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## Laity must allow priests rest says new Dublin bishop

Chai Brady

Priests must be allowed time off to “recover and recuperate” as more and more is asked of them, the new Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin has said.

Before his episcopal ordination on Sunday in St Andrew’s Church in Westland Row parish Fr Donal Roche told *The Irish Catholic* there is an urgent need to alleviate the pressure on the archdiocese’s priests.

“I can understand that for a priest who has been ordained for 50 years or more, he feels he is letting people down when he doesn’t have Mass every single day, and yet in a lot of groups of parishes now, there’s a system where at least one day in the week where there won’t be Mass... It needs to be more accepted and more the norm.

“I think people still feel there should be Mass in every church, every day. We have to work harder at that I think to let people realise that there has to be time off for priests, and that they need to recover and recuperate from their work.”

He said that when there were two or

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### Youth process in Cork with Bishop Gavin



Local school children walk with Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin during last Sunday’s Eucharistic Procession. Over 4,500 people took part. Photo: Fr Marius O’Reilly.

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# Laity must allow priests rest says new Dublin bishop

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three priests in a parish time off “could easily be managed”, but now “you could have your day or your week blocked out with all your appointments”. Often priests can’t take weekends off for holidays because of lack of cover, he added.

Bishop Roche said in his new role his main responsibility will be “supporting priests will be one very big part, and supporting the archbishop in his task as he’s got a huge amount to do”.

However, in terms of engaging young people he added: “I would love to be able to focus on some way of inspiring and getting young people together, for prayer, scripture groups, social action groups... That would be a hope that I’d be able to focus on something

around that.

“But first of all, it’s not just about getting people to do things or to come to things, it’s getting them to have an encounter first with Christ, essentially it’s about helping people to find the Lord in prayer or in scripture,” he said.

Bishop Roche said: “We get as far as Confirmation with them in the Primary school system and it’s just such a challenge after that. Once they go beyond that as teenagers it’s very difficult for parents, for teachers, to keep youngsters safe from the dangers that are there. It’s so easy for them to be led down the wrong path. It’s a challenge for all of us, not just the Church, to try to keep young people safe.”

» Continued on Page 8 & 9

# A year of Ireland’s environment

**Renata Milán Morales**

The National Library of Ireland (NLI), together with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), announced on May 27 the first recipient of their inaugural Photographer in-Residence as Paula T. Nolan, from Dublin.

Paula’s project titled ‘ReViewing Ireland: A Photo Study of Ireland’s Environment’, will involve travelling via public transport to each of the 26 counties over a period of one year. Over the seasons, Paula will capture images of environmental interest. She will be aided by access to EPA experts and the NLI’s photo-

graphic collection. She will take pictures and compare them with what she finds in the landscape of today.

The recipient said: “Being selected as the EPA/NLI/Photographer in-Residence is the greatest achievement of my life as an artist photographer, there is no subject closer to my heart, more important to us all, than the survival of humankind and nature considering the threat posed by the climate crisis. I am grateful for an opportunity to work visually with the subject, with people who know more than I do, to create a body of work that captures a year of Ireland’s environment.”

# Jesuit priest calls for people to find issues that fire them up

**Gareth Foynes**

‘This should not be’, is a perfectly legitimate response to injustice in society, according to one Jesuit priest.

Catholic social teaching is an area of doctrine which is concerned with human dignity and the common good in society. Many gathered in Whitefriar Street Church community hall to discuss how Catholic social teaching should be implemented in society. There was a particular focus on how to usher this into a society that practises the faith much less than previously. Dr. Patrick O’Riordan S.J. stressed the idea that ‘there is a realisation that not every-

one in this society has the same vision as we have of getting to heaven and building a community of saints in the resurrection. People have other visions. So how do we work with people from other visions of the common good? Well, the Second Vatican Council says that we may not agree with what the ultimate common good is but we can agree on what are the conditions that will enable people to flourish.. and those conditions can range over the full gambit of economic, social, cultural and political conditions.’

However, Dr. Maria Power advocated for a more aggressive approach by suggesting that ‘deep structural changes had

to be made. This allows us to overcome the abuses of power. This is the deep seated transformation that will take generations to achieve but will also be necessary to figure out God’s plan for humanity. The approach should involve working with the marginalised to figure out solutions rather than making decisions for them. If our expression of Catholic social teaching would take such a form, it would mean that the teachings that the preferential options for the poor, solidarity and subsidiarity can actually work to create a tension to bring about the transformation necessary for the Kingdom of God to start becoming a reality in our society,’ she said.

## Fr Brian digs deep in Knock



Tree planting by Fr Brian Grogan SJ at the Creation Walk, Knock Shrine. Also pictured Fr Richard Gibbons and horticulturalist Dylan Prendergast. Photo Sinead Mallee

# Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration initiative in Dublin

**Renata Milán Morales**

Over forty people are committing to spend at least an hour weekly in front of the Blessed Sacrament with the aim of establishing 24/7 adoration.

A Legion of Mary praesidium joined Radio Maria with the purpose of promoting adoration and helping to establish the Blessed Sacra-

ment being exposed 24/7-perpetual adoration. This would make Radio Maria the only place in Dublin where people can have adoration at any time day or night. It is situated near the Red Cow Hotel, beside the M50, so people come from all parts of the city and beyond.

Organised by a group of lay Catholics with the support of the priest director of Radio

Maria Fr Eamonn McCarthy, adoration started in the station’s building aiming for forty days and forty nights in 2020. Then, Covid struck, forcing the adoration to cease. There was a break and then after a few months a second ‘adoration’ project was launched. Adoration continued until recently, following the forty days, but the exposition was not permanent.

“At present, we have three nights per week covered with adoration, most days during the day Monday to Saturday. Our biggest challenge is getting adorers who can commit to coming for an hour or more once a week”, said Marie, a

member of the praesidium organising the perpetual adoration. “We have about 40 adorers on our books committed and some people just pop in when they can.”

Marie believes that “having the chance to visit the Blessed Sacrament exposed at any time during the day is important since Jesus can give us so much love, peace, and healing through His presence.”

If churches wish to establish adoration locally there is a group called the ‘Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration’ who have a website, [eucharisticadoration.ie](http://eucharisticadoration.ie), with details of how to set it up available.

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## Clarification and Correction

### Mary Immaculate College appointment

The Irish Catholic has learned that the Vicar General of the diocese of Limerick was not appointed, nor sought appointment, to the position of head of the theology department of Mary Immaculate College as claimed in a report last week on a letter which was circulated to all the bishops in Ireland by an Mary Immaculate academic. The *Veritas Catholic Directory* published this in error in 2023 and 2024 and The Irish Catholic is happy to clarify the matter. The position, as of going to press, is believed to be still vacant.



## Lough Derg blooms and booms



### Renata Milán Morales

This May, Lough Derg has welcomed more than a thousand pilgrims to the island, and this is only the start of the pilgrimage season. Also, this year, more than 1100 teenagers attended a pre-Confirmation retreat. 816 attended the same retreat in 2023. "Lough Derg is increasing the outreach to young people. Ireland has missed out on evangelising for two centuries now and

that needs to be rebuilt", said James McLoughlin, a member of the Lough Derg team.

The traditional three day pilgrimage begins Friday May 31 and finishes on August 15. "It is a programme of prayer, fasting, walking bare-footed and undertaking a 24 hour Vigil. Without shoes and sleep and with little food, pilgrims are confronted with the essential aspects of life, an experience which can enable them to discover their hidden strengths and rediscover

what really matters in life. Many people find that their pilgrimage to Lough Derg helps them to deal better with life's ordinary struggles", as the organisers describe on their new website [loughderg.org](http://loughderg.org).

In the same note, James McLoughlin says: "You are giving all up. For some people that can be challenging, but there is freedom in being able to put our lives in perspective and prioritise and reevaluate things we take for granted."

Lough Derg also offers residential retreats, now in their second year. These retreats are for anyone who is searching for a way to explore and deepen their faith. On crossing over to this ancient island of prayer, Lough Derg "offers a unique opportunity to step back from a busy life, into prayer and reflection, and towards a deeper relationship with God", said James McLoughlin.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mount Merrion's family Mass celebrates 30 years

#### Renata Milán Morales

Mount Merrion's family Mass choir was joined by other parish choirs for Mount Merrion's family Mass anniversary concert on May 24. Thirty years ago, the family Mass was established by a dedicated group of parents and parishioners. The vision of Mount Merrion's family Mass was to create a liturgy tailored for children, with simplified readings and prayers that would be easier for them to understand. Most importantly, they aimed to actively help children grow in their faith. Children who attended the initial family Mass are now continuing the tradition, bringing their own children along.

Organisers say that "Mount Merrion's parish is proud to be one of the longest-running family liturgies in the country. This concert was not only celebrated because of Mount Merrion's milestone but also with the aim of raising funds for the Cardinal Vaughan Hope Centre in Kenya and the Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association."

### Rosary Rally comes to Knock

The All Ireland Rosary Rally will take place in Knock this Saturday June 3. The Rally has been an annual event in Knock for over thirty years.

It was inspired by the Rosary Priest Venerable Fr Patrick Peyton who was famous for holding Rosary Rallies all over the world attended by over twenty-five million people.

Bishop Oliver Doeme will speak at the rally this year in the Basilica at 1pm. His diocese in Nigeria has been under attack by the Boko Haram terrorists since 2009, and thousands have died and hundreds of thousands have been displaced. He will speak about the power of prayer, and the Rosary, in particular, in helping his people in their great need.

There will also be the Stations of the Cross and a Rosary Procession, and a celebrated Mass, with anointing of the sick. Archbishop Eamon Martin will be the Main Celebrant. From 9am there will also be an opportunity to meet different apostolates from all over the island of Ireland in St John's Centre including Totus Tuus Magazine, Radio Maria, The Fr Willie Doyle Association, St Martin's Apostolate, Mother's Prayers, Catechism of the Catholic Church Adult Studies, World Apostolate of Fatima, Children's Rosary, and the Fr Patrick Peyton Centre.

## Novena giving hope for pro-lifers

### Gareth Foynes

The Prayer for Life Novena is taking place this week and according to Petra Conroy, one of the organisers, it is well necessitated. Petra is just one of many among the Council for Life of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference who have organised the initiative.

Petra believes it is a crucial time to host such an event: 'It's important that we don't get too comfortable with it (abortion)... a certain acceptance.. a resignation.'

Originally from Kildare, Petra has been advocating for the protection of human life in the womb from as far back as she can remember and is aware of the key strategies that will aid human life being preserved: 'loads of things can be done.. get people to pray.. it's the most effective.. it helps in our hearts and minds.'

Effective communication is also key according to Petra: 'It has to be presented in different ways.. I think anyone looking at the mat-

ter with a clear mind will come around.'

Petra also calls out the hypocrisy of many on the pro-choice side: 'Abortion is not a good thing for women.. it's an amazing thing to be able to bring new life into the world.'

While primarily focusing her efforts on abortion, Petra notes the concerns she has when it comes to euthanasia in Ireland: 'It's strange that they go to great efforts to prevent suicide in Ireland but are in favour of state endorsed suicide.'

Petra is one of many pro-life people who feel betrayed by Irish politicians: 'I'd have huge respect for the likes of Peadar Tobin.. there are certain principles that he wasn't willing to break.. he was willing to stand for what he believed in.. a lot of people who don't agree with him respect him because he has principles..'

Despite all of this, Petra remains optimistic and shocked at the sheer amount of people she knows in the pro-life movement.

## Two Benemerenti medals awarded in space of a week

### Staff reporter

Pope Francis has awarded the Benemerenti medal for service to the Church to two Irish parishioners in the space of a week. Belfast Christian musician Rita Goldsmith and Tipperary sacristan Willie Fogarty were bestowed with the award in recognition of their "long and untiring service" to their respective Catholic communities.

Rita Goldsmith was formally presented with the award by the Bishop of Down and Connor Alan McGuckian at a ceremony last Sunday.

She was nominated by Fr Eugene O'Neill and the parish community at St Patrick's Church in Belfast in recognition of her "long and untiring service" to the Catholic community of Belfast.

Bishop McGuckian noted Ms Goldsmith's constant and devoted living vocation as a Christian musician.

He said at the heart of



Fr Conor Hayes presented Willie Fogarty with his Benemerenti medal. Photo Credit: Seamus Bourke.

the award was her dedicated service to the Sacred Liturgy and ministry of music not only in St Patrick's, but in Clonard Monastery and many parishes where she has provided music.

Last week, Willie Fogarty was also awarded the Benemerenti Medal for over 30 years of service as sacristan at St Anne's Church in Clonmore, Tipperary.

Mr Fogarty was thanked for his commitment and

generosity of time and goodwill to the parishioners and priests of the parish.

The Clonmore parishioners also thanked those who assist Mr Fogarty in his work including the ministry of music, floral arrangements, care of the grounds and preparations for all the liturgical devotions through the year, they acknowledged that the work is "a real team effort".



# Joy in Dublin as two auxiliaries appointed

Brandon Scott

**A** packed St Andrew's Church, Westland Row greeted the arrival of two new auxiliary bishops for the Archdiocese of Dublin last Sunday afternoon. Bishop Paul Dempsey, previously the Bishop of Achonry, and Bishop Donal Roche, a priest of the archdiocese, were ordained by Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell.

Speaking in his homily, Dr Farrell said that he personally sought two auxiliaries to assist him in his oversight of the archdiocese as a means of responding to the "rapidly-changing social and pastoral needs of our people" and that, as proclaimed by Pope Francis, the Church of today is called to be "capable of transforming everything, so that [our] customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world, rather than for her [own] self-preservation".

Addressing the congregation in St Andrew's, newly-ordained Bishop Roche was under no illusions that the Church faces enormous challenges in the years ahead, but said that he is willing to listen in the hope of securing a positive future.

"We face enormous challenges as a Church for which there are no easy solutions," he said. "In recent weeks, people have been asking me what are your views on this or that or what will you do about the various challenges we face? People are rightly

worried about declining vocations, the shortage of young people in the Church, the changing face of parish life and so many other issues. I don't come with ready-made answers, but I come with an open heart, a willingness to listen, an enthusiasm for the mission ahead and most of all, I come with hope for the future."

Transferring to the Archdiocese of Dublin from the Diocese of Achonry, Bishop Paul Dempsey recognised that the changes witnessed in both society and Church-life have been "enormous" but insisted that the Church's mission "remains the same" regardless and is driven by the continued proclamation of Christ "in and out of season".

"We have come through an enormous amount of change as a society and a Church," he said. "We have had to confront difficult truths that were necessary to face. This will always be part of our story. However, in the midst of all this change, the mission remains the same. As baptised Christians we proclaim Jesus Christ in season and out of season. Some would say the Church hasn't a voice anymore, the Church is dying and no longer has a place in the public square.

"Pope St John XXIII referred to them as the 'prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster'. They are always with us. It is important to remember that the Church is not dying, it is a model of Church that is dying. We are on the cusp of something new. The Church is always in a process of renewal."



The two new auxiliaries with Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell.



Bishop Donal Roche greets parishioners after the ceremony.



Bishop Paul Dempsey greets the congregation.



The opening procession in St Andrew's Church. Photo: John McElroy.



Bishop Donal Roche greets members of the congregation.



A packed congregation of well-wishers.



Bishop Donal Roche lies prostrate during his episcopal ordination.



The two new auxiliaries together.



# A son's quest – A mother's dilemma

**A**round the beginning of this century, I worked on London newspaper alongside a lively and admirable writer, Andrew Pierce. I came to know that Andrew was adopted, and just recently he has published an account of his search for his birth mother, 'Finding Margaret'.

Margaret's story was not an unusual one. She was a nurse from Co. Mayo who emigrated to England to work. In 1960, she became pregnant out of wedlock. At that time, it was virtually impossible – in England as well as in Ireland – for a single woman to keep her baby, and so Andrew, originally christened Patrick James, was placed in an institution and eventually adopted.

## Family

Catholic clergy are sometimes accused of having "trafficked" infants for adoption, but Andrew makes clear that the priest who prompted the adoption just made a humane plea. He preached on the theme of family life, and then told the Wiltshire parishioners "that there were dozens of babies at an orphanage called Nazareth House in Cheltenham, who desperately needed good, loving Catholic homes".

A family was much better for a child than an institution, and so, Betty and George Pierce, a decent, working-class couple with three children of their own, applied to adopt.

Betty and George turned



**Mary Kenny**

out to be wonderful parents to Andrew, and he loved his siblings. The adoption was carried out responsibly and with follow-up supervision – Andrew was two and a half when he was adopted and could have had problems settling. But he grew up happily and from his teenage years, built a successful career as a journalist (his friend, film star Dame Joan Collins, launched his book).

**“Margaret had covered her tracks carefully, and proved difficult to locate. But at last they found her, in Birmingham, and knocked on her door”**

Andrew didn't want to hurt his adoptive parents by searching for his birth mother, but eventually in his forties, he began the quest. It was no easy task, though he was ably supported by two women journalists, Amanda Platell and Jane Moore, experienced researchers. Margaret had covered her tracks carefully, and proved

difficult to locate. But at last they found her, in Birmingham, and knocked on her door.

## Reluctance

At first, Margaret denied knowledge of Andrew. Subsequently, she admitted that she was his birth mother, although she kept saying she couldn't really remember much about it all (although she had been 34 when Andrew was born in 1961). She couldn't remember who the father was.

She was cordial, but evasive. She promised to meet him on several occasions, but didn't turn up. He kept in contact by phone, and was caring towards her, but she never showed any interest in his life or career. She had married a Patrick Lennon, had four other children (and grandchildren) and didn't want them to know about her first son. Finally, when she was afflicted by Alzheimer's and in a care home, a warmth developed between them – yet he feels he never really got to know her.

