

# The Irish Catholic

## 'EVERYTHING FOR HEAVEN' TOUR OF ST BERNADETTE'S RELICS ENDS

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# 'Trust in Faith in difficult times' - GAA All-Star

Exclusive

Chai Brady

Named a GAA All-Star last week, Tyrone man Niall Morgan is open and frank about the ups and downs of living a life of Faith. Opening up about the sorrow of miscarriage, the All-Star and primary school principal said that people should "trust in Faith" during difficult times.

Tyrone's All-Ireland winning goalkeeper said that before their first child his wife lost two children to miscarriage, which was a "huge test of Faith, because you're thinking, 'why us?'"

"At that stage you almost thought that you were the only one because people did not really talk about it, I think it's important to speak about it because one in five pregnancies end in miscarriage, which is a huge chance, and people would not really realise it," said Mr Morgan.

"We had a priest in our parish when I was younger... and he always said it was good to question your Faith, because it is only at the times you question your faith that you realise what you've actually got. It is good to ask yourself 'what do I have Faith in and why do I have faith?'"

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## Seminarians, nuns and priests all help out in the flood devastation



After the floods in Valencia, Spanish parishes were turned into collection centres and shelters. Within hours of the tragedy, more than 15,000 Catholic volunteers set to work to help those affected, including seminarians, nuns, priests and even Archbishop Enrique Benavent of Valencia.

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# 'Trust in Faith in difficult times' – GAA All-Star

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The 33-year-old Edendork man also advised people to "remember everybody has a reason to be here and there is a plan for everybody, just have faith in that journey and know that there is love there and there is someone in this world that you are making the world better for".

"Trust that process and have that Faith... for some it takes that little bit longer to find that purpose and some of us have tougher periods than others, but we all face our battles at different times and in different ways – have that strength to persevere and push through, know that there will be help there and you will get

through it in the end."

Despite Tyrone not reaching the All-Ireland quarter finals, Mr Morgan was one of the 15 selected as 2024 PwC GAA/GPA Football All-stars last week due to his exceptional performance.

He added that he does not pray to God to fix things, saying "I feel that God presents himself in different ways and through different channels, and it could be through the smallest bit of advice that you get from someone at a time that you don't expect it, or it could be when whenever you ask a tough question to somebody and they tell you something you don't want to hear, that's where my Faith presents itself".

# Giving St Bernadette a lift in Cork

Illiana Ochoa Bravo

The visit of St Bernadette in Ireland has come to an end, with stops in Elphin and Cork and Ross Dioceses. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Cecelia Healy, who drove the relics to Cork's cathedral, said it was a "memorable and great experience."

Along with being one of the volunteers to drive the relics, Ms Healy was also appointed as a steward for the relics. She said the experience was a "nice, peaceful and lovely feeling... Me, as well as the other helpers, felt that we were caring for the relic. It was a privilege to do the transporting of the relic and be a steward. We got to meet such lovely, lovely people."

Driving the relics of St Bernadette was a unique experience for Ms Healy and her team. When they reached the North Cathedral, "everyone was clapping. There were people being extremely emotional, some were even crying."

Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross has said having the Relics of St Bernadette has been "a great blessing for Ireland." He said: "It has allowed people an opportunity to express their faith and has allowed people an opportunity to feel solidarity with other people."

Similarly, Ms Healy said watching everyone gather to be in the presence of the relics, as well as meeting with people to coordinate the handling of the relics, made everything feel "like a family."

Bishop Gavin says that in today's culture where the Catholic Faith can "seem almost marginal," the visit of the Relics of St Bernadette has brought diverse communities together where they can celebrate their religion freely.

Fr Tom Hayes, resident in the Parish of Clonakilty, said the volunteers were chosen because for years, they were part of the team of helpers who "served on the diocesan



The volunteers who transported the Relics of St Bernadette around the Diocese of Cork and Ross. From left to right: Culm Long, Cecelia Healy and David Howard.

pilgrimage to Lourdes."

Ms Healy states that she has been a helper for the pilgrimage of Lourdes for 12 years, and was inspired by her mother, who had been a helper for 34 years. "Lourdes to me is very special because my mom as well was connected to Lourdes."

According to Ms Healy, when transporting the relics throughout the Diocese of Cork

and Ross, her and the other two volunteers, David Howard and Culm Long, had to be careful since the relics were heavy. Mr Howard and Mr Long had to do all the heavy lifting because of the difficulty of transporting the relic onto its platform. Everything had to be "correctly done and handled." The relics were welcomed in the Diocese of Cork and Ross from October 30 to November 1.

# Ardee locals fearful that new grotto might be removed

Brandon Scott

Locals in the Co. Louth town of Ardee are fearful that a recently installed grotto, which has become a site of "prayer" and "reflection", will be subject to removal in the imminent future due to "a number of complaints" that have been lodged with Louth County Council revolving around "religious symbolism in a public space".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, local representative and General Election candidate for Aontu Michael O'Dowd said that the grotto,

which was only opened to the public in May, has become "accepted" by the town after members "rallied around" for its inclusion.

"The grotto was the idea of a volunteer named Dermot and the general public in Ardee rallied around it. People pass it and a lot stop and reflect as they pass it. It's become very much accepted in the town by the community."

Explaining the reasons for the possible removal of the grotto, Mr O'Dowd said that meetings were held by Louth County Council where

members discussed the grotto's "appropriateness" in a multicultural country.

"What happened was that this was raised at a number of local meetings and there is an Ardee 2040 plan," he said. "So the grotto was not part of that plan. Two members of Louth County Council met with Dermot and said that they have received a number of complaints about the grotto."

"They haven't made any decision on it but one of the issues concerned the appropriateness of the grotto in current, multicultural Ireland and

religious symbolism in a public space. I would believe that there would be very strong support for its retention."

Local volunteer Dermot Maguire, who was instrumental in the grotto coming about said that locals are happy with the grotto and his campaign to save it has generated large support.

"I have seen people coming down to it and they say their prayers and they're happy. No one has ever complained to me about it," he said.

"The Council haven't spoken to

me per se about a removal but they were kind of implying that it could be removed. Michael asked them for a report of the complaints but they said they couldn't give names but we just wanted to see a report of the complaints.

"Locals are very supportive of the campaign. I currently have 590 names online and 897 actual signatures. All in all I'd say I would have 1000 names, no bother."

**i** Louth County Council was reached for comment but did not respond by the time of publication.

# Housing crisis increasing risk of sexual exploitation

Renata Milán Morales

St Marta Group, a human rights charity, rooted in the Catholic Church, has said that "human trafficking in Northern Ireland

has reached alarming levels, according to local charities." The findings highlight the urgent need for stronger preventative measures and "support systems for victims, including safe housing."

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Barbara Condon, Ruhama's CEO, stated that they are "deeply concerned by the spread of 'sex for rent' practices, which disproportionately impact women in financially

precarious situations. With Ireland's worsening housing crisis pushing many into economic desperation, women from lower- and middle-income backgrounds are increasingly at risk of exploitation."

The CEO of the organisation founded by the Good Shepherd Sisters and Our Lady of Charity Sisters also declared that "this is a form of sexual exploitation that has gone underreported and unaddressed for

too long. When necessities such as shelter are tied to sexual demands, real consent is undermined... The law should ensure comprehensive legal options and safeguard victims." **i** See page 12

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# Sainthood cause set to open for 'youth inspiring' Sr Clare Crockett

**Chai Brady and Renata Milán Morales**

A Derry-born nun who died in an earthquake in Ecuador has been hailed as an inspiration for youth following the announcement she will soon be officially put on the path to sainthood.

Sr Clare Crockett wanted to become a famous actress in Hollywood and was on the path to doing so until she attended a retreat in Spain on Good Friday and felt a strong call to religious life. Sr Clare subsequently joined the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother (SHM).

Fr Gerard Mongan, parish priest of her native Long Tower parish said that she already has a "huge following of devotees who are inspired by her remarkable conversion story".

"The people of Derry and beyond are overwhelmed by the possibility that one day, they will have their

own saint. In particular, she has been an inspiration to many young people who have been inspired by her life, especially her infectious joy," Fr Mongan said.

Bishop Fintan Gavin, Chairman of the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development for the bishops' conference told *The Irish Catholic* that part of Sr Clare's attraction "is that people can relate to her as a young woman, a woman who didn't set out on this path for holiness immediately... she lived a life of a teenager and then through encountering Christ, changed her life".

"She was also a person who had a very prayerful and serious side and had a lot of fun attached to her as well... I think she's a very real saint for young people today," Bishop Gavin said.

