

The Irish Catholic

‘NOT IN OUR NAME’

Tuam survivors reject repeal call Page 3

NEWMAN’S VISION

Fresh life with Notre Dame Pages 12 & 13

CHRISTMAS BUDGETS

Avoiding the overspend Pages 31 & 33



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Ireland will not re-visit Mass changes despite Pope’s green light

Cost seen as barrier to new translation

Susan Gately

Despite ongoing complaints from some parishioners about some of the texts of prayers used at Mass across the country, there are no plans to review it in Ireland or return to an earlier translation of the Missal, *The Irish Catholic* can reveal.

This is despite the fact that Pope Francis has now given local bishops the authority to take charge of new translations. The cost of any re-appraisal of the texts and the huge effort that was involved in the current translation have both been cited as factors.

Msgr Joseph McGuinness, who chairs the Irish Church’s Council for Liturgy, confirmed to *The Irish Catholic* this week that “there is no plan at present for the Irish Episcopal Conference either to authorise its own translation, or to revisit the translation produced by ICEL (the International Commission for English in the Liturgy) in 1998”.

Many commentators have favoured

» Continued on Page 2

30,000 line out for coastal Rosary



Greg Daly

Tens of thousands of people joined in prayer at almost 300 locations around Ireland for the ‘Rosary on the Coast’, organisers believe.

“30,000 people as far as we can estimate went to the coast and prayed, with people all over the world and people in their homes all over Ireland – and now we’re going to get miracles, and there was no cost,” pro-life campaigner and former MEP Kathy Sinnott told *The Irish Catholic* of the November 26 event.

Numerous clergy, including at least six bishops, personally took part in the lay-led effort to coordinate prayers for the preservation of life in both parts of Ireland, she said, describing the situation in the North as “incredibly threatening”, and pointing to the campaign to remove the Eighth Amendment to Ireland’s constitution.

See page 4.

CHAI BRADY

Catholic joy to see Pope in Myanmar PAGE 16



MARY KENNY

The image of Buddhism is not what it was PAGE 5



DAVID QUINN

When liberal churches trade their identities for nothing PAGE 9



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Inside this week

Medical Matters

Only skin deep

Page 32



Children's Corner

Christmas jumpers for the tree

Page 34



Webwatch

Steering between extreme errors

Page 37



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Lost in translation – we need an honest debate on Mass translation

So, Irish parishioners will not have to face the upheaval of yet another new translation of the Mass – at least for now.

Reflecting the pragmatism that is the defining characteristic of the modern Irish Church, the cost and huge effort that has gone in to the last revision of the Mass currently in use in parishes means bishops will not re-visit the issue.

There's an old joke told in ecclesiastical circles that asks what the difference is between a liturgist and a terrorist. The wry answer is that at least one can negotiate with a terrorist.

The joke serves to illustrate a serious point that there are few things that divide in the Church as much as liturgy.

While people unhappy with the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s cited many issues, it was ultimately the move away from the traditional Latin Mass that led to schism under Blessed Pope Paul VI.

What have been described as 'liturgy wars' have been going on for decades in the Church. Vatican II gave the authority to supervise Mass translations to local bishops' conferences. For the English-speaking world this meant the establishment of the International Commission



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) to carry out this work. Concerns over accuracy and faithfulness to the original Latin text led the Vatican to effectively neuter the body in the 1990s scuppering a 1998 translation of the Mass that had been expected to be adopted by bishops here.

What emerged was a Vatican-supervised translation that led to a new Roman Missal that was adopted in Irish parishes exactly six years ago this weekend.

Controversy

The process has not been without controversy. Many priests and parishioners expressed the belief that the translations were inadequate and did not properly reflect English as it is actually spoken. Others welcomed the translations as more authentic, given the faithfulness to the Latin text.

In truth, the current translation is inadequate in many ways. For the most part, the people's responses ("And with your spirit" etc.) work

quite well and – to take the example of the pre-communion "Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and I shall be healed" – are both faithful to the original Missal and scripturally-sound.

In other places the Missal is very weak. Some of the opening prayers, for example, are hard to comprehend. A rigid adherence to the Latin text has meant that many of these prayers are unwieldy and often make little sense over several readings.

When the time comes for the next revision of the Roman Missal (likely to be quite some time away) the challenge will be to balance faithfulness to the original with the need for a text that is both beautiful and comprehensible.

In the meantime, the energy that so many people put into fighting about liturgy could be better expended on reaching out beyond the Church to those who no longer practise their faith.

Ireland will not re-visit Mass changes

» Continued from Page 1

a return to the 1998 text claiming it is more comprehensible than the current text of the Mass in usage. That text had been ready to be implemented but was thrown out by the Vatican at the time amidst claims it did not accurately reflect the Latin original.

Bishop of Achonry Dr Brendan Kelly – who also sits on the bishops' liturgy commission – said that the cost and effort of producing the current version of the Roman

Missal made a revision at this time prohibitive.

"You can imagine the expense and the effort that went into the actual translation we have at the moment," he said. Confirming that the hierarchy has no plans to discontinue the new texts he said: "it would be a huge task to revisit the translation of the Missal".

In September, Pope Francis amended Church law to give local bishops more authority over the translation of the Mass, seen as a move to decentralise authority from

Rome. However, the final say on whether a translation of the Mass is approved or not still rests with the Vatican.

Fr Danny Murphy from the National Centre of Liturgy in Maynooth agrees that some "pastoral and academic critique" in Ireland and throughout the English-speaking Church, suggests that the new translation is awkward and incomprehensible, and, he said, "it appears to disregard that English grammar is closer to German than Latin".

"The uneven reception of the new edition and transla-

tion after six years is an indication that this may not have been a reasonable change. In order for a law to be binding, it must be reasonable," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

According to Msgr McGuinness the new rules "present challenges" for both Rome and the local Church. He said this means Church leaders here taking a more 'hands on' approach and the Vatican showing a "willingness to have greater trust and confidence in the bishops' conferences to fulfil their proper role".

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'Not in our name' – Tuam survivors reject calls for repeal of pro-life law

Luke Silke and Greg Daly

Former residents of the Tuam Mother and Baby Home have rejected what they see as attempts to use controversy surrounding the home to promote legislation permitting wider access to abortion in Ireland.

One former resident, a prominent campaigner for the full story of Tuam to emerge, told *The Irish Catholic* that he wanted to challenge media outlets for "using the Tuam story – our story – my story as a platform from which to push for legal abortion".

The man, whose identity is known to *The Irish Catholic* and has appeared before the commission investigating the controversy surrounding Tuam, asked only to be identified as Patrick. He said he strongly disagreed with attempts by some pro-choice campaigners to link Tuam with a campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment. "I disagree with that – that's beyond a joke now," he said.

"They now want to offer abortion as a solution to 'unwanted children' – sure isn't that me," he said. "If abortion was legal back in the day, I probably wouldn't be here. The people that were born in Tuam – sure we'd be the first ones aborted."

Insisting that each human



life is "a life no matter what, regardless of circumstance", Patrick said that "legalising abortion would be a huge step back into the dark past where the vulnerable and 'unwanted' children were discriminated against".

Link

Attempts to link the pro-choice cause with Ireland's historical mistreatment of

unmarried mothers have been common at least since Galway Pro-Choice held a vigil in June 2014 for the Tuam mothers and babies. At the Citizens' Assembly this March, one Tuam woman asked whether the Church had any credibility in making the argument that all human life matters, given what she called its "horrific track record" in caring for the vulnerable in Ireland, "specif-

ically, in the light of the recent discovery of 780 babies' and infants' bodies thrown into septic tanks in Tuam".

A fellow onetime resident of the home, Walter Francis, joined Patrick in saying "We wish to see the Eighth Amendment retained in the Constitution. If abortion was legal back in the day, we mightn't be here today."

A granddaughter of a

woman who gave birth in the home in the late 1930s, who is also known to *The Irish Catholic* but asked simply to be known as Ger, said her grandmother, despite living to see stories about the home dominating national headlines in 2014, "always spoke of the positive experience she had while in the home, and had no bad words to say about the nuns who worked there."

"It still baffles me how the media can run the pro-abortion narrative alongside the 'dumped Tuam babies' narrative without seeing any contradiction," she said, adding that the Eighth Amendment guarantees protection to the most vulnerable.

Confusion

Similar confusion was expressed by Mary Moriarty, who in October 1975 entered the crypt on the home's former grounds and who helps people raised in the home trace their relatives. Mrs Moriarty, who has also submitted evidence to the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation, said: "I cannot understand why this story is being used as a platform by some from which to campaign for the repealing of the Eighth Amendment."

Declaring herself to be "totally against abortion", Mrs Moriarty urged adop-

tion as an alternative, saying "there are people crying out for children".

Citing her own experience, Mrs Moriarty described how her "niece was told one time that her unborn child wouldn't survive beyond birth and was advised to have an abortion."

"She didn't take the abortion anyway and that child is 15-years-old now and he's as cute as a fox!" she told *The Irish Catholic*.

Cllr Martin Ward, a former Mayor of Tuam and member of the Children's Home Graveyard Committee who like Mrs Moriarty has given evidence to the commission, took issue with those who have suggested that the Church had been involved in covering up the deaths and burials of children at the home.

"The media have also, most defiantly, been using the Tuam story to push for legalised abortion, something which many members of the committee disagree with," he said.

"In the past, the State hugely let down 'illegitimate' children," he said, continuing, "let's not let this happen again – please save the Eighth Amendment".

The Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation is due to report next February.

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More than 30,000 join in coastal Rosary for pro-life 'miracle'

Prayers offered for the protection of life

Greg Daly

About 30,000 people gathered at almost 300 locations for last weekend's 'Rosary on the Coast' initiative, organisers believe.

Based on figures from groups around the country, it looks like the event was a huge success, according to pro-life campaigner and former MEP Kathy Sinnott.

"Between a quarter and a third of locations sent in their estimated figures, and extrapolated from that our estimate for Ireland would be 30,000 people," she told *The Irish Catholic*, explaining that Irish groups met at 295 points around the country for the pro-life prayer rally, with some locations such as nursing homes being 'hidden locations'.

Groups

The 30,000 who gathered in Ireland were joined in prayer, she said, by individuals praying in their homes all over Ireland and by individuals and groups from around the world. She has heard, she said, of groups praying at England's Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, of parishes praying in Britain, and of seminarians praying in Rome's Irish College and North American College.

Spiritual support also came from Poland, she said,

where Radio Maria almost daily reminded people to join in Ireland's coastal Rosary, and from places as far afield as Japan, Nigeria, and Peru.

At least six bishops were involved in the event, she said, while others gave it their blessing by allowing their cathedrals to be used as locations for it. Priests around the island also participated and led groups, although it was a lay-led initiative.

Asked what the event was intended to achieve, she said: "Miracles – we were asking for miracles. We are asking for the protection of life."

Describing the situation in the North as "incredibly threatening", she said while pro-life campaigners in the North should be praised for their work, things have reached a point where only a miracle can stave off the introduction of a British-style abortion regime in the region.

Pointing to the threat to the Eighth Amendment in the Republic, she also said that the prospect of euthanasia being introduced is looming in the background. She said this was "an acute problem", as compared to the "chronic problem we've seen over the past 40-50 years of the fall away from practice and even adherence to the Faith",

"You don't get miracles without asking for them," she said.



Over 300 people gathered to pray the Rosary at Laytown Beach, Co. Meath.

Put needs of people before politics: Archbishop Martin

The archbishop of Dublin intervened to avoid a general election during the political row which led to the resignation of Tánaiste, Frances Fitzgerald. Pointing out the time and polarisation an election

would involve, he told RTE news on Sunday last that "people will suffer".

Earlier at the reopening of Huntstown Church, damaged by a fire in June 2016, Dr Martin said Dublin and Ireland had

many "urgent needs". "I appeal this morning to political leaders to place these needs first. Splintering and bickering damage not just politics but damage the service people need."

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Too much RE, too little PE?

Staff Reporter

Firebrand left-wing TD Paul Murphy has contrasted the time Irish schools spend on religious and physical education, suggesting that a burgeoning obesity crisis among Irish children could be staved off by increasing time for physical exercise in the school curriculum.

"If the Government is serious about an approach in terms of a healthy lifestyle then let us have a carrot approach and a serious approach to increasing the amount of physical education in primary schools, which is on average one hour a week," he said, challenging the planned 'sugar tax' as pointless and punitive towards ordinary people.

Contrast

The Dublin South-West Solidarity-People Before Profit TD said a UCD study found that primary school girls typically spend 46 minutes a week on physical education, including "the before and after bits".

"Let us contrast that with religion, regardless of ethos, where it is two and a half hours a week," he said, noting that Ireland is the third lowest of 37 European states for time spent on physical exercise in primary schools.

"If the Minister is serious about young people being healthy then he will significantly increase the amount of time spent on physical education in the school curriculum," he said, calling also for an enhanced national health service, and an education and health-promotion campaign to discourage consumption of high-sugar soft drinks.

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The image of Buddhism is not what it was...

Many people were irritated by Bob Geldof's decision to return his Freedom of the City of Dublin as a protest against the current regime in Myanmar (still sometimes called Burma) and the treatment of the Rohingya people there. The Lord Mayor of Dublin felt, especially, that it was a graceless move, since this honour is not given to many.



But Geldof [pictured], who can be bombastic and headstrong, achieved what he sought: to focus on the injustices and cruelties that have been meted out to the Rohingya Muslim people in Burma. And to draw attention to the fact that Burma's much-praised leader, Aung San Su Kyi – also given the Dublin City honour – seems to have been complacent

Mary Kenny

in allowing these horrible persecutions, sometimes called 'ethnic cleansing', or even genocide, to occur. This week the City of Oxford has followed Geldof's lead, and stripped the Burmese leader of the honour that they had bestowed on her previously.

Pope Francis, visiting Myanmar-Burma, has had to walk a diplomatic line between showing care and compassion to those who have suffered, while not risking making things worse by reprimanding the majority Buddhists. Yet his very presence has

● Meghan Markle, Prince Harry's fiancée, describes herself as a feminist, and she has spoken at the UN about women's rights. It will be interesting to see how far she accommodates feminism with being a British princess. Will she retain her own name, or incorporate it into that of her husband, as in 'Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex' (said to be the title in waiting)? What an anguishing decision awaits!

also highlighted the pitiful situation.

The persecution of the Rohingya people – who have suffered beatings, killings and expulsions inflicted by the Burmese authorities – has had another effect. It has tainted the widespread perception of Buddhism as a religion of peace, harmony and that 'mindfulness' which implies tolerance of all.

Atrocities

Buddhist monks and preachers have been implicated in the atrocities. The BBC has reported that Buddhist leaders have said that the Rohingya deserved their suffering, as they are an

alien people. The Rohingya are not militant Muslims, but the militancy of some Muslim sects has been attached to their reputation.

Buddhism has been, in recent decades, the most fashionable of religions and philosophies, particularly in Hollywood, where it has been seen as so very different to the "harsher" and more "judgemental" of western faiths. Buddhism's concern for animals has been especially endearing to those who are fond of their pets – and there's no harm in that.

But it's now clear that Buddhists can be as aggressive and even as tyrannical as any other group of people: like the rest of us, they are flawed human beings who make mistakes and can be cruel, malign and even murderous when the Devil takes a grip. Original sin never disappears from the human race.

A lasting work of art

In clearing out my old flat, I found a framed Irish pound note from the early 1970s. I wouldn't normally frame an example of 'filthy lucre' – as I believe St Paul refers to money – but I see this note as a piece of history. It is based on a design commissioned and endorsed by the poet W.B. Yeats, who headed up the Currency Commission for the Free State in the 1920s, so the pound note is bordered in beautiful Celtic designs.

The face on the currency, as older readers will know, is that of Hazel Lavery, dressed as an Irish 'colleen'. (On the larger denominations, she also has a harp.) Hazel, an Irish-American beauty, was married to the Belfast-born painter Sir John Lavery, and was herself a talented painter and art teacher. She was Winston Churchill's painting tutor, while she was advancing the cause of Ireland among the political classes at Westminster. She fell in love with Michael Collins, and afterwards, it transpired, Kevin O'Higgins fell in love with Hazel. So far as we know these amours were never consummated, but the *grá* was there.



She died in 1935 at the age of 55 from a heart condition, myocarditis, her husband Sir John by her side. According to Sinead McCoole's fine biography, *Hazel*, Sir John consulted 18 doctors in an effort to save her.

So this Irish pound note is full of history, of narrative and of cultural background, and when I look at it, I think not of 'filthy lucre', but of the national and biographical narrative behind it all.

And I think how vapid and meaningless, by contrast, are the designs on the Euro notes. Wouldn't it be an uplifting contribution to everyday transactions if the European Central Bank would add some culture to the currency – the sculpture of Michaelangelo, the paintings of El Greco, the brooding face of Beethoven? Then it would be rather more than just money.