**“Adoption is complex. There are many sides to the story – the birth mother, the child, the adoptive parents, the siblings, even the grandparents”**

Andrew's quest is brave and honest, and his conclusions balanced: he doesn't blame Margaret for grasping the chance of marriage and security. Although he seeks therapy (with a counsellor who is also a Catholic priest) for the trauma of his early years – the orphanage was harsh – he writes that he was glad Margaret placed him for adoption because he had such loving adoptive parents.

**“In all this journey he has remained strong in his own Catholic faith, and supported by priests in England and Ireland”**

And you can appreciate Margaret's point of view, too. Some people deal with the past by putting it behind them – that's their way of coping with it. It could be alarming for an old lady to get that knock on the door, informing her that a child she had relinquished nearly fifty years previously had found her.

**O**ne of the points that Andrew makes is that there were as many Anglican mother-and-baby homes as there were Catholic – all the churches ran them. This doesn't invalidate the charge that some were cruel and harsh. But the Irish general supposition that they were exclusive to Ireland, and exclusively Catholic, is erroneous.

Andrew's quest brings him to Co. Mayo – also seeking his father's identity. He writes, too, about coming to terms with his gay sexuality. In all this journey he has remained strong in his own Catholic faith, and supported by priests in England and Ireland.

## Complexities

Adoption is complex. There are many sides to the story – the birth mother, the child,

**F**unerals are an occasion of mourning and grief for the faithful departed, but they are also a time of community, and of encountering old friends, connections and colleagues.

It was quite jolly to see Vincent Browne again at a recent funeral. He's 80 this spring, and seems in fine fettle. "Never been happier," he beamed. Why? "No stress. Grandchildren. Good wife."

That, indeed, sounds like a recipe for contentment in the senior years!

the adoptive parents, the siblings, even the grandparents. My former colleague Andrew Pierce has illuminated that complexity so touchingly in "Finding Margaret".

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Andrew Pierce





## Senator Rónán Mullen

A view from the Seanad



# We need courageous political candidates

**‘T**he World is Big and I’m so Small’, is the title of a children’s book that I’ve never read. Maybe I should pick it up sometime. I suspect a lot of voters, as they prepare their list for the European and local election candidates, feel a bit daunted by the list of problems facing the country and the world, and wonder how to do some good in the face of it all.

The important thing, of course, is to make a beginning. Let’s start with the local: Ask politicians what they will do to keep our communities safe, to ensure that we have enough Gardaí to check anti-social behaviour, to look after our environment, to fund local and voluntary activity and ensure support for older and more vulnerable people at a time when many feel isolated or forgotten.

### Complex

Taxpayers’ money is not in short supply, relative to other countries anyway, but with an increasing population and an ever more complex set of human needs (think health service, special needs in education, the housing shortage and the integration of migrants) it’s hard to see how the money can keep flowing in the long term. We expect so much more from the State than we once did. The pie may be getting bigger, but so is the number of plates being sent up.

And there’s a cultural and values vacuum in our society that no government grant can fix, but which is costing us dearly, socially as well as financially. Take abortion, and the rising number of women, and men indirectly, availing of it.

**“Will the candidates speak up for the right of parents to choose schools to reflect their preferred ethos, and the right of schools to fully respect those parents’ choices?”**



A woman arrives with children at a polling station in Dublin March 8, 2024, to vote on a referendum to redefine family and delete wording on stay-at-home mothers in the Irish Constitution. Photo: OSV News/Reuters, Clodagh Kilcoyne

How much invisible hurt and damage gets done when ordinary decent people allow the killing of innocent human beings into their lives? How much more unexplained depression? How much more social conflict as people’s unresolved anger and despair emerges? And what impact does this social problem have on human and social solidarity and our long-term ability to be happy together?

I was driving along Dublin’s northside last week and was glad to see a billboard proclaiming “I am an Election Issue – Vote Pro Life”. The Pro Life Campaign wants to highlight the plight of unborn children in the coming elections. Their website [www.prolifecampaign.ie](http://www.prolifecampaign.ie)

has a helpful guide to the positions of the candidates, and you can even sign up to canvass for pro-life people running in your area.

With around 2,000 people running, that database must have taken some time to compile, and credit is due to all involved. You can play your part. Ask the candidates if they agree that abortion is regrettable whenever it happens, and if they will push for policies to reduce the distressingly high incidence of the procedure in our country now.

### Fathers

What of child-rearing, and in particular the absence of fathers from so many children’s lives? We can see how, in some

ways, things have got better for children. No brutal beatings in national school now, and parents more tender too perhaps than in the past when material things were in short supply and life was harder.

But how many more challenges do children now face in their social adjustment, their educational attainment, their exposure to addiction, risky sexual behaviour and criminality, because, for example, so many mums who are left alone can’t cope, can’t deliver that balance of tenderness and rigour that every child needs for a stable upbringing, no matter what supports come from the State?

**“Who teaches values to the children anyway?”**

How do the candidates propose educating the next generation to value stable lifelong relationships between men and women as the socially-preferred environment for the upbringing of children? And, in light of the referendum results, how

would they facilitate mothers and fathers who want a better balance between their work as parents in the home and as providers outside of it?

And who teaches values to the children anyway? What do our candidates think of the ever more intrusive role of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, which seeks to supplant the role of parents in teaching their children about relationships and sexuality, by seeking to implement a curriculum that at times verges on the perverted?

### Ethos

Will the candidates speak up for the right of parents to choose schools to reflect their preferred ethos, and the right of schools to fully respect those parents’ choices? In this regard, I would urge parents and other concerned citizens to respond to the latest NCCA consultation on its draft specifications for the Primary Curriculum before 7th June (election day). See [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) or get the pre-

cise link by following me on X - @RonanMullen.

The global questions matter too - the carnage in Gaza, the war in Ukraine, murder and mayhem in South Sudan, the persecution of religious minorities in India, China and countless other places - these things must be talked about, even if it’s difficult to know what our country should do.

**“If it was right to recognise Palestinian statehood, why didn’t it happen years ago - before the current crisis?”**

I wonder about our Government’s decision to recognise the State of Palestine at this time. Is it a well-deserved rebuke to Israel for the disregard for innocent life in its war on Hamas, for the failure to stop hundreds of thousands of Jewish settlers from running riot in the Occupied Territories over many years, and the recent two-fingers from Netanyahu to a two-state solution?

Or is it a form of ‘cheap grace’, a piece of virtue-signalling that’s of no practical help to the victims of war, but might embolden terrorists even more? If it was right to recognise Palestinian statehood, why didn’t it happen years ago - before the current crisis?

Ireland will presumably support sanctions against Israel, if the EU moves in this direction.

But for the future, shouldn’t we, as a small, traditionally neutral, country, avoid big gestures and work more in the background - with our American friends, at the United Nations, and in every forum possible - to persuade for peace and human rights, not just in the Middle East but in Ukraine too?



## Mary Immaculate College – President

### The Organisation

Mary Immaculate College (MIC) is an autonomous, university-level, Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts. Founded in 1898, and linked academically with the University of Limerick, MIC is the oldest higher education institution in Limerick, Ireland. It has gone from 75 students in 1901 to 5,000 students today enrolled in undergraduate programmes and a range of postgraduate programmes up to and including doctoral level. Significant expansion in recent decades has seen the College's suite of educational programmes expand across two impressive campuses, one based in the heart of Limerick City and one in Thurles, Co. Tipperary.

### The Role

The role of President is a critical appointment within MIC as the President will provide leadership in upholding the values of the College and will be strongly committed to promoting and sustaining the ethos and values of MIC as a Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts.

Appointed by (and reporting to) the Board of Trustees, the President (An tÚachtarán) is the Chief Executive Officer of the College and is ultimately responsible, within the framework of policy set down by the Governing Authority (An tÚdarás Rialaithe), for the leadership and executive management of the College, including academic, administrative, and financial affairs. The President is a member of the Governing Authority and is Chairperson of the College's Academic Council (An Chomhairle Acadúil).

### The Person

The successful candidate will have experience, skills, knowledge and personal attributes necessary to lead and manage the College, adhering to the fundamental principle that the holistic flourishing of the student is at the centre of its mission and activities. They will have the capacity to formulate a shared vision for the College as an independent and autonomous, university-level, higher education institute in alignment with its Strategic Plan.

The President will be a role model in exemplifying the very best values of Mary Immaculate College. They will have responsibility for supporting the academic and professional aspirations of the entire College community and will be strongly committed to promoting and sustaining the ethos and values of MIC.

### Application and Further Information

For further information and to apply for this role visit [www.mazars.ie/executiverecruitment](http://www.mazars.ie/executiverecruitment)

All enquiries relating to the role should be directed to the Executive Recruitment Team by email to [execrecruit@mazars.ie](mailto:execrecruit@mazars.ie) or by telephone on +353 (1) 449 4400.

**Mazars will be managing all aspects of this recruitment project on behalf of MIC.**

**No enquiries or canvassing should be made directly to MIC.**

**Deadline for applications: 12noon on Monday, 17th June 2024**

*Mary Immaculate College is an equal opportunities employer with a strong commitment to diversity, inclusion and equality at all levels of the organisation.*

**mazars**



# Laity must accept overburdened priests need time off – Bishop Roche



**An enthusiastic Church-led youth group helped to shape new Dublin bishop's faith and path to priesthood, writes Chai Brady**

**Y**oung priests are “very courageous” and countercultural in following their vocation in modern Ireland, Dublin's new auxiliary bishop has said, adding that there is a need to alleviate pressure on priests who are tasked with a plethora of responsibilities.

Newly ordained Auxiliary Bishop Donal Roche told *The Irish Catholic* that in his role he hopes to better support priests who are faced with growing demands and administrative responsibilities as numbers thin.

With family descending on Dublin from across the world, including two brothers based in Australia, for his episcopal ordination Bishop Roche certainly feels the weight of responsibility placed on him by Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin.

## Vocation

Looking back on his youth and faith journey, he said: “I grew up in the late 60s, early 70s, so Faith was there, but not really talked about very much. We went to Mass every Sunday. My mother would have talked about it occasionally, but my father just went to Mass, said his prayers and was an example.

“I did what I had to do. I never rebelled against it, but it was just something I did: going to school on a Monday, you went to Mass on a Sunday. But it wasn't until in my late teens when Faith began to become real for me.”

Fr Roche said that in the late 70s it was quite normal for a teenager to go to Mass and that he met many of his friends through Church-based activities, youth clubs etc.

“I formed a bond of friendship with a group of people, and thanks to a local curate in our parish, who would have been very enthusiastic and great, he formed a group

of people who came together and we prayed and discussed scripture... that is when Faith began to become very real.

“Ever since then, back when I was 19 or 20, the scriptures, particularly the Gospels – the vision of the Gospels – took root. And that's always been there. That's what kept me going.

“I've always found it an inspiration to try to live by Gospel values. I haven't always succeeded. In fact, I have failed miserably on many occasions, but it's always there. That vision that is in the Scripture and also the gathering for the Eucharist, the sense of community, the breaking of bread has always been a huge inspiration for me. But from the time I was a teenager, that's what led me into seminary, those early three or four years a lot of deep friendships were formed and my Faith was really strengthened.”

When Bishop Roche was in his 20s, reading his “battered old Bible” waiting for Mass in his parish church, he felt a sense that maybe he would explore a vocation to the priesthood, adding that the Scripture was something that “really made sense to me”.

**“I really have great admiration for the few seminarians we have. I think they are very courageous, much more so than I would have been. They are swimming against the tide”**

Regarding new vocations to the priesthood he said: “To be a priest at the time would have been a very respectable thing. Neighbours and friends would have celebrated the fact that I was going into the seminary. It was much easier for us, and the fact that there was so many of us – there was 25 in my class – we were supported by each other and supported by family and by society. It was a very positive thing to do. As we know with all that's happened over the years, with all of the scandals and the growing secularisation, that culture has changed, the climate has changed and it's much more difficult now for a guy who's thinking of being a priest, and that's why I really have great admiration for the few seminarians we have. I think they are very courageous, much



Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell, places the bishop's mitre on Bishop Donal Roche's head. Picture: John McElroy.

more so than I would have been. They are swimming against the tide.”

Asked about the pressures put on the few remaining priests, Fr Roche said he is very familiar with the difficulties with trying to get time off particularly in a big parish where there are a lot of funerals and other duties that need an immediate response.

He said: “It is a difficulty, there's no doubt about it. I have had it myself for the last number of years. I can get a break, but it's kind of Monday to Friday holidays, it is hard to get weekends off. I am thankfully blessed with energy and I love what I do and all that but as you get older it is more difficult. I know a lot of the priests in the diocese are under a lot of pressure in having time off, being burdened with the extra workload because parishes have been grouped together as a priest might be looking after two or three parishes.”

## Challenges

Highlighting the challenge of funerals in particular, Bishop Roche said that some parishes face three funerals a week. “It is being addressed as part of the Building Hope project where we're trying to encourage people in parishes to understand the situation, to be aware of it, to be involved in it. There's a lot of things happening, like training of funeral teams and baptism teams to take some of

the burden away from priests and to give people the option not to have a funeral Mass or a wedding Mass – you can have a service without the Mass. Things like that are happening – but we're still hoping and praying for vocations,” he added.

**“I can understand that for a priest who has been ordained for 50 years or more, and he feels he is letting people down when he doesn't have Mass every single day”**

Realistically, Bishop Roche says that there will not be the same number of vocations to the priesthood as in the past, so the Dublin Diocese is preparing for a Church that provides fewer Masses, and while the “Eucharist has to be provided, it won't be the same level of service as before”.

“We have to let priests know that they can let go of some things. Some priests feel they have to keep everything going – three Masses every Sunday – and it's difficult to let go of things,” Bishop Roche said.

“I can understand that for a priest who has been ordained for 50 years or more, and he feels he is letting people

down when he doesn't have Mass every single day, and yet in a lot of groups of parishes now, there's a system where at least one day in the week where there won't be Mass. So you might have no Mass on Tuesday. So the people can go somewhere else on a Tuesday.

“It needs to be more accepted and more the norm. I think people still feel there should be Mass in every church, every day. We have to work harder at that I think to let people realise that there has to be time off for priests, and that they need to recover and recuperate from their work.

“That is the reality of life. When you had two or three priests in the parish, that could easily be managed, but now you could have your day or your week blocked out with all your appointments and then the funeral just comes, the phone call out of the blue and you could have two or three funerals booked in for the week before you know it. It's often happened to me. Heading into the weekend I could have three funerals for the following week before I even got to Monday, I had funerals taking over. And you're trying to do other things as well – keep in touch with the schools and the sacramental programme – so things get dropped then because the urgent things take over from the important things very often.”

## Decline

Bishop Roche said that he has noticed that quite a number of people are not having a Church funeral, and that it is “sad they're going straight to the crematorium or the graveyard” as the Church can offer a church service but not necessarily a Mass.

He said that the diocese will soon be having a meeting with funeral directors to “let people know that there are alternatives”.

“You can still have a church service, a prayer service, with the Gospel but led by a layperson. And I think people, when they realise that, they might opt for that rather than having nothing at all, or having just a secular service – which is becoming more and more common.”

Bishop Roche said that many young people are not Mass-goers and may not place the same value on the Mass as the older generation.

“You see it all the time with the sacramental programme, the First Communion, Confirmation, people are still Catholics, they still want to receive the sacraments, but they wouldn't necessarily be Mass-going every week,” he said.

“Wedding Masses are almost gone, the number of Church weddings has collapsed but even those who have a Church wedding very often there is not a wedding Mass, it's just a service. I think in the past everything had a



## “Bishop Roche said that in terms of young people there are many initiatives happening but they are small in various parts of the country and “scattered”, and there’s a need to connect them”

Mass attached to it and it does not necessarily have to be so, so it's about educating people that you can still have a fairly worthy and beautiful celebration of a funeral with prayers and readings but not necessarily with the Eucharist,” Bishop Roche said.

“The proportion of Catholic weddings fell from 40% in 2022, while the percentage of civil ceremonies increased from 26.2%.”

Looking at last year's figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), it was reported that the number of Catholic weddings made up just 35% of all those taking place in the State – the lowest recorded figure since the year 2000 – with civil ceremonies making up 32%.

The proportion of Catholic weddings fell from 40% in 2022, while the percentage of civil ceremonies increased from 26.2%.

### Youth

Bishop Roche said that in terms of young people there are many initiatives happening but they are small in various parts of the country and “scattered”, and there's a need to connect them.

“I would hope to have more of a role in that, in trying to give to people what I had myself, I feel it's such a treasure,” he said, particularly in a ‘social media culture’ with TikTok, YouTube and more, getting the word of God across “is a challenge”.

Asked what he saw were going to be his main roles

as a new auxiliary in Dublin, Bishop Roche said that “supporting priests will be one very big part, and supporting the archbishop in his task as he's got a huge amount to do”.

However in terms of engaging young people he added: “I would love to be able to focus on some way of inspiring and getting young people together, for prayer, scripture groups, social action groups... That would be a hope that I'd be able to focus on something around that.”

“But first of all, it's not just about getting people to do things or to come to things, it's getting them to have an encounter first with Christ, essentially it's about helping people to find the Lord in prayer or in scripture.”

“We get as far as Confirmation with them in the Primary school system and it's just such a challenge after that”

Born in 1958 to Sheila and Joe Roche, Bishop Roche grew up in Drimnagh in Dublin, the middle child of a family of seven children. He attended both primary and secondary school at Drimnagh Castle CBS, and is no stranger to the issues Dublin faces, lamenting the shooting earlier this month which saw a 20-year-old murdered in Drimnagh. An AR-15, a military grade rifle, was used in the shooting.

“We get as far as Confirmation with them in the Primary school system and it's just such a challenge after that. Once they go beyond that as teenagers it's very difficult for parents, for teachers, to keep youngsters safe from the

dangers that are there. It's so easy for them to be led down the wrong path. It's a challenge for all of us, not just the Church, to try to keep young people safe,” Bishop Roche said.