Sr Kristen Gardner SHM, who is in the same order as Sr Clare and will be officially promoting her

beatification cause said that Sr Clare's story has "such a strong impact on young people in Ireland because they identify with her. They see her as one of them, she had her dreams, she wanted to go to Hollywood, she loved partying... and yet, she discovered a greater love, she discovered that only Christ could satisfy her desires for greatness and for happiness and this is what inspires young people".

Sr Kristen said that Sr Clare was young and "full of the true joy that only God can give" which is "quite the opposite of how nuns are often portrayed in films".

"However, this film portrayal is not the true reality of religious life. When one gives one's life to God, one finds true joy and happiness. And Sr Clare is an example of that," she added.

The opening of the cause for the beatification of



Mural to Sr Clare Crockett in Derry

Sr Clare Crockett will take place on Sunday, January 12, 2025 in the Cathedral of Alcalá de Henares, Madrid,

Spain. From this point she will be declared a servant of God and the intensive scrutiny of her life and ministry

will continue with both a postulator and vice postulator appointed to present the case to the Vatican.

## Vatican anime mascot 'an invitation to youth'



**Renata Milán Morales**

The Church has unveiled 'Luce', a new mascot designed to reach younger generations in the upcoming Jubilee 2025. The mascot's design and purpose have raised different reactions, with some questioning whether such an

approach aligns with traditional Church practices. However, many Church leaders view it as part of an evolving mission to adapt to cultural shifts and share the faith in contemporary ways.

James McLoughlin, Youth Coordinator for the Diocese of Clogher, supports the initiative, seeing Luce as a modern approach to his-

torical religious art that has evolved across centuries to engage new audiences. "If we look back at Church art through the ages, it has moved with the times... While Luce may not be to everyone's taste, if it points anyone to find out more about Jubilee 2025 and the Church, then it is a good thing," he said.

Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross described Luce as a "pastoral tool", clarifying that while the mascot is innovative, its purpose is ultimately to lead young people toward the Church's deeper and more enduring message. "Luce is just one of the many

tools that help us to propose the gospel," he explained. "But the depth of the message that we're offering goes beyond any mascot. It's simply a point of invitation to younger generations, a medium for engagement with a different generation."

## Clogher Diocese's youth awarded JPII

**Renata Steffens**

The Diocese of Clogher's diocesan JPII Award Ceremony happens this Friday, November 8 in the St Joseph's Church, Monaghan Town. The award will be handed to the diocese's youth by Bishop Larry Duffy, and guest speaker Mickey Harte will give a talk afterwards about the importance of faith in the participants' lives.

James McLoughlin, the award coordinator in the diocese told *The Irish Catholic* "This year, 85 young people from 16 parishes across the Diocese of Clogher will receive the award after taking part in the award program. Their efforts culminated in meaningful contributions that have enriched their parishes, local communities and the

broader diocesan family."

Mr McLoughlin said the annual award ceremony "celebrates not just the achievements of the awardees but also highlights the role of mentors, parishes, and schools in guiding and supporting the young participants throughout their journey."

The coordinator said the program "continues to strengthen the bonds between young people and their communities, ensuring a vibrant future for the Church."

The Pope John Paul II Award was established to celebrate the late Pope's commitment to youth engagement in the Church, Mr McLoughlin said. The program encourages young people aged 16 to 18 to become more active in their parishes and community.

"Participants engage in a variety of projects, ranging from liturgical roles and leadership within their par-

ishes to outreach initiatives that support social justice and community welfare", said the coordinator.

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# Aontú: Govt must ask serious questions about State childcare

**Brandon Scott**

Speaking after the publication of the Child Law Project's latest report, a report which concluded that the State child care system in the country is in "crisis", Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín said that he has "no doubt" about the recent judgment

of the advisory body and that it's high time Government started asking very "serious" questions about the ongoing deficits in the State child care system.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Mr Tóibín outlined the problems currently hindering the provision of State child care services and said

that Government decisions are exacerbating the situation and endangering children.

"There's no doubt about it" (the system being in crisis), he said. "There's no doubt that so many of the State services are completely disjointed in terms of the protection of children. There's no doubt that many of the State services are overwhelmed with the numbers coming through and under resourced in terms of ability to help.

"There's no doubt as well that the Government are making decisions around what's called 'Special Emergency Arrangements'. These are unregulated State care accommodation that often has unvetted staff where children are going miss-

ing from. Academics have shown that these children are getting targeted for sexual exploitation."

Pointing out that numerous elements of the services are in turmoil, Mr Tóibín said that this level of dysfunction is directly responsible for children going missing.

"Three major elements of the services are collapsing at the moment and until they're dealt with, we're going to see more children go missing," he said. "We found out that 227 children have died in the last 10 years - that's practically a child a month. 11 children were murdered as well in that period of time. The Government have very serious questions to ask in relation to this.

"The Child Law Project was a solution in terms of trying to bring these cases to light and trying to create transparency in this situation and now the Government have defunded them so they don't even have the facilities to do this anymore," he said.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Delay in trial of man accused of Cork-born bishop's murder

The mental competency of a man accused of the murder of Cork-born Bishop David O'Connell to stand trial will not be determined until the new year.

Earlier this month, the case against Carlos Medina, the husband of Bishop David O'Connell's housekeeper, was suspended after his lawyers raised concerns about his ability to stand trial during a pre-trial hearing.

Last week a competency hearing opened in Hollywood courthouse and the case has now been adjourned until January 15 for "further proceedings", according to Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.

### Archbishops of Armagh united to remember war chaplains

Archbishop Eamon Martin and Anglican Archbishop John McDowell will share reflections on the lives and service of two wartime military chaplains, Rev James McMurray-Taylor and Fr John Patrick O'Brien SSC who both served as chaplains to the Royal Ulster Rifles and landed in Normandy on D-Day, on BBC Radio 4, Sunday Worship, on Sunday November 10.

The service, on the theme of devotion and duty, will be broadcast from 8:10am, and led by the Rev Dr Lesley Carroll.

### Generous donations to Co. Monaghan and Armagh churches

St Mary's Church, Castleblayney Muckno Parish received a donation of over £1,000 during the visit of the Relics of St Bernadette.

The Diocese of Clogher said on a Facebook post that Brian Ruddin, from Cordelia's Mobile Catering Service Newry Road, made a "great act of kindness" by serving volunteers and visitors food and drinks free of charge, asking only for donations which he passed on to the parish.

Mr Ruddin has not only donated to St Mary's Church but also to Armagh Cathedral. During the visit of the Relics of St Bernadette to the Cathedral on October 29, Mr Ruddin donated £2,340.

The cathedral said that Mr Ruddin's generous donation will go towards the "current fundraising campaign for the restoration and maintenance of the Cathedral."

## Glenstal Abbey's abbatial blessing



The recently-elected abbot of Glenstal Abbey, Abbot Columba McCann OSB, received his abbatial blessing on November 1 at a ceremony presided over by Archbishop of Cashel and Emlly Kieran O'Reilly. Photo: Miriam Power.

## Derry children draw God

**Renata Steffens**

Schools from the Derry Diocese are getting ready to draw God in an annual fun day of

art and faith. The 6th annual World Drawing God Day will take place on November 14, when children from all around the globe use art to express their faith inspired by the book of author Karen Kiefer.

Thérèse Ferry, Derry Diocesan Advisor for Primary Schools told *The Irish Catholic* she ordered the book *Drawing God* in 2019 and showed it during an In-service, "so we could get the children of the Derry Diocese drawing God!"

Due to the great response to the book - which follows a girl who, inspired by Picasso, decides to draw God, but "her classmates can't see God in any of her drawings until

they find inspiration in her contagious faith" - an International Drawing God Day was created.

"The response from schools in the diocese has been fantastic," Ms Ferry said. "Every year since then schools across the diocese have participated." The schools send the pictures to Ms Ferry and author Karen Kiefer, who has a 'virtual museum' for the project.

"The images from the Drawing God Projects reveal that the children from the diocese 'have no problem understanding God'. They are 'simple and sincere' and they have much to teach us."

## US priest in Ireland: Irish people sense US election is 'their election'

**Staff reporter**

Speaking in advance of the US presidential election, Fr Gary Chamberland CSC, an American priest who has been ministering for four years in Ireland, said that Irish people follow the latest political trends in the US like "it's a sport" and that people in the country feel that it's "their election" because of the implications it will have on the wider world, regardless of who the victor is.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Chamberland said that from his experience, Irish people have a deep investment in US politics. "I've often remarked to people that the Irish watch American politics like it's a sport, as do we, but

you're a little farther away from it," he said. "My sense is that Irish, like many people in the world, see it as their election because like it or not, good or bad, the American presidency and American foreign policy has a deep impact on around the world. Everything from geopolitical issues to financial and economic."

Winner aside, Fr Chamberland's wish is for the election to yield a "decisive" outcome, one free of protracted court trials, arguing, and bickering.

