more support



Renata Milán

In early May Pope Francis addressed the reality of birth rates decreasing in Italy and urged Italians to have more children. “It is important to work together to promote natality with realism, foresight, and courage” Pope Francis said, introducing the topic of tumbling birth-rates in Europe to his audience.

“Birth rates” he said, “are the foremost indicator of a people’s hope”. *The Irish Catholic* asked young Catholics what their opinion on this issue is and what obstacles, if any, they face in having a family.

Obstacles

Three main issues arose: Career, finances and their current priorities in life.

On the economical aspect, Shamin Fernandes, 28, said, “The main thing for me would be considering if I can support my children financially. Beside this, I also know how difficult is to get a spot in ‘daycares’ and how it needs to be booked in advance”.

Patrick Duffy, from Monaghan, points out “that the State should support those who choose to have children”, accentuating the importance of a “need for greater commitment on the part of all governments.” As the Pope added on May 10, “for the young generations to be put in the condition to realise their legitimate dreams. This means implementing serious and effective choices in favour of the family. For example, to put a mother in a position where she does not have to choose



Pope Francis speaks at a meeting on Italy’s declining birthrate at the Concilazione auditorium in Rome May 10, 2024. To the Pope’s left is Gianluigi De Palo, president of the Foundation for Natality, which organises the annual meeting. Photo: CNS Vatican Media

between work and child-care; or to free many young couples from the burden of job insecurity and the impossibility of buying a house”.

“A stable community that provides spiritual, social and practical support is a huge contributing factor to the confidence we have in starting our own family”

On a similar note, Stephen and Orla, from Co Meath, said that they “agree with the Pope. This is a sign of hopelessness. A symptom of the broader spiritual crisis that Ireland is experiencing. As my fiancée and I look forward to building our own family, one of the most important sources of support that we have are our family and friends. We depend on our loved ones during our highs and our lows. Having a stable community that provides spiritual, social and practical support is a huge contribut-

ing factor to the confidence we have in starting our own family. Last year, the EU published the results of a survey on loneliness wherein Ireland was found to have the highest rating in Europe (more than 20% of respondents reported feeling lonely). This is undoubtedly contributing to the decline in birth rates. For people who feel such uncertainty about their own individual future, the prospect of raising a family seems unrealistic and daunting. The state and private sector can contribute to improving fertility rates through better family benefits, increased availability of housing and efforts to enhance people’s financial literacy”.

Sonsoles, 25, from Spain and living in Ireland, thinks that she “would only consider having kids if my economic situation is favourable and balanced. Also, I would

not have children without a partner since I believe a family comes from the union of two people who love each other. And I wouldn’t like to have them ‘too late’ in life. In my early 30s would be the latest I would consider having kids.”

Perspective

On a more social aspect, Harry Fitzgerald told *The Irish Catholic*: “I think the whole society has been following the consumer’s mentality, even practising Catholics. There is even a consumer mentality towards children. People are making all sort of excuses, ‘I don’t own a house; I just started a new job...’ The average age of someone getting a mortgage is around their late 30s. And having kids is an extra struggle. It limits us of what we want to do daily. I don’t think the economic situation is a ‘bulletproof’ argument

for not having kids. Some people don’t want to have kids because it is inconvenient for them, even in Catholic circles. If you look at the statistics, the largest families are had by the poorest people. The more a person is earning, the less likely they are to have a large family. Everything is oriented towards the material. Even some people who wants to have kids see kids as a commodity. People think ‘I have a right to have children’. They are not viewing the child ultimately as a person. It is separating the dignity to the functionality”.

“Also think money is a big deal, because having children is a life-long commitment”

Elly Westendorf, a 21 year-old student from the USA, said, “The main obstacle for not having children is”, in her situation, “being currently involved in pursuing a higher degree. It makes

it difficult to find time for children. They require a lot of focus and energy. I also think money is a big deal, because having children is a life-long commitment. At this point I am not financially feasible for it, when I am paying college and paying for a rent as well. Socially, I think people are having children late in life and that they would like to travel or move to different places before building a family”.

“A strong birth rate is the prerequisite for society, and this is to some extent the cause for persistent relevance of religion in the broadly atheist west. History shows that a society which isn’t orientated around children will suffer”, Roman Cabay, a student at Trinity College Dublin, told this newspaper.

Hope

Is our youth hopeless? Most of our voices agree that a change is needed, socially and financially, to be able to facilitate an increase on natality rates. The standards when it comes to build a family are not exactly as they used to be in some cases. Also, It is difficult to guess how long it will take to see action being taken from our institutions.

Pope Francis concluded his speech by saying: “And here I address the young. I know that for many of you the future can seem daunting, and that amidst the declining birth rate, wars, pandemics and climate change, it is not easy to keep hope alive. But do not give up, because tomorrow is not something ineluctable”.



Harry Fitzgerald, Co. Dublin



Stephen and Orla, Co. Meath



Sonsoles, Spanish living in Ireland

The 'birthgap' is something that we can no longer continue to ignore



Wendy Grace

If a woman has not had her first child by the time she is 30, statistically, she has only a 50% chance of ever having a baby. It's a shocking fact that we can no longer ignore.

We find ourselves in a space where couples experience involuntary childlessness, i.e. those who always wanted children but left it too late. For many, had they been more aware of the biological realities, they may have changed their priorities.

As politicians are knocking on your doors in the coming weeks, in advance of the June local and European elections, it's unlikely you will see any of their manifestos addressing the socio economic ticking time bomb of Ireland's falling birth rates. In fact 70% of the world's countries' populations are below, or close to below, replacement level.

Birthgap

A 'birthgap' basically means there are more aging adults than babies replacing them. Yet no one is seeing the issue with a near future where playgrounds and schools are

empty while nursing homes and hospitals are full.

Ireland has one of the fastest growing populations in Europe and we, like every other industrialised nation in the world, are at the tipping point of population replacement in the wrong direction. With this future, how can you possibly have a state pension, and when you retire who will replace you?

Documentary filmmaker, and data scientist, Stephen J. Shaw produced 'Birthgap - Childless World' - it's free to see on YouTube. As part of his research he looked into 24 countries to try to understand the cause of the phenomenon of declining birth rates.

“Family size wasn't changing much, what was changing was the number of those who were childless”

What Shaw was fascinated with was why birth rates were falling at the same time in some countries but not others. He was intrigued by the trends emerging in culturally diverse countries, he thought he might find a common thread in the move towards smaller families.

But what he found was that in general family size

wasn't changing much, what was changing was the number of those who were childless.

For example, the number of childless people in the UK has grown to one in four over the past five decades, yet the number of children that mothers are having has increased slightly, from 2.3 in the 1970s to 2.4 today.

He explained; “There is a common misperception that most childless people never wanted children in the first place, or have a medical condition that prevents them from becoming parents. Research, however, suggests that 80% of people without children are childless through circumstance, with the most common reason being not having a partner at the right time”.

Priority

The heartbreaking reality is that when you look at, for example, US research of more than 5,000 women, between up to 96% say they want to have children, but nowhere close to that figure achieves that goal. But it is a taboo to even suggest that motherhood is a priority, we are meant to put career, owning property, or not being 'tied down' ahead of all else.

Shaw explained he, like so many others, thought that rather than population control being one of the biggest threats to humanity, it was actually population collapse we needed to be fearful of.

As the data in the documentary clearly outlines, when you examine the facts there is no data to support the overpopulation hysteria.

“The pied pipers of anti-natalism, and ideologists of various persuasions, still preach about overpopulation during this time of rapidly falling birth rates. The reality is that we no longer need to be concerned about growth in the total global headcount.”

Choosing when, if at all, to have children is a deeply personal decision, but does that mean we can't discuss and educate ourselves on the reality that there is a fertility window, and that might mean making different life choices and changing the paths you may take?

“Not only is this leaving victims of unplanned childlessness, but an attitudinal shift is crucial to our world thriving”

Some would prefer to bury their heads in the sand. When Cambridge University tried to show this documentary, protestors got the screening cancelled, as it was apparently too controversial to hear women's voices around the world

talking about motherhood.

The cultural pressure to delay 'settling down' and to put career as the holy grail above all else has resulted in generations being robbed of their dream of becoming parents. Perhaps we need to focus more on telling the story that marriage is not the capstone but the cornerstone of life.

Why is it so wrong to talk about considering parenthood at a younger age and accepting the reality that the rapid shift in getting married and beginning families at a later stage will have a devastating personal and societal impact.

The documentary also explores unplanned childlessness as a cause of grief and pain. Yet we still seem to tiptoe around the realities of biology. Not only is this leaving victims of unplanned childlessness, but an attitudinal shift is crucial to our world thriving.

Future

In Jody Day's powerful TedX talk on her experience of childlessness she explains that 20% of British women born, like her in the 1960s,

turned 45 without having a child, double that of the previous generation, and that number is ever increasing.

And remember, it is not childlessness by choice, it's by design. Modern societal and cultural pressures have led to a seismic shift, in a short space of time, and have changed when we think we should commit to someone, and start a family.

All industrialised countries have fertility rates below replacement level, no society can survive long term in this way. Only a tiny minority actually want to be childless, yet as the data shows, it's the number of women having no children, not by choice, that has risen so sharply. This is not about shrinking families, it's about women never having any children when they always pictured that in their life plan.

Parenthood needs to be seen as a societal and Governmental priority to be supported, nurtured, and celebrated. This 'birthgap' is the epidemic that dare not speak its name, but we must start speaking - our survival depends on it.

“This 'birthgap' is the epidemic that dare not speak its name, but we must start speaking - our survival depends on it”



A nurse checks the vitals of a newborn baby in the Family Birth Center at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan. (OSV News photo/Emily Elconin, Reuters)



LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL
AND LET'S WORK FOR A BETTER
SOCIETY FOR OUR CHILDREN
AND GRANDCHILDREN.

The Pro Life Campaign promotes pro-life education
and defends human life at all stages.

By leaving a gift in your Will you will be helping us to continue our work to
educate the public on right to life issues, campaign for positive support for
women in unplanned pregnancy and ultimately to restore a culture
of protecting unborn children in Ireland.

Any gift, large or small, makes a real difference.
Contact us today to order a copy of our Wills leaflet
or to find out more.

prolife
campaign



Tel: (01) 662 9275 or visit www.prolifecampaign.ie

Nigerian royalty visits Irish sisters to thank them



Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, the 14th Emir of Kano, Nigeria with Mary Crowley, OLA District Leader.

Khalifa Muhammad Sanusi II

The OLA (Our Lady of the Apostles) sisters in Cork, Ireland, established my alma mater – St Anne's Primary School, Kakuri, Kaduna. They also founded the Queen of Apostles College – now Queen Amina College – and St Gerard's hospital among others all in Kaduna.

I have been planning to visit their Ardfoy convent in Cork, since late 2021, when my headmistress Sr Katherine Devane, passed away at the ripe age of 95. I just needed to go and pay my respects to this wonderful woman who made such a profound impact on my life, to thank the OLA sisters and the SMA fathers and the Catholic Church for the education I received.

The SMA fathers are a brother association of priests to the OLA sisters and the first Catholic missionaries to Kaduna and Kano. From my St Anne's days I remember Fr Bell who used to give the communion to Catholic children during service assemblies.

There was no attempt to convert Muslim pupils to Christianity. In fact our matrons made sure we prayed, and during Ramadan food was prepared at the right time for Muslims. (Of course we all said the Hail Marys and Our Fathers during assembly but not because we were required to!).

And by way the food in Catholic schools was horrible at

least then. We had cold baths in Ramadan and lived a spartan life. But we had excellent academic education. It prepared one for a life where material possessions mean nothing and values are everything.

Education

I went to St Anne's at the age of 8 and joined class 4. In 1971, my final year, Sr Katherine took over as Headmistress so I was her pupil for only one year. It is amazing how as children even the smallest things remain with us throughout our lives. All of us remember Sr Katherine (who we nicknamed "Sr Shiru" in Hausa meaning quiet sister- to distinguish her from her colleague Sr Ann. who we nicknamed "Sr mmmm mmmm" because she was a disciplinarian who kept interspersing her speeches and words of reprimand with mmmm mmmm!).

Sr Katherine was quiet, tender, caring, gentle. All my classmates continue to go have fond memories of her, each in a special way.

I have a memory of her that has remained with me forever. I had malaria at one time and was extremely ill with a high temperature. I was weak and unable to do anything. I thought I was about to die.

Sr Katherine came round to the dormitory to see me. She wrapped me up and took me in her arms. With another sister, they drove me to St Gerard's hospital where I had my injections and returned me to school. She kept checking on me

until I fully recovered.

It may sound like a small thing but for a young boy the love and care at that point was so touching, and the care continued until I left. She did not have to do that herself.

“No one could teach me hatred or enmity for someone simply because they were of a different faith”

Now why is all this important? Sr Katherine was a Catholic sister who showed so much love to a Muslim boy. She showed me the kind of care and concern I would expect from a mother.

I learned from an early age that there are wonderful people in every religion. After Sr Katherine no one could ever tell me all Christians were bad people and only Muslims were good. No one could teach me hatred or enmity for someone simply because they were of a different faith, or stop me from loving those who love me and being kind to those who are kind to me simply because they are not Muslims.

As I learned more about my religion and more of the Qur'an I saw that the Qur'an teaches us to be kind and good and caring and just to all those non-Muslims who did not fight us for our faith or persecute us (Q60:8-9 for instance). The only people we

have problems with should be those who decide to fight us or stop us from being Muslims by force, without provocation.

The verses are all there in the Qur'an. The fact that Muslim men can marry Christian women is sufficient evidence. Would one marry a woman one did not truly love?

Yet we see people preaching hate and anger. Non-Muslims think this is Islam but in fact it is the ignorance of the people and their misfortune in not knowing the power of love. Just as Islamophobic Christians and misguided militia do not live by the teaching of Christ.

Influence

Sr Katherine taught – and gave – me love at an early age. And in this she influenced my life, my world view, even before I went to King's College. She gave me an open mind to other faiths, and I have had the fortune since then of having many friends – brothers and sisters – who are Christian. They have in some cases shown me more love and loyalty than many of my blood-relatives.

Of course I also have many Muslim friends, brothers and sisters, who have done the same. It only proves that there are good people and bad people everywhere. A bad Muslim or bad Christian is just a bad person. A good Muslim or good Christian is a good human being. Period.

It is for this that I will always remember her with love. I needed to come to her grave. I have not seen her since 1972. I telephoned the convent in 2019 but could

not speak to her because she was hard of hearing. When she died I was in France. But I could not go to Ireland as I needed a different Visa. It took me so long because the Irish embassy insists on holding on to a passport for six weeks before the Visa is issued. Very difficult if you travel a lot.

“I pray for my country Nigeria that God bring us peace and that we learn that love and mercy are what we need, not hatred and bloodshed”

I just had to come to Sr Katherine to tell her how much I love her. And to thank her for what she did in my life. And thank God for meeting her at the right time in my life- that is to say, at the beginning. I pray for my country Nigeria that God bring us peace and that we learn that love and mercy are what we need, not hatred and bloodshed.

Rest in peace dear Sister.

This is a speech delivered by Khalifa Muhammad Sanusi II, the 14th Emir of Kano, Nigeria, in Ardfoy Convent, Co. Cork last week during a visit to Ireland to thank the OLA and SMA religious who helped so many in the country.

Pilgrimage to Pike Wood Mass rock

The Kerry Branch of Cumann na Sagart hosted a pilgrimage with Eucharist, in Irish, at the Pike Wood Mass rock, Killarney on the Feast of local St Carthage (Mocuda) on May 14. Pilgrims from Kerry, Australia and Poland assembled in the Penal Day wooded sanctuary to listen, as Dr Jim O'Sullivan shared the late Fr Seán Quinlan's poem *The Mass Rock Priest*

1706 and delight in the traditional music of Deacon Thady O'Connor with cantor Fr Pádraig Mac Cárthaigh. Chief celebrant, Fr Eoghan Ó Cadhla, was accompanied by Fr John J. Ahern, Fr Tom Crean, Fr Tomás Ó Luanaigh, Frs Tadhg and Mícheál Ó Dochartaigh. Coillte's care for this ancient Christian sacred space and fine bi-lingual notice-board was acknowledged on the occasion.



Association of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) wishes to recruit a Secretary General

About our Organisation

The Association of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) represents and promotes active collaboration between Religious Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life and Lay Missionary Organisations. As a representative association, of 150 membership congregations our mission is to provide leadership and support and foster collaboration among our members and to promote spirituality, social justice, and sustainable living on a shared journey of faith.

The Role

The Secretary General will be responsible for coordinating the day-to-day operation of AMRI in an effective and efficient manner. Under the leadership of the Executive Council of AMRI the Secretary General will ensure the necessary conditions are in place which will enable AMRI to successfully meet its strategic goals, in keeping with our Vision, Mission and Values Statement.

Job Details

Contract Type: Fixed-Term for a Period of 3 years.
Location: Cypress Grove Road, Templeogue, Dublin 6W D6W YV12
Hours of Work: The contract is for 40 hours per week, mainly Monday to Friday. However, due to the nature of the role some evening and Saturday work will be required.
Salary: The job will have a competitive salary in a stimulating and a creative environment.

Experience/role requirements

- Awareness of the cultural and religious situation (and/ or Institutes) in Ireland.
- Demonstrated strong leadership qualities and organisational skills in a similar role
- Strategic plan implementation
- Experience of working effectively within a corporate governance structure

Key Responsibilities

- Implementation of AMRI Strategic Plan
- Ensure the operation and maintenance of excellent organisational structures within AMRI
- Build and maintain collaborative, professional relationships within the team and with key Stakeholders
- Ensure that AMRI is appropriately represented at all times.

How to Apply

To apply for this position, please send a cover letter outlining how you meet the criteria, your salary expectations and when you would be available to commence employment, along with your CV to secretariat@amri.ie

Closing date for applications is 26th June 2024.

Yet another proposal to further weaken marriage



David Quinn

It is not that long since divorce was not permitted in Ireland at all. The State followed the view of the Catholic Church that marriage should be permanent and indissoluble. This was a country with an overwhelmingly Catholic population, and so when a referendum to make divorce legal was first put to the country in 1986, it was defeated by a margin of two-to-one, and when it was put to voters again nine years later, it was passed by less than one percent. For the first decades of the life of the Irish State, a proposal to permit

divorce would probably have been beaten by ten to one.

So, we cannot pretend that our prohibition on divorce was an imposition by the Catholic Church on Irish society. It had enormous popular support.

“Society wanted children to be looked after as well as possible and it wanted men to take responsibility for their children”

The Catholic Church is unusually strict, even by religious standards, in its attitude to divorce because Jesus was very strict about the matter. Other Christian Churches are less strict because Jesus, according to certain interpretations of the Gospels, did permit divorce in cases of adultery.

West

Nonetheless, every Western society made divorce hard to obtain until roughly the 1970s. They believed marriage was extremely important and a vital part of the overall social fabric. Marriage was not simply important for the couple. It was important for society itself, and this was chiefly because nearly all marriages result in children. Society wanted children to be looked after as well as possible and it wanted men to take responsibility for their children, and the mother of their children.

If fewer people married, or if divorce became commonplace, then fewer children would be raised inside marriage, and fewer men would take care of their children. This is exactly what has happened, and it is hardly a good thing. So, societies were not simply being cruel in making divorce hard, if not impossible to get, and in cre-

ating extremely strong social norms around marriage. Somehow, we seem to have forgotten all this.

In the Western world, marriage is now seen as being simply about the couple. The social and religious purpose of marriage hardly get a look-in. In fact, marriage is barely even about the couple in some ways, but about the happiness of each individual spouse. If one spouse is no longer happy, then the marriage should be brought to an end, is the dominant thinking, and as quickly as possible, regardless of what the other spouse thinks, never mind any children they might have.

This kind of highly individualistic view of marriage is ultimately behind moves to shorten the waiting time before a marriage can be ended by divorce. Green TD, Patrick Costello, wants to reduce the waiting time for divorce from two years to just six months.

When divorce was first introduced in 1995, the waiting time was four years. This was to convince reluctant voters that marriage would remain a robust legal and social institution and not something that could be easily dissolved.

“Where there is domestic violence or an abusive relationship, being tied to an ex-partner for longer than is necessary is draconian and unduly onerous”

Then in 2019 we had a referendum to reduce the waiting time to two years, and now Deputy Costello wants to reduce it to six months.

Introducing his Bill to the Dáil last week he said: “I have dealt with numerous constituents who are in very difficult situations where their marriages are breaking down and they have found the current law a source of deep frustration and deep pain. It ties them to an ex-partner for significantly longer than is necessary. In cases where there is domestic violence or an abu-



sive relationship, being tied to an ex-partner for longer than is necessary is draconian and unduly onerous. It holds people back and prevents them from starting a new chapter in their life.”

At face value, this seems like an impregnable case. It seems compassionate and it also seems to promote personal freedom, the highest value of a very individualistic society.

But let's look a little closer. For a start, there is nothing now preventing a couple separating and coming to a separation agreement regardless of the waiting time for divorce. This will cover issues like the division of property, maintenance payments and above all who gets custody of the children and how often the separated spouse can see them.

Divorce

What divorce gives you is the right to marry someone else. That is the only real difference between divorce and a separation agreement. So even if a spouse is abusive, there is nothing to prevent you separating today and hopefully sorting out your legal affairs, although this can be very difficult, and will remain difficult no matter how quickly a divorce can theoretically be obtained. (In any case, an abusive spouse should be in prison).

If there is abuse in a marriage, then there is a stronger case to be made for quicker divorces. But if not, then it should not be too easy to obtain one.

