A remarkable man: Tributes paid to much-loved veteran Maynooth professor – Page 8



## **Arming rural Ireland would** be sign we've 'lost our soul'

Tackling rural isolation seen as key challenge

#### **Susan Gately**

A proposal that would see people allowed to arm themselves for protection from intruders would be a sign that the country has "lost its soul", a leading priest-campaigner for rural Ireland has warned.

Fr Harry Bohan has also appealed to parishioners to work to tackle the scourge of rural isolation urging people to "turn off the television and check on your neighbours" who may be living alone.

#### **Taser guns**

It comes after independent TD Michael Fitzmaurice raised a proposal to allow elderly people in the countryside to arm themselves with pepper spray or taser guns to feud-off would-be attackers.

The Gardaí have launched a special task force in a bid to stamp out a recent upsurge

#### **CHAI BRADY**

The Pope faces an uphill struggle in Myanamar PAGE 23

in rural crime. However, Mr Fitzmaurice believes that allowing people to use such weapons "may alleviate their worries and may help prevent them being injured or hurt".

Deputy Fitzmaurice also called for homeowners to be given the right to store legally-held firearms in their bedrooms.

However, Fr Bohan rejected this insisting to The Irish Catholic that if people have guns in their bedrooms "they are living in dread all the time".

The well-known activist for rural economic and social development agreed, nonetheless, that the deputy had made a good point in relation to isolation which in rural areas "has become a huge problem".

"There is isolation every-

» Continued from Page 2

### Irish-American takes next step towards Sainthood

**Cardinal Angelo** Amato, prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, concelebrates the beatification Mass of Irish-American friar Blessed **Solanus Casey on** Saturday at Ford Field in Detroit. At least 60,000 attended the beatification of the Capuchin Franciscan priest See Page 14. Photo: **CNS/Jeff Kowalsky** 

#### **MARTIN MANSERGH**

Learning the lessons of the two World Wars PAGE 7



#### **MICHAEL KELLY**

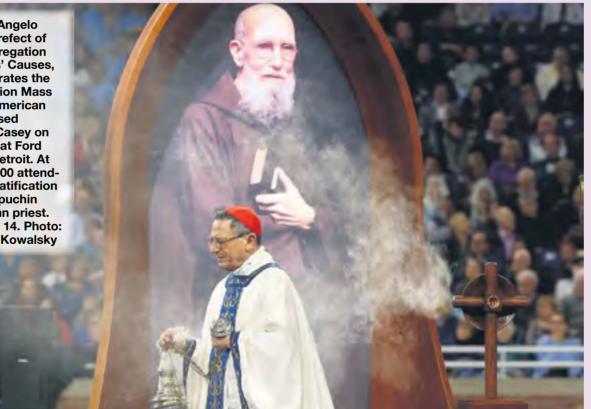
Remembering **Fr Ronan Drury** PAGE 2

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### **Inside this week**

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## Remembering a remarkable man who lived his priesthood to the end

r Ronan Drury – who was buried on Monday – shaped several generations of stu-

dents for the priesthood. He lived at St Patrick's College, Maynooth for more than a third of that institution's history. As Professor of Homiletics - the art of preaching - he helped aspirants the length and breadth of Ireland prepare for the arduous task of making the Sunday Gospel relevant to the struggles of the lives of the parishioners

He used to describe the Sacred Scriptures as the story of the marvels that God has done for us, rather than a list of things believers have to do for God.

He never tired of reminding students that the starting point in good preaching is finding where people are in their lives and applying the Gospel to that. He had little time for arid dogmatism that couldn't speak to the felt need that the People of God had for sustenance on their daily nilgrimage.

#### Above all, Ronan Drury will be remembered as a tremendous priest"

One priest told me during the week that Prof. Drury helped his generation of priests to find their voices. Speaking to people about Ronan Drury, the remarkable thing is that he remained relevant to different



generations of students for the priesthood despite the fact that things were changing so rapidly.

He was an adaptable man and an accommodating man. At the various gatherings around his obsequies in the past few days much has been made of his gentleness, his compassion, his quick wit, fast recall and penchant for a story.

All of this was true, and it has been lovely to hear more about this from those who knew him much better than I.

Above all, I think, Ronan Drury [pictured] will be remembered as a tremendous priest. More than a few people have told me in recent days about how they marvelled at the way in which he lived his priesthood to the fullest.

A priest I know spoke of Fr Ronan as "a fantastic example of priesthood".

He was, "dedicated,

compassionate, kind, prayerful, and happy. He never forgot anyone." Close friends describe how he

faced his own death with peace,

prayer and serenity – "an example to

the end", as one person described it to me.

As well as a priest and preacher, Fr Drury was also for 40 years editor of The Furrow. The task of an editor can often be a lonely one - to be sure, one never lacks advisers willing to offer their two cents of wisdom on what one ought to do or ought not to do. But, when tough decisions have to be made - and the inevitable consequences of publication faced advisers can be few and far between.

#### **Christian virtue**

In his editorial work, Fr Drury knew that caution was not a Christian virtue: he knew that the closest of friends often have to critique, or issue a wake-up call, or help one confront some unpleasant truth that one is unwilling to face.

Ronan Drury: editor, preacher and - above all - priest, will be fondly remembered.

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

1 See Page 8.

## Tackling isolation in rural areas is key task

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#### » Continued from Page 1

where. Doors that were always open in towns and villages are all closed now. People have their own entertainment with TV, and 'business' is taking over the time that parents have." According to Fr Bohan,

parishioners need to be "doers of the word - faith

in action, caring for one another, stepping outside the church building".

He agreed that people need

sion and go out to meet or

check on their neighbours.

be a need to "re-structure"

to learn to turn off the televi-

While he said there may

#### **Neighbours**

challenge is to "bring the Gospel message back into action."

The priest who founded the Rural Resource Organisation which ultimately resulted in the building of 2,500 houses in 120 villages, said there was a huge search for meaning going on in Ireland today as evidenced by the plethora of books

on yoga, mindfulness and Christian spirituality. He saw Deputy Fitzmaurice's initiative as a "wake-up call".

Without people resorting to arming themselves, a lot more could be done to relieve rural isolation, he said. "There must be ways for people to look out for each other even in rural Ireland."



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## Ask Pope to visit Matt Talbot, Archbishop Martin says

#### Greg Daly

People should write to Pope Francis to encourage him to visit the tomb of Matt Talbot when he comes to Dublin next year, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has said. Speaking in Maynooth at a conference on priestly formation, Archbishop Martin spoke of how priests come from the "holy people of God", a term the Pope regularly uses when speaking of ordinary Catholics, especially those from marginalised communities.

"The bishop's main point was the importance of the holy people of God, with Matt Talbot as example," said Fr Richard Ebejer, former administrator of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish on Seán McDermott Street, where Talbot's shrine is. He added that he was delighted that the famous Dublin ascetic had been mentioned, and so asked whether the Pontiff might be prevailed upon to visit Talbot's tomb, which St John Paul II was widely expected to visit in 1979 although doing so had never been on his schedule.

#### **Disappointed**

"The local people had prepared for the visit, and had been disappointed when the Pope did not visit," the Maynooth-based Salesian told *The Irish Catholic*, saying that this showed how it is "good not to raise expectations".

Fr Ebejer has previously said that

the disappointment felt locally at St John Paul's failure to visit the tomb is still palpable today, and that while the North inner city is a marginalised community which has a social stigma attached to it, it has many positive aspects which the archbishop himself has often highlighted.

"There's a strong sense of solidarity there," Fr Ebejer said, describing the area as a "local community struggling to lift itself out of poverty". He pointed to how Dr Martin has spoken about the role of mothers and grandmothers keeping families together when things went wrong, and noted how – even among families where religious practice is low – there is a strong attachment there to the local church.

Fr Eddie Conway OP of the nearby St Saviour's Church, where Talbot had been going when he collapsed and died in Granby Lane in 1925 agreed it would be good if the Pope visited a community that is so often marginalised.

Stressing that details of the papal visit have not been confirmed, Fr Conway described the failure to visit the tomb in 1979 as "a terrible omission" and said "It would be good for the Pope to visit him - he's Dublin's holy man, the saint of the working class, known for how he fought with the whole addiction thing, and someone people can identify with." Matt Talbot was declared

'venerable' by Pope Paul VI in October 1975,

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Pope Francis and, main

photo, Pope John Paul II

at Dublin Airport in 1979

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#### Halt paramilitary violence, Church leaders urge

#### Staff reporter

**4 | News** 

Church leaders have called on paramilitaries in the North to stop their violence for the sake of young people in the region.

In a statement to coincide with the United Nations' Universal Children's Day, the clergy warned that the vision of the Peace Process was being lost in the face of continued violence and intimidation.

Lamenting how too many children and young people remain exposed to such violence either directly or indirectly, the clerics praised those who work to offer better options, while warning that such valuable work is threatened by funding cuts and financial uncertainty.

The statement was issued by Armagh's Archbishop Eamon Martin, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh Dr Richard Clarke, Rev Dr Laurence Graham, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland. Rt Rev Dr Noble McNeely, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and Dr John McDowell, the Church of Ireland Bishop of Clogher and President of the Irish Council of Churches.

cross/

## Irish missionaries in Zimbabwe watch political developments 'with hope'

#### Susan Gately

An Irish Franciscan priest who has been living in Zimbabwe for 50 years says he is hopeful for the future of the country. Fr Walter Gallahue, a parish priest in Harare, told The Irish Catholic that everything was "very peaceful" in

"There is no sense of panic, we are waiting to see what will happen," he said.

The Irish priest was speaking just before outgoing President Robert Mugabe bowed to pressure and announced his resignation.

resignation had been voluntary, but it came as parliament was due to begin debating his impeachment.

#### Change

Speaking to The Irish Catholic as it went to press this week amidst growing uncertainty in the southern African country, Fr Gallaghue said: "There is widespread hope that under a new leader we can begin to turn around the economy. This is a huge hope.'

Mugabe, his vice president and all those in power were "part of the armed struggle" of the 1970s in Zimbabwe against white rule, he said, which he had witnessed at first hand. "I was here during the armed struggle and the people protected me. I was the only white man in a 40

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urban parish, Glen Norah, in

Harare with around 3,000

which is part of the Irish Prov-

The order in Zimbabwe.

Catholics.

Fr Gallahue, who hails from Rosslare, ministered in rural areas for many decades,

but in recent years he has been parish priest of a large

the capital.

Mr Mugabe insisted his

mile radius."

until this autumn Director of England and Wales' National Office for Vocations, said seminaries need to take account of the fact that men are also now entering seminary after years of experience in the world.

"Losing the autonomy they've had for a decade or more is very difficult, yet this personal deconstruction is a necessary part of formation," Fr Jamison said, maintaining that this should not be "a pro-

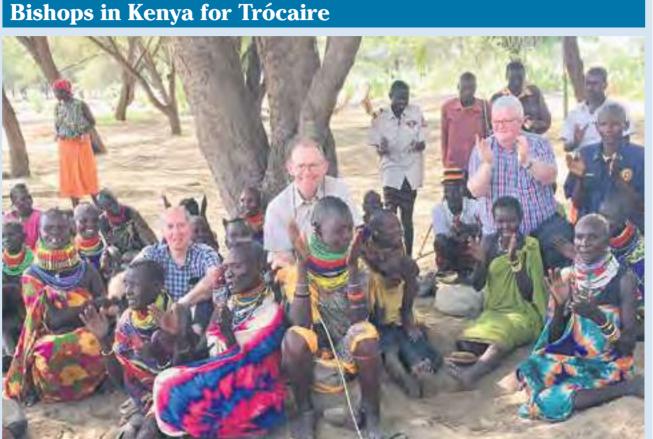
### **FAITH RENEWAL** Sat 25 November 'Reflection Day on Parish Ministry in Advent' with Dr Aoife McGrath

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Taking place from 11am-3pm, Prayer Guidance Centre, Knock Shrine. Fee €30 includes lunch. Booking advised. T: (094) 93 75355 Email: faithrenewal@knockshrine.ie ince, has six houses - three in Harare, and three in outlying areas. The Franciscans serve in parishes or run houses for their students in formation -

around 25 at the moment. For Fr Walter, Zimbabwe it is home. "They are wonder-

ful people. I pray to God that things will go well for them."



Bishop Denis Brennan of Ferns with Killaloe's Bishop Fintan Monahan and Canon Michael McLoughlin, diocesan administrator of the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora with locals in Turkana, Kenya, as part of the bishops' annual Trócaire trip.

### Many now enter seminary after conversion experience

#### **Greg Daly**

The man credited with playing a major role in an upsurge in candidates for the priesthood in Britain has said those involved in vocations promotion need to understand that many young committed Catholics now consider a vocation after a conversion experience. Addressing a major conference on priestly formation in Maynooth at the weekend, Fr Christopher Jamison,

cess of humiliation through silly practices" but instead should be "a real stripping back to the basics of the spiritual life".

Fr Jamison drew on surveys which reveal today's young people stay young, in a sense, longer than their predecessors did.

It's not merely that they enter seminary later, he explained; they marry significantly later and their sense of affiliation to institutions is lower.

While, he says, today's young Catholic adults cannot simply be pigeonholed as "all conservative", they do tend to have conversion processes in common. with the vast majority of seminarians in England and Wales being converts, reverts or at least people who can point to when they started to take their Faith seriously.

*i* See pages 10 and 11.



#### Comment 5

## The vulnerability of some, the toughness of others

t is said, amongst teachers, that by teaching, you learn. Similarly, by writing for readers, a journalist learns much from those readers. And over the past week, I received a reader's letter which gave me much pause for thought. It was from "Anne" in the "West of Ireland".

"I am writing to you re the Harvey Weinstein story," Anne wrote. "I just want to say and I am sad to have to, that one does not have to go far away to hear such stories. They are and in the past were happening all over Ireland. And nobody did anything about it. It was and still is a difficult time for women and girls. Often other women will not believe them or help them. Indeed sometimes they can be abusers too."

#### Message

This was a palpably sincere message from someone speaking out of her own experience. It made me realise that we should always bear in mind that individual experiences can be so different, and that people can see things, and remember things, in many different ways. And all those differences should be respected.

**She simply** stubbed out a cigarette on the would-be offender's skin, causing him agonising pain"

Looking back, I think I was a very robust young woman and my early formative years were spent in London's Fleet Street, where the aim of every female journalist was to be 'a ten-minute egg' - exceptionally hard-boiled. We boasted we could drink any man under the table, though







women were much more

much more sensitive, and

therefore, probably more

likely to be pounced on by

predatory males. Here is a

lady who is remembering

which the publicity around

the Harvey Weinstein case

It is sad that she writes

"nobody did anything about

it". And even surprising.

Heaven knows the Irish

clergy preached against

these themes were often

underlined in devotional

magazines like the Sacred

perhaps sermons were too

often aimed at underlining

rather than the predatory or

aggressive sexuality of some

the modesty of women

Heart Messenger. But

the sins of fornication

and concupiscence -

times of fear and hurt,

has aroused.

vulnerable, probably

we were darned fools about that And because of this 'ladette' attitude, what Anne calls the Harvey Weinstein scenario seldom arose, or else we were combative enough to deal with it.

A contemporary colleague of mine, Ann Leslie, recounted recently on Channel 4 how, when such a situation arose, she simply stubbed out a cigarette on the would-be offender's skin, causing him agonising pain.

Another late colleague of mine not only knew how to deal with any would-be Harveys, but ruthlessly used her own sexuality to beat the men professionally. On a foreign trip, she'd beguile the local police chief seductively, and get a scoop that would leave the guys standing.

But Anne's letter has reminded me that other

• "My daughter has just had a baby son," announced a radiant grandmother arriving at a meeting. "They're calling him Toby. It means 'God is good' in Hebrew.'

men.

It's a phrase one of my aunts would often iterate, and now I know it comes from the ancient Hebrew. Truly, you learn something new every day.

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#### <u>Heavy falls from grace</u>



My late sister, who lived in America for the last 40 years of her life, hugely admired two men in American public life: President Bill Clinton and the thoughtful television host Charlie Rose.



Now Charlie Rose has been suspended from his shows because of claims of sexual misconduct, and the political commentators report that three separate women in Bill Clinton's past are accusing him of serious sexual assault. My sister Ursula would be devastated.