"It's all very complex," he said. "I just hope the election is decisive, either way, just so that the year and a half of court trials and arguing and bickering over the validity of elections just doesn't happen this year."

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# The Catholic Church, the reds and the mafia

**H**ere's a fascinating theme: "Family Values: the Catholic Church and the Mafia". This was the subject of Fr Alexander Lucie-Smith's address at last week's Catholic Writers' Guild in London.

Fr Alexander, born in Malta, is knowledgeable about Sicilian (and Calabrian society), and has written several novels intertwining the Mafia, the local priesthood, and the people.

The Mafia was originally a movement which helped landless peasants against wealthy landowners: 'cosa nostra'. During the Second World War, the Mafia opposed Mussolini – "they hated anything that glorified the state" – and so, when the Americans liberated Sicily, 'cosa nostra' found themselves on the right side of post-war politics. The Americans empowered them for having been anti-Fascist, and this opened an influence with the United States.

## Opposed

The Church, said Fr Lucie-Smith, was naturally opposed to the Mafia, since the mob were in the business of crime and murder. But the Church was also anti-Communist, and post-war, the Communist Party was strong in Sicily. There was something of a three-way power struggle, and the clergy often had to perform a balanc-



Mary Kenny

ing act.

Moreover, even though the Mafiosi themselves were gangsters (one cool-looking mafiosi, Salvatore Giuliano, is reckoned to have killed 250 policemen, the wives and mothers have usually been faithful Catholics. Sometimes a Mafiosi will say "I'm religious – my wife goes to Mass".

**“An admirable priest who challenged the mob, Fr Pino Puglisi, was murdered and is regarded as a martyr”**

Sicily is a close-knit society – 'everyone is related', and there's always been a kind of solidarity against the Italian mainland, which some Sicilians call "the Continent". Northern Italians also look down on southerners, which again solidifies community spirit.

In recent years, brave judges and courageous priests have defied the Mafia more robustly. An admirable priest who challenged the mob, Fr Pino Puglisi,

was murdered and is regarded as a martyr.

But despite the best endeavours of reformers, the Mafia still exists: and is joined today by the Russian, Chinese, and Albanian mafias – the last said to be the most ruthless.

## Paternalistic

Fr Alex, who is 61 and a parish priest near Epsom in Surrey, told a story which illustrated the "paternalistic" values of the Mafia. A young man informs his "godfather" that he has impregnated his girlfriend. "Marry her," orders the Don. "Oh no – I'm not bothered about that," says the fellow, being very modern. "In that case," says the Mafiosi, "here's some money – you can give it to your mother and she can spend it on your funeral." The lad complied with "cosa nostra" orders!

Alexander Lucie-Smith's novels follow themes of Italian priests and their moral struggles with Mafiosi and corruption: "The Chemist of Catania" and "The Nymph of Syracuse" are both gripping. They're especially interesting for any cleric wrestling with issues of crime and criminals, and how to address community problems where gangsters are powerful.



## A very strange cremation caper

**N**ovember is the month when we especially remember the dead, and in that context, I must finally deal with the last of my late sister's ashes. My sister Ursula died in New York in 2003, and what happened to her mortal remains was strange and indeed distressing.

She had arranged for a funeral home in upper Manhattan to carry out the cremation, after a Requiem

Mass. I was in her apartment in East 19th Street when a box allegedly containing her ashes was delivered to me. I duly brought them back to Ireland; part of these ashes were scattered on Sandymount Strand, leaving some remaining in an urn.

It wasn't long before I was contacted by the New York Police Department who informed me that the funeral home in question was a criminal operation which was trading in the body parts of

dead people, for profit (run by an ex-dentist, who was charged and found guilty). The ashes returned to the families of the deceased were, in effect, fake. The body parts had been sold off all over Latin America, and, possibly, Asia.

So the ashes I hold are not, really, Ursula's at all. Yet I've kept them all these years "in memoriam". They have become more significant as symbolic remembrance than a burnt offering of the body.

**M**elania Trump is the most famous Slovenian in the world: and the second most globally renowned Slovenian is a Marxist (or Marx-ish) philosopher called Slavoj Žižek, aged 75. His is the name to drop in intellectual circles – he's known as "The Elvis of Philosophy".

I won't pretend to understand, much less explain, his bewilderingly contradictory ideas (influenced by Hegel and Lacan, we're

told), but apparently his new book "Against Progress" argues that there is no such thing as linear progress (as Marx believed) – and we're all doomed anyway.

However, on one literary point I'd confidently challenge him. He claims that Sam Beckett is a much more consequential writer than James Joyce. No way, José! Beckett is, mostly, a nihilistic bore – while JJ is forever rich in narrative, language and ideas.

  
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# Saints go marching among the ghouls

Renata Steffens

In a time when children walk around dressed as witches and ghouls, it is good to have an alternative celebration. Ireland saw many All Saints parties happening in the past few weeks, giving children an opportunity to have fun and wear costumes, as well as cultivate their faith.

Catholic Mothers Ireland organised a party in Ballymena, Co. Antrim on November 1 and on November 3 a party happened in Cappagh Parish Hall, Killyclogher, Co.

Tyrone.

Sinéad Strong, Director for the Catholic Mothers Ireland told *The Irish Catholic* "This is the 10th year of All Saints parties hosted by the group, which held their first one in October 2014 as an alternative to the ghosts and ghouls Halloween is more typically associated with these days.

"The children took part in a saints colouring competition and other fun saint-themed games and activities. They all had a wonderful day learning about the Saints and making new friends", Ms Strong said.

Another All Saints party

happened in St Patrick's Cathedral Parish, Armagh. Fr Barry Matthews, parish administrator has said the children loved it and they had "all sorts of saints represented."

This is the third year the celebration happens in St Patrick's Cathedral. Fr Matthews said the Missionaries of Charity sisters "helped a lot" with the children's costumes.

"From Blessed Carlo Acutis, Mother Teresa to John the Baptist... Even people dressed as Juan Diego and with the images of Our Lady of Guadalupe... and of course, our own beloved St Patrick."



Armagh All Saints Party



Davog McShane as St Patrick during the 3rd All Saints party in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.



The Scullion family: Joseph as St Pope John-Paul II, Eamon as a modern-day version of St Joseph, Dermot as St Dermot, Lily-Marie as Mother Mary and Nuala-Rose as St Cecelia.



Gemma Toner, Denise Toal and Claire Duffy at the All Saints party in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.



The Cullen family: Jacinta-Rose as St Elizabeth, Francesca as St Rita, Joseph as St George, Judith as Queen Isabella, and Cecelia as the Angel of Fatima.



Sinéad Strong and daughter Blathnaid as St Gemma Galgani and St Elizabeth of Hungary.



Ballymena All Saints Party.



Omagh All Saints Party.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### AMRI new Executive Council elected

AMRI has announced their new Executive Council with Fr Joe McGee MSC as president and Sr Barbara Murphy IBVM as vice president.

Fr McGee, from Donegal, was ordained in 1986 and has exercised his pastoral ministry mostly in England, as a parish priest and school chaplain. He was also elected for the second time Provincial of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in 2023.

Fr McGee "looks forward to working closely with AMRI and with the support of the Executive Council he will endeavour to serve the wider membership to the best of his ability," the charity said in a statement.

A Wexford native, Sr Murphy made her first profession in 1977 and served in a number of ministries and leadership positions.

The new Executive Council also elected as members Sr Breege O' Neill RSM, Fr Brendan O'Rourke CSsR, Sr Irene Balzan MMM, Sr Anozie Ndidi Eucharistia MSHR, Fr Jim Noonan OCD, Fr Michael O'Sullivan Mafr and Denise Flack Viatores Christi.

### Cork and Ross youth gathering happens this month

The young adult groups in the Diocese of Cork and Ross will host the fifth CONNECT event on November 17 in UCC. These events, organised by the leaders of the young adult ministries in the diocese, bring together people aged 18 to 35 for a day of talks, workshops and community.

CONNECT 5 will happen from 9.30am to 4pm, with theme 'In a troubled world, Dare to Hope'. The event will include guest speakers Fr Columba Jordan CFR and Katie Ascough, Founder of 'Called to More.'

During the day, participants will attend Mass, enjoy the gathering with music and chat and some quiet time for prayer and reflection. To register access [www.eventbrite.ie](http://www.eventbrite.ie), the registration fee is €10 and includes lunch.

### Strong connection between church and Tidy Towns winners

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* after Ballincollig Tidy Town's historic win over the weekend, Tidy Towns volunteer and Eucharistic Minister in the parish, Diarmuid Horgan, said that response the group has received has been "huge".

"It's been huge," he said. "There's been a huge response on social media and on the street and from other Tidy Towns across the country. We got a bit of kudos from the local priest at Mass on Sunday – we got a good mention and a round of applause.