For example, you could easily have a case where one spouse is simply tired of the marriage and has met someone else. The other spouse might be content enough in

the marriage, or else is prepared to put up with a certain amount of unhappiness for the sake of the children.

“The strong legal and social trend at the moment is to make marriage something that is easy to dissolve and to weaken its position in law”

But that second spouse can be divorced against their will and potentially in just six short months no matter how long the couple have been married.

Admittedly, there is nothing to stop a spouse walking away from the other one anyway, but in a ‘quickie’ divorce regime, they have a stronger incentive to do so because now they can marry whoever they have met more quickly.

Is this truly just? It is just on the abandoned spouse? It is fair on the children? Does the commitment you make when you marry, the solemn vows you exchange, really count for so little in the eyes of the law or society?

The strong legal and social trend at the moment is to make marriage something that is easy to dissolve and to weaken its position in law. Nothing is done to strengthen it. Almost everything we are doing is designed to dilute the social norms around it and to make it easier and quicker to walk away from, even if this suits only one spouse.

Is this really compassionate at the end of day? In an overall sense, is it really making for more happy adults and more happy children? It is debateable, to say the least. It is perfectly possible that weakening marriage in the name of freedom and ‘compassion’ is creating more misery in net terms. This thought never seems to occur to us anymore. It should.

The Irish Catholic

FREE HOME DELIVERY

*geographical restrictions apply

Don't miss breaking news delivered directly to your home each week



With the closure of religious shops around the country, signing up for free home delivery of *The Irish Catholic* will ensure seamless arrival of the newspaper to your doorstep every Thursday.

Stay up to date with analyses that represent your voice on the national stage.

Regular contributors provide commentary to hot button issues of the day.

Local voices highlight the ongoing work of parishes and communities throughout the country.

News Delivery brought to you by **THE IRISH TIMES**

For further details

Ph: 01 920 3901 | Email: info@newsdelivery.ie | www.newsdelivery.ie

“Their marriages are breaking down and they have found the current law a source of deep frustration and deep pain. It ties them to an ex-partner for significantly longer than is necessary”

We all need satire in a world of petty despots



Martina Purdy

Not long after I quit the BBC for the convent, a few of my former colleagues came around for tea and biscuits. So for a bit of craic, I wheeled the convent tea trolley into the parlour and did my best Mrs Doyle accent: "You will, you will, you will!"

We all enjoyed the joke! Mrs Doyle – the fictional housekeeper on the RTE satire *Fr Ted* – was famous for constantly pushing tray loads of tea at every visitor to the parochial house. The show basically lampooned the Catholic Church, and portrayed priests as mad or idiotic.

I can't say I was a fan. I watched a few episodes and decided that it wasn't my cup of tea, so to speak.

It was extremely popular though. I once met a few Irish seminarians who had great affection for the show. One gleefully described it as "part- documentary". A retired priest, who bore the wounds of service, had a different take. He thought *Fr Ted* had done more damage to the priesthood than any serious critical analysis might have done. "It portrayed all priests as eejits," he said.

The popular show came to an abrupt end after three seasons in 1998 with the sudden and tragic death of the lead actor, Dermot Morgan. May he rest in peace.

Transgender

But *Fr Ted* may be rising again. The fictional character has reared his head of late. There's a #FreeFrTed Campaign on social media, linked to the apparent cancellation of the show's co-creator Graham Linehan. He seems to be on the same page as the Pope these days when it comes to transgender ideology.

Linehan, like Pope Francis, is a vocal critic. The Irishman has more than half a million followers on X (Twitter) and is appealing to followers to share a rather lengthy mes-

sage, in which he claims his career began to suffer when he spoke out to protect children from being transitioned. He had noticed boys and girls being placed on "an irreversible medical pathway that was deeply damaging to their health and peace of mind".

"In this, they were encouraged by legacy LGB organisations that had catastrophically lost their way."

“Lenihan feels vindicated over his position thanks to the recent publication of the landmark UK Cass Review”

"When I began speaking out about it, trans activists reacted as they always do, by

contacting possible employers, smearing my name in propaganda outlets like *Pink News*, which would later come after JK Rowling when she entered the fray. The police were sent to my door multiple times. I was sued by a succession of activists."

The best selling author of the Harry Potter series, JK Rowling, was also viciously attacked for her stance, but was perhaps "too big" to cancel. Lenihan less so. He said his career was damaged by his passionate and outspoken arguments: biological sex is real, women's places in sport should be protected, and children should not be subject to experimental medical protocols. He says a backlash from trans activists scuppered plans for *Fr Ted – The Musical*, claiming the production company Hat Trick, which co-owns the rights, does not want his

name associated with the project.

These days, Linehan feels vindicated over his position thanks to the recent publication of the landmark UK Cass Review – a victory for common sense. It found that 'trans healthcare' did not take sufficient regard for the long-term consequences for children. In effect the bodies of boys and girls were being mutilated on the basis of weak evidence while whistle-blowers were vilified and smeared (Dr Hillary Cass is doing the rounds in the US now where she says American medics are out of date.)

Satire

Linehan believes the tide is turning in his favour. Will the producers of *Fr Ted – The Musical*, heed his call to make the show? Or will he be forced to write his own musical *Mrs Doyle – The*

Whistleblower?

A few things to consider in all of this. Comedy, as *Fr Ted* might say, is no joke. It is seriously important to our society. The brilliant American comedian Jerry Seinfeld just claimed comedy is being killed off and censored by a woke culture of political correctness. "This is the result of the extreme left," he said.

“Comedy often cuts to the truth and whatever cannot withstand satire is false”

We all need laughter but we also need satire. Because it has a greater purpose: constructive social criticism. Comedy often cuts to the truth and whatever cannot

withstand satire is false.

Linehan's struggles reveal the ruinous nature of the 'cancel culture'

Thank God *Fr Ted* and Linehan never got cancelled by the Catholic Church.

Educated privately at the Catholic University School in Dublin, he was clearly taught to think. Ironically his views on transgenderism are closer to the Catholic Church than those on the political left who fiercely defend this ugly and dangerous "you will, you will, you will agree" ideology.

I won't be queuing up to get tickets for *Fr Ted – The Musical* but good luck to Graham Linehan and his attempts to get Mrs Doyle et al to sing and dance.

In a world of petty despots and dangerous dictators, we all need satire.

And laughter should never be cancelled.



Author J.K. Rowling.

Mrs Doyle in acclaimed sitcom *Fr Ted*.

STATE OF THE NATION

A brand-new name in Ireland's media landscape!

Every week we'll be asking hard questions and saying what others are too afraid to say in public.

Journalism with integrity is our business.

Our first few podcast episodes on the March referendums with renowned journalists Michael Kelly, David Quinn and Wendy Grace gained us the respect of listeners across Ireland. We have since turned a critical eye on other social issues, including the findings of the Oireachtas committee on Assisted Dying, the Hate Speech Bill and its chilling effect on the freedom of expression, the inclusion of gender ideology in Irish school curriculums, and more!

Visit www.rss.com/podcasts/stateofthenation to listen to the full podcast episodes. Also available on all major streaming platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, etc.

For more information, e-mail info@stateofthenation.ie

Celebrating Our Voice FM third anniversary

The station manager writes about it



John Nugent

Not everybody gets excited about their third birthday, but the people involved in ourvoicefm.com certainly are!

This internet radio station was set up to support individuals and groups who don't often get the chance to have their voices heard. Truly heard!

The Brothers of Charity Services West Region and the Community of Strokestown, Co. Roscommon, have been a great support to this project over the last three years and it's no surprise that the rewards of commitment, hard work and dedication, have now produced regular fun, serious and entertaining radio shows.

'Ourvoicefm.com' is giving a platform to presenters and DJs who would not normally be invited to broadcast or present on issues close to their hearts. 'Our Voice Fm.com' is becoming a real vehicle that's allowing people to grow in confidence, it is encouraging and developing skillsets and giving people social standing within the community. In other words, this venture is allowing people with a disability to shine.

"After three years of broadcasting over the internet and through the 'Mytuner' app we are reaching out to the world. The public are tuning our way through smart phones, computers, tablets, iPad and various other smart devices. Everybody is going smart these days. We intend now to spread our wings and invite individuals from around the country who have an interest and desire to get into broadcasting to come join us."

Production

"The Production process within radio is multifaceted and not just



about presenting and DJing. We need researchers, sound-techs, advertisers, marketers, producers and social media techs. These areas are all a part of keeping a station afloat and where people can use their talents and skills to highlight the voices of those who up to now are going unheard."

“There is no arguing that a disability puts limits on our day to day lives but this doesn't mean that we cannot contribute to enhance the community and society we live in”

'Ourvoicefm.com' is searching for individuals who may have felt that they are being held back by a disorder or disability or lack of

support. "We would love to hear your voices and your stories. The country needs to hear the amazing talent that is on offer and via the internet the world does too", says John.

Disability

Disability is not a nice word! Straight away it elicits negative connotations and attitudes and yet, according to our last census, 22% of our population reported experiencing at least one long lasting condition or difficulty. That's 1.1 million people. That's a lot of people. But on the other hand, that's a lot of potential broadcasters, presenters and DJs who could have their voices heard and stories told. That's a lot of listeners when you include families, friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

"There is no arguing that a disability puts limits on our day to day lives but this doesn't mean that



we cannot contribute to enhance the community and society we live in. 'Ourvoicefm.com' is trying to achieve this goal", says Audrey Murphy from the production team.

The beauty of internet radio is that you don't have to travel to a studio to broadcast and that's a big plus for individuals with mobility issues. You can do this in your living room, kitchen, bedroom or shed. All you need is access to Wi-Fi and a hook up to 'ourvoicefm.com' streaming service. This makes it so easy for people to record and submit or stream live shows.

There are many service providers around the country who could assist with setting up small pop-up

studios. Not to mention schools, training centres, community hubs, etc.

Interested

John and other members of the production team of 'ourvoicefm.com' would be more than happy to help interested parties in setting up the broadcast. Maybe also some people out there have a catalogue of recordings or podcasts that can be re-broadcast to a much wider audience if so then you can contact the team on 'ourvoicefm@gmail.com'.

Now it's back to the birthday bash. 'Ourvoicefm.com' will be three years old on June 3. Happy Birthday Guys!

“The beauty of internet radio is that you don't have to travel to a studio to broadcast and that's a big plus for individuals with mobility issues. You can do this in your living room, kitchen, bedroom or shed”

Elections 2024: Using every preference on the ballot paper to deliver change on the pro-life issue



There is a real prospect of pro-life gains in the upcoming elections, writes **Eilís Mulroy**

Before voters go to the polls in Irish elections, the Pro Life Campaign has, for many years now, published a 'Voter Guide' with a comprehensive list of candidates and where they stand on right-to-life issues.

As well as being an invaluable guide to voters, it ensures genuinely pro-life candidates are rewarded for their stance, while it reminds abortion supporting candidates that they stand to lose votes over their support for abortion.

In advance of the upcoming local and European elections on June 7, the Pro Life Campaign is once again calling on supporters to 'think pro-life' before they vote and to consult the up-to-date version of the 'Voter Guide' on its website.

Excellent

Across the country, in most constituencies, there are excellent pro-life candidates running who stand a good chance of getting elected provided we get behind them. Making sure that we inform ourselves about the candidates running in our own local electoral areas and also passing on this information to family

and friends is the key to more pro-life candidates crossing the victory line.

After giving our highest preference votes to pro-life candidates, we should use our additional preferences wisely to help ensure that the most extreme pro-abortion candidates do not get elected.

The proportional representation (PR) system that exists in Ireland allows us to vote for the candidates we most want to see elected (pro-life candidates) and to tactically vote against candidates we least want to see succeed (pro-abortion candidates).

“A significant proportion of the electorate are pro-life but their views and concerns are not adequately represented by those in public office”

That's the reason why the Pro Life Campaign provides additional information on the election section of its website about candidates other than those listed as pro-life. By voting No.1 for the candidate you most want to see elected and then voting down the ballot paper to the candidate you least want to see elected, you ensure the best possible outcome for the pro-life issue.

Given the massive rise in abortion numbers since the law changed and the horrifying amount of taxpayers' money being spent solely on abortion provision (€46 million in just four years), there is a drastic need for more pro-life public representatives at local and national level - representatives who will not be cowed by the current political

establishment and who will work as a united team to shift the public policy focus away from the promotion of abortion to instead focusing on initiatives that will help reduce the abortion rate and foster a renewed respect for human life in society at large.

A significant proportion of the electorate are pro-life but their views and concerns are not adequately represented by those in public office. This needs to change and the way to change it is for people to make a conscious decision to vote pro-life at election time.

There has to be electoral consequences for those in government who promised voters before the last abortion referendum that abortion would be "rare" in Ireland if the people support the repeal of the Eighth Amendment. The more we spread the word about what has happened the more people will become awakened to the need for things to be done differently.

The recent March for Life in Dublin, which extended in length across two sides of St Stephen's Green was an event that showed the potential that's there to effect real political change if everyone plays their part.

In the time remaining before election day, we need to turn the call to 'vote pro-life' into actual votes.

Difference

This is our chance to make a real difference. What happens in the upcoming elections will determine who represents us for the next five years and whether progress is made in reducing the number of abortions taking place and in restoring some semblance of balance in public discourse on the issue.

The pro-life candidates running in the upcoming elections are making huge personal sacrifices in stepping forward. The least we can do is set aside a small amount of time to familiar ourselves with the 'Voter Guide' in advance of election day and make sure that our family and friends know where to look for information on the stances of candidates before they vote.

i The election 'Voter Guide' can be viewed at www.prolifecampaign.ie



Veritas Shops are closing...

By the end of 2024

Don't miss the latest in Catholic news from Ireland and abroad
Subscribe today and get *The Irish Catholic* delivered to your door

Featuring news and analyses that represent your voice on the national stage, regular contributors who provide commentary on hot button issues and local voices highlighting the ongoing work of parishes and communities throughout the country.

Special Offer for New Subscribers
3 MONTH SUBSCRIPTION

€55

Down from €65

Print Subscription
3 Months for €65
6 Months for €105
1 Year for €199

Digital Subscription
3 Months for €20
1 Year for €60

For more information, please visit
www.irishcatholic.com/shop
or call on 01 687 4028

The Irish Catholic

You can also send us a cheque/postal order to:
The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277

Brazilian Catholics find a home in Smithfield



Renata Steffens

Located in Smithfield, a vibrant community of Catholic Portuguese speakers have found their home away from home in a church in the heart of Dublin. The priests, the laypeople and the majority of the community attending Portuguese Mass and church events in the St Mary of the Angels, Church Street, Dublin 7, are Brazilian immigrants.

Católicos em Dublin, in English 'Catholics in Dublin', was founded in 2009 with a small group of Brazilian youth missing their country and feeling the need to attend Mass in Portuguese.

Looking for a priest who could say the Mass in their language, they found Fr Patrick McNamara who lived in Brazil, and was fluent in the language. Fr McNamara was the first of many priests who would take turns saying Mass in Portuguese for the first few years of the community.

All celebrations would happen in different churches, according to the availability of the priests and spaces. They did not have an official chapel or regular Mass until 2019, when the first and current chaplain, Fr Severino Pinheiro da Silva Neto arrived.

Celebrate

"Fr McNamara was the first one to celebrate Mass in Portuguese. It first happened in the St Saviour's Church, in Dominic Street. Then he brought the Mass to Halstead Street Parish", Fr Neto mentioned.

"The community started with him", the priest added "he was an important priest, and worked a lot defending the rights of Brazilians who came to Ireland to work in meat factories."

Part of the community for



St Mary of the Angels preparing for Sunday Mass. Photo: Renata Steffens

over seven years, Sheila Maria was part of Brazilian events and activities before the community was an official chapel. "We had rosary on Tuesdays and adoration on Thursdays, and funny enough we would pray for a Brazilian priest to be sent to our community every week," she said.

Ms Maria remembers how the community was mostly formed by young immigrants, coming together to pray and how that changed over time. "The friar began working with families and helped to grow the number of it in the community," she said.

“The Archbishop even mentioned to Pope Francis how on Sundays between 400 - 500 young people would attend Mass here. He likes to tell that story”

"A woman called Lady Anne was the responsible bringing a Brazilian retreat to this place," Fr Neto mentioned about the first activities of the Brazilian community in the Church Street location.

"The Archbishop Diarmuid Martin visited the chapel a

few times and celebrated Masses and confirmations. In 2017, he came during the Our Lady Aparecida festivities, and was impressed with the number of young people attending the celebrations," Fr Neto remembers.

"The Archbishop even mentioned to Pope Francis how on Sundays between 400-500 young people would attend Mass here. He likes to tell that story," the priest joked, and continued, "It was him who requested the Capuchin Friary to provide a Brazilian friar to assist the community in St Mary of the Angels."

Capuchin

Fr Neto is a Capuchin Friar from Rio Grande do Norte, a state located in northeastern Brazil. He told *The Irish Catholic* that Ireland was always in his mind before moving here, and that visiting the state was one of his biggest dreams.

The priest lived in Rome for a few years where he studied for his Master's degree in biblical theology. Moving back to Brazil he worked in different parishes there for a few years, but the calling to visit Ireland was still there.

The priest moved to Dublin to study English, and decided not to stay at the Friary at the

time. He rented a room like any other exchange students and attended the Masses blending with the community.

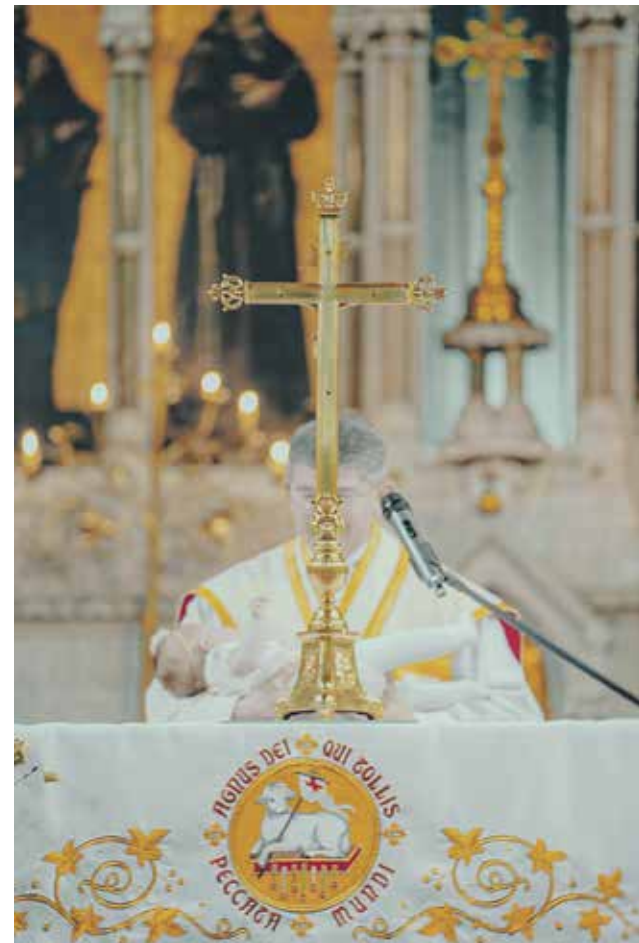
Fr Neto was back working in Brazil in 2018 when in a national meeting the Capuchins received a letter from Ireland requesting a Brazilian friar to be sent to Church Street. He showed interest, as he felt that would go along with the calling he felt to come back to Ireland.

“The idea was received by the Capuchin Friary, who gave and keep giving support and structure, allowing Brazilian priests to assist the Brazilians in the Church”

"They said that another friar had already been selected, but would consider myself. Later they told me it would be two priests and I was one of them," he said. "In the end, only one friar was sent, and it was myself."

The Archbishop was the one who requested to Fr Adrian Curran, provincial officer at the time, to bring a Brazilian priest and to create the chapel, as the Brazilian community was already very big but had no structure or hierarchy.

Fr Neto said they are all grateful for the assistance the Friary gives to the Brazilian community. "The idea was received by the Capuchin Fri-



Baby being presented to the community. Photo: Pastoral da Comunicação (communications office)

ary, who gave and keep giving support and structure, allowing Brazilian priests to assist the Brazilians in the Church."

He highlighted a few times that "the Archbishop suggested the idea of bringing a Brazilian priest, but without the active support of the Irish Capuchins we would not be here. They provide all the necessary support for us to be here."

Growing

A second priest, Friar Ademir Marques arrived in 2023, as the community was growing too much and had only one Brazilian priest.

Layman Lucas Miguel Silva, arrived in Ireland with his wife in February 2019, they were part of laity in Brazil, and searched for a Brazilian Catholic community in Dublin from the moment they decided to move into the country.

"My wife was checking the *Católicos em Dublin* social media posts from Brazil, so we knew when Mass would happen, all activities and events planned. When we arrived we wanted to keep anonymous, only attend Mass and nothing more. But it didn't work, God wanted us involved."

Mr Silva said that he and the Chapel ministries' mem-

bers assist Fr Neto in his visits to other Brazilian communities in Ireland. Cork and Roscommon have their own Brazilian priests, but Fr Neto and Fr Marques would take turns to go to other cities to say the Mass, hear confessions, baptism and provide all services the community needs.

“On a regular Sunday, the Mass has 400 attendees, but in an Our Lady Aparecida celebration Mass or during Easter, for example, it can have more than 750 people”

"It's a long list," Mr Silva said, "we provide services to Naas, Ballyjamesduff, Edenderry, Portlannington, Limerick, Letterkenny in Donegal, the list goes on. On May 11, Fr Severino said the first Brazilian Mass in Drogheda," he added. "There are also some people in Gort, which is the town with the biggest Brazilian percentage in Ireland. The biggest number of Portuguese speakers."