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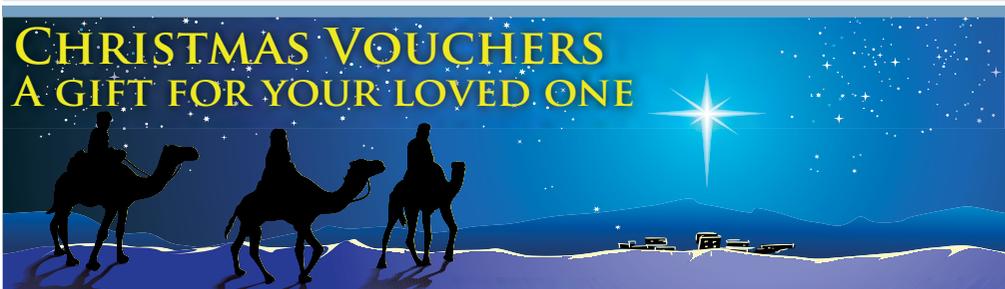
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Bishops' conference goes green

Susan Gately

Staff at the headquarters of the Church in Ireland are taking up the Pope's challenge to go green looking about how they can practically take on board the Pope's ecological letter *Laudato Si'* on the care of creation.

Around 20 members of the hierarchy's secretariat attended a training day hosted by representatives from Trócaire and prominent people working in the fields of theology, ecology and climate change.

The group has been working to produce a work plan for implementing *Laudato Si'* across the country.

Dr Lorna Gold from Trócaire told *The Irish Catholic* that the day was a mix of reflection and re-connection with nature, and practical sessions "on what each of us can do to change our behaviour".

Sustainable

"A lot of ideas were generated which will have to be sifted through now to see how they can be implemented," she said. One of these was to ensure that the World Meeting of Families is "as sustainable as possible" and to "work with the Global Catholic Climate Movement, who have been working to make sure Papal visits are as eco-friendly as possible".

Other considerations included ensuring that the workings of the headquarters of the bishops' conference, the Columba Centre in Maynooth, is more sustainable.

Last week Trócaire launched a new report on financial investments in the light of climate change and *Laudato Si'*.

Honouring their patron



Altar servers celebrate in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh on November 26, the feastday of St John Berchmans, the patron saint of altar servers.

Church urged to take the lead on refugees

Greg Daly

Government failures to settle refugees are not surprising, but a new scheme gives the Church the opportunity to step up and help, a leading priest has said.

"It's not surprising the system they've had in place is failing because it lacked a vision underpinning it about what integration is," Fr Alan Hilliard told *The Irish Catholic*, commenting on reports that the Government is considering suspending its settlement programme for refugees from the Middle East.

Although the Government undertook in 2015 to accept 4,000 asylum seekers currently housed in camps in Greece, Italy and Lebanon, only about 1,400 people have so far arrived in Ireland, with the State growing increasingly concerned about its capacity to accommodate refugees.

Although Irish bishops, priests and parishes have repeatedly in recent years offered to help, and have been unable to do so, this situation has changed in recent

months, Fr Hilliard said.

"Up until recently there was only one means of settling asylum seekers and refugees, and that was through Government initiatives, but the Government has put up a new scheme whereby communities can sponsor asylum seekers and refugees," he said.

Sponsorship

In September, he explained, the Government announced at the Annual Concordia Summit in New York that Ireland was adopting a community sponsorship programme for refugees. Community sponsorship is a model of refugee

development pioneered in Canada in the late 1970s, enabling local communities to work together to help resettle refugees.

"I'm not surprised that the Government is sort of washing its hands of it saying they haven't got capacity, but really the method they had in place for resettling asylum seekers and refugees leaves a lot to be desired - I think the community could do a lot more," Fr Alan Hilliard said, adding that the community sponsorship programme "gives an opportunity, if people are serious about welcoming the stranger, to go in a different direction".

Noting that other countries have successfully used communities to sponsor the resettlement of refugees, Fr Hilliard said: "The largest sponsor of resettlement of refugees in the United States is the American Catholic bishops' conference, but we've never had that opportunity before this year. The question is now can community-based agencies like the Church respond to that?"

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Repealing the Eighth would be a 'blank cheque'

Voting to repeal Ireland's constitutional protections for mothers and unborn children would be "a leap into the dark" like "signing a blank cheque", solicitor Alan Daveron told delegates at the RENUA Ireland AGM.

Speaking at the Tullamore Court Hotel, Mr Daveron asked whether voters could trust a government which had defied the popular will to introduce water charges, for example.

"No-one knows what the government really plans to do," he said, criticising the lack

of balanced public debate on the subject, and maintaining that the right to life is a human rights issue that transcends religious belief.

"I do not believe we have the right to tell a child they do not have the right to be born," he said.

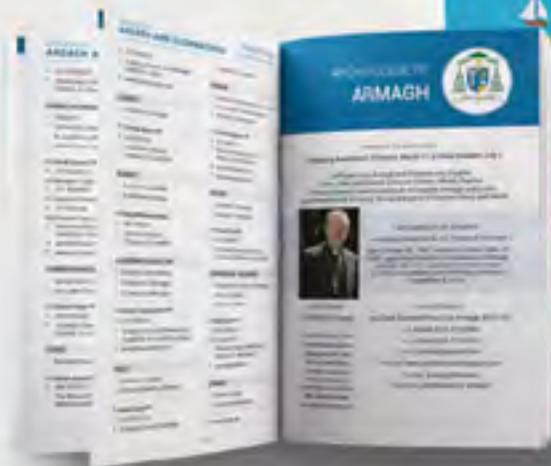
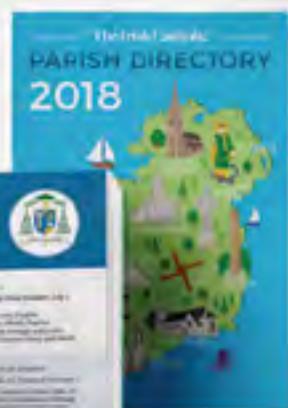
The AGM also saw RENUA Ireland leader John Leahy brand Amnesty International a "disgrace" and "knowing traitors to the cause of human rights" over their support for legal abortion.

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Will you give a child like Suborna a miracle gift this Christmas?

In a desperate attempt to see better, eight-year-old Suborna from Bangladesh learned to cup her hand around her eye. It might've helped her focus for a moment – but sadly, it wasn't going to stop her eyesight deteriorating, day by day.

Suborna was born with a cataract in her eye, so all her life she'd struggled to see the world around her. As she grew older, this condition chipped away at her confidence and independence. It became impossible for her to play games with other children and she became more and more reluctant to leave the safety of her home.

Her parents worried endlessly about her future

At school, Suborna couldn't see the black board from any seat in the classroom, often she preferred to sit at the back. Luckily Suborna's cousins attended the same school and often they would try and share their notes with her. However, no amount of squinting at the blackboard – or using her cousins' notes – could help her keep up with her work at school. To her frustration, Suborna was held back in a class of much younger pupils. And though you'd often find her gazing at a book and pretending to read, this was just wishful thinking. She couldn't see well enough to make out the words.

Of course, it wasn't only Suborna who was affected. Her parents worried endlessly about her future, fearing that she'd get bullied, become isolated and that she'd miss out on her education and her one chance for a better life.

Suborna and her family desperately needed a miracle – and thanks to donations from Sightsavers supporters,

Suborna used to cup her hand around her eye in an attempt to focus her eyesight



All Photos: © Sightsavers/Julia Gunther



Suborna's Grandmother looks on as Dr Salam examines Suborna's eyes

they received one. Suborna's sight was restored by a cataract operation carried out at Mymensingh Eye Hospital, where our incredible team of doctors and nurses treat hundreds of children every year. The surgery took just 20 minutes and was a resounding success – afterwards she exclaimed: "I can see more clearly – I am feeling happy!"

Cataract is the leading cause of childhood blindness in Bangladesh where eye care services are almost non-

existent. At Mymensingh Eye Hospital there are only two paediatric surgeons who, between them, can each perform up to ten child cataract surgeries in a day. Operating on the eye is delicate work, which requires a great deal of concentration. For these two surgeons, therefore, the pressure is intense and the hours long. However, Dr Abdul Salam, the surgeon who operated on Suborna, believes it's worth it to see the life-changing results of the simple cata-

ract surgery. Indeed, most of his patients see more clearly after just one day and recover at least 80% of their sight within a month.

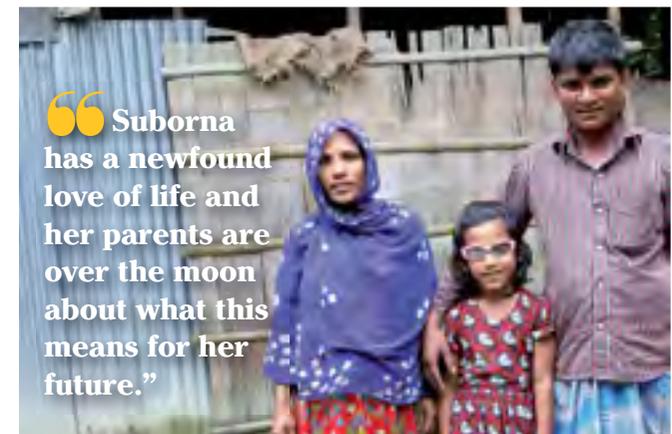
“I am confident that Suborna will do better at school now – I will do anything to make sure she gets an education.”

For Suborna, thanks to Dr Salam and his team of miracle workers, her life has completely changed. She is now much more confident and has made lots of new friends. She especially enjoys playing 'kut-kut,' a game similar to hopscotch, with them. Suborna has a newfound love of life and her parents are over the moon about what this means for her future. Her father told Sightsavers: "I am confident that Suborna will do better at school now – I will do anything to make sure she gets an education."

Incredible transformations like these are only possible with the help of our wonderful supporters. As Dr Salem laments, "there are so many children who need help and we need lots more trained doctors." Without Dr Salam and his team, there would be no one to perform cataract operations in Mymensingh, and with over 13,000 children in Bangladesh still going blind from cataract, your support is urgently needed to fund this team of miracle workers.

Over the last four years, we've made 811,845 miracles such as this one happen as part of our Million Miracles campaign. Reaching a Million Miracles would mean so much. It would mean that over 150,000 people will be able to see again – that's equivalent to the entire population of County Wexford!

We're so close to achieving our target of A Million Miracles by the end of 2017 but we need your help – **will you make a miracle happen for another child like Suborna?**



“Suborna has a newfound love of life and her parents are over the moon about what this means for her future.”



Suborna, wearing protective sunglasses, plays with other children after her successful cataract operation.

About Sightsavers

Our vision

Sightsavers' vision is of a world where no one is blind from avoidable causes and where visually impaired people participate equally in society.

Our mission

We are an international organisation working with partners in developing countries to eliminate avoidable blindness and promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Every year, Sightsavers works with partners to carry out millions of eye examinations, and refer people for treatment to prevent blindness and save sight.

Suborna now has her sight and a chance of a better future. Make A Miracle happen this Christmas please give a gift today.

Your gift of €36.00 to Sightsavers would be enough to provide a sight-saving cataract operation. Donate at www.sightsavers.ie or call 01 6637666

Sightsavers

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Losing our identity in the name of respectability



Liberal Churches lose both members and integrity, writes **David Quinn**

The Lutheran Church of Sweden is urging its clergy to use gender-neutral language when referring to God and avoid words like 'Lord' and 'he' and 'father'. What Martin Luther, after whom the Lutheran Churches are obviously named, would think should be obvious. He would hate it and denounce it, but that's because Luther took the Bible seriously and many of his modern successors do not.

Lutheranism is based chiefly in Germany and the Nordic countries. Germany is split roughly 50-50 between Catholicism and Lutheranism. It is interesting to compare their respective fortunes because the Lutheran mainstream has adopted every single reform the modern world insists upon and Catholicism has not.

To put it another way, Lutheranism has done everything possible to make itself more 'relevant' to the modern world, while Catholicism has more or less stuck to its guns, and yet the fortunes of Lutheranism have not revived at all. On the contrary. While it may be true that Catholicism in Germany is in decline, Lutheranism in Germany is declining at least as fast, despite all its reforms.

Recommendation

Lutheranism began with a reformation, that is to the say, the Reformation. It was a reformation based on Luther's interpretation of the Bible. For the last few decades another reformation has been underway, this time a reformation based on leaving behind the Bible. How else do we explain the

Nuns pray during the canonisation of Elizabeth Hesselblad, a Lutheran convert, now Sweden's second saint in 625 years.



call to refer to God using gender-neutral language?

While it may be true that God has no gender as such because he has no body, at the same time he is referred to continuously in the Bible as male. Again and again he is called 'Lord' and Jesus referred to him as 'Abba', meaning 'father'. Are we to second guess Jesus? Apparently so. Do some Christians believe they know better than Jesus? Apparently so.

Lutheran pastors do not have to follow the recommendation, of course. But many will and probably already have. In fact, some have doubtless been already doing so for years.

“Do some Christians believe they know better than Jesus? Apparently so”

As it is, the head of the Lutheran Church in Sweden is a woman. Women's ordination has been permitted for years. It is possible to find Lutheran bishops who approve of abortion under certain circumstances, never mind contraception. Some Lutheran churches also conduct same-sex marriage ceremonies. It is very hard to think of a single liberal reform they have not adopted.

The point of all this isn't to argue against the substance of these reforms (not here anyway) so much as to demonstrate that the reforms in no way, shape or form make the Churches that go down this road an iota more 'relevant' to the general population or draw in new

members in substantial numbers. Quite the reverse in fact, because they increase the rate of decline.

This should be noted carefully by those Catholics – Fr Tony Flannery is one such – who urge us to embark on a similar reform programme. It should also be noted by all those journalists and commentators who urge the same.

The Catholic Church is continually being told that it must introduce a plethora of liberal reforms if it is to have any hope of stemming the haemorrhaging of members. It must permit women priests. It must permit married priests. It must permit Catholics to use contraception. It must soften its position on abortion, which the Catholic magazine *The Tablet* urged in Britain recently to worryingly little backlash. It must soften its position on divorce and remarriage. And so on.

Again, I am not attempting here to argue for or against these various reforms. I am simply arguing what is unarguable; namely that these reforms have never revived the fortunes of any Church and have instead accelerated their decline.

The reason is because they alienate their orthodox members and drive them to more conservative churches and they do not draw in alienated liberals because for the most part these alienated liberals aren't staying away from church for this or that teaching, they simply don't believe, period. They might be happy to call themselves 'spiritual not religious' and they might have a vague belief in a god of some kind, but they do not believe strongly enough to have any intention of becoming a member of any church.

faithful to the Bible, faithful to the historic tenets of Christianity – go elsewhere.

What is more, the liberal Churches lose their integrity along with their members, and also lose all ability to be truly counter-cultural and prophetic.

Social reforms

Many of the social reforms of the last 50 years are destroying our societies over the long term. Birth rates in the West are well below replacement rate. Millions of unborn children are being aborted annually and the commitments that buttress the family are being undermined in the name of personal freedom. A growing number of societies are killing their old and infirm.

In the midst of this, the Christian Churches have to be true to themselves even if it comes at the cost of endless attacks from our cultural elites, and a loss of 'respectability' and

marginalisation.

For centuries the Church lived alongside the warrior cultures of Europe and found itself making many compromises that undermined its moral witness over the long term.

Today it finds itself alongside a culture that exalts sexual 'liberation', and personal freedom more generally, and it is tempted to compromise again. Some Churches have already compromised completely at the price of their integrity, their membership and their ability to offer a proper counter-witness to a society that very badly needs it. That is far too high a price to pay for a pat on the hand from our rulers and a tiny bit more 'respectability'.

i David Quinn's new book is *How we Killed God* (and other tales of modern Ireland) from Currach Press.

Cork Talk

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(and other tales of
modern Ireland)



David Quinn

columnist and head of the Iona Institute

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'Red Wednesday' shows we haven't forgotten the suffering Church



Britain's Houses of Parliament in London were bathed in red light for Red Wednesday.



We have a duty to stand in solidarity with persecuted believers, writes **Dr Michael Kinsella**

As 2017 comes to a close, we can reflect upon a year in which the Church marked both the 70th anniversary of the founding of Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) by Fr Werenfried van Straaten and the 100th anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima. Fr Werenfried dedicated the work and mission of ACN to the patronage of Our Lady of Fatima – precisely because her prophetic revelations told of a Church that would suffer greatly in the years ahead: and so it has come to pass.

Last Wednesday, ACN Ireland held its first Red Wednesday event. Across the country, parishes wore red and lit their churches red as a public witness of solidarity with the suffering and persecuted Church.

The Irish faithful, historically and currently, are acquainted with Christian persecution – be it explicit or devious – where the wages of sin are all too apparent in our society and where hostility to Christian teaching, culture and even identity has been normalised, if not encouraged, by many in government. Indeed, in Ireland at present, there is something of a 'cultural cleansing' of Catholicism from the country's public, political and cultural life.

Enemies

Conscious of this, Red Wednesday is ultimately a call to compassion for our fellow Christians, forgiveness of our enemies and the vital importance of prayers for both: time and again we find that those who have suffered most grievously, who have most cause to feel hurt,

are the first to forgive – and forgive from the heart. In so doing, the power of the persecuted witness to forgiveness lies in the consequent Divine gifts of peace, hope and joy in often the most desolate and difficult of circumstances – and with an awareness among the faithful that one of Christianity's greatest saints, St Paul, was once one of its greatest persecutors.

The Church thrives when it can be a community of believers peaceably working together for the Kingdom of God, which is why we must work hard to ensure that those Christians who are isolated and alone through imprisonment, torture, harassment or who live under suppression know that they are still united with us in prayer.

“In charity, we can respectfully disagree with tenets and dogmas”

In the years to come, Red Wednesday will better inform the faithful of the often horrific political and social realities under which the hundreds of millions of Christians live and die and, as a consequence, provide a strong moral consensus and impetus for our government to both acknowledge and alleviate the plight of persecuted Christians.