## Vestment design competition opens for World Meeting

#### Susan Gately

**6 | News** 

The WMOF18 is calling on artists and designers to put on their creative thinking caps to come up with a "unique and inspirational"

design for the vestments to be worn by priests, bishops and the Pope himself at the masses of the World Meeting of Families in August 2018. The



Family: Joy for the World' should in some way be reflected in the design. Artists may submit up to three original designs and each design should be accompanied by a short note

explaining its

inspiration. Elizabeth and Lilly Yeats, sisters of the poet William Butler Yeats and members

of the Dun Emer Guild, crafted large volume production and vestments used in the in Ireland in 1932. Their according to the organisers. deadline for applications and judge the designs and award the winner a prize of €1,000

The WMOF congress theme – 'The Gospel of the

should be easily produced,

cleaned and maintained".

December 20 is the

an independent panel will

Eucharistic Congress held cloth-of-gold creation with intricate Celtic embroidery influenced by Elizabeth's time in the circle of William Morris are still in use in St Mary's Pro-Cathedral in Dublin today.





Fr Shay Cullen SSC with Preda Foundation Executive Director Francis Bermido, in Kerkrade, the Netherlands,

where at EURIADE the annual International Festival of Dialogue Fr Cullen was awarded the 2017 Martin Buber Award for his work on human rights in the Philippines since 1969.

## Sinn Féin out of step with ordinary people on abortion - MP

#### **Greg Daly**

Sinn Féin's new party line on abortion does not reflect the views of ordinary voters, the Sinn Féin MP for Mid-Ulster has said.

Francie Molloy, who succeeded Martin McGuinness as MP for the area in 2013, said the policy adopted at the party's Ard Fheis was both "progressive and hysterical", and cautioned against the triumphalism of some who had campaigned for it. "I think it was hysterical, particularly by people gloating on the position," he said, adding, "I saw a danger in it I did not like."

Until the Ard Fheis, the party, which since 2015 has favoured the repeal of Ireland's constitutional protections for unborn children, had held that abortion should be legal in cases of so-called 'fatal foetal abnormalities' and when pregnancies had arisen through rape and incest.

#### **Grave danger**

However, the party has now voted to also support allowing abortion in cases where "a woman's life, health or mental health is at serious risk or in grave danger". This is in practice a call to bring abor-

tion law in Ireland in line with that in Britain, where over 97% of 2015's more than 190,000 abortions took place on mental health grounds.

Speaking to *The Irish News*, Mr Molloy warned that the conference vote was out of step with ordinary constituents.

"It's important to keep in touch with the grassroots and realise these decisions can be taken in isolation. It's very easy to pass a motion in the heat of an ard fheis - it's different when you are on doorsteps and people don't see the logic for it," he said, adding that the vote "does not reflect the view of the people on the ground".

Opposing the change in party policy, Meath West TD Peadar Tóibín told the conference, with reference to the 1916 Proclamation: "The right to life is the primary human right. You cannot cherish all the children equally if you do not give the right to life to all the children."

He appealed for party representatives to be allowed to vote with their conscience on the issue, but Sinn Féin deputy leader Mary Lou McDonald has said the party will not "cop out" by taking what she called the "a la carte" approach of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

#### **Catholics do not** understand Pope Archbishop

Pope Francis is misunderstood by people both within the Church as well as by some outside it, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has said.

Speaking in St Mary's Church on Dublin's Haddington Road as part of the Patrick Finn lecture series, Archbishop Martin said the Pope's example "inspires some and... upsets others and leaves them insecure".

'Curiously, the inspired can be among non-believers and the upset even among cardinals," he said, adding: "Pope Francis is not someone who is out to change the teaching of the Church. What he does is to find ways in which he can win hearts for what the Church's teaching involves, not through imposing and judging, but through winning and attracting.'

There are those in the Church who do not understand this, Dr Martin said, and who feel that unless the Pontiff "daily reaffirms in every detail all the teaching of the Church, that he is somehow rejecting that teaching".

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ovember is the month of remembrance, with All Saints' Day on the 1st, followed by All Souls' Day on the 2nd, in the Christian calendar. It is also the month when on 11 November 1918 an Armistice was called which brought the main fighting in the First World War to an end.

Remembrance is about respect for the dead, for those who served and fought with courage and self-sacrifice for a cause beyond themselves. Their memory matters to their families and communities. Remembrance needs to go further, to a resolve not to allow that needless level of sacrifice of human life to recur. That is best achieved by reconciliation.

One definition of reconciliation given by the Chairman of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Barbara Walshe, at a discussion marking German Remembrance Day on November 19, is "learning to live with radical difference". The definition certainly applies to peace in Northern Ireland, nearly 20 years after the Good Friday Agreement.

#### **Survivors**

All survivors of the First World War have passed over the horizon. Even the next generation of their families is now elderly. Inevitably, remembrance is extended forward in time to include those in uniform, who died performing their duty. In Thurles Cathedral last Sunday in a Mass presided over by the Archbishop of Cashel and Emly Kieran O'Reilly and a subsequent wreath-laying in St. Mary's Garden of Remembrance, those who died on UN peacekeeping duties trying to prevent radical difference spilling over into violence were especially remembered.

On Saturday, November 11, the Annual Armistice Day Commemoration hosted by the Glasnevin Trust, took place with the support of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and the Royal British Legion (Republic of Ireland branch). It consisted of an Ecumenical Service in the Church of the Resurrection at Glasnevin, the blessing and unveiling of four additional Victoria Cross

## **Remembering the lessons** of the two World Wars



commemorative plaques, and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Cross of Sacrifice.

The new memorial gifted by the French Government beside it with the tribute to Irish soldiers by Marshal Foch inscribed emphasises that on the Western Front they were fighting alongside French and Belgian soldiers to free occupied territory, and not just for a British Empire promising Home Rule.

Public attitudes to the First World War and to the victims of it have much evolved. There is now a full acknowledgement of the part played by members of many families from practically all communities in Ireland. Recruits did not come mostly from one minority religious, political and class background. Yet there was a time when patriotism was regarded as the preserve of much smaller numbers who had fought in the independence struggle.

#### Public attitudes to the First World War and to the victims of it have much evolved"

The best comment on all of this was made by one such person, Taoiseach Seán Lemass, in 1966, the 50th anniversary of the Rising, when he said on 18 February: "In later years it was common – and I also was guilty in this respect – to question the motives of those men who served the British armies formed at the outbreak of the war, but it must, in their honour and in fairness to their memory, be said that they were motivated by the highest purpose, and died in their tens of thousands in Flanders and Gallipoli, believing they were giving their lives in the cause of human liberty everywhere, not excluding Ireland."

Home Rule, at one time supported by both Pearse and de Valera, was seen as promising freedom, but the ongoing difficulties in delivering it on any basis, even after decades of it being demanded by a large majority of Irish MPs and voters, meant it was superseded by rising Irish expectations of a post-war new world order founded on self-determination.

#### Lessons

There were two lessons from the First World War. One was the dangers of brinkmanship on all sides, there being several crises pre-1914 that were only narrowly averted. The second lesson, only fully learnt (one hopes) after a still more disastrous world war ending in 1945, was one already apparent with the defeat of Napoleon.

As French historian Thierry Lentz concludes, "without consciousness that the abuse of power ends in failure, the hegemonic adventure invariably ends by the constitution of a vast coalition, which, given a modicum of determination, skill and patience, always finishes by being victorious".

There remains one area of controversy, the symbolism of wearing the poppy. In order to show respect to the dead, it is not necessary to wear any symbol. People should not be pressurised into wearing one, or not wearing one. If one is worn here, there is much to be said for confining the wearing to the day of attendance at a particular event or ceremony, and not for weeks on end.

As part of the UK then, Ireland was involved in the First World War, with official political, clerical and media encouragement in the opening stages, but with strong resistance to conscription. The meaning that we invest in commemoration may well differ to some extent from what takes place in Britain.

Commemoration

There was something deeply wrong with a mind-set that

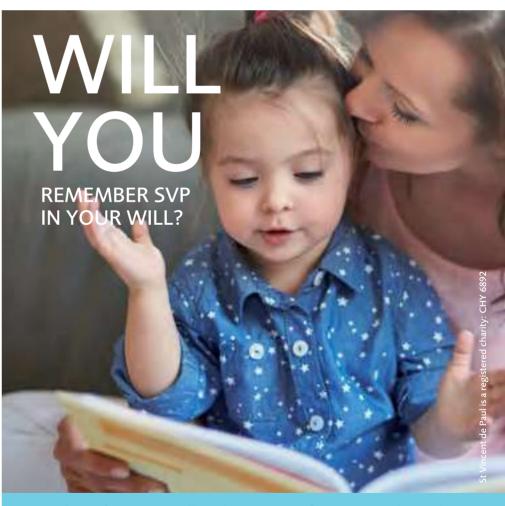
considered a Remembrance Day commemoration in Enniskillen a legitimate target 30 years ago in 1987. Repudiation of that attack that ultimately cost 12 lives helped prepare the way for peace.

The Germans have their own emblem for remembrance, a blue forgetme-not, given by wives to husbands leaving for the front.

They have their own German War Graves Commission. Speaking of World War II in particular, reference is made to shame and humiliation, but also to quiet heroic acts of defiance by individuals who risked their lives to save others by disobeying orders.

At Glencree, a wreath was laid by a senior French Embassy official, emphasizing Franco-German reconciliation and their deep shared commitment to the European Union as the best way of preventing the return of a tragic and bloodsoaked past. Ireland remains part of that project, with the exact consequences of Brexit for Northern Ireland and North-South trade yet to be clarified.

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Society of St Vincent de Paul

# A priest with an innate sympathy for the underdog

onan Drury came to Maynooth as a young man in 1942 to prepare for the priesthood and, apart from three years, he lived his priesthood in this college. He had a great devotion to this place and its traditions. Despite the length of years that God blessed him with, he always remained young at heart.

When he first came to the college it was a stricter and more severe place, and yet he showed great humanity and warmth to the students all throughout his time here. He was approachable, caring, friendly, generous and respectful. He had an innate sympathy for the underdog and gave extra support for the weaker student. Students had a great fondness for him and that affection for him A great crafter of the spoken and written word has gone to God, writes **Fr Michael Mullaney** 

never diminished through the generations of students that passed through here.

Not only had he a great humanity but also a great sense of humour. He lived life with heartiness and zest, his presence and company brightened the room when his arrival at the table lifted a dull conversation. He was, in the whole of his health, delightful company, quick witted and a man blessed with a great recall.

As professor of eloquence and homiletics, Fr Drury made a huge contribution to the formation of seminarians in challenging us to be imaginative, creative, effective, real, relevant and vulnerable when breaking open the Word of God for the People of God. He himself was an inspiring and poetic preacher and particularly famous for preaching at 68 midnight Masses in his native Mullagh, Co. Cavan. For those of us from the country

A wonderful evening of festive songs and carols to start the Christmas season

## ← CHRISTMAS ∽ GALA CONCERT

#### In Aid of **Trōcaire**

Sunday December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7.30pm Mount Argus Church, Harold's Cross, Dublin

#### With MC: Joe Duffy

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- The Key Notes with Lisa Lambe
- Nás na Rí Singers
- Mount Sackville girls choir
- Fr Brian D'Arcy

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To reserve tickets, please email grainne.dunne@trocaire.org o<u>r Call 01 505 3269</u> he taught us voice-training – ironing out my terrible Tipperary 'ths'. I occasionally still lapse back into mispronouncing them. He was always an encouraging teacher. If he didn't think much of the homily or reflection you had prepared, he would strive to find a word, a sentence and if you were really lucky a paragraph he saw some hope in. I have to admit, I had a few of those experiences.

#### Thinking

As editor of *The Furrow* he gave many an opportunity to voice new ideas and thinking, especially those who were on the margins of the Church: alternative voices as well as those who reflected on the challenges and changes facing the Church in modern Ireland. With great humility in

With great humility in the background as editor for some 40 years he produced a monthly magazine providing readers with wide range of thought-provoking material, sometimes controversial, but like Ronan himself, never uninteresting.

We commend this crafter of the spoken and written word to rest in the Word himself"

Through *The Furrow*, he informed and opened minds. But he was an editor to the end, overseeing the October issue a month ago. When I called to see him in the hospital recently, I told him I was preparing notes for someone giving a conference lecture. I asked him if the notes were not used, could I rework them



The late Fr Ronan Drury.

for *The Furrow*. Even from his sick bed he asked, would I have it ready for the November issue deadline. An editor to the end.

Those who journeyed with him in recent months will know how much he suffered quietly and uncomplainingly. Facing the end of life, he revealed his depth of faith and his spiritual strength. He faced death openly, with serenity and left a deep impression on those he spoke with in his final days.

We give thanks to God for the life of Fr Ronan Drury. Maynooth gives thanks for the humanity, the humour and the humility with which he enriched this college, his home, his colleagues and students over the years. We commend this crafter of the spoken and written word to rest in the Word himself.

And now the plough is still and the furrows cut, the seed is scattered and the work is done, our prayer, our hope is that Ronan now hears the refreshing and welcoming words: "Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy and rest of your Master."

(1) Fr Michael Mullaney is President of St Patrick's College, Maynooth. This piece is taken from remarks he made in the College Chapel at Maynooth last Sunday evening (19/11/17) during Vespers for the happy repose of the soul of Fr Ronan Drury.

## Tributes paid to Fr Ronan Drury

#### Staff reporter

Tributes have been paid to Maynooth professor Fr Ronan Drury who has died aged 93. A stalwart of the national seminary, Fr Drury taught countless generations of Irish priests the art of preaching homilies. He died on Thursday, November 16, in Dublin.

A priest of the Meath Diocese, he was ordained in 1949 having begun his

seminary formation in Maynooth in 1942. At a solemn ceremony of Vespers in the Maynooth College Chapel current President Fr Michael Mullaney recalled that from 1942, Fr Drury had lived all but three years of his life at Maynooth. In fact, his long-time service to the college meant that he was resident on campus for more than a third of the college's 222-year history.

Many former students and colleagues packed the Vespers service on Sunday evening, and remembered Prof. Drury at a reception afterwards in Pugin Hall.

As Professor of Homiletics, he not only trained and inspired students in Maynooth, he supervised an annual course at the Irish College in Rome for students preparing for ordination.

He became editor of *The Furrow* – a pastoral journal – in 1977 following the death of the founding editor Canon JJ McGarry. He continued as editor up until his death and colleagues recalled how he was working on the November issue during his final illness.

A native of Mullagh in Co. Cavan, Fr Drury celebrated a remarkable 68 consecutive Midnight Masses in his native parish. His requiem Mass was celebrated in the college chapel at Maynooth on Monday, November 20, and he was buried afterwards in Mullagh.

#### Comment 9

## **'Crisis of identity' in priesthood** reflects a wider social crisis



Living well is a lifelong process, but we have to know what we are aiming at, writes **David** Ouinn

n an excellent address to a conference on priestly formation in Maynooth at the weekend, Archbishop Eamon Martin made a passing reference to the volumes of work that have been written in the years after the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965 about the "crisis of identity" among priests. This idea about a 'crisis of identity" caught my eye because the 1960s did not spark a crisis of identity among priests alone, but right across society and it's not over yet.

There is a crisis of identity among men, for example. Once upon a time a man knew his basic job in life (if he married and had children) was to be a provider, and an authority figure and example to his children.

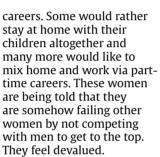
Now men have been told they are not really needed by women. Women can provide for themselves. Men are not even needed as fathers because women can easily raise their children alone, or with the help of other family members and friends if need

#### **Primary carers**

There is a crisis of identity among women. Women were expected in the past to be the primary carers. They were expected to mind the home and all in it.

Women are now told they really ought to be engaged in full-time work and rising to the top of their chosen profession. If they must have children, then day-care will mind those children during the working day. Children should be no impediment to reaching the top and competing with men.

But lots of women don't want full-time, life-long



There is a crisis in parental identity. Are parents supposed to be authority figures or friends to their children, or a mixture of both?

**There was a** certain way to be a man, a woman, a teacher, a parent, a wife, a husband, a child and so on"

There is a crisis of sexual identity at the most fundamental level. Once. men were men and women were women, but now we are told there are dozens of different 'genders' we can choose from and a growing number of people, including children, are being encouraged to choose a gender that is at variance with their physical body.

There is also a crisis of national identity. We used to be able to say that a nation consisted of people who shared the same language, had a shared history, a shared religion, a shared ethnicity etc. Now someone who arrived yesterday and does not speak the language, or share our history, religion or ethnicity is as much a national of their new home as someone born there.

The various crises of identity referred to above can, I am sure, be added to,



but the overall point is that,

if there are crisis of identity

among priests, they are not

alone. On the contrary.

The priest used to

see himself in part as an

authority figure, and people

expected that of him. Much

of the authoritarianism that

has so badly damaged the

reputation of the Church in

Ireland stemmed from this.