"I'm Minister of the Eucharist as well as being in the Tidy Towns. A lot of that would overlap. So a lot of the Tidy Towns members would also be heavily involved in the Church."



**Rialtas na hÉireann**  
Government of Ireland

## **The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme is now open for applications.**

The Payment Scheme provides financial payments and health supports to eligible people in acknowledgement of circumstances experienced while in Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions in Ireland.

The application process is straightforward, and there is support available for those who wish to apply.

**To apply to the Payment Scheme, or for further information,  
please visit [gov.ie/paymentscheme](https://gov.ie/paymentscheme) or call our helpline on **01 522 9992**.**



## Senator Rónán Mullen

A view from the Seanad



# Making Catholicism and careers compatible

I was honoured to speak at a 'Catholic Careers Summit' for young people recently in Dublin's Larkhill-Whitehall parish. This event brought young adult Catholics together to think about their careers in the context of their faith. What would be the challenges for living their faith while practising their chosen profession? And what opportunities might their work offer to bring themselves and others closer to God.

It is always a privilege to meet and speak with people a generation or two younger than yourself and to offer any help you can as they make their way in the world.

People entering public life can see their work as serving the needs of fellow men and women. What they do needs to make sense to people of different-faiths-and-none who believe (1) that good is better than evil and (2) that the common good is something we should all be aiming for.

### Thrive

In case there's someone close to you whom you want to survive and thrive in the middle of the world, I reproduce here some of the ideas that came up at the summit.

1. Ask yourself the questions: 'Why am I here? Why I am alive?' Thinking about the mystery of our existence helps us get away from the herd mentality and open ourselves to the idea that we are made for something special. The world is a mystery. Faith offers an answer rooted in the awesome dignity we enjoy as children of a loving God.

That realisation is a mission and a mandate to



honour the human dignity of all whom we encounter—in everything we do. It's pretty obvious also that we each have a different set of gifts and talents to those of other people. Putting our particular combination at the service of others is the best and happiest way to live.

**“We don't have to be paralysed by any depressed sense that things were great in that far-off time when most people went to church and respected basic morality”**

2. If not us, who? If not now, when? The only people whom we can change is

ourselves. The only time we have is now. These ideas are liberating. We don't have to over-think about how good or bad things were in society in the past. We don't have to be paralysed by any depressed sense that things were great in that far-off time when most people went to church and respected basic morality.

Nor must we be crippled by shame over the actions of others who failed to give Christian leadership or did wrong things. All we have is now. What is the Lord calling us to do now - in these days, in the world we live in, with the people we find ourselves among?

### Remember

3. Remember Mother Teresa's dictum: "We are not called to be successful, but faithful." This is not an excuse for mediocrity or for not taking responsibility. We must try to excel. But we work best when

we see ourselves as instruments. As Bishop Robert Barron puts it, it is not about the play I am writing, producing or starring in, but about finding my place in the *theodrama* - the play that God has written and is producing.

Thinking about it this way, isn't it egotism in us to expect to see the full results of our efforts? So let's till that garden in front of us, and stop worrying about the state of the fields that may seem beyond our reach.

**“Who will effect positive change, if not people inspired by love of neighbour and fellow human beings?”**

4. Be 'people for others'. As Bishop Barron puts it, To be holy is to do the will of God; to do the will of God is to love, and to love is to will the good of others. "See how the Christians love one another," recorded Tertullian of the wonder of pagan Romans at the ethos of Christians who lifted up the poor and cared for the weak. As our world

lurches into new forms of the old barbarism (think cruel wars, abortion and euthanasia presented as compassion, selfish drug use, the commodification of children, violent and ugly political rhetoric), who will model the alternative way to live, if not Christians? And who will effect positive change, if not people inspired by love of neighbour and fellow human beings?

### Network

5. 'Network, Network, Network'. I will be eternally grateful to Mary Kenny for offering this simple advice to me around 25 years ago. We were chatting about how to put the best foot forward for what you believe in. And she spoke those vital words. Now we all have different levels of reserve and not everyone is an extrovert with an overwhelming desire to expand their network of friends or live on LinkedIn.

But if you have Christ in your life you have won the lottery. And it's for sharing, not keeping to yourself. Love is the one thing that, the more you give it away, the more you accumulate. And showing that love to other people through all your activity touches the most surprising of hearts. And you become

more effective. Relate to others out of sincere concern for them. That's good ethics. But that leads to high-quality relationships and better results. So it is good politics too.

**“Think of prayer and spiritual reflection as going for a tank of petrol or diesel. You fill up and then you drive. You don't have to tell people you have fuel in your car”**

6. Let's not over-spiritualise. It's paradoxical, but the best way to work for God is not to go on about God all the time. Think of prayer and spiritual reflection as going for a tank of petrol or diesel. You fill up and then you drive. You don't have to tell people you have fuel in your car. They'll know where you've come from as you do your daily work, campaigns and projects.

7. Finally, get your sleep. It really isn't all about you, you know. It's the *theodrama*.

**“Love is the one thing that, the more you give it away, the more you accumulate. And showing that love to other people through all your activity touches the most surprising of hearts”**

# US politics may be divisive but at least it offers choice



Maria Steen

As I am writing this column, the final ballots in the US election are yet to be cast. The result appears to be hanging in the balance, with polls suggesting that those favouring one candidate over the other are almost evenly divided. Like many observers, I have watched with interest the somewhat tumultuous nature of this presidential cycle – and the political commentary on it.

Reading Fintan O'Toole in full pearl-clutching mode in the pages of *The Irish Times* or listening to *RTE's* 'coverage', one would be forgiven for thinking that the possibility of a Republican victory signals the end of democracy as we know it. One of the consistent observations (and complaints) from this side of the water is in relation to the lack of unity in the US, with the finger being pointed at former President Trump as a "divisive figure".

What is interesting about the complaints of a lack of unity and the divided and divisive nature of political discourse in America, is that they come – almost overwhelmingly – from those who would regard themselves as liberal.

These commentators talk about how a candidate that unites everyone is what is needed. What they fail to address is how this can happen when approximately 50% of the population (if the polls are to be believed) do not agree with their liberal worldview.

## Unite

The unspoken subtext to their comments is that what they really want is an enforced unity, where everyone is expected to 'unite' under the candidate of their choice. In other words, liberals want everyone to be liberal. This is a form of government, but not a democracy.

For anyone in the US who values freedom of religion and expression, or who opposes abortion, the ideological capture of education, or the transgender project, "unity" under the Democratic Party candidate would mean subjection to tyranny.

While democracy requires a majority rule, it does not mean that a minority who is not happy with the outcome



should be crushed into submission, never to be allowed again to utter a complaint, as has happened here to pro-lifers since the 2018 referendum. The liberals who promote this idea of "unity" offend against the very principles of liberalism.

Having taken part in major national debates on marriage and abortion, as well as the more recent referenda on "care" and "women in the home", I can say that conflict and division in the political sphere are not pleasant – but in a free society, they are sometimes necessary. Without them, there can be no free exchange of ideas, no testing of concepts, no examination of policies, no real choice given to people.

**“Those few brave politicians in Aontú and among the independents who stand out as being different are very much swimming against the tide”**

While the two party system in the United States has its limitations, it at least offers voters what the late Phyllis Schlafly called "a choice, not an echo". In Ireland, by contrast, the major political parties are practically indistinguishable from one another on most policy matters, and certainly on the so-called "social" issues, of which abortion is perhaps the most prominent.

Those few brave politicians in Aontú and among the independents who stand out as being different are very much swimming against the tide.

When it comes to the major parties, voters who value life, marriage, the family, and the right of parents to educate their children as they see fit, are left out in the cold. The political outlook is even more bleak when one considers the overwhelming consensus from the academic and journalistic establishment.

The truth is that the striking characteristic of Irish political discourse is that it is actually devoid of any major conflict or any serious division on most matters of consequence. I, for one, find this to be utterly oppressive.

Democracy, the rule by the people, presupposes that the people have a choice (in other words, that there are differing proposals on offer) and that they are well-informed as to the different choices. A free media plays a crucial role in a democracy for this reason – its role is to test the ideas on offer, to hold politicians to account, and to level the playing field, so that smaller opposition or minority voices and independents can engage fairly and be able to challenge and debate the larger and more powerful voices.

## Lockstep

Instead, what has happened in this country over the last couple of decades is that journalists have been overwhelmingly in lockstep with politicians – or rather it is the other way around. A small elite of journalists, broadcasters and academics has an outsized influence on political commentary, to the extent that they have direct influence on politicians without even having to lobby them.

It's not so much that politicians fear falling out of favour with these commen-

Ireland is run by an oligarchy of liberal political commentators and politicians.