“When we arrived we wanted to keep anonymous, only attend Mass and nothing more. But it didn't work, God wanted us involved”



Laypeople organising donations to send to Brazilian flood's victims. Photo Renata Steffens

“Other young people can see that faith is alive. Our Brazilian community is an inspiration for other young people. Faith testimony is our biggest contribution to the Church”

In the other churches around the country, the friars say Mass in Portuguese once a month, but in Church Street it happens every Sunday at 4pm. “On a regular Sunday, the Mass has 400 attendees, but in an Our Lady Aparecida celebration Mass or during Easter, for example, it can have more than 750 people,” Mr Silva explained.

Mr Silva mentioned that, even though most people in the community are Brazilian, it is open to all nationalities, Portuguese speakers or not. For that, some Masses happen in English, or are said in a mix of both languages.

The layman explained that their “Brazilian roots and values are Catholic, and immigrants find that here. We have the image of Our Lady Aparecida... The person enters the church and knows they are home.”

Community

Fr Neto believes Brazilians have a particular way of living their Catholic faith, and that attracts them to the community. “The most important element that makes a Brazilian community so important is the language. People would come here, and the English language is a big difficulty, to pray in English is. But that is not the only element, the culture would be as well. The unique Brazilian way of living the faith, even though the Catholic faith is only one everywhere.”

For the priest, the existence of a Brazilian chapel in Ireland helps immigrants to stay and live a Catholic faithful life. “It helps them to maintain their faith and have a better life in Ireland.” For

him, it also helps people to participate of the Irish community. As the chapel is fully integrated with the Parish and Diocese.

“It is also a way to contribute with the local parish. Always collaborating and bringing our particularities to the local community, at the same time we are open to learn the ways of the local Church.” For Fr Neto there are two important elements in the relationship of the Brazilian chapel and the parish: “to contribute and to receive.”

“We have many adult baptisms here, people who were protestants and discovered the Catholic faith here. People who were not faithful in Brazil and discovered it here”

Fr Neto sees the Portuguese Masses as an opportunity to attract people to Catholicism. “We have many cases of people who are being converted here. People who had no faith and for multiple reasons, loneliness maybe, were faced with essential questions that only faith can answer.”

“We have many adult baptisms here, people who were Protestants and discovered the Catholic faith here. People who were not faithful in Brazil and discovered it here. Other re-discovered their faith in here,” the priest explained.

Ms Sheila Maria is a cat-



Fr Severino Pinheiro da Silva Neto with boys and girls on their first day as altar children. Photo: Pastoral da Comunicação (communications office)

echist, and just recently started to work with children, most of her catechism work in her seven years in the community was with young adults and adults.

Confirmation

“For example, many people want to get married in the church but never did a confirmation. So they would come to us to get it,” Ms Maria explained. She mentioned a former Muslim man who came to the church and was converted. He attended catechesis (in English) for months and today has all Sacraments.

For privacy reason, Ms Maria could not mention his name, but he is still very active in the Church. “He is living in the south now, so he can’t come very often, but he always sends us pictures when he is attending some Mass,” she said. For Fr Neto the Chapel does “significant evangelisation work.”

The priest believes that a community who speaks the people language is of extreme importance. “The Church needs to fulfil people’s needs, like God coming to Earth as a man. He came to meet his people, and the Church needs to do the same. As many people have difficulty with the language, having a community who speaks their own means they can be included.”

“Cultivating the traditions can helps non-practicing Brazilians to go back into a more active Catholic life”

One of the biggest contributions of the Brazilian community to the Irish Church is that the people there are very young, vibrant, and bring testimony. “I am under the impression that the testimony of young Brazilians being part

of the Church is very important. Other young people can see that faith is alive. Our Brazilian community is an inspiration for other young people. Faith testimony is our biggest contribution to the Church.”

Similarly, Mr Silva believes the most important part in the community life is the testimony. And how cultivating the traditions can helps non-practicing Brazilians to go back into a more active Catholic life.

Procession

“We do the Our Lady Aparecida procession every year. It starts with a novena, then on Sunday we walk the procession. Last year we even walked on Capel street, and it had around 600 people in the procession,” the layman commented. “It is an important event, as many Brazilians would not know about the Catholic community, but would recognise Our Lady Aparecida’s image on

the streets and join the procession,” he concluded.

“Ms Maria told The Irish Catholic they provide assistance for all who need help and go after them for support”

But the *Católicos em Dublin* also do work to assist the community in more ‘social service’ ways. Ms Maria told *The Irish Catholic* they provide assistance for all who need help and go after them for support. “Our community has been a reference to other Brazilians in Dublin as well. We assisted people dealing with cancer, helped people living on the streets, and I remember this specific case of a drug addict, who is today living in Brazil, well and with a life completely different than the one he was living here.”

Out&About

Tralee's Kerry Camino 2024



KERRY: Two communities walk together in Tralee's Kerry Camino. Pictured kneeling in front Mike O'Donnell, who began the Camino in June 2012 with Adrienne McLoughlin, Ingrid Boyle, Michael Fitzgerald, Eamon Kelly and Grace O'Donnell. Photo: John Cleary.



DUBLIN: Military chaplains at State 1916 Commemoration Ceremonies, Arbour Hill, May 18, 2024.



TIPPERARY: Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly was present in the ceremony for Ordination to the Diaconate of Killian Heney, in St Michael's Church.

IN SHORT

Lelia Doolan celebrated her 90th birthday with charity skydive

Cork broadcaster, television producer, theatre director and filmmaker celebrated her ninth birthday with a charity skydive. Lelia Doolan was the first woman artistic director of the Abbey Theatre and first woman to be appointed chair of the Irish Film Board.

Now living in Killeenaran, Co. Galway, Ms Doolan turned 90 on May 7 and did her first

parachute jump at the Irish Parachute Club in Clonbullogue Airfield, Co. Offaly. She jumped from almost 4,000 metres and said that "it was shocking at the beginning... and then it was nice and easy."

Her goal was to raise €3,000 for Doctors Without Borders. "These men and women give themselves to healing in the likes of Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine. Every penny counts. People are enormously generous," she mentioned about the fundraising before the jump.

She already raised over €32,500 and donation can be made until July 5 at idonate.ie.

PLC turns their focus to the local elections

The Pro Life Campaign (PLC) held a 'Voting Pro-Life' webinar on Tuesday, May 14. The discussion was organised with the upcoming local elections in mind. Panellists included local election candidates Mairead Tobin and Cllr. Kenneth Flynn.

The discussion was simple and to the point while the speakers had plenty of resolve. Cllr. Flynn urged people, despite the election being a local one, to vote in terms of policy

and politics and not in terms of who the voter knew personally and was fond for non-policy related matters.

He also stressed that even though the upcoming election is a local one, many candidates could potentially go on and become TD's whenever the next general election takes place. Having pro-life candidates was important to him in light of this.

Mairead Tobin encouraged people not be afraid of resistance to the pro-life message on the doorstep when canvassing for candidates. Tobin insisted her experience was a positive one.

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



LIMERICK: Chris Reardon SNA at St Brigid's Primary School, Singland, at her retirement celebration in the Castletroy Park Hotel on Thursday, May 2, with school's principal Sarah Ryan and Olivia Danaher.



LONDON: Attending a concert at the Jesuit Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street London, on April 27, in aid of Humanitarian Relief for the Holy Land, are in the rear: Chevalier Gavan Ryan, KC*HS; Chevalier John Vickerman, KHS; Mrs Angela Vickerman and Chevalier Dr. Brendan Ryan, KC*HS; Front: Chevalier Leo Hopley, KGCHS; Ms Angieszka Oparowska; Dame Margaret Hopley, DGCHS and Dame Mary Maxwell, DGCHS.



CAVAN: Fr Martin Gilcreest PP Laragh blesses a tractor during a special blessing of tractors after Masses at Laragh parish, organised by the parish pastoral council.



LIMERICK: A group of parishioners from the Holy Rosary Parish, Ennis Road, gather at the Grotto of Our Lady, Fernbank, to say the rosary during the month of May.



KERRY: James Bowler featured on the Diocese of Kerry's YouTube video *DoK TV* as part of 'Youth Week 2024.'



KERRY: Ciara and Saorise featured on the Diocese of Kerry's YouTube video *DoK TV* as part of 'Youth Week 2024.'

ANTRIM

Our Lady of Bethlehem Abbey invite men between the ages of 20 and 50 for a 'monastic come and see day' on June 23 starting at 10am. The event happening in the Cistercian monastery of Our Lady of Bethlehem, in Portglenone aims to answer questions and assist those who feel a calling or vocation to start a religious life.

CAVAN

Eucharistic Adoration takes place in St Clare's Chapel, Cavan Cathedral, from 11am–7pm daily.

CORK

The 98th Cork Eucharistic Procession to mark the feast of Corpus Christi will happen on May 26 at 3pm processing from the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne to the Church of Peter and Paul.

DERRY

The Holy Family Padre Pio Prayer Group meets on the first Tuesday each month (next on June 4) at Holy Family Chapel, Ballinacorney, Derry. It starts with the Rosary at 6.45pm, followed by Mass at 7.15pm, and Novena to St Pio directly afterwards. There is a first class relic available for veneration.

DUBLIN

Prayers in devotion to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal happens every Monday evening in the Disciples of the Divine Master chapel of adoration, White's cross, Newtownpark avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin. With Holy Rosary; Novena Prayers at 6.55pm, Chaplet of Divine Mercy at 7.20pm and Celebration of Holy Mass at 7.30pm.

GALWAY

Sacrament of Reconciliation at Shrine of Our Lady of Clonfert will happen Saturday, May 25 from 12noon to 2pm, and will be ministered by Fr Declan McNerney. For more information contact by phone 090 967 5113 or email stbrenseyre-court@clonfertdiocese.ie.

LAOIS

Rosary prayed in the Church of the Assumption, the Heath, Portlaoise parish,

daily at 2pm and at 3pm on Sundays.

LIMERICK

St John's Cathedral annual novena to St Anthony takes place June 5 and concludes on Thursday, June 13.

LOUTH

All are welcome to 'Family Fun Day' as part of The Archdiocese of Armagh's 1500th Anniversary celebration that will happen in St Patrick's Church, Dundalk. The event will take place on June 16 at 3pm and will be followed by a procession to St Nicholas Church for a prayer service.

MAYO

Launch of new 'Creation Walk' at Knock Shrine on Saturday May 25 at St. John's Welcome Centre 10.30am to 3.30pm. The walk will be launched alongside with Brian Grogan SJ's new book *Creation walk – the story of a small blue planet*.

MONAGHAN

Church Music Weekend organised by the Diocese of Clogher will happen on May 25-26 in St Joseph's Pastoral Centre and Church, Park Street, Monaghan. Led by composer Ronan McDonagh the event will be divided into a workshop on Saturday (May 25 at 10am) and a concert on Sunday (May 26 at 5pm). Tickets for each day cost €10 and can be booked on www.clogherdiocese.ie/churchmusic

TYRONE

First Class Relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis to visit St Colmcille's Church, Carrickmore on Friday May 24. The relic will be welcomed at 11.30am, two short talks to happen at 1pm and at 4pm, and the Mass before the relic departs will happen at 7.30pm.

WATERFORD

All are welcome to participate in the Corpus Christi Procession that will happen on May 30 in Waterford city. The meeting will happen at Ballybricken Green at 6.30pm and the procession will finish in the Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity.

Thousands descend on Co. Down for Carlo Acutis' relics

Renata Milan

On May 13, 2024, the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis visited St Nicholas' Church, Ardglass and St Mary's Church, Dunsford in Co. Down, and was greeted by an estimated 5,500 people.

The relic has travelled to Ireland this weekend from Assisi's Sanctuary of the Renunciation, the church where Blessed Carlo Acutis' remains are housed and displayed. It is located at the site where it is said that St Francis of Assisi cast off his rich clothes and took up the poor habit. It was in Benburb Priory on May 12. The relic is a first-class relic, meaning it is a piece of the body of Blessed Carlo Acutis.

On October 10, 2020, he was beatified by Pope Francis, becoming the first millennial to be declared 'Blessed' by the Catholic Church. The Church said that his beatification highlighted "the significance of his witness, particularly for the younger generation, demonstrating that holiness is attainable even in our modern world."

Monsignor Figueiredo presented Fr Gerry McCloskey with a first-class relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis for the Diocese of Down and Connor. The event included Rosary prayer in the church, Mass, Divine Mercy Chaplet and benediction followed by the closing ceremony and farewell. Also, there was an exhibition of Blessed Carlo's life on display in the porch of the church. The relic departed St Nicholas' Church to arrive next morning at St Mary's Church Dunsford (two miles from Ardglass).

Fr Gerry McCloskey, parish priest of Dunford and Ardglass parish, who organised the two-day event said: "It was a wonderful day which despite the heavy downpours of rain didn't prevent long lines of people waiting to be blessed by the relic of this young teenager, Carlo Acutis, who lived in this millennium and who is now proclaimed Blessed. The huge numbers of those wanting to venerate show that devotion to this young saint is increasing as many favours are being received through his intercession. Well over 5,500 people attended the two-day pilgrimage to the Co. Down Coastal village to get a blessing of the young boy's relic."



Deacon Jackie Breen blessing a member of the parish



Bishop Alan McGuckian, of Down & Connor



Deacon Jackie Breen PP blessing a young member of the parish



Deacon Jackie Breen blessing 9-year-old Francis Smith of St Patrick's primary school, Legamaddy, Downpatrick. Photo Bill Smyth



LtoR - Bishop Alan McGuckian, Bishop of Down and Connor, Deacon Jackie Breen, PP Fr Gerry McCloskey, Fr Ciaran Dallat PP of St Macartan's and Msgr Figueiredo giving a blessing at the relic of Carlo Acutis



People queuing up for a blessing of the relic of Carlo Acutis in St Nicholas' Church, Ardglass, Co. Down. Photo: Bill Smyth

THE SYNODAL TIMES



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

BISHOP SHEN BIN: MISSION AND VISION OF THE BISHOP OF SHANGHAI

PAGES 20-21



Cardinal Hollerich asks western women to be patient with the Church

KNA

The call for equal rights and the ordination of women is getting louder and louder in the Catholic Church – at least in the West. But there are also other mentalities in the universal Church, a Pope's confidant reminds us.

In the discussion about the ordination of women in the Church, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich warns against excessive impatience. “If you attack too much, you won't achieve much,” he said in an interview published on Friday by the website *kath.ch*. “You have to be cautious, take one step at a time, and then perhaps you can go very far.”

He does not believe that demonstrations are the right way to change things, said the Archbishop of Luxembourg. This would “lead to polarisation and ultimately to the death of the Church”. The Jesuit and papal confidant warns that the issues at hand must be discussed in detail and comprehensively. Otherwise, there is a danger that the women's issue will be seen as something that “liberal Catholics want to push through”. It takes “tact and patience if you want real solutions”.

Cardinal Hollerich is Archbishop of Luxembourg and at the same time Relator General, i.e. a kind of moderator or managing director in the synodal process of

the universal church. He emphasised that the synod is not about politicising, but above all about listening to one another. “We must not perceive the world as a threat,” he said. He believes that the Spirit of God is at work in the world; and it is important to recognise “through the discernment of spirits” where the Spirit is at work in society.

“It needs arguments and time”

The issue of the ordination of women is not an infallible doctrinal decision, the Jesuit reminded the audience. “It can be changed. It needs arguments and time.” According to Hollerich, he would be happy if women felt fully equal in the Church. “Whether that happens through the priesthood or not is something that time will tell.” The important thing now is “that women are given more responsibility”.

Vocation is not the only criterion for ordination, emphasised the cardinal; and: “I also know men who feel called and are not admitted to ordination.” Hollerich conceded that a man's vocation is scrutinised but not that of a woman. This could be perceived as structural discrimination, “if you think in European terms”. But, according to Hollerich, “the Church is bigger”; various other continents in their way of life of the Church could not necessarily understand this way of thinking.

“Huge problems afterwards”



A female participant at the Synod listens to Cardinal Hollerich. Photo: CNS

The objection that appointed women should therefore take a back seat is “based on a typically European principle of the individual”, explained the cardinal. “Many societies don't think like that at all; the community comes before the individual.” In

the Church, many see such individualistic positions as neo-colonialist; “and we must be very careful not to initiate a huge backlash”. According to Hollerich, the global Church must take different mentalities into account. “We have to have these discussions with the

whole Church, otherwise we will have huge problems later. Then the Catholic Church will fall apart.”

The Jesuit explained: “It's not the evil Vatican that insists on these positions and doesn't want to change anything.” There would be “a storm in

other continents if it were to introduce the female priesthood tomorrow” and the Vatican would have to back down. This has already happened with the comparatively “small matter” that same-sex couples can now be blessed in church. (KNA)

Bishop Shen Bin: Mission and Vision of the Bishop of Shanghai



In 2023, Bishop Shen Bin was consecrated bishop of the Shanghai Diocese. The *Agape* magazine recently conducted a lengthy interview with Bishop Shen.

Agape: Bishop Shen, hello! Could you please tell us about your family? How did the family's atmosphere of faith influence your vocation? What made you decide to choose the vocation of consecrated life?

Bishop Shen Bin: I was born and raised in the rural area of Qidong, Jiangsu Province. My father was a worker, and my mother was a peasant. My grandparents, parents, and even my great-grandparents were all believers, so I was born into a family that had been believing in God for generations. My earliest impression of faith was when I was very young, seeing my parents pray every day. It was in the 1970s, a time different from the current atmosphere of faith. My parents prayed devoutly without telling me anything about faith, but the scene of their devout prayer left a mark on my memory and sparked my curiosity. After the reform and opening up in 1978, my parents began to talk about faith, and

I realised that my family had always been believers in God. It was also in that year, when I was eight years old, that I was baptised by an elderly parishioner and accepted the faith of my ancestors. Although my parents couldn't teach me the doctrines of faith when I was young, their devout prayers were a silent instruction in faith. It can be said that my awareness of faith originated from their actions of prayer.

Agape: What pastoral work have you done since being ordained as a priest? In your parish pastoral work, what is the most important experience for you?

Bishop Shen: On October 1, 1996, I was ordained as a priest at the Caojia Town Church in Qidong. Afterwards, I was assigned by the bishop to serve as a parish priest in Haimen, until June 2002. These six years were very significant in my priestly career, and I would say they were the happiest six years of my priesthood. I particularly enjoyed being with the parishioners. During my time in the parish, I often thought about organising activities for today, planning for tomorrow's events, and I was immersed in that joy. A priest should live among the parishioners and discover his own value through serving them.

During those years, I wholeheartedly immersed myself in the role of a parish priest. I often took the

parishioners on pilgrimages, organised weekly gatherings on different topics, and sometimes arranged picnics for them. Through these activities, I guided the parishioners to deepen their understanding of faith and encouraged them to participate more enthusiastically in parish activities and services, fostering a sense of belonging to the parish. In this way, I busily engaged in these activities for six years.

Agape: In 2010, you were consecrated as the bishop of the Diocese of Haimen. How did you carry out your pastoral work as the bishop of the diocese? Could you briefly review your pastoral work in the Diocese of Haimen for over a decade?

On April 21, 2010, I was consecrated as a bishop. The Diocese of Haimen has 15 priests and 18 nuns. Although there are not many priests in the Diocese of Haimen, they are very united, which is the foundation laid by Bishop Yu Chengcai.

After taking office as the Bishop of the Diocese of Haimen, my main task was to continue to unite the priests and promote various evangelisation work in the diocese together.

Firstly, I made efforts to improve various systems in the diocese, such as standardizing financial procedures, establishing protocols for the registration and use of Mass offerings, and implement-

ing approval processes for fund usage. These measures aimed to ensure transparent management and reasonable utilisation of diocesan funds. I specified the Episcopal authority for fund usage, requiring approval from the presbyteral council for expenditures exceeding a certain amount. Secondly, to ignite the missionary zeal of the priests, I endeavoured to grant them more trust and autonomy. This empowerment enabled priests to actively engage in parish development and pastoral work.

“We aimed to enhance the spiritual quality of the faithful”

Subsequent events demonstrated the clear effectiveness of this trust. Additionally, I sought opportunities to nurture priests and nuns, facilitating their holistic development. Thirdly, there was a focus on nurturing the faithful. Through organising training sessions and various activities, we aimed to enhance the spiritual quality of the faithful. Fourthly, I aimed to raise awareness of the Diocese of Haimen, ensuring that people understand its history and current endeavours. Therefore, I intensified the promotion of the dio-

cese, utilising Church media to acquaint people with the Diocese of Haimen and foster a positive impression thereof.

Agape: Your work in the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference has given you a holistic view of the Chinese Church. What do you think are the challenges facing the Chinese Church today and its future development direction?

Today, the Chinese Church indeed faces some important challenges and difficulties. For example, the Church's image in society is somewhat vague, and the general public lacks understanding of the Church. There are many complex reasons for this, including the small proportion of our faithful in Chinese society, our limited “voice,” the limited understanding of the Church, and the insufficient recognition of the contributions made by the Church to Chinese society, among others. Another reason is the lack of talents within the Chinese Church (especially the lack of influential talents) and the problem of succession.

“For the Chinese Church to develop better, I believe it is necessary to first strengthen various aspects of the Church's own construction”

This has led to our insufficient influence in many fields of society. These issues require serious consideration.