Sr Annie Demerjian SJM recently visited Ireland and provided her own testimony to audiences both North and South about the sufferings of Christians in Aleppo, Syria.

She quoted I Corinthians 12:26, when she said: “We are all one body – when one member suffers, we all suffer. When one member is rescued and raised, we all rejoice. Persecuted Christians and Christians in the West are not two separate entities, but rather we are the one body! The persecuted Church needs its fellow Christians to support them, yes, but to also pray for them most fervently.

“Our brothers and sisters are proud of their Christian witness and ask not necessarily that their cross be taken away but that they have help in carrying it.”

The degree of religious freedom is an ethical measure of the respect for freedom of conscience and expression in a society. Our search for the transcendent, for meaning beyond the commercial and ideological, is to a great degree contingent on constitutional protection and cultural acceptance of those whose search is expressed through religion.

In charity, we can respectfully disagree with tenets and dogmas and, in prudence, we may provide limits to religious expressions that could undermine a universal human right – but if the borders of religious expression are defined by intimidation, violence or persecution it is a catastrophe for humanity and a murder of the principles we seek to defend.

In all, we must ensure that, whatever our differences, our common humanity is the frame of reference for common resolution to our con-

flicts.

During Red Wednesday we remember, in the words of Benedict XVI, that when we lose sight of God, we lose sight of our humanity:

We can see from recent world events and the mobilisation of anti-life ideologies worldwide that Christian persecution can be an ideological guise but, in all cases, it seeks to extinguish the beauty of the Christian witness and its unsurpassable affirmation of the dignity of human life.

“Christian persecution... seeks to extinguish the beauty of the Christian witness”

When you next attend Mass, remember the Christian lives martyred and those who continue to confess their Christian faith even amid the most brutal oppression and the souls affirmed and saved because of their brave witness. Remember that there are generations of Christians who have never escaped the catacombs, who are still thrown to the lions in the arena.

On Red Wednesday, the Irish faithful publicly affirmed their solidarity with persecuted Christians – so that though our brothers and sisters may be persecuted, they will not be forgotten.

i Dr Michael Kinsella is Director of Public Affairs and Religious Freedom with Aid to the Church in Need (Ireland).

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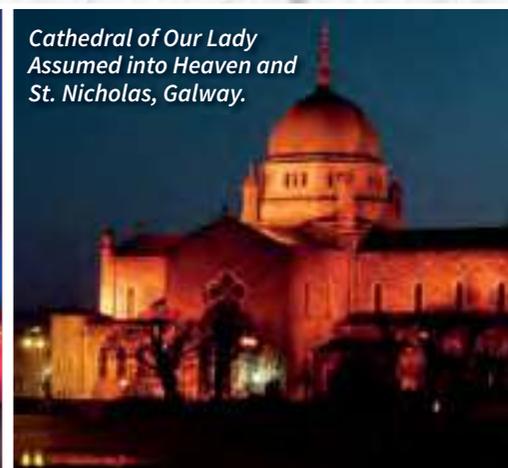
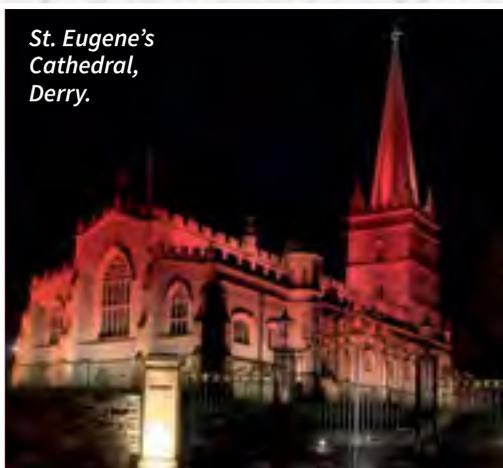
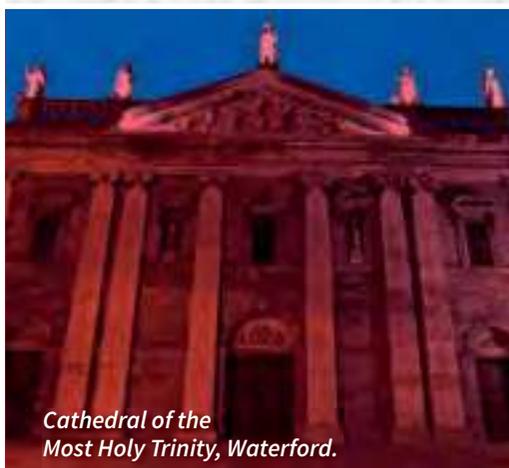
IRELAND'S FIRST

RED WEDNESDAY

took place on 22 November 2017 when Cathedrals and churches throughout Ireland were lit up in Red.

(as were Cathedrals and Churches in Iraq, Malta, the Philippines and the UK.)

On that date, countless numbers of people wore an item of Red clothing and prayed for all those who are suffering for their Faith in Christ.



On Wednesday 22 November 2017, by way of publicly expressing support and solidarity with persecuted Christians the world over.

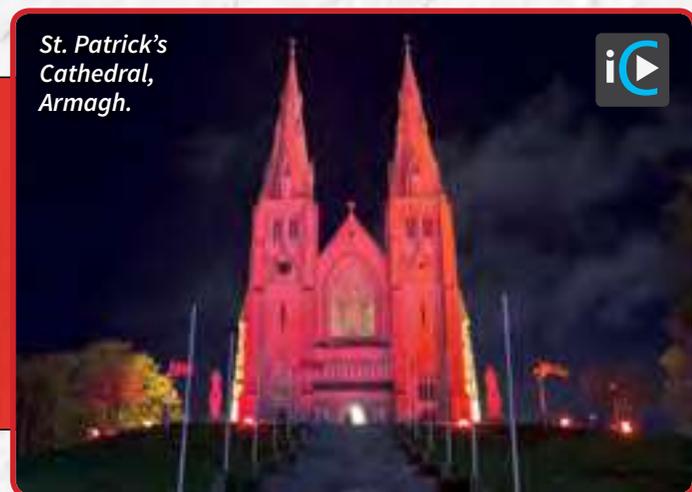
We wore Red, We lit Red & We prayed.

On **Wednesday 21 November 2018** join us for Ireland's second RedWednesday. In the meantime please pray for all those who are being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel.

SEE AND SHARE

Log on to our website to view Archbishop Eamon Martin at the Vigil of Prayer for #RedWednesday in Armagh Cathedral.

www.acnireland.org



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Owen Smith, Mary McGrath and Clay Elmore at the lecture in University Church Dublin. Photos: John McElroy



Claire Brown, Grace Allison and Lisa Caulfield.



Raphaelle Glover, Kristia Hoffman and Brigit Hirsch.



Ryan Hergenrother, Brian Quigley, Brittany Margritz, Lucas Masin-Moyer and Collen Scott.

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Breathing fresh life into Newman's vision of faith and reason in dialogue

Staff reporter

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has said that one of his proudest achievements in leading the Church in Dublin is the launch of a new centre aimed at creating space for dialogue between faith and reason.

The Notre Dame Newman Centre for Faith and Reason has marked an important milestone in Dublin with the celebration of the first anniversary of the project.

Based at University Church on St Stephen's Green, the centre is an initiative of the US University of Notre Dame in Indiana in partnership with the Archdiocese of Dublin.

Dialogue

Speaking at Mass at the church last Thursday evening to mark the US holiday Thanksgiving, Dr Martin said: "I thank Notre Dame University for responding to my appeal to try and give realisation to the dream of Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman that this place would be a place of dialogue between faith and life in contemporary Ireland."

Dr Martin told Massgoers that "if you want to find a true relic of Newman this is it. This is something that he



Amy English and Julia Dunbar at the lecture in University Church.

has left us.

"It's one of the projects of which, as Archbishop of Dublin, I'm most proud," he said.

Archbishop Martin pointed out that "faith is not an abstract ideology, it's not an imposition".

He said that faith is "not something out of date, it's a singular path for opening ourselves to the generosity and the mercy of our God and giving an example of where we find fulfilment in our lives

and to show how Faith can enrich society".

Amongst events to mark the first anniversary of the centre included a lecture of Limerick-born Notre Dame Prof. Cyril O'Regan on Newman's vision for the dialogue between faith and reason.

The centre also hosted an inaugural performance of renowned composer Patrick Cassidy's *The Mass* which was performed to a packed church on Tuesday evening.



Grace Garvey, Jenna Frantik, Austin Proehl, Caroline Colella and Katelin Bowens at the Mass to celebrate Thanksgiving.



Zach Yager, Samantha Gambardella and Beckett Haglund at the lecture.



Deacon Dermot McCarthy (left), Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (second left), Fr Bill Dailey CSC, Director of the Newman Centre, and Fr John Jenkins, CSC, President of Newman Dame.



Isabel Cabezas, Jonathan Tiernan and Kelly Koerwer at the lecture.



Fr Bill Lies CSC, Helen Orrock, Callun Jeacle, Fr Turlough Baxter and Frank O'Donnell.



Prof. Cyril O'Regan giving the lecture in University Church.



Erin Embrey, Jamie Campbell, Maggie Tallmadge, Kara Shannon and Grace Garvey at the lecture.

Your legacy could provide the future they deserve...



Photo: Jennifer Neale, Malawi, 2016

Manuel Steven, Peter James and Chifindo Kagons pose for a photo in their village of Jambawe in Lilongwe, Malawi, which is supported by Concern's Livelihoods programme.

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Out&About

545 teenagers honoured at Tuam JP II award ceremony



MAYO: Pupils from Rice College, Westport who received Pope John Paul II awards from Archbishop Michael Neary during a ceremony at Knock Shrine.



MAYO: Students from St Brigid's, Tuam with their Pope John Paul II awards.



MAYO: Students from St Colman's College, Claremorris were among those presented with awards by Archbishop Neary.



MAYO: Some of the pupils from St Gerald's, Castlebar with Archbishop Neary and officials at Knock Shrine.



KERRY: Amy O'Sullivan (left), Olivia Nix, and Natasha Tobin attended a day for transition year students from Presentation Secondary school Tralee, which was organised by Our Lady and St Brendan's Parish, St John's Parish and Spa/Fenit Parish. Photo: John Cleary

Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



▲ **CORK:** Young people from the Diocese of Cloyne who were honoured for their contribution to the lives of their local parish through the Pope John Paul II awards.

◀ **CORK:** Student recipients of the Pope John Paul II awards from Kinsale Community School with their teacher Mr Brian Penthony.



KERRY: James Sheehan (left), Darrah Broderick and Dylan Moriarty attended a day for Transition Year students from CBS The Green Secondary school at Ballyroe Heights Hotel, organised by Our Lady and St Brendan's parish, St John's parish and Spa/Fenit parish. Photo: John Cleary

WICKLOW: Pictured at an ecumenical service of remembrance in St Kevin's Church Glencree, Co. Wicklow are Fr Bernard Kennedy PP St Mary's Enniskerry, Dr Sigurd Rink, military bishop, Evangelical Church in German, Pastor Stephan Arras, Dublin Lutheran Church and Revd Kenneth Newell, Presbyterian Church, Belfast. The service was organised by the Dublin Lutheran Church in conjunction with a civil wreath laying ceremony at the adjacent German Military Cemetery.

IN SHORT

Archbishop pays tribute to young people's generosity of spirit

Thursday November 16 saw more than 500 teenagers gather at Our Lady's Basilica at Knock Shrine where they were recognised for their voluntary contribution to their local parish communities (see page 14).

With over 1,200 people in attendance, Archbishop Michael Neary welcomed the young people to the event, along with their families, friends, school teachers, principals, chaplains, priests and many representatives of the

various parish and diocesan bodies.

Speaking to the young people receiving their Award, Archbishop Neary said: "This is a wonderful celebration filled with music, dance, reflection and words of affirmation. It is recognition of your dignity, the gifts that you have, the way in which you used them and is a pointer to your generosity of spirit".

All 545 teenagers aged between 16-18 years of age, received their medal and certificate in recognition of work carried out by them in their school, parish and wider communities over the last year.

Cloyne youth embrace JP II challenge

In all, 124 young people from across the diocese received the award. Amongst the schools represented were St Mary's Secondary School Mallow, the Patrician Academy Mallow, Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal Blarney, St Colman's Community College Middleton, St Aloysius College Carrigtwohill, Presentation Secondary School Mitchelstown, St Mary's Secondary School Charleville, Colaiste Fionnchua Mitchelstown, Kinsale Community School, Christian Brothers College, Cork and Sacred Heart School, Clonakilty.

ANTRIM

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

ARMAGH

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

Adoration chapel, Edwards Street, Lurgan, adoration on week days from 9am-9pm.

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

Mondays at the Monastery: Presentation House, Glashule Road

Monday December 4 at 7.30pm. Dr Aoife McGrath - Celebrating Christ in the Family as we look forward to The World Meeting of Families

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.

The Dublin 15 Faith and Justice Group welcomes new members and currently meet on the first Friday of the month in Hartstown Church. Contact Fr 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 (John 10:10) book club for young adults meets every Thursday from 7-8:30pm in St Paul's Church, Arran Quay (Smithfield) to meditate, share and discuss life & faith. Refreshments provided. www.facebook.com/lifetothe-full-bookclub

FERMANAGH

A Mass to St Peregrine for all the sick is prayed each Wednesday evening in St Patrick's Church, Derrygonnelly at 7.30pm. www.churchservices.tv/derrygonnelly

KERRY

The Alliance of Two Hearts First Saturday vigil of adoration and reparation in Caherciveen parish church at 3pm: Divine Mercy chaplet, adoration, rosaries. Mass at 7.30pm.

KILDARE

A centring/contemplative prayer group meets in the Old Baptistery of St Michael's parish church in Athy every Thursday at 8pm. For more info ring Dolores at 086-3474679

LIMERICK

Eucharistic Adoration takes place each Friday in Raheen church following 10am Mass until 10pm, Crecora on Thursdays, following morning Mass until 12noon and from 6-10pm, and in Mungret Church on Wednesdays, from 10am to 12noon.

LOUTH

Young adults: spend an hour of quiet and peace with others, in a prayerful, candlelight setting, with Taizé music. Friday December 1, from 8.30pm to 9.30pm, followed by a cuppa. 'Bethany', 34 Point Road Dundalk, Co. Louth.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass in the Old Rite (Tridentine) will take place on Sunday December 10th, in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at Knock Shrine at 5.30pm.

ROSCOMMON

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St Croan's Church, Ballymoe, every Monday 10-11am and Thursday 8-10pm. Also at St Bride's Church, Ballintubber, every Wednesday 7.30-8.30pm.

SLIGO

Latin Mass in Carraroe on the last Sunday of each month at 3pm.

WATERFORD

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

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, 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.

Catholics express joy amidst Pontiff's politically-charged visit

Chai Brady

in Naypyidaw, Myanmar



Thousands of the faithful broke the silence of the ghost town that is Myanmar's capital city to welcome Pope Francis on the second day of his historic visit to the embattled nation.

Colours and music filled the streets all the way to Naypyidaw airport, with exuberant Christians donning their t-shirts with the logo of Francis' visit, which depicts a heart drawn in Myanmar's colours, containing a map of the country and a picture of the Pope with a dove.

People came from miles away to welcome the Pope with Vatican flags and signs reading: "We love you Papa Francis."

The streets leading up to the airport are over a mile long, and they were filled with devout Catholics happily waiting for the Pontiff in temperatures over a sweltering 30 degrees heat.

"We are so happy he has come to us, right now we need his wisdom to guide our country," said Ms Naing, who travelled from Mandalay, over 300km away, and wears traditional Myanmar garb which comes in many colours, hers being red, white and black.

Forced out

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.

There has been much speculation about whether the Pontiff would use the politically-charged term 'Rohingya', which is a group of mainly Muslim people that have been forced out of their country in their hundreds of thousands through a brutal military campaign.

Over 600,000 of the Rohingya people, which the Pope has previously described as his "brothers and sisters" have fled to Bangladesh, with many staying in squalid conditions in refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar, close to the border between the two countries.

Last week Myanmar State Counsellor and de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bangladesh officials

which will put into motion efforts to help the displaced people return to Myanmar. However, the particulars of the agreement still have to be resolved, such as when the repatriation will begin.

The Pope called for respect for all religious groups and ethnicities in his address in the International Conference Centre in Naypyidaw, which was lavishly decorated with red carpets and flowers. The motto of his visit is 'Love & Peace', which made his mention of the Panglong Peace Conference and the establishment of the United Nations after two World Wars all the more relevant.

“ Racism and discrimination is still an issue in Myanmar, with Muslims often being described as ‘Kala’ ”

Although he did not mention the Rohingya people specifically, something senior Myanmar prelate Cardinal Charles Maung Bo had warned against before his visit, as recognising the group in any way could spur radical Buddhist movements in the country to violence, he did call for respect for all ethnic groups.

The Pope said: "The future of Myanmar must be peace, a peace based on respect for the dignity and rights of each member of society, and respect for each ethnic group and its identity, respect for the rule of law and respect for a democratic order that enables each individual and every group – none excluded – to offer its legitimate contribution to the common good."

Racism and discrimination is still an issue in Myanmar, with Muslims often being described as 'Kala', a derogatory term that rose to prominence after the military's *coup d'état* in 1962.