Nowhere was this more obviously shown to be the case than in the referenda run last March, when government NGOs, political commentators, journalists and all the major political parties were in direct opposition to the will of the people.

**“When we fundamentally disagree on whether something is right or wrong, then conflict is necessary and even good”**

This was only highlighted because there happened to be a referendum on the issue; however, the vast majority of laws and policy are made without direct reference to the people. The oligarchy

gets its way because there is no real opposition. Can you imagine how the people might have voted if the recent controversial SPHE curriculum had been put to them in a referendum?

## Consensus

As Catholics, we know that neither consensus nor conflict is a good in itself. Consensus is good when there is agreement that what is right, is right, or that what is wrong, is wrong. But when we fundamentally disagree on whether something is right or wrong, then conflict is necessary and even good. Looking to the US then, the "divisive" election campaign may in fact be a good thing.

The electorate is being presented with a real choice: voters understand what is at stake, and which values the two candidates espouse, even if in their persons they do not always fully embody those values. The choice is stark. But at least American voters have a choice.

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# The Disciples of the Divine Master's Centenary, 'a very special day'



Renata Milán Morales

**T**he Disciples of the Divine Master congregation recently celebrated a thanksgiving Mass in Athlone, where they first established the congregation in Ireland, to mark the centenary of their founding in 1924 by Blessed James Alberione. The Mass, led by Bishop Kevin Doran, was attended by clergy and a choir from St Peter and Paul's Parish. The order, known for its commitment to Eucharistic adoration, came to Ireland in 1963, and the community in Athlone became a spiritual attraction. "It was a very special day, and we had a lovely, lovely group of people who came and joined us for the celebration," said Sr Kathryn to *The Irish Catholic*.

The Sisters began their Irish mission by working alongside the Society of St Paul, offering liturgical services and creating vestments. They relocated from Ballykeeran to Athlone in 1985, after famously purchasing a pub for their new convent. Their centre continues as a place of welcome and quiet prayer, and they are now renovating the Alberione House in Dublin to expand their hospitality ministry.

The Irish community, which includes Sr Muriel Fetherston, their first Irish sister, who will be 99 years old in March, remains inspired by their mission to "live and give Jesus Master to the world," explained Sr Kathryn. With faith, they look forward to a future of spiritual growth, fortified by the joyful legacy of Mother Scholastica's humble example of dedication to Jesus in the Eucharist.



Disciples of the Divine Master cutting their Centenary cake to celebrate 100 years of joyful service. Photos: John McElroy.



Sr Muriel Fetherston with family enjoying a chat and meal at a local hotel during the Centenary celebration.



Disciples of the Divine Master, Bishop Kevin Doran, Bishop Ray Browne, Bishop John Kirby, priests and friends after the Centenary Mass.



Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin, Deacon Tony Larkin, Bishop Michael Duignan, Bishop Ray Browne, Bishop John Kirby and Fr John Deignan P.P.



Sr Muriel Fetherston chatting to people after Mass.



Clarissan Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Maureen, Yahaira, Luz and Elena at the reception after Mass pictured with Fr Christopher Edebianga.



Principal celebrant Bishop Kevin Doran speaking to the congregation.



A large congregation in Sts Peter and Paul's Church Athlone to celebrate the Centenary of the Foundation of the Disciples of the Divine Master.



Srs Brid Geraghty and Christiane Carroll introducing all those present to each of the 10 Institutes of the Pauline Family founded by Blessed James Alberione at Mass.



Sr Muriel Fetherston, the first Irish Sister who will be 99 years old in March with her carer Sr Cassie at the Mass.



Sr Kathryn Williams speaking at Mass.



Sr Muriel Fetherston, with her carer Sr Cassie bringing a candle to the altar which represents one of the ten institutes of the Pauline Family founded by Blessed James Alberione.

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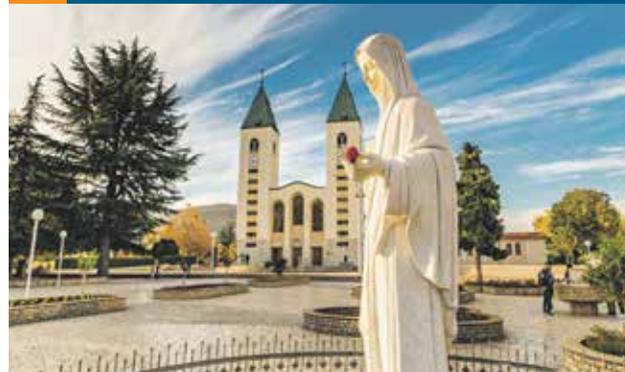


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# 'Everything for Heaven'

**Renata Milán Morales**

The recent visit of St Bernadette's relics to Ireland, culminating in the Cork and Ross and Elphin Dioceses, has drawn thousands of the faithful from across the country. This powerful event offered a unique opportunity to connect with a saint whose life

of quiet suffering and strong faith has inspired generations. Br Antony Sahayampilai, a Presentation Brother based in Cork, attended the event at Cork's Cathedral as a choir singer. Speaking with *The Irish Catholic*, he shared his reflections on the relic's visit.

"When I entered the church, I was shocked to see it packed with so many

people," he said. "I didn't expect such a large turnout, and people had come from far away. I was very happy to see that everyone was very prayerful." The intensity of the shared devotion was clear, and for Br Antony, the ceremony was deeply moving. "I think these kinds of ceremonies bring people together and increase their faith," he said.

Emphasising the significance of the relics, Br Antony added, "I think the relics are a physical connection with St Bernadette and Lourdes. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the relics in Ireland." He noted the special connection Irish Catholics feel with Lourdes, a place of pilgrimage and healing. "Many of the visitors to the relics may have gone to

Lourdes or have had family members visit Lourdes. It is a special place of healing," he explained.

For many, the relics' presence in Ireland offered an extraordinary moment to experience a piece of Lourdes. This rare opportunity touched hearts, reawakening devotion in an age that often feels disconnected from the sacred. St Berna-

dette's own words capture this spirit of faith: "I shall spend every moment loving. One who loves does not notice her trials; or perhaps more accurately, she is able to love them. I shall do everything for Heaven, my true home. There I shall find my Mother in all the splendour of her glory. I shall delight with her in the joy of Jesus himself in perfect safety."



Bishop Fintan Gavin welcomes the relics of St Bernadette at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork. Photos: Brian Loughheed.



Bishop Fintan Gavin prays at the relics of St Bernadette at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork.



The relics of St Bernadette at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork.



People came from near and far to visit the relics of St Bernadette at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork



Bishop Fintan Gavin celebrated the Sacrament of the Sick with those who visited the relics of St Bernadette at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork.



Mons Gearóid Dullea anointing people who visited the relics of St Bernadette at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork.

# The light of Christ and the law



Martina Purdy

Claire Brennan is a Catholic mother of four who was arrested in October last year while praying inside a so-called “safe-access zone” at Causeway Hospital in Derry.

Brennan (52), of Doney-sheil Road, Rasharkin, has a court date on December 2 and faces a fine up to £2,500 if convicted.

In legal terms, the charge is that she carried out a protest, either recklessly or with the intention of influencing a protected person in a “safe access zone”, a zone which she refused to leave.

This “safe access zone” law was first introduced by the Stormont Assembly in 2022 - with legislatures across these islands following suit. Indeed the Dublin Health minister has just introduced a similar law.

These laws have created zones of at least 100 metres around the entrances to abortion facilities. But critics insist these zones are not safe for the child in the womb nor do they protect women who are wounded by abortion, nor do they take into account the help that vulnerable women often receive at the gates of an abortion clinic.

Brennan has the backing of the advocacy group, Christian Concern, on human rights grounds. Her co-accused David Hall, (39), of Kingsbury Gardens, Coleraine, pleaded guilty in May. He became the first person to be convicted under this draconian law. Hall was fined £250.

## Convicted

Given the framing of the law, there is a high chance that Brennan will be convicted. So much for the pro-choice brigade who insist they do not want to ‘criminalise women’ over abortion.

When she was arrested Brennan was kneeling on a

traffic island opposite the hospital praying with rosary beads and holding a sign which read, “Pray to end abortion”. There was also a banner with the image of Our Lady of Fatima.

Brennan now continues her prayer vigil these days outside the zone, one of eight in Northern Ireland hospitals.

“I feel this new law is next to communism,” she said, “that Jesus is being made voiceless so I am standing in the gap for Jesus and I am being a voice for him”.

There are complex rights issues at the heart of this law.

It was passed by the NI assembly in March, 2022, and was soon challenged in the UK Supreme Court by the NI Attorney General on the grounds it disproportionately interfered with the rights of those who wanted to express their opposition to abortion. There is after all in the European Convention of Human Rights the right to freedom of thought, religion, expression, conscience and assembly.