Authority need not lead to

but far too often it does.

Parents, teachers,

presented themselves as

authority figures and they often succumbed to the

authoritarian temptation as

the multiple identity crises

As has the rise of

traditional roles were pre-

to be a man, a woman, a

teacher, a parent, a wife, a

husband, a child and so on.

The rise of individualism

meant that we were now

what these various roles

free to decide for ourselves

meant and how we wished

to fulfil them, if we wanted

set. There was a certain way

individualism. The

Individualism

well, which has helped spark

doctors, men, also

of our time.

authoritarianism, of course,

They feel devalued.

to fulfil them at all. But many people didn't (and don't) have a clue how to use their freedom. In the case of religious life some convents collapsed completely in the wake of Vatican II because the members simply couldn't come up with another way of living the congregational life. Individualism destroyed them Many men become

fathers but don't want to take on any of the real responsibilities of fatherhood preferring instead to be 'free'. Women have abortions in preference to taking on the responsibilities (and loss of freedom) involved in motherhood.

These multiple crises of identity are not easily solved. Individualism destroys the idea of traditional roles

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**David Quinn** columnist and head of the lona Institute

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and the destruction of authority (as distinct from authoritarianism) makes

it harder to teach because

parents and teachers, never

mind priests and religious, find it harder to be listened

What about priestly

again allow themselves to

but they should not let that

deter them from trying to

become shepherds, which

is a kind of authority figure.

The shepherd is a leader who

protects his people and cares for his people. A priest who

is reluctant to be a shepherd

isn't a priest all, except in the

strict sacramental sense. A priest has be a teacher,

as Jesus was a teacher.

And he must sometimes

be willing to be a prophet

as well, which is to say, he

must be willing to take risks

by telling his people things

they might not want to hear

about the ways in which they

identity? Clearly priests and religious can never

be authoritarian figures,

to.

In his talk David will discuss how 'Official Ireland' is ruthlessly pushing all consideration of God to the margins of Irish life and the various ways in which this is manifesting itself. The talk is based on David's new book, 'How we killed God (and other tales of modern Ireland)'.



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might be diverging from the teachings and ways of Jesus. Archbishop Eamon rightly

savs in his talk that priestly formation is a lifelong process. Becoming a better and better husband, or father, or nurse or doctor or teacher or journalist is also a lifelong process. But we have to know what we are aiming at.

The priest is aiming at becoming a better and better shepherd to his people. Christians – lay, priest or religious – aim to be more and more Christ-like. On these points, there should be no crisis of identity at all. If there is, then we cannot expect to attract new members, or new vocations.

🚺 David Quinn's new book is How we Killed God and Other Tales of Modern

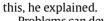
Ireland. It is available from all good bookshops and from www. currach.ie



f there were recurring themes in last week's international priestly formation conference in Maynooth they were ones of integrity and integration.

Opening comments from Armagh's Archbishop Eamon Martin on identity and closing ones from Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin on the role of the priest in the Ireland of tomorrow understandably dominated headlines, of course. There was, however, much more to 'Models of priestly formation: assessing the past, reflecting on the present and imagining the future' than the observations of Ireland's two leading clerics.

Fr Hans Zollner, head of the Pontifical Gregorian University's Centre for Child Protection, for instance, in a talk on the spiritual and practical aspects of formation in safeguarding, noted how the highest risk factor in becoming an abuser is uncertainty about sexual identity. Personal integration is key to Integrity was central to a major international formation conference at the national seminary, writes Greg Daly



Problems can develop after seminary too when many priests stop praying properly or fail to develop their prayer lives. Recalling how prayer is, in key respects, a conver-sation with God entailing bringing our lives before God, Fr Zollner said the challenge is to integrate priests' personal and pastoral lives with their spiritual lives.

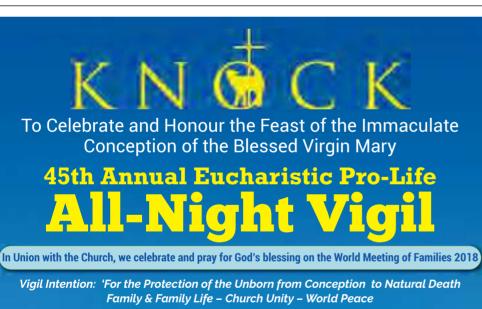
#### **Spiritual life**

All too often, he said, priests' personal and pastoral lives grow and develop in the years after leaving seminary, while their spiritual life remains in what he called the "late adolescent stage of the seminarian", causing a split to develop

to a point where priests either lead double lives or break under the strain.

Aside from the problems posed by a lack of personal integration, further problems can be caused by a lack of integration between seminaries and dioceses, he implied. Pointing to how differences between seminaries and dioceses can lead to bishops overruling men who seminary staff had spotted as unsuitable, Fr Zollner warned against "magical thinking" and said that while bishops difficulties are understandable, "a craving for numbers is just very harmful for everyone".

Serious integration between seminary and dio-



December 7th/8th, 2017

Thursday midnight to Friday morning

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#### **Vigil Programme**

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12.00 midnight: VIGIL proper commences in the Basilica Fr. Brendan Walsh, S.C.A.

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Renewing the ongoing challenge of priestly formation

cese was just one of the many levels at which Fr John Kartje, rector of the University of St Mary on the Lake at Mundelein, Illinois, in the Archdiocese of Chicago, said integration should take place in seminary formation.

Best practice, the onetime astrophysicist said, entails seminaries being integrated into their dioceses - such that priests should look on the seminary as the "heart of diocese", with this entailing lay admissions boards and with interaction with archdiocesan women's councils, and dioceses having vicars for ongoing formation. Not that this is simply a task for the 'institutional' church, he said: every Catholic has a role in priestly formation, because new priests need to leave seminary understanding what they're called to do.

He noted how the most recent Vatican guidelines on priestly formation – 2016's Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis - say seminaries should form missionary disciples "in love" with Christ himself, "shepherds with the smell of the sheep, who live in their midst to bring the mercy of God to them". Such priests he said, should see themselves as disciples on journeys, constantly needing an integrated formation, understood as a "continuous configuration to Christ".

#### Changes

Recalling how spiritual formation should be at the core of seminary life, Fr Kartje pointed to Pastores Dabo Vobis, St John Paul's 1992 exhortation on priestly formation which emphasised the importance of integrating intellectual and spiritual formation in a pastorally effective way, and considered different ways in which classroom instruction might take place in seminaries.

Lessons can be learned from changes in instruction in medical schools, he said, where collaborative 'reversed classroom' approaches emphasise how the instructor is not omniscient, and help students to live with imperfection while considering topics in whole rather than disjointed ways.

**Sensible** and sensitive accompaniment are key in the formation process"

Getting outside the classroom is important too, he said, pointing to how it's worth considering the lived experience of priesthood in ways that go beyond pastoral field education: he cited two seminaries that avail of 'teaching parishes' where men in formation can witness the 'life cycle' of parishes, having a partial immersion in parish life for their entire time in seminary.

Such models, he said, involve weekly parish visits with limits on time spent there, mentorship in parishes with involvement in parish lay committees, learning objectives and agreements for the year, parish feedback, and regular theological reflections in the seminaries on parish experiences.

Challenges in such approaches, he said, can include time management, fears of getting things wrong, and discomfort with uncertainty.

Faculty members need an integrated approach to things too, he said, with faculty members spotting issues of concern being urged to share these with formation advisers as soon as possible, the academic faculty being made aware of any issues, weekly meetings of formation teams, and counsellors and spiritual directors being asked to share general perceptions of the state of the community based on their sessions.

Stressing the usefulness of meaningful benchmarks in formation, Fr Kartje said a good spiritual director can help priests in training bring to the surface those issues the Church needs to know, emphasising that trust and accompaniment are critical in these areas.

Sensible and sensitive accompaniment are key in the formation process, said Fr Christopher Jamison, Abbot President of the English Benedictines and until this autumn Director of England and Wales' National Office for Vocations.

#### **Experience**

In particular, he said, careful handling is needed when dealing with men who begin seminary formation after years of experience 'in the world' - an increasingly common situation, and one that had prompted Fr Zollner to observe that a one-sizefits-all approach is far from ideal when seminarians can include men barely out of college and ones who have had homes, cars, and girlfriends.

"Losing the autonomy they've had for a decade or more is very difficult, yet this personal deconstruction is a necessary part of formation," Fr Jamison said, maintaining that this should not be "a process of humiliation through silly practices" but instead should be "a real stripping back to the basics of the spiritual life"

Likening such situations to difficult parts of long hikes that - if persevered through - lead to beautiful views and experiences, he said: "This Archbishop Jorge Carlos Patrón Wong with a group of seminarians in Maynooth.



can lead to distress and panic when they realise that their autonomy is slipping away, but if well handled by a formator, it is a key moment in formation."

#### **Seminaries**

Fr Jamison's address sought to explain to those gathered what surveys reveal today's young people to be like, the ecclesial and spiritual qualities of those Catholic candidates for seminaries and ordinations, and the formation needs of such candidates, and began with the simple reality that today's young people stay young, in a sense, longer than their predecessors did.

It's not merely that they enter seminary later, he explained; they marry significantly later too. Their sense of affiliation to institutions is lower than those who came before them too. Young people belong to their friends and sometimes their families, but not to institutions, and social media is providing them with alternatives to the kinds of networks and communities previously found in trade unions, political parties, and churches.

The value and nature of the relationships formed online are, he said, different issues, though he said that they clearly have some value.

While affiliation to religious bodies is lower among today's young adults than their predecessors, he said, what affiliation there is tends to be intensely felt and consciously chosen. Religious by intention, not by inheritance, these have had to choose Faith deliberately and tend not to be impressed by halfhearted inherited Faith.

While, he says, today's young Catholic adults – those from whom today's seminarians tend to come – cannot simply be pigeonholed as "all conservative", they do tend to have conversion processes in common, with the vast majority of seminarians in England and Wales being converts, reverts or at least people who can point to when they started to take

#### It's not merely that they enter seminary later, he explained; they marry significantly later too"

their Faith seriously.

The proverbial zealous convert, he cautioned, can take time to mature, and there are questions about how long it takes before somebody can be described as genuinely being Catholic.

The Eucharist, he said, is utterly central to the Faith of such young adults, the Mass truly being the source and summit of their Faith. In this light, it's worth noting that while many young people who identify as Catholic still find Mass boring, those who come forward have learned what Mass is about.

In short, he said, candidates for seminary and religious life today tend to be strongly Catholic, having come to an intentional Faith during early adulthood with a deep devotion to the Eucharist.

Not that they always come forward quickly, he observed, describing as the world's largest religious order the Little Brothers and Sisters of Perpetual Discernment. 'Discernment', he said, could be a wonderful experience, but equally can be a protracted one, experienced as a heavy burden. It is, he said, not always good to tell young people that God has a plan for them, but that it can be better to assure them that they are on a journey, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, who will guide them where they need to go.

With today's young adults coming from a generation that's in some ways quite individualistic, it is perhaps not surprising that they have a strong – perhaps an excessive – focus on individual salvation, that does not pay sufficient attention to the mandates of Matthew 25, while others can suffer from a perhaps suppressed selfloathing drawn from broken family experiences, or from a sense of self-importance, that, in combination with personal fragmentation, can be lethal.

Most candidates have a great zeal for evangelisation, reflecting their generational sense of self-sufficiency and tendency towards optimism, but they need careful formation if they are to be reborn as pastoral disciples, he added.

#### Induction

Crucial to doing this, he said, tends to be an induction into communion, with clergy realising that their priestly communion is foundation to their priestly formation. Also vital, he said, is helping young adults distinguish between good spirits and bad spirits at work in our souls; bad spirits love to destroy communion, and men in formation must learn to test their spirits and see whether they are drawing them into communion or out of communion. It's perhaps most important that they learn to tell when bad spirits come clothed as angels of light.

"Much of the Catholic blogosphere," he added in passing, "is full of the bad spirit masquerading as the good, and this can affect seminarians." The third and final priority for this generation of seminarians is to ensure that the story in their heads is the story of the Gospel, not the story of themselves. The daily reading of Scripture is to be engaged in a story where the star performers are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Describing this as "the necessary antidote for the bad spirit", he cautioned that without the deep engagement through God's word that is *lectio divina* the bad spirit can take control and let us see ourselves as the stars of our own lives.

Fr Jamison's reference to the blogosphere and social media sparked a panel discussion and a debate about the use and abuse of the internet in seminaries, an issue of obvious importance in Maynooth given rumours that captured national headlines in summer 2016.

Abandoning the internet is hardly an option as one of those attending pointed out – Popes have spoken of the internet as a digital continent and digital continents need digital missionaries. At the same time, said Archbishop Jorge Carlos Patrón Wong, Secretary for Seminaries in the Vatican's Congregation for Clergy, today's seminarians, with internet-ready phones, have opportunities for sins that simply weren't options for their predecessors.

"Spiritual war," he said, "breaks out after night prayer."

This is not grounds for panic, he maintained; he has been impressed by how young adults can live in both the real and online worlds, and has found "marvellous" the ability of people to integrate their virtual, personal, and prayer lives. We are seeing, he said, the last generation of bishops and formators who are migrants to the internet: the next generation are natives, and it can be easier and more fruitful to learn from them.

#### **Fascinating papers**

The conference was packed with other fascinating papers, including an exploration of different models of priestly formation around the world offered by Fr Ronald Witherup, the Superior General of the Society of Priests of St Sulpice, while Sr Katharina Schuth of St Paul Seminary in Minnesota, USA, spoke in dazzling detail on 'Priestly Formation after *Pastores Dabo Vobis*'. Constantly emphasising the need to form priests for their role as pastors, Sr Katharina warned of the dangers of incomplete or ineffective vetting of applicants, and how, for instance, inexperienced vocations directors can hinder sound admission practices.

Maynooth's own Fr Kevin O'Gorman SMA spoke on the implications for formation of different models of priesthood, pointing to the need to prevent clericalism, while Sr Brenda Dolphen RSM of Rome's Gregorian University discussed the joy and the cost of learning to become a Christlike pastor with Fr Eamonn Conway of Limerick's Mary Immaculate College pointing out that for the Christian, self-fulfilment comes through self-emptying.

Ahead of the conference the President of Saint Patrick's College, Fr Michael Mullaney, said it was his hope that the speakers and participants at the conference would benefit from their deliberations and reflections.

It is hard to imagine that anybody left Maynooth last week without having gained immensely.



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## Out&About

#### Bishops on tour for Trócaire: Kenya believe it?





▲ KENYA: Bishops Fintan Monahan, William Crean, Denis Brennan and Canon Michael McLoughlin met the Irish Ambassador to Nairobi, Mr Vincent O'Neill, and Trócaire's Director Éamonn Meehan, the Regional Director Paul Healy and Director of the International Division Seán Farrell during the bishops' annual Trócaire trip.

Advantage of Achonry's preparation launch for the World Meeting of Families.



**ANTRIM:** Colm Denver (left) and Seamus Kelly from Bawnmore Community Association, join John Read from the Housing Executive and artist Janet Crymble (right) at the Nativity scene in Bawnmore in Newtownabbey.



**DUBLIN:** Archbishop Diarmuid Martin ordained Deacons James Daly and Bill O' Shaughnessy to the priesthood for the Dublin Diocese. The ordinations took place in St Mary's Pro Cathedral Dublin. Photo: John McElroy



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**KILDARE:** Orla Curtin, Sarah Lennon and Aishling McKenna graduate from the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth. Archbishop Eamon Martin presided over the ceremony which included 241 lay, clerical and religious students and 24 permanent deacons who were first to complete a Diploma in Diaconal studies. Photo: John McElroy

#### Events | 13

#### ..... Events deadline is a week in advance of publication

at 3pm.

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Divine Mercy chaplet, adora-

tion, rosaries. Ends with Mass

Saturday vigil of adoration

and reparation in Caher-

Janice and Moss Carrig will

hold a prayer meeting in St

Mary's Church in Knocknagoshal on Sunday November 26 at 3pm.

A centring/contemplative prayer

group meets in the Old Bap-

tistry of St Michael's parish

church in Athy every Thurs-day at 8pm. For more info

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place each Friday in Raheen

church following 10am Mass

Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12noon and from

Church on Wednesdays, from

Adoration of the Blessed Sacra-

ment at St Croan's Church,

Ballymoe, every Monday 10-

11am and Thursday 8-10pm.

Patrick's Church, Derry-

churchservices.tv/derry-

gonnelly

**KERRY** 

at 7.30pm.