The Pontiff said that religion "need not be a source of division and distrust, but rather a force for unity and forgiveness, tolerance and wise nation building".



Pope Francis meets Aung San Suu Kyi, state counselor and foreign minister of Myanmar, at the presidential palace in Naypyitaw.

He added that religion can be a force for peace, especially when religious leaders work together.

Address

"Your Holiness, the gifts of compassion and encouragement that you bring to us will

be treasured," said Aung San Suu Kyi during her address at the conference.

"We are proud and happy that you have come to our country a mere six months after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Myanmar.

She added that she began her education in a St Francis Convent in Rangoon, and joked that "it makes me fancy that I'm entitled to special blessings from Your Holiness".

"But all the blessings you confer will be shared by all of us that we may be able

to spread goodwill and joy throughout our land."

Chai Brady is with the Pope in Myanmar. Follow his updates on Twitter: @ChaiBradyIC



Children welcome Pope Francis as he arrives at Yangon International Airport in Yangon, Myanmar.



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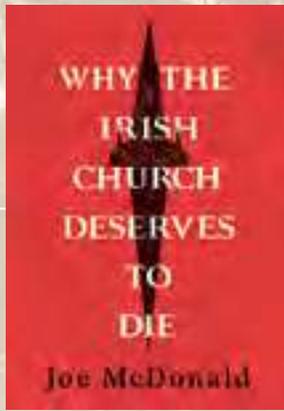


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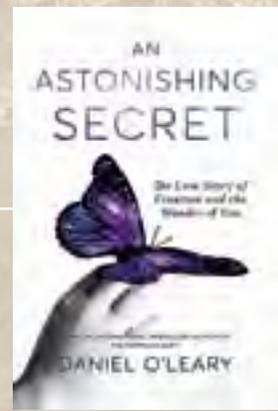
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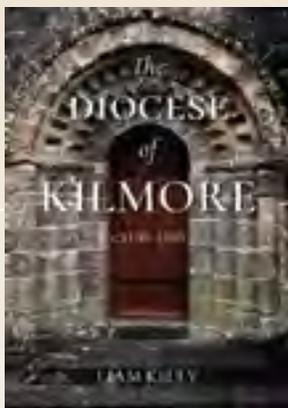
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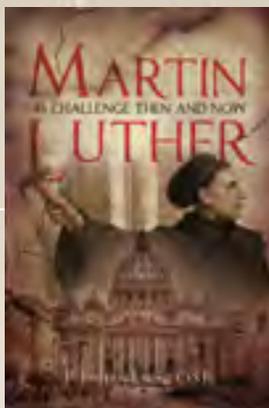
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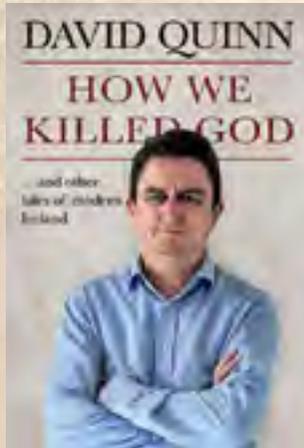
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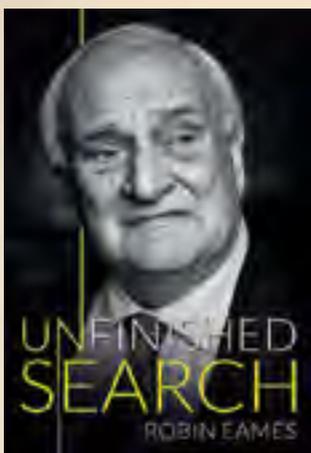
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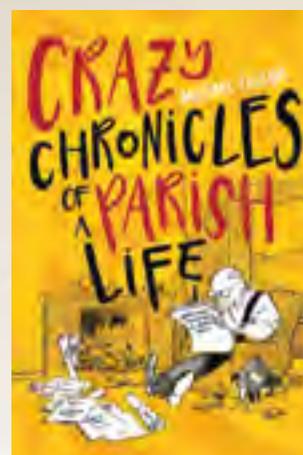
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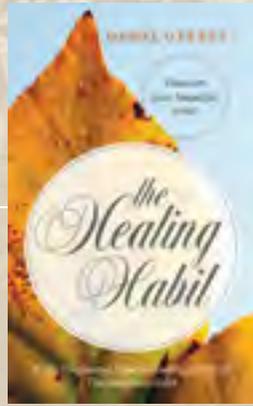


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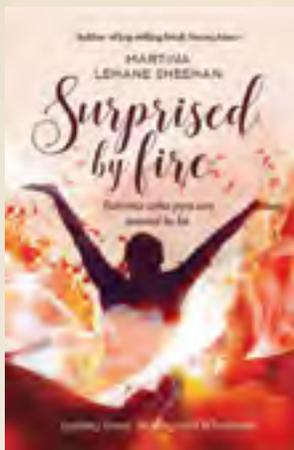
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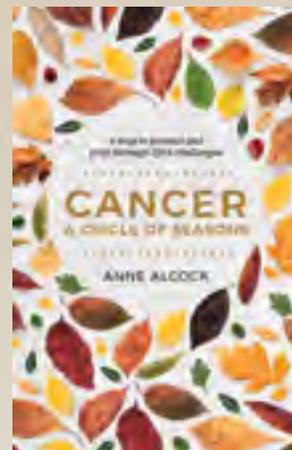
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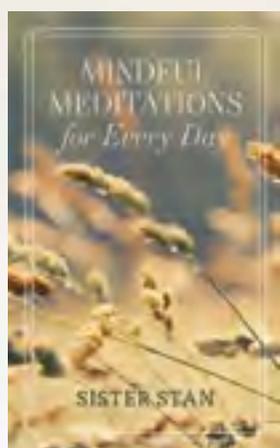
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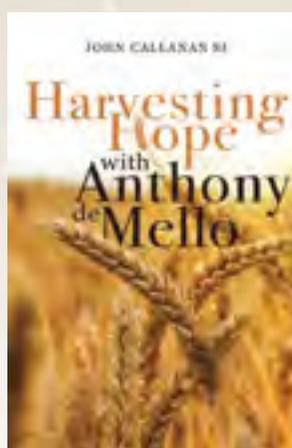
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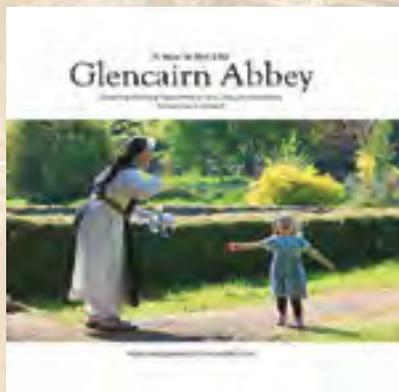
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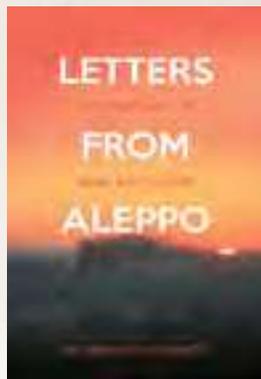
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World Report

Egypt's Christians pledge support as mosque death toll rises to more than 300

Egypt's Coptic Christians – often the target of Islamist violence in the country – have pledged solidarity and support after a deadly terror attack on a mosque in Sinai which left at least 305 worshippers dead.

Pope Tawadros II, along with all members of the Coptic Church, extended their condolences to the victims' families, a statement by the Church read, adding that it hopes for a speedy recovery of the injured.

Armed militants stormed the Sufi al-Rawda mosque in North Sinai's al-Arish during Friday prayers detonating explosives and shooting worshippers.

Solidarity

The Coptic Pope announced that bells would ring out at Christian churches all over the country to express solidarity. While no group has claimed



An image taken with a mobile phone shows a victim being taken care of in a hospital in Ismailia, Egypt, after a bomb attack at Al-Rawdah Mosque in Bir al-Abd. Photo: CNS

responsibility for the deadly attack, Egyptian authorities say they believe members of

so-called Islamic State were responsible. Sufi Muslims have fre-

quently been targeted by Islamic extremists who consider the Sufis to be heretics.

Cardinal says Vatican II continues to shape Church life

The Second Vatican Council continues to have an enduring impact on the Church and on the papacy of Pope Francis, according to the Vatican's top diplomat, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

That gathering of bishops from around the world presented a new paradigm of a "world Church – a Church with a global dimension", said the cardinal, who is the Vatican's Secretary of State.

During a visit to the United States that included celebrating a Mass in Baltimore to mark the centenary of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Parolin stopped in Washington to deliver an address at The Catholic University of America.

He said that although Vatican II occurred more than 50 years ago (1962-65), "it certainly retains for the Church a prophetic character".

Cardinal Parolin said the main consequences of the council included the introduction of local languages in the liturgy.

Pope urges bishops to exercise authority as judges in annulments

A diocesan bishop is the sole judge in the streamlined process for handling marriage annulments, Pope Francis has said.

The simplified process "is not an option that the diocesan bishop can choose, but rather an obligation that derives from his consecration and from the mission received", making the bishop the sole and exclusive authority in charge throughout the three phases of the briefer process, the Pope said.

The Pope made his remarks during an audience on November 25 with canon lawyers, priests and pastoral workers attending a course sponsored by the Roman Rota, a Vatican tribunal that mainly deals with marriage annulment cases.

Peace

The Pope encouraged them to be close to those who are suffering and who expect help "to restore peace to their consciences and God's will on readmission to the Eucharist".

The new process "is an expression of the Church that is able to welcome and care for those who are wounded in various ways by life and, at the same time, it is an appeal for the defence of the sacredness of the marriage bond", he said.

Pope Francis used the occasion to clarify and strongly emphasise how a bishop should not completely delegate the duty of deciding marriage cases to diocesan officials, especially in the streamlined process for handling cases of clear nullity that were established with new norms that took effect at the end of 2015.

He pointed out that the clear role of the diocesan bishop as sole judge in the briefer process was meant to help apply the new laws and increasingly recover an appropriate practice of synodality.

Indian Catholics sorry that papal invitation never came through

As Pope Francis continues his tour to Myanmar and Bangladesh, Catholics in neighbouring India regret missing a chance to meet him in their homeland, nostalgically recalling past papal visits, reported ucanews.com.

Catholic groups began discussing plans to host the pontiff earlier this year, after the Vatican confirmed a papal visit to the region.

According to the report, nobody then expected a papal itinerary would not include India, home to 19 million Catholics. Cardinal Baselios Cleemis Thottunkal, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, said the Indian Catholic Church was expecting to receive Pope Francis, "but it did not happen".

The lack of an official invitation for Pope Francis to visit India is widely seen as being the result of political considerations by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. The government is run by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

Zimbabwe's bishops urge new government to embrace diversity

All Zimbabweans should have a voice in the country's governance following Robert Mugabe's 37-year presidency, and the new government should embrace diversity, Zimbabwe's bishops said.

Congratulating President Emmerson Mnangagwa, whose November 24 inauguration followed a *de facto* coup, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference also thanked 93-year-old Mugabe for "the good work he did for Zimbabwe during the liberation struggle" against white rule and as president.

"We forgive him for any shortcomings during his long tenure of office," the bishops said in a pastoral statement.

Addressing all Zimbabweans, the bishops said: "We thank God and congratulate you as a nation for displaying a high standard of maturity in the recent tensions" in the southern African country.

"We thank you all for your peaceful conduct, tolerance and co-operation during the military-assisted transition," they said.

The bishops said the goals of economic recovery and electoral reforms must be achieved before the general elections, scheduled for 2018.

Mugabe's policies are widely blamed for Zimbabwe's economic decline over the last two decades. Millions of economic refugees have left the country, with most going to South Africa.

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Letter from Canada

End of an era for Church as Gregory Baum passes



Michael W. Higgins

The death of Gregory Baum on October 18 in Montreal marked the close of an era for the Catholic Church in Canada.

But not only is it Canadian Catholicism that both mourns and celebrates the life and work of an inspiring nonagenarian; it is the universal Church as well.

Baum was both a controversial figure in the Church and a necessary one. Various an ecumenical theologian, social scientist, political activist, and prolific author, Baum was first and foremost a model of intellectual and spiritual curiosity.

This is why he was controversial up to the end of his life at the age of 94.

“Many of his numerous admirers and coreligionists would tread lightly where Baum plowed away indifferent to public opinion”

In the same year of his death, he published his ‘non-autobiography’ in which he disclosed his homosexuality, the understanding he had with his wife of many years (Shirley was meticulously, tirelessly and uncompromisingly cared for during her protracted descent into the darkness of dementia by Baum), his querying with restless transparency and searing honesty why he should continue with his expensive dependency on dialysis to live thus preventing much restricted and limited hospital costs from being redirected to other needier cases, and openly wondering about the very goodness of God in an age of genocides. Not light stuff.

Admirers
Many of his numerous

The man in detail

Gregory Baum was one of Canada’s most influential and controversial theologians and a participant in the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

Baum was the author of the first draft of *Nostra aetate*, the Vatican II declaration that addressed the relations of the Catholic Church with non-Christian religions.

After being admitted to St Mary’s Hospital in Montreal on October 8, he told a friend: “I’m disappearing inside.” He decided not to continue the dialysis treatment that had kept him alive for the last four years.

As a young theologian, then-Fr Baum shot to prominence in the early days of Vatican II. He was mentored by Cardinal Augustin Bea, then-president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. An ally of St John XXIII, Cardinal Bea went looking for credible Catholic experts on Catholic-Jewish relations and found his man in Fr Baum.

Refugee

Gregory Baum was born to a Jewish mother and Protestant father in Berlin in 1923. At 17, in 1940, he came to Canada as a war refugee after a brief stay in England. Among the many Jewish refugees in camps in Quebec were young intellectuals who set up classes for the younger refugees, which Baum attended.

He became a Catholic during the war years and joined the Augustinian order in 1947. He was ordained a priest in 1954. He studied theology at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland and published *That They May Be One*, an influential book

admirers and coreligionists would tread lightly where Baum plowed away indifferent to public opinion. In fact, with a persistent and endearing naiveté he was always stunned to discover that he had critics, detractors, enemies.

He was not only a man of reflective theological hope, he was a perpetual optimist.

In a way he had to be. With his sister, he escaped death by



about Catholic ecumenism, in 1958.

His involvement in the Second Vatican Council began even before the world’s bishops met in Rome, as Vatican officials were planning the Church’s first truly global meeting.

“He became a Catholic during the war years and joined the Augustinian order in 1947. He was ordained a priest in 1954.

“I remember the first session I attended was in

November 1960,” Baum told *The Catholic Register*, Toronto, in 2012. “I was at the first session of the secretariat in Rome. We had the first meeting with Cardinal Bea and Msgr (later Cardinal) Johannes Willebrands, and this was all about ecumenism. At the end of the meeting Cardinal Bea said, “I just saw the Pope” and he said to us, that he wants the secretariat to prepare a statement to rethink the Church’s relationship to the Jews.”

St John XXIII’s concern about the six million Jews killed in the heart of Europe during World War II largely drove the Second Vatican Council. Baum had already

begun publishing in academic journals about Catholic-Jewish relations.

Baum attended all three sessions of the council as a peritus, or theological expert.

Theology

After the council, Baum taught theology and ethics at the University of St Michael’s College in the University of Toronto. He left the priesthood in 1974 and married. He studied sociology at the New School for Social Theory in New York and, in the 1980s, taught in the religious studies department at McGill University, Montreal.

Baum was a frequent target of conservative campaigners in English

Canada and the United States. Msgr Vincent Foy, a Canadian theologian, published frequent articles condemning Baum as a “Marxist...ex-priest.” Msgr Foy popularised a theory that Baum had excommunicated himself by marrying before his laicisation was formally recognised by the Vatican. Baum’s opinions on ordination of women and gay marriage drew frequent criticism.

“I live in a dream world in Quebec... I still belong to a wide network of progressive Catholics”

Baum’s critics were further incensed when he published his 2016 autobiography, *The Oil Has Not Run Dry*, in which he spoke of his first homosexual experience, at the age of 40.

The author of more than 20 books, Baum said he was never worried by the criticism.

“I live in a dream world in Quebec,” he told *The Catholic Register*. “I still belong to a wide network of progressive Catholics. I never meet any conservatives.”

He was founder and editor of the influential journal *The Ecumenist* from 1962 to 2004. The journal highlighted connections between theology and sociology, politics and culture. In his retirement, he became outspoken on Quebec politics, multiculturalism and economics.

— Michael Swan

Nazi hatred, survived internment camps in England and Canada, pursued mathematics to the graduate level with the support of an altruistic and disinterested sponsor, converted to Catholicism via St Augustine, was ordained an Augustinian friar, did a doctorate in theology in Switzerland, was seconded to work with Augustin Bea SJ and Cardinal Johannes Willebrands for the Pontifi-

cal Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, served as one of the drafters of the unprecedented document on the Church and non-Christian religions, *Nostra aetate* (this was of special importance to Baum because of his Jewish background), taught theology for decades in two Canadian universities, explored the rich and complex interaction between sociology and theological investigation, publicly

challenged Catholic teaching on sexual ethics, resigned from active priestly ministry, married without laicisation and established and edited one of the leading ecumenical publications of the last half-century, *The Ecumenist*.

A fecund mind if ever there was one.

He was not a comfortable Catholic nor did he make other Catholics comfortable. But he cherished his Eucharis-

tic community, rejoiced in his Risen Christ, nurtured the faith of his impressive cohort of students – a questing faith centred in justice – and followed his native curiosity to new horizons.