**“If the mere presence of someone praying nearby causes distress, what is it like for a woman seeing a baby pushed in a pram? Are we going to ban them too?”**

The Supreme Court concluded the safe access zone was not disproportionate, and that rights are limited. It took into account the right to privacy, and freedom from harassment and intimidation, citing evidence that women entering facilities for an abortion are distressed by the “mere physical presence” of protestors: “Even a silent prayer vigil causes distress.”

Surely this is especially true for women who are conflicted about the decision? This law does not take into account abortion trauma, too often ignored, which

can manifest itself in years of pain, in alcohol and drug addiction. The legal use of the word influence is troubling - as it could be argued that it upholds one choice only.

If the mere presence of someone praying nearby causes distress, what is it like for a woman seeing a baby pushed in a pram? Are we going to ban them too?

What about the influences towards abortion? Would anyone on the pro-choice side advocate a law preventing a man offering cash with the words, “Get rid of it?”

These laws criminalise not just prayer in a particular place but the ‘good samaritan’ who is not allowed to offer help, even though there are plenty of women who testify that it was a leaflet - or the welcome offer of practical help at the gates of an abortion clinic - which saved their child’s life.

In Northern Ireland, this law was spearheaded by the Green Party leader Clare Bailey, who had previously volunteered as a “client escort” for Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast.

When this clinic opened up, after one of the most liberal abortion laws was imposed on Northern Ireland by Westminster, Brennan joined other pro-life advocates outside the clinic.

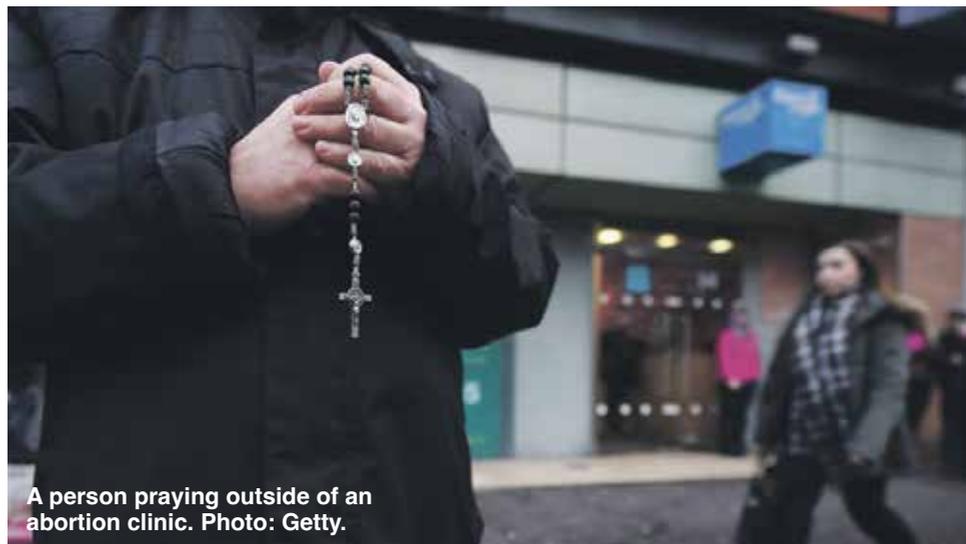
“I was outraged,” she told *The Irish Catholic*. “And a holy anger came upon me. I had just had a daughter who is now 12. She was just born and I was outside the abortion facility when we were doing a demonstration, and I was breastfeeding my newborn baby outside Marie Stopes.”

## Impact

Brennan believes it was prayer which had the biggest impact on Marie Stopes’s closure in Belfast after five years.

Subsequently, Brennan continued her prayer vigils at the gates of Coleraine Hospital for a year and a half before she fell foul of the new law.

Abortion figures are generally under-reported in Northern Ireland, where 7,681 abortions have taken place as of February 15, 2024 since the new abortion law took effect in NI at the end of March 2020. These Department of Health figures were obtained



A person praying outside of an abortion clinic. Photo: Getty.

by the TUV leader Jim Allister MP.

**“Safe access zone laws are also now in effect in Scotland, England and Wales, where prayer is not specifically banned”**

There are as yet no specific figures for abortions

at Causeway Hospital but it is known that 1,947 were carried out in the Northern Trust and Causeway is the only hospital ‘safe zone’ listed in this area. New figures are due shortly.

Safe access zone laws are also now in effect in Scotland, England and Wales, where prayer is not specifically banned though silent prayer has been criminalised through Public Safety Protection Orders imposed by some councils in England. New guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service

in Britain indicates that people who silently pray (that is in their heads and hearts) are not automatically prosecuted but it is a risk.

Brennan urged others not to be afraid to take a stand. If convicted she risks prison if she refuses to pay a fine. “I know that going to prison won’t be easy but I believe that nothing will happen without the will of God. And if it is the case that I do have to spend a short time in prison, then I believe this will serve some purpose for the greater good.”

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**“7,681 abortion have taken place as of February 15 2024 since the new abortion law took effect in NI at the end of March 2020. These Department of Health figures were obtained by the TUV leader Jim Allister MP”**



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# Voters are in a volatile mood ahead of General Election



David Quinn

It's a bit of a risk writing a column for a newspaper that comes out on a Thursday and assuming the General Election will have been called by the time you read it. But all the predictions are that Ireland will have its General Election on Friday, November 29, and Taoiseach Simon Harris will have called announced the date at the end of this week. The TDs are already mostly back in their constituencies canvassing for support.

At the moment, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail are looking good to be returned to Government, whether they deserve it or not. A *Sunday Independent* poll at the weekend had Fine Gael on 26% support, Fianna Fail on 20% and Sinn Fein on 18%. Independents were on 16% with the rest split between the various small parties.

Sinn Fein is a far cry from where they were a year ago when they were head and shoulders above either of the two main Government parties with about 36% support. They have experienced a huge fall since then.

Even compared with their election result in February 2020, Sinn Fein is down about six points. Fianna Fail is down two compared with then, and Fine Gael is up four. Therefore, Fine Gael is sitting fairly pretty, although it is all relative because 26% support isn't much to be writing home about. The glory days of the two main parties, and Fianna Fail especially, are almost certainly never coming back.

## Immigration

What has happened, especially since the economic crash of 2008, is the fracturing of the Irish political scene, but also the rise of Sinn Fein. Even if they are down from the heady heights of a year ago, their vote is much higher than it was say, 2016, when it won only 13.8% of the vote in the General Election of that year. I wouldn't be entirely surprised to see them climb back up to the 24% they won in 2020 if they run a decent campaign.

But why has Sinn Fein's support dropped so much in



Protestors take to the streets in Dublin. Photo: Frank McGrath.

**“We might or might not like the attitude of a large part of the working class, but it is what it is and as a result the traditional social democratic parties across Europe have lost lots of voters”**

the last year? That usually happens to Government parties. The reason most political commentators are giving is immigration. Sinn Fein is broadly speaking a social democratic party and across Europe those parties have found themselves on the horns of a dilemma.

**“This leaves their working-class voters feeling very betrayed and then they bring their votes elsewhere”**

Their traditional working-class supporters tend not to like high immigration, but the leaders of these parties usually do. They seem to think immigrants are more deserving of support, if a choice must be made, than their working-class base, and

therefore they do not seek to reduce immigration levels.

This leaves their working-class voters feeling very betrayed and then they bring their votes elsewhere. In France, for example, many working-class voters now support the National Rally, the party of Marine Le Pen, which wants to bring down high immigration and is particularly opposed to high immigration from Muslim countries.

We might or might not like the attitude of a large part of the working class, but it is what it is and as a result the traditional social democratic parties across Europe have lost lots of voters. There is one exception, namely Denmark, where the ruling Social Democrats have cracked down on high immigration and therefore have kept their working-class vote.

## Compromise

It's a curious thing that a lot of voters seem to be angrier

at Sinn Fein than the Government over high immigration. Maybe that is because high immigration tends not to affect middle class areas very much.

My own hunch is that the Independents, and maybe Aontu, will do well in the coming election. Fine Gael are riding quite high in the polls because the economy appears to be doing well, and it is, for some.

**“If you asked the average voter whether they feel better off now than in February 2020, many would surely answer that they do not”**

But there is something of an artificial feel to things. On paper we are booming, but look a bit closer and we see that a huge amount of the

growth is coming from the multi-national sector. This has caused corporate tax receipts to absolutely boom, but the homegrown economy is doing much less well and so are many ordinary people.

The last election happened just before Covid-19 arrived and back then prices were much lower than they are today. Now we are all paying far more for the basics of life like food and fuel. If you asked the average voter whether they feel better off now than in February 2020, many would surely answer that they do not.