### Life experience

Unlike some other priests who shied away from commenting on issues related to immigration and asylum seekers, Bishop Roche as a parish priest in Wicklow was always open to speak about the concerns of the community and the need to welcome the stranger as controversy arose last summer when the Grand Hotel in Wicklow began to be used as a centre for asylum seekers.

Bishop Roche worked for four years as a clerical officer in Dublin County Council before entering Clonliffe College in 1980 to study for the priesthood. He was sent to Maynooth to study for a degree in theology and was ordained for the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1986 in his home parish of Mourne Road.

His first appointment was a period of six years as a priest-teacher in Coláiste Dhúlaigh, Coolock. He then spent five years as a diocesan adviser for religious education in primary schools. This was followed by eight years as chaplain to St Mark's Community School, Tallaght. After a total of 19 years involved in religious education, he still retains a great interest in the evangelisation of young people and has an active involvement in sacramental preparation programmes. During this time, Fr Roche also served for about six years as assistant vocations director in the archdiocese.

Fr Roche's first parish appointment was in Lucan South, where he spent seven years. This was followed by 11



Bishop Donal Roche embraces the Anglican Archbishop of Dublin at the ceremony.

years in Wicklow Town, also looking after the surrounding areas of Kilbride, Barnardarrig and Brittas Bay for four of those years.

### Immigration

Regarding migration, he said: “I have no doubt that the majority of Irish people are still very welcoming and very compassionate. And when you see the individuals and you hear their stories, I think most people are very welcoming.”

“And yet I can totally understand the other side of it, where people are saying there are so many people coming that we can't cope and we see that with space going up along the canal, we don't have accommodation, so people are understandably

concerned about it. So there's no easy answer,” he said.

“It's not about taking sides and saying we should welcome everybody or welcome nobody, it's a very delicate situation”

“There is a xenophobia, a racism among a minority of our population and it's horrendous, but I do think we still have a compassionate heart to welcome the stranger. Understandably people are concerned about numbers... in a situation where the only

hotel in the town is gone, people talk about livelihoods and the tourism industry – very real concerns. It's not about taking sides and saying we should welcome everybody or welcome nobody, it's a very delicate situation.”

Fr Roche is a fluent Irish speaker and is often called on to celebrate Mass and the sacraments in Irish in various parts of the archdiocese.

As an auxiliary bishop, Donal Roche's titular See is that of the ancient diocese of Cell Ausaille, which is situated in the area of Killashee near Naas, Co. Kildare. St Auxilius was said to be a nephew of St Patrick and there are monastic ruins in Killashee that are believed to date back to the 5th Century.



Newly appointed auxiliaries of the Archdiocese of Dublin, Bishops Paul Dempsey and Donal Roche, greet members of the congregation in St Andrew's Church.

## 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





# Canada, Christianity and the culture wars



Martina Purdy

**O**n a recent trip to Canada, I was left exasperated by a homily on the feast of St Francois de Laval. This saint - canonised by St John Paul II - was the first bishop to travel to what was then a 17th century French colony. He was also the first to establish a seminary. That much was clear from the homily. But why did this Toronto priest seem to be apologising for the mission? More political correctness, I thought, as he mumbled something about all us having our own views on Canadian history.

All I wanted to know was what this missionary did for Christ to merit sainthood.

So I did my own research. St Francois de Laval trained Huron Indians for the priesthood, and got into a tussle with the state when he objected to the lucrative liquor trade which was leaving native Indians dangerously intoxicated.

Eventually, I asked a fellow Catholic why this priest seemed so reticent to talk about St Francois de Laval?

"Probably," he said, "because of Owen Keenan."

I knew this priest, now a monsignor, from the Good Shepherd parish where I was raised. His parents were solid Catholics who had emigrated to Canada from Newry.

## Kamloops

I didn't know that he had gotten into some bother over a homily which was posted online in June 2021, soon after the remains of 215 native Indian children were reportedly discovered at a former residential school in Kamloops. (These state institutions, run by the Church, forced children from First Nations into schools, where their own language was forbidden. Horrendous cases of abuse took place).

The mass grave story spread like wildfire. The Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was in the thick of it, demanding a Church apology.

Mgr Owen agreed that the



Church should say sorry for its role in the "ill-devised government project". But he suggested waiting until the facts were established before "rendering ultimate judgement".

"Many people had very positive experiences," he said, receiving healthcare and education in isolated regions.

**“We are not allowed to even say that good was done there. I await to see what comes to my inbox”**

Calling for prayer and reconciliation, he added: "Two-thirds of the country is blaming the Church, which we love, for the tragedies that occurred there."

"I presume the same number would thank the Church for the good done in those schools, but of course that question was never asked."

"And we are not allowed to even say that good was done there. I await to see what comes to my inbox."

His inbox exploded in a media storm which led to his resignation as pastor of Merciful Redeemer Parish. The monsignor was placed on indefinite leave by Ontario's Cardinal Collins.

On a visit to Canada in July 2022, Pope Francis apologised for the Church's role in the residential school system. Mgr Keenan is now pastor of St Patrick's in Brampton but his warning about rushing to judgment was prophetic.

## Error

The claim about mass graves at Kamloops turned out to be a grave error. No excavations have been carried out at Kamloops and other sites have, so far, failed to turn up evidence of any bodies. But nearly 100 churches across Canada have been torched or damaged - one of many disturbing occurrences during Justin Trudeau's premiership.

Who could forget his 'liberal' government's decision to use emergency powers to end the mass protest in Ottawa over his draconian rules around Covid vaccine mandates and passports? Aston-

ishingly, around 200 personal bank accounts were frozen.

**“I did not want to get the vaccine jab. But I was left with no choice. I could not re-open my business without it”**

Trudeau said he wanted to keep Canada "safe".

"Totalitarian," said a friend whose own business did not survive the lockdown.

Another told me: "I did not want to get the vaccine jab. But I was left with no choice. I could not re-open my business without it."

To be honest, as I flew to Toronto I was bracing myself for the culture wars (Floor to ceiling Pride banners were draped all over the airport lounge as I departed last June).

In Canada abortion is legal throughout pregnancy for any reason.

Funny though, when I mentioned to a waitress that I lived in Ireland, she declared

"Oh you have big problems there!" We had an interesting conversation about the Toronto school system. "If I could afford it," she declared. "I would homeschool my kids."

I realised how bad car crime had become in Toronto when I climbed into a friend's jeep. She was struggling with one of those steering wheel clamps - the kind of security device I hadn't seen in Belfast since the Troubles ended.

But do you know what passes for "safe space" in Canada these days?

An assisted dying centre called MAiDHouse (sic), where "your life is your choice."

## Euthanasia

"What is more Orwellian than describing a euthanasia centre as a 'safe space'?" asked campaigner Dr Amanda Achtmann.

Thank God for outspoken Canadians like her - and Dr Jordan Peterson, who shot to fame when he refused to be compelled by law to use politically correct pronouns.

Canadian Chris Elston, a father of two, was so incensed

by the damage done to children by puberty blockers, he strapped a billboard to his chest with the words: there are only two genders. A video of "Billboard Chris" clashing with a garda in Dublin went viral.

**“A new creed however is springing up”**

I thought of him as I came to Dublin Street, Markham, where 19th century Mennonite architecture and a sprinkling of churches recall Canada's Christian roots. A new creed however is springing up. Lamp posts were festooned with weird looking council banners, proclaiming diversity, unity and intersectionality. (Not entirely clear what intersectionality is but it has something to do with identity politics, discrimination and oppression.)

I left Canada pondering the fate of Mgr Keenan.

But also remembering the faith of our fathers who wisely made St Joseph the official patron of Canada.

All is not lost.



# Does anti-Semitism exist in Ireland?



David Quinn

**D**oes anti-Semitism exist in Ireland and how widespread is it? How do you even define the term? Ever since the brutal war in Gaza began last year, following the Hamas atrocities inside Israel, criticism of Israel in this country and elsewhere has intensified. The criticisms are so strong, that many Jews are saying it is sometimes tinged with anti-Semitism.

After Ireland announced it was recognising the state of Palestine last week, the Israeli ambassador to Ireland, Dana Erlich, remarked to *The Irish Times* that attacks on Israel have “gone beyond the normal criticism, it is a vilification of a whole society, which now is also translated to the Jewish community here.”

She said: “We see the rise of anti-Semitism. And it is all connected.”

## Critic

These remarks earned the ire of President Higgins who is a long-time critic of Israel. Rebuk-

ing the ambassador, he said: “It is absolutely outrageous to be abusing the Jewish community by saying that there is widespread anti-Semitism.”

It is interesting that he accused the Israeli ambassador of “abusing the Jewish community”. What can he have meant? Possibly he believes that she was wrongly using Ireland’s Jews as a pawn in the diplomatic row between Israel and Ireland.

**“The Jewish community in Ireland had never before felt ‘their viewpoint as Jewish people so delegitimised’”**

But he could not be more mistaken about this, because the ambassador was relaying exactly how Irish Jews feel.

Shortly before making these remarks, President Higgins had met the new Chief Rabbi of Ireland, Yoni Weider, who had been officially installed in a ceremony in the Dublin Hebrew Synagogue a few days before.

But Chief Rabbi Weider then got involved in the dispute. Addressing a march in Dublin on Sunday in solidarity with Israel, he said that the Jewish community in Ireland had never before felt “their viewpoint as Jewish people so delegitimised”.

He remarked that since the

Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, members of his community “feel uneasy in the street when wearing something that identifies them as Jewish, or at work. That they are negatively judged, that they are seen as the outsider, as the ‘other’.”

Addressing the Chief Rabbi’s installation ceremony, the head of the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland, Maurice Cohen said something very similar. So, there is no question that the Jewish community here feel very beleaguered and isolated, and President Higgins seems in denial of that fact.

The Jewish community believe some of the attacks on Israel are motivated by anti-Semitism. Are they right about that? Obviously criticising Israel is not, in itself, anti-Semitism. You can dislike the actions in the West Bank and Gaza of successive Israeli governments, and even oppose the existence of the Jewish state (that is, Israel), without being in the least anti-Semitic.

## Fiercest

But there is also no doubt that some of Israel’s fiercest opponents are anti-Semitic. Hamas is obviously a good example of that. So is Iran and so are some of the leaders of the Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the West Bank. For example, the head of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, has been strongly criticised in the past for anti-Semitic remarks he has made including a claim only last September that Adolf Hitler ordered the mass

murder of Jews because of their “social role” as moneylenders, rather than out of animosity to Judaism.

Palestinian children are often taught material in schools that is unambiguously anti-Semitic, material that has drawn the ire of the European Parliament.

**“Sinn Féin would shun any other organisation that has a racist ideology, so why not Hamas?”**

None of this happens in Ireland, obviously, but a lot of Irish politicians and activists are very careless, to put it at its mildest, about who they sometimes share platforms and common cause with. For example, Sinn Féin representatives have from time to time met Hamas leaders. It is all very well to say that this is how you bring an organisation in from the cold, but this is not the right approach when such an organisation remains dedicated to the destruction of Israel and is so anti-Semitic in its core ideology.

Sinn Féin would shun any other organisation that has a racist ideology, so why not Hamas? Why isn’t there the same concern about anti-Semitism as there is about other forms of racism?

If you are an Irish Jew, how are you supposed to feel about this?

President Higgins himself

has sometimes warned against Islamophobia, but seems to deny that anti-Semitism is a real problem in Ireland, even though he acknowledges it is very real elsewhere.

It is interesting that a lot of the same people who are very alert to the possibility of racism in Ireland, and who are often quick to condemn as ‘racist’ hard questions about our immigration and asylum policies, are so slow to see anti-Semitism.

Is it racist to be anti-Zionist?

## Zionism

No, it is not, but some of the criticisms of ‘Zionism’ veer into anti-Semitism by conjuring up old stereotypes about the Jews.

Zionism, by the way, is simply Jewish nationalism, so is not wicked in itself, unless the desire for a national homeland per se, is wicked, which is obviously not the case.

But sometimes in the criticisms of ‘Zionism’, there are references to the influence of Jewish money and bankers. This is classic anti-Semitism. It is a stereotype with a very long history. It has often prompted pogroms against Jewish communities.

A few years ago, a Sinn Féin TD retweeted a claim that Hitler was a pawn for a bank owned by the Rothschild family, which is Jewish.

Associating Zionism with Nazism and with ‘genocide’ also verges into this territory. It is a constant now to do this. Associating the Jewish state with Nazism and accusing it

of perpetrating something like a modern Holocaust is quite deliberate. There are few other states with bad human rights records, much worse than Israel’s (see Saudi Arabia or China for example) which are so regularly associated with Nazism.

In a report on anti-Semitism in the British Labour party a few years ago, human rights lawyer, Shami Chakrabarti, said: “I recommend that Labour members resist the use of Hitler, Nazi and Holocaust metaphors, distortions and comparisons in debates about Israel-Palestine in particular.”

She added: “My advice to critics of the Israeli State and/or Government is to use the term ‘Zionist’ advisedly, carefully and never euphemistically or as part of personal abuse.”

**“The Catholic Church needs to be very careful how it approaches this subject”**

This is advice we would do well to heed here.

A final word. The Catholic Church needs to be very careful how it approaches this subject. It is one thing to support the rights of the Palestinian people, but given the long history of Catholic anti-Semitism, we have to be very careful not to be seen to veer into that territory again, meaning we have to choose our language carefully.

# ‘How to build a life – ask a Dominican saint’



Breda O'Brien

**T**he Irish Dominicans are celebrating 800 years in this country. They arrived a mere eight years after the founding of the Order and just three after the death of St Dominic.

At the time of writing, the seventh most popular article on *The Atlantic* website is about wisdom to be gleaned from great Dominicans. (*The Atlantic* is a US magazine famous for its in-depth analysis of politics, culture, and technology.)

The article is not connected to 800 years of Irish Dominicans but it is inspired by more than 800 years of the Dominican Order. It is written by Arthur C. Brooks, who teaches the most popular elective at Harvard Business School, about how to be happy. His popular *Atlantic* column, ‘How to Build a Life’,

has hundreds of thousands of readers.

Brooks is a practising Catholic but when writing for the secular media, draws his spirituality from eclectic sources, including but not limited to Buddhism. He was raised as an Evangelical Protestant but had a conversion experience at the age of 15 involving Our Lady of Guadalupe. On a school band trip, he visited the Guadalupe Shrine where the tilma, or miraculous image of Our Lady imprinted on Juan Diego’s poncho, is housed.

**“Brooks used a version of the current *Atlantic* article recently when he gave the commencement address to graduates”**

He became convinced that Our Lady was also looking at him with compassion and began the process of becoming a Catholic. He dropped out of college to work as a French horn player and then, emigrated to

Spain in pursuit of his future wife, Ester, who had been raised in a staunch Communist household. After long prayer, she converted. Brooks now attends daily mass, prays the rosary and spends an additional half hour a day in personal prayer.

In the modern world, this all sounds like a recipe for being cancelled but instead, he teaches at Harvard, and writes books with Oprah Winfrey about how to build the life you want.

Brooks used a version of the current *Atlantic* article recently when he gave the commencement address to graduates of Providence College, a Dominican university in Rhode Island.

## Teachings

The commencement address is even more explicitly religious than *The Atlantic* article but they share core tenets. He draws on Meister Eckhart, the Dominican mystic, to make the point that we should not be attached to our goals. In the Commencement address, he elaborates on this to say we should instead, be attached to the will of God. Specifically, we should pray every night that God’s will be done in us.

He then cites Rose of Lima, a contemporary of St Martin de Porres, to illustrate another fundamental truth. The 1600s gave the truly bad advice, ‘If it feels good, do it.’ Brooks says that the modern world declares, ‘If it feels bad, avoid it.’ This is also a disaster. He says instead that we should learn from St Rose. ‘Without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace,’ she stated. ‘The gifts of grace increase as the struggles increase.’

**“Remember that our Saviour, Jesus Christ suffered. His Blessed Mother suffered. Are you suffering? That means you’re a human on Earth”**

In the commencement address, he builds on this by saying: ‘Suffering per se is not evidence that you’re broken. Remember this as you struggle in the coming years. Remember that our Saviour, Jesus Christ

suffered. His Blessed Mother suffered. Are you suffering? That means you’re a human on Earth.’

He says trenchantly that pursuit of your own, personal truth is pointless and misguided. In *The Atlantic*, he points to St Thomas Aquinas, who declares ‘that only one true and divine truth exists—an ineffable mystery that we can’t fully attain on Earth.’

Again, in the commencement address, he elaborates by stating that relativism is not only wrong but a likely cause of depression. He summarises his entire message by saying, ‘Use things, love people and worship God.’

He also cites St Dominic himself, who advocates that it is better to ‘wear humility than fine clothes.’ Brooks says that it is better to listen than to shout down opponents.

## Trump

Brooks, in between being a French horn player and a happiness guru, was head of a powerful, centre-right think-tank, the American Enterprise Institute. He was a free-market advocate with influence on everyone from Mitt Rom-

ney to Barack Obama.

However, the advent of Trump changed all that. After his resignation from AEI, Brooks addressed a National Prayer Breakfast in 2020 attended by Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi, where he advocated loving our enemies as Christ taught.

**“Seeing Dominican saints profiled in a major US magazine is still an unexpected thrill”**

Trump spoke after him and explicitly rejected not only Brooks, but Christ’s teachings.

It is easy to be cynical about Brooks, his New York Times bestselling book with Oprah, his Harvard perch, or his top fee being \$100,000 for a speech. There is something uncomfortable and offputting about re-packaging Catholicism as self-help to achieve a happier life.

Nonetheless, seeing Dominican saints profiled in a major US magazine is still an unexpected thrill.



# Out&About

## Prayers for Donegal



**DONEGAL:** Twenty one children received First Holy Communion on May 1 at St Michael's Church, Creeslough. Prayers were offered up quietly for the success of Donegal the next day.



**LIMERICK:** Boys and girls from Doon Parish who received their First Holy Communion pictured with their class teachers, Ms Elizabeth Doherty, C.B.S. and Ms Ann Treacy, Mercy Convent N.S., along with Fr Jimmy Donnelly, P.P.