May he rest in peace.

📖 Visit Michael W. Higgins’ blog, *Pontifex Minimus*: <http://sacredheartuniversity.typepad.com/pontifexminimus/>

Zimbabwe

– an opportunity for change



The priority now has to be improving human rights and lifting millions of people out of extreme poverty, writes **Seán Farrell**

Zimbabwe always struck me as a country struggling with how its past influenced the present. So many of my conversations in my two years working for Trócaire in the country revolved around the terrible legacy of apartheid Rhodesia, the independence and creation of Zimbabwe, the need of one man and one party to maintain power no matter the cost and the awful price that ordinary Zimbabweans had to pay as a result.

I have never worked in a country with so much poverty and human rights abuses sitting alongside so much potential. This potential is everywhere – in an educated and creative population, in some of the best farming land on the continent of Africa and in the abundant resources, both natural and human that the country holds.

“These times are particularly poignant for those I worked with fighting for human rights”

And now we sit at a moment of real change. For the first time in 37 years a whole country can think about what a post-Mugabe era might look like. The scenes of jubilation and dancing and rejoicing are amazing to see



and the release of the fear and intimidation that held so many Zimbabweans captive has been incredible. I spent last week speaking to friends in Harare, on the streets, celebrating a changing of the guard. “Welcome to the new Zimbabwe,” people chanted in a spectacle of free expression that would have been impossible just weeks ago.

These times are particularly poignant for those I worked with fighting for human rights and whose lives were drastically changed through torture, murder and intimidation by the restrictive and brutal state apparatus that maintained Mugabe’s power. My experience of living and working there was always richer from seeing the courage, determination and commitment of so many of the people who stood for what was right and just despite the enormous costs.

And for them, it’s a time of hope. That is something that I did not see in my time in Zimbabwe. The breaking of this culture of fear and intimidation is in itself worth rejoicing.

Of course, the future ahead is uncertain. We know the past deeds of the new President, Emmerson

Mnangagwa, are chequered to say the least. He himself has served at Mugabe’s side as the targeting and killing of political opponents became commonplace, as the country went through the violence of civil unrest and farm invasions, as the collapse of the economy led to unemployment rates of 90% and as Zimbabwe became an example of a failing state.

Economic wrongs

So, we do not know where the road ahead will lead. Mnangagwa’s initial steps seem to indicate a real interest in righting some of the economic wrongs and some Zimbabwean opposition figures have appeared willing to have dialogue in order to move the country forward. His first address spoke of “witnessing the beginning of a new and unfolding democracy”. I suspect that many on the streets of Harare are waiting to see what exactly this might look like.

Whatever change emerges from the current process, the priority has to be on improving human rights and lifting millions of people out of extreme poverty. Ordinary people in Zimbabwe have paid a heavy price for the abuses

of the Mugabe era going back decades. People now are hopeful that with change there will come economic reforms and human rights reforms that will lead to a brighter future. That hope must be turned into reality.

The Catholic Church in Zimbabwe along with other Churches under an ecumenical alliance issued incredibly strong statements and a pastoral letter in the past week calling not just for peace but for change. This is fundamental to delivering the hope that all Zimbabweans now feel.

“People for the first time in 37 years felt a collective empowerment in removing Mugabe from power”

Trócaire has been working in Zimbabwe for over thirty years. Much of our work in the country is focused on defending people’s human rights and on tackling the deep poverty in rural parts of the country. And despite the change seen in leadership last week, as Zimbabweans wake up

this morning, the poverty they experience will still be the same.

The millions who marched are certainly aware of the potential challenges that lie ahead. The army were central and pivotal in recent events. Much of Mugabe’s legacy may be maintained and used to further new cycles of oppression.

But one fundamental thing has changed. People for the first time in 37 years felt a collective empowerment in removing Mugabe from power.

My hope is that this outpouring of collective action that was so immensely powerful may be lasting.

Another Mugabe may not be able to hold a whole country to ransom again.

Whatever happens, Trócaire will be there to see it. And our work with local organisations to shape and challenge what the future brings will be important and necessary.

Zimbabwe has seen a new dawn. Now it’s time to create the day.

i Seán Farrell is Director of the International Division with Trócaire and previously worked in Zimbabwe.

Letters

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

War cannot be avoided 'at all costs'

Dear Editor, Pope Francis' admirable anti-war rhetoric is deserving of some important reflection. While one would obviously be in agreement with the Pontiff that war ought to be avoided, this cannot be done at all costs. Of course, the Pope is also right in pointing out that nations ought not to take aggressive stances against one another. However, suggestions from theologians close to Francis that the Pope might 'jettison' the idea of a just war would be troubling indeed. Such a notion seems to imply that one can, in fact, build Heaven in earth and come to a situation where war is never necessary.

The reality is that there are – and always will be – instances when the just nations of the world may have to resort to violence to quell the unjust nations of the world. Examples include the entirely unprovoked attack on a nation state from a foreign aggressor. We would reach a pretty depressing place in world history were the free nations of the world to fail in their duty to act in these circumstances to repel the invader.

That being said, one must only resort to war as a last resort. Pope St Pohn Paul II was right when in 2002 he wrote that "war is always a defeat for humanity". It's a sad reflection on fallen human nature that wars will sometimes be the only option – sad as this fact is.

*Yours etc.,
Donal McDermott,
Bangor,
Co. Down.*

A dangerous nihilistic tale

Dear Editor, why does a Catholic newspaper run an article that gives *Suburbicon* an excellent five-star rating when it "destroys our faith in the goodness of human nature at every turn". This nihilistic attitude pays homage to the gospel of George Clooney and appears to contradict the ethos and theme of every other article in the newspaper! Just wondering?

*Yours etc.,
Sean Grace,
Malahide, Co. Dublin.*

● **Film critic Aubrey Malone repiles:** I appreciate Mr Grace's point. Perhaps it would have been more appropriate to say the film "threatens" rather than "destroys" our faith in the goodness of human nature. As I mentioned in my review, its ending has cathartic elements. It's important to note that neither I nor Mr George Clooney are nihilistic. A film, like a book, expresses a point of view as evidenced by its characters. Such characters aren't reflective of the fullness of life, just elements of it that are relevant to the constraints of the plot. If we were to reduce any book or film with negative elements in it to the level of nihilism, even the Bible would have to face such a charge. As I also mentioned in my review, *Suburbicon* is a moral film with a Biblical subtext.

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.

Letter of the week

ACP need a good dose of reality

Dear Editor, it was good to see that the former Abbot of Glenstal Abbey Fr Mark Patrick Hederman OSB giving the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP) a bit of a reality check at their recent meeting (IC 16/11/17). I was surprised, however, that the leadership of the ACP appeared to flatly reject Fr Hederman's criticism of their movement. Statements from the ACP are always needlessly negative and seem more designed to give talking points to the

Church's detractors rather than build up the faith of ordinary Catholics.

The angry response of the ACP leadership to Fr Hederman's critique is indicative of a clericalist attitude that would seek to present itself as 'speaking truth to power' (the bishops) while being unable to hear truth when it is spoken to them.

The ACP has raised vital issues about the future of the Church in Ireland, and their work with priests

who have been falsely accused of abuse was evidently badly needed. However, the organisation also needs a good dose of reality: they should work with everyone else to bring about a better Church rather than criticising everyone else.

Well done Fr Hederman.

*Yours etc.,
Mary Kelly,
Straffan,
Co. Kildare.*

Non-religions arguments for right to life

Dear Editor, the respect for the sacredness of life in the womb has its roots in Christianity's Jewish origins; in the belief that all human life is sacred and a gift from God. Although the sanctity-of-life principle is most commonly associated with issues pertaining to the end of life, it is equally relevant when debating ethical issues associated with the beginning of life. The common factor being the concept of personhood. Although the idea that life

is sacred may have religious origins, it can be defended on non-theological grounds as it is supported by those of no religious persuasion who put a value on all human life. However, when discussing the lives of individuals with disabilities the quality-of-life ethic is frequently the principle upon which the quality of their lives is based. The danger is that there will always be discrepancies as to who chooses, and who judges what qualities are

required to live a worthwhile life.

Pro-choice advocates do not accept that the foetus is a human person with a right to life. However, a foetus is already a person with the potential to become who they were created to be; not a potential person but a person with potential. Life is a continuum so how can it be said that a neonatal child is a person but a baby in the womb is not? A foetus diagnosed with an

abnormality is no different, it has an equal right to life and deserves to be treated with equal respect. To abort on the grounds of a prenatal diagnosis of an abnormality, is to predetermine that a life will not be worthwhile before it has had a chance to begin.

*Yours etc.,
Christina Coakley,
Ballyhaunis,
Co. Mayo.*

Time for a day of atonement

Dear Editor, I would strongly urge the bishops of Ireland to have a 'Day of Atonement' on a Sunday during this coming Lent 2018, for all the abuse that took place in the name of our Church over the last number of decades.

In preparation for the coming of Pope Francis, and a proposed referendum on the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution the bishops' voices would carry a lot more weight if we had a day of atonement.

*Yours etc.,
Michael Foulds,
Blackrock,
Co. Cork.*

Sinn Féin's double standards

Dear Editor, in his final address as President of Sinn Féin to the members at the recent Ard Fheis, Gerry Adams spoke about woman's rights. He said "on the basis of respect, tolerance and equality" that Sinn Féin would never support denial of these rights in Dublin or London and such an attitude would not be tolerated in Northern Ireland. Yet when the vote on abortion was taken at the Ard Fheis the adoption of the motion put to the members was akin to 'abortion on demand'. This did not reflect the view of some important members whose efforts to make voting for the motion a 'conscience matter' was defeated also. It has been noticeable and

recorded that public cracks have recently appeared in Sinn Féin ranks over bullying allegations. Gerry Adams declared publicly that he himself did not agree with all of Sinn Féin's policies. Abortion is the "direct killing" of an innocent baby. Surely all members who have regard for the sacredness of all human life and the freedom of conscience and expression must reflect on these matters and vote according to their conscience despite any dictate from any party? A vote for Sinn Féin in the future could be regarded as a vote for availability of abortion.

*Yours etc.,
Rev. Patrick Marron,
Fintona, Co. Tyrone.*

Priesthood seen as sacrifice

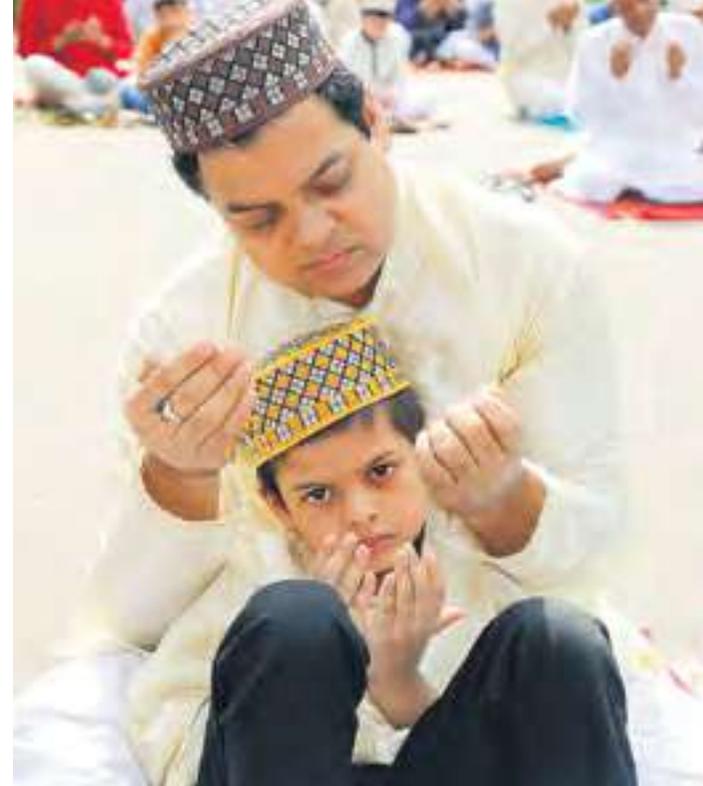
Dear Editor, any discussion on the priesthood must begin with a definition of what exactly priesthood is. A priest is someone who offers sacrifice. Catholic priests offer the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross to God. This implies a relationship with God, with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Begun by God, this relationship is nourished by prayer, reading of Sacred Scripture and the lives of the saints. I hope that my brother priests will find time every day for this conversation. Talking of saints, I can't help liking St Anthony. He helps me find things when I can't find them myself!

*Yours etc.,
Fr Noel McKeown OP,
Dominican Priory, Newry, Co. Down.*



📷 Around the world

VATICAN: Nuns walk by as the Christmas tree is positioned in St Peter's Square. Photo: CNS



BANGLADESH: People pray in front of the National Eid Prayer Ground in Dhaka. Pope Francis is due to meet representatives of the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees living in the country.



LIBYA: Migrants arrive at a naval base after being rescued by the Libyan coast guard.



USA: Joseph Yap and Alejandro Velez prepare their box shelter on the lawn of Good Shepherd Church in Alexandria for the fifth annual 'Homeless for a Night' campout.



VATICAN: An image of Sudanese St Josephine Margaret Bakhita is carried in procession during a prayer service led by Pope Francis for peace in South Sudan and Congo in St Peter's Basilica.



MYANMAR: Pope Francis blesses an image of a sick child held by Reuters reporter Phil Pullella aboard his flight from Rome to Yangon for his six-day visit to the country.

Playing loose with the truth



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

It can be quite disheartening to watch the news these days. Our world is full of hatred, bigotry, racism, and over-stimulated greed and ego. The gap between the rich and poor is widening and random, senseless violence is an everyday occurrence. One lives with hope, but without much optimism.

Among all of this, perhaps the most distressing thing of all is the erosion of our capacity to recognise and acknowledge the truth. From the highest government offices, to the major media outlets, to our local newspapers, to the thousands of bloggers, down to our dinner tables, we are becoming irresponsible, manipulative, and outright dishonest with the truth, denying it where it's inconvenient, bending it to suit our own purposes, or labeling it as 'fake news', 'an alternative fact', 'misinformation', 'a truth that's no longer operative' or as 'political correctness' with no truth value.

“The unforgivable sin is precisely the sin of lying which can become unforgivable because of what it can do to us”

Studies from major scientific institutes are dismissed as just another opinion with the result that we are creating an entire society within which it's

becoming more and more difficult for any of us to trust what's a fact and what isn't. That's dangerous territory, not just politically but especially spiritually.

Dangerous

Scripture tells us that Satan is the Prince of Lies and Jesus makes it clear that, among all sins, failure to acknowledge the truth is far and away the most dangerous. We see this motif particularly in the text that warns us that we can commit a sin that's unforgivable because it's a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What's this sin? Why is it

unforgivable? And what has it got to do with telling lies?

The unforgivable sin is precisely the sin of lying which can become unforgivable because of what lying can do to us. Here's how the biblical text unfolds: Jesus has just cast out a demon. Part of the Jewish faith at that time was the belief that only someone who came from God had power to cast out a demon. Jesus had done that, but the Scribes and Pharisees who have just witnessed this found it to be an inconvenient truth since they denied Jesus' goodness.

So in the face of truth they had

to either acknowledge something that they did not want to or they had to manipulate the truth to give it a different meaning. They chose the latter and, clearly aware that they were manipulating the truth, accused Jesus of performing the miracle through the power of Satan. They knew better, knew they were lying, but the actual truth was too difficult to accept.

Jesus initially tries to argue with them, pointing out that there's no logic in suggesting that Satan is casting out demons. They persist, and it's then Jesus utters his warning: "In truth I tell you, all human sins will be forgiven, and all the blasphemies ever uttered, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin." (Mark 3:28-29 parallel text in Matthew 12:31-32.) What exactly is this warning?

“God's inner integrity assures that all of reality also has an inner integrity, an intelligibility”

Jesus is saying this: be careful about what you are doing just now, putting a false spin on something because it is too awkward to accept as true. The danger is that if you continue to do this you may eventually come to believe your own lie. That will be unforgivable, given that you will no longer want to be forgiven because you will see truth as a lie and a lie as the truth. The sin cannot be forgiven, not

because God doesn't want to forgive it but because we no longer want to be forgiven.

Dictionaries tell us that blasphemy is the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God. We don't blaspheme when we use foul language when we're frustrated; nor do we blaspheme when we shake our fists at God in anger or turn away from him in bitterness. God can handle that. The one thing God cannot handle is lying, where we lie to the point of believing our own lies (the real danger in lying) because that eventually warps our consciences so that we can no longer tell truth from falsehood or falsehood from truth.

Theology teaches us that God is One, this means that God's inner integrity ensures that all of reality also has an inner integrity, an intelligibility, meaning that something cannot be and not be at the same time; meaning that two plus two cannot equal anything but four; meaning that a tree is always a tree no matter what you say it is; and meaning that black can never be white. God's Oneness allows us to both trust reality and trust our normal perception of it.

That's what's under attack today, almost everywhere. It's the ultimate moral danger: God is One and so two plus two can never be five – and if it is then we are no longer in touch with God or with reality, we are warped in conscience, and are blaspheming the Holy Spirit.



Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, November 30, 2017

Youth space
The Christmas retreat that welcomes all

Page 34



Avoiding the Christmas overspend

Christmas often elicits imagery of family gatherings, present-sharing and festive cuisine, but behind this ideal hides many financial costs and burdens. Last year, Retail Ireland projected that the average Irish household spent over €2,500 on Christmas gifts, which may find their root in more expensive technological products, pressure on parents to please their children and the consumerist society that we live in.

Colette Power, National Development Officer of The Money and Budgeting Service (MABS) told *The Irish Catholic*: "At Christmas, spending tends to peak. It's a big trigger event. Overspending is an issue. We all want to make it a happy



Colm Fitzpatrick explores how to cut down on costs this Christmas

festive period by buying gifts and sharing, as well as parents trying to do lots for their children."

As costs pile on top of one another, it can be difficult to discern the best ways to reduce spending with so many pieces of advice at your fingertips. Here are eight easy ways to combat the Christmas costs this year.

BUDGET, BUDGET, BUDGET: Before the Christmas shopping

season begins, it is important to set aside some time to look at your bank balance and decide how much money you plan to spend between now and Christmas as well as how much you'd like to spend on gifts.

TRAVEL: Don't forget to factor in travel, food and decorations as those costs all add up. Colette suggests looking at these expenses in line with your

income and cut unnecessary items from the list. Although the idea of budgeting sounds daunting, in reality it's very fast and easy. You can find an accessible budgeting tool at www.mabs.ie which takes about 15-20 minutes to complete. Whatever your budget is, stick to it!

INTERNET: The internet is your friend. Anyone can fall prey to impulse buys but they are the least cost-effective way of spending money this Christmas. The best option is to research online to find the best deals rather than wandering aimlessly around shops.

Retail Ireland revealed that last year, consumers were making more Christmas purchases in

November driven in part by promotional retail days such as Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Make use of these days where prices extensively drop before they go back up.

PAPER NOT PLASTIC: The most expensive cards this Christmas will be credit cards. For many people, credit cards are essentially loans enabling them to live beyond their means. This is especially true during this festive commercial season which can pressurise purchasers into using them, overlooking the interest rates which can affect them further down the line. "Hold back on the credit card. Be careful and judicious when you use

» Continued on Page 33

Family News

AND EVENTS

Perils of alcohol abuse laid bare

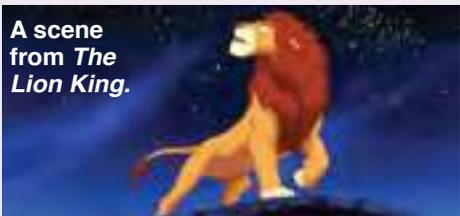
Drinking in your teens and 20s increase the risk of cancer in later life, the HSE has warned ahead of the Christmas season, when alcohol is part and parcel of festivities for so many.

"We have known for some time that drinking alcohol regularly increases the risk of developing some types of cancer," said Dr Marie Laffoy, Assistant National Director of the HSE National Cancer Control Programme, pointing out that evidence in a new report means "it's important to get the message out to young people that what they drink now affects their cancer risk in the future".

The report says 900 people are newly diagnosed with alcohol-related cancer in Ireland every year, noting that alcohol is listed alongside tobacco and asbestos as a type one carcinogen by the World Health Organisation.

"The positive news is that this is something every individual has the power to control – the less we drink, the lower the risk of developing these cancers," said Dr Laffoy.

A scene from *The Lion King*.



SUGAR CLUB SCREENS DISNEY CLASSICS

Running up to Christmas, the Sugar Club on Dublin's Leeson Street is showing a series of Disney films, including such Pixar classics as *The Lion King*, which shows this weekend.

The 'Disney Xmas Classics' series runs at 3pm every Saturday, and is a must for Disney lovers of all ages.

Table service will be offered during the films, with the venue serving pizza, popcorn and sweets, along with Disney-inspired drinks.

Tickets, costing €10 for adults and €7.50 for children, with special deals being offered of €30 for two adults and two children or one adult and three children, are available online and should be advised to book in advance to make sure you get a table on your requested day. Tickets for the first showing can be booked at <http://www.thesugarclub.com/listings/event/the-lion-king>

Claim tax refund for nursing home costs

Taxback.com and Nursing Homes Ireland have produced a guide to financing and claiming tax refunds for nursing home fees and other related costs, in the belief that confusion about the system is causing thousands of people to miss out on relief to which they're entitled. Families could be entitled to anything from €400 to €25,000.

As much as 40% of nursing home costs can be claimed back. If a family member in a nursing home does not qualify for the Fair Deal scheme, it may be possible for someone who pays tax at the higher rate and contributes €300 a week to the cost of their care to claim back €6,240 at the end of the year, for example.

In addition, it may be possible to claim relief on medical expenses at a rate of 20%, with further reliefs being available to kidney patients and their families.

ONLY SKIN DEEP



Skin is the largest organ in the human body and its visible appearance often reflects on our health and vitality. If eyes are the window to our souls, so too skin can mirror something deeper about our general health.

We subject our skin to sun, rain, wind, deodorants and perfumes and probably take for granted just how important it is until problems arise. But skin conditions are common and account for about 15% of all consultations with GPs. Furthermore, they can be a source of great social embarrassment, anxiety and low self esteem.

The most common skin condition in those aged between 30-60 in Ireland is rosacea otherwise called the 'Curse of the Celts'. It has a greater incidence in those with fair skin, blue eyes and of Celtic ancestry and is characterised by facial redness, especially around the cheeks and nose and often raised bumps and pimples.

Sensitive

Visible blood vessels may also be present as well as flushing and the skin tends to be sensitive and may feel as if it stings or burns. The eyes are not infrequently involved where there may be irritation, burning and a dry gritty sensation.

Signs are sometimes erroneously attributed to alcohol intake though while not causing the condition it can lead to exacerbations as can sun exposure, hot drinks and spicy food, all of which can increase blood flow to the skin.

While the cause is not clear, a considerable amount of research is being undertaken in rosacea implicating the immune system and skin microflora. In particular, microscopic mites

Medical Matters

Dr Kevin McCarroll



called Demodex which are ubiquitous in normal adults (especially around hair follicles and the skin's oil glands) are significantly more prevalent in rosacea.

Regular use of SPF 30 cream to reduce UVB skin exposure and minimising hot or spicy foods, alcohol, hot baths and showers can reduce facial flushing. Antibiotic gels and tablets can help by reducing inflammation.

A new cream which actually kills the mite is also available and laser therapy can also be used as a longer lasting treatment of skin redness.



Overall, rosacea tends to remit and relapse over periods of months to years though usually burns out in older age.

Eczema is one of the commonest skin problems affecting about 20% of children (where in 80% of cases it first presents). It can also persist

into adulthood where it has prevalence of about 10%.

If both parents have eczema, there is an approximate 80% chance that children will also have it and it's more prevalent in those with asthma or hayfever.

Eczema gives rise to areas of red, dry skin that are often intensely itchy, leading to scratching which can make it worse. There are lots of irritants and allergens that can trigger it including soap, shampoos, detergents, fragrances and house dust mites but often none can be identified.

“For many skin conditions, ensuring good daily skin care with moisturisers is important”

Soaps and shower gels can dry out the skin by removing natural oils so using moisturisers will help to soothe and rehydrate it and optimise its barrier role against irritants.

Clothes that increase skin temperature (especially wools) will aggravate eczema. Using soft cotton materials and anti-dust mite bed covers may help. For flare ups, topical steroid creams work well.

Psoriasis affects about 70,000 people in Ireland with about 15% having a severe form of the disease. It is usually a chronic condition with remissions and flare ups and occurs when the immune system attacks the skin.

This leads to inflammatory, itchy, red patches with a silvery scale. It often affects the elbows, knees, face and scalp or behind

the ears which may be the only area of involvement. There are many potential triggers including emotional stress, several medications, cold weather, smoking and alcohol.

It's important to keep the skin well moisturised with non-soap substitutes and avoid scrubbing or using very hot water when washing.

Skin creams that contain cold tar and calcitriol (a vitamin D analogue) are used in mild cases. Phototherapy with special UV lamps under specialist supervision can be used for more moderately severe cases and when topical creams fail. Steroid creams are used for acute flare ups and in difficult cases it will be treated with medications that suppress the immune system.

Seborrheic dermatitis is a type of eczema that often occurs in the scalp giving rise to scales and dandruff but also affects oily areas of the body such as in the face (especially the nose), chest and back. It can occur at any age and gives rise to red areas that may feel itchy and burn and can be exacerbated by cold, soaps and stress.

Topical creams as well as antifungal shampoo for scalp involvement work well.

In general, for many skin conditions, ensuring good daily skin care with moisturisers is important as well as identifying and avoiding potential triggers. If you have any ongoing skin complaints, make sure to get them checked out so you can get the right treatment.

i Dr Kevin McCarroll is a Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine, St James's Hospital, Dublin.

» Continued from Page 31



it," says Colette. "It can encourage impulse purchases. It's easy to spend. You need to consider how it's going to impact your budget and how you will repay the interest. It's an expensive way of spending." The best option is to avoid borrowing altogether unless necessary, so use either cash or a debit card. This way you can enjoy Christmas without as much financial stress on your mind.

LOANS: If borrowing is a necessity this Christmas, Colette suggests taking out a low interest loan from a reputable institution. "You can come to an occasion where you need to borrow," says Colette, adding that you should only take the exact amount you need to borrow and plan how you are going to make these repayments.

You should search around to find the best deal, starting with credit unions as they can be competitive. It is also worth looking into personal microcredit schemes which entail the lending of small amounts of money at low interest rates.

“You should search around to find the best deal, starting with credit unions”

IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS:

Gifts don't always have to be modern and expensive, often the best ones are those that have thought and care put into them. Making a gift is not only cost effective but they are often the ones that stay in the family heirlooms. Why not be creative and knit a jumper, make a cushion or compose a song? People will be moved by the time and effort you put into it. If you need help with ideas, there are hundreds of websites online to offer some inspiration.

BREAK WITH TRADITION:

Instead of splurging out on hundreds of gifts this year, it might be better to take a more minimalist approach. This might mean focusing on one or some of the things your child really wants and setting that as your aim rather than buying more than what is actually needed. Often children are

showered with gifts that are never opened or used, only to be later thrown out. Colette says, "People need to look at what they need to buy as opposed to what they want to buy. You should be prioritising your gift list of what you need." Make sure the gifts that you are buying are ones that you are sure your children want. If this idea interests you, let your children know that the structure of gift-giving will be different this Christmas.

THE GIFT OF TRAVEL:

Oftentimes, experiences are more valuable than things, which is why a family holiday can be a great Christmas present. This would be particularly useful for older and extended families who would be more open to doing something different, rather than younger children who are expecting a visit from Santa. With all of the extended family making a contribution to a holiday, the figures for your Christmas expenses could drop significantly. It is surely something worth talking about with your siblings, and will alleviate the stress of having to do Christmas shopping.



SECRET SANTA: Secret Santa is a great way to cut down on expenses as it limits the amount of people you have to buy for, usually at an agreed inexpensive price. Colette says, "Do you really need to buy gifts for

everybody? Look at various options, sit down and have this discussion with your siblings and ask if you can do something different this year. Lots of families have the same issues but don't necessarily want to say it."

By exchanging presents anonymously among extended family and friends, Secret Santa offers a fun and mysterious way to approach gift-giving this year, which involves all everyone.

Although this list is not exhaustive, it can act as a spring board by which you can explore different ways to save some money this Christmas, and enjoy the occasion without worry.

Overspending and its consequences can place serious psychological strain on individuals experiencing it, affecting not just themselves but those around them. It has a particularly acute effect on families, halting both parents and children from living fully as a family.

“With all of the extended family making a contribution to a holiday, the figures for your Christmas expenses could drop significantly”

"Overspending in a family situation can cause a huge amount of difficulties that permeate the family life, says Colette. "It can lead to stress and mental health issues, they're the main things. It can affect family life going forward. A good handle on your budget and income and would ease those burdens. Come in and talk to MABS. Help and assistance is there."

If financing is a problem this year, it is important to remember that above all Christmas transcends the material. Although gift-giving is an important aspect of Christian life which should be celebrated, the true gifts of Christmas can't actually be bought.

i For more information about budgeting this Christmas, see www.mabs.ie

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

I can feel the Christmas crazy beginning to descend. I have had great plans about being organised. I actually bought a couple of presents about six weeks ago – but then it all went pear-shaped again and I find myself with a list of things to do and a shorter Advent to do them in.

Advent is such a beautiful time of the Church's year, but it can so easily get lost in the scramble to get ready for Christmas. And I'm not against the getting ready. I think it is important to buy gifts that people will enjoy and appreciate. That takes time.

I think that the windows of houses sparking with decorations are a wonderful sight amidst the darkness of December evenings.

In our house there is huge anticipation for the Christmas dinner and an insistence that it must be a 'proper' Christmas dinner – so no swapping the turkey for salmon this year or leaving out the brussels sprouts. There is baking to do – for ourselves and to be given to others. The caramel squares are a particular hit and Christmas is one of the few times in the year when I make them and we all ignore how many calories they contain.

“I'm planning a few mornings to catch up with people over a cup of coffee”

So, this busyness is important. I have no desire to be an Ebenezer Scrooge character with a "bah humbug" attitude to Christmas. The issue for me though is that I want both to prepare for Christmas and experience the beauty of Advent. The purpose of Advent is to create a space for us to reflect on what it means that God would send his own beloved to be one of us, God at the heart of our humanity and our humanity at the heart of God. That is something worth pondering, worth sitting with over a cup of tea for ten minutes and just thinking about – before the mad rush kicks off again.

So, I have been looking for an anchor that will keep me rooted, keep me in touch with the amazing reality of the Incarnation amidst everything else. One thing I have done is to sign up for the 'Sacred Advent' emails from the Jesuits in Loyola Press. Every day an email with a short reflection will pop into my in-box. I hope that this will encourage me to pause, to think, reflect, pray and connect. Undoubtedly there will be days when the last thing I feel like doing is pausing or praying but hopefully there won't be too many of those!

You can find this resource and many more on www.loyolapress.com/advent

The other thing I am going to do this Advent is talk to people! I've been wondering for a while

about Christmas cards and sending them to people who I care about but do not see regularly. The increase in the price of stamps has prompted me to make a change. This year instead of sending a card to people I haven't seen for months I'm going to phone them, have a chat and wish them the blessings of Christmas.

Planning

There are also people here in Donegal, even in my own town, whom I haven't seen or spoken to this year so I'm planning a few mornings to catch up with people over a cup of coffee.

Relationships are at the very core of Christmas – the relationships between family and friends – and very specially, God's desire for relationship with us, made real in Jesus Christ. Celebrating our connectedness seems to me like a good way to remind myself what Christmas is about.

What will you do in your family to celebrate Advent? An Advent wreath on the kitchen table is a beautiful visual reminder. An Advent calendar which links us into the Christmas story is a great way to weave the Word of God into our days. Whatever we do, let's hold on to this wonderful season of the Church's year, time to prepare our hearts and homes to welcome Jesus in.



The Christmas retreat that welcomes all

Youth Space

Youth 2000 has been one of the main faith-building events that I have been to, writes **Ruairí Ben McClintock**



Growing up my mother and father always encouraged me to love God. My mother used to read to us children's Bible stories and my father prayed with us every night.

Every Sunday we'd attend our local church. There are eight children in my family and my mother and father planted a seed of passion for the Lord in all of our hearts, so even though my older siblings are away in college, married and working, they all have felt the love of Jesus in my home and some continue to pray daily.

As a young child, praying and attending Church was quite easy but as I got older this became more and more difficult. All my friends thought of God as 'Santa in the sky'. I found it hard to share my faith and find kids my age who also shared the love and passion I did.

This is around the time I attended my first retreat two years ago. I was 17 years old. I decided to go to my first retreat because a couple years before, my two older sisters had been to a Youth 2000 retreat and loved it. Their experience encouraged me to go.

Retreat

I will always remember my first retreat. I was worried everyone in the retreat would be super religious and holy and I would be frowned upon. But it was totally different to

what I was expecting. The moment I arrived I was welcomed. That's the thing about Youth 2000, no matter what your background is, you always feel welcome and the people I met at that retreat have gone on to become my best friends today.

The people are amazing but it doesn't end there. The number one reason for my attending the retreats is the Eucharist. It is one of the most peaceful, loving and healing experiences I have ever felt. Adoration is such a wonderful experience. It's almost indescribable, simply amazing.

The Christmas retreat in Newbridge is one of my favourite retreats every year, coming near to our Lord's birthday. It's the best way to prepare for the true reason

for the season – Jesus. It's such a treat to be able to meet friends you met at previous retreats during the year. Last year's winter retreat was a ball, it went by so fast and I always wish the retreats could last longer.

“The priest gave us tips and tricks on how to read our Bibles to the best of our abilities”

I remember one of the two things which struck me the most during this retreat were the people with constant smiles on their faces. They were beaming smiles, as if it was coming from within, a smile no one could take away from them. This is the kind of smile that can

only come from a deep love of Christ.

The other thing I really enjoyed was the workshops. There were so many I couldn't go to them all but the ones I did go to, I don't regret. The Pure in Heart workshop blew me away. Talking about real values in relationships and how to feel confident just being you, also what real love is, not the kind you see in our everyday culture, but real love.

There was also a workshop on reading the Bible, which helped me to understand God's Word. The priest gave us tips and tricks on how to read our Bibles to the best of our abilities and this workshop is helping me to this day.