For the Chinese Church to develop better, I believe it is necessary to first strengthen various aspects of the Church's own construction. The Church has its own traditions and modes of existence, which are our advantages. However, today's Chinese Church especially needs to keep up with the times. We should bravely think and actively make changes based on the foundation of maintaining our good traditions and modes. Society is changing, people are changing, and the Church should adapt to the reality of Chinese society and make some adaptive changes. The purpose of doing so is not to let the Church go with the flow but to highlight the identity and mission of the Church, making it easier for the Church to be recognised and accepted by everyone.

Secondly, the Chinese Church needs to open itself up to Chinese society, engage in dialogue with people from all walks of life, and engage in dialogue with contempo-

“We must go out and let the universal Church hear the voice of the Chinese Church, and we must personally tell the story of the Catholic Church in China”

rary thoughts and cultures. The Church should be confident. We have rich spiritual resources and ancient yet beautiful traditions, and we should courageously present ourselves with an open mind. In today's Chinese society, the Church should open its doors, go out, and welcome others in.

Thirdly, the Chinese Church, especially the clergy, should strengthen their sense of mission. The mission of the Church is to spread the Good News, a mission entrusted to the Church by Christ, not only to the clergy but also to all the faithful. Although our clergy overall have a good sense of mission, there is still a need for further cultivation and enhancement to fully realise our mission in society. Increasing our sense of mission will stimulate our enthusiasm and improve our initiative. The Church also needs to cultivate the missionary mission of the laity because the faithful, who are present in various fields of society, have a dual identity in both the Church and society. They are truly the bridge connecting the Church and society.

Furthermore, the Chinese Church must also pay attention to the cultivation of future generations. We should encourage more young people to dedicate themselves to the Church and provide them with good nurturing to become the backbone of the Church's future development.

Agape: After the Second Vatican Council, the Church affirms and encourages the evangelistic mission of the laity. Pope Francis also said, “Laypeople are the protagonists of the Church.” What role do you think laypeople should play in the affairs of the Church? What do you think is the role of women in the Church?

In parish life, parish priests should avoid acting alone because the energy of priests is limited, and planning and specific operations for pastoral work in the parish cannot be accomplished by one priest alone. The main body of the parish is the faithful, and the role of priests is to manage and serve, and parish development cannot be achieved without the participation of the faithful. Therefore, priests should be open-minded and invite outstanding laypeople to participate, making good use of their talents and abilities to contribute to the development of the parish.

As for the faithful, we hope that they will actively partici-

pate in various activities in the parish. I hope that our faithful will show initiative and not just see themselves as passive observers or bystanders; they should not only participate in parish activities but also actively communicate with priests and offer suggestions for parish life.

Regarding the role of women in the Church, I believe that they can play a very important role in many aspects of Church life. We see that there are more female faithful participating in Mass than male faithful, and there are also more female faithful involved in various specific tasks in the parish. Women can play important roles in various aspects of Church life. So I think we should fully trust and rely on female faithful, provide them with more opportunities, and allow them to leverage their feminine advantages.

Of course, our parish priests should also guide their work so that they can serve the parish responsibly and ensure the harmonious operation of parish work.

In summary, in church life, we must fully recognise the importance of different roles, be good at guidance and cooperation, satisfy the needs of the faithful, and promote the development of the Church. I hope that through these efforts, we can create a vibrant and diverse church life.

Agape: Shanghai is an international metropolis, and the Shanghai Diocese can be said to be the window of the Chinese Church. How should the Shanghai Diocese present itself in the universal Church, and what kind of exchanges and interactions do you hope it will have with the universal Church?

Bishop Shen: “Just as Shanghai is China's window, the Shanghai Diocese should also be the window of the Chinese Church. Being in Shanghai, whether it's foreign churches visiting us or us going out to visit, provides us with opportunities to truly feel that the Shanghai Diocese is a member of the universal Church. As a local church, the Shanghai Diocese has an invisible connection with the universal Church in terms of faith, and we should also strive to express tangible connections between the Shanghai Diocese and the universal Church. Therefore, we must be brave enough to go out and show the confident and open face of being a member of the universal Church.

Since the signing of the

“Sino-Vatican Provisional Agreement” in 2018, the entire Chinese Church has opened up to external communication and exchanges. In October of that year, we had two visiting delegations in Rome simultaneously. One delegation participated in the World Bishops' Conference, while I led another delegation to attend the World Peace Prayer Conference organised by the Sant'Egidio Community in Bologna, Italy. I remember that day when the five of us Chinese bishops gathered at

“Second, you must come to China in person, and you will see a completely different Chinese Church”

St Peter's Square in the Vatican and took a precious group photo. Later, I was invited to speak at the closing ceremony of the World Peace Prayer Conference, and my speech, which lasted only ten minutes, received six rounds of applause from the audience. Standing on the podium at that time, I felt very confident. This confidence stemmed from the fact that I come from China, and because today's China has already taken centre stage on the world platform. In the following years, I led visiting delegations from the Chinese Church to Spain, Germany, France, Belgium, and other countries. Through interactions with the universal Church, I found that the number of friends of the Chinese Church is increasing. This is my experience: We must go out and let the universal Church hear the voice of the Chinese Church, and we must personally tell the story of the Catholic Church in China.

I often say to many foreign friends: First, if you want to understand the situation of the Chinese Church, you should listen to me because I am a bishop in China, I am responsible for the Chinese Bishops' Conference, and I understand the situation of the Chinese Church better than anyone else.

Second, you must come to China in person, and you will see a completely different Chinese Church.

i The above interview was translated by Timothy Xu in March 2024 from 聖愛 (The Agape, the 8th issue of 2023), the monthly magazine published by 光啓社 (Guangqi Society) of the Catholic Diocese of Shanghai.



Our lady of Sheshan 2023

In new vetting process for apparitions, Vatican nixes 'supernatural' label



Visitors stroll with umbrellas and raincoats along Via della Conciliazione, while the reflection of St Peter's Basilica is seen on a puddle of water on a rainy day in Rome March 26, 2024. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



Elise Ann Allen

Last Friday, the Vatican rolled out a new expedited procedure for vetting alleged Marian apparitions or other spiritual phenomenon, ruling that they will no longer be deemed supernatural, but simply that nothing stands in the way of encouraging devotion.

In an introductory presentation of the new norms, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), said one of the biggest novelties is that, in order to prevent delays in the vetting process for alleged apparitions, the discernment process will end "not with a declaration of 'de supernaturalitate' (of the supernatural)".

Norms

Rather, six different "prudential conclusions" will be given, depending on the case, he said, insisting that "as a rule," these conclusions "do not include the possibility of declaring that

the phenomenon under discernment is of supernatural origin – that is, affirming with moral certainty that it originates from a decision willed by God in a direct way".

Fernández explained that the decision was made largely on grounds that a ruling on alleged supernatural phenomena would be reached faster, which is especially important in the digital age, and to avoid any confusion that belief in these phenomena is obligatory.

“The new norms also appear to acknowledge the use of false mysticism, the use of spiritual images or symbolism, in recent abuse scandals in the Church”

The new norms "entirely" replace the previous set, issued by Pope Paul VI in 1978, which were only published in 2011, and spell out six new rulings the DDF can give when cases of alleged apparitions arise, while insisting that from now on, no ruling deeming them to be "supernatural" in nature

“As the case is being evaluated, special attention must be given to the good reputation and ecclesial standing of any witnesses, as well as any potential causes for concern”

is to be given.

Among other things, the new norms also appear to acknowledge the use of false mysticism, the use of spiritual images or symbolism, in recent abuse scandals in the Church, insisting that careful attention must be paid to whether the alleged supernatural events are being used "as a means of or pretext for exerting control over people or carrying out abuses".

Fernández said a revision of the 1978 norms began in 2019, and that during a November 2023 session in the DDF, it was agreed that "a comprehensive and radical revision" was needed. The final draft of the new norms was presented to the Pope on May 4, and he approved them, decreeing that they take effect on May 19, 2024, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Clarity

Fernández said another reason new norms were needed

was the fact that in the past, bishops would obtain the required clearance from the Vatican to encourage devotion to an alleged apparition, but they were not allowed to say the DDF was involved.

He said some bishops had also made confusing statements implying that faithful were obliged to believe in the phenomenon such as, "I confirm the absolute truth of the facts" and "the faithful must undoubtedly consider as true", at times acting as if the apparitions "were valued more than the Gospel itself".

“The DDF will now offer a conclusion of nihil obstat, or 'nothing stands in the way'”

Fernández also noted that "very few cases" of alleged

apparitions ever achieved a clear determination on their supernatural status, saying only six cases since 1950 had been definitively resolved.

Once an inquiry into an alleged apparition or spiritual event has been completed by the local diocesan bishop and sent to the DDF with his opinion, the Vatican office, according to the new norms, can respond with one of six conclusions. Rather than a positive ruling on the supernatural nature of the alleged event, the DDF will now offer a conclusion of *nihil obstat*, or "nothing stands in the way."

Rulings

According to the norms, this ruling is given when, "Without expressing any certainty about the supernatural authenticity of the phenomenon itself, many signs of the action of the Holy Spirit are acknowledged...and no aspects that are particularly critical or

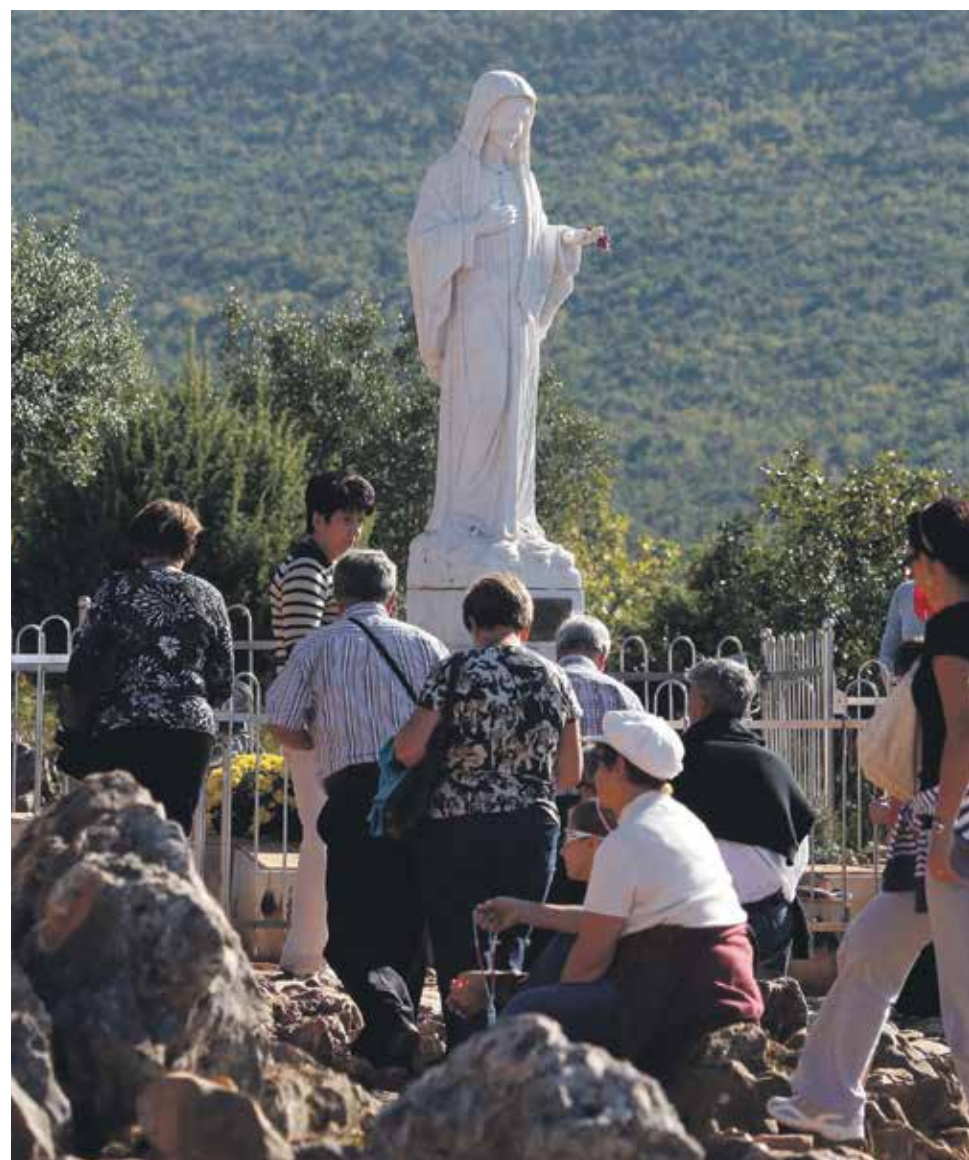
risky have been detected, at least so far". In this case, the diocesan bishop is encouraged to promote devotion and pilgrimages.

The DDF can also issue the conclusion, *Prae oculis habeatur*, "it should be kept in mind", which is to be given in cases in which "positive signs are recognised", as well as "some aspects of confusion or potential risks".

A third possible ruling is *Curatur*, or "it is taken care of", which according to the norms will be given when devotion to an alleged event has already spread widely, but "various or significant critical elements are noted".

“Diocesan bishops in these cases, or others delegated by the Holy See, will intervene directly, or if they are unable to, 'will try to reach a reasonable agreement'”

In this case, the norms say, "a ban that could upset the People of God is not recommended", but the dioc-



Pilgrims are pictured in a file photo surrounding a statue of Mary on Apparition Hill in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mary reportedly appeared on the hill to six village children in June 1981. Photo, CNS/Matko Biljak, Reuters.

“The bishop must establish a commission with at least one theologian, one canonist, and one expert chosen based on the nature of the alleged phenomenon”

esan bishop is asked not to encourage the phenomenon, and to promote alternative devotions instead. A ruling of *Sub mandato*, “under command”, is to be given when the critical issues do not involve the alleged phenomenon, but the person or people involved “who are misusing it” either for profit, for immoral acts, or for some other personal gain.

Diocesan bishops in these cases, or others delegated by the Holy See, will intervene directly, or if they are unable to, “will try to reach a reasonable agreement.” The DDF can also issue the ruling, *Prohibetur et obstruatur*, “it is forbidden and obstructed”, when there are serious concerns surrounding an alleged supernatural event.

Resolution

In this case, the bishop is asked to make a public declaration that devotion is not allowed, and to prepare a catechesis on the reasons

why. Finally, the DDF can issue a *Declaratio de non supernaturalitate*, “a declaration of non-supernaturalism”, when an event is found to be definitively “not supernatural”, for example, when an alleged visionary admits to having lied, or “credible witnesses” provide proof of falsity.

“It is the task of the diocesan bishop, according to the norms, to personally investigate himself”

In all cases, the norms reiterate that “as a rule, neither the Diocesan Bishop, nor the Episcopal Conferences, nor the Dicastery will declare that these phenom-

ena are of supernatural origin, even if a *Nihil obstat* is granted”, although the pope can authorise “a special procedure in this regard” if he chooses.

Fernández said in his preparatory note that while in the past there has been confusion surrounding alleged apparitions, including cases of back-and-forth approvals and disapprovals, this can be solved “by ensuring a quicker and clearer involvement of this Dicastery”.

It can also be avoided by no longer striving for a declaration of “supernaturalness”, which he said, “carries high expectations, anxieties, and even pressures”. The issuing of a *Nihil obstat* instead, he said, authorises positive pastoral work while also downplaying expectations.

In terms of procedures, when an alleged supernatural event occurs, it is the task of the diocesan bishop, according to the norms, to personally investigate himself or through a delegate, in consultation with the national bishops’ conference and the DDF.

Inquiry

As part of his inquiry, the bishop must establish a commission with at least one theologian, one canonist, and one expert chosen based on the nature of the



Sts Jacinta and Francisco Marto are pictured in a colorised image with their cousin, Lucia dos Santos (right), in a file photo taken around the time of the 1917 apparitions of Mary at Fatima, Portugal. Sister Lucia was declared ‘venerable’ on June 22 by Pope Francis. Photo, OSV News/Reuters.

alleged phenomenon. A delegate will also be named by the bishop to coordinate its work, and a notary will also be appointed who will attend all meetings and interviews, take minutes and assist with organisation.

“Once an inquiry is completed, the bishop must issue his own votem, or opinion, on the report”

Any witnesses interviewed as part of the inquiry must be deposited in front of the entire commission, if possible, and they must be interviewed as soon as possible. Any audio and visual materials that are relevant must also be carefully examined by the commission, and any organic material – such

as bread or wine in the case of an alleged Eucharistic miracle – must be sent to a lab, while maintaining due reverence for the sacrament.

If the alleged supernatural events continue during the investigation, the diocesan bishop is asked to avoid any “uncontrolled or dubious displays of devotion”. Once an inquiry is completed, the bishop must issue his own *votem*, or opinion, on the report, and submit it to the DDF.

As the case is being evaluated, special attention must be given to the good reputation and ecclesial standing of any witnesses, as well as any potential causes for concern, such as efforts to seek profit or personal gain.

Evaluation

Once the case arrives to the DDF, officials will make their own evaluation and respond with a ruling, which the bishop must communicate to the people. If a *Nihil obstat* is granted, bishops are instructed to carefully evaluate the fruits and

growth of devotion, ensuring the faithful “do not consider any of the determinations as an approval of the supernatural nature of the phenomenon itself.”

However, if at any point the alleged event can be traced to a scammer or someone who seeks profit or other personal interests, the diocesan bishop must apply “on a case-by-case basis, the relevant canonical penal norms in force”.

The new norms come into force amid several recent controversial cases of alleged apparitions, including the controversial Marian apparitions in Medjugorje; an alleged case of a Marian statue that cried blood in Trevignano Romano, Italy, that was eventually debunked as false; and an apparent apparition in Amsterdam in which Mary allegedly asked the pope to declare a new dogma assigning her the title, “Co-redemptrix”.

Elise Ann Allen writes for Crux.

“As the case is being evaluated, special attention must be given to the good reputation and ecclesial standing of any witnesses”



World Report

IN BRIEF

Germany now a 'mission country,' Bishop Bätzing says amid declining Catholic numbers

● The German Bishops' Conference president has called Germany - a nation whose very history is entangled with the Catholic Church - a "mission country".

In an interview with the Society of the Divine Word's German-language magazine, Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg said: "We live in a missionary country when we realise that less than half of Germany's citizens still belong to the Christian denominations".

According to CNA Deutsch, CNA's German-language news partner, Bishop Bätzing said evangelisation had been a central theme "since [Pope] John Paul II and also for [Pope] Francis".

The German prelate continued: "But the other half are not simply faithless or don't ask any questions, and in this respect, I believe we need to do much more".

Church in Mexico wins lawsuit filed by 'trans' person seeking baptismal record change

● A Mexican court has ruled in favour of the Diocese of Querétaro, located in the north-central region of the country, in a lawsuit filed by a person who identifies as transgender and demanded that the diocese change the sex indicated on the Church's baptismal certificate and registry.

According to Tomás Henríquez, director of the Latin American and Caribbean division of Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International - an organisation that helped the diocese in this

case - the complaint, filed for the first time in 2021, demanded that the Catholic Church change the baptismal record "so that it reflects the person's claim to be a woman instead of a man".

In a May 14 interview with ACI Prensa, CNA's Spanish-language news partner, Mr Henríquez explained that the Catholic Church refused to make the change due to "the immutable doctrine of the Church regarding the constitution of the person as a man, as a woman, who has been created that way by God".

Director on new film and powerful conversion: Mother Teresa 'was sent there for me'

"Jesus Thirsts: The Miracle of the Eucharist" is a new film that takes viewers on a journey to rediscover the importance of the Eucharist. Through dialogue with notable Catholic figures who explore the biblical origins of the Eucharist and share personal stories, one of the film's producers, Jim Wahlberg, said he hopes to revive faith in the Eucharist.

In addition to Wahlberg - the brother of actor Mark Wahlberg - several well-known Catholics make an appearance in the film, including Bishop Andrew Cozzens of Crookston, Minnesota; Fr Donald Calloway, MIC; Fr Robert Spitzer, SJ; Scott Hahn; Curtis Martin; and Chris Stefanick.

The film will be shown in cinemas in the US on June 4, 5, and 6 distributed by Fathom Events.

Wahlberg spoke with CNA at the premiere of the film at Christ Cathedral in Orange County, California, about why he believes this movie is so important, and he also shared some of his own powerful testimony.

"We got a big problem in our Church," Wahlberg said. "When the report is 70% think that the Eucharist is a symbol or that they don't believe in the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist ... that's a real problem."

A 2019 Pew Research study found that only a third of



James Wahlberg, producer of 'Mother Teresa: No Greater Love' poses with Sr Szymona and Sr Jose Mercy of the Missionaries of Charity at the documentary's premiere in Radom, Poland, October 19, 2023.

Catholics in the US believed in the Church's teaching about the Eucharist. Nearly 70% of those in the study said they saw the body and blood of Christ as a symbol.

Wahlberg has been vocal about his personal story of being incarcerated due to substance abuse and the powerful conversion he had after hearing St Teresa of Calcutta speak when he was in prison.

Wahlberg ended up in the juvenile justice system, and by the time he was 17 years old he was on his way

to serve a five-year sentence in state prison. After completing his sentence, he picked up a drink again on his first day out.

"The only person going for it was the Catholic priest, Fr Jim Freitas, the greatest man I've ever met in my life," Wahlberg said.

"He approached me and he said, 'Hey, I hear good things. I hear you're trying to change your life. I have a job opening in the chapel,'" he shared. "Gives me a job in the chapel and within weeks tells me excitedly that

Mother Teresa was coming to the prison. And I'm like, 'Fantastic! That's so great! Who's Mother Teresa?'"

Wahlberg said that he now knows, at 58, that "she was sent there for me".