**TIPPERARY:** Crowning Our Lady during Mass on May 12, at St Mary's Parish, Cahir.

### IN SHORT

#### New exhibition displays early records of 'Mission of Mercy'

The 'Catherine McAuley and the Mission of Mercy' exhibition was launched on May 18, at Mercy International Centre in Dublin. Sr McAuley founded the 'Sisters of Mercy' in 1831, a religious congregation largely involved in assisting and caring for the poor and sick.

The exhibition "delves into the material history of the house, the social context in which Catherine McAuley and her early companions lived, and the daily routines and religious practices of the founding Sisters of Mercy," said the Mercy International Association in a statement.

"Catherine McAuley's vision and achievements reach across the centuries. Her commitment to social justice, her courage, and

her immense support for women and children are remarkable. I believe her story will strike a chord with people worldwide today," said Sr Margaret Daly, Head of Heritage and Spirituality for Mercy International Association during the launch.

The exhibition offers a variety of audio recordings, an interactive digital archive, and a unique collection of stories, photos, and artefacts from the first House of Mercy.

#### Catholic University legacy still celebrated 170 years after foundation

The Catholic University, which is today part of University College Dublin (UCD) and the Museum of Literature of Ireland, celebrated 170 years on May 18. Irish Catholic bishops first approved Fr John Henry Newman as

the rector of the university. Its doors stayed open until 1858 when Fr Newman decided to return to his home in London.

His departure left the university under the care of the Jesuits who then divided part of the Catholic University into UCD. Fr Newman's legacy is remembered within UCD's history through the Newman House.

The Newman House is now currently the host for the Museum of Literature in Ireland. This museum uses the historic building to showcase Irish Literature through interactive and imaginative exhibitions and art.

Made up of two connected Georgian-style homes, the Newman House stands up from its surroundings. Unique art, both inside and outside of this historic building, help draw people in and teach them about Irish Literature, one of the main objectives for opening the Catholic University 170 years ago.

#### Giant puppet visits Derry

The world-famous symbol of hope for refugees, Little Amal, a 12-foot puppet arrived in Derry as part of a tour of Northern Ireland. She spent four days in Belfast, beginning on Friday, May 17, before making her way to Derry.

Since July 2021, Amal has been welcomed by two million people on the streets and by tens of millions online. A total of 440 events unique to each community that she visits have been created for her by thousands of artists, civil society and faith leaders.

Amal – whose name means hope in Arabic – is at the heart of 'The Walk', a project that began three years ago on the Syria-Turkey border. The Walk has so far raised almost £750,000 for 'The Amal Fund with Choose Love' which provides support for refugees, including education, food, shelter, emergency medical care and legal assistance.



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Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**TYRONE:** Primary 7 Pupils enjoy a special pre-Confirmation Retreat at Termonmaguirc Parish.



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**TIPPERARY:** Crowning Our Lady during Mass on May 12, at St Mary's Parish, Cahir.



**DUBLIN:** Sr Patricia O'Donovan, CEO, Mercy International Association, and Sr Margaret Daly, Head of Heritage and Spirituality at Mercy International Association, at the 'Catherine McAuley and the Mission of Mercy' exhibition launch.



**CARLOW:** Fr Seamus Whelan S.C.A. and his Grand-Nephew Daniel Kealy on the occasion of Daniel's First Holy Communion in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Borris May 18. Fr Seamus, who has ministered in Argentina throughout his priesthood, will celebrate the Golden Jubilee of his Ordination next month.



**DUBLIN:** Members and board members of Mercy International Association at the 'Catherine McAuley and the Mission of Mercy' exhibition launch.

## 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 Portlengone 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

Connect Summer BBQ to happen in Mardyke House on June 6 at 7pm. It is an opportunity for young adults aged between 18-35 to meet new people from across the Diocese of Cork and Ross. The evening will include food, fellowship and music and costs €8. For more information check the diocese's website.

## DERRY

The Holy Family Padre Pio Prayer Group meets on the first Tuesday each month (next on June 4) at Holy Family Chapel, Ballymagroarty, Derry. It starts with the Rosary at 6.45 pm, 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.

Pilgrims of Hope International Mass and picnic organised by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate will take place on Sunday, June 9 at the Oblate Church, Tyrconnell road, Inchicore, Dublin 8 at 1.30pm. The event will bring together Catholics

from all nationalities, to celebrate the cultural richness of the Church.

## GALWAY

Celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi with Eucharistic procession will start with Mass in June 2, in the Abbey Church at 3pm, followed by procession to Poor Clare Monastery.

## KERRY

Sacred Heart Novena will happen at St John's Parish, Tralee, from May 30 to June 7. Prayers will be each evening at 6pm followed by Mass at 6.10.

## 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

Achonry Diocese Youth Commission's 'Achonry Reek Challenge' to happen in Croagh Patrick, Westport on Sunday June 9 at 3pm. Everyone between ages 18 - 35 welcome (under 18s must be accompanied by guardian). The event is free and refreshments will be served afterwards. Contact Stephen to register at youthministry@achonrydiocese.org.

## WEXFORD

St Anthony's novena at Franciscan Friary Church from June 4-13, will happen on weekdays at 10am and 1.05pm, on Saturday Healing Service at 11am with vigil at 7.30pm, and on Sunday at 10.45am. On June 13 a Solemn Feast Mass followed by refreshments will happen at 10am.





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### For first time, Italian Church nets less than €1 billion in taxpayer funds

● For the first time since Italy's system of public financing for religious and charitable causes was overhauled in 1984, income for the Catholic Church from public tax revenue has fallen below €1 billion, capping out this year at €910,266,000. Last year, the total was €1.3 billion, and in 2022 it was €1.1 billion.

While the declines reflect a gradual long-term drop in the number of Italians opting to direct a portion of their personal income tax payments to the Catholic Church, observers say the decline in 2024 also reflects an overall decline in income tax revenue due to accounting holdovers from the peak of the Covid lockdowns, which are still being reflected in collections.

### Florida priest charged for biting arm of woman he says was desecrating Eucharist

● A priest in Florida bit the forearm of a woman he says was desecrating the Eucharist in a Communion line at church last week and has now been charged with one count of battery.

Fr Fidel Rodriguez, 66, admitted to police that he bit the woman but said he did so only after she reached into the ciborium

and tried to grab a host from it, damaging other hosts as she did so.

"The only defence that I found to defend something that for us, for all of us, is sacred, was biting her. I have recognised that I bite her. I'm not denying that," Fr Rodriguez told police, according to body camera video obtained by CNA.

### Prominent Jesuit: The Society of Jesus is in 'profound decline'

● Fr Julio Fernández Techera, a Jesuit priest and rector of the Catholic University of Uruguay, has written a widely circulated, critical essay about the Society of Jesus warning that the order, founded by St Ignatius of Loyola in 1534, is in "deep decline".

The essay by the 57-year-old priest is titled "*Ad Usum Nostrorum III*" ("For Our Use III") addressed to his Jesuit brothers. The document, which originally circulated within the Society of Jesus, was recently published by the Spanish journalist Francisco José Fernández de la Cigoña on his blog on Infovaticana.

This is the third document in a series that Fernández began in 2022 when he wrote his initial essay ("*Ad Usum Nostrorum*"), noting that for a long time he has felt dissatisfied with the situation in the Society of Jesus while making it clear that he is not going through a vocational crisis nor is he thinking about leaving.

### Church officials: Militarisation of Ecuador prisons causing starvation and torture

● Four months after criminals took control over several prisons, causing a wave of violence in Ecuador, officers are being denounced for continually violating the inmates' rights. Prisoners who were released have described the situation inside the prisons as a "living hell", with a lack of food, no medical or spiritual assistance, and frequent sessions of torture.

According to Giovanni Dután, who has been working as a volunteer in the prison pastoral ministry in the city of Cuenca over the past 12 years, the missionaries are stopped from getting into the Turi penitentiary by the military – which now control the prisons – over the past few months.

"With two or three exceptions in March and April, when we were allowed to celebrate the Holy Mass at two prison blocks, we have not been allowed there all over that period for safety reasons," Mr Dután told *Crux*.

## Pakistan bishop calls anti-Christian mob violence a 'dark day'

A May 25 attack on Christians in north-central Pakistan by an enraged Muslim mob, accusing a Christian man of having defaced the Quran, represents a "dark day" for the country's Christian community, Pakistan's top Catholic official has said.

"I strongly condemn this incident. It's a dark day for the Church in Pakistan," Bishop Samson Shukardin of Hyderabad, president of the Pakistan Catholic Bishops Conference, told *Crux* in the aftermath of the attack.

"Without knowing or investigating [the accusation regarding the Quran], the mob attacked a 74-year-old Christian man," Bishop Shukardin said. "Christians are very disappointed and afraid." Although many observers have long complained that such violent episodes are encouraged by Pakistan's controversial anti-blasphemy laws, Bishop Shukardin said the Church is not calling for those laws to be repealed but rather for good judgment in how they're applied.

"Many Muslims have condemned this incident, there are many good Muslims, but the majority attack on mere allegations," he said. "Many of the complaints are based on made-up evidence, and the real causes are personal vendetta or gains."

"Jealousy over the economic development of Christians is one of the reasons for this attack, Bishop Shukar-



Members of the Christian community chant slogans as they hold placards during a protest in Karachi, Pakistan. Photos: OSV News photo/Akhtar Soomro, Reuters

din said. "They use the law against Christians for professional rivalry. Christians are afraid to start and open businesses, as the Muslims will not accept it." Bishop Shukardin also credited local police for intervening and preventing fatalities.

According to local observers, hundreds of Muslims took part in the mob violence in Sargodha, Pakistan, located in the Punjab province, on Saturday. The incident began with an accusation that a Christian had defaced the Muslim holy book, which led to an assault in which his shoe-making factory was burned

to the ground.

Sargodha police chief Sario Khan was quoted by local media as saying that officers had rescued at least five people from the violence, and that stones and bricks had been hurled at police during the melee.

A police spokesman said the violence is now under control and that officers are investigating the allegation regarding the Quran, which would be a crime under Pakistan's controversial anti-blasphemy laws. According to local sources, at least one Christian man named Lazar was seriously injured during the violence and is currently

hospitalised.

Overall, roughly 25 arrests were made. "This ugly incident of mob violence has made us Christian very terrified, for we feel that no Christian is safe in Pakistan," said Dominican Fr James Channan, who directs a Church-run peace centre in Lahore, Pakistan.

Fr Channan expressed scepticism that the culprits would face legal consequences for their actions. "The grave injustice which is done to Christians after such horrific attacks is that no one is punished," he said.

## Cardinal Hollerich: 'Today we have politicians. Politicians have no convictions'

In an interview with the French newspaper *La Croix* last week, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ, discussed the European elections and the dwindling influence of Christianity on politics.

Cardinal Hollerich is archbishop of Luxembourg, a member of the Council of Cardinals that advises Pope Francis, and a key figure at the Synod on Synodality, where he serves as relator general.

"This is a political consequence of the decline of Christianity and Catholicism in Europe because it is a fact that Christians in Europe are now a minority and will become even more so in the coming years," he said, explaining the current political position of Christians in Europe.

This decline had led to a "lack of ideas" and a lack of politicians of the calibre of Robert Schuman and Alcide De Gasperi – two staunch Catholics

and founders of the European Union.

"Today we have politicians. Politicians have no convictions: They read polls and adapt what they think to them. This is a huge mistake that I see at both national and European levels," the cardinal said.

Compelling political argumentation has faded into the background, he added. "Today, those who govern us no longer have a backbone."

## Myanmar: A state of unprecedented turmoil and suffering, says cardinal

In an interview with *ACI Prensa*, CNA's Spanish-language news partner, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, archbishop of Yangon in Myanmar, said there is an "unprecedented state of turmoil and suffering, which seems to have no end" in

the country resulting from a coup d'état at the beginning of 2021 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conflict has already left more than 100 places of worship bombed or damaged, the cardinal said, and the violence has spread in

many areas of the territory.

In addition, he said that almost 3 million people have been displaced and are in urgent need of assistance, which has been arriving little by little thanks to the work of the Catholic Church and other nongovernmental

organizations such as Religions for Peace.

"The attack on places of worship has forced many congregations to abandon their churches, a significant blow to predominantly Christian communities such as Kachin," he lamented.





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## Making strides for Christ



Pilgrims process in a 12-mile walk from Laporte to Walker, Minnesota, along the Paul Bunyan State Trail during the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage May 20, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Courtney Meyer

# US Catholic group sues President Biden for banning annual Mass

A Catholic fraternity is taking the White House to court after it was banned from holding an annual Mass it has staged at a national cemetery for more than 60 years. The Knights of Columbus has held a Memorial Day Mass at the Poplar Grove National Cemetery in Virginia every year since 1960.

But it is claiming religious discrimination after the National Park Service (NPS) decided the religious service amounted to a 'demonstration' and decided to ban it on the Petersburg site.

"The policy and the decision blocking the Knights of Columbus from continuing their long-standing religious tradition is a blatant violation of the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom

Restoration Act," their lawyer John Moran said in a press release.

"We urge the court to grant our restraining order and allow the Knights to hold their service this Memorial Day."

The group was founded in New Haven, Connecticut as a welfare organisation in 1882 and boasts more than two million members around the world. The NPS has had a rule in place since the 1980s classifying religious services and vigils as "demonstrations".

There was a specific exemption for "official commemorative events conducted for Memorial Day, Veterans Day and other dates designated by the superintendent as having special historic and com-

memorative significance to a particular national cemetery".

But the NPS clamped down on the Knights after a policy change in 2022 requiring "demonstrations" that are likely to attract "onlookers" to take place elsewhere.

"National Cemeteries are established as national shrines in tribute to those who have died in service to our country," Alexa Viets, superintendent of the Petersburg National Battlefield, told the Washington Times.

"As such any special activities within the cemetery are reserved for a limited set of official commemorative activities that have a connection to military service or have a his-

toric and commemorative significance for the particular national cemetery."

Former President John F Kennedy was a member of the Knights but his fellow Catholic successor in the White House now faces a court battle over religious discrimination.

"We assume that there must have been some kind of oversight or miscommunication, and that the park service is simply going to approve the permit," said Roger Byron of law firm First Liberty Institute.

"If they don't, we'll know that something else has happened - something that bears the unmistakable marks of religious discrimination. The National Park Service is way out of line."

## Two Catholic priests kidnapped in Nigeria within a week

In an escalation of violence against Christianity, two Catholic priests have been abducted in Nigeria within a week, underscoring the ongoing persecution faced by Christians in Africa's most populous nation. Fr Oliver Buba of Yola Diocese is the latest priest to be kidnapped in Nigeria.

He was taken on May 21. In a statement released the same day by Bishop

Stephen Mamza of Yola, the priest was abducted from his residence at the St Rita Catholic Church in the Numan Local Government Area.

"With sadness in our hearts, we write to inform the general public of the kidnap of one of our priests, Very Rev Fr Oliver Buba," the bishop's statement stated. "We invite all Christ's faithful and all men and women of

goodwill to earnestly pray for quick and safe release of our priest," the bishop said, before committing the safety of the priest to the loving care of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Last Tuesday's kidnapping came barely seven days after another priest, Fr Basil Gbuzuo of Onitsha Diocese, was kidnapped on May 15.

## Vatican roundup

### Pope Francis recognises miracle for canonisation for Blessed Carlo Acutis

● Pope Francis has recognised a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Carlo Acutis, paving the way for him to become the first millennial saint.

The Italian computer-coding teenager who died of cancer in 2006 is known for his great devotion to the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

The recognition of the second miracle attributed to Blessed Acutis' intercession makes it possible that Blessed Acutis could be canonised during the Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee Year.

In a decree on May 23, Pope Francis approved the miraculous healing of a 21-year-old girl from Costa Rica named Valeria Valverde who was near death after seriously injuring her head in a bicycle accident while studying in Florence in 2022.

### Vatican doctrine czar visits Cairo to mend fallout over Fiducia

● After the Coptic Church in Egypt earlier this year severed dialogue with the Vatican over its controversial declaration approving blessings for those in same-sex unions, the Pope's doctrine czar has travelled to Cairo in an attempt to smooth things over.

Argentine Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, head of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), this week travelled to Cairo, where he

held a meeting with Pope Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The reason for the visit, according to Vatican News, the Vatican's official state-run information platform, was to discuss the DDF's December 18 declaration, "Fiducia Supplicans: On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings", and the Coptic Synod's subsequent statement rejecting it and announcing a suspension of dialogue.

### Vatican reverses dismissal of nun in US diocese

● In a ruling that in-part closes a year-long saga that at times had gotten ugly in the public sphere, the Vatican has overturned a decree from Bishop Michael Olson of Fort Worth, Texas, in which he dismissed Mother Teresa Agnes Gerlach from the Carmelite Order.

Bishop Olson issued a decree of dismissal against Gerlach on June 1, 2023, after an investigation the diocese launched months earlier found the prioress of the Carmelite Monastery in Arlington, Texas, guilty of sexual misconduct with a Catholic priest of another diocese, now identified as Fr Philip Johnson from the Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina. An investigation into Fr Johnson remains ongoing.

There are a few reasons the Vatican overturned Bishop Olson's decree. Two of them are related to the particulars of Mother Gerlach's misconduct, and the other was because of a procedural misstep. The Vatican reasoned that although Mother Gerlach admitted to the misconduct, the admission did not establish that the misconduct was "perpetrated by the exertion of force of violence".

The Vatican also reasoned that her admission of the misconduct did not establish abuse of her ecclesiastical authority as prioress because she "possessed no real or even imagined authority" over Fr Johnson.

### Vatican offers assurances as China outlines rules for dialogue

● At a high-profile conference in Rome this week, top Vatican officials reaffirmed that the Church does not pose a threat to China's sovereignty and acknowledged that foreign missionaries made past "errors" in evangelisation, while also stressing the importance of unity with Rome.