**KILDARE** 

LIMERICK

#### WATERFORD

Exploring St John's Gospel with Fr Michael Mullins, Tuesdays 8pm–9pm in the Edmund Rice Centre

#### WATERFORD

Waterford Charismatic Renewal celebrating the Feast of Christ the King, Sunday November 26, Mt Sion Heritage Centre from 2pm - 5.30pm. Enquiries Síle: 086 8590394

#### TIPPERARY

A three hour vigil in honour of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal will be held in Pallottine Chapel, Thurles on Monday 27 November from 7.30-10.30pm, consisting of a Eucharistic and Marian Hour conducted by Fr James Purcell PP, concluding with Mass

#### WICKLOW

- Blessing of Advent wreath and Evening Prayer with the Carmelite Sisters and the Maynooth College Choir in the Carmelite Monastery in Delgany on Saturday on December 2 at 4pm. Bring Advent wreath for blessing. Refreshments afterwards in the St Thérèse room.
- The Glencree Parish Group hold a special Mass for healing in St Kevin's Church, Glencree on the First Saturday of every month.
- Eucharistic adoration, St Mary & Peter Church, Arklow, every Tuesday & Friday 2-7pm & Sunday 2-5pm.
- St Patrick's Prayer Meeting on Thursday evenings at 8pm in the De La Salle Pastoral Centre, Wicklow. Come for prayer, scripture, music and a cuppa



### MINDFULNESS • MUSIC • MEDITATION

SISTER STAN, MARTINA LEHANE SHEEHAN MARK PATRICK HEDERMAN, NÓIRÍN NÍ RIAN, **JOHN WATERS...AND MANY MORE** 

Newman's University Church, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2



•

NYUMBANI: Minister Coveney and Sr. Mary Owens, Executive Director of Nyumbani, with the children of Nyumbani.



LIMERICK: Pupils from Doon CBS Primary School display their shoeboxes for the Christmas Showbox Appeal



CORK: Aoife Horgan, Aoibhinn Barry, Conor Dineen and Laura O'Donovan who travelled to Kolkata, India to work with the Hope Foundation, received Endeavour Awards from Anthony Forde, Blarney Credit Union, at the Scoil Mhuire gan Smal. Photo: Mike English

#### 

#### Rescued nativity statues spread **Christmas** cheer

After 100 years nativity statues from a North Belfast church have been restored with the help of young people, an artist, and the Housing Executive.

Over time the figures were substantially damaged but restoration work from local young people, shepherded by Antrim artist Janet Crymble, has given

them a new lease of life just in time for the festive season. Almost £3,000 (€3,350)

was provided by the Housing Executive, through its **Building Relationships In** Communities programme. Seamus Kelly from

Bawnmore Community Association said that a local priest told him he was going to dump broken statuettes from St Mary's Star of the Sea Church.

Mr Kelly said: "Many of the older parishioners remember these being on display when they were children – it's reckoned they're around 100 years old.

Artist Janet Crymble agreed to take on the restoration project and worked with young people in the area to clean the figures, produce new molds and replace and re-attach limbs.

The figurines will be on display in the Bawnmore area in the run up to Christmas.

Seamus said: "It's really given the community a lift - for seven weeks at the darkest time of the year this nativity scene will be on display at Bawnmore Park and will brighten up our community."

#### **Edited by Chai Brady** chai@irishcatholic.ie

.....

#### ANTRIM

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

#### ARMAGH

4pm

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

Lurgan, adoration on week days from 9am-9pm.

#### CLARE

Matt Talbot Novena will take place in St Senan's Church, Kilrush on Mondays and Ss John & Paul Church, Shan-non on Tuesdays at 7.30pm for the months of October and November.

#### CORK

A pro-life Mass is held on the last Friday of every month at the Poor Clares monastery, College Road, at 7.30pm.

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

#### Wednesday of every month. DERRY

Dungiven Parish: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Mon-Fri, 8am-noon and 3-9pm.

#### **DUBLIN**

Divine Mercy Devotions in the Church of Three Patrons, Rathgar every First Friday at 7pm. Mass, Benediction, chaplet & blessing with relic

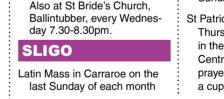
- of St Faustina. Confessions available. Annual Ecumenical Walk of Light, an inter-church journey
- from Newman University Church St Stephen's Green at 4pm to Centenary Methodist Church at Leeson Park, ending at St Mary's on Haddington Road. Pilgrimage on Sunday, November 26. finishes at 6.30pm
- The Dublin 15 Faith and Justice Group welcomes new members and currently meet on the first Friday of the month in Hartstown Church. Contact Fi Joe 087 6632944.
- Divine Mercy Mass and holy hour 7.30pm every Tuesday in St Saviour's Church, Dominick Street, Also daily Divine Mercy prayers at 2.30pm at the shrine with the relic of St Faustina.
- Our Lady of Knock prayer meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in St Gabriel's Nursing Home Glenayle Road, Raheny, D5, from 8pm-9pm.
- Life to the Full (Jn 10:10) book club for young adults meets every Thursday from 7-8:30pm in St Paul's Church, Arran Quay (Smithfield) to

Escape from the 'Black Friday' shopping frenzy!









## Beatification of Irish-American friar a moment of pride in forefathers' faith

he Irish heritage of a Capuchin priest beatified last weekend in Detroit made him who he was, according to Fr Tom Betz OFM Cap., St Augustine, Pittsburg's Capuchin Provincial Minister. Fr Betz was speaking of Fr Solanus Casey, whose parents emigrated to the United States from Ireland in the aftermath of the Great Famine.

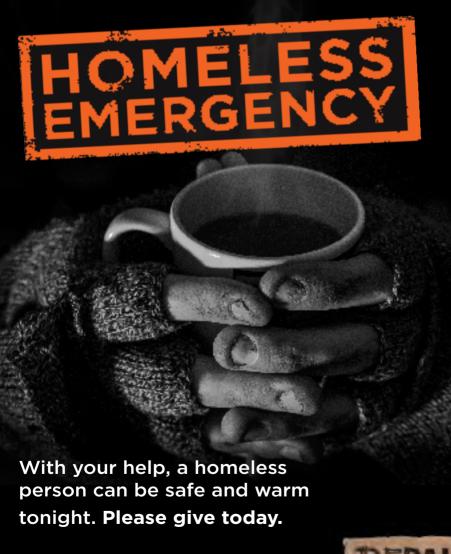
The Mass in Detroit's Ford Field Stadium was concelebrated by 500 priests before a congregation of some 65,000 people, including some who believed they were cured through his **Susan Gately** writes on the Capuchin doorkeeper who teaches us "I can't do everything but I will do what I can"

intercession. Among these was Paula Medina Zarate, a retired schoolteacher from Panamá whose skin disease was healed just hours after praying at Fr Solanus' tomb. During the ceremony, she carried a wooden crossshaped reliquary containing bone relics removed from



Blessed Solanus' remains.

"Most people think the reason Fr Solanus Casey became a saint was because of his belief in the power of prayer. He stood for the fact that God does care for the prayers of you and me and he responds to them, but I have a different take on him," Fr



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Help the homeless get warm and dry — GIVE SHELTER AND SOUP TONIGHT — Betz told *The Irish Catholic*. "He was a man

who didn't get to achieve his dreams as a priest. He was never allowed to hear confessions, he couldn't preach at major Masses, he never held a position as a pastor or assistant pastor. But he didn't complain. His attitude was 'I can't do everything but I will do what I can'."

Born Bernard Francis Casey in 1870, Solanus was the sixth child in a family of ten boys and six girls born to Irish immigrant parents who left Ireland after the Famine.

#### Reunited

His father Bernard James Casey from Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan, emigrated aged 17, arriving in Boston in 1857. He met his wife-to-be Ellen Murphy when she was just 16.

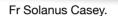
They fell in love at first sight but Ellen's family insisted they wait three years before marrying. The two separated, but through the help of a priest were reunited three years later and married.

Fr Solanus had a happy childhood in Wisconsin, steeped in Catholic tradition. The children loved sports and the boys formed their own baseball team. He recalled his father calling to them, "Prayer, boys, prayer!" From his mother – a native of Camlough, Co. Armagh - he gained a great love of the rosary.

Fr Solanus lived by faith...he always used to pray, above all in front of the tabernacle"

With little education, he left home at 17, working as a lumberjack, a hospital orderly and a prison guard. Aged 21, he attempted to become a diocesan priest but his lack of German and Latin meant he could not continue. While praying for discernment before a statue of Our Lady, he heard her voice telling him "go to Detroit" – where the Capuchins had their headquarters.

Fr Solanus was ordained in 1904. Because of his perceived lack of theological education, he was a 'simplex



priest' without ability to hear confessions or preach doctrinal sermons. For two decades. he served in a succession of simple roles in friaries in New York as sacristan and then as doorkeeper, answering the monastery door. It was here that Fr Solanus became a much-loved and sought-after counsellor. Sick people sought his blessing and "remarkable cures began to take place", according to the official website for his Cause for Sainthood.

He was a man who didn't get to achieve his dreams as a priest"

"Fr Solanus lived by faith. His person seemed to be surrounded by a supernatural halo. He always used to

rai halo. He always used to pray, above all in front of the tabernacle," said Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect for the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, at the Beatification Mass.

Fr Benedict Groeschel – the founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal who died in 2014 – recalled visiting the friary on a warm night and being unable to sleep. Around 3am, he took a walk and arrived at the chapel where he put on two lights and saw Fr Solanus kneeling on the top step of the altar.

Following his 20 years in New York, Fr Solanus lived at the St Bonaventure monastery in Detroit until 1945, again serving as a doorkeeper. He had great love for the sick and poor and fasted to give poor people his own lunch. "I have two loves: the sick and the poor," he said. During the Great Depression of 1929, he started Detroit's soup kitchen with the help of benefactors.

"One day there was no more bread and there was a long line of more than 200 people waiting for some-thing to eat," recounted Cardinal Amato. "Fr Solanus approached and began to recite the 'Our Father'. A little bit later knocking was heard at the door and the baker appeared with a large basket of bread, and a truck-load of God's gifts. When the people saw this, they began to cry with emotion. Fr Solanus simply stated: 'See, God provides. No one will suffer want if we put our trust in Divine Providence'."

In a congratulatory message on the Capuchin's beatification, Armagh's Archbishop Eamon Martin expressed the "joy of the Church in Ireland".

"His beatification today is also a moment of great pride in the faith of those who have passed on to us a trust and belief in Jesus Christ," he said.

Fr Solanus Casey died in Detroit in 1957 aged 86. His last words were: "I give my soul to Jesus Christ."

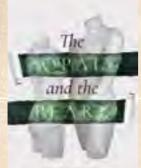
Although he had been living away from Detroit for ten years, 20,000 people attended his funeral.



Blessed Solanus Casey records a note from a woman who visited him at St Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit in 1941.



## Thought-provoking Books —



HEDERMAN

#### The Opal and the Pearl Mark Patrick Hederman

With seven billion human beings on one planet we need a new ethics guiding us in our way of relating to one another sexually. Author Mark Hederman, a Glenstal monk, delivers a stimulating critique of the Catholic Church's monosexual stance.

Price: €19.99 (Hardback)



WHY THE IRISH CHURCH DESERVES TO DIE Jue Medonald

#### Why The Irish Church Deserves to Die Joe McDonald

The Catholic Church in Ireland is dying. While this death has been taking place for quite awhile, it is now accelerating. Uncompromising views, lack of accountability, unrealistic expectations and the inability to connect with younger generations have all taken a toll. Is it too late for salvation or is there still hope?

Price: €12.99 (Hardback)

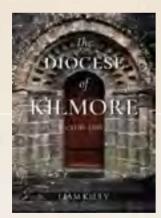


#### An Astonishing Secret Daniel O'Leary

This book could be described as the sum total of a life's worth of contemplation about God, life and meaning. Daniel O'Leary attempts to grasp what it means to be a human being in such a vast cosmos and what is our role and the role of a God.

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#### The Diocese of Kilmore c.1100 - 1800 Liam Kelly

An in-depth look at the ecclesiastical history of the diocese of Kilmore from 1100 to 1800, this book outlines the impact of the Reformation and the subsequent arrival of the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian newcomers into the diocese.

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**History Books** 

#### Martin Luther His Challenge Then and Now P. Fintan Lyons

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther published his 'Ninety Five Theses', sparking a movement that challenged many beliefs and practices, which changing the world forever. Explore the mind of the man who dared question the Catholic Church, in a time when questioning the Church could bring dire consequences.

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#### Our Lady of Charity in Ireland 1853-1973 Jacinta Prunty

Using archival records, Jacinta Prunty tackles the magdalen asylums, reformatories, industrial schools, hostels and family group homes run by the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland, as well as the convents themselves.

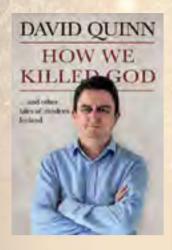
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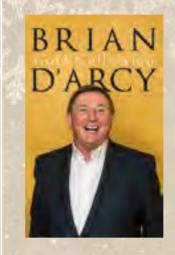
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#### How We Killed God David Quinn

For almost 25 years, David Quinn has charted the turbulent relationship between modern Ireland and the Catholic Church. From the controversies that have raged about Church and State, the abuse scandals and the right to life, this book is a very different take on nearly a quarter of a century of tumultuous change in Irish society.

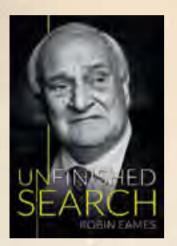
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#### **Gold Collection** Brian D'Arcy

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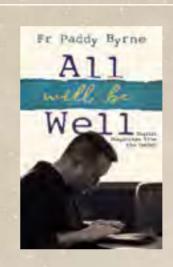
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#### Unfinished Search Robin Eames

For most of the world, the Northern Ireland peace process is a thing of the past, but there is still a long road of healing and reconciliation to be travelled. In this honest and personal account, Eames offers a glimpse into the pain and suffering that the Troubles brought to so many communities in Northern Ireland.

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#### All Will Be Well Fr Paddy Byrne

Midlands priest Fr Paddy Byrne has become one of Ireland's top advocates for a new, inclusive, and merciful model of Church. In his first book, he draws on years of parish ministry and pastoral care to outline the challenges we face, while offering hope and inspiration to readers, leading them towards what he sees as a positive future.

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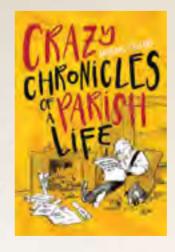
## Light reading



#### The Kilderry Files Maurice Manning

This fast-paced thriller with a rich cast of characters brings us to the heart and paranoia of Wartime Ireland and into the inner reaches of Catholic politics – a time filled with greed, betrayal and murder. A novel full of treachery, intrigue, courage and cowardice that transports the reader to the murky parts of Irish society.

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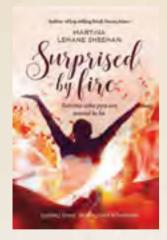


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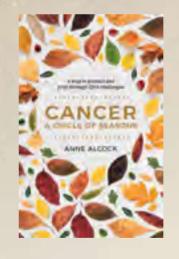
#### Surprised by Fire Martina Lehane Sheehan

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Interweaving psychology, mythology and spirituallity, this book takes the reader on a journey towards transformation and healing. The author's vibrant creativity and inspiring wisdom will work wonders on all of our flattering and wayward hearts, telling us that we are no longer victims and giving us glimpses of the enchanted place we one day hope to inhabit.

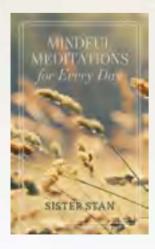
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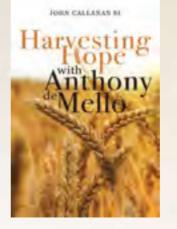
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Cora Guinnane and Joanne O' Brien





Native Irish Dogs Shane McCoy and Colin White

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Where I find God is a thought-provoking book where some of Ireland's finest thinkers share where they have found, and continue to find, the divine in their lives. The book includes contributions by Mary McAleese, Brent Pope, Sr Stanislaus Kennedy and Fr Peter McVerry amongst others.

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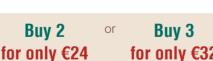
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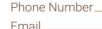








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#### **International news** 23



With Francis due this weekend, hopes are high that his visit can inspire reconciliation. writes Chai **Brady** from Myanmar

he development of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and the Vatican are at infant stage as the Pope prepares to travel to the embattled nation this weekend, during a time of international condemnation and ongoing conflict with local militia

The Papal visit to Myanmar (also known as Burma) and Bangladesh begins this Sunday. Francis arrives at 1.30pm, he receives his official welcome in Yangon International Airport and will stay in the country until November 30.