"Without a doubt in my mind," he said. "Nobody ever told me God loved me, that Jesus died for me, nobody ever told me that. She gets up and says that God loves you. That Jesus Christ died for you. And there was a moment when she was speaking that it was just me and her."

Gunmen kidnap Nigerian priest

● A Catholic priest in the Onitsha Diocese of Anambra State, Rev Fr Basil Gbuzuo, has been kidnapped by yet-to-be identified gunmen. The news of the priest's abduction was contained in a release by the Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha dated May 16, 2024.

According to the statement, the incident occurred on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, around 8am along the Eke Nkpor-Obosi bypass.

The statement also added that His Grace, Most Rev Valerian Okeke, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Onitsha, had called on all Christ's faithful and people of goodwill to pray for the quick and safe release of the priest.

Over 1,000 attend Eucharistic procession in US

● A crowd of more than 1,000 Catholics processed with the Eucharist through the streets of downtown Washington, DC, to celebrate the solemnity of St Joseph last Saturday morning in spite of scattered rainfall throughout the event.

The Catholic Information Centre's (CIC) second annual Eucharistic procession - which took place just blocks from the White House - drew participation from priests, nuns, and laypeople from the area. The May 18 procession was nearly twice the size of last year's procession on May 20.

"People have shown their love for the Eucharist [by] showing up in this rainy weather," Fr Charles Trullols, the director of CIC, told CNA after the procession.

Top Congo cardinal plays down church/state crisis

Amid what threatened to become a serious church/state situation in Africa's largest Catholic country, a cardinal threatened with prosecution for sedition in the Democratic Republic of Congo met May 16 with the country's president and afterward attributed the tensions to "misunderstandings".

"There has been more misunderstanding than a real problem," said Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo of Kinshasa after his encounter with President Félix Tshisekedi at Congo's Presidential Palace, where the *chargé*

d'affaires of the Vatican embassy in Congo, Monsignor Andriy Yevchuk, was also present.

Cardinal Ambongo said the meeting, which lasted two hours, was devoted to discussing issues "that may have created unease". Though Cardinal Ambongo did not indicate whether the recent threat of prosecution has been withdrawn, he attempted to present the results of the meeting in a positive light.

"Where people dialogue, things are clear," he said. "It is with a feel-

ing of great satisfaction and gratitude towards the head of state that I leave this office. As far as I'm concerned, normally there are no more problems. There have been more misunderstandings than real problems."

Cardinal Ambongo also insisted that he and President Tshisekedi, whose great-uncle was a Catholic bishop in Congo but who today attends a Pentecostal mega-church, share a concern for the common good. "I think we agree on one point," Cardinal Ambongo said.

US court says parents have no right to opt out of LGBTQ curriculum

A federal appeals court ruled that parents in Maryland have no right to be informed when their children are being instructed with LGBTQ materials or to opt their children out of that instruction.

The legal advocacy

group Becket Law, which is representing the parents challenging the Montgomery County Board of Education, said that the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court's ruling.

The firms said the ruling

means that parents of children enrolled at Montgomery County Public Schools "have no right to be notified or opt their kids out of" materials that teach transgenderism and other sexual ideologies.

Becket, which special-

ises in religious freedom cases, said the parents had objected to their children being exposed to books that included materials that "champion pride parades, gender transitioning, and pronoun preferences for children".



Edited by Brandon Scott
brandon@irishcatholic.ie

Powered by the Eucharist



Joshua, centre, and Lucas Dahlberg, right, compete in the 100-metre dash May 5, 2024, during a middle school track meet at Hill-Murray School in Maplewood, Minnesota. Joshua began a remarkable recovery from a debilitating illness hours after he received his first Communion May 13, 2023. Photo: OSV News/Dave Hrbacek, The Catholic Spirit

NFL player criticises Catholic leaders for lack of leadership in speech

Kansas City Chiefs' place-kicker Harrison Butker offered some pointed criticism of Catholic bishops and priests along with advice to college graduates in his commencement address at Benedictine College on Saturday.

Catholic bishops should be more like St Damien of Molokai and less concerned about what civil and cultural leaders think about them, the three-time Super Bowl winner and outspoken Catholic said.

St Damien (1840–1889), a missionary priest from Belgium, spent nearly 16 years ministering to lepers in Hawaii before dying of their

disease.

"His heroism is looked at today as something set apart and unique when ideally it should not be unique at all," Butker told the graduates at the Catholic liberal arts college in Atchison, Kansas, on May 11, the day after St Damien's feast day.

"For as a father loves his child, so a shepherd should love his spiritual children, too. That goes even more so for our bishops, these men who are present-day apostles."

He said bishops are rightly "not politicians but shepherds", but that they have given up their influence by not leading properly.

"Our bishops once had adoring crowds of people kissing their rings and taking in their every word, but now relegate themselves to a position of inconsequential existence. Now, when a bishop of a diocese or the bishops' conference as a whole puts out an important document on this matter or that, nobody even takes a moment to read it, let alone follow it," Mr Butker said.

"No. Today, our shepherds are far more concerned with keeping the doors open to the chancery than they are with saying the difficult stuff out loud. It seems that the only time you hear from your

bishops is when it's time for the annual appeal, whereas we need our bishops to be vocal about the teachings of the Church, setting aside their own personal comfort and embracing their cross," he said.

He also criticised US President Joe Biden and other Catholic leaders.

"Bad policies and poor leadership have negatively impacted major life issues. Things like abortion, IVF, surrogacy, euthanasia, as well as a growing support for degenerate cultural values in media all stem from the pervasiveness of disorder," Mr Butker said.

Slovak bishops call for peace after assassination attempt on prime minister

Following the assassination attempt on Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico last Wednesday, Slovakian bishops have called for peace and unity.

"We must actively work for peace," Archbishop Bernard Bober of Košice, chairman of the Slovak Bishops' Conference, said in a statement.

"It is important that we respect each

other and strengthen the good in each of us," he said, calling on the public to reject all forms of violence and promote the good in people instead.

Archbishop Bober expressed his deep regret over the violent incident and condemned what authorities are now treating as an act of attempted murder.

The gunman was described as a "lone

wolf" who acted out of political hatred against Prime Minister Fico, Slovak news agency SITA reported. The attacker expressed his dissatisfaction with government policy in a video published online before the assassination attempt. He now faces attempted murder charges and life in prison.

Vatican roundup

Pope takes swipe at conservative critics for their 'suicidal attitude'

● In an interview with '60 Minutes', aired last Sunday, Pope Francis took aim at his "conservative critics" in the United States, saying a conservative is someone who "clings to something and does not want to see beyond that".

"It is a suicidal attitude," the Pope said as reported by '60 Minutes', which released a brief clip of the upcoming interview conducted by CBS' Nora O'Donnell.

"Because one thing is to take tradition into account, to consider situations from the past, but quite another is to be closed up inside a dogmatic box."

The full interview, conducted April 24, aired as part of '60 Minutes' on May 19 on CBS.

Syro-Malabar crisis in India not resolved by latest meeting with Pope

● A meeting between the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in India and Pope Francis is causing some controversy in the Eastern Rite Church.

"This is where the devil - the devil exists - the divider, creeps in thwarting the most heartfelt desire the Lord expressed before he sacrificed himself that we, his disciples, would be one, without divisions, without breaking communion," the Pope said May 13 in an audience with Syro-Malabar Archbishop Raphael Thattil, the major archbishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly.

"Safeguarding unity is not a pious exhortation but a duty, and it is especially

so when it comes to priests who have promised obedience and from whom the believing people expect the example of charity and meekness," Francis said.

The synod required that Mass be celebrated facing the people during the Liturgy of the Word, and facing the altar during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. That decree, however, was resisted by a swath of clergy and laity in Ernakulam-Angamaly, on the grounds that Mass facing the people throughout the celebration represented their local tradition and is also more in keeping with the liturgical teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

Italian actor Benigni to join Pope Francis for World Children's Day

● Pope Francis will be joined by Italian actor Roberto Benigni and soccer star Gianluigi Buffon as the pontiff celebrates World Children's Day over the last weekend in May.

The Vatican announced last Thursday that World Children's Day will kick off on Saturday, May 25, at 3:30pm with a soccer match between kids and professional soccer players in Rome's Olympic Stadium led by Buffon, the goalie who helped Italy achieve victory in the 2006 World Cup.

On the second day of the event, Benigni, best known for his Oscar-winning film 'Life Is Beautiful', will give a short speech at the end of Pope Francis' Mass and Angelus address in St Peter's Square on Sunday, May 26.

World Children's Day is a new initiative by Pope Francis sponsored by the Vatican's Dicastery for Culture and Education in collaboration with the Catholic community of Sant'Egidio, the Auxilium Cooperative, and the Italian Football Federation.

Controversial Chinese bishop speaks at Vatican conference

● This week a high-profile conference was held marking the centenary of the Catholic Church's first ever council in China, drawing a slew of experts and featuring prominent Vatican speakers, including Pope Francis. On May 21, a conference titled '100 years since the Concilium Sinense: Between history and present', was held at Rome's Pontifical Urban University, marking the 100th anniversary of the Council of Shanghai.

The conference, organised in collaboration with Fides News, a missionary news site attached to the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation, featured a slew of high-profile speakers from the Vatican and China, including Pope Francis and a bishop who was initially appointed without his approval.

Pope Francis will open the day-long conference with a video message, after which a video on the 1924 Council of Shanghai will be shown.



Letter from Jerusalem

Hope in the Holy Land



Justin Robinson OSB

Easter is a time of hope, something which has occupied me a lot lately as the season comes to a close and my three-year sojourn in a war-torn Holy Land comes to an end.

We hope for things all the time. I have a long-standing hope that Middlesbrough FC will be promoted to the Premier League, though I'm annually disappointed. Christian hope, however, involves the desire for something and the expectation of receiving it: specifically, union with God in heaven. This hope keeps us from discouragement and sustains us through times of abandonment and struggle as Christ's victory over sin and death means we, too, will be saved from our worldly struggles to enjoy eternal life and happiness with God. This hope transforms our outlook on our present-day situation and is a graced confidence which ought to flavour the entire Christian life.

Last weekend I was in Nablus, a West Bank town which is close to my heart. I studied Arabic there before entering the monastic life, and took the name Justin in honour of the town's philosopher-saint when I entered the monastery. I've been struck lately by the sense of hopelessness about the place, as my friends rather fatalistically share their outlook on the Holy Land's situation, on their lives and on the future.

Raid

Smoking a bubbling argileh pipe, lemon and mint flavoured smoke wafts around us as my friend Issa describes the previous night's arrest raid in his village. "We were sitting around in the café when the Israeli army arrived and detained us all. The officer said someone had been shining a laser-pen into a nearby settlement, and they were going to arrest five youths every night until it stopped even though he knew it was none of us, simply because he can," he said.



Palestinians walk past the ruins of houses in Gaza City, March 20, 2024, that were destroyed during Israel's military offensive amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. Photo: OSV News photo/Dawoud Abu Alkas, Reuters

I ask him what it was like to be detained, as he spent half an hour in custody before being released whilst five of his friends were led away into the night in the back of military jeeps. "I was afraid," he answers, "and I was thinking about my future: for how long will I be in jail? For a month, for a year? Will I graduate this year? Will I get married?"

"Nobody is safe, because if you're a Palestinian you're in danger. Anyone of us, even if we're innocent"

Another friend leans-in with his rather grim assessment. Aboud tells me that

"I'm reminded of all the struggles this land has seen in just the past three years that I've been here, and of how I arrived during a war in Gaza and will soon leave as another war rages on"

"the only thing I hope for is inner peace, where I can sleep without worrying about anything. Every day I face death twice, as there's a checkpoint on the way to and from work. I don't even feel safe in my bed. Nobody is safe, because if you're a Palestinian you're in danger. Anyone of us, even if we're innocent."

Reeling

His village is still reeling from the shooting last year of an 18 year old Palestinian student, an event which has instilled a deep fear in the villagers. Bidding farewell to his friends in a nearby café, he was driving in the darkness to his father's workplace when he came upon an Israeli military patrol who sprayed the car with bullets and claimed

it was a car-ramming attack. The student was killed instantly, whilst his severely injured and soon-detained passenger overheard a soldier say "oops" when realising the patrol's mistake.

"I believe Christian and Muslim Palestinians alike possess a deep faith and an abiding trust in God's providence, come what may"

"I don't have hope for the future, I don't know if I'm going to be alive going home today or the next day. The constant fear is

exhausting and the pressure means I can't focus on anything," Aboud adds.

Want

The Palestinians whom I've come to know want the same things as anyone else: to graduate, to find a good job, to build a house and to start a family. Some might say that people here display a certain amount of stoicism in the face of life's hardships and uncertainties, but I believe Christian and Muslim Palestinians alike possess a deep faith and an abiding trust in God's providence, come what may. More often than not, whatever comes is rarely good news. With the words of my Nablus friends still floating around my head, on my return to Jerusalem a friend reminds me of a hadith which predicts those living in the Holy Land will live a sacred struggle until the Last Day. With this in mind, I'm reminded of all the struggles this land has seen in just the past three

years that I've been here, and of how I arrived during a war in Gaza and will soon leave as another war rages on.

"Only God only knows, but I'm strengthened in the knowledge that we are a people of Easter hope who trust in Christ's triumph over suffering and evil"

So, I wonder if this is the way it's going to be forever, and what hope there might be for the future in this seemingly hopeless place... I've concluded that only God knows, but I'm strengthened in the knowledge that we are people of Easter hope who trust in Christ's triumph over suffering and evil, and in God's promises of justice and peace.

Letters

Letter of the week

Not to sound sanctimonious, but....

Dear Editor, As communities enjoy the season of welcoming the children who have reached the age of reason to the table, and celebrate their young people answering an invitation to step forward either for Confirmation, or to be blessed, I wonder if, in our talk of 'bouncy castle Catholics', and the 'bribing of children to make their Communion', have we forgotten, or even read, Brendan Behan's story of

the Confirmation suit. Are we ignoring, or have we forgotten, the lessons on faith, humility, hope, human dignity, true piety and people's religion that the life and death of David Kelly's Rashers Tierney in Strumpet City taught both a young priest, whose well-meant but patronising, paternalistic attempts to help his parishioners were met with contempt? We may have diverse worldviews, may wonder

at people's actions, and question them. We may well call others out on things when we need to allow for progress in a pluralist society where the majority are from the Catholic tradition.

But, when it comes to expressions of culture and of faith, what right do any of us have to look down our noses on others?

Yours etc.,

Sinéad Nic Mhathúna, MREd
Donnycarney, Dublin 9

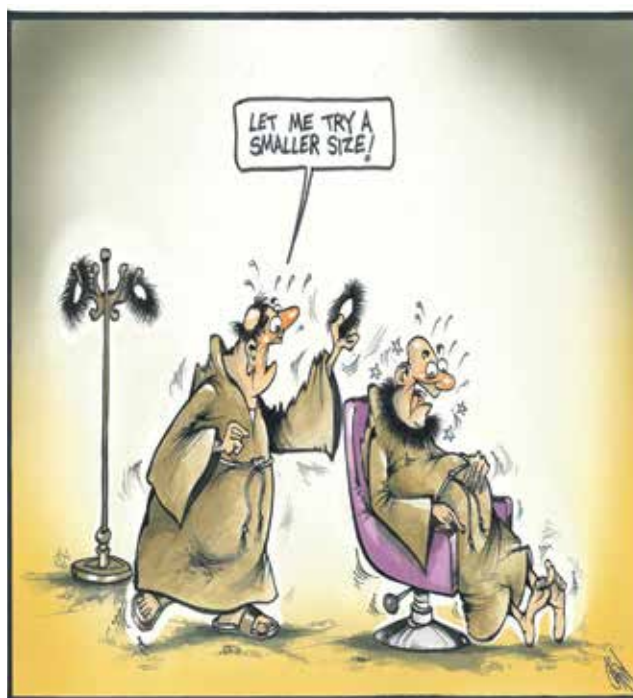
The Eurovision and The Emperor's New Clothes

Dear Editor, Well done to Colette Colfer on an exploration of Eurovision singer Bambie Thug and gender ideology [*The Irish Catholic* - May 16, 2024]. Everyone is entitled to self-identify as they please, but the scientific evidence - while something they can ignore - should not be dismissed by our media. It was amazing to see how

mainstream media presenters worked so hard to avoid referring to Bambie as a woman or using the word she. It did remind me of the fable by Hans Christian Andersen 'The Emperor's New Clothes'.

Yours etc.,

Deacon Frank Browne,
Ballyroan Parish,
Rathfarnham, Dublin 16.



facebook community

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

Youth focus at heart of Jesuits decision to end parish admin

"Participation, that's how to keep them. I've watched children from birth to 40. People who participate in the life of the parish and in the church ceremonies feel a sense of belonging. Churches are 'watering' down ceremonies, to make everything shorter, why are we all in such a rush! Bring back children's liturgy, altar servers, children's choirs, prayer books, colouring books for nursery age children clapping hymns." - **Ann O'Loughlin**

Poor catechism is the reason. Many do not understand the what they're being taught and think it's akin to a fairy tale, because that's how it's relayed to them. Instead they need to be given

the gospels with the historical evidence to support it, especially as they mature around confirmation age. So that they understand what they're confirming is truth, not merely belief, but belief in truth. - **James Smith**

We need better formation, the religious material in the schools is poor. The catechism content needs to be teaching proper doctrine. - **Nora Flood**

Youth are desperate for the Church to offer them faith and meaning

This didn't start today nor yesterday. I am 64, and can recall people much older than myself, some now deceased, who didn't know the basics of the faith, despite going to Mass weekly and having attended Catholic

schools. For example, one man who saw himself as a strong Catholic but had only the vaguest idea of the Trinity; or a woman who seemed not to have known that Jesus rose from the dead! - **Declan McSweeney**

No leadership shown, no priests going into schools, nothing happening in parishes... Some priests not interested... Teachers in schools not practicing themselves and not showing commitment to the faith and most parents too busy and expecting the schools and priests to educate them in the Faith. Everything regarding Faith is moving in slow motion and another generation of youth will be lost to the Catholic faith. Parish Pastoral Councils are not interested in pastoral ministry in parishes and only interested in material things. - **Noeleen Moffatt**

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

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.

Editorial

Dublin's Archbishop Dermot Farrell turns 70 later this year. At a time when most of his friends and contemporaries have been retired for several years, he continues to lead the country's most populous diocese - and arguably the Irish diocese facing the greatest challenges.

Soon, Dublin will have twice as many auxiliary bishops - Bishop Paul Dempsey and Bishop-elect Donal Roche - as it has aspirants for the priesthood. The capital currently has one young man studying for the priesthood, in a diocese with 198 parishes and more than a million registered Catholics.

The responsibilities of an auxiliary bishop are entirely in the gift of the archbishop. Dr Farrell is free to allocate whatever pastoral responsibilities he likes to his two new assistants. One would assume that part of this will be the reanimation of parish Confirmation ceremonies with the presence of a bishop once more. When Archbishop Diarmuid Martin was left as the sole member of the episcopate in Dublin, a bishop confirming children became rarer. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that parish priests receiving the power of delegation to preside at the ceremony became the norm.

Now, Dublin has the opportunity to re-connect parishes with the wider diocesan family.

Dublin's two new auxiliaries are both men who have served as parish priests in sprawling and busy parishes before their elevation. They know the stresses and strains that priests are under.

Parish priests will tell you that when they were in seminary that were warned about the danger of becoming 'lone ranger' priests. To be effective in ministry, they were warned, priests must be able to work together.

Now, most priests have no choice other than to be lone rangers. Curates, once so plentiful that men fresh out of Maynooth had little hope of even serving in an Irish parish for the first few years of their priesthood, are now an endangered species.

Most priests now work alone in parishes, and despite the commitment of many inspiring lay volunteers and even parish catechists, the responsibility all falls on the shoulders of the priest.

It's getting to the time of year when most people are considering some form of summer vacation. Priests are no exception, the Confirmation and First Holy Communion ceremonies make the culmination of a busy first half of the year in a parish. The summer months have traditionally provided a welcome respite for clerics.

But many priests are in a dilemma about their annual leave entitlement. Bishops are generally solicitous towards their priests and encourage them to take their well-earned holidays. However, dioceses are less supportive when it comes to providing cover. Priests who are in parishes alone rely on the generosity of a neighbouring priest to cover funerals when they are on leave. If they are unfortunate enough not to be beside a priest who is willing to be helpful, they may be unable to leave their parish given that the pastoral needs that may arise are not provided for.

If the priest cancels Sunday Mass because he is on leave, he runs the risk that parishioners will grumble about the absence of the Sunday Eucharist. There is another issue: most parishes run on a shoestring budget, and cancelled Masses mean no collections.

The synodal process has identified a general feeling of warmth from parishioners towards priests. People are concerned about their workloads, but there is precious little in terms of concrete action. One way the hierarchy could act would be to create a realistic system of cover for when priests are away on leave. This should not be the responsibility of the priest, who all too often sees it as just one more thing to do. Diocesan offices should take on a leadership role, and ease this one burden. Bishops, who are generally free from obligations on a Sunday, could well take the lead in offering cover for hard-pressed priests.

My life has been colonised...



Dualta Roughneen

A few years ago I was free. I had no house. No wife. No baby. I had all the freedom in the world. In the last few years my life has been colonised. Taken over. My freedom is gone. I have responsibilities and commitments. Decisions I make are no longer taken with my own interests in the first place. I can no longer simply do as I wish.

I wake up in the morning, not at a time of my own choosing. I dance to someone else's tune. My free time has disappeared. There are some snatched hours late in the evening but they are minimal. My hard-earned salary is no longer my own. It disappears on stuff that I never wanted. I don't need expensive baby formula. A new patio? Not top of my list.