Likewise, members of China's state-backed Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA) lamented what they said was a "colonialist" mentality among western foreign missionaries in the past who, they said, had a sense of "superiority" and attempted to erase Chinese culture, refusing to involve local clergy in leadership.

The conference held last week and titled, '100 years since the Concilium Sinense: Between history and present', commemorated the centenary of the 1924 Council of Shanghai and marked an unprecedented coming together of top officials from the Vatican and mainland China.



# Letter from India

## ‘Hate thy neighbour’ as an election slogan in Modi’s India



John Dayal

India’s Narendra Modi seems to have decided that he can win a third five-year term as prime minister only through campaign rhetoric targeting the Muslim religious minority as a threat not just to national security, but to the 80% Hindu majority among the country’s 1.40 billion people.

Muslims, in the census last held in 2011, account for just under 15%, with Christians at a little over 2.30%.

The Election Commission of India, its three members handpicked by Modi from among the pool of his former officials in Gujarat, where he was chief minister for 14 years, and in New Delhi since he became prime minister in 2014, has been deaf to loud protests by civil society which is monitoring the elections carefully.

On May 11, civil society groups protested against the election commission for its inaction on violations of the model code of conduct by Modi, saying the officials should “grow a spine or resign”.

### Policies

Former judges, retired election officials, bureaucrats, military officers, professors, artists and editors, are apprehensive that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) may take extreme measures in the general elections now underway to blunt popular anger against Modi’s policies that have impacted employment, agriculture, education and social harmony.

Religion is seen as the super weapon in this no-holds-barred election – a “Brahmastra”, a divine force. Modi styles himself as the “Hindu Hriday Samrat”, or “he who rules the hearts of the Hindus”.

He sought to appease his ‘vote bank’ by rushing through the consecration of a still-incomplete Ram temple

being built on the ruins of the 500-year-old Babri mosque in Ayodhya which was demolished by rapturous mobs in 1992. It did not work.

In a wink, he fell back on rousing anti-Islam passions, a tried and proven tactic that has often worked for right-wing politicians since the Indian subcontinent’s blood-stained partition in 1947.

Modi had successfully used targeted hate against Muslims in retaining power in Gujarat, and then as the engine of his electoral campaigns to become prime minister in the general elections of 2014 and 2019.

**“Modi and his long-term friend and Home Minister Amit Shah seem to have shocked even some of their cabinet colleagues and allies with their vitriolic lampooning of Muslims”**

In the general elections, he had deftly padded them with promises of “Acche Din” or “better days”, and a return to the golden age of Hindu mythology.

But the gloves are off this time. Modi and his long-term friend and Home Minister Amit Shah seem to have shocked even some of their cabinet colleagues and allies with their vitriolic lampooning of Muslims.

The opposition parties, who are part of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), are accused of harbouring and nurturing people successively described as termites, traitors, saboteurs, infiltrators, seducers of Hindu women in alleged ‘love jihad’, and in final imagery, creatures out to displace Hindus from their homeland.

**“Civil society groups protested against the election commission for its inaction on violations of the model code of conduct by Modi, saying the officials should “grow a spine or resign”**



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is pictured March 12, 2021. Photo: OSV News/Amit Dave, Reuters

The last was through a vicious short animated film. It shows the Muslim as a Cuckoo bird, the South Asian Cuculidae. The bird is well known for its sharp song in the summer months.

But, alas, it is better known for laying its eggs in the nests of crows and much smaller songbirds. The chick hatches, grows big very fast, expels and kills its weaker nest mates, till, finally, it alone survives.

This was a short film shown as election advertising on paid and unpaid social media. The imagery will not be lost on a four-year-old child. It was not lost on the electorate.

It took a long and bitter fight by civil society, first with the lethargic election commission, and in courts of law, before the animated film was proscribed. No one has been punished so far.

### Religion

India, like its neighbor Pakistan, has perhaps the world’s most stringent law against blasphemy and targeting of religious communities. Blasphemy not just against the God of Abraham, but against

any god, of the millions in the Hindu pantheon, for instance.

No one calls them anti-blasphemy laws anymore, and many have forgotten they are remnants of the penal code enforced by the colonial British Raj to maintain a semblance of law and order amidst India’s myriad religions, caste, and groups competing for scarce resources and fiercely guarding ‘purity’ lines.

The United Kingdom does not have this on its statutes anymore. Pakistan uses it, not unsparingly, to keep in check its tiny Christian population and its various Islamic sects such as the Shias, the Sufis, and the Ahmadiyas.

**“Election officials have been quick to act against opposition candidates if they fall foul of these regulations”**

Several sections of the Indian penal code call for action for hurting religious feelings or doing anything that can cause friction or violence between communities, including insulting religions and religious communities. These precautions have been carried over to the laws and rules governing elections and are an intrinsic part of the

model code of conduct applicable to political parties and candidates.

As expected by a cynical civil society and political activists, election officials have been quick to act against opposition candidates if they fall foul of these regulations.

Samajwadi (socialist) Party leader Maria Alam Khan at a public rally in Uttar Pradesh called upon her electorate to participate in a “vote jihad,” saying that voting as a religious duty was necessary to defeat the ruling party. Within hours, the election commission set up a “flying squad”, ordering the police to take action.

### Sentiments

The BJP and its leaders seem to be immune to the law. With five phases of the seven rounds over in this general election, the BJP has repeatedly used religious tropes in its poll pitch and incited communal feelings. Its official social media handles have shared such content and its leaders have openly made anti-Muslim remarks.

The award-winning portal, *Alt News*, has exposed how the ruling party used the Hindu god Ram to stoke religious sentiments alleging that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi plans to lock up the temple gates.

Modi said at an election rally in Dhar, in central Madhya Pradesh state on May 7, “...

Modi needs 400 seats so that the Congress does not put a ‘Babri lock’ on the Ayodhya Ram Temple...”

The Congress shall provide a quota based on religion in contracting, Modi claimed. “They are also planning to prefer minority communities over others in sports, they will be deciding who will be selected for the cricket team based on religion. I want to ask Congress today, if this was your intention all along why did you break apart the country into three parts in 1947? You should’ve declared the country as Pakistan back in 1947 and removed the existence of India.”

**“T Raja Singh, in a recent video clip, can be seen singing from a campaign stage that strongman Modi will throw out all Pakistani mullahs”**

Lesser leaders have been outright vulgar. BJP legislator from southern Telangana state, T Raja Singh, in a recent video clip, can be seen singing from a campaign stage that strongman Modi will throw out all Pakistani mullahs. Sharing the hate video, right-wing influencer Sunanda Roy praised the courage of the legislator.

BJP’s youth leader Tejaswi Surya, a sitting MP has repeatedly targeted Muslims in Karnataka and other states. He tells the women present in the audience that the INDIA bloc and Congress will make them wear burqas. He also claimed that the Congress manifesto proposed the implementation of sharia law and would give freedom to Muslims for cow slaughter.

Civil society is keenly observing the campaign towards the two final rounds. Votes cast through electronic voting machines will be counted on June 4. Results will be announced on the same day.

**i** John Dayal writes for UCA News.



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Highest honour bestowed on Dana

**Dear Editor,** News that Ireland's first Eurovision Song Contest winner in 1970 and former MEP Dana Rosemary Scallion has been conferred with a Papal honour, in recognition for services rendered to the Catholic Church, is cause to rejoice. Dana who regularly appears on EWTN, wrote and sang the theme song, 'We Are One Body', for Pope St John Paul II at World Youth Day 1993. The Derry-born entertainer who now resides in Galway received the highest honour bestowed on a layperson that emanates directly

from Pope Francis and is granted to a layperson who has done service to the Catholic Church at a ceremony in Baile Chláir, Co. Galway. The Order, of which she's been made a Dame, was established by Pope Gregory XVI, in 1831, to acknowledge "personal character, reputation and notable accomplishment" on behalf of the Church and society, regardless of the recipient's religious affiliation. Other recipients of this honour are Alice von Hildebrand and Francis X. Maier. The Dame of the Equestrian Order of Saint

Gregory contested presidential elections in 1997 and 2011 as an independent candidate, and served a full five-year term as an MEP for the former Connacht/Ulster constituency between 1999 and 2004. Fewer than 100 Irish laypeople have been similarly honoured, with Dana Rosemary Scallion becoming only the 14th Dame to be conferred in Ireland, after her investiture.

*Yours etc.,  
Gerry Coughlan,  
Kilnarnagh, Dublin 24*

## What is revealed may be quite unexpected

**Dear Editor,** I have noticed of late that many people's woes stem from 'Needing' what they want but not wanting what they need. It creates a lot of tension, pressure, disappointment and often broken relationships. Sometimes it seems that God gives in to the whims of his children (and sometimes not) but which is really the greater blessing?

Most people realise quickly that God is not like Santa Claus; even if each Christmas morning I check the drive-way for the sudden appearance of an ocean blue Aston Martin DB5. Even the next step in prayer of negotiating it down to a second hand, high mileage pick-up truck with a slight oil leak that would see me through to my 70's; did not meet with success.

We can feel at times that some people are jumping the queue when it comes to bless-

ings, that our prayers are stuck in God's spam folder somewhere and in a spirit of false comparison we feel a bit left behind. But if you take a long view what is revealed may be quite unexpected.

An acquaintance of mine, a prayerful man to begin with, was given the opportunity to have a business in his chosen field. He did everything in prayer, from applying for contracts, to suppliers, to staff, each meeting or letter he wrote would be under God's guiding hand. He did well. From being an employee he was catapulted to success, multimillion Peso contracts flowed in like a river and profits with them. At what point things changed I don't know. He acquired property, vehicles, houses, luxuries, holidays and entered into ventures without seeking God's guidance and things started to fall apart. Bad payers squeezed



the cash flow, unexpected tax bills, and his integrity in money matters was compromised. During that time, periodically he turned back to God, who bailed him out; then he would repeat his folly and back to repentance and so on. It's an old story of lacking the

character to rule the kingdom. Perhaps it's part of his learning curve.

Would we rather have God's gifts and troubles or God himself and peace of mind?

*Yours etc.,  
Stephen Clark,  
Manila, Philippines*



## facebook community

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

### 'Brazilian Catholics find a home in Smithfield' - Renata Steffens

"I feel blessed because I arrived in 2019 with my husband and found this amazing community. We love our life here in Ireland, the culture but when you have a community and have the opportunity to meet people from your home country make the immigrant's lives better and happier. I love being part of this community. Fr Severino, Fr

Ademir, Fr Kevin, Fr Richard and all Fathers and Brother Capuchins are brilliant and make us feel very welcome. May God bless them all for everything they do for everyone." - **Andressa Simões**

"Fr. Severino has been developing, indeed, a magnificent work as a Catholic Pastor, gathering hundreds of Brazilians, today, residing in Dublin, Ireland. With a consecrated knowledge of the Scriptures, in addition to internal work,

through media, spreads the Gospel, prepares studies, takes names of obvious light for debates. Fr. Severino is a scholar, discerning in touching the Scriptures, tracing his name as a Guiding Star of thousands who drink from the wisdom that fills him and preached with humility. Take the church seriously and the Gospel is the first cause of all truth. Congratulations, Fr. Severino!" - **Wilton Eliana Porto**

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

In London, the FA Cup Final was played at the weekend. As is traditional, the inspiring hymn Abide With Me was sung with gusto before the soccer action got underway.

Sports fans know a thing or two about faith and hope. To give yourself fully to your favourite team is to be a true believer, and it is to live the whole gamut of emotions and experiences from joy and hope to sorrow and despair.

Perhaps that is why so many elite sportspeople are so level-headed and tend to take things in their stride. Today's victory, can easily be tomorrow's defeat – and vice versa. The do well to recall the ancient Hebrew wisdom that 'this too will pass'.

Abide With Me has salient comfort for Christians when tempted to despair or give in to a lack of hope in the face of the many challenges facing the Church and society: *Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

It was sentiment like that that Bishop Paul Dempsey was appealing to in Dublin's St Andrew's Church on Sunday when along with Bishop Donal Roche he took up his new ministry of service as an auxiliary bishop in the sprawling Dublin Diocese.

Bishop Dempsey recalled the words of Pope St John XXIII to denounce 'prophets of doom' to point to those who look at the challenges facing Irish Catholicism and conclude – either gleefully or gloomily – that the Church is dying.

The Church is not dying, Bishop Dempsey insisted, but a particular historic form of the Church is dying.

And any farmer will tell you, that for growth – something must die. The scriptures are full of such paradoxes: "I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit..."

This is not to say that the model of the Church that has gone before was wrong. The Catholic

Church would not have thrived after the Reformation were it not for the vision of the Council of Trent, but what was relevant for the 17th Century in terms of structures and ways of ecclesiastical thinking is certainly not adequate for the 21st Century.

Nor is this an issue of liberals and conservatives, progressives and traditionalists – ideological capture of the Church diminishes the ability of the Church to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our technocratic world has very little interest in inward-looking conversations akin to moving deckchairs around the Titanic.

Faith teaches us that God makes the Church ever-new. And yet, this belief is understandably tempered by the human reality that the Church in Ireland is tired. But we must not allow tiredness to be the guiding light in our discernment. Of course, the Church must pull back to save resources and energy. But this should be strategic rather than defeatist. Bishops are not regional managers of banking groups, closing local branches to give a better return to shareholders. The Church must never forget that it is missionary by its very nature and must always work for growth.

The Pope's synodal pathway is centred around prayerfully listening together as people, religious, priests and bishops to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church in 2024.

That discernment, which has already begun, will be difficult because the need for careful deliberation is matched by the urgency of the situation.

What shape the Church in Ireland will take in the future is still largely unclear. Certainly, it will be smaller; but it must be a Church that – in the words of Pope Francis – 'goes out'. It must be one that, confident in the Gospel, seeks to bring people to a living faith capable of transforming everything.

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



Can voting  
for a politician  
in a particular  
political party  
be sinful?

Jenna Marie Cooper

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## Harrison Butker and JP II on the dignity and vocation of women



Emily Zanotti

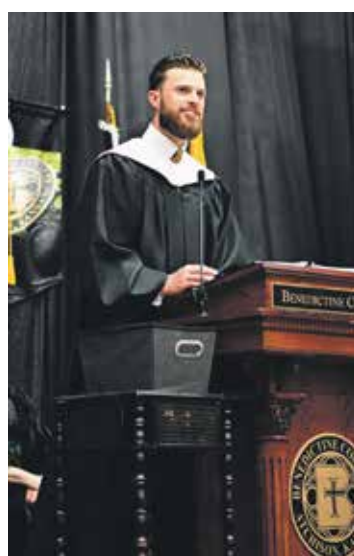
There is little needed to set fire to the world of online Catholics -and the recent commencement speech from Kansas City Chiefs kicker, Harrison Butker to an audience of Benedictine College graduates seemed to riddle Catholic social media with fractures, as traditionalists and liberals, Catholics and non-Catholics, and even men and women came to loggerheads over how to digest the controversial remarks.

The real tragedy may be, though, that lost in the greater discourse is how many of Butker's beliefs are not those of the Catholic Church at large - certainly Natural Family Planning is not simply a form of "Catholic birth control," and priests are not called to live lives set apart from their flock, both things Butker suggested. Butker's apparent vision of the role of women in society, while not entirely incorrect, is an overly simplistic version of the Church's own vision, which is rich, nuanced, deep and beautiful. And not centered on biological motherhood alone.

### Auspices

Butker's remarks, in context, suggest that while the women in his audience had achieved great things, they had done so under the auspices of a "diabolical lie," which led them to seek corporate achievement instead of a life in the home.

"Congratulations on an amazing accomplishment," he said to the women in the audience, before suggesting that they have "had the most diabolical lies told to you." While they may go on to "successful careers in the world," he suggested his wife's life only "truly started when she started living her



Harrison Butker, kicker for the Super Bowl LVIII champion Kansas City Chiefs, delivers the May 11, 2024, commencement address at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan. Photo: OSV News/Todd Nugent, courtesy Benedictine College

vocation as a wife and as a mother."

As Catholics, we see a difference between a job and a vocation - the latter being a call from God Himself, and a purpose for life that aligns with God's plan. For many women, including myself, our vocation includes marriage and biological motherhood. For many women, it is a call to holiness, to chaste singleness or to the acknowledged highest calling of a woman, religious life.

Butker's comments, many Catholic and non-Catholic women believe, suggest that he believes the role of a stay-at-home spouse to be the highest, if not the only legitimate calling, for women - or at least, as Emily Stimpson Chapman smartly noted in her own essay earlier this week, many women who are familiar with online Catholic traditionalists and the so-called Man-o-sphere interpreted it that way.

Whether that was Butker's intention or not, his remarks, and perhaps his beliefs, seem poorly constructed in light of Catholic social teaching, articulated so

boldly in St John Paul II's work on the subject of the vocation of women, "Mulieris Dignitatem."

Popes have spoken only infrequently on the subject of women's roles in society. In the 1500s, the Catechism of the Council of Trent suggested women should remain at home, exiting to the outside world only with their husband's permission.

The Church is largely silent again until the early 20th century, when Pope Pius XI authored "Casti Connubii," "Of Chaste Wedlock," which gave passing thought to women as keepers of the home, among its more strident proclamations on abortion, birth control and the sanctity of marriage.

### Dignity

Pope John Paul II, however, devoted an entire apostolic letter to the subject of the dignity and vocation of women in the early 1980s - at a time when women were moving in large numbers into the working world, and feminism was well within its third wave. But his words are not designed to chastise women, but to remind them - and society at large - of the significant and, more importantly, vital role that women play in the world, not just as biological mothers, but as spiritual, societal, temporal mothers as well.