## Expectations

What this means is that there isn't really much love for the Government. The votes Sinn Fein have lost in the last year have to go somewhere and many could gravitate towards the Independents.

We are also being told all the time that Simon Harris is very popular with voters. But is he really? His approval rating is 52% which isn't bad, but

**“Many won't want to answer. They will be tempted to run a mile. But getting a response is far more important than anything else they might have an opinion about”**

is only four points higher than Micheal Martin's approval rating.

If the next Government is going to consist of Fine Gael and Fianna Fail again, then they might find themselves having to partner with some combination of Independents.

Whatever Government does emerge, what can we expect then? In my opinion the most consequential piece of legislation to come before the next Dail is likely to seek to allow euthanasia.

A private member's bill is currently before the House of Commons in London and a free vote is being permitted. Labour now has a huge majority, and it will take a big effort to defeat the bill, although that is possible.

**“Don't believe this election will necessarily go as expected. In 2020, both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail were predicted to do better than they did and Sinn Fein a lot worse”**

It is quite likely that the next Irish Government will not sponsor a euthanasia bill as such, but will allow a free vote if a private member's bill comes before the Dail which is very likely. That could well pass, unless a very good campaign is mounted against it, hopefully led by doctors.

For sheer moral significance, a euthanasia bill will surpass anything else that could come before the Dail in the next five years.

This is why any candidates coming to your door should be asked what they think about the matter. Many won't want to answer. They will be tempted to run a mile. But getting a response is far more important than anything else they might have an opinion about.

And meanwhile, don't believe this election will necessarily go as expected. In 2020, both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail were predicted to do better than they did and Sinn Fein a lot worse. The pundits were wrong on all three counts. What is certain is that the electorate are in a volatile mood and that could lead to an unpredictable outcome in a few weeks' time.

December  
19, 2024



The Irish Catholic

# Winter Legacy

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# Out&About

## Prayer and a chat in college



**ANTRIM:** The Catholic Chaplaincy at QUB team joined the community of students and academics at St Mary's University College for Mass and afterwards for some coffee and chat on October 24.



**WEXFORD:** The annual weekend Conference for newer members of religious congregations in Ballyvaloo Retreat Centre, led by Sr Chris and Sr Eileen, happened on the last weekend of October.



**ARMAGH:** The Lisnally Special School celebrated their Annual Harvest Thanksgiving Assembly on October 23.

### INSHORT

#### Co. Leitrim sister awarded SETU honorary doctorate

South East Technological University (SETU) has awarded a Co. Leitrim religious sister with an honorary doctorate for her life-long dedication to social justice and empowerment of marginalised communities. Sr Brigid Reynolds received her honorary doctorate award in a ceremony at SETU Arena in Waterford on October 30.

Originally from Mohill, Co. Leitrim, Sr Reynolds completed a science degree at UCD before joining the Marist Sisters religious order. Over the years, Sr Reynolds worked in a number of projects focusing on combating poverty, promoting social inclusion, advocating for social justice through policy development, and more.

She also co-founded Social Justice Ireland with Fr Seán Healy, which they led until their retirement in 2023. Social Justice Ireland advocates for social justice and improves the lives of communities through independent social analysis and effective policy development with the aim of creating "a sustainable future for every member of society and for societies

as a whole".

Reflecting on the honorary doctorate, Sr Reynolds said she felt "honoured, humbled, and surprised" by the recognition.

#### Recycled bottles and cans collected in fundraiser for Mercy Hospital

A Cork man has been collecting plastic bottles and cans as a fundraising action for the Mercy Hospital Foundation. Dave O'Leary, an operator at the Pepsi plant in Little Island, has been fundraising in honour of his friend Ian, who was treated at the hospital prior to his death three years ago.

Mr O'Leary told *Echolive.ie* he started the project in August. "I did the Cork City Marathon and I kept noticing loads of people were collecting plastic bottles...I got chatting to a guy and he said they were collecting for a charity and I thought that would be a great idea for the Mercy hospital."

Through this campaign, Mr O'Leary has already collected more than 6,000 cans and nearly 9,000 plastic bottles, raising €700.

"I keep all the receipts and the transactions, and I hand them

in at the end of the month to Pepsi. Whatever is raised from it, Pepsi will match it, so we're hoping that it will be closer to the €1,000 mark by the time we hand over the cheque," he said.

#### Bishop Gavin makes pastoral visit

Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin recently visited Rosscarbery and Lisavaird Parish, one of the parishes in the Clonakilty Family of Parishes. During his visit, Bishop Gavin celebrated Mass at Rosscarbery and Lisavaird and met parishioners.

Bishop Gavin emphasised the importance of the future of the Church in the diocese, referring to the pastoral letter launched on October 6. The bishop informed the parishioners that the number of priests under 60 years of age will shortly be very few.

He also mentioned lay participation is essential. "As we all listen together to where God is calling us to be his Church," a statement on the diocese's website said.

The bishop also encouraged people to pray the 'Prayer from the Boat', recently issued and available with the pastoral letter and at all church doors.

Edited by Renata Steffens  
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**MAYO:** The Ballyhaunis Parish's Cave-Carrowreagh Station Mass was celebrated in the home of Brendan and Mary Morrissey on Friday, October 25. There was a lovely gathering of family, neighbours, friends and relations.



**WATERFORD:** South East Technological University (SETU) has bestowed honorary doctorates upon Sr Brigid Reynolds, educator and humanitarian and Éamonn McEaney, scholar, author, and cultural advocate, pictured here with Prof. Veronica Campbell, Prof. Patrick Prendergast and Dr Derek O'Byrne.



**CLARE:** Indian priest Fr Jibin Jose PMI (third from left) was assigned to work in the Killaloe Diocese in October. He has been appointed to the Abbey Pastoral Area with residency in the Cathedral House.



**WEXFORD:** Recently, Secretary General for AMRI Gerard Gallagher visited the annual weekend Conference for newer members of religious congregations in Ballyvaloo Retreat Centre, which was led by Sr Chris and Sr Eileen.



**KILDARE:** Dr Julia Meszaros, Lecturer in Systematic Theology with Brónagh Wearen and Brandon Lowe during the launch of the new St Patrick's Pontifical University literary magazine *The Donkey*. This publication includes poetry, short stories, reflections, essays, and other student contributions.



**DUBLIN:** (L/R) Elizabeth Small, Anna Regina Gakuhi, Phuong Dong and Liz Mwangi, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas who made their final vows this year, were recently in the Mercy International Centre for a retreat. Photo: Brenda Drumm, Mercy International Association.

## DONEGAL

The Annual Raphoe Diocesan Society Mass will take place on Monday, November 18 at 7pm in Teach Pobail Mhuire, Doiri Beaga/ St Mary's Church, Derrybeg. Celebrant will be Msgr Kevin Gillespie, diocesan administrator. To enrol a person in the RDS contact rds@raphoediocesan.ie. Enrolment is €15.

## DUBLIN

Healing of the family tree Mass with exposition and benediction happens every last Friday of the month at 7.30pm in the Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Fairview.

## CLARE

Bereavement Mass takes place on November 14 in Killaloe Church at 7.30pm. Special invitation is extended to all families of people whose funerals took place in the parish during the past year.

## CORK

'Connect 5' is a faith gathering for young people aged 18-35 in the Diocese of Cork and Ross. With theme 'In a troubled world, dare to hope', the events happens on November 17 from 9.30am to 4pm in the Student Centre, University College Cork. €10 ticket includes food and refreshments.

## DERRY

Women's laugh and craft group happens every Monday from 7.30pm to 9pm in the Kildare room beside St Brigid's, Carnhill. Classes cost £3.

## DONEGAL

Bowling in the Mevagh Parochial Hall happens on Thursdays at 8pm. New members are always welcome.

## DOWN

The Parish of Magheralin's Remembrance Mass takes place on November 10 at 11am in St Patrick and St Ronan's Church. If you wish to have a loved one remembered at this Mass, contact the Parish Office or a member of the Pastoral Council before November 3.

## LEITRIM

Life in the Spirit Seminars happens at St Brigid's Church, Drumcong, N41 CK74 at 8pm. The event started on October 10 and happens every Thursday until November 21. Every talk counts with a different special guest. All welcome.

## LOUTH

Prayer hour takes place every Tuesday from 7-8pm in St Peter's Church, Dromiskin. Join for reflection on the word of God and adoration of the blessed sacrament.

## MAYO

Service for the dead takes place on November 17 at 7pm in Kilmovee Church to pray for those who have died since November 2023. Contact Fr Joseph at 086 160 5373 with the names of the deceased relatives of parishioners who dies outside the parish.