My Saturdays used to be my favourite day. I would wake up in the morning and my wife would head off to work. I would have the day to myself. I put on my runners and would go for a 20km run. Sometimes even a marathon. I would get home and put on the football, the rugby, the darts. Whatever was on TV. Now, I struggle to get out for a 5km run. Any day of the week. Saturdays – like every day – are a time sink. Time just disappears. I never feel rested.

I travelled for work. I went to places most people never get a chance to go and got paid for it. At the drop of a hat, if there was an earthquake or a pandemic, I would be off. Without a care in the world really. Now, any travel has to be planned months in advance. The logistics are a nightmare. My trips don't just impact me but mean my wife has to adjust her life, her work.

Carefree

I used to be carefree. Now, I am full of worries. Will my daughter be ok? I imagine all the worst-case scenarios that could happen to her in her life. That I have to protect her from. But know that I can't really. I worry about the mortgage. About my job. I haven't quite got around to worrying about my health but now that I have a duty of care I probably should. I have to make sure I am around for her.

It sounds terrible, doesn't it? But it isn't. That is the mystery of life. The mystery of parenthood, of responsibility and constraint. How can I explain to someone that giving up all my unfettered freedom is the best thing that could happen?



I never believed it was going to be that way myself. I was dubious to the claims that being a father is wonderful.

Parenting and family is great they said. But really? How can I be swapping frivolity for worry by a good thing? How can I recommend to people who are now as I used to be that if they take on the burdens of the natural order of life, that they will be happier, their life will be better, they will have no regrets?

That is the mystery of life. But also the challenge of our times. As people like me cling on to perpetual adolescence, postpone making life's commitments, seduced by the trappings of freedom – of licence, rather than liberty – there are fewer and fewer signposts that give direction to young people that corral them into making the choices that they don't know are right for them.

“While family is more affordable than ever it was, there is much more to give up and much more that has to be shared”

In time's past, there were social markers that pushed young people into making decisions that they did not know were good for them! Family ties, interdependency, community, shorter-life spans, poverty even. To steal from Thomas Hobbes, life was much more nasty, brutish and short. Now there are the trappings of individual free-

dom, disposable income, career and self-advancement, untrammelled socialising, consequence free relationships, dating apps, luxury goods that are affordable, streaming TV services and much, much more. While family is more affordable than ever it was, there is much more to give up and much more that has to be shared.

Conundrum

The conundrum is similar to that of making a commitment to religion. Religion, a commitment to faith, with its rules, restrictions, and the responsibilities it brings to others but also to oneself, is not on its face appealing. Many cynics talk, dismissively, of 'Catholic guilt' – which is of course a real thing. Why burden yourself with that?

Faith places restrictions that are not just found inside oneself, but come externally as well. I am not free to define my own sense of right and wrong based simply, arrogantly, on my own ideas and my self-defined morality. Morality handed down by religion builds on centuries, millennia, of deep thinking as well as Tradition, Revelation and Scripture. It demands limitation on what I can and cannot do. It is demanding of me. Given the choice of individual freedom to do what one wants to do versus the requirements of adherence,

why would someone freely, in good sense, choose the burden of faith?

Yet, research shows, repeatedly, and undeniably, that measures of someone's religious commitment, such as how often they attended Church, were consistently associated with a range of outcomes, including a lower risk of depression, anxiety and suicide and reduced cardiovascular disease and death from cancer. People who consider themselves religious are consistently found to be happier than their unbelieving peers.

“Voluntarily choosing to give up liberty for the trap (pings) that is either parenthood or the faith, can only be explained by the experience of those that have done it”

The challenge of communicating and explaining to those reluctant to give up their free-living, uncommitted lives to the joy of parenting and family resonates with the difficulties of selling the health and happiness benefits and the

sense of purpose that comes with being part of a religious community, with the accompanying restraints, restrictions and responsibilities.

Voluntarily choosing to give up liberty for the trap (pings) that is either parenthood or the faith, can only be explained by the experience of those that have done it. While repeated surveys show that the happiness of the faithful exceeds those that do not believe, and stories of parents' happiness and joy in their new found responsibility, are difficult for the unencumbered to comprehend, cynicism abounds that both have fallen under some form of self-justifying irrational spell.

Faith

As faith disappears and people marry later, if at all, have fewer children and have them later, it ought to be a public policy priority to promote both the faith and parenthood, as social goods that benefit the individual but also society as well.

Even if the logic makes sense to someone that responsibility can bring improved wellbeing and happiness, the barriers to giving up the good life of individual freedom are growing all the time. Although the fleeting pleasure of that

first cigarette in the morning is hard to give up, we know it is in our interests to do so. Despite the taste of that extra spoon of sugar, not to mention its addictiveness, we know we need to wean ourselves off it for our own good.

“Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetite”

Much energy, resources and policy is expended making sure the public are informed about the benefits of making these changes, there is a dearth of investment in promoting the benefits of family and religion as personal and social goods, despite all the research that is incontrovertible.

In 1791 Edmund Burke, wrote: “Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites . . . It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.” Ironically, increasingly modernity makes us slaves to our passions, and the fetters of faith and family offer a pathway to truer freedom. Yet, this is only whispered rather than shouted from the rooftops.

“There is a dearth of investment in promoting the benefits of family and religion as personal and social goods, despite all the research that is incontrovertible”

Bringing God to the 'normality' of our lives



Renata Milan

In Tramore, Co. Waterford a new initiative has emerged blending elements of faith and sport in a program called the 'Surfing Retreat'. Run by Fr Taddeo Hammerle, Youth Chaplain at Holy Family Mission in Glencomeragh, Co. Tipperary, and Mr Billy Butler, owner of Freedom Surf School, this mission aims to provide secondary school students with a unique experience that integrates faith exploration, physical activity (hikes and surfing), community building, and moments of prayerful reflection.

The 'Surfing Retreat' program, launched recently, targets students aged 13 to 18 (young adults' groups on request) offering them a day out of their routines. Combining theoretical sessions on topics such as Creation Theology and practical activities such as hikes and surfing lessons, the retreat seeks to provide an experience that nurtures body and soul. The program's flexibility allows for the incorporation of elements such as adoration, Confession, and additional activities as requested by the attendees.

Vision

The inspiration for this initiative came from Mr Butler's desire to "infuse young people's life with joy, wonder and a deeper connection to God through sport". The 'surf school' owner also observed: "It is important for young people to find joy and wonder in God's creation, and can find meaning and direction in their lives, while exploring who we are meant to be and growing in virtue". I am enthusiastic about surfing and sharing the joy of Christ with the youth. As the owner of 'Freedom Surf School', I have been providing coastal educational programs to schools for many years. These programs combine surfing, with ecology, history, geography, Irish, and nature talks. It was time to bring God into it."

Recognising the connection between faith and recreation, Mr Butler wrote to the bishop to share with him this idea. Bishop Cullinan had a young

priest in mind, Fr Taddeo, whose background in youth ministry and enthusiasm for sports made him an ideal collaborator. Together, they envisioned a program that would evangelise through surfing. Fr Taddeo shared with us:

"Last June I was invited to go surfing for the first time with Billy Butler's Freedom surf school in Tramore. As I am a sporty person, with previous snowboarding experience, surfing came quite naturally to me, and it didn't take long for me to start loving surfing. I simultaneously felt the desire to use this sport for the Lord. What could be more exciting than bringing people to the Lord, with surfing thrown into the mix. Since there was a meeting of minds, he invited me to come down more often to practice surfing, and to work out how we can use this sport for the Lord. Now, not even a year later, we had our first 'surfing retreat'."

"This retreat uniquely blended faith, surfing, and the joy of God's creation into one harmonious experience"

On April 30, Ardscoil na Mara's school prayer group took part in the first 'surf retreat'. "This unique retreat provided an opportunity to nurture minds, bodies, and souls. The students and teachers were able to experience the exhilarating sport of surfing while also exploring how God remains relevant in their lives today", said Rachel Fleming (5th Year-Year Head of Ardscoil na Mara's school).

"The majestic setting of Tramore Bay", continues Ms Fleming, "proved to be an ideal location for students to learn to surf and delve into deeper questions surrounding life and faith. An engaging talk on God's creation was delivered by Fr Taddeo enriching the retreat's spiritual aspect. As a Christian ethos school, Ardscoil na Mara is committed to the moral and spiritual formation of its students, so that, as discerning adults, they may participate in life to the full. This retreat uniquely blended faith,



Ardscoil na Mara's school prayer group



Ardscoil na Mara's school prayer group

surfing, and the joy of God's creation into one harmonious experience. Students relished the diverse team faith challenges, particularly the beach hike, where they could share personal stories of God's influence in their lives. The retreat also provided students with the opportunity to reflect on their beliefs, find spiritual support among their peers, and enjoy the fun of surfing amidst the stunning backdrop of Tramore Bay."

Challenge

The main challenge faced by the organisers was not as much on the message reception from the youth but finding a balance between spiritual enrichment, 'giving glory to God', and 'having a good time'. "Not to be too strict nor too easy-going. To put God at the centre and still have a good time. And to understand how to do that. To bring God to the world and not the opposite". Fr Taddeo and Mr Butler emphasise the importance of

placing God at the center of this experience while allowing the students to truly engage with their faith in a free environment.

"I want to show them that you can be normal and be catholic at the same time. That they can bring God to the 'normality' of their lives"

Inspired by St John Paul II, who, before becoming the supreme pontiff used to bring his students to camping and hiking events, Fr Hammerle tells us: "These are the moments where he (St John Paul II) spoke to his students



Fr Taddeo

about God, and he brought them closer to him. By having a good time in nature. I want to show them that you can be normal and be Catholic at the same time. That they can bring God to the 'normality' of their lives".

Success

The first retreat was a success, receiving Fr Taddeo's "high praise, with many students noting how inspiring and relevant they found his words", said Rachel Fleming. Ms Fleming added: "Several described the retreat as the best day they'd had in a long time, appreciating the sense of unity and purpose it fostered. Freedom Surf School provided tea, coffee, and snacks upon arrival, as well as comprehensive surf instruction, equipment, and practical demonstrations. This organisation allowed students to fully immerse themselves in the experience. Fr Taddeo and Mr Butler ensured that it successfully united faith, fun, and nature, and we look forward to

returning for another retreat at the earliest opportunity".

"Please God this venture will bring many young people to the Lord while enjoying being immersed in the wonderful surf, catechesis, and camaraderie"

Whilst this initiative has recently started, Fr Taddeo and Mr Butler agree that the way it is developing is 'providential'. "Please God this venture will bring many young people to the Lord while enjoying being immersed in the wonderful surf, catechesis, and camaraderie", Mr Butler said.

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, May 23, 2024

Does an obligation to attend Mass on Ascension Thursday include those travelling outside the diocese?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Page 32



Parishes in Ireland Interviewing The Catholic Youth



James Garavan

We often hear priests speak about how the Church ought to accommodate the ever-diminishing young Catholic population. Today I sat down with two young Catholics, Conor and Isabelle to discuss life as a young Catholic and how they think, as a young person, Irish parishes and schools are failing to support the youth.

We began by speaking of how parishes can do more to evangelise the youth.

The modern parish landscape

Conor's experience in his local parish revealed some concerning trends. He noted that there was little catechism at all in his parish. Middle-aged women with good intentions but little theological study primarily ran the parish, and attendance at Mass by teenagers was alarmingly low—often fewer than ten young people would participate. Conor maintains that the lack of intellectual engagement served as a deterrent for many young people and that a dedicated group for Leaving Cert

and college-aged individuals could be a game-changer.

Isabelle believes that young Catholics are drawn to upholding Catholic tradition as opposed to adjusting to suit the current culture. She thinks it's important to uphold this and recognise what the young people in the Church want to see as actual Catholicism rather than a watered-down pseudo-Catholicism which is manifested by a desire to cater towards non-practising youth.

“This tradition not only encourages young people to actively participate in the Mass but also instils a sense of responsibility and connection to the Church”

Both agree that such a group would provide a space for young parishioners to connect, and discuss their faith, in an intelligible manner. It's also important for young Catholics to see good role models in the Church whether that be other young people practising their faith or older people with positive stories of their experiences as Catholics. “To promote this, parishes could hold and promote youth events for young people to meet other practising Catholics their age or talks by people who can encourage them to

hold onto and share their faith”, says Isabelle.

Conor also advocates for bringing back altar boys to churches. This tradition not only encourages young people to actively participate in the Mass but also instils a sense of responsibility and connection to the Church. By involving youth in the liturgy, parishes can create a more vibrant and inclusive worship experience. Even if catechesis classes were introduced to young people, there is an even greater understanding one can derive through real participation.

Failure of the Christian Brothers

Conor recalls that during his first year at the Christian Brothers school, there was a sense of alive religiosity. The school held Masses, had a dedicated prayer room, and even employed a chaplain. However, over time, this religious atmosphere waned. The once-denominational prayer room gradually transformed into a non-denominational space, now primarily used by Muslim students. Conor laments the loss of a distinct Catholic identity within the school by the fault of the timid clergy who let their school succumb to the disease of secularisation. One poignant change was the removal of the Our Lady of Fatima statue in this room. This iconic representation of the Virgin Mary held deep significance for generations of students. However, it was replaced with a salt lamp—an item associated more with modern wellness trends than

religious devotion. Conor reflects on how this shift is emblematic of the broader secularisation of Catholic institutions. Conor's experiences in the classroom were equally disheartening. His junior certificate teacher lacked a comprehensive understanding of Catholicism. Instead of engaging students in meaningful discussions about faith, the class veered off-topic. Conor describes it as a “doss class,” where the teacher would casually mention drugs or alcohol but rarely touched upon explicitly religious matters. Leaving certificate did not get much better as Conor's teacher's assertion that socialism is the closest ideology to Christianity - it should be noted that Paragraph 2425 of The Catechism states: “The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with ‘communism’ or ‘socialism’”. Apart from misrepresentation, intolerance was also widespread. Too often, Conor contends, anti-clerical ‘jokes’ feature in the classroom. A humour that would rightfully never be allowed at the expense of a different religion.

Isabelle also has had the same experience in her ‘Catholic’ school. “As children, we are taught, in Catholic schools, a watered-down version of Catholicism”. For children whose main source of religious education is their school's religion curriculum, “Catholicism is, in a nutshell, a few songs about friendship and some colouring-in pages”. With such a weak foundation of religious education, it seems completely unsurprising to her that most young people

lose their faith and stop attending mass by the time they enter college. Isabelle also notes that it can be extremely difficult for Catholics to openly practise their faith in such a hostile school environment. Such an environment is best explicated in Conor's school's annual compulsory ‘Gay Standup Week’, again symbolic of a significant departure from Catholic teaching in an alleged Catholic school. By dedicating a compulsory week to gay awareness, the school insisted that students learn about queer culture, queer films, and queer celebrities.

“Just as people gravitate towards the shine of a diamond, so too will people approach real, unapologetic Christianity”

One couldn't help but wonder if the Christian brothers regard queer culture as a more prescient issue than the Gospel. All in all, both Isabelle and Conor fundamentally identify the same problems and I am sure this voice is echoed by so many young Catholics. The clergy ought not to be ashamed of their faith. Their desire to get with the times rests on the sacrificial table of authentic Catholicism. Just as people gravitate towards the shine of a diamond, so too will people approach real, unapologetic Christianity.

Hope in a wounded Church



Teresa Pitt Green

Most Catholics experience the crisis of sexual abuse by clergy in relation to headlines, as stories from around the globe or from the local parish where a trusted priest has been removed. Yet the pain of abuse within the church bleeds somewhere else, in someone else's wounds, which are the only place where hope for healing may be found for any of us.

This pain we share began in the instant of abuse, at the nexus where the innocence of children needed to trust the holiness of priests but was betrayed. In my case, the rupture now afflicting the entire church was inflicted over five decades ago. Like all victims, I emerged grievously harmed, but that was not all. Along with my family, the parish and the whole Church was betrayed. All children of God would find reason to be wary in the house of God.

Rupture

At the point of rupture, victims often lose any sense of safety in school, Church, rectory, home and faith. After abuse in the church, victims very seldom trust parents for help. A carefully practiced self-protective withdrawal replaces carefree play with siblings and young friends. The tectonic shock of harm ripples ever further outward by degrees of separation. Extended family, where abusers may enjoy a place of honour, becomes fraught with the threat of further harm. Teachers, including religious sisters, may seem like (or be) an abuser's allies.

This relational rupture reverberates across time, too. Later in life, long-suffering spouses find they accept an emotional blind spot in the person they married; sometimes it is not until decades have passed that their wife or husband shares about the wound of abuse and a deeper intimacy becomes possible. Children, with their intuitive responsiveness to parents, sometimes respond to the unspoken suffering of a parent in their own behavioural issues, bouts of mental illness, and even suicidal tendencies.

Colleagues and friends lose a similar chance to know the full, wonderful person who

A man prays the rosary prior to a prayer service celebrated in English and Polish, marking Divine Mercy Sunday at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn, N.Y., April 7, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz



has survived abuse and lives hiding behind defences that guard unresolved pain. Some people stay loyal and bear their own hurt. Some disinvest emotionally and move on. Others are driven away by the unrecovered victim's impulse to recreate rupture over and over.

“Our faith shows us the hope found in this scourging as he is lifted on the cross, but the abuse has driven people away from trusting this reality”

Extrapolate this pattern into widening circles of other faith families affected by abuse: the parish, the

diocese, the religious order and the whole church. These spheres are harmed by some degree of separation from the original rupture. In micro and macro-spheres alike, my abuser left a bloody stripe on the very image of God. Our faith shows us the hope found in this scourging as he is lifted on the cross, but the abuse has driven people away from trusting this reality.

Trinitarian

The Trinitarian notion of God reveals the very nature of God is relationship. It is in this relationship we are safe and drawn to new life apart from the ravages of sin and evil. Yet abuse gave me reason to distrust what the church told me about God, and the unresolved rupture of abuse within the church continues to set disaffected

Catholics adrift.

Healing individuals and all the relationships harmed by abuse takes the same path, but with the graces of the Holy Spirit bringing new life. Consider how some clergy-abuse survivors, who have received beauty for the ashes of our broken lives, are consciously returning from the arduous journey of recovery with the new life found in relationship with God.

“Survivors of clergy abuse return with a unique invitation that often inspires bold responses in hope”

From the bullseye of the rupture, we bring special graces home to the Church.

When any victim shifts toward healing, many relationships adjust, because we do not heal alone but in relationship to the world around us. Survivors of clergy abuse return with a unique invitation that often inspires bold responses in hope, but sometimes sparks resistance to change or to truth. Tumult often follows, temporarily, as secrets are exposed and wounds are revealed, but healing begins with hurt, and chaos is not the end point of any work of God.

Graces

At the site of rupture, similar graces begin when a priest or religious brother, serving as a proxy for the other side of the wound of clerical abuse, learns how to respond sensitively to

the issues with which victims of clergy abuse grapple. His pastoral range expands. He now can offer safe harbour for victims of clergy abuse, but he has also gained effective ways to care pastorally for wounds which parishioners carry into the pews from living in an increasingly violent and sexualised society - and sometimes family.

Here is a tectonic shift of a different type, directly contrary to the spiritual death wrought by abuse, emanating from the point of rupture where so many have seen only disaster and hopelessness.

“The light of the Holy Spirit is rippling out from points of rupture long ago and today reaching the wounds that linger in our church”

God's graces are transforming survivors and priests as you read this, maybe not as fast as one may wish, but in God's good timing. This healing is happening even while your focus is fixed on surfing headlines, which do not tell the full story you need to know. The light of the Holy Spirit is rippling out from points of rupture long ago and today reaching the wounds that linger in our church.

Now is a sacred opportunity for you to learn more about abuse and recovery and how the Good News can be offered sensitively and knowledgeably to wounded and skittish people. Now is the evangelical moment when we are surrounded by a world rife with abuse, trauma and sexualised violence. We can reflect the glory of God as - from the darkness of abuse in our Church - we bring our own healing as a credible story of hope for others. This seems to me the only way because, after all, we really are an Easter people, and Hallelujah really is our song.

✚ Teresa Pitt Green is an internationally known author, speaker, and advocate for trauma-informed pastoral care. She co-founded Spirit Fire, a Christian Restorative Justice Initiative, whose ministry is to facilitate recovery from the lasting impact of abuse, especially clerical abuse, for survivors, their families, parishes, clergy, and church leadership.

A Eucharistic Word: Christification



Michael R. Heinlein

What does it mean to receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? How are our lives to be changed from such an encounter?

In fact, the fruits of the Eucharist are many. They bring about a unity in diversity, wherein each member of the body - responding to grace - can live unique and compelling eucharistic lives. The list is long, but I am inclined to think St Paul should be at its top.

While St Paul is chiefly known to most of us for his letters - which make up nearly half of the New Testament, and from which the Church is taught Sunday after Sunday - Paul's influence and reach cannot be underestimated. Not only is he one of the most significant and important Christians in our history, but also arguably one of the most influential persons in human history.

Persecutor

Paul's experience with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus led to the conversion of this one-time persecutor of Christians. That encounter Paul had with Christ was so real, in his view, it was no different than the encounters Christ had with the Twelve while in their midst. Paul's unique experience shaped and informed the early Church so significantly that Paul himself has become regarded

as the 'Thirteenth Apostle'.

Paul came to know in his experience on the road to Damascus that his persecution of Christ's followers was a persecution of Christ himself. The nascent Christians that Paul once wanted to extinguish were one with Christ, members of his body by baptism, a bond strengthened and intensified through reception of his body in the Eucharist. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (Jn 6:53-56).