Many protestants - particularly those who have built careers and followings off of the idea of "Biblical Masculinity" - may view women as subservient to men from the beginning. Pope John Paul II entertains no such thought, elevating instead the "mutual relationship" of man and woman in marriage, and noting that 'domination' of either sex threatens civil stability. To find inequality and enmity in the relationship between men and women not only disadvantages women, subjecting them to all manner of crimes against dignity, but it also "diminishes the true dignity of the man," as it goes against the ethos "which was originally inscribed by the Creator in the very creation of both of them in his own image and likeness."

Women, he says, are different

than men - significantly so - but no less made in His image.

Even Jesus Christ, Pope John Paul II notes, exhibited no qualms about speaking frankly to and with women - a rarity in Jesus' time - and that the "order of love in the created world of persons first takes root in a woman." Mary, the mother of Christ, is intensely maternal, undoubtedly the paragon of femininity, and it is her free will assent to God's purpose for her life that ushers in salvation, "impossible with men, but not with God."

There is no doubt God believes women have dignity and that they are made in His image, but what of their vocation? Pope John Paul II speaks to that, as well, in depth in his apostolic letter where he lays out the several callings given to women and how both biological and spiritual motherhood are consequential and necessary - but it is perhaps his Letter to Women in 1995 that puts it more concisely.

**"Their womanhood, their feminine genius and their maternity - things often seen as weaknesses by radical and secular feminism - are, in fact, strengths"**

In this letter, Pope John Paul II calls upon women to participate in "every area of life - social, economic, cultural, artistic, and political," and he suggests that a "greater presence of women in society will prove most valuable," for "it will help to manifest the contradictions present when society is organised solely according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity, and it will force systems to be redesigned in a way which favours the processes of humanisation, which mark the 'civilization of love.'"

His words get to the heart of how the Church views women. While traditionalists, conservatives and often Catholics, may be tempted to dismiss "feminism" out of hand, Pope John Paul II reminds us that women are in fact equal

in dignity and called to all sorts of vocations and involvement. Their womanhood, their feminine genius and their maternity - things often seen as weaknesses by radical and secular feminism - are, in fact, strengths. Women, by their very maternal nature are assets to every part of society, as long as we don't deny our female nature, but embrace it.

Although biological motherhood and stay-at-home parenthood are perfectly wonderful - and perhaps among the most vital - vocations, Pope John Paul II and the Church, are clear: the "diabolical lie" is not that women are meant to be in the corporate world, but that their womanhood does not matter in the corporate world.

The "diabolical lie" of feminism is that women have nothing unique to offer to society that differs from what men offer, rather than assets, intrinsically linked to their womanhood, that make them essential to every area of life.

### Observation

We can't reduce Catholic thought on how women do that to a shallow, bumper-sticker observation on a single woman's vocation, nor can we say that "life" begins for women when they become wives and mothers. Certainly, for me, despite years in the workforce, and my position writing to you now, raising my children remains the most significant job of my life. It is, as many women know, the greatest job I could have hoped for.

But that is not to say that my life only began at their birth. As humans, made in the image of God, our lives begin the moment we come into existence as an individual thought of our Creator, and there are as many plans, purposes and vocations as there are people.

That is, of course, very hard to fit in a commencement speech.

*Emily Zanotti is a humour writer and political communicator who focuses on the joys and trials of life as a Catholic mother. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee with her husband, three children, two cats and four chickens.*



# Clergy abuse: Priests are the antidote



**Teresa Pitt Green**

**M**y work with clergy is a long way from the old days. Then, when I spotted a Roman collar on a random passerby mixed in the throng of a Manhattan Avenue, I would crumble into the nearest doorway with a mix of anxiety and grief known as 'beginning to remember'. Now, I offer the story of my recovery to sensitise clergy to issues which victims of abuse face, so that diocesan and religious priests and brothers may create, with grace from the Holy Spirit, their own unique pastoral approaches to the suffering which the faithful bring into the pews every Sunday.

Even as the Church in the United States has implemented reforms that have greatly reduced child abuse within Church settings, the world is far more dangerous for children and vulnerable adults than when I was a child enduring abuse by a series of priests. The incidence of violence in homes and public spaces is on the rise, with catastrophic increases in sexualised violence being enshrined in media and normalised in social interactions.

## Survivors

Many people bear a private hell in their hearts at Mass each weekend, tucked safely behind a neutral public persona. We cannot forget, either, the victims who are alienated from the sacraments, adrift without graces for spiritual healing so terribly needed. For all these people, it is hard to find a sense of sanctuary and safety - and a hope for healing. The situation is dire, but the solution is near.

As a survivor of clergy

**“The world is far more dangerous for children and vulnerable adults than when I was a child enduring abuse by a series of priests”**



abuse, I understand how a priest or religious brother can offer a unique antidote to the wounds of abuse, particularly for people alienated from the Church, and especially for survivors of abuse by clergy. Doing so, he will become more of himself. That is a daring sacrifice given the rage and risks involved in caring for people who have become alienated from God and have even rejected Him. It leads a priest to stand in a seemingly impossible breach, quite alone in the middle of an uncomprehending society, with one arm stretched toward the soul who hides within a cringe of pain and the other toward the Eucharist - his very existence a way home as proxy for Church and as stand-in for Christ.

The challenges are real because the hope is great. Some priests choose to 'wing it' when they encounter a victim of abuse. Others, who are not gifted in this pastoral

area, choose not to refer victims to others. The problem is that, despite their best intentions, uninformed priests often re-traumatise victims, who then disappear without reconciliation. Other victims voice reasonable objections but are dismissed as malcontents, and nothing is learned.

**“It doesn't take much for priests and religious brothers to learn to help victims of clergy and other abuse reconnect with God and with our faith”**

When a victim dares to explore reconciliation, it tends to be a one-shot experiment without rehearsal. This is true of clergy abuse survivors and many other people wounded by abuse or trauma who have a shame-based relationship with God. It doesn't take much for priests and religious brothers to learn to help victims of clergy and other abuse reconnect with God and with our faith, but the process often surprises these men as they realise what they alone offer. This

has something to do with the nature of abuse itself.

Few people in the Church understand the nature of abuse, so they do not understand the role clergy plays in healing survivors, families, parishes and the whole Church. In response to news of child abuse in the Church, people seek me out to offer ideas about 'fixing' the priesthood, as if the priesthood is itself flawed and inclined to producing abusers. Most commonly, people tell me that abuse will end only when priests can marry, ignoring both that the preponderance of abusers are married (or living in couples) and that a common setting for abuse is the family.

Others claim that abuse will end when women are priests, suggesting that women are less capable of evil and revealing unawareness that prosecutions of women as abusers are on the rise. Along with other ideas that suggest priests are guilty by association with predators - who (let's remember) abused the Roman collar to gain access to prey - there seems to be a widespread ambivalence toward the priesthood shared among people who even consider themselves close and loving friends with one or more priests.

Some researchers have argued that the priesthood as an institution is flawed. Without analysing their methods, I notice these experts only studied what I experienced firsthand. My firsthand experience runs contrary to their findings. The abusers whom I knew were not simply stumbling into a temptation for human intimacy. Instead, they were, through myriad small choices, using their authority intentionally to groom children as well as their would-be protectors. They were choosing progressive levels of depravity. These actions are the opposite of human intimacy. Abusers whom I knew were not flawed versions of priests and religious brothers whom I now know, but the opposite of these men. The difference is not in degree. It has never been about degree. It is a difference in kind.

## Conviction

My conviction in this regard has only grown throughout

**“Abusers whom I knew were not flawed versions of priests and religious brothers whom I now know, but the opposite of these men. The difference is not in degree. It has never been about degree. It is a difference in kind”**

my recovery and ministry. Where the abuser destroys free choice, the priest informs and empowers free choice. Where the abuser dehumanised me by isolating and using me, a priest points to the fulfilment of our humanity through an intimate relationship with the divine. The abuser forcefully sacrificed my childhood, potentially killing all spiritual life, but a priest sacrifices his life to lead people to eternal life. The list could go on and on.

**“It is an unimagined evangelical moment when victims and clergy engage in safe dialogue, creating a safe home”**

This is the white martyrdom of which I was taught when I was a little girl. Its truth runs counter to my experience then. Priests and religious brothers, serving in a milieu of ambivalence toward their radical self-sacrifice, are living contradictions to the wounds of abuse. It is an unimagined evangelical moment when victims and clergy engage in safe dialogue, creating a safe home for all who are wounded, whether they are praying in the pews or drifting alienated and homeless in a dark and troubled world.

*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.*



# Meeting Jesus at midnight or in the wee small hours



Elizabeth Scalia

**W**e all have them, those desperate times, particularly in the wee small hours of the morning, when illness or anxiety pulls us up from our beds and down to our knees, or keeps us on our feet, pacing the floor as we seek relief from physical or mental or spiritual aches and ailments.

Sometimes, we wish we could awaken the whole household, begging our families to supply the sort of immediate solace we need. But we don't do it. They need their sleep, after all.

What do you do in those times? Do you find yourself longing for a mother's presence, and thus pick up your rosary? Do you warm up some milk, light a candle and open the Scriptures?

Sometimes, in those hours of silent suffering - especially if my affliction is some mental anguish I cannot push away - I will seek out the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, which is easier to do today than it was 20 years ago.

## Consolation

I recall a particular night when old ghosts and new torments were trampling heart and mind, preventing rest. Not wishing to disturb my family, I drove to a local parish. There, I stood at a side door, gazing through a small window at the tabernacle within, visible only by the light of the candle beside it (the reassuring sign that Christ was there). I simply watched the flame flicker and adored. I asked Jesus if I might stay there - not exactly at his

feet but as near as I might - and take my consolation from his boundless and supernatural presence.

It was by no means an ideal situation, and yet as I stood there, consolation did in fact come. On those chilly steps, a true "peace surpassing all understanding" (Phil 4:7) settled upon me like a healing balm. Despite my limited view, Christ transcended the tabernacle and every material and spiritual obstacle between us and let me feel not just seen but recognised, not just heard but understood.

Mostly, I felt loved beyond my own comprehension of intimacy and acceptance.

I hated leaving, but when I did, all the doubts, all the fears I'd been entertaining - all the great wreckage of my heart - stayed behind, with Jesus. I went home, having learned the valuable truth that everything is known, and that we are none of us alone.

And I slept.

**“Sitting before a streamed monstrance can offer a powerful bit of succour to anyone's day”**

In 2024, it's much easier to find Christ, present and exposed in a monstrance, no matter the day or the hour. One need no longer hold a cold and lonely vigil at a locked door because - thanks to what used to be called 'new media' - monasteries and diocesan adoration chapels from all over the world maintain live streams of the Blessed Sacrament for remote adoration, whereby the energy of the Christ is transmitted through energy both housed and in the ether, to encounter our own.

This is a particular boon to the incarcerated or the infirm, of course,

but sitting before a streamed monstrance can offer a powerful bit of succour to anyone's day.

## Accommodations

Recently I saw a brief video of a pastor in Stratford, Connecticut, who, during the isolating lockdowns of 2020, installed what he called a "drive-up adoration window."

"I was coming out of my rectory chapel in March of 2020," he explains, "and I looked to the right and I saw that I have this entrance-way but next to it is this glass panel. And I got to thinking, 'I could set up an Adoration window, here. Jesus would be safe behind the glass; nobody could get to Jesus.' I had a custom-made shutter built, and now people drive up outside, they get out of their cars, they walk up to that shutter and then they can open it. I put a kneeler out there, a chair for them to sit on, and I have people 24 hours a day coming, at 2am, 4am, 6am, during the day."

"Say hi to Jesus," he smiles as he demonstrates how an adorer can open the shutter and sit or kneel before Christ, present behind the glass. "Just come by," he invites. "Spend a few minutes with Jesus. He's waiting here for you, all the time!"

"Some might object, of course, or find it irreverent. I don't. The little 'drive-up adoration window' may be a humble way to bring Jesus to us, but I have a hard time believing he would mind. He permitted himself to be brought into Jerusalem via a humble donkey, after all."

And I know that on a cold and restless night 20 years ago, I would have been so grateful to drive out to meet Jesus and find him waiting for me - not in distant shadows, but so beautifully near.

Even today, with remote viewing at my fingertips, I would still be grateful.

**i** Elizabeth Scalia is editor-at-large for OSV. Follow her on X (formerly known as Twitter) @the anchoress.



## Questions of Faith

Jenna Marie Cooper

### Can voting for a politician in a particular political party be sinful?

**Q:** After the last presidential election, while in confession, I asked the priest this question and his response astounded me. He said voting for a Democrat was a mortal sin, their political stance on abortion demands this, and he went on to list all the party's dreadful practices he considered evil. I always vote for the person, regardless of their party connection. I did not agree with my confessor and believe that our Church does not consider a party's stance as a reason for sin. I thought Church and State were not connected. Am I wrong? I said I did vote for a Democrat, and he continued to excoriate me for this action. I was granted absolution but still did not feel comfortable with his reasoning. Please let me know how you think a Catholic should view this question.

**A:** First of all, I am sorry to hear that you had a difficult experience in confession. Nobody should be made to feel 'excoriated' in the context of a sacrament. But to answer your question, the short answer is: No, simply voting for a Democrat is not a sin in and of itself.

The longer answer is that the relationship between Church and State is more complicated than it might appear at first glance, and there are a number of nuances to take into account when seeking to fully live out our Catholic faith as citizens in secular civil society.

In terms of legal philosophy, the relationship between Church and State is something that Catholic scholars have pondered for millennia. Although it is obvious that secular governments can often enact imprudent or even evil policies, there is a fundamental idea that all legitimate authority is ultimately granted by God and therefore ought to be respected.

In the United States we have a foundational principle of religious freedom, which concretely manifests itself in "separation of Church and State." This means that the United States government is meant to be religiously neutral with no official state religion. Yet at the same time, Catholic legal philosophy recognised that the Church and the state often have

shared goals and mutual stakes in certain aspects of civil life. Further, we believe that Catholics are not only called to remain in communion with the Church, but also to be good citizens and to take part in public life in a way appropriate to our own particular vocation and circumstances.

The upshot to this is that Catholics are called to vote according to their well-formed conscience so as to support the dignity of human life in all areas.

Thus, it would be wrong for a Catholic to vote for a pro-abortion politician specifically because of the politician's pro-abortion stance (and this would apply regardless of that politician's party affiliation).

Still, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' document "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" acknowledges that "Catholics often face difficult choices about how to vote" (No. 34). This same document goes on to observe: "There may be times when a Catholic who rejects a candidate's unacceptable position even on policies promoting an intrinsically evil act may reasonably decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons." But with the caveat: "Voting in this way would be permissible only for truly grave moral reasons, not to advance narrow interests or partisan preferences or to ignore a fundamental moral evil" (No. 35).

Voting for a particular Democrat who happened to be pro-life would clearly not be a sin, even if the majority of Democrats do tend to support abortion. And, on a case-by-case basis, it is morally permissible to vote for a pro-choice candidate if there are grave reasons to do so; for example, there may be no clear pro-life candidate, or in conscience you might discern that the pro-life candidate endorses policies that severely and unacceptably undermine human life and dignity in other areas.

**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.



# Losing a loved one to suicide



I have been writing on suicide for nearly forty years. I do so because suicide is generally misunderstood, badly misunderstood. Moreover, perhaps more than any other form of death, suicide leaves those who are left behind with a heavy burden of sadness, hurt, and guilt.

Four things need always to be said upfront about suicide:

First, suicide is a disease, perhaps the most misunderstood of all diseases. In most cases, the death is not freely chosen. When people die from heart attacks, strokes, cancer, AIDS, or accidents, they die against their will. The same is true for suicide, except that in the case of suicide, the breakdown is emotional rather than physical – an emotional stroke, an emotional cancer, a breakdown of the emotional immune system, an emotional fatality.

And this is not an analogy. Suicide is a disease. Most people who die by suicide die against their will. They only want to end a pain which can no longer be endured, akin to someone jumping to his death out of a burning building because his clothes are on fire.

## Salvation

Second, we should not worry unduly about the eternal salvation of a suicide victim, believing (as we used to) that suicide is the ultimate act of despair and something God will not forgive. God is infinitely understanding, loving,



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

the cause of death, who exits this world broken, oversensitive, gentle, overwrought, and emotionally crushed. God has a special love for the broken and the crushed.

**“We should not torture ourselves with guilt and second-guessing when we lose a loved one to suicide”**

However, knowing all of this doesn't necessarily take away our pain (and anger) at losing someone to suicide because faith and understanding aren't always meant to take away our pain but rather to give us hope, vision, and support as we walk within our pain.

Third, we should not torture ourselves with guilt and second-

guessing when we lose a loved one to suicide. “Where did I let this person down? If only I had been there? What if?” It is natural to be haunted by the thought, “if only I'd been there at the right time.” Rarely would this have made a difference. Indeed, most of the time, we weren't there for the exact reason that the person who fell victim to this disease did not want us to be there. He or she picked the moment, the spot, and the means so that we wouldn't be there. Suicide is a disease that seems to pick its victim precisely in such a way so as to exclude others and their attentiveness. This is not an excuse for insensitivity, but a healthy check against false guilt and painful second-guessing.

## Human

We're human beings, not God. People die of illness and accidents all the time and sometimes all the love and attentiveness in the

world cannot prevent a loved one from dying. As a mother who lost a child to suicide writes: “The will to save a life does not constitute the power to prevent a death.”

**“At least once a week for the past four or five years, she would remark that she wanted to die.... It's been hard for me to disentangle the role I played in her unhappiness”**

And so, we must forgive ourselves for our human inadequacy vis-à-vis having lived with someone in suicidal depression. But that is not easy, as this man who lost his wife to suicide attests: “My wife had been unhappy and depressed for so long that I pray that she is now finally at peace. At least once a week for the past four or five years, she would remark that she wanted to die.... It's been hard for me to disentangle the role I played in her unhappiness. ... At a minimum, I will take to my grave the realisation that I

could have done more to keep her afloat. Over the past several years, instead of giving a pep talk to try to encourage her to see things in a more positive light, my default option had become avoidance and withdrawal. I had assumed that trying to dispel the fog of her depression only tended to make matters worse, at least for me, since I would often become the easier target for her anger/unhappiness.”