Also, I can't say anything more without mentioning the Youth 2000 prayer groups that happen

all over the country. It's fantastic being able to have that hour or two during our busy weeks to just spend some time with fellow Christians and of course Jesus. For our prayer meeting we start off by having the Eucharist enter the room, brought by our parish priest, then we sing songs of adoration, followed by prayers of petition where we pray for the world and our fellow Christians. This is followed by more songs of adoration and then the Rosary. After this we read the Sunday Bible readings and discuss its meaning and how it could affect us in our modern day lives. We also go for outings together.

We recently all went up Mount Brandon in Kerry, going through the fourteen Stations of the Cross, which was extremely fun and (because we live in Ireland) extremely wet; never before had a shower been talked about with such enthusiasm within our prayer group!

“I wouldn't be where I am today if not for the members in my prayer meeting and friends from Youth 2000”

If I'm truthful I'd say I wouldn't be where I am today if not for the members in my prayer meeting and friends from Youth 2000.

It has helped me out during tough times, supported me when I was down, encouraged me to be a better human and Christian, and every single one of them are absolutely wonderful people.

I'd strongly advise anyone, from any background, to come and join us. There is literally something for everyone.

So, what are you waiting for! Get to the Christmas retreat this year and if you go, be sure to find me and say hello!

For more information about free buses to this year's Newbridge Christmas retreat visit www.youth2000.ie



The Youth 2000 Christmas retreat.



Children's Corner

Erin Fox

Making perfect jumpers for your Christmas tree

Advent begins this weekend and it's officially time to embrace the Christmas spirit, starting by donning your Christmas jumper. Each year, Christmas jumpers get wackier and more distinctive. Yet sometimes it's still hard to find the perfect jumper of your dreams.

It's very easy to upcycle an old plain jumper and decorate it whichever way you want. But what about when you have a dozen ideas in your head?

You parents won't be too impressed if you Christmassify all your jumpers, tops and tees so it's better to leave those alone.

But you can create dozens of small jumpers and let your fashion designs flow onto those.

While it's still a bit too early to put up the Christmas tree, it's not too early to make decorations. So, this weekend, sketch out your oh-so-fashionable designs and make your own miniature Christmas jumpers to hang on the tree when it's time to put it up.

For the jumpers you will need: metal wire (or a large paper clip straightened out), wire cutters or secateurs, coloured felt, Christmassy buttons and sequins, embroidery thread, scissors and needles.

Cereal card

First make your jumper template on the back of some cereal card. Create different templates so the arms of the jumper are positioned differently. Make a few copies of each of the templates as they might get a bit battered when you pin them to your fabric.

Pin the template to the felt and cut out two pieces for one jumper. To make the hanger, cut a 12-inch piece of the wire.

Place one of the jumper templates on the work surface and bend the wire to create the first

corner of the hanger.

Use the template to help you gauge the size of the hanger. Lay it onto the pattern to help you gauge the size. Leave enough space around the collar for stitching at the end.

Bend the other side to create a triangle. The two ends should intersect. Take the left side and twists this around the other side to create the hanger neck.

Bend the other side to create the hook and snip off any excess wire.

Make as many as you need for hanging up your jumpers.

Glue the hanger to one of the pieces of the jumper. Add more glue and press the other piece on top and then glue on your decorations.

You can sew a blanket stitch all around the edge of the jumper if you like.

Instead of hanging the jumpers on the tree, make them into a garland or use them as gift tags on presents.



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



A show any adult audience would enjoy

Sometimes one series of a TV drama is enough, as quality can deteriorate, but I was delighted to see **The A-Word** back for a second series on BBC 1, Tuesday nights.

This is the story of an autistic boy, Joe, and the struggles of his parents and wider family to cope with the situation. It's a tough subject, but the tight pace, the excellent ensemble playing of the cast and most of all the large dollop of humour save it from being too grim, too preachy or too sentimental. As well as being hugely entertaining it is moving as well, and I'd say there's been quite a few viewer tears.

There are lessons about accepting children with special needs, and not only autism. In a subplot there's a Downs Syndrome young man seeking employment and doing well at it.

The show exudes a warm humanity and a noteworthy appreciation of family as well – Joe's grandfather provides much of the humour (a fine turn by Christopher Eccleston) and there's all sorts of confusion in the extended family – Joe's uncle has split from his wife but they pretend to be still married so as not to offend her parents, one of whom is a philandering clergyman!

But they're splitting too, leaving the clergyman staying behind to mend his daugh-



Some of the cast of BBC's *The A-Word*.

ter's marriage. It's complicated.

The young actor playing Joe (Max Vento) is totally credible, while there are touching performances from Morven Christie as the mother and Lee Ingleby as the father, loving each other, loving Joe, but struggling to cope. Some of the language is quite frank and the sexual morals could do with some tweaking, but an adult audience with any bit of heart should enjoy it immensely.

Last week's episode was particularly impressive, with a nice thawing between the clergyman and his daughter, a note of caution on the appropriate boundaries between married men and their female friends and a subtly emotional last scene as Joe gathered his

family as if for a photo.

Home drama

On the home drama front I'm rarely enthusiastic about what passes for comedy on RTÉ 2 but last Thursday I did enjoy the first episode of **The School**, a mockumentary set in an Irish primary school. I suspect the writer must have insider knowledge as it rang entirely true, but of course with comic exaggeration.

There's the new principal whose patience is sorely tried by the overbearing secretary, an incompetent teacher and Department inspectors.

The show needs a few more quirky characters – apart from the main three the other adult parts are weak, though engagingly naturalistic performances are elicited

from the young pupils. The school Nativity play figures in the plot and so far the treatment is mostly respectful.

Apart from a few iffy references the usual crudity is absent and a bit of trimming in that department could have made it an enjoyable



Fr Paddy Byrne.

family show, with enough humour to keep children and adults alike laughing all the way to the staffroom.

Last week I was critical about an item on the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk), so this week I've come to praise Pat not to bury him. Last week he featured an entertaining and enjoyable interview with Fr Paddy Byrne from Portlaoise on the occasion of his new book. Fr Byrne paid tribute to his twin brother for being so supportive – he said he was never alone, right from conception.

As prison and hospital chaplain he was busy but found that the celibacy rule freed him up to do all the work that came at him. After attending college he had joined the priesthood at a time when the Church was already embroiled in scandal so that has been part of his Church landscape ever since. He found his seminary experience quite positive and not as restrictive as some – they were sent working in hospitals and elsewhere in the community.

He acknowledged the invaluable assistance of lay lecturers, including women, in the human sciences. His Twitter ministry (two words not often seen together) and writing for local papers made the writing of a book no great surprise.

Kenny raised the issue of dwindling numbers in the

PICK OF THE WEEK

FERN BRITTON MEETS BBC 1, Sunday, December 3, 10am

Fern Britton speaks to Paralympic athlete Stef Reid who survived an accident and committed her life to God.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE? – LIFE FOR A LIFE RTÉ 1, Sunday, December 3, 10.30pm

Agnes Furey, her daughter and grandchild murdered, refused to let anger and bitterness poison her life.

CATHOLIC LIVES EWTN, Monday, December 4, 10am

Host David Kerr talks with former British Ambassador to the Holy See, Francis Campbell.

priesthood but Fr Byrne was in no way pessimistic about the future. He described his vibrant parish and how well the Parish Priest had it organised with plenty of invaluable lay expertise.

Kenny was very positive throughout, as I am myself about the interview.

boregan@hotmail.com



Pat O'Kelly

Music

Collins' fresh focus on Chopin's short creative life

Thanks to the hospitality of ambassador Marie-Claude Meylan, the Swiss Embassy was the convivial venue for a recently launched CD – *Chopin Recital* – featuring Dublin-born pianist Finghin Collins. On the Swiss classical label Claves, for which Collins has already recorded excellent Schumann albums, the new disc, 50-1719, is a cooperation with RTÉ Lyric FM.

Collins' choice of music covers the major part of Chopin's short creative life – he died from tuberculosis aged 39 in 1849. Beginning with the Op 17 Mazurkas, it concludes with the substantial Op 61 Polonaise-Fantasia. In between comes the stand-alone Op 45 Prelude, a selec-



Finghin Collins.

tion of Nocturnes and the wonderful 4th Ballade.

As befits the music, Collins' playing is delicate and

dramatic as well as sensitive and majestic as he follows the richly romantic paths of Chopin's own artistic genius. Launched in time for the Christmas market, the rewarding disc is well worth serious consideration.

Staying within the Collins family, congratulations are due to Finghin and his highly gifted pianist sister Dearbhla as both were awarded well-deserved honorary doctorates by the NUI. The conferring took place at Dublin's Royal College of Physicians in Ireland last month.

Chopin is also the focus of attention at Russian pianist Daniil Trifonov's recital at the National Concert Hall next Tuesday (December

5). Trifonov's visit is part of the NCH's Centenary of the Revolution series and his programme is an interesting weave of pieces strongly influenced by Chopin together with music by the Polish-born master himself.

The former includes sets of variations by Rachmaninov and the relatively unfamiliar Catalan composer Federico Mompou who died in 1957. Both works take their stance from Chopin's Op 28 Preludes.

Funeral March

The second part of the evening is devoted to Chopin's Op 35 Funeral March Sonata written between 1837 and 1839 mostly at Nohant, the chateau near Paris of the

writer George Sand (Aurore Dupin) with whom Chopin had a lengthy relationship.

With its expressive themes of lamentation, anger and revolt, the Funeral March is the Sonata's slow movement. Often compared to that in Beethoven's Eroica Symphony and Siegfried's funeral music from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, an orchestral version of the March was played at Chopin's obsequies at the Madeleine in Paris on October 30, 1849.

The College of Physicians was also the location earlier this month for the finals of the Frank Maher Classical Music Awards. Created in 2001 by Emmet O'Rafferty, chairman of Top Security Group, the

awards are a memorial to Vincentian Fr Frank Maher, music teacher at Castleknock College who died in 1998. The competition is open to sixth year post-primary students and the €5,000 main prize must be used to 'attend a recognised institution or on a purchase necessary for the development of talent'.

The 2017 winner is 17-year-old cellist Killian White chosen by the jury of Veronica McSwiney, Dr Gerard Gillen and Dr Kerry Houston. Heard to excellent effect in music by Fauré and Paganini and showing enormous potential, Wesley College pupil Killian hopes for a place in the Paris Conservatoire.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Science and the human soul

Science and Spiritual Practices: Transformative experiences and their effects on our bodies, brains, and health

by Rupert Sheldrake
(Coronet, £20.00)

Christopher Moriarty

Scientific evidence shows that humans have sought, for tens of thousands of years, to connect their activities with something outside their day-to-day activities. Since history began, written records of religious practices have been maintained.

A short time ago, relatively speaking, societies, including our own, began to question the importance and the very existence of any form of spirit world. This outlook took a major step with the Enlightenment towards the end of the 18th Century, accelerated with the scientific revolution of the 19th and 20th Centuries and is very much around us in the 21st Century in the form of atheism and secularism.

Facts

Rupert Sheldrake is one of the many members of the scientific community who combines a career as a committed scientist with one of studying and proclaiming the facts of life that elude the scientific discipline and are therefore dismissed by secularists. Sheldrake's conventional science is a strictly rational and experimental study of the mechanisms underlying the growth of plants.



His parallel study is of the philosophy of science and the nature of the relationship between the human mind and the universe. His personal behaviour includes regular Christian worship on Sundays. He shares with Darwin, Dawkins, and others the gift of being able to express his views in

a highly readable style.

Enjoying an upbringing as a believer, Sheldrake adopted atheism in his teens and subsequently came to two important conclusions. Firstly that atheism is a belief system and no more rational or logical than belief in the Divine. Secondly that the human being is an integral part of a living universe. The things of the mind are very much more than the electrical and chemical processes that take place within the individual's brain.

Phenomena

Science and Spiritual Practices follows on from previous books by the author in examining a number of phenomena relating to connections between the physical world that answers readily to scientific inves-

tigation and the world of the senses which cannot be measured, bottled or dissected.

He describes the results of the myriad of statistical studies which show impressive, though scarcely remarkable, therapeutic effects of such practices as yoga, performing music, walks through forests and both formal and informal religious observance.

In addition, he provides examples of the truly remarkable physical changes in the brain itself resulting from such behaviour.

Statistical studies have been with us almost as long as a human lifetime, but neurology is a development of the past 20 years or so and has actually overturned some of the widely accepted theories of less than half a century ago.

As well as the exciting overall thrust of this book, there are many gems from the author's personal experience and the writings of thinkers from the likes of Pythagoras and Plato through more than two millennia to the present day.

“Catholic means universal. If it excludes anything that is a path to God, it's not Catholic, but just a sect”

One that particularly interested me is the author's time spent living in an ashram in the course of the years he spent working in crop research in India.

One of his teachers was the Benedictine monk Fr Bede Griffiths who began his morning Mass with a Sanskrit mantra invoking the divine power that shines through the sun.

The priest's reply to Sheldrake's questioning the inclusion of a Hindu mantra in a Catholic service was “Precisely because it's Catholic. ‘Catholic’ means universal. If it excludes anything that is a path to God, it's not Catholic, but just a sect.”

This is a book of inspiration and knowledge – it also has a substantial element of practical advice on how to follow a variety of spiritual exercises which, statistics show, have a measurable positive effect on health and happiness.

i Dr Christopher Moriarty is a marine biologist and author with an interest in the interactions of religion and science.

The stars in their courses

The Astronomy Book (Big Ideas Implied Explained series)

DK / Penguin Random House, €20

Michael Fewer

When our children were young, one of the highlights of visits to our country cottage was the night skies, particularly in autumn and winter, when we all used to wrap up well and lie out on foam mattresses, trying to identify the constellations and enjoying ‘shooting stars’.

Recently, when city friends came to visit with their teenaged children, the weather was good, and we seduced the youngsters away from their tablets by showing off our night sky. They were astonished at the brilliance and number of stars decorating the vault of the heavens, and said

they had never seen ‘shooting stars’ before.

Impressed

They were even more impressed when I pointed out Earth satellites passing over, and how common they are today. They were full of questions, with a hunger for more information. I wish I had known then about *The Astronomy Book*: it would have been perfect for them and, indeed, for anyone from about 14 upwards, all those who are fascinated by the universe and want to know more about it.

The creation of many hands, it opens with the history of astronomy and how our understanding of the universe has progressed, and includes short biographies of pioneers such as Ptolemy, Galileo and Herschel, and even our own Lord Rosse and his great telescope at Birr, County

Offaly, is dealt with.

Red giants, cosmic expansion and black holes are simply explained, spacecraft crammed with intricate scientific equipment that have ‘boldly gone where no man has gone’ are described, while terrestrial and satellite-mounted telescopes that allow us to peer far out into the galaxies are well covered.

Cutting through complex jargon, the basic text is peppered with panels of simple diagrams, succinct quotes, explanatory images, critical dates and bullet point information, all in plain English, which will appeal particularly to young, computer-savvy readers.

i Michael Fewer writes on Ireland's natural and man-made heritage.



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.

Mysteries of de Valera's early life

**De Valera: Volume 1
Rise 1882-1932**
by David McCullagh
(Gill Books, €24.99)

Joe Carroll

Apart from about eight full biographies of Eamon de Valera, there have been the hundreds if not thousands of articles and critiques covering his long life. What new is there to say?

David McCullagh, who is a journalist with RTÉ and author of books on John A. Costello and the 1948-51 Inter-Party Government, has made full use of de Valera's personal papers hoping "to illuminate the real de Valera".

McCullagh's book, allowing for the fact that it only goes up to 1932, falls between the 1970 authorised biography by the Earl of Longford and Thomas O'Neill, which some have unfairly characterised as "hagiography", and the highly critical one by Tim Pat Coogan in 1993 who summed up: "de Valera did little that was useful and much that was harmful."

McCullagh concludes that "by 1932 his character had both shaped his career and been shaped by it; he entered office with certain skills and certain limitations. He was in the words of his colleague, Jim Ryan, 'pliable but unbreakable' – a mixture of determination and flexibility that would serve him well in his political career."

Thanks to his journalistic skills, McCullagh's impressive research does not become bogged down in detail and his narrative is marked by shrewd comments highlighting the twists and turns which characterised de Valera's "rise".

These begin in 1917 when he eased Arthur Griffith out of the leadership of Sinn Féin which he had founded and continued up to Fianna Fáil's entry into the Dail in 1927, when the much denounced oath suddenly became "an empty formula".

Puzzles

Some puzzles attached to de Valera's long life still defy definitive answers. The origins and later life of his father Vivion, the absence of any written evidence of his marriage to Katherine Coll in New York, or was it New Jersey? McCullagh calls Coll an unreliable witness in these matters.

Did de Valera have a nervous breakdown when commanding the garrison at Boland's bakery (not mill)



in 1916? Was he saved from execution by his American citizenship or by intervention of William Wylie with General Maxwell? Why did he not lead the Treaty negotiations in London? Even Lord Longford, his devoted admirer, argued that he should have. Did he set Collins and the team an impossible task?

Was he largely responsible for the Civil War, or was he pushed aside by the IRA in the Four Courts? How could he make the "wading through blood" speeches at a critical point before hostilities broke out? Was there sharp practice in the part-funding of the *Irish Press* with money from the American bonds?

“McCullagh seizes on the details that bring the ‘Long Fellow’ to life”

McCullagh digs out all the relevant evidence on these crucial stages in de Valera's life and gives his own conclusions, while admitting sometimes that the evidence is inconclusive and at this stage likely to remain so.