“Paul believed to the core of his being that the Eucharist is Christ's very body and blood - of whom he encountered and who dwelled in him. He proclaimed and taught that Christ's eucharistic presence is real”

Paul's encounter with the risen Lord not only resulted in his conversion but also his efforts to both increase the membership of Christ's body and teach about the ramifications of the new life that incorporation brings. Paul's aim was to build up a community of believers who lived like they had "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14). This is what shaped and motivated the impressive missionary undertakings in his desire to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles. All of this made Paul's encounter with Christ something rooted in a tremendous eucharistic faith.

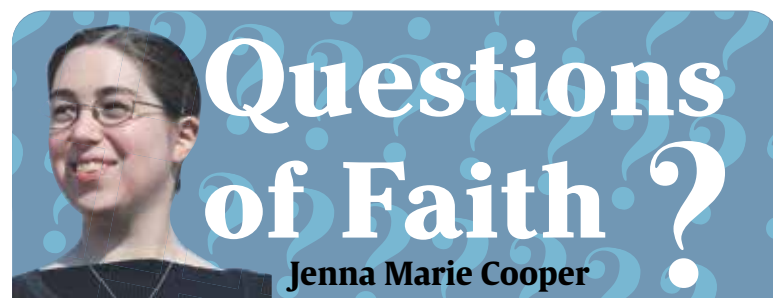
Paul believed to the core of his being that the Eucharist is Christ's very body and blood - of whom he encountered and who dwelled in him. He proclaimed and taught that Christ's eucharistic presence is real. Illustrating this, he wrote: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor 10:16). Not only is Christ's eucharistic presence real for Paul, but by our eucharistic encounter with Christ he comes to dwell in us, he changes us, he is united with us. By the Eucharist, we are Christified. So real is our incorporation into Christ's body, Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:19-20).

Martyrdom

St Paul's own martyrdom brought to completion a life lived completely in and for Christ. Paul exhorts Christians to give Christ "glory in the Church" (Eph 3:21), which means we are all called to give witness to Christ by our lives. While some might be called to do so to the extent of offering their very life by dying for Christ and the Church, we are all called to offer our lives to him and in his service.

Like Paul, then, we can live as eucharistic witnesses by offering all of ourselves, as Paul put it, "as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1). This is Christification; this is Christ living in us.

i Michael R. Heinlein is author of "Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I." and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Does an obligation to attend Mass on Ascension Thursday include those traveling outside the diocese?

Q: I live in a diocese where the feast of the Ascension is celebrated on Thursday. This year, I was traveling for work on Ascension Thursday, and in the diocese where my conference was, Ascension was moved to Sunday (by which point I was already back home). I feel bad for missing the feast of the Ascension this year, and I'm wondering if there is anything I should have done to fulfil my obligation.

A: While it is a pity that circumstances prevented you from celebrating the Solemnity of the Ascension this year, you did not fail to fulfil any obligations.

For some background, Canon 1246, Paragraph 1 of the Code of Canon Law states: "The Lord's Day, on which the paschal mystery is celebrated, is by apostolic tradition to be observed in the universal Church as the primary holy day of obligation. In the same way the following holy days are to be observed: the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Epiphany, the Ascension of Christ, the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, the feast of Mary the Mother of God, her Immaculate Conception, her Assumption, the feast of St Joseph, the feast of the Apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and the feast of All Saints."

But significantly, Paragraph 2 of that same canon goes on to tell us: "However, the Episcopal Conference may, with the prior approval of the Apostolic See, suppress certain holy days of obligation or transfer them to a Sunday."

Practically speaking, this means that the holy days of obligation you are actually bound to observe as a Catholic depend on what your local bishops' conference (the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States) has decided to do.

For example, in the United States, Catholics are not bound to observe the feast of St Joseph or the feast of St Peter and St Paul as holy days of obligation - though of course, these feasts are still important and festive days on the church's liturgical calendar, and we are free to choose to attend Mass on those days if we wish. It was also the USCCB's decision to transfer the feasts of Epiphany and

Corpus Christi to the following Sundays on a national level.

The solemnity of the Ascension is a somewhat special case, however. In 1999, the USCCB decided to allow ecclesiastical provinces - that is, local groupings of dioceses ordered around a metropolitan archdiocese - to decide whether to transfer the celebration of the Ascension to the following Sunday.

Currently, the provinces of the Archdiocese of Boston, Hartford, New York, Philadelphia and Omaha maintain the traditional date for the celebration of the Ascension on the Thursday of the sixth week of Easter, 40 days after Easter Sunday. This applies to Catholics in the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania and Nebraska.

Since the solemnity of the Ascension is a holy day of obligation, when it is observed on a Thursday this means an extra trip to church; when it is transferred to a Sunday, there is no 'extra' obligation beyond Sunday Mass.

In your case specifically, the general principle is that you are bound to observe the laws, including the liturgical laws, in the place where you are actually present (see Canon 13, Paragraph 2). So, your obligation to attend Mass on Ascension Thursday only applies when you are physically present in a diocese that celebrates the Ascension on that Thursday; the obligation does not follow you personally when you are traveling.

That all being said, the mystery of the Ascension is an important one in our life of faith, so if you happened to 'miss' the Ascension this year, you might consider looking up and prayerfully reflecting on the Mass readings for this feast on your own. Praying a novena to the Holy Spirit is also a good way to remember the apostles' post-Ascension time of waiting for Pentecost.

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



Reacting to criticism

In much of the secularised world today, we live in a climate that's somewhat anti-Christian and anti-Church (as contradictory as this may sound in a culture that still considers itself Christian). But the truth is that in many circles today it is fashionable to bash Christianity, especially its churches, be they Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Evangelical. Invariably the criticism will focus on inconsistencies, faults, and historical sins inside these churches. Indeed, the expression, "I am spiritual but not religious," carries a not-so-subtle critique of the churches. "I want God, but not Christianity and the churches."

How serious is this? What's to be our response? While it's irritating, ultimately it's not a major cause for concern. As a Church, we are not fundamentally threatened by this, and we should not overreact. Why?

Criticism

First, because a certain amount of this criticism does us good. We have real faults and shortcomings and our culture generously points them out. The present criticism of the Church is healthily humbling us and pushing us towards a more courageous internal purification. Our critics show us our faults; they do us a favor. Besides, for too long we enjoyed a situation of privilege, never a good thing for the Church. We tend to be healthier as Christians whenever we are living in a time of dis-privilege rather than in a time of privilege, albeit it isn't as pleasant. Moreover, there's something weightier at stake.



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

“The present criticism of the Church is healthily humbling us and pushing us towards a more courageous internal purification”

We must be careful not to overreact to the present anti-ecclesial climate because this can lead to an unhealthy defensiveness and put us too much in the position of adversary vis-a-vis the culture. That's not where the gospel wants us to be, not at all. Our task instead is to absorb this criticism, painful though it can be, gently point to its unfairness, but resist every temptation to be overly defensive. Why? Why not aggressively defend ourselves?

“No matter how prevalent or unfair the criticism, the Church is not about to go under or away any time soon”

Because we are strong enough not to, pure and simple. We can withstand this without having to

become hard and defensive. No matter how prevalent or unfair the criticism, the Church is not about to go under or away any time soon. We are more than two billion Christians in the world, stand within a two-thousand-year-old tradition, have among ourselves a universally accepted scripture, have two thousand years of doctrinal entrenchment and refinement, have massive centuries-old institutions, are embedded in the very roots of Western culture and technology, constitute one of the biggest multi-national groups in the world, and are growing in numbers world-wide. We are hardly a reed shaking in the wind, reeling, a ship about to go under. We are strong, stable, blessed by God, an elder in the culture. Because of this we owe the culture graciousness and understanding.

Identity

Beyond that, and more important than our historical strengths, is the

fact that we have Christ's promise to be with us and the reality of the resurrection to sustain us. Given all this, I think it's fair to say that we can absorb a fair amount of criticism without fear of losing our identity. Moreover, we must not let this criticism make us lose sight of why we exist in the first place.

The Church does not exist for its own sake or to ensure its own survival. It exists for the sake of the world. We can too easily forget this and, in all sincerity, lose sight of what the gospel asks of us. For example, compare these two responses: at a press conference, someone once asked the late Cardinal Basil Hume what he considered the foremost challenge facing the Church today. He replied: "To save the planet." Some years later, another Cardinal (unnamed here because of his answer) in a television interview was asked roughly the same question, "What do you see as your first task in taking over this diocese?" His reply: "To defend the faith." A very different answer, clearly.

Everything about Jesus suggests that Hume's view is closer to the gospel than the other. When Jesus says, "my flesh is food for the life of the world," he is telling us that the major task of the Church is not to

defend itself, to ensure its continuity, or to keep the world from grinding it up. The Church exists for the sake of the world, not for its own sake. That's why Jesus was born in a trough, a place where animals come to eat, and it's why he gives himself on a table, to be eaten. Being ground up is part of what Jesus is about. Everything about him suggests vulnerability over defensiveness, risk over safety, trust in a divine promise over any human defence and insurance.

“We must be the food of understanding, graciousness, and forgiveness for the world”

The very essence of the gospel is a call to risk beyond defensiveness, to absorb what's unjust, to not be defensive— "Forgive them for they know not what they do." We are meant to be food for the world, not anxious about our own survival. We must be the food of understanding, graciousness, and forgiveness for the world.

“The very essence of the gospel is a call to risk beyond defensiveness, to absorb what's unjust, to not be defensive”

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity



Dt 4:32-34, 39-40
Ps 33:4-5, 6, 9, 18-19,
20, 22
Rom 8:14-17
Mt 28:16-20

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



Periodically, people ask me, "What is your favourite part of being a deacon?" Near the top of my list would have to be the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of baptism. There's just nothing like it.

There is a small green book that priests and deacons use for the Rite of Baptism. It has everything spelled out in there, all the readings and prayers. On the last page of my own copy of the book, I have scrawled a name and a date: 'Margaret Flanagan, July 1, 2007.' That was the first baby I ever baptised. Little Margaret, I should add, was very well behaved. She didn't cry. (For the record, I was bawling. I couldn't believe what I was doing. But Margaret, God bless her, was cool, calm and collected.)

Baptisms are typically

joyous occasions. It's a day of tremendous possibility and hope. Even more than a wedding, a baptism is a sign of a new beginning - and a future that stretches before us without limits. Anything seems possible.

Solemnity

We could almost say the same about this solemnity we celebrate this Sunday, honouring the Most Holy Trinity. We are reminded anew that our God shatters our human limitations and dwells with us in three persons - an infinite mystery that has defied easy explanation for centuries.

But the Gospel this Sunday - with Christ's instructions to his apostles about baptism - also reminds us of something vital and significant. It tells us that the

very notion of the Trinity lies at the centre of our faith. It's part of us from day one.

From the very start of our lives as Christians, when we feel that first splash of water, we are claimed in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It underscores the extraordinary importance the Church places on this singular belief, this one great dogma: one God in three persons.

It all begins with the Trinity.

“Preachers today will tell you it is a minefield; one wrong step can explode into misinformation or outright heresy”

That is one of the reasons we celebrate this feast, one week after Pentecost. Following the Holy Spirit's thunderous arrival in the Upper Room, the Trinity has been revealed to a waiting world, Father, Son and Spirit, and

we pause to rejoice in this extraordinary gift.

It's a gift that most believers will tell you can be overwhelming and hard to grasp. Saints and theologians have attempted to explain it for centuries - St Patrick memorably used the three-leafed shamrock to illustrate the notion of one God in three persons - but preachers today will tell you it is a minefield; one wrong step can explode into misinformation or outright heresy. (I remember a priest once telling me that he tries to schedule his vacation for the time around Trinity Sunday. "I always try to take off that week," he confided, "because I don't want to have to preach that day.")

Abstract

But this much needs to be preached, and often. The Trinity is more than an abstract concept. It is a reality that touches our lives in innumerable ways - beginning with our creation at the hands of God, our salvation through his Son Jesus Christ, and our ongoing conver-

“In whatever ways we may try to understand the mystery and meaning of the Trinity, perhaps that's one image all of us can understand”

sion as people of inspiration, resilience and hope through the Holy Spirit.

“It's like a candelabra with three candles, he said, but giving off one light”

And don't forget how it is imparted to us in baptism - a sacred moment that is reenacted again and again every time we dip our fingers into a font and bless ourselves in the name of that very Trinity.

When I baptised little Margaret Flanagan, I gave her parents a lit candle and said the same words that have spoken to countless Christians across the ages: "Receive the light of Christ."

Thinking about that moment, I'm reminded of

something the Methodist preacher John Wesley once said about the Trinity. With a nod to St Patrick, he attempted to explain it this way: it's like a candelabra with three candles, he said, but giving off one light.

In whatever ways we may try to understand the mystery and meaning of the Trinity, perhaps that's one image all of us can understand. Ultimately, by virtue of our baptism, we are called to live in that light - to always draw closer to it, and to always strive to give it to others.

May we always pray to do that in the name of the one God in three persons - in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog "The Deacon's Bench."



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Government messes and slippery slopes

Media debates can be frustrating when people are talking at cross purposes, misunderstanding or misrepresenting each other and generally being illogical.

These thoughts were prompted by **Today with Claire Byrne** (RTÉ Radio 1, Tuesday), when the topic was the proposed reduction in welfare contributions to Ukrainians here since the beginning of the war – the reductions are already in place for more recent arrivals.

Jim O'Callaghan TD (Fianna Fáil), a politician I have some time for, defended the Government proposals, which seem rather drastic – dropping payments from around €232 per week to around €38.

The chief argument seemed to be that in the interests of equality and consistency all should be getting the same – but logically that could mean all raised to the higher level, or all payments set at some level in between.

Tom McNaney of Effective Aid Ukraine pointed out that the drastic reduction proposed would disproportionately affect older women and young mothers with children – they would find it difficult to impossible to get work.

He challenged Deputy O'Callaghan for praising our 'extraordinary generosity' to Ukrainians in the past – this



Actress and disability rights activist, Liz Carr.

would not soften the blow of the proposed measure. Deputy O'Callaghan also compared our contributions favourably to other countries, but again, logically, one could argue that Ireland could or should be better than the European norm, he also referenced just two countries that were paying higher than €100 – so why would we not match the best examples?

We have been generous, have taken more refugees proportionally than other countries, but logically that could be a source of either regret or even better, pride. Yes, resources can seem to be

scarce and are certainly not unlimited, but money can be found in a crisis (e.g. Covid) and so much money is wasted – e.g., the millions used to fund abortions, money for destruction.

I fear the Government, admittedly in a challenging situation, has made a mess of the issue.

A related discussion on **The Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Friday) was much better. Gillian Tiggs, former United Nations Assistant Secretary General and Assistant High Commissioner for Protection with UNHCR was well informed, clear and moder-

ate. In response to the challenge of mass migration she favoured stabilisation of the countries people were fleeing from, so they wouldn't feel the need to flee.

Most migrant people, she said, were displaced within their own countries, and many more tend to flee to neighbouring countries where was more understanding – it was only a 'relatively tiny' minority that fled to far away countries.

She could understand how this could still lead to local problems in these countries. Supportive of the UN in general, she was critical of the use and abuse of the veto in the Security Council. One could argue some points, but it was a refreshing contribution to a thorny debate.

Better Off Dead? (BBC One, Tuesday) tackled another thorny issue, euthanasia, with an 'authored' piece by disability rights campaigner and actress Liz Carr. She could see all the dangers of any move towards legalisation, but wasn't afraid to speak to those of a different view.

Yes, it was one-sided, but as she said it should 'redress the balance' – perhaps she had in mind Esther Rantzen getting blanket coverage for her efforts to get assisted suicide legalised in the UK.

One of the scariest segments was her visit to Canada,

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday May 26, 1.15 pm

Aled Jones visits the National Gallery in London for an exclusive tour behind the scenes of the gallery, which boasts one of the largest collections of religious art in the world.

CHARBEL

EWTN Sunday May 26, 9 pm

An intimate biography of St Charbel Makhluf, a Lebanese monk known as a healer and miracle worker. He dedicated himself fully to sharing and humility, uniting both Christians and Muslims.

NATIONWIDE

RTÉ One Wednesday May 29, 7pm

Nationwide looks back at the long history of protest on O'Connell Street.

showing the slippery slope in graphic detail – the euthanasia doctor who was proud of her work (she provided abortions too); the woman who found out by text that mother was euthanised after being approved for it by phone by a doctor who didn't even meet her; the homeless man who found it much easier to access 'medical assistance in dying' (MAID) than to access housing; the colourful MAID explainer book for children whose family member was to be euthanised; the existence of a 24-hour suicide prevention hotline alongside a 24-hour assisted suicide facilitation hotline; the proposals

to extend MAID to children from 12 years old. 'Let's get out of here!' said Liz.

Diverse contributors said it was less about suffering and more about choice, autonomy and control. Among those was Dr Kathleen Sleeman, an impressive palliative care doctor very concerned about coercion, the vulnerable being pressurised.

Ms Carr was part of an activist group of disabled people who felt vulnerable and threatened by the prospect of legislation. 'Assist us to live, not die' said one of their placards.



Music

Pat O'Kelly



La traviata has returned to Irish National Opera

Although something of a fiasco at its première on March 6, 1853, at the La Fenice opera house in Venice, Verdi's *La traviata* now ranks among the most popular of his operas and, indeed, the most frequently performed in the Italian repertoire worldwide. *La traviata* has returned to Irish National Opera for a series of five performances this week at Dublin's Gaiety Theatre (Tuesday, May 21 to Saturday, May 25).

Seeing the play *The Lady of the Camellias* by French writer Alexandre Dumas fils in Paris, Verdi decided the drama would make an ideal transfer to the operatic stage and considered Venice's La Fenice Theatre an ideal venue. The composer approached his friend, and well-established

librettist, Francesco Maria Piave to supply a text.

Piave was summoned to Sant' Agata, Verdi's home near Busseto in Northern Italy, and while matters did not run all that smoothly between them Piave was sanguine maintaining "everything will turn out fine. We will have a new masterpiece from this true wizard of modern harmonies".

Problems

But *La traviata's* passage was still not without its problems. Verdi wanted it in 'modern day dress' but the Fenice's censors and management thought otherwise and demanded 17th century costumes. Verdi was adamant.

Further problems arose with the casting especially with the highly acclaimed soprano Fanny Salvini-Don-



telli. She was not one of Verdi's favourite singers but she had contractual obligations with La Fenice and could not be replaced.

However, the unfortunate woman was jeered during the first performance as the audience considered her too

old – she was thirty-eight – and overweight to undertake the role of a young demimonde dying of consumption. Besides leading tenor Lodovico Graziani and baritone Felice Varesi also found themselves the butt of audience dissatisfaction.

Needless to remark the composer himself was not well pleased and in a letter to another friend, Emanuele Muzio, next day wrote, "*La traviata* last night [was] a failure. Was the fault mine, or the singers? Time will tell". Well, time told and relatively soon *La traviata* was being staged throughout Italy and further afield.

Abroad

First performed in England on May 24, 1856, at Her Majesty's Theatre in London the opera was considered 'morally questionable'. The heads of the Church of England did their best to have an injunction placed on performances and Queen Victoria refrained from visiting the theatre during the opera's run although it seems 'the music, words

and all, did not go unheard in Buckingham palace'.

Following the first US performance at the Academy of Music in New York on December 3, 1856, the eminent lawyer and diarist George Templeton Strong noted, "People say the plot's immoral, but I didn't see that it's so much worse than many others, not to speak of *Don Giovanni*, which as put on the stage is little but rampant lechery".

Under the baton of young conductor, Killian Farrell, the current INO production has the role of courtesan Violetta Vallery shared between sopranos Amanda Woodbury and Máire Flavin with tenor Mario Chang as lover Alfredo and baritone Brett Polegate as his concerned father Giorgio Germont.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



Resurgem: the awe-inspiring restoration of Notre Dame

A Short History of Notre Dame,

by Ken Follett
(Pan Books, £12.99 / €14.99)

Peter Costello

On April 15, 2019 a fire in the roof space of Notre Dame de Paris appalled those who admire Paris and love the Cathedral. That great medieval edifice, begun in the 12th century, is a dominant symbol of the history and culture of France - as Victor Hugo the Romantic poet realised so long ago.

The wood of the roof was burned out, but the stone vaulting of the inner cathedral ceiling saved the scorching debris from falling into the nave.

The French government vowed to restore it, and the work was soon put in hand and it is now nearing completion.

Paris at present is preparing for the start of the Olympic Games at the end of July. But beforehand the attention of the world is focussed on the preparations in Paris and France in general. This has brought attention to the work on the Cathedral, which is substantially complete. When the Games start the world press will have time and space for little else. So the work on the Cathedral is getting a share of the pre-games attention.

Memories

For my wife and myself who were regular visitors to Paris over many decades Notre Dame has a special place in our memories. I can recall being at Sunday Mass there back in time, sitting in the chairs reserved for worshippers, sitting in a congregation of wealthy Parisian Catholics - the refined height of French respectability.

While we prayed, a party of Japanese tourists passed in front of us, their camera clicking away - those were the days before mobile phones. It was a strange experience. I could imagine Oriental albums later holding pictures captioned: "Native Europeans as at their ritual ceremonies" or some such phrase.

Tourism does strange things to the world. To be classed as a "natives" was probably good for our souls.

The popular book under review was written by best-selling novelist Ken Follett immediately after the fire. His



Notre Dame on fire

aim was to construe in some way through his own work to the restoration fund, which while largely made up of state funds also appealed for public support from all those people of goodwill whoever they are, who love the Cathedral.