## Guilt

That is a common guilt feeling shared by many who have lost someone to suicide, particularly a spouse. What needs to be understood is that the depressed person's anger is most often focused precisely on someone whom they trust and are very close to because that is the only safe place where they can unload their anger (without the other reciprocating). Consequently, the person who is the target of that anger will often escape by avoidance and withdrawal – with the resulting guilt feelings afterwards.

Fourth, when we lose loved ones to suicide, one of our tasks is to work at redeeming their memory by putting their lives back into a perspective so that the manner of their death doesn't forever taint their memory. Don't take down their photographs, don't speak in hushed tones about their life and death, don't put a permanent asterisk beside their names. Their lives are not to be judged through the

**“When we lose loved ones to suicide, one of our tasks is to work at redeeming their memory by putting their lives back into a perspective so that the manner**



# Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Ex 24:3-8  
Ps 116:12-13, 15-16,  
17-18  
Heb 9:11-15  
Mk 14:12-16, 22-26

## The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



**“B**e what you see, become what you receive!” With these words, the saintly bishop Augustine urged his flock to deepen their understanding of the gift and mystery of the Eucharist. The good bishop reminded the faithful that the Eucharist transforms them into the presence of Jesus, the One they receive. They become the body of Christ as they receive the body of Christ in the Eucharist.

Augustine drew the attention of his flock to the miracles that unfold at every Eucharist. First there is the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. The other, equally important, miracle was the transfiguration of those who receive the Lord into his living presence in the world. Just as bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus in the Holy Spirit, we who receive the Lord are meant to be changed to reflect his loving presence in the world.

### Source

The bishops of the Second Vatican Council noted that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” Everything the Church is and does finds its foundation and goal in the Eucharist. The Eucharist makes the Church, and the Church makes the Eucharist. As St Paul writes, “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? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though, many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”

**“The Eucharist is spiritual food that strengthens with nothing less than the eternal life promised by Jesus”**

As Jesus nourishes us with his body and blood, we are united to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and to the community of believers. When we receive the Eucharist, we partake of and become the “living bread that came down from heaven,” that Jesus is for the life of the world. The Eucharist is spiritual food that strengthens with nothing less than the eternal life promised by Jesus when he said that “whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.”

This unmerited gift invites profound “Eucharistic amazement” that God desires to live within us in the



eucharistic mystery of his body and blood!

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains the Trinitarian meaning of the Eucharist as thanksgiving and praise to the Father, as the

sacrificial memorial of Jesus and his body, and the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit in the power of Jesus’ real presence. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we encounter Jesus present in the eucharistic species of bread and wine, present in the minister who acts in the person of Christ the head, present in the sacred word of God proclaimed and present in the assembly gathered to worship God. In the eucharistic encounter with Jesus, the word of the psalmist becomes our prayer, “I will take the cup of salvation, and call on

**“I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord”**

the name of the Lord.”

This year, the bishops of the United States are continuing to lead the faithful in a National Eucharistic Revival to rediscover the gift and mystery of the Eucharist as spiritual nourishment for the journey of faith. On this Solemnity of the Body and Blood, may our love of the Eucharist deepen so we can pray in gratitude and in faith,

“speak to me, Lord.”

Question: What does Jesus’ gift of himself in the Eucharist mean to you today?

**i** Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

**“This unmerited gift invites profound ‘Eucharistic amazement’ that God desires to live within us in the eucharistic mystery of his body and blood!”**





# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## We want to see what we believe

**R**esistance is sometimes easy, when you have public or cultural support, or difficult when you're up against public disapproval or Government oppression.

On **Liveline** (RTE Radio 1, Friday) we heard the fascinating story of Sr Kate McCarthy, an Irish religious sister who was part of the French resistance during World War II. Her story was told to Joe Duffy by historian Catherine Fleming who was heading off to attend a ceremony in France to mark her heroism. Her story is further told by a book, unpublished yet, Catherine has written. Sr Kate was put into solitary confinement while awaiting her trial, and into Ravensbrück Concentration Camp from where she was liberated by the Swedish Red Cross. She also had to struggle with ill health but after the war she was involved in an institution to look after elderly. Such an inspirational life.

Another inspirational Catholic is Blessed Carlo Acutis, the young student who is further on the way to being declared a saint now that two healing miracles credited to his intercession have been approved. The news was covered very positively on **Henry Bonsu** (Times Radio, Saturday). We heard from *Times* reporter Kaya Burgess who had

Carlo Acutis



interviewed Carlo's mother and from Fr Alan Robinson in whose church there is a relic of Blessed Carlo. In a reversal of the norm, he influenced positively the faith life of his parents. We learned of his faith devotion and his altruism – he was particularly concerned for the migrants and the homeless.

There was quite a contrast between their sacrifices and the campus protests about the war in Gaza. On the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Friday) roving reporter Henry McKean spoke to some of the student protestors at UCD and brought along former Government minister, Alan Shatter, a member of the Jewish community. The students did not impress –

some didn't even know what the pro-Palestinian slogans on placards meant. Some were quite inarticulate – such activists are not used to such close questioning. I often wonder, however, if vox-pops are fair – prone to editing and not always representative. As if to provide some balance the show played an interview with a US student activist. At least he was articulate but could have been more robustly challenged.

Meanwhile, the latest edition of **Songs of Praise** (BBC One, Sunday) focused on the interface of art and religion in the context of the 200th Anniversary of the National Gallery in London. Dr Gabriele Finaldi, the director, explained to presenter Aled

Jones how central religious art was to collections in the Gallery. He described the 'astonishing array of imagery', saying 'we want to see what we believe'. Artist Sophie Hacker spoke of capturing transformative moments, sparks of divine encounter. She described how her work was suffused with the fact that she lived a life of faith – she prayed with her hands and her imagination.

Catholic priest Fr Patrick van der Vorst was another enthusiast and showed Aled Jones around some of his favourite paintings in the Gallery – including Caravaggio's striking 'Supper at Emmaus'. He founded the Christian.art website to bring together works of art and relevant gospel

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### MORNINGS WITH WENDY

**Spirit Radio Monday June 3, 10am. Continuing weekdays.**

Wendy Grace presents topical issues and music.

#### SUNDAY MORNING LIVE

**BBC One Sunday June 2, 10am**

Topical magazine show that gets to the heart and soul of issues of the day, returning for a new season.

#### INVITED TO COURAGEOUS LOVE-THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY

**EWTN Monday June 3, 7pm**

Seven members of the Courage group share their personal stories about same-sex attraction and how they transformed their lives by understanding and embracing the freedom of chastity.

readings. He wanted to get the word of God out there through the way of beauty.

I particularly liked the two songs from the Gallery itself – Gounod's 'Ave Maria' sung by the BBC Young Choristers of 2023 and 'Praise My Soul the King of Heaven' by the vocal group Apollo 5. The prayers at the end were from contributors to the show – Fr Van Der Vost prayed for the courage to share God's love with the world; Dr Finaldi gave thanks for the gifts of art and music; Sophie Hacker that we would feel God's presence in all things.

Finally, **Blue Lights** (BBC One, Monday), the police drama set in Belfast, finished last week with a very grip-

ping and emotional episode. The programme makers are blessed with an outstanding cast and a real empathy with human beings and their very believable problems. The opening scene of a child with a gun being confronted by the police was tense beyond measure, and a reconciliation scene related to legacy crimes from *The Troubles*, was very moving. I'd still hold on to my previous negative comments about the gratuitous bad language and the lack of any character motivated by a genuine religious faith, but this must be one of the best drama series of the year so far.



# Music

Aubrey Malone



## Piano prodigies shine in feel-good documentary

**S**hanghai is the Promised Land. From the surrounding villages and townships, they come, Junior Franz Liszt's pitting themselves against the best of the rest from areas that expand like repeating decimals.

Xia Yidi is eight. He's the kind of lad you might expect to see playing with his toys. But when he puts on his dickie bow and starts tickling the ivories it's as if he was born with a piano in his hand.

Where does this kind of talent come from? Is it inspiration or perspiration? He's hardly tall enough to reach the piano, never mind hammer out sonatas on it. (He even has insights into

Chopin, for God's sake).

The Chinese are a lovely people – friendly, unassuming, emotional, warm. They also have an incredible work ethic.

The parents in *Piano Dreams*, which is co-directed by Richard Hughes and Gary Lennon, put their lives on hold to give their children the opportunity to get the best out of themselves. They personify sacrifice and dedication. One couple even decide to live apart so the father can earn enough for his child's tuition.

There are many stories here. A mother cries over a sick relative. Her daughter's neck hurts from her exertions at the piano. She



scours her phone to see if she's gotten through to the next round of auditions.

A boy pins his hopes on being accepted for a position in a New York academy. If he is, he'll be the first member of his family to

study overseas.

The teachers of these three pupils are hard taskmasters. "Only one bathroom breaks per hour!" one of them barks. Another tells her pupil not to use her shoulders for force when

she's playing but rather her back.

Everything is tabulated. Failure isn't an option. As a pre-credit diktat informs us: "There is no Plan B."

There are 40 million piano students in China. If the trend continues, they'll soon be as prevalent in people's houses as televisions or computers. The expansion must surely produce a world figure in time. We may even be seeing him – or her – in the present film.

When it began I had worries about the premature adultification of the children on view. I also had concerns about what we might call "The JonBenet Ramsey Factor" – i.e. Toddlers in Tiaras. Some years ago, I

watched a documentary about Chinese children being trained to be circus artistes. It seemed to me as if they were being turned into automatons with the workload.

My fears were allayed on both scores here. Even though the pupils work their socks off, they retain their personalities. And unlike the circus film, they don't get beaten if they say they're too tired – or bored – to work.

*Piano Dreams* is a sweet little film that leaves us with a warm glow. It tells us you can be a workaholic and still be yourself. I dare you not to be charmed by these mini-maestros.

One for all the family.





# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## The “Flight into Egypt” as history



The Virgin's Tree, photographed as it was at the end of the 19th century

**The Holy Family in Egypt**, narrative by Nazmy Morcus, illustrated by Nazmy El-Kommos, with a preface by the late Dr Mamdouh El-Beltagie, Minister of Tourism (Cairo: Ministry of Tourism, no price stated.).

Peter Costello

In the West Christians of all kinds are often unaware of the feasts and festivals of their Orthodox and Eastern brethren in faith. Hence many will be quite unaware of what an important day this coming Sunday, June 1, is in the calendar of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Christians.

It marks the great feast day of “The Advent of the Holy Family to Egypt”, when that harried trio crossed over the ancient boundary between Palestine and Egypt at Rafah - a sort of Exodus in reverse.

The day was given a renewed sense of status on its acceptance by UNESCO, the UN cultural organisation, as one of the two traditional festivals which Egypt succeeded in placing on the “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity”.

### Summer

The other festival is the community celebrations later in the summer of “The Birth of Virgin Mary”, which takes places differently within different tradition: on September 8 in the West, but on May 9 in the Coptic Church,

Egypt's Minister of Cul-

ture at the time, Nevine el-Kilani, in an official government statement, said that: “Recording the celebrations associated with the Holy Family's Journey on the representative list of intangible cultural heritage is considered a message of peace, love and security from the land that embraced the Holy Family, revived its course and preserved for many years the celebration of its journey to Egypt.”

**“Those relating to the Holy Family in Egypt are, however, considered largely authentic by the Coptic Church, and are also accepted by some Western scholars”**

Indeed for more than 1600 years these events have been continuously celebrated in Egypt, which is indeed a long and continuous tradition.

The traditions about the Holy Family in Egypt, now recognised universally, were first collected and organised by Pope Theophilus, the 23rd Patriarch (385-412 AD). He presented them as an authentic historical tradition.

The Holy Family's journey

**“Others, however, would say if people believe in Jesus as a figure in history, there is no reason to doubt the story, or the tale of the Flight into Egypt”**

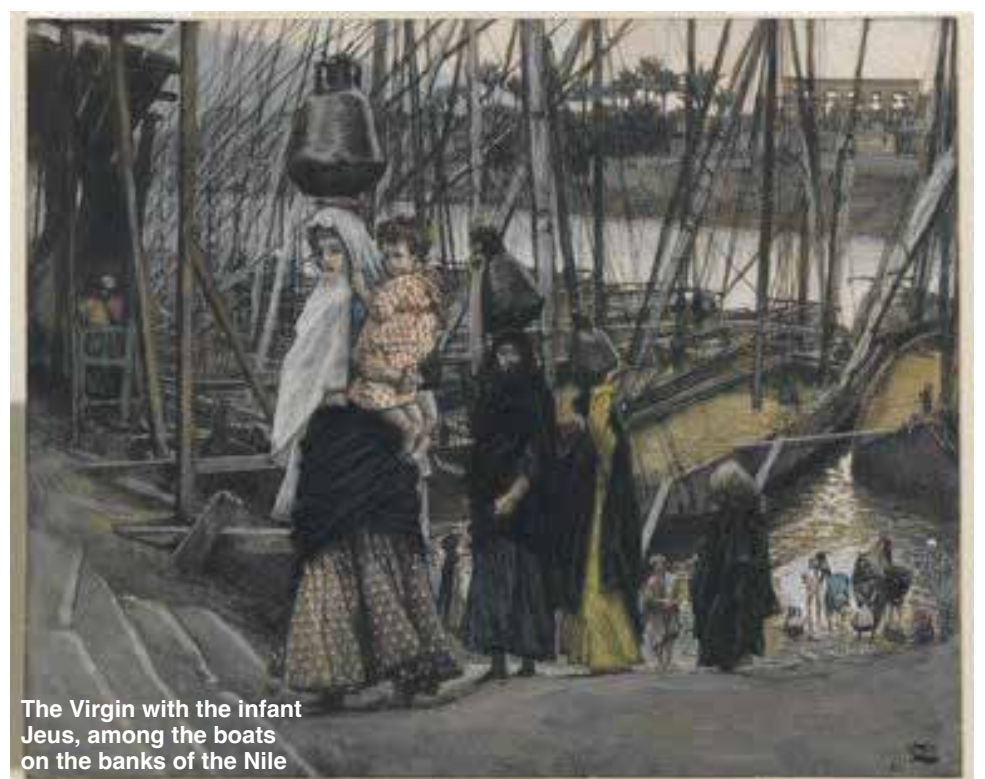
is recounted in this brochure, the concept of which was approved before his death by the late Pope Shenouda III, who had been the leader of the Coptic faith as 117th Pope of Alexandria, and Patriarch of the See of St Mark, an influential figure whose reign lasted 44 years.

### Apocryphal

Some scholars suggest that such legends are apocryphal, and arose in the course of the first two or three centuries to fill out what many early Christians found as the meagre historical basis of their faith.

Those relating to the Holy Family in Egypt are, however, considered largely authentic by the Coptic Church, and are also accepted by some Western scholars. To those who totally accept Jesus as an historical figure they would seem to be quite consistent with what we are told in Gospels.

They seem, however, to have been arranged from an early date so as to provide an itinerary passing the length of the courtly from El Arish and Farma in the north through Old Cairo in the middle, diverting to the Western Desert before continuing south to Gabal Dronka, yet still within the limits of Upper Egypt.



The Virgin with the infant Jesus, among the boats on the banks of the Nile

So in themselves they provide the spine for a lengthy tour of Egypt medieval and modern. No such full tour is yet on offer, but doubtless as the tourist industry in Egypt picks up they will be.

King Herod had chosen, in the light of what the Magi had told him, that he would have to destroy all the boys born in Bethlehem in a cer-

tain period, seeing them as in some way a threat to his rule. Christians later liked to imagine this meant hordes of innocent babies - which would have been so memorable a crime as not to have escaped the notice of historians.

### Reflection

But a little reflection on the matter suggests that in fact the number would have been very small, perhaps no more than a dozen. Those sceptical historians mentioned above, however, think it is a fable, as no Jewish leader would massacre children for such a reason.

Others, however, would say if people believe in Jesus

as a figure in history, there is no reason to doubt the story, or the tale of the Flight into Egypt.

**“There are some twenty eight places marked on the route map in this brochure on the map linked in some way with the Holy Family in Egypt”**

The passage of the Holy Family into Egypt was only the beginning of what is for the Copts a significant connection. They too would pose in a different form that



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.

## “Arise and take the young Child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young Child’s life”

question Blake asked: “and did those feet in ancient times” walk upon Egypt’s green and fertile soil.

There are some twenty eight places marked on the route map in this brochure on the map linked in some way with the Holy Family in Egypt. It would take a small monograph to deal with all these in detail, but for a short article like this three places stand out.

The first of these would have to be the visit of the Holy Family to Wadi el-Nitrous, out in the western desert, about whose supposed Irish connection I wrote about in these pages a little while ago.

Next in popularity is the shrine located in the northern Cairo district of Matariya, one of the Egyptian capital’s poorer neighbourhoods, in the walled garden of which a sycamore tree flourishes, which is the direct descendant of the original tree that died centuries ago, but from which sprigs were replanted.

### Tradition

This is perhaps the most popular site of all, for this is the ‘Virgin’s Tree’, under which tradition says the Virgin Mary sat and rested during the flight. There is some doubt about its age and history, but on the occasion of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 it was given to the Empress Eugenie by Ismail, the then ruler of Egypt.

Here too were the famous balsam trees, extinct since 1615, with their own traditions. From the sap of these was prepared a balm which was said to be highly curative. According to the scholar E. A. Budge, writing in 1895, “the oil was much sought after by the Christians of Abyssinia who thought it absolutely necessary that one drop of the oil should be poured into the water with which they were baptised”.

The most southern places on the route, where the Holy Family turned back along the route they had come, stands the large rambling monastery of Al Muharraq.

Their legend says the Holy Family lived here for six months in a cave, which in Coptic times

became the chapel of the Church of the Virgin Mary, which stands at the western end of the present monastery. The altar stone is said to have been the resting place of the child Jesus during those months.