A lot can happen in four days, and hopes are high the Papal trip to Myanmar will be a welcome instigator of much-needed peaceful dialogue

Most of the Western world has agreed the predominantly Muslim Rohingyas are an ethnic minority"

There are about 659,000 Catholics in Myanmar, over 1% of the total population of 51 million, while about 88% of the population is Buddhist.

But his decision whether to use the word 'Rohingya' during his visit, which he has used several times in the past, is becoming a point of contention

Most of the Western world has agreed the predominantly Muslim Rohingyas are an ethnic minority in the predominantly Buddhist country. The term is dismissed by politicians and a lot of the public in Myanmar, who view them as illegal Bangladeshi migrants even though Rohingya people have lived in the country for generations. They are excluded from being recognised as one of the country's 135 national races.

Already more than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Rakhine State from





A Rohingya refugee carries his son and belongings into Teknaf, Bangladesh. Photo: CNS

Myanmar military operations that were sparked by a rebel group's attack on police posts in the region in late August. This resulted in the deaths of 12 members of the security forces and almost one hundred insurgents. The retaliation was extreme.

The military have been accused of a campaign of ethnic cleansing by the UN and prominent NGOs such as Human Rights Watch.

The Pope has previously spoken in solidarity with the Rohingya Muslims. Following the Angelus prayer on August 28, he said: "Sad news has reached us of the persecution of our Rohingya brothers and sisters, a religious minority. I would like to express my full closeness to them - and let all of us ask the Lord to save them, and to raise up men and women of good will to help them, who shall give them their full rights."

#### Chased away

Last February, while marking the feast of former slave St Josephine Bakhita during a General Audience, the Pope said "Let us pray to St Josephine Bakhita for all migrants and refugees who are exploited and suffer so much"

"And speaking of migrants who are exploited and chased away, I want to pray with you today in a special way for our Rohingya brothers and sisters.

He said the Rohingya "have been suffering for years" and that they have been tortured and killed because they want to keep their traditions and their Muslim faith.

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon

Chai Brady is in Myanmar for the visit of Pope Francis. Follow his updates on Twitter @ChaiBradyIC see next week's edition of The Irish Catholic for full coverage.

and most senior Myanmarese Catholic clergy, has urged the Pontiff not to use the term 'Rohingya' again while on his visit.

"We have asked him at least to refrain from using the word 'Rohingya' because this word is very much contested and not acceptable by the military, nor the government, nor the people in Myanmar," Cardinal Bo said in an interview in Yangon. However, he said the Pope would raise the need to assist the Muslim minority.

"They are also human beings, they have a human face and they also need human dignity, so eliminating or killing any one of them, that's not justified..," Cardinal Bo said.

Previously the cardinal said the Pope was coming to 'heal the wounds of the countrv".

**b** The persecution of the Rohingya has not been this intense since 1982 when an unjust citizenship law was passed"

"Vatican and others need to work toward healing the wounds of our nation, by showing a future that can bring positive results for all communities."

He added this isn't a problem that has suddenly appeared – as it has been ongoing for 60 years - but that the persecution of the Rohingya has not been this intense since 1982 when an unjust citizenship law was passed which has led to the people living in a limbo in which they became neither full citizens of Bangladesh or Myanmar – the law seemed to

target them specifically. Many victims of the vio-lence have said Myanmar soldiers are committing massacres, rape and the mass burning of homes and property. The stories from refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh - where many refugees have escaped to – are horrific.

Catholic charities such as Caritas and the Irish charity Trócaire are intervening to alleviate the suffering of the fleeing Rohingya.

There has also been international criticism of democratically elected State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Aung San Suu Kyi, who was accused of not doing enough to quell the violence. However Myanmar's military is still a powerful force in the country ever since it seized power in 1962 through a coup'état. Suu Kyi has the backing of the citizens, but the country's generals still control the army, leading to a delicate balance of power. It was the military's decision to change the name of Burma to Myanmar, the capital Yangon to Rangoon, and then to move the capital to another site, naming it Naypyidaw.

Even after the government allowed elections to be held in 1990, the first in almost three decades, and despite Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party winning 80% of the seats, the military junta did not cede some power until around 2011.

With the Pope's visit close his timetable has been published. Nothing is scheduled except an official welcome when the Pope arrives in the afternoon of November 27 in

Taw (sometimes spelt Naypyidaw) where he will meet the President at 4pm – 9.30am in

Yangon. The following day he will travel by plane to Nay Pyi



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Suu Kyi half an hour later. This will be followed by meetings with various civil society organisations, authorities and diplomatic corps.

Ireland – and then Aung San

#### Monks

He will return to Yangon on November 29 and celebrate Mass in the Kyaikkasan Ground, a sports ground, in the morning. He will then meet the Sangha, the supreme council of Buddhist monks in the late afternoon followed by a meeting with the Myanmar bishops in St Mary's Cathedral

On Thursday November 30, Francis will celebrate a Mass with young people in St Mary's Cathedral in the morning, before leaving for Bangladesh in the afternoon.

The beginning of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Myanmar began when Mr San Lwin, Myanmar's first ambassador to the Holy See, presented his credentials to Pope Francis in a ceremony on November 9 after the decision was made to establish ties when the Pontiff met Suu Kyi in the Vatican on May 4 of this year.

.....

## **O** Letters

#### Letter of the week

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

## Pope leads the way, walking the walk on caring for the marginalised

**Dear Editor**, It was lovely to see at the weekend Pope Francis hosting a lunch for some of Rome's vulnerable and needy people. It's a beautiful witness to the Gospel imperative to reach out to those who society forgets. While the critics of the Church will often point to what they perceive to be the Vatican's wealth as a sign of hypocrisy, all across the world the Church walks the walk on caring for the marginalised. Whether it's care for those living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries, or the poor and needy in our own country, the Church is always there. In fact, it is often the case in troubled parts of the world that when every other charitable or aid agency pulls out, the Church is the only presence.

This is something we as Catholics should be immensely proud of – not in any arrogant way, but in knowing that we belong to a Church that strives to put the poor at the centre of everything we do.

.....

Yours etc., **Mary O'Donnell,** Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

#### A plea to get away from the path of sin Dear Editor. The words the Catholic Church says: Incidentally, the doxology paraphrase of the Catholic Church says:

"When we say 'lead us not

into temptation' we are ask-

ing God not to allow us to

take the path that leads to

sin. This petition implores

and strength; it requests the

grace of vigilance and final

perseverance."

the Spirit of discernment

**Dear Editor**, The words "trespass" and "trespasses" and the phrase "lead us not into temptation" are translations of the words of Our Lord – and used in my Knox Catholic Bible anyway! (Pray for the Lord's Supper, Letters, IC, 16/11/17). Paragraph 2863 of the *Catechism of* 

#### Time to get the numbers right

Dear Editor, with the Papal Mass with Pope Francis scheduled for the Phoenix Park just nine months away, now is the time for parishes to start to get ready. There are 1,359 parishes in Ireland. At the very least, could every parish commit to bring 100 people who might not be able to make their way to Dublin? It would be a great welcome for our Holy Father.

Yours etc., **Mary Mitchell,** Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

### What about reparation?

Dear Editor, On your 'World Report' (IC 2/11/17), you published an astonishing report of a statement by Pope Francis that no matter what crimes we commit throughout our lives all we have to do is "repent with our dying breath" and we will be saved. No mention of reparation. The piece also says that what the Pope means was that "all the good works people have or haven't done throughout their lives aren't measured to determine entry into heaven"

I find that absolutely astonishing. In fact, I very much doubt that the Pope

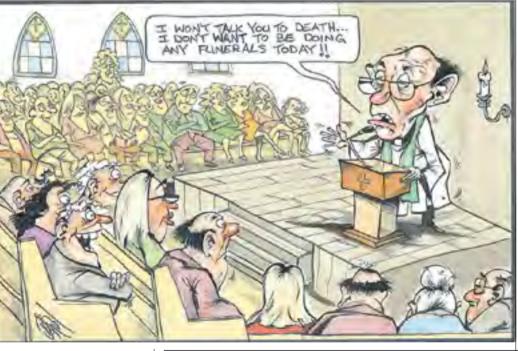
could have made such a statement because what it would mean would be that we can cheat, rob. kill, torture and so on but we needn't worry because when we are about to meet our maker we can say: "I'm sorry," and all is forgiven. So why not have a great time here at everybody else's expense - even the expense of their lives because it's all going to be forgiven anyway if we just say 'sorry' to God when we're dying?

I don't believe that could be right.

Yours etc., **Pat Naughton,** Clondalkin, Dublin 22. Incidentally, the doxology in the Mass after the 'Deliver us' which follows Our Father "For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever" – despite being said as a part of the prayer by most Protestants – is not, in fact, included by Our Lord in the way to pray. It is a

paraphrase of the *Didache* or of a marginal gloss, added centuries ago by an unknown monk, presumably when copying the Bible by hand.

> Yours, etc., **Kieron Wood,** Rathfarnham, Dublin 16.



### Overdue thanks to those who build the Kingdom of God

**Dear Editor**, I like Kathy Sinnott's (Rosary on the Coast I.C. 26/11/17) and Bishop Doran's call to prayer to defeat the abortion industry in Ireland. Prayer, like the Rosary, is the ultimate response to the Kenny-Varadkar Modest Proposal (for preventing children from being a burden to the country and making them beneficial to the private abortion industry).

A true pastor will shepherd his flock, with prayer as a priority. The 'hired hand' of the Gospel, will promote strategic planning, meetings, administration and maintenance. Pope Francis has all to often challenged us on being "curators of museums". In his most recent Weekly Audience he states "the encounter with the Lord is always a living encounter, it's not a museum encounter."

A sincere thanks to Bishop Doran, Kathy Sinnott and others who build up the Kingdom of God, and not some Marxist utopia.

Yours, etc., **Declan Cooney,** Birr, Co. Offaly.

### Broaden the horizon

**Dear Editor**, I was delighted to read in your newspaper that Pope Francis is considering the option of ordaining so-called *viri probati* – men of proven character within a local community as priests. At present, it seems, the Holy Father is only considering this option for the Amazon region. Let's hope that this will soon be something that is considered for the wider Church.

While many commentators are suggesting that the Pope is only considering the option where there is a shortage of vocations, I would like to propose that the Church widen the horizon and see the great positive benefits that married men can bring to the priesthood.

Already, we have married converts from Anglicanism and Methodism who are working hard in parishes in Britain, the United States and elsewhere. I don't think anyone would suggest that they are any lesser of a priest because they are married. In fact – with all due respect to celibate priests – I think one can easily argue that their lives experiences of the ups and downs of family life mean that they can bring so much more to their ministry.

A celibate priesthood will always be a feature of the life of the Church, and one that is of tremendous value. Nevertheless, it is time to enrich our understanding of the priesthood by inviting married men to take up the Lord's call. There's also the additional issue of the many dozens (hundreds?) of priests who left ministry in this country to get married. Wouldn't it be a gesture of immense generosity if bishops were to invite these men to return to their public ministry. I fail to see why their decision to marry should exclude them from service to God's people.

Yours etc., **Kate Allen,** Dungannon, Co. Tyrone.

## So much for 'bad behaviour'

**Dear Editor**, I cannot be alone in thinking that Eileen Gleeson – head of the Dublin Region Homeless Executive – is channelling a Dickensian notion of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor when she proposes the idea that many people are homeless as a result of "bad behaviour". When one sees a man sleeping in a doorway in our cities and towns the first reaction should not be to wonder what he has done to find himself in this situation, it should be to wonder what sort of society we have that tolerates this immense injustice.

Yours etc., **Ann Flanagan,** Dungannon, Co. Tyrone.

## Keep the food coming

**Dear Editor**, Eileen Gleeson from Dublin City Council criticises volunteers who give food and hot drinks to the homeless in our capital. Mother Teresa of Calcutta – now St Teresa – was also criticised in her charitable work with her detractors claiming she did nothing to challenge the unjust structures that collude to keep poor people poor. Mother Teresa had a simple response: "when I see a woman who is hungry, I don't have time to ask why she's hungry – I simply feed her". I for one hope that volunteers will continue to provide food and drinks for the homeless. "In an much as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me."

Yours etc., **Donal Gleeson,** Sagart, Co. Dublin.

#### Letters to the Editor

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

We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication date, acknowledge unpublished letters or discuss the merits of letters. We do not publish pseudonyms or other formulae to conceal the writer's identity, such as "name and address with editor". We do not print letters addressed to someone else, open letters, or verse. Letters to the Editor should only be sent to *The Irish Catholic*, and not other publications. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be shortened for space requirements.

## ..... ound the world

VATICAN: People take photos as Mass marking the first World Day of the Poor in St. Peter's Basilica.





USA: Jeanette Vizguerra, a mother of four who lived in Denver churches for 86 days to avoid immigration authorities, is hugged during an immigration rally near Washington DC.



**BRAZIL:** Soldiers of the Brazilian army patrol a street in the Rocinha favela of Rio de Janeiro. Police crackdowns on drug dealers in the area have affected people's religious activities.



ITALY: Seminarian Samuel Bass from the Diocese of Austin greets a woman as poor people leave after eating lunch at the Pontifical North American College in Rome.



**VATICAN:** Pope Francis speaks before eating lunch with the poor in the Paul VI hall after celebrating Mass marking the first World Day of the Poor.



USA: Capital letters representing the 89 chapters of 'The Four Holy Gospels' are seen inside The Art of the Gospels by Makoto Fujimura gallery at the Museum of the Bible in Washington DC.

## God is very close to us... closer than we imagine

here's a growing body of literature today that chronicles the experience of persons who were clinically dead for a period of time (minutes or hours) and were medically resuscitated and brought back to life.

Many of us, for example, are familiar with Dr Eben Alexander's book, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife.* More recently Hollywood produced a movie, *Miracles from Heaven*, which portrays the true story of a young Texas girl who was clinically dead, medically revived, and who shares what she experienced in the afterlife.

There are now hundreds of stories like this, gathered through dozens of years, published or simply shared with loved ones.

Hell, as Jesus assures us, is a real option; though, as Jesus also assures us, we judge ourselves"

What's interesting (and consoling) is that virtually all these stories are wonderfully positive, irrespective of the person's faith or religious background. In virtually every case their experience, while partially indescribable, was one in which they felt a warm, personal, overwhelming sense of love, light, and welcome, and

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not a few of them found themselves meeting relatives of theirs that had passed on before them, sometimes even relatives that they didn't know they had.

As well, in virtually every case, they did not want to return to life here but, like Peter on the mountain of the Transfiguration, wanted to stay there.

Recently while speaking at conference, I referenced this literature and pointed out that, among other things, it seems everyone goes to heaven when they die. This, of course, immediately sparked a spirited discussion: "What about hell? Aren't we judged when we die? Doesn't anyone go to hell?"

My answer to those questions, which need far more nuance than

are contained in a short soundbite, was that while we all go to heaven when we die, depending upon our moral and spiritual disposition, we might not want to stay there. Hell, as Jesus assures us, is a real option; though, as Jesus also assures us, we judge ourselves. God puts no one to hell. Hell is our choice.

#### **Experience**

However, it was what happened after this discussion that I want to share here: a woman approached me as I was leaving and told me that she had had this exact experience. She had been clinically dead for some minutes and then revived through medical resuscitation. And, just like the experience of all the others in the literature around this issue, she too experienced



Dr Eben Alexander who wrote Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife. a wonderful warmth, light, and welcome, and did not want to return to life here on earth.

Inside of all of this warmth and love however what she remembers most and most wants to share with others is this: I learned that God is very close. We have no idea how close God is to us. God is closer to us than we ever imagine!

Her experience has left her forever branded with a sense of God's warmth, love, and welcome, but what's left the deepest brand of all inside her is the sense of God's closeness.

#### How can one heart, one mind, one person be consciously on top of all of this..."

I was struck by this because, like millions of others, I generally don't feel that closeness, or at least don't feel it very affectively or imaginatively. God can seem pretty far away, abstract and impersonal, a Deity with millions of things to worry about without having to worry about the minutiae of my small life.

Moreover, as Christians, we believe that God is infinite and ineffable. This means that while we can know God, we can never imagine God. Given that truth, it makes it even harder for us to imagine that the infinite Creator and Sustainer of all things is intimately and personally present inside us, worrying with, sharing our heartaches, and knowing our most guarded feelings.

Compounding this is the fact that whenever we do try to imagine God's person our imaginations come up against the unimaginable. For example, try to imagine this: There are billions of persons on this earth and billions more have lived on this earth before us. At this very minute, thousands of people are being born, thousands are dying, thousands are sinning, thousands are doing virtues acts, thousands are making love, thousands are experiencing violence, thousands are feeling their hearts swelling with joy, all of this part of trillions upon trillions of phenomena.