As a good reporter, McCullagh seizes on the details that bring the 'Long Fellow' to life. His rugby exploits in Rockwell and Blackrock including a trial for Munster. His getting drunk after one victory, his insistence on taking all the place kicks, and often missing to the irritation of his team mates. His fleeting appearance in novels by Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis as a result of his prolonged fundraising tour in the US in 1919-20.

The importance of Catholicism to de Valera is mentioned from time to time, but with less emphasis than that by Longford and O'Neill, who wrote that "his absorption in the life and teaching of Jesus might qualify him as an amateur Christologist".

Although refused the

sacraments along with other active Republicans during the Civil War, de Valera insisted he was not "excommunicated" and claimed that he had raised this question with the Pope (Pontiff not specified) and the Pope agreed with him.

In a 1923 letter to Monsignor Salvatore Luzio, who had been sent to Ireland by Pope Pius XI to try and end the Civil War, de Valera wrote: "Though nominally cut away from the body of Holy Church, we are still spiritually and mystically of it and we refuse to regard ourselves except as his children." McCullagh comments that "this wording suggests he did at the time consider himself as excommunicated". Another unsolved mystery?

The second volume will cover important phases in de Valera's life such as the Economic War, the new Constitution, the return of the Treaty Ports, Irish neutrality in World War II, the failure of the anti-Partition policy, the post-war economic slump leading to huge emigration, and his years in the Áras from 1959 to 1973. We will have to wait to see how his reputation emerges from these events.

Joe Carroll is a former political correspondent and the author of a book on *The Emergency*.

• The Books Editor adds: A small point in passing - the one volume 'authorised' biography by Lord Longford and T. P. O'Neill, running to 494 pages, is a version of the "official" biography in two volumes in Irish by Tomás Ó Neill (1968-1970), based on the President's private papers, which took 632 pages to get to the new constitution of 1937; if completed, it would have run to over 1250 pages. Both books illustrate de Valera's anxiety to control the judgement of history on his life - something that seems never to have bothered other leaders of the state.

The Irish version contains extended discussions of contentious matters, such as the death of Cathal Brugha. McCullagh is not unique in leaving this biography unconsulted, along with other books on the period in Irish - the copy in the National Library is almost unread.

The 'authorised' version was published in London in November 1970, but de Valera demanded that an Irish 'first edition' from the same printing was issued in Dublin by Gill & Macmillan!

Web Watch

Greg Daly

Steering carefully between errors of extremes

The squabbles about *Amoris Laetitia* continue to rumble on, with Dan Hitchens, deputy editor of England's *The Catholic Herald* observing from his Twitter account @ddhitchens that "Rocco Buttiglione, one of the leading critics of traditional teaching on the sacraments, has collected his articles into a book", and directing followers to his firstthings.com "critique" from August 2016 of what he calls "Buttiglione's critique".

In fairness, Dan's piece is worth reading, if only to wonder at how much can be misunderstood, and at the oddness of Prof. Buttiglione - a leading Italian philosopher and close collaborator with St John Paul II - being referred to simply as "the politician Rocco Buttiglione", or to wonder why Dan was "taken aback" to find Prof. Buttiglione arguing in osservatoreromano.va for a change in the Church's pastoral discipline around the sacraments.

There's not a hint in the article of how the July 2016 article in the Vatican's newspaper was by no means Prof. Buttiglione's first intervention on this subject, with his May 2016 lastampa.it interview, in which he discussed how *Amoris* was following a path mapped out by St John Paul II, going wholly unmentioned in the piece.

An interview with the philosopher-politician this month on lastampa.it, entitled 'Here is the deviation on which *Amoris Laetitia*'s critics fall', certainly shouldn't be missed, given how it condenses so effectively the arguments of Prof. Buttiglione, not merely on *Amoris Laetitia* and its place in the Catholic Tradition, but on the nature of faithful and unfaithful disagreement.

Particularly fascinating is how he felt compelled to speak up for *Amoris Laetitia* in opposition to those who would seek to hijack the



Cardinal Marc Ouellet.

memory of St John Paul II, who he describes as "my life's great friend".

He cautions that while some have accused Pope Francis and those who recognise the development in the Church's pastoral approach of 'ethical subjectivism', they have themselves fallen into an error of ethical 'objectivism', focusing wholly on the gravity of a sin, without considering personal culpability.

"Catholic ethics is realistic," he says. "Realism sees both the subjective and the objective side of the action, and therefore assesses both the grave matter and the full knowledge and deliberate consent. As Dante Alighieri teaches, the opposite of an error is not the truth, but the opposite error. Truth is the narrow path between two errors of the opposite sign."

Defence

Another eminent defence of *Amoris Laetitia* in recent weeks has come from the pen of Cardinal Marc Ouellet, who readers may recall as Pope Benedict XVI's legate at the International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin 2012 and as someone considered as a possible successor to Benedict during the 2013 conclave.

'Accompanying, discerning, integrating weakness' in osservatoreromano.it opens by asking whether we

should be worried that "a Jesuit Pope is offering, as a pastoral approach for the whole Church, the experience of the charism of accompaniment and discernment developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*".

Charism

Claiming that this charism is effectively implemented in the controversial eighth chapter of *Amoris*, he says this offers bishops a vast open field for the "pastoral conversion" Pope Francis has called for since his 2013 programmatic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* ('*The Joy of the Gospel*'), with these being rooted in missionary principles laid out in that exhortation and the earlier encyclical *Lumen Fidei* ('*The Light of Faith*'), itself inherited in large part from Pope Benedict XVI.

Even taking in subjects as diverse as media attention to the synods on the family, it's a fascinating and important article, not to mention a solidly realistic one, not least when the cardinal observes that "it is no longer adequate to just go on restating doctrine and discipline for we run the risk of widening the gap between the community of the faithful and the many families in difficulty which no longer correspond to the usual norms of conjugal and family life".

It's not a short read, but it's one well worth reflecting on at length.

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A Talk on True Life in God

“Tell them that: The God they have forgotten has never forgotten them”

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Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

C.W.

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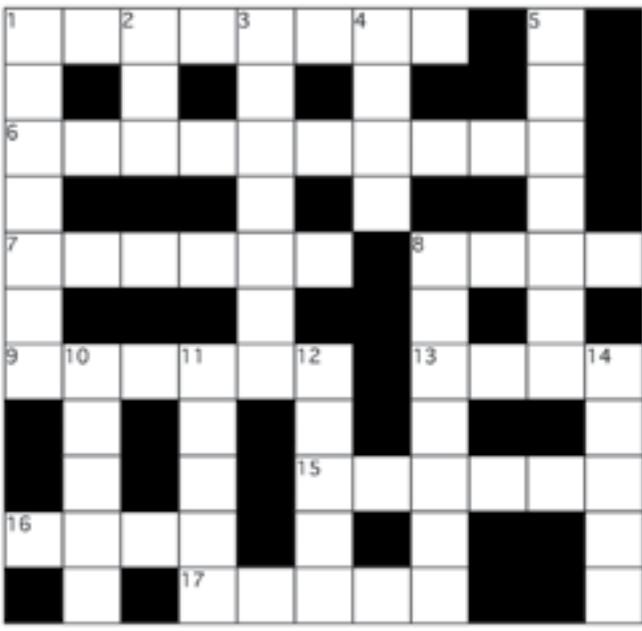
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Crossword Junior Gordius 210



- ACROSS**
- 1 Use it to keep your place in the novel you're reading (8)
 - 6 Rudeness (3,7)
 - 7 Seat you'll find on a bicycle or put on a horse (6)
 - 8 Prison (4)
 - 9 This bird has a speckled breast (6)
 - 13 Take one from ten to get this number (4)
 - 15 Almost (6)
 - 16 In this place (4)
 - 17 Metal becomes this when it is left out in the rain (5)
- DOWN**
- 1 Mind a child for someone (7)
 - 2 Ancient (3)
 - 3 When you have this illness, you get spots (7)
 - 4 Sounded a bell (4)
 - 5 You might put this on a seat to make it more comfortable (7)
 - 8 The first month of the year (7)
 - 10 Something sweet made by bees (5)
 - 11 Below (5)
 - 12 They're at the ends of your arms (5)
 - 14 Country where you'll find the pyramids (5)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS
GORDIUS No.326

Across - 1 Artificial 6 Torc 10 Amour 11 Rat poison 12 Watered down 15 Aisle 17 Edit 19 Ingot 21 By jingo 23 Moral 24 Leon 25 Ante 26 Amman 28 Dashing 33 Packhorse 34 Plato 35 Eras 36 Beatitudes

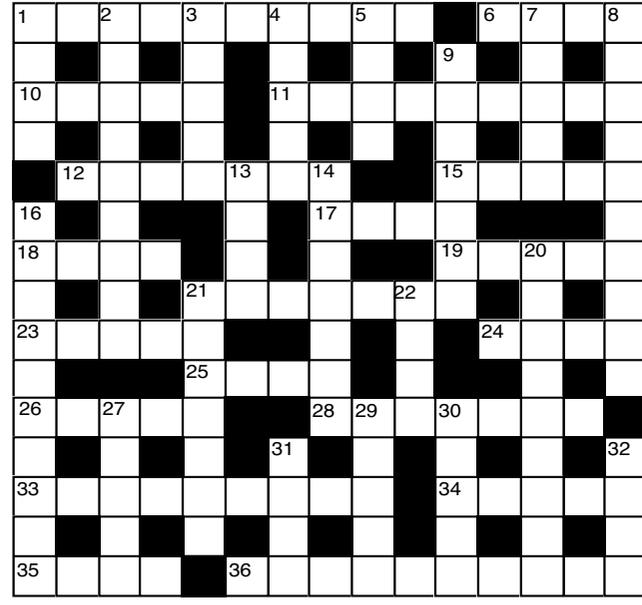
Down - 1 Afar 2 Trojan War 3 Farce 4 Carte blanche 5 Arty 7 Oasis 8 Concertina 9 Horatio 13 Ruby 14 Decided 16 Adam's apple 20 Greenland 22 Gaps 27 Mecca 29 Avert 30 Hop it 31 True 32 Moss

CHILDREN'S No.209

Across - 1 Jewel 6 Address 8 Marry 9 Scream 10 Dirt 12 Acts 13 Caged 14 Bee 15 Photo 16 Igloo 17 Got 20 Fingerprint

Down - 1 Jump 2 Working 3 Lay 4 Education 5 Beret 7 Simple 11 Tadpole 13 Chief 14 Bog 18 Own

Crossword Gordius 327



- ACROSS**
- 1 A cauldron he has no right to carry for the old chemist (10)
 - 6 Distort conflict quietly (4)
 - 10 The part of a cow that is milked (5)
 - 11 This eminent Presbyterian has the rotor made differently (9)
 - 12 Prehistoric elephantine creature (7)
 - 15 Manchester United football team is initially seen in civvies (5)
 - 17 Egg (4)
 - 18 Eye impertinently (4)
 - 19 The sailor, a sheepish male, can supply Isaac's father's original name (5)
 - 21 Alternative name for Burma (7)
 - 23 One to whom a cheque is made out (5)
 - 24 Rent out a seabird (4)
 - 25 Car by Issigonis or skirt by Quant (4)
 - 26 Young pigeon (5)
 - 28 Written record, detailing wood chopped by volume? (7)
 - 33 Break continuity (9)
 - 34 Should this be rearranged - tough! (5)
 - 35 Boring type of the computer world (4)
- DOWN**
- 16 Is the rendered carcass not above being interfered with? (10)
 - 1 Chemical extracted from Carolina lumber (4)
 - 2 The Central Criminal Court in London (3,6)
 - 3 Group of concubines (5)
 - 4 The firm encountered a space traveller (5)
 - 5 Impolite (4)
 - 7 & 8 A political document meant for capital redistribution (3,2,10)
 - 9 The science of language (7)
 - 13 Sole, solitary (4)
 - 14 & 30d Traditionally sturdy footwear (7,5)
 - 16 The camp is soon to be broken up? One can show empathy with that (10)
 - 20 This musical instrument may literally get God nearer (4,5)
 - 21 People who are part of a club or society (7)
 - 22 Keen to go into silver (4)
 - 27 Speak (5)
 - 29 Riverine mammal (5)
 - 30 See 14 down
 - 31 Large seafish (4)
 - 32 Let it stand - used to nullify a correction (4)

Sudoku Corner 210

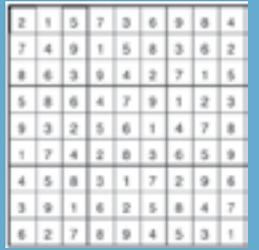
Easy

		2	7	9	5			
		1			8	2		
7				6	9			
5					6	8		
6		8		1			5	
8	7						4	
	8	4					5	
9	6			2				
	1	6	3	8				

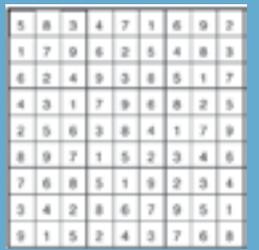
Hard

6					8			
		7		4		3	5	
	8	9						
		5			3	2		
9		3		6				1
	7	4			8			
					5		7	
7	1		6	9				
		5						3

Last week's Easy 209



Last week's Hard 209





Fr Bernard Healy

Notebook

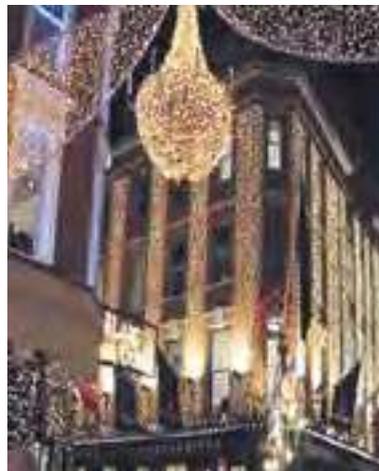
Looking for a Christmas to start, not to end

AT THE START of November this year, various Facebook friends began posting images and messages stating that with Hallowe'en behind us, now was the time for Christmas songs and decorations. Christmas seems to start earlier each year, but the current fad seems to be for the Christmas Season to encompass the whole of November. I doubt that many people actually spent November draping everything with tinsel, but our culture's celebration of Christmas is disconnected from the liturgical celebration of the Nativity.

With Christmas lights being switched on and shops decorated in the middle of November, it's no wonder that people are ready for Christmas to be over when December 25 rolls around.

Midnight Mass or the turkey leftovers of St Stephen's Day mark the end of the Christmas season rather than being at the beginning of our celebration.

Although starting Christmas earlier is driven by commercial pressures, the big problem isn't the commercialisation in itself, but the way the birth of Christ becomes the cue to stop our celebrating rather than being the beginning



and cause of our feasting.

The Church marks the four weeks of Advent before Christmas, but without a deliberate effort to mark this season, the spiritual value of Advent is swamped by our premature Christmas feasting.

SPEAKING TO some pupils of Polish descent in one of my parish's primary schools, they tell me that Polish Christmas traditions preserve the idea of fasting in preparation for Christmas. Polish families gather for a big meal on Christmas Eve, the *Wigilia* or Vigil. Despite the fact that this meal can be elaborate, with many courses and tasty desserts, meat is never served. The main course is always fish, a reminder of the fact that abstinence from meat on Christmas Eve was once part of the Church's preparation for the Christmas Feast.

My first December back in Ireland after several years of seminary in Rome was a bit of a culture shock. The Italians don't anticipate Christmas quite so early, and the seminary's emphasis on what is happening in the liturgical calendar made for a much more fruitful build-up to Christmas. (I sometimes wonder whether it is only in seminaries and religious houses that Advent is properly appreciated.)

During the Masses of Advent, we see a sobriety and a restraint in what the Church prescribes for the season. The Gloria isn't sung, the vestments are violet and the Advent wreath gives the sense of gradual preparation for a great feast.

Reminder

The first weeks of Advent focus on the second coming of Christ – a reminder that we live not simply

for the present, but with the hopeful expectation of Christ giving a definitive resolution to the course of human history. We are invited to measure ourselves against the demands of the Gospel and cultivate an expectation that God's saving help will not fail us.

The end of Advent places us with Mary and Joseph and the journey towards Bethlehem; a reassurance that just as the longings of the prophets were fulfilled by Christ's birth in the stable, so we too are consoled by the nearness of Emmanuel – God-with-us.

Can we try to make the coming weeks a preparation for rather than an anticipation of Christmas?

The Advent fasting of previous generations might not be practical, but we could all exercise a little restraint in the weeks before Christmas. We might hold off on the decorating so that the transformation of our homes is more closely associated with the coming of Christ Himself. It's also a good time to make a sacrifice in favour of the poor – in memory of the Holy Family's poverty and as a conscious response to the message of those prophets who prepared the way for Christ.



● In their book *Catholic and Loving It*, Sabitha Narendran and Andrew Salzman suggest a good way for families to prepare spiritually for Christmas. The empty Christmas crib is set up in the home at the start of Advent, and straw obtained to decorate it. During Advent, whenever a family member performs an act of kindness, they can add a piece of straw to the crib. When Christmas comes around, and the Christ Child is placed in the manger, his home has already been prepared by the sacrifices and kindnesses of the Advent season.



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"True glory is that which will last eternally, and to reach it, it isn't necessary to perform striking works but to hide oneself and practice virtue in such a way that the left hand knows not what the right is doing." - St Therese

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