## SLIGO

The Youth 2000 Connaught autumn retreat will take place in the College of the Immaculate Conception, Summerhill, Sligo Town on the weekend of November 8-10. Join for talks, testimonies and workshops. Donations only. Bring a sleeping bag! For more info email connaught@youth2000.ie.

## TYRONE

Mary's Meal's Zero Hunger documentary about the hunger crisis in Ethiopia will be shown in the 1st Tyrone Scout Hall, Charlemont St, Dungannon on November 15 at 8pm. Free admission. Tea/coffee available. Not suitable for children due to distressing scenes.

## WATERFORD

A six-week mini-bridge course starts on Tuesday, November 19 at 6015pm in the parish hall of St Joseph and St Benildus parish centre. For more info and to register contact pbrowne312@gmail.com or 087 971 8586.

## WESTMEATH

Rosary in Raharney and Rathwire Church happens every Friday at 7pm during November. Everyone welcome.

## WICKLOW

The Parish of Rathdrum's Annual Remembrance Mass will take place in Rathdrum Church on November 16 at 6pm.

# Matt Talbot and friends

Fr Hugh O'Donnell SDB

With the centenary of the Venerable Matt Talbot arriving next year, it's good to recall the kind of man he was. Often we treat saints the way we treat celebrities, isolating them from their background but thereby overlooking the many friends whose encouragement and insight enabled their light to shine. It would be easy to think of Matt simply as a loner and ascetic but he was much more than that. For those who knew him, such as Paddy Laird, "he was always pleasant company – and enjoyed a laugh". Mary Manning also shared that, "Matt was always happy; he was cheerful and good-humoured." He had a ready smile.

He had trustworthy friends who loved him, beginning with his mother who, as confidante and companion, knew him better than anyone. Dr Michael Hickey, perhaps

his most important friend and *anam cara*, who taught in Clonliffe College and was later President, would visit Matt's flat a couple of times a week where they would have spiritual conversation and sing hymns. He was Matt's regular confessor for almost thirty years.

There was Bob Laird who worked with Matt and would invite him home for tea. And later, his son Paddy who became one of Matt's closest friends when he joined the work force in T&C Martin's timber yards. The fact that Paddy only died in 1985 means that here was someone who could give a knowing and realistic picture of Matt and not an overly pious version. "On our way from

work," he recalled, "he'd join in when we talked about strikes or politics or football matches. He liked to be affable and good company."

## Friendship

Another dear friend was Ted Fuller, who helped Matt an evening as he tried to master the accounting side of the job when Matt was put in charge of costing timber leaving the yard. Ted reports him confiding; "Oh Ted, I don't know will

I be able for this. I'm no good at figures. I'm afraid I won't be able to make up the bills for the loads" and Ted reassuring him that he'd be working near him and all he had to do in a fix was to give him a shout.



Members of the Knights of St Columbanus Michael Murphy, Tommy Kiernan and Brian McCarthy showing the relics of Matt Talbot to Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin Paul Dempsey who celebrated the Mass on Sunday November 3, in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Sean MacDermott St, Dublin. Photo: John McElroy.



Members of the Knights of St Columbanus pictured with Auxiliary Bishop Paul Dempsey and with the relics of Matt Talbot, which have been entrusted to them for 2025, the Centenary year of Matt Talbot's death. Photo: John McElroy.

All three of his closest friends who helped shoulder his coffin at the end, Paddy, Ted and John Robbins, could remember Matt sharing with them the constant and strong temptations he had faced in the early months of taking the pledge to abstain from alcohol. He even recalled for them the occasion he stood outside Bushe's pub on the corner of Upper Gardiner and Dorset Street fingering a few coins before going in. Fortunately, not being known there the barman was slow in coming to him and Matt found the chink of light in himself that caused him to retreat. He came that close to abandoning the pledge that ever afterwards, he told them, he never carried money.

**“The discovery that he was wearing two chains around his body with a cord round his arm and knee providentially opened a window onto a life given over to God in prayer, fasting and charity”**

Ralph O'Callaghan was also there at the end and paid the cost of the funeral expenses. Ironically this key figure in Matt's later life was a wine merchant with offices on Lower Gardiner Street and stores on Mabbot Lane. They had become great friends, and Matt would visit him regularly in Rathmines to exchange and discuss spiritual books.

In fact it was from Ralph that Matt became aware in the last decade of his life of the book, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* by St Louis de Montford, where he learnt of the practice of wearing a small chain to symbolise the surrender of one's life to Jesus through Mary, a practice which he confided to his friend, John Gunning, "lifted him from Earth to Heaven."

Later, Matt would take that practice to a different level, the nature of which only became evident when his dead body was being undressed in Jervis St Hospital following his sudden death on the way to Mass in 1925. The discovery that he was



Statue of Talbot near Dublin's Talbot Memorial Bridge, sculpted by James Power.

**“When Sir Joseph Glynn's *Short life of Matt* appeared early in 1926, the first edition of 10,000 copies sold out in four days. Within a few months, 140,000 copies were in circulation”**

wearing two chains around his body with a cord round his arm and knee providentially opened a window onto a life given over to God in prayer, fasting and charity.

There were others too, like Mary Manning with whom he conversed every day. At lunchtime she boiled the water to make his tea and cocoa, or the lady whose dog Matt loved to pat in the porch after Mass. She recalled vivid spiritual conversation with Matt.

## Legacy

That the first notice of his death in the *Irish Independent* on June 8 should read 'Unknown Man's Death' brings a smile given that his story would go viral in no time. When Sir Joseph Glynn's *Short life of Matt* appeared early

in 1926, the first edition of 10,000 copies sold out in four days. Within a few months, 140,000 copies were in circulation! Twenty years on, the life had been translated into 21 languages!

In 1931, the archbishop Dr Byrne opened a diocesan enquiry into the holiness of Matt's life. The following year Cardinal Jean Verdier archbishop of Paris took time away from the Eucharistic congress to visit Matt's room in 18 Upper Rutland Street to spend time there in prayer. Deeply moved by the experience, before departing, he praised the local people for their wonderful faith of which Matt Talbot is a living witness. They too are part of the story.



# Christmas

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— 2024 —

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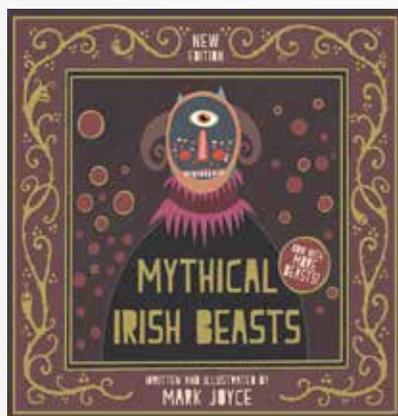
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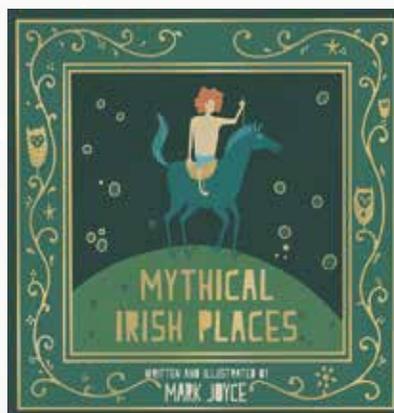
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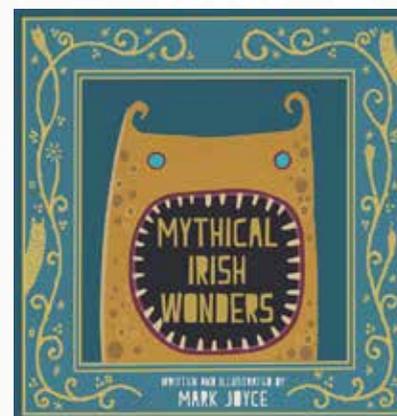
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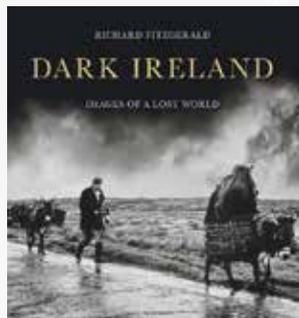
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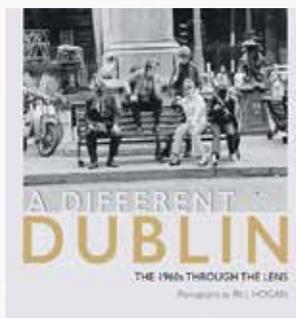
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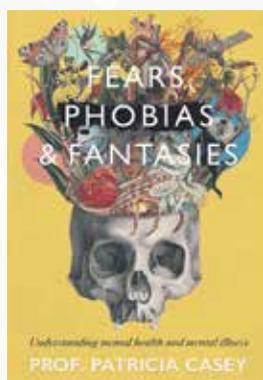
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