How can one heart, one mind, one person be consciously on top of all of this and so fully aware and empathetic that no hair falls from our heads or sparrow from the sky without this person taking notice? It's impossible to imagine, pure and simple, and that's part of the very definition of God.

How can God be as close to us as we are to ourselves? Partly this is mystery, and wisdom bids us befriend mystery because anything we can understand is not very deep!

The mystery of God's intimate, personal presence inside us is beyond our imaginations. But everything within our faith tradition and now most everything in the testimony of hundreds of people who have experienced the afterlife assures us that, while God may be infinite and ineffable, God is very close to us, closer than we imagine.



**Youth Space** 

Actions not words Page 30



## You are not alone in being lonely

hristmas is often associated with joy, thanksgiving and family. However, for over a third of older people in Ireland, this festive holiday will only elicit fear, sadness and isolation.

Loneliness, an often ignored epidemic, is plaguing the cities, towns and countrysides of Ireland, preying on the most vulnerable in our society. Although it remains hidden, it's psychological and physical effects can be detrimental, sometimes leading to depression and even suicide.

A new survey released last month carried out by ALONE, an Irish charity that supports older people at home, showed that alongside financial problems and



poor health, loneliness was the biggest fear for OAP's in Ireland. The statistics highlight the shocking reality of the situation: in Ireland, one in three people aged 65 or over live alone, as do three in five people aged 80. This worrying situation has manifold causes such as the death of a partner, lack of family support or retirement.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE, told *The Irish Catholic*,

#### It's important to reach out to old people living alone this Christmas, writes **Colm Fitzpatrick**

"People don't realise that it's a journey. Older people begin to lose different relationships with their colleagues, partners and families – if there are fewer services in the community, then the less people will talk.

"We don't expect the pain and struggle of living on our own. It challenges mortality and disability. People lose heart. It's hard to keep on top of your physical and mental health. Your mental health will suffer if you don't speak to anybody, if there's nobody to talk to, to come round, to share opinions, to debate, to give lifts to the hospital. It's a huge problem."

#### Independence

Although loneliness can affect all ages, its impact is particularly acute on older people as they are more susceptible to illnesses or may lack social mobility, which can have a huge impact on their independence.

Many studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between loneliness and a reduced lifespan, with it being more dangerous than smoking 15 cigarettes a day and twice as deadly as obesity. As a result, the outward symptoms aren't always obvious or immediate and can build up silently over time.

A partial list of the physical diseases caused or exacerbated by loneliness include, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, fragmented sleeping patterns, Alzheimer's, increased cognitive decline, and neuro-degenerative diseases. In fact, one study has even shown that women with fewer social ties were 43% more likely to see their breast cancer return and 64% more likely to die from breast cancer. Without a support network, mortality increases. In 2016, 4 500 people were

In 2016, 4,500 people were supported by befriending services nationwide, an increase

**»** Continued on Page 29

## Family News

#### AND EVENTS

#### Young people urged to take it easy with sport

Too much sport can be damaging for teenagers, a leading surgeon has warned. Patrick Carton, a hip consultant at Waterford's Whitfield clinic, has revealed he has been operating on 10 patients a week

with hip problems caused by arduous training regimes. Some of these patients have been as young as 15, though the average age

young as 15, though the average age is 26. Excessive movement can cause deforming tears in hips' seals, he revealed, in research published in the *Clinical Journal of Sports Injuries* noting that lunging and squats are often difficult for athletes with such damage.

Advising that teenagers should focus on one sport and train lightly, rather than risking overtraining through a range of sports that can take a toll on the hips, he cautioned that female hips are more susceptible to sportsrelated damage than male ones, and warned that stiffness in the hips after exercise, perhaps accompanied by groin pain, is usually a clue that something is amiss.

#### **MONITOR WINS AWARD:** A

breastfeeding monitor for new mothers, designed by a Dublin-based start-up, has won the ESB Spark of Genius award at the annual Web Summit.

The €25,000 prize, presented to Coroflo in Lisbon, rewards the creation of a hi-tech

nipple shield, incorporating technology that monitors and measures milk flow from mother to baby and communicates its measurements with a smartphone app.

The inspiration for the device came in

early 2015 when Coroflo founders Helen Barry and

James Travers' own baby son was born weighing just five pounds (2.27kg), making it especially important that they knew how much breast milk he was consuming.

The company is currently engaged in beta testing with new mothers, and aims to have product and app ready in the first half of 2018, with a planned Irish launch next September.

#### Mental health of young men under focus

A greater focus in needed on the mental health of young men, the chairperson of Tullamore's Men's Shed has said on International Men's Day.

Noting how many young men struggle with physical and mental health, Tom Finnerty said: "I think we need to focus a little bit more from a younger age on their physical health, their wellness and to be aware of what is going on in their lives."

With the majority of suicides in Ireland being men, Mr Finnerty said, it's important to help build communities where men can look out for each other, describing how at Men's Sheds – like the one in Tullamore – men can take part in projects, meet new friends or even just drink tea and play pool

"It's a very informal setting," he said. "There's no pressure on anybody to do anything in the shed." eople long for love that lasts. And such love is really possible. This is the good news at the heart of *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*) which Pope Francis invites us to embrace and share. The World Meeting of Families

2018 Parish Conversations programme is a resource available to parishes for that purpose. It provides a simple, concrete opportunity for people

to explore a vision for love, marriage and family in light of their own experience and what Pope Francis says in *Amoris Laetitia*.

A burning question for Pope Francis is how we can share – especially with young people – the Christian wisdom about love which is so relevant to the hopes of all people, not just Church people. This Christian vision for love, marriage and family is explored in the WMOF2018 'Amoris: Let's Talk Family! Let's

be Family' programme of parish conversations over six sessions.

#### Session

Each session is simply structured into two halves, each half introduced by a video clip. The first is a vox pop, where people in a variety of family situations share their experiences of life, love and family. This is followed by small group discussions where participants can respond to what they have heard and share something of their own experience.

This first half then is about the reality of family life, in all its fragility and variety. It is this reality that *The Joy of Love* seeks to speak to. The second half of the session then is that conversation. It starts with a video clip summarising what Pope Francis is saying on the session topic in the *Joy of Love*. It then goes on to small group conversation where people



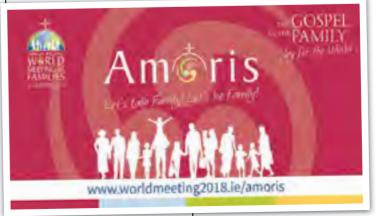
Talking family, being family

offer their response to what they have heard. The task of the local leader or facilitator is simply to provide the space for a respectful conversation on this.

One of the sessions focuses on God's compassion and mercy in the face of human fragility, and the challenge this poses for the Church. Pope Francis is crystal clear on this – God excludes no one from his mercy and accompaniment, and neither should the Church. Whatever situation people are in families. We don't know where they stand before God. We have to give space to people's own conscience. Pope Francis makes the distinction between our conscience – where God reveals himself – and our ego, which thinks it can do as it pleases. Following our conscience involves bringing objective and challenging questions to our conversation with God. The task of the Church is to support people's capacity to utilise their conscience – the Church is not there to replace conscience.

#### I think *Amoris* Laetitia is a treasure for all of humanity, not just for the Church"

The *Amoris* parish programme seeks to be faithful to two very strong emphases in *Amoris Laetitia*. These are on the one hand the desire to present clearly the fullness of the Christian vision for love, marriage and family. And on the other hand the desire that



relation to love and family, the Church should seek to be with them, and not in a judgmental way.

We can't know the full circumstances which influence and at times force people's choices about relationships and none should feel excluded from God or the Church because, for whatever reason, their lives have taken a different path. The videos and resource materials thus seek to include the voices and images of a wide spectrum of people.

The process by which the materials are explored seeks the form of a kind conversation that shows respect for the experiences of the participants, whoever they are. The vision of The lov of Love, which in itself is the outcome of a process of respectful dialogue, is offered gently for consideration, in the confidence that its beauty and integrity can shine through without needing to be imposed on people. It is also offered in the confidence that the wisdom of people's life experience is a resource for the Church, and that a Church that teaches can also be taught.

#### Vision

Overall I find the vision of love, marriage and family attractive, coherent and convincing, especially in the context of our global economic culture. I think *Amoris Laetitia* is a treasure for all of humanity, not just for the Church. I hope the resource materials, including the six Parish Conversations will give us the confidence and wherewithal to be missionaries with its good news.

In the end it is not very complicated. Johnny Duhan expresses the core of this vision in his beautiful and not surprisingly popular song *The Voyage*:

"Life is an ocean, but love is a boat.

- In troubled waters it keeps us afloat.
- When we started this voyage there was just me and you. And now look around us, we have our own crew."

*Martin Kennedy, is a freelance trainer and facilitator with Church and Community groups. He is working as the Pastoral Programme Coordinator for the World Meeting of Families 2018.* 

#### » Continued from Page 27



of 42%. ALONE's Befriending Service provides companionship to older people who are socially isolated through a weekly volunteer visit as well as a range of social events. The volunteers visit older people one hour a week, make regular check-in phone calls and also help out with small practical support when appropriate and necessary. Its impact has not gone unnoticed. Leo, a befriending case study, had been living alone in Dublin for the last 14 years, and after retirement found himself feeling increasingly isolated and lonely.

"I was just sitting in, smoking. I had no exercise. I needed help to look after my daily chores. I wasn't cooking. I wasn't doing anything. I was probably depressed but I didn't know it," he said. After ALONE was recommended to him by a public health nurse, he was introduced to an ALONE volunteer who has changed his life.

"Had I not been put in touch with ALONE I dread to think where I'd be now. It's shown me a door to a way back into society. Instead of isolating myself I now want to get out."

#### Initiatives

These types of initiatives which offer engaging social interaction provide the help and support that many older people so badly need.

Commenting on the increase of older people using befriending services, Seán Moynihan said: "I don't think that people are aware just how devastating loneliness can be for your general health. Not only can loneliness lead to depression, but it is also a predictor for dementia, cardiovascular disease and decreased immune system responsivity," adding that as we enter winter calls for support will dramatically increase with loneliness being one of the main issues.

#### The aches of loneliness are often more pronounced around the Christmas season"

By providing support to older people at home, the impending demand on healthcare will also be alleviated, as older people are being forced to remain in hospital beds due



Seán Moynihan.

to lack of supports to go home. "In 2016, 20% of older people had issues with home adaptations and 10% were unable to keep their homes warm. These numbers highlight the lack of housing choices and supports for older people in the community," explained Seán.

"ALONE believes that Ireland's impending ageing demographic requires a move away from traditional models of care towards alternative models that harness community resources," he says, noting that since 2016, the charity has been developing a technology platform that supports people at home and is operated through mobile apps and home sensors. In this way, social interaction and support can be more immediate.

Although loneliness is difficult to face at all times in the year, the aches of it are often more pronounced around the Christmas season. At a time when families come back together to share and celebrate, the effects of loneliness become more marked. "Loneliness is evident around Christmas." says Seán. "It is a time of reflection. renewal and rebirth. When people are on their own it is heightened.' As a result, ALONE volunteers will be out supporting older people this Christmas, providing Christmas dinners and conversations.

This year it has partnered with An Post for its 'Do One Thing' campaign. Baz Ashmawy launched the campaign which encourages members of the public to reach out to older people experiencing loneliness by sending them a personalised An Post card. Speaking at the launch, Baz said, "We are asking people to do one thing this Christmas – send a lovely Christmas card to an older person! For just €5 you can go online, order a card and write a nice message to an older person linked in with ALONE.

"An Post will then print and post the card. Every card sent will raise money for ALONE, as well as making a huge difference to that older person's Christmas." €3.20 from every card sold will go directly to ALONE's services.

#### Combating loneliness is a communal responsibility and so everyone has their part to play"

However, it is not just up to charities to show solidarity with the older generation. Combating loneliness is a communal responsibility and so everyone has their part to play. By reaching out to someone, Christmas can be transformed from a time of loneliness and misery to one of joy and companionship.

"People need to be cognisant, and aware and to think about older people," explained Seán. "Really make the effort, drop in on a family member, a neighbour or an ex-work colleague. People will appreciate the call and the communication."

For those who are intimidated by asking for help this Christmas out of fear or unsureness, ALONE urges you to pick up the phone and take the first step in changing your life.

"Please reach out and give us a call. People are picking up the phone, it's a brave thing to do. There's no stigma involved, and our volunteers will help you stay in power and control of your life. There is no reason why what you are experiencing has to be the same next year".

**()** To find out more about ALONE and for support during this Christmas period, see http://alone. ie/

#### 

## Dad's Diary Rory Fitzgerald

believe that viruses are the most powerful nonhuman creatures on the planet. I've never had to take a day off work in order to recover from an attack by a bear, shark, lion or wolf. Only viruses have the power to so casually disrupt our lives. Any large, fang-toothed creature you might think of has been shot, eradicated or caged. Yet despite all our modern technology, viruses have us at their mercy.

These microscopic creatures have been unwelcome visitors in our house in recent weeks. Despite the bad press they get, I have to admit that they are industrious and creative little fellows.

They've been hard at work in our family recently, causing a colourful variety of symptoms, ranging from vomiting, to high temperatures, to coughs, queasiness and generalised malaise. I suppose it's a seasonal tradition that viruses display their newlycreated ailments as winter approaches each year.

I used to think that the term, "It's a virus", so beloved of doctors, was a medical term derived from the latin for, "I haven't got a clue." However, my medic wife assures me that these seasonal colds and flus really are caused by various ever-mutating viruses, against which we can only rely upon our body's own defences. The only way to fight these bugs is to give their victim rest, warmth, nutrution and the ever-vital TLC.

#### The bond between parent and child grows stronger as they pass through a short illness"

As I type, the latest casualty – our three year old daughter - is asleep at my feet on a mattress on the living room floor. Yesterday afternoon she became unusually quiet and developed the temperature of a small nuclear reactor. As her temperature hit 40 degrees, last night she actually began



hallucinating. A parent's heart melts as the temperature rises and a normally boisterous child is reduced to again being a babe in arms, helpless and suffering.

This triggers in us the instinct to wrap them in blankets, speak softy, and to give every comfort. All the normal rules are broken: she can have toast and jam in bed, screen time quotas are abandoned and a nest of comfort is built around the child.

I remember how as a sick child the greatest comfort came not from the paracetamol, or the lemsip, but from my mother's many kindnesses. I even re-enact the odd sickbed rituals of my own childhood. Toast was

always cut into soldiers when we were sick, as these were deemed to have curative properties.

#### Comfort

I too cut toast into soldiers for our own sick children. In addition to any welcome placebo event, these little rituals show the sick child that they are loved, that they will be treated specially when they're sick and that their parents will do anything that can comfort them.

The bond between parent and child grows stronger as they pass through a short illness. In feeling deeply cared for, the children are reminded that, when it comes to it, we will drop everything for them. It gives us slow one-toone nurturing time with a child which we wouldn't otherise get.

In our ever-busier world, perhaps those viruses are doing us a favour by making us slow down for a few days, and so giving us that rarest – and most healing of commodities – time.

## Youth Space Actions not words



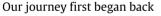
#### Niamh O'Sullivan, Rosa **Geoghegan and Sarah Lennon**

oly Child Killiney is a school in the Le Chéile Trust and has a tradition of undertaking an Immersion Project with Fifth Year students which has involved travelling to Kenya and Kolkata. The initiative echoes the Christian ethos of the Le Chéile Mission statement and continues the strong commitment we have in Holy Child to living Gospel values in a variety of justice and peace initiatives. Our programme is an active and creative educational process to increase students' awareness and understanding of the world we live in. It is a process of interaction, reflection and action and it has been put together for the mutual benefit of the Holy Child students and the children in the Developing World. Since 2011, 5th Year students

have taken part in the Immersion Programmes in both Kenya and India. By being with the host communities and reflecting on that experience in the light of the Gospel message, students have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of their Christian faith, to grow in their own sense of God and to increase their commitment and capacity to work for real change in our world today.