## “For all Christians the Flight into Egypt remains, along with the Nativity, the Shepherds and the Magi, a natural part of the Christmas story”

It was here (according to Matthew 2:20-21) that the Angel of Lord again appeared to Joseph, and told him: “Arise and take the young Child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young Child’s life.”

And so they returned home to allow the child to grow in time into a man.

This illustrated brochure, which came to me from the government department which is now the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, provides a brief well illustrated account of the legendary travels of the Holy Family through Egypt, north to south, the subject of devotion as well as art over the centuries.

For all Christians the Flight into Egypt remains, along with the Nativity, the Shepherds and the Magi, a natural part of the Christmas story, something that lingers in their adult memories whatever else they come to believe, a memory still cherished as a part of their own childhoods.

For further information the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities can be reached at [info@mota.gov.eg](mailto:info@mota.gov.eg), or the site [mota.gov.eg](http://mota.gov.eg), which provides a great deal of information useful for those wishing to visit the Christian sites of Egypt, both medieval and modern. The Coptic Museum in Cairo should not be missed. The sites in the Western desert such as Wadi El-Natroun need more detailed planning.

# Poetic Flowers of Listowel Poets

**Autumn Blooms: A Selection of Stories, Poetry and Parable,** by Paddy Glavin, Cyril Kelly, John Fitzgerald. (Copies are available from Woulfe’s Independent Bookshop, 7 Church Street Listowel, Co. Kerry; email [woulfesbookshop@gmail.com](mailto:woulfesbookshop@gmail.com); phone (068) 21021; €12, with a special postage rate of €6.80).

J. Anthony Gaughan

Listowel Writers Week, the premier locally led and sustained literary festival in Ireland is an event with a global recalme. After a short period of turmoil, it has now recovered its poise, and is refocusing on what it does best. From today onwards the town is presenting a seven day programme filled with good things of many kinds in the way of shows, talks and exhibitions. It is a matter of cultural creation from the ground up, rather than coming down from Dublin, and good luck to it.

This book, very much a product of local culture, is the work of three proud sons of Listowel. One is well-known, Cyril Kelly, he is of *Sunday Miscellany* fame. The others, Paddy Glavin and John Fitzgerald, are not so well-known but are also cherished by their fellow-townpeople.

### Sections

The book is divided into three sections. Section I, entitled ‘Workshop’, features 48 poems from Paddy Glavin. Section II, entitled ‘Reckonings’, has 24 of Cyril Kelly’s stories. Section III, ‘Looking Back’, concludes with 65 poems from Tom Fitzgerald.

Paddy Glavin had already published a poetry collection in 2011. In this collection he casts a cold and perceptive eye over events, persons, places and things. As the News of the World liked to trumpet – ‘All human life is here’. There is a vivid poem on the Black and Tans recalling some of their atrocities. ‘The Shoemaker’ prompts a vision of Tom Sweeney, the town’s shoemaker, in whose company I, like other youngsters, spent many hours admiring his skill and



An image of a storyteller passing down his traditional lore to a young listener in the Kerry Writers Museum large

enjoying his conversation on local sport. ‘A Visit to Skellig Mhichíl’ re-creates the unique atmosphere surrounding that legendary monastic centre.

Cyril Kelly is a master-storyteller and his stories here are enthralling. In one he recalls how Moss McCarthy from the Gaeltacht in West Kerry was lost and found in Dublin during Christmas week. He was spending the week with his daughter. Suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, he became separated after attending midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Luckily, he was noticed and assisted by Cyril and after a few very traumatic days he was safely returned to his family.

In another story Cyril in probing his family background envisages his grandfather Henry, an RIC pensioner, completing the 1911 Census form. The story develops into an encomium on his grandmother, Sarah Quaid of Drumcollogher, Co Limerick. She was an accomplished dress-maker and established a millinery business in Listowel which flourished across many generations.

Tadhg Brennan’s forge

was in a lane behind Cyril’s home. As a youngster he spent many hours viewing Tadhg at work. The blacksmith fitted steel bands to the wheels of ass carts, hay carts, barrows, and farm machinery. He fashioned and fitted shoes to horses, asses and mules. Some of the horses would be docile mares but others could be giddy, restless stallions. Sometimes Tadhg had other commissions with gates and railings. Cyril’s description of Tadhg at work captures every nuance of the blacksmith’s skill. In this story there is also an interesting exchange between the two of them. After hearing Cyril’s voice on a tape recorder, Tadhg exclaimed prophetically ‘Hanam an Diabhail. We’ll hear you on Radio Éireann yet!’

Cyril also describes Lent in Listowel. There was the regime of Fast and Abstinence and the annual mission conducted by the Redemptorist fathers. Then there was the temporary shop, bedecked with religious objects of all kinds, erected by the Murray family in front of the church.

### Lent

Cyril also describes Lent in Listowel. There was the regime of Fast and Abstinence and the annual mission conducted by the Redemptorist fathers. Then there was the temporary shop, bedecked with religious objects of all kinds, erected by the Murray family in front of the church.

Cyril also remembers how on one occasion during the ‘Renouncing of the devil’ a lighting candle sent a lady’s very inflammable hat alight.

## “They range far and wide over every aspect of his experience and include poems on two well-loved ‘characters’, his father Sandy, the restaurateur, and Seán McCarthy, the balladeer”

Tom Fitzgerald published a poetry collection in 2016 and he has been involved in Writers’ Week over the years. His poetry has the flavour of Sigerson Clifford’s *The Boys of Barr na Stráide*. They range far and wide over every aspect of his experience and include poems on two well-loved ‘characters’, his father Sandy, the restaurateur, and Seán McCarthy, the balladeer.

It is a pleasure to welcome this publication from these “scribblers” as they call themselves who share a love of the world of the imagination, writing, and their native hearth.

For information about the Listowel Writers Week, see the festivals website for all details of events and speakers; email: [info@writersweek.ie](mailto:info@writersweek.ie); tel: (068) 21074; or call at 24, The Square, Listowel.

# Gerard Manley Hopkins Summer School 2024

This summer school, the only one in Ireland with what can be called a religious basis, is to be held in Newbridge College, July 19-25. The full programme is not yet available but the settled highlights include an exhibition of the surrealist paintings of Desmond Morris, better known as a biologist, which are quite remarkable. Morris,

who began his career as an artist in the 1950s, now lives in Ireland. He is the author of the recent much praised biographical dictionary of *The British Surrealists*. This rare showing of his work should not be missed: “Worth a journey,” as the Michelin guide books would say.

There will also be an evening piano recital by Hans Pallsson, who

has been a regular guest at past Summer Schools. And, of course a range of speakers on themes connected with G. M. Hopkins, his life, poetry, influence, heritage and faith. This is a major literary event that reaches those parts of the imagination that others don’t even try to.

Further details can be obtained from [abbottvin@gmail.com](mailto:abbottvin@gmail.com).



# 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](mailto:advertising@irishcatholic.ie)

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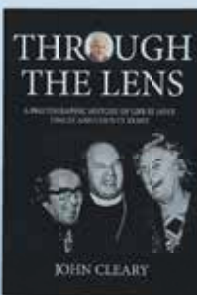
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Leisure time

Crossword

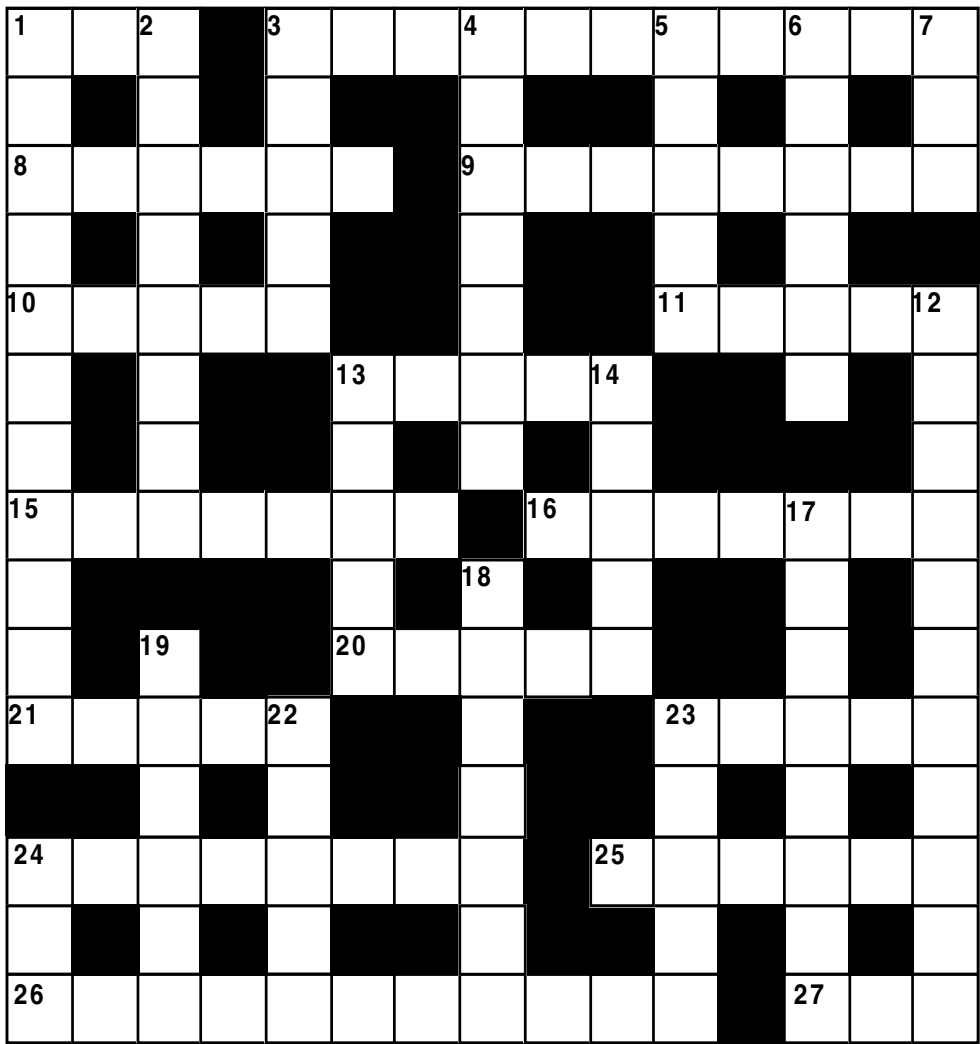
Gordius 665

Across

- 1 Insect or eavesdropping equipment (3)
- 3 Clerical detective created by GK Chesterton (6,5)
- 8 Motive (6)
- 9 One who believes in exclusively peaceful means (8)
- 10 Move just a little (5)
- 11 Departing (5)
- 13 Excursions (5)
- 15 Set fire to (7)
- 16 American type of alcoholic spirit (7)
- 20 Tantalize (5)
- 21 Belief in the existence of God (5)
- 23 Place of combat (5)
- 24 Fatherly (8)
- 25 Cereal crop (6)
- 26 Pope's representative (5,6)
- 27 Firearm (3)

Down

- 1 Lacking in concentration, or one obsessed with ornithology? (4-7)
- 2 Male descendant (8)
- 3 Turned to ice (5)
- 4 Optimistic (7)
- 5 Slang for glittering objects (5)
- 6 Source, beginning (6)
- 7 Immature louse (3)
- 12 American gorge (5,6)



- 13 This English river flows through Notting-ham (5)
- 14 Push (5)
- 17 It is awarded to a pristine beach (4,4)
- 18 An accumulation of work needing to be done (7)
- 19 Tent in which to see a circus (3,3)
- 22 Wall-painting (5)
- 23 Astound (5)
- 24 Young seal or dog (3)

SOLUTIONS, MAY 23

GORDIUS No. 664

Across

- 1 Coat of arms 6 Apes 10 Input 11 Harmonica 12 Protest 15 Curia 17 Rate 18 Eggs 19 Admit 21 Chancel 23 Aisle 24 Knit 25 Note 26 Ingot 28 Tempest 33 Announces 34 Piece 35 Even 36 Pennyroyal

Down

- 1 Chin 2 Asparagus 3 Octet 4 Athos 5 Mark 7 Prior 8 Stalactite 9 Conceal 13 Etch 14 Trinket 16 Decapitate 20 Monastery 21 Centaur 22 Exam 27 Genie 29 Essen 30 Piper 31 Oche 32 Well

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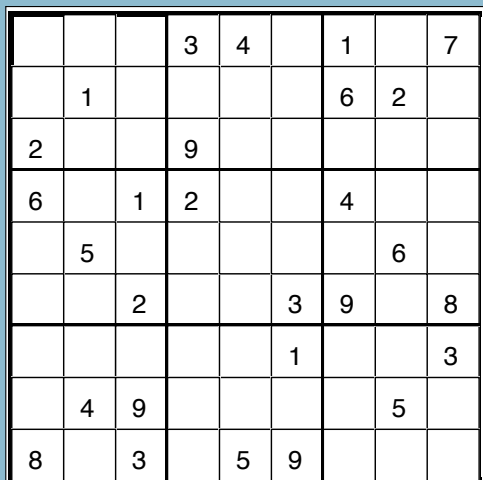
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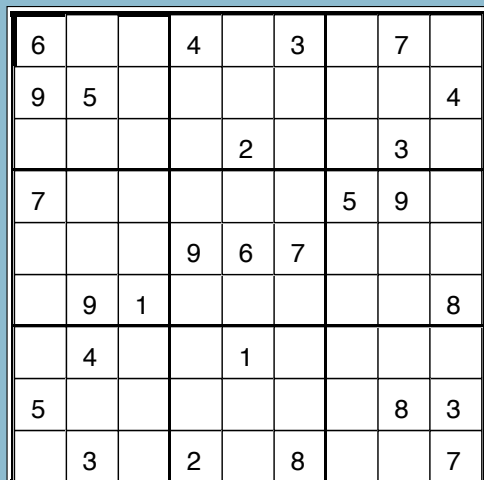
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Sudoku Corner 535

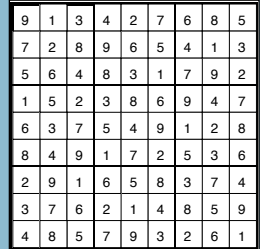
Easy



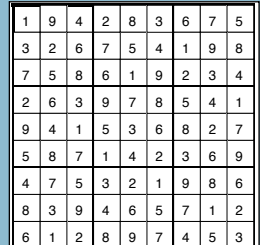
Hard



Last week's Easy 534



Last week's Hard 534





## Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



# Corpus Christi – The mystical and the inexplicable

**The Feast of Corpus Christi this weekend** reminds us to reflect on and celebrate the extraordinary gift that Jesus left us at The Last Supper. The gift of himself in the form of very ordinary food, bread.

One of my fears is that because we have the opportunity to attend Mass and receive Communion as often as we wish there is a real danger that we can take that privilege for granted. I worry for myself and for others that our faith in the Eucharist and the belief that Jesus is really present when I receive Communion is not as strong as it was in the past.

## Generations

I think of the generations who went before us in Ireland who had such belief and reverence in the Eucharist that they risked their lives to be able to attend Mass and receive Communion in makeshift chapels and at Mass Rocks.

I think of the efforts the British authorities made and the rewards they offered for information about where priests were hiding. That was all to do with the Eucharist because if they could get rid of the priests, they could get rid of the Eucharist.

So, on this feast of Corpus Christi when we celebrate that gift of Eucharist which Jesus first gave us



at The Last Supper I want to share something I read recently which may give us pause for reflection.

This extraordinary series of events began at Mass in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina in the summer of 1996. During the distribution of Communion, a host fell on a dirty floor. The priest decided to put the host in a glass of water to dissolve.

He placed the glass in the tabernacle. Five days later the host had not dissolved but instead there were red blood stains in the glass. The priest contacted his local bishop (now Pope Francis).

The bishop contacted a specialist doctor, Caston Gomez to investigate. The doctor sent samples from the glass of water to a laboratory in California for further testing but not dis-

close the origin of the samples. The scientists in California presented the following findings: 'The tissue was muscle tissue from the left ventricle of a human heart'.

Dr. Gomez further consulted an expert cardiologist in New York, Dr. Frederick Zugibe. Again, he was not told that tissue he was examining was from a sacred host. His conclusion was 'The person with this heart must have been very wounded. Under examination this tissue shows the heart would have been under great strain and stress. They were subjected to prolonged torture...but how is it that as I was studying the sample it was moving? How did you remove the heart of a dead man and bring it alive to me here in New York?'

Dr. Gomez relates the utter shock

of his colleague in New York when he was told the origin of the tissue he was examining.

## Consoling

I find it fitting and very consoling that the Eucharist would appear under the guise of the human heart, that part of all of us where love is found, where love is felt where love grows and is given from.

My heartfelt prayer for myself this weekend and for all of us par-

ticipating in Masses up and down the country, is that we would all grow in our faith in and our love for the Eucharist. Jesus at the heart of our lives and at the heart of our parish communities.

## Remember that wedding in Cana...

An Irish priest is driving down to New York for the St Patrick's Day parade and gets stopped for speeding in Connecticut. The policeman smells alcohol on the priest's breath and then sees an empty wine bottle on the floor of the car, so he asks the priest, "Sir, have you been drinking?" "Just water," says the priest. "Then why do I smell wine?" The priest looks at the bottle, picks it up, sniffs it and says, "Good Lord! He's done it again!"



## Food for the journey

"We break this bread with reverence and give it to each other for eating just as another person once broke those loaves with us and asked us not to forget. We haven't! If there is any command we have been religiously obedient to it is this command of not forgetting do this in my memory! Do it again and again! Jesus, we have....We have broken bread with tears in our eyes And we've broken it. When our hearts felt nothing, but we have broken it just as you asked us to do. We are still trying to understand what it means. But we haven't forgotten." Macrina Wiederkehr

## 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**

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