“She said she would donate the publisher’s profits to the rebuilding fund and, if I wished, I could do the same with my royalties ‘Yes,’ I said. ‘Of course, I’d love to’”

Aimed at the readers of his “Kingsbridge” series of novels, especially the first written in the series *The Pillars of the Earth* (1989) set in 1135, focussed on the building of a medieval cathedral in Norman England. A world-wide best seller that novel sold well everywhere, but was some six years on the German bestseller lists - yes six years. In all his books have sold over 188 million copies.

“Two days after Notre Dame burned, ‘Ken Follett has revealed,’ I flew to Paris to appear on the TV programme ‘La Grande Librairie’ for a discussion about cathedrals. The following morning I had breakfast at the Hotel

Bristol with my French publisher, and she asked me to write a short book about Notre Dame and what it means to all of us. She said she would donate the publisher’s profits to the rebuilding fund and, if I wished, I could do the same with my royalties. ‘Yes,’ I said. ‘Of course, I’d love to.’”

If even half his global readership were to buy this little book, a genuine work of love, it would amount to a very big donation to the funds for restoration. Follett, like so many people, claims to be a sort of “atheist”, but also a man of spirituality. But he loves nothing better than a Church service with great music.

Behoves

If Ken Follett can be so generous it behoves Catholics of faith globally to answer in kind.

With all his skills of research, grasp of the period, easy popular expression, this little book is an ideal introduction to the mysterious world of the medieval cathedral builders, a world which is still being explored. And an ideal introduction to the subject, but only an introduction.

For those seeking something more scholarly but still approachable, a book to try would *The Cathedral Builders of the Middle Ages*, by Alain Erlande-Brandenburg (New



Handmade from the ground up: Medieval mason at work on the extension to a Cathedral

Horizons / Thames & Hudson, €7.95).

“This is a short book, but filled with extraordinary images which also remind us that the cathedrals were also hand-made in a very special and literal way by masons, architects, and artists”

This is also available in French from Gallimard the original publishers, under

the most expressive title of *Quand les cathédrales étaient peintes* (*When the cathedrals were painted*) which in itself captures an aspect of medieval architecture than few reflect upon, the blazing divine glory of the cathedrals inside and out when they were, indeed, painted.

Extraordinary

This is a short book, but filled with extraordinary images which also remind us that the cathedrals were also hand-made in a very special and literal way by masons, architects, and artists of the age and, of course, an ambitious bishop

or two.

What those who love the cathedral are looking forward to reading is the report of all that has been learned through the restoration about how the medieval edifice was constructed. But that may take a little time yet. It will be an important work when it appears.

Whatever about the Olympics, which can take care of themselves, anyone going to Paris in the next few months should keep an eye open for more news in the coming months about the restoration of Notre Dame de Paris, truly “Our Lady of Paris”.

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.

A fortress of many varied fortunes



Spike Island in Cork Harbour from the air.

Spike Island: The Rebels, Residents and Crafty Criminals of Ireland's Historic Island,

by John Crotty
(Merrion Press, €18.00 / £14.99)

Thomas McCarthy

On a bright summer's morning there is nothing quite as magical as the watery approach to Spike Island from its old naval supply-base of Cobh.

John Crotty, Waterford-man, has been the latest keeper of that place, though the island's Co. Waterford connections go back to the days of Celtic monasticism, of Lismore's St. Carthage / Mochuda, who prayed and sanctified that very unholy spot more than a thousand years before its nineteenth century miseries.

More recently the good John Crotty has animated the citadel and battlements of Fort Mitchell with literary festivals and the hugely popular 'After Dark' tours. He and his team of volunteers and guides have created an immensely important Cork Harbour venue where art and history meet constantly.

Comprehensive

It is fitting, therefore, that he should have authored this new and very comprehensive guide. A more important guide to Spike Island is unlikely ever to

be written.

The physical island that we see today, with its many battlements and enormous Fort Mitchell of twenty-four acres, owes much to just one individual, General Charles Vallancey. Vallancey came from Gibraltar to Spike in 1779 to create a battery of eighteen cannons.

But it was "the Year of the French" with its invading force of forty-four warships and fifteen thousand troops that convinced British authorities to create something much more powerful in Cork harbour.

“Those who marvel at the recent idea to deport hapless refugees would do well to study the history of Spike Island”

These military fortifications would take another sixty years to construct, completing, in Crotty's words 'the most expensive construction project in Irish history. It is the largest military fortification in Ireland and one of the largest in the world.'

The island lay quiet after the Napoleonic Wars until the dark decade of the 1840s with its Famine, Fenians, convicts and mass deportations. Those who marvel at the recent idea to deport hapless refugees would

do well to study the history of Spike Island.

In the seven years after 1849 more than six thousand convicts passed through the Spike 'convict depot.' In his book *Life Among Convicts* Revd. Charles Gibson wrote: "The prison was overcrowded. The prisoners were like sheep in a pen. And most of them were as innocent as sheep."

Amazing

Crotty tells the whole story, creating a most amazing anthology of lost souls. One of the prison's most compelling inmates must surely be the Manchester-born James Grey who was not only a high-society thief but a brilliant mechanic and inventor. He was regularly locked into an ingenious travel-trunk from which he unlocked himself to pilfer ship's valuables. This is the kind of story that John Crotty loves to tell and he tells it here with skill and relish.

One of the most compelling phases in Spike's long history began on 15 February 1921 when the island once again became a political prison. Crotty writes movingly of this era, and of the men who came through, including the legendary Seán Moylan of the Cork No.2 Brigade who fully expected to be executed.

The Truce came, then Civil War, then peace, then the hand-over of the Treaty Ports - the small num-

ber of strategic bases over the Western approaches to these islands - in 1938 - on the very eve of a new war.

Then 'the Emergency' and its aftermath; then coming down to recent times the great cohort of 1980s joy-riders who at least got a decent education while they served their sentences as teenage 'offenders'.

And now, a new era, as a place of leisure, adventure and education. This is a book worth getting, then, this valuable handbook of the darker geographies of Irish life; a place redeemed only by the *Jail Journal* of John Mitchell and the exemplary, holy life of one-time resident, Ellen Organ (August 24, 1903 - February 2, 1908), the venerated 'Little Nellie of Holy God' whose childhood home still stands there as a blessing to us all.

'Little Nellie' was the child who yearned for Holy Communion before she died. Her story inspired Pope Pius X to issue his decree *Quam singulari* in July 1910 that lowered the Holy Communion age to seven.

Whenever I visit that spot on Spike Island I am always overwhelmed by the holiness emanating from that humble house. Her holy memory lights up an otherwise bleak place; and I am grateful that her presence is there still, blessing all of us, including the author John Crotty.

Thoughts and memories of a sustaining nature



Memory Near and Far, by Eamon Flanagan CM

(Published by the author at St Peter's, Phibsborough, €6.00 plus postage; available directly nationwide from Veritas, and also through the Knock Shrine Bookshop.)

Peter Costello

It is appropriate that the impressive city church of St Peter's in Phibsborough should be in the charge of The Congregation of the Mission, otherwise known as the Vincentians.

That church stands symbolically at a crossroads, where paths divide, in an area which has seen very great changes from a Victorian suburb into a now bustling area filled with the new urban life provided by Ireland's new communities. There is certainly mission work to be done here, of a novel kind.

Fr Eamon Flanagan has given to his public since 1998 some fourteen publications: nine volumes of his poetry, three selections of poetry and prose, the two most recent being in prose on spiritual themes. This book to hand continues the themes he began writing about in *Life in Abundance* in 2022.

Thriving

Though Ireland seems to have a thriving publishing industry, bringing out works of devotion and spirituality is difficult, given the decreasing market, as perceived by the book trade generally. But the readers are there. They only need to be reached. Fr Flanagan's new little book will reach them as his track record shows.

The cover blurb, defined as "a persuasive summary" of a text, provides a snapshot of the contents: "While the

focus is mostly Catholic, there is also a strong recognition of human-divine values that are universal and carry great potential.

"Fr Flanagan, a Vincentian priest with wide experience, imagines the Catholic Church collaborating with people of goodwill, and working towards a new transformation of the world 'to the glory of God the Father' (Philippians 2:11). "This sound spirituality is presented in holistic Christian humanism."

“These days poetry has become such a matter of academic concern that the simple pleasures of writing personal poetry has been overshadowed”

So what is so special about this book? Basically it is an exploration of memory, which he sees as God's greatest gift. Memories which allow us to see what is very close to us, laying before us on the beach of life, memories too that come from the past in the distance, perhaps a little more difficult to see, but enriching to comprehend. His poem exploits an image of Lough Gara in South East Sligo, "in St Attracta country", taken by a family member.

Though he everywhere reflects on the current scenes, often in striking phrases, what really strikes the reading is the recall of the past, as in a poem in the third section 'My Parents', which alone places all the rest in perspective.

Also very appealing is a poem in the second part called 'Great Potential'.

These days poetry has become such a matter of academic concern that the simple pleasures of writing personal poetry has been overshadowed.

Fr Flanagan casts a beam of personal illumination across the face, mind and soul of Ireland. Every reader will find in these echoes of their life and recognition of things as they are in contrast to what they might or ought to be.

Classifieds

The deadline for advertising in the classifieds is 10.30am, the Friday before publication. Contact the Classified Team on 01 687 4027 or email advertising@irishcatholic.ie

Remembering

MEMORIAM CARDS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CARDS & NOTELETS

BOOKMARKS

Samples / Information

KENNEDY PRINTERS

BANTRY, CO. CORK, IRELAND

Tel. 027 50102

www.kennedyprinters.ie

email: info@kennedyprinters.ie

Listen to

The Confession Box



Available now

on all major

podcast

streaming

services!

The Gift Of A Lifetime

Be there for others after you're gone.

A gift in your will to Irish Hospice Foundation is a meaningful way to help ensure no-one faces death or bereavement without the care and support they need.

Email Anna Sadlier at anna.sadlier@hospicefoundation.ie or call 01 679 3188



www.hospicefoundation.ie



Merchants Quay Ireland

Homeless & Drugs Services



A gift in your Will to Merchants Quay Ireland can be lifesaving.

Hundreds of men and women at their darkest hour, come to Merchants Quay Ireland for food, showers and support when there's nowhere else to turn.

A gift in your Will in any amount, will change lives. And we'll always remember your kindness.

You can decide a specific amount or give a percentage after taking care of your loved ones. Even 1% is enough to help.

All your solicitor will need is this:

- Merchants Quay Ireland of 24 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8
- Revenue CHY Number: 10311
- Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20026240

Just ring 01 5240139 if you'd like more information, or to let us know about your legacy. Thank you for the good you leave behind.

LOUGH DERG

3-DAY PILGRIMAGE CO. DONEGAL. 2024 dates are: 31st May – 2nd June; 5th July – 7th July; 9th Aug – 11th Aug. Tel: 0863853027 / 01-4941171


SERVICES

ALL UNWANTED home waste removed. Cookers, fridges, beds, suites, wardrobes, carpets etc. Removed and disposed of in a proper manner. No job too small or big. Contact Tommy, 087 6406015.

LOOKING TO RENT

MATURE, RELIGIOUS WOMAN NEEDS A QUIET ROOM in houseshare in northside and south-central Dublin from July onwards. Require a reasonable rent price. Contact 087 6991834

When you remember Trócaire in your Will, you bring hope to people living in the world's poorest places



It's easy to get started, and we'll help you every step of the way. Call Grace Kelly on 01 629 3333, email grace.kelly@trocaire.org or write to me at Trócaire, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One day, parents and their children will tell the story of how your legacy of love changed their lives. Thank you for considering a gift to Trócaire in your Will.

Please pray for the beatification of

Little Nellie of Holy God

"May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model"

– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

Will the MSC Missions

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart bring hope to the poorest people living in over 48 countries worldwide.

Please help us with a gift in your Will

Contact:

MSC Missions Office, PO Box 23 Western Road, Cork.

Tel: 021-4545704 Email: info@mscmissions.ie

www.mscmissions.ie

The Irish Catholic

PREPAID CLASSIFIED AD COUPON

Please print your advertisement in the coupon, placing ONE word in each space. Below, please print your name and address. Do you require a Box Number? YES ☐ NO ☐ (Please tick ✓) Box Number €6 extra.

1					€29.99
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					€34.91
7					€39.83

Name and contact detail form MUST be filled out

Name

Address

Landline Mobile

I enclose Cheque/PO: €.....I wish to pay by Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Laser ☐

My Visa/Mastercard/Lasercard number is:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Expiry Date:Signature

The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277.

Phone: 01 687 4028

Leisure time

Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

Your Lasting Legacy

Many people are choosing to include a loving gift in their Will to support families, children and young people experiencing homelessness. You can make a real difference by helping future generations find a place called home.

For more information, please contact Assia:
086 103 3130 assia.buono@focusireland.ie
Focus Ireland, 9 - 12 High Street, Christchurch, D08 E1W0
FocusIreland.ie

Classifieds:
01 687 4028

We will pass on the flame of faith.

For over 130 years, The Irish Catholic has been a voice of hope and inspiration for Catholics in Ireland. Find out more by scanning the QR code below



Phone: 01 6874028
The Irish Catholic

Crossword Gordius 664

Across

1 Heraldic device (4,2,4)
6 Mimics (4)
10 Contribution to a meeting or discussion (5)
11 Musical instrument (9)
12 Speak out against, demonstrate (7)
15 The court of the Papal See (5)
17 Speed or percentage (4)
18 Ova (4)
19 Confess, own up (5)
21 Part of the church where the altar is (7)
23 The central walkway in a church (5)
24 Practise needlecraft (4)
25 Short letter or musical character (4)
26 A bar of precious metal (5)
28 Shakespearean play featuring Prospero and Miranda (7)
33 Declares or proclaims (9)
34 Segment (5)
35 Smooth, level (4)
36 Variety of mint plant (10)

Down

1 Facial feature below the mouth (4)
2 Variety of vegetable (9)
3 Group of eight (5)
4 One of The Three Musketeers (5)
5 This evangelist is the patron saint of Venice (4)
7 Abbot's deputy (5)
8 Hanging limestone feature (10)
9 Hide (7)
13 Engrave with acid (4)
14 Bauble (7)
16 Behead (10)
20 Monks live here (9)
21 Mythical being, half-man, half-horse (7)
22 Test (4)
27 Aladdin's magic helper (5)
29 German city (5)
30 This kind of musician often wears a kilt (5)
31 Stand here when throwing darts (4)
32 Water source (4)

1		2		3		4		5			6	7		8
										9				
10						11								
	12					13		14			15			
16								17						
18										19		20		
				21					22					
23											24			
					25									
26		27						28	29		30			
						31								32
33										34				
35						36								

SOLUTIONS, MAY 16

GORDIUS No. 663

Across

1 Coo 3 War and Peace 8 Raisin 9 Squirrel 10 Wheat 11 Thing 13 Bliss 15 Soldier 16 Pelican 20 Dalek 21 Death 23 Papal blessing 25 Deja vu 26 Barrel organ 27 Noh

Down

1 Caraway seed 2 Olive oil 3 Waist 4 Arsenic 5 Paint 6 Adroit 7 Eel 12 Glendalough 13 Bread 14 Speak 17 Chaplain 18 Blogger 19 Career 22 Haste 23 Preen 24 Bob

Sudoku Corner 534

Easy

			4					
7	2	8						3
5	6		8		1			2
	5	2		8		9	4	
6			5		9			8
	4	9		7		5	3	
2			6		8		7	4
3						8	5	9
					3			

Hard

			2	8				5
	2				4	1		
7					9			
		3			8		4	
9			5		6			7
	8		1			3		
			3					6
		9	4				1	
6				9	7			

Last week's Easy 533

3	6	2	8	7	5	4	9	1
7	1	4	2	9	3	6	5	8
5	8	9	1	4	6	7	2	3
2	4	6	7	3	9	8	1	5
8	5	1	6	2	4	3	7	9
9	7	3	5	1	8	2	6	4
6	2	5	4	8	1	9	3	7
1	3	8	9	6	7	5	4	2
4	9	7	3	5	2	1	8	6

Last week's Hard 533

3	9	5	7	1	6	4	2	8
2	6	1	4	5	8	9	7	3
7	4	8	3	9	2	6	5	1
9	7	6	8	3	1	2	4	5
5	1	3	2	6	4	8	9	7
8	2	4	9	7	5	1	3	6
4	5	9	1	8	3	7	6	2
1	3	2	6	4	7	5	8	9
6	8	7	5	2	9	3	1	4

Notebook

Fr John Harris OP

All kinds of everything reminds me of you

All the talk and coverage around the Eurovision contest over the last few weeks, brought me back to my youth. I remember sitting at home with my mother, watching the black and white television when Dana won the Eurovision in 1970 from Amsterdam. Only when I looked it up on the internet this week did I realise it was actually produced in colour. After 54 years I can still sing along with Dana.

How Ireland and pop culture has changed? A single girl sitting on a stool in the middle of the stage wouldn't have a snowball's chance in hell of winning the contest now. The lights, the noise, the optics have all changed beyond recognition. Not just for the Eurovision.

Love

Dana was singing a love song but as I listened to it again, I couldn't help thinking of how it could also be seen as a song about God. In our biblical theological tradition, we believe that the good things we see in creation about us are reflections of the goodness and beauty of God. For instance, in the Book of the 'Song of Songs' in the Old Testament we see how the love between two young lov-



Dana Rosemary Scallan who won the Eurovision Song Contest for Ireland in 1970.

ers reflect the desire of the soul for God and His desire for us. As we looked at the aurora borealis lighting up the skies earlier this month our hearts were expanded to the mystery of beauty.

Pope Benedict XVI asked us to open our hearts to the *Via pulcritudinis*, the path of beauty.

He says when addressing artists: "Beauty, whether that of the natural universe or that expressed in art, precisely because it opens up and broadens the horizons of human awareness, pointing us beyond ourselves, bringing us face to face with the abyss of Infinity, can become a path towards the transcendent, towards the ultimate Mystery, towards God."

“We love only that which is beautiful”

Pope Francis teaches “every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the ‘way of beauty’.

Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties. Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus”.

Both Popes, quoting from St Augustine, remind us, “we love only that which is beautiful”, therefore the incarnate son, as

the revelation of infinite beauty, is supremely lovable and draws us to himself with bonds of love. Pope Francis says that a formation in the *Via pulcritudinis* ought to be part of our effort to pass on the faith.

Alas not all art opens us up to the way of beauty and it can at times be very dark, sinister even demonic. As in all things affected by original sin there can be an absence of what God had planned to be present. The peace and joy which beauty opens us up to is an indication of what is truly beautiful. It reminds us that we are made for God and our hearts cannot rest until the rest in God.

Mass in time of war

● I was speaking recently with a man in his 90th year. He had served Mass in the Dominican church in Waterford during World War II. He told me that during the war years, because of the rationing and the scarcity of new candles, etc. the altar boys were only allowed to light the big six candles on the high altar for midnight Mass at Christmas and for the high Mass on Easter Sunday.

70 years of the Dominican monastery in Fatima

I know that many of our readers when visiting Fatima on pilgrimage also visit our monastery of Dominican enclosed nuns in the Monastery of Pope Pius XII. On June 16 this year the monastery will celebrate 70 years since its foundation in 1954. There are three Irish nuns still in the community, Sr Diane now in her 100th year, the only remaining members of the founding community, Sr Angela from Cabra and Sr Michael from Derry. We wish the community every blessing for their anniversary and thank them for the years they have welcome thousands of Irish pilgrims to Fatima with tea and biscuits.



The Little Way Association

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

€.....**ROOFING MISSION CHAPELS**

€.....**FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY**

€.....**NEEDS OF MISSIONARIES**

€.....**MASSES** (please state no.)

€.....**LITTLEWAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

We ask for a minimum of €6.50 or more for each Mass

To donate online go to
www.littlewaysassociation.com

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.

☐ Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) (Block letters please)

Address

1C/05/23

A Ugandan parish urgently needs our help to roof its new church

Fr Charles Osire has written to us from Uganda's Soroti Diocese. His bishop tells us, "The local Christian community together with Fr Charles have struggled to bring the structure to its current state and they now badly need some external financial help in order to complete the roofing of their church."

Father explains to The Little Way Association: "The construction of St Kizito's church started in 2013 and has been done in phases, but now has slowed down as we look for help to put up a roof and finish the building. We look forward to having a much better House of Prayer for our growing Christian community. Living conditions here are very difficult but the new church, when finished, will enable us to promote real catechesis and to empower the people to collaborate in work and prayer.

"I believe the Prophet Haggai is inspiring me to approach The Little Way for help. As he said : 'Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house; I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord.' On behalf of all our Christians I thank you in advance for the financial aid you are able to give us. May Our Lord bless your Association."

Your gift will be most gratefully received, and will be sent without deduction to Fr Charles to help complete the long-awaited church at Kitane.

(If we receive more funds than are required for this project they will be used for similar chapel projects).

"True glory is that which will last eternally, and to reach it, it isn't necessary to perform striking works but to hide oneself and practice virtue in such a way that the left hand knows not what the right is doing." – St Therese

PLEASE HELP FEED THE HUNGRY

Please spare a thought for the millions who die each year of hunger and disease in mission lands. Your donation will relieve the pangs of starvation, and every euro you send will be forwarded to a missionary priest or sister for food for the hungry.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AT OUR THERESIAN HOUSE IN KNOCK?

The work involves general house-keeping duties, providing guests with a light breakfast, prayer and welcoming pilgrims. If this work appeals to you, and you could offer one month of your time, please write to Maria Grcar at the address in the coupon, giving details, experience and a contact telephone number.

Email: contact@littlewayassociation.com