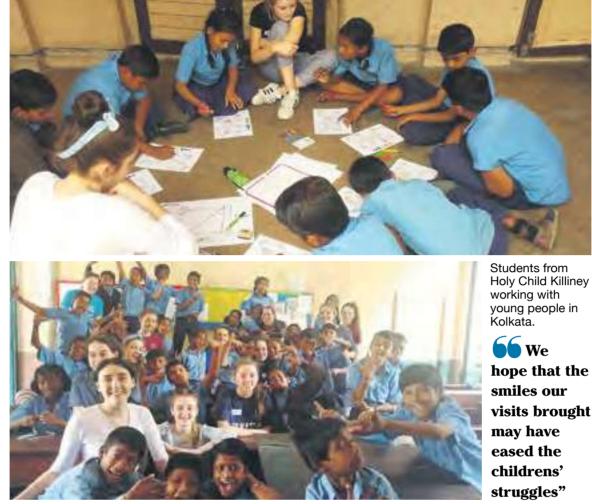
#### **Opportunity**

In February this year 15 students and three staff members travelled to Kolkata, India to stay with the Edmund Rice Schools teaching in St George's School in Bow Bazar. Here our students had the opportunity to teach simple concepts in maths, science and English along with some games, songs, dances, art and crafts to help the children express themselves and grow in confidence.





Love Notes Wendy Grace



in September 2016, when each student undertook to raise much needed funds for St George's and the Mary Rice Centre, two free schools in the Edmund Rice network in which we would be teaching.

Weekly meetings were held where students gained an understanding of global development issues such as the causes of poverty, human rights, justice, development and environmental issues mainly focusing on our host country, India.

From the very first moment we stepped out of the airport into the heat and noisy traffic we knew we

had embarked on a truly immersive experience. Although early on a Sunday morning, the streets were busy and the journey to St George's was an extraordinary culture shock. Our senses were awakened by the new sights, smells and sounds of Kolkata

The Brothers in Kolkata were incredibly hospitable and provided us with the most valuable insights into the lives of people we met. Kolkata at night could be a perilous place for children with extensive child trafficking, child labour and the sex trade.

This being the case we were very impressed by how the

children presented themselves, eager to learn, always dressed in perfect uniform and were very polite and respectful addressing us either as "ma'am" or "sister".

#### **Bleary eyed**

During our second week in Kolkata our work diversified. We woke bleary eyed and dazed at 4.30am to attend 6.00am Mass in the Mother House followed by volunteering in one of their missions. We were then designated our positions for the day, the Missionary orphanage and a home for women and girls with special needs. This day proved to be one of

the most difficult days, providing us with plenty of challenges. The group working in the orphanage were divided between the special needs children and the malnourished children. The girls were definitely kept on their toes, providing plenty of entertainment for the children, including an impromptu concert. They helped to feed, change and put the children to bed where they said their goodbyes and finished for the day.

#### We can now understand why St Teresa is in fact a saint"

The second group experienced a real taste of India when they travelled by tuc tuc (small threewheeled van) to their location for the day. Further out of Kolkata city the home provides care for women and girls who suffer with mental health issues. The students spent the morning doing laundry and later caring for the women and girls who came from sometimes abusive families living on the street. It proved a very challenging day and St Teresa and her missionaries certainly provided us with some satisfying but very demanding experiences in India. We can now understand why St Teresa is in fact a saint.

Over the two weeks there were many challenging moments and we came to realise that no amount of individual effort could ever begin to address the massive problems in Kolkata.

However, we hope that the smiles our visits brought to the children may have eased their struggle even a little bit for a little while. We have been personally challenged to take a look at the way we are living our own lives.

The work of the Christian Brothers and so many agencies such as the Missionaries of Charity and HOPE will inspire us each day to take up that challenge. We hope to return in the future and are very grateful that we were given this opportunity, to help others, and to realise how truly blessed we are.

## Sons' argument is going to ruin our family Christmas

Q: My two sons have had a falling out and are no longer talking. They usually both bring their families to our house for Christmas Day dinner. This year my wife and I are facing the devastating prospect of having no grandchildren here for Christmas day. We have already tried to get them talking, as have their wives, but they are both stubborn. What can we do?

A: Without knowing exactly the reason and the severity of the argument, it is hard to know how long will be needed for healing to take place. Is there one sibling that might be more likely to apologise, can you reach out to him again? Write a personalised handwritten letter to both of your children, explaining how important a reconciliation is for you and the whole family. Give it some time for the hurt and dust to settle. Then after this step, hopefully, you can try to bring them together to talk.

If you are going to act as a mediator, it is important that you don't take sides, or come into the discussion with an opinion. If you can't be neutral

perhaps there is another family member that could mediate.

With this initial discussion, have reasonable expectations. It may not be realistic that things will just go back to the way they were, but a starting point is Christmas together, being civil,

enjoying the day and ensuring the children have a nice time and, little by little, earning one another's trust again. They may not be friends straight away but can they find a middle ground?

#### **Possibility**

This is about showing the possibility of rebuilding their relationship once more, even if it is not perfect, and putting their children ahead of their own disagreements

Sadly, around one-third of people say that relationships with some of their siblings are distant, using words like "competitive" or "hurtful" to depict their childhoods. As we get older maintaining the closeness, that perhaps once existed, takes hard work

The speed at which old conflicts can reduce

your adult sons into children again might be preventing them from moving forward. They are 'pushing each other's buttons' without even realising it they have re-entered their childhood roles, that may have been fraught in the first place

This isn't necessarily about creating agreement on whatever the issue is, but helping your sons to understand the others' point of view. Often it can happen that a response, in the present, is connected to something from their past. Even though they grew up together, they are now adults spending lots of time apart. Is the issue something that is really current or is it a battle between their 12-vear-old selves?

Sometimes letting go of the past is the best way to encourage better sibling relationships into the future. The roles they have assumed are the product of years of practice, but you can't make your sons change their behaviour.

Unfortunately, there isn't a simple solution. Ultimately, your sons have to make the choice to talk once again, but you can be the one to encourage this situation to come about.

#### **Reviews** 31

## ..... **D**TVRadio

## Brendan O'Regan Would You Believe? returns with impact

f I settle down to Sunday night TV I want something cosy, undemanding, even uplifting, but that's not how it turned out last weekend.

Would You Believe? (RTÉ 1) returned with impact last Sunday night with the first episode in a two-part exploration of the subject of evil. Mick Peelo's report didn't contain any blinding new insights but reviewed different theories and asked lots of searching questions. Was it to do with 'wiring' in the brain? Was it nature or nurture? Were there evil people or just evil acts? Was it a purely human phenomenon or were spiritual influences at play?

Fr Pat Collins, being both psychologist and exorcist, straddled the human sciences and the spiritual realm, and thought it would be naïve to rule out a spiritual dimension.

Prof. Ivor Browne, psychiatrist, thought we all had elements of "the shadow" but we need to accept, manage and take responsibility. Colin Sumner, Professor of Criminology at UCC inclined to the view that evil was based on 'moral outrage', though that sounded too relativistic some things are evil even if we fail to take moral outrage.

Dr Clare Kelly of Trinity College thought it was all within. She explored the neuroscience, found certain areas of the brain inactive



The Brennan brothers return to TV screens with At Your Service: To the Rescue on RTÉ

in psychopathic people, but understandably hesitated to identify an 'evil spot' in the brain. Christine Louise de Canonville had studied the psychology of evil and saw narcissism at the heart of it. Her experience of a seriously abusive person, whom she described as looking 'demonic' when violent, made her reluctant to rule out a spiritual dimension - she said there's so much we don't understand.

All very interesting so far, but I was uneasy at the use of named living people being regarded as embodying evil, and for continuity I think it would have been better to join the two episodes into a one-hour special. The questions raised for the second part don't bode well, e.g. "maybe we need the devil as much as we need God?". Really?

#### **New document**

Meanwhile on another but not entirely unrelated front the Director of the National Women's Council, Orla O'Connor was interview on The Pat Kenny Show (Newstalk) on Wednesday of last week about that body's new document on abortion and the Eighth Amendment. Though it concerned the taking of babies' lives, there was no sense of evil or even of children being involved at all.

Pat Kenny did ask several challenging questions about how representative the National Women's Council was and whether some of their constituent bodies would disapprove of the Council's anti-Eighth stance.

He suggested they were "incredibly political" on the issue. I thought O'Connor was uncomfortable and hesitant on these questions, eventually referencing an AGM vote in support of abortion 'services' in Ireland. But she also accepted that some constituent bodies didn't have a position on the issue.

She thought most women were on the 'middle ground' on the issue, but wasn't asked why then the NWC was taking such an extreme position (similar, as Kenny pointed out, to the Citizens' Assembly



Mick Peelo.

recommendations).

What bugged me most about the interview was Kenny's use of the term "socalled pro-life" – I found this a mean-spirited denigration of one side in this debate. Not only that, but he is tending of late to suggest pro-life people might be labelled 'antichoice' – so, two insults for one side, but the other side gets to choose its own labels.

The lack of logic and consistency was clear in this mouthful: "There's an argument as to whether you should label people prochoice or anti-choice rather than pro-life or pro-choice." Notice how one side gets to be 'pro-choice' either way. Logically shouldn't he be asking if it should be pro-life vs anti-life, or anti-abortion vs pro-abortion?

Finally, the uplift! I'm not a great fan of the Brennan brothers' reality TV shows, but I have to admit I really enjoyed At Your Service: To **the Rescue**, on RTÉ 1 on Tues-day night of last week. John and Francis were enthusiastically overseeing a makeover for the premises of the Cork Penny Dinners group and it was so inspiring, particularly because of the generosity of the group's volunteers and benefactors, the gratitude of those who benefitted from their services and most of all the touching personal stories of loneliness, homelessness and struggles to cope with

#### **PICK OF** THE WEEK

THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL EWTN, Monday, November 27, 2.30 pm, Friday, December 1, 10.30 pm

. The Courage Apostolate welcomes and accompanies people with same-sex attraction as they try to live in accordance with Church teaching.

#### A NEW ORDER

UTV, Wednesday, November 29, 10.45 pm Former Manchester United footballer Philip Mulryne reveals his extraordinary journey from the Premiership to the priesthood.

#### DAVID BROPHY'S CHOIR OF AGES

RTÉ 1, Thursday, November 30, 10.15 pm David Brophy is on a mission to bridge the divide between young and old through music.

challenging family and social circumstances.

It was the perfect antidote to the Christmas season's commercialism.

boregan@hotmail.com



## From dream to nightmare in Pleasantville

topple like a house of cards as

soon as a serpent enters this

serpents are represented by

blacks, Jews and non-Episco-

palians. In the 'father knows

best' bubble that comprises

the John Updike veneer of

For the xenophobic, such

lace-curtain Garden of Eden.

#### Suburbicon (15A)

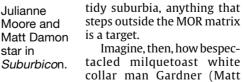
George Clooney working with the Coen Brothers? Surely not. Would that not be a bit like Cary Grant teaming up with David Lynch? And yet here he is, doing it for a fifth time and carrying it again, calibrating the twisted parabolas of this jocosely dark parable with a deftness one mightn't have thought possible from the former *ER* star.

Ever since he hung up his scalpel he's busied himself becoming (whisper it) 'a serious film-maker'. He often punches above his weight, coming across as little more than the 'thinking woman's crumpet', but here he aces it in wickedly subversive mood.



It's a coming-of-age moment for Gorgeous George.

In his directorial hands he co-scripts the film too, along with the Coens - Suburbicon opens up a pastelshaded cosmos that's too good to be true, We know the picket fences are going to



tacled milquetoast white collar man Gardner (Matt Damon) might react when the Mafia visits his house

one night to terrorise his wife Rose (Julianne Moore) and sister-in-law Margaret (also Julianne Moore)?

But nothing is what it seems in *Suburbicon*. It's a riddle wrapped inside a mystery.

If you lift the stone where Pollyanna resides, all manner of vermin fester underneath. And not all of them come from 'outside town'. Or from a different creed – or colour.

Clooney peels off the lay-

ers of slime like an onion, vouchsafing us yet more crassness in every quasiwhimsical scene. Moore fiddles and suburbia burns. Is anybody pure? By the time the carnage reveals itself in its full venality you wonder if even little Nicky (Noah Jape) is going to sprout horns. **Symbolism** 

Aubrey Malone

It's a captivating film that keeps its symbolism under wraps until the final few minutes. Here the racial integration message is laid on a little too obviously for comfort. Until then, anything can happen - and usually does.

It could yet be my film of the year. If I only give it nine out of 10 it's because I can't help feeling, as with all Clooney's films – even those of the new and improved Clooney - that he's always 'getting at' something. You forgive him here because what he's 'getting at' is so mind-bending.

Suburbicon is the ultimate anti-50s film, the ultimate kick in the teeth to the American dream, the ultimate unpicking of the rottenness that lies at the core of the poisoned apple of Dwight Eisenhower's tree of knowledge.

To reveal any more would spoil your surprise at a film that cavalierly destroys our faith in the goodness of human nature at every turn. Take a deep breath before you dive in. You might never be quite the same again.

#### 32 | Reviews

## BookReviews Peter Costello Recent books in brief A Christian voice

I am infinitely loved: A month of meditations by Brian Grogan S.J. (Messenger Publications, €4.95) The title of this little pamphlet is taken from a remark by Pope Francis: "When all is said and done, we are infinitely loved." Brian Grogan reapplies this to draw out in a month's course of meditations the idea that each individual reader is infinitely loved.

The book is arranged with a meditation facing a quote from a prayer and a quote from the scriptures, with in-between a



space of the reader's own name. So rather than those broad generalities that so often make up books of this kind, the message of love and attachment is focused on you yourself.

This makes for a very involving text which many will benefit from, perhaps in unexpected ways. But that, too, is the author's intention. He suggests that a relationship with both God and those around us is an ongoing, changing, explorative affair. This is a quiet little book, which readers having personalized it, will come to cherish in a quiet fashion too.

Liturgies for Young People edited by Donal Neary S. J., with a foreword by Archbishop Dermot Martin (Messenger Publications,

€14.95) We have all had the experience: of looking round the congregation at a Sunday Mass. There are older people, the mature middle aged we might call them, and there are young parents with their couple of small children. But where, one asks oneself are the teenagers, the university students, and the people in their first jobs: nowhere

to be seen. Every pastor is conscious of this black hole.

In this manual Fr Neary provides a set of liturgies arranged around the school year to which have been added others out of season so to speak for crucial events of one kind or another. The aim is to provide services which will engage that youthful cohort, and hopes to leave them with a permanent benefit, so that when in due course they have their children, the grandchildren of the mature, they will find a place once more in the pews.

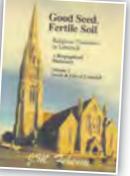
That at least is the hope. But one wonders if the structure of school and Church, where in a sense the young are captive, fully answers the need. The apostles after all did not linger over long in the porch of the Temple; they travelled around, and they stood up in the agora with all the competing streams of opinion and commerce. But as Archbishop Eamon Martin points out in his brief foreword these suggested liturgies can be adapted as well to many other occasions of life beyond school and Church.

#### Good Seed, Fertile Soil. Religious Vocations in Limerick. A Biographical Dictionary, Volume 2: South County and City of

Limerick by J. M. Feheney (Iverus Publications, Mardyke House, Cork T12 W8RP, €20.00)

The author is a Presentation Brother, and this is very much a local author's work of love for the past of Limerick Diocese, with brief biographies of the priests and nuns who have worked there. It will prove of immense value to readers of all kinds, but reminds us all of the real achievements of a past that has gone

by



## A Christian voice from a realm of fear



Fr Ibrahim Alsabagh overlooking some of the ruins in Aleppo.

#### Letters from Aleppo by Fr Ibrahim Alsabagh (Columba Press, €14.99) Anthony Redmond

have a Syrian friend whom I met in Dublin 15 years ago when he was a student of English. He returned to Syria before the terrible war began in 2011 and he is now married there with two small children. We keep in touch and he tells me about his constant fear and daily anxiety and his efforts to survive and make ends meet. I find it heartbreaking.

You can, therefore, imagine how anxious I was to read a book detailing the difficulties of daily life in that troubled and tragic land by a Syrian priest, Fr Ibrahim Alsabagh, a member of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor.

His extraordinary book is called *Letters from Aleppo* and it's one of the most deeply moving and powerful books I've ever read.

#### Monastery

Fr Alsabagh was born in Damascus and after his studies in Rome he returned to Syria in 2014 to be with his suffering people. He is now the parish priest of his church and monastery in west Aleppo. He describes in meticulous detail and compassion the daily suffering of his people and their constant fear of being attacked and killed.

What comes across very

strongly is his profound love for his parishioners, and those who are not of his flock, and the amazing courage and resilience of the people among whom he lives. It is an amazing story and I cried as I read this wonderful book.

Fr Ibrahim has great respect and concern for Muslims in Syria and he knows what they, too, are suffering. It is all too obvious that if the extremist jihadists of various types, especially ISIS and Al Nusra, have their way the unfortunate people of Syria would be subjected to the most cruel, barbaric tyranny.

The US and the west are certainly not helping the situation by supporting many of the so-called rebels"

Were it not for Russia and Iran coming to the aid of the Syrian government the entire country would have been completely overrun by the most vicious, sadistic forms of Islamist fundamentalism. We saw what happened in Libya and Iraq after the USA and Britain helped to destablise and destroy those countries.

The same thing would have happened in Syria. The provincial Governor of west Aleppo, Mohammad Waheed Akad, said that as the rebels had launched indiscriminate shells at the civilians in west Aleppo they shouted, "God is great." He added: "But God and Islam have nothing to do with such brutality."

The US and the west are certainly not helping the situation by supporting many of the so-called rebels.

Among the worst problems mentioned by Fr Ibrahim are the shortage of water and electricity. He writes: "The problem of drinking water remains, but people also need water for personal hygiene. People are so desperate that they go around under the rain of missiles hoping to get water from the taps installed in the streets, near wells. No water has come out of the taps for ten days now.

Today the value of the dollar rose to 410 Syrian pounds ( about 70 cent), while only yesterday it was at 400. The prices of staple foods like bread, vegetables and so on are constantly going up. One woman who still has a job, and therefore a monthly income, explained to us that she could no longer afford even one dish of vegetables a day."

The monthly salary for those lucky enough to have a job can be as low as  $\in 30$  or  $\notin 40$  a month. Fr Ibrahim and his priests there try their best to help these desperate people.

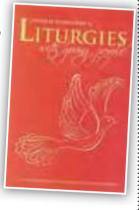
When his church was attacked by gas canisters as he was distributing Holy Communion he could see his parishioners screaming in pain as showers of stones and broken glass fell on them. He put down the Blessed Sacrament on the altar and rushed to help them.

He writes: "In the sacristy I realized that the hosts in the pyx were stained with the blood of some of the worshippers. This made a great impression on me, more than seeing the church covered in dust, plaster and broken glass. The hosts mixed with our blood were an unequivocal sign of the presence of the Lord in communion with us; it was as though they shone with the light of consolation and peace."

#### Ambassador

Fr Ibrahim visits the bereaved and the injured and those whose homes have been destroyed and he offers what help, financial and spiritual, he can. He is truly God's ambassador to his people. The people turn to him for consolation and encouragement in their despair.

"What encourages me," he writes, "to go on in my daily mission despite the countless signs of death we witness every day is what Jesus said about the daughter of Jairus: 'The child is not dead, but asleep' (Mk 5: 39) There is still hope. In Aleppo, these words have become a parish priest's profession of faith, that of his parishioners and all Christians."



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.

#### Half a century in television news



Rwandan Hutu refugees fleeing violence.

#### Breaking News: An Autobiography by Jeremy Thompson

by Jeremy Thompson (Biteback Publishing, £20.00)

#### Peter Hegarty

Thompson's writing is as assured and informed as his reports for Sky News were. He has a keen eye for the haunting details of a story, describing the scorched shapes of Iraqi soldiers, 'sightlessly staring' from the cabs of their burned-out trucks.

During a visit to a hospital in Freetown, Sierra Leone he espied a vulture perched on a rail peering in a broken window at the expiring patients.

His most memorable chapters deal with Africa. He reported from the camps around Goma where thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees succumbed to hunger and disease.

A woman fell dead of starvation beside him just moments after he had heard an ad for a burger while waiting to talk to CBS. Many of the unfortunates around him had hacked their Tutsi neighbours to death only weeks earlier. They were pleading for help now, having ignored pleas for mercy then.

#### Reputation

Sky News has built its reputation on its nimble, imaginative reactions to breaking stories. It is quick to dispatch reporters to places that are suddenly the focus of attention. Thompson anchored live from Soham after two young girls, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, went missing. Many will remember his interview with Ian Huntley, the

school caretaker who was later found guilty of murdering the girls. Huntley was one of many 'skilled liars' he has spoken to over the years.

A good presenter knows 'when to shut up', when to let the pictures speak for themselves.



The second secon

Thompson has decided to shut up for good after 50 exhilarating years.

Field reporting is becoming easier as gear gets lighter, more technologically sophisticated"

When he started out – in print – he always kept a few 2p coins handy in case he had to file a story from a phone box. At the time television journalists had all day to put together a package for, say, *The News at Ten*.

Nowadays we expect to see the news as it happens. Rolling news programmes need continual updates, fresh angles, breaking stories. Field reporting is becoming easier as gear gets lighter, more technologically sophisticated. Thompson is amazed that he can file a report, from a hotel in Damascus, with only a camera attached to a laptop.

Repression, war, and genocide may be the human condition, but the causes and reality of suffering are coming under more scrutiny than ever.

#### **The World of Books** By the books editor

## **'So are they all, all honourable men'**



Sir Bob Geldof prepares to hand back his deed as Honorary Freeman of the City of Dublin.

he controversy that has been aroused by Bob Geldof (or should that be Sir Bob?) handing back his deed as Honorary Freeman of the City of Dublin at the City Hall has focused public attention on just what this title is.

Turning as I always do to the books on my shelves. I find that though the title is not much discussed in the heavier more academic tomes that now abound about the city's millennium of existence, these lauded few are listed in the older editions of Thom's Directory (of the kind so vital to all research into all matters relating to Dublin), and in the pages Fr Eddie O'Donnell's always useful Annals of Dublin, illustrated by finely printed images of Fr Frank Brown, in which is printed the "Roll of the Honorary Freemen of the City of Dublin".

The city may be far more than a thousand years old, but this title is quite modern - in the historian's sense, that is - for it dates only from 1876.

Parliament (that is to say Westminster) had passed an Act that enabled Dublin City Council "to elect and admit persons to be honorary burgesses". This was rather in imitation of a medieval custom of admitting people to be "free citizens", who were presented then with a key to the city gates.

This Victorian act can be seen as part of a general movement across these islands for the rapidly enlarging (often heavily industrialised cities such as Manchester or Glasgow) to give themselves grander airs with respect to London's.

## ••• One takes away the impression of one lot of politicians rewarding another lot"

The Irish nationalists who then controlled the city council (from time to time) at once admitted Isaac Butt, the leader of the Irish Independent Party (1876), W. E. Gladstone, then the darling of the Irish (1877), and Ulysses S. Grant, the former President of the USA who was touring the world (1878).

So much for the great, but the fourth freeman was one of the good. This was Captain Edward

E. Potter, commander of the Relief Ship Constellation. Capt. Potter had carried supplies of food to the famine struck West across the Atlantic, laying off aid at the villages along the coast as he sailed northwards in 1879-80. He was admitted at the end of his work as a special mark of honor (26 April 1880).

Capt. Potter represented the sort of person that one might expect to be honored today for their charitable works, as was Bob Geldof in due course.

However, when one goes down the list one can see that those marked out were overwhelmingly political public figures, or people who were once celebrities of some kind or another.

#### Hopes

Some are now little known. Coming upon their names, many would ask who was Ehrenfried Gunther Baron Hunefeld and Captain Herman Köhl in June 1928. Yet all was made clear by the next name, Major James Fitzmaurice. These were the fliers who conquered the Atlantic, raising Ireland's hopes of being a major player in international flight.

But there were also a fair number of genuine – and deserving – Dublin talents, people such Edwards/ Mac Liammóir, Noel Purcell, and Maureen Potter and many others who were genuinely popular. (And doubtless T. D. Sullivan, one of the founders of this paper, deserved his tribute in 1887 – if only because he was one of the great ballad writers of the day...)

Yet on the whole one takes away the impression of one lot of politicians rewarding another lot. Given the fact that so many politician have many human failings, and often have feet of clay, it is hardly surprising that now and again some embarrassment should arise over those chosen. But we cannot worry about the past.

But one feels today that if Bob Geldoff wants to do something about the situation in Myamar he could begin here at home, and apply himself to achieving reconciliation between the Buddhist Burmans in Ireland and their Muslin compatriots the Rohingya – who are rejected by them as 'Bengalis'. At present neither group in Ireland speaks to the other. Step into the gap, Sir Bob? But don't insult Dublin and Dubliners instead. 9436694.

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## Leisure time

Gordius 209

#### **Crossword Junior**

17 Obtained (3)

19 This pattern is different for

every person (11)

2 Doing your job (7)

4 We go to school to get a

wear this kind of hat (5)

7 Very easy, not complicated

13 The leader of a tribe (5)

14 You get turf from here (3)

(9)

DOWN

1 Leap (4)

aood

(6)

11 Baby frog (7)

3 Put down (3)

#### ACROSS 1 A ruby or diamond, maybe

- (5) 6 Write this on an envelope to show where it should be
- delivered (7) 8 Become husband and wife
- (5) 9 Yell with fear (6)

16

- 10 Filth (4)
- 12 Plays a part in a play or movie (4)
- 13 Placed an animal behind bars (5)
- 14 Insect which makes honey (3)
- 15 Short word for what you take with a camera (5)
- 16 House made of snow and ice (5)

#### 18 Possess (3) LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

#### **GORDIUS No.325**

Across - 1 Cos 3 Rule of thumb 8 Stucco 9 Camino de Santiago 10 Pygmy shrew 11 Loire 15 Marched 16 Hexagon 20 Darns 21 Third 23 Spell 25 Celtic 26 Gerrymander 27 All

Down - 1 Cash payment 2 Smuggler 3 Rocky 4 Etchers 5 Trial 6 Utopia 7 Bye 12 Evangelical 13 Spend 14 Weeks 17 Green tea 18 Dragoon 19 Dinner 22 Doily 23 Steer 24 Sag

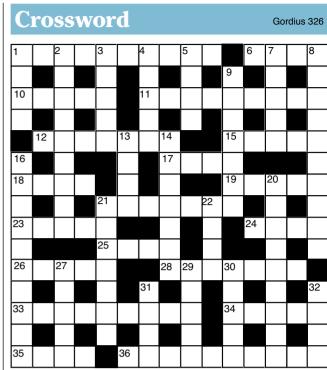
#### CHILDREN'S No.208

Across - 1 Pandas 5 Safe 7 Boil 8 Animal 9 Bath 10 Pig Dew 13 Lawnmower 17 Acorn 18 Stand 19 Tees 20 Seesaw

9 Belfast 11 Dreams 12 Window 14 Wrote 15 Mane 16 Waste

#### **Sudoku Corner** 209

E	Easy Hard										
		1		7	3						
	7		9		5	8	3				
		6	3		4						
	5		6				1	2		4	
		3						7			
		7	4				6		9	8	
					1		2	9		7	6
			1	6	2		8		7		
					9	4		3			



#### ACROSS

- 1 I lit Africa up? That's not natural (10)
  - - 6 Get Celtic jewellery to a Roman Catholic (4)
    - 10 The French word for love (5)
    - 11 What will a poor saint provide
    - that will rid one of pests? (3,6) 12 & 18a Diluted the dampened
- feathers (7,4) 5 You might see a Frenchman 15 The central walkway in a
  - church (5) 17 Prepare for publication (4)
  - 18 See 12 across
  - 19 Bar of precious metal (5)
  - 21 Goodness me, that's some
  - bony jig! (2,5)
  - 23 The message of a parable (5)
  - 24 Christmas in France? Return
  - for Mr Trotsky (4) 25 Bet made before cards are
  - dealt (4)
  - 26 A morning with a chap in a Middle-Eastern city (5)
  - 28 Running in a gallant way (7)
  - 33 Equine beast of burden (9)
  - 34 Ancient Greek philosopher (5)
  - 35 Even rapidly acting

6

7

5

6

1

5

2 3

3 7

2

9

3

1

8

- substances initially take ages! (4)
- 36 How happy are these eight to be situated differently! (10)
- DOWN

з 4

9

4

1 7

5

7 6 1 It's nowhere near being

involved in a safari (4)

- 2 In a jar, two ran around to find an ancient conflict (6,3)
- 3 Fiasco or risqué comedy (5) 4 & 21d Total discretionary
- power to recreate herbal accent (5,7) 5 Creative way to reorder the
- tray (4) 7 Fertile spot in a desert (5)
- 8 Musical instrument that gives a performance in one note only? (10)
- 9 Christian name of Admiral Nelson (7)
- 13 Red gemstone (4)
- 14 Made one's mind up (7)
- 16 Is it the first fruit that is to be
- found in the throat? (5,5) 20 The largest island in the North Atlantic (9)
- 21 See 4 down
- 22 Intervals or spaces (4)
- 27 One of the holy cities of Islam
- (5)

29 Preclude creating an avenue to the right (5)

- 30 A Greek character in torrid surroundings? Get away! (3,2) 31 Verifiable (4)
- 32 Small, green, non-flowering plant (4)

## Last week's Easy 20

					<u> </u>		J	200
1	5	8	2	7	6	4	3	9
6	3	9	8	5	4	7	1	2
7	4	2	3	0	1	6	8	5
з	2	6	5	8	9	1	4	7
8	7	5	1	4	3	2	9	6
4	9	1	6	2	7	э	5	8
5	6	7	4	3	8	9	2	1
2		3	9	6	5		7	4
9	8	4	7	1	2	5	6	3

#### Last week's Hard 208

Down - 2 Aroma 3 Dolphin 4 Shampoo 5 Sting 6 France

#### **Notebook**

## Universal lessons from the art of war

JULY 2009 saw the commissioning of HMS Daring, a Type 45 destroyer and the most technologically advanced ship the Royal Navy had ever deployed. Capable of travelling nearly twice as far and almost half as efficient again as the ship it was replacing, it had stealth technology and a huge radar which could keep tabs on 1,000 targets at once, as well as missiles capable of striking down a

cricket-ball-sized object travelling at three times the speed of sound. All very impressive, we might think, but there was one catch: it was very expensive. So expensive, indeed, at about £1 billion per

ship, that Britain can afford just six of these ships, roughly half the number it had had of the previous ones. Currently, the British navy has just 19 surface combat ships - six destroyers and 13 frigates,

down from a total of 33 warships in 2000. The problem, of course, is that

no matter how good a ship is, it unlike Boyle Roche's famous bird cannot be in two places at once.

What does this have to do with the Church?

Last week saw two deacons being ordained to the priesthood in Dublin, just days after



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin celebrated Mass for 15 priests who had died in the last year.

'Some will immediately say 15 dead and only two new priests. Statistics and numbers are important, but they are not the entire picture," Dr Martin

about numbers. The Church is not a Church triumphant in this life. What is vital is the quality of the life of faith that dwells in our hearts.

the most obvious one at the present time being that of David and Goliath. It's a lesson that the journalist Malcolm Gladwell developed to remarkable effect in his 2013 book - developed from a 2009 article - David and Goliath: Underdogs, misfits, and the art of battling giants.

picking up on the wisdom of Lawrence of Arabia, Gladwell considers scenarios where underdogs beat the odds, picking up on situations where apparent major disadvantages turn out to be keys in success. It's very far from being a perfect book, but it's one that offers real insights too. It could priests, but what is important is the quality of faith in people's hearts and the level of witness that priests give."

All true, again, but there are realities here, realities of reach. This isn't just a year in which 15 priests died and but two were ordained; it's also a year in which no new seminarians started priestly studies for the archdiocese of Dublin

#### Energetic

Current figures suggest there will be at best 144 priests in Dublin in 2030, down from 369 now. If religious orders respond to their own vocational shortfalls by withdrawing from Dublin parishes, the number could be as low as 111, and by no means all of these will be healthy and energetic.

Fr James Daly and Fr Bill O'Shaughnessy may turn out to be wonderful priests, and the Faithful should be deeply grateful for their generosity and willingness to answer God's call. However, no matter how good they are, there are still just two of them.

It's a common line in the Church that numbers aren't everything, and that's utterly correct. But they are something.

### A timely lesson

**Greg Daly** 

Not far from Syria's Lebanese border, on a spur dominating the landscape, stands Krak des Chevalier, a crusader fortress described by T.E. Lawrence -Lawrence of Arabia to most people – as the "most wholly admirable castle in the world".

A vast base for the Knights Hospitaller, at its peak it was manned by a garrison of 2000 men. Seemingly impregnable, it fell to the Egyptian Mamluks in 1271, its by then tiny garrison incapable of holding the castle's walls.

In effect this was a case study in the famous adage of Frederick the Great, the 18th-Century Prussian king and general, that "he who defends everything defends nothing"; there may be lessons here for how the Irish Church best deploys its clergy in this depleted time.



#### Absolutely true as far as it goes, of course, as was the archbishop's comment a few days said, before adding: "Faith is not later: "Certainly, we need new THE BIBLE, of course, is not short of strategic lessons, with perhaps Addressing subjects ranging from warfare to basketball, and rightly

be useful reading for people wondering where the Irish Church can go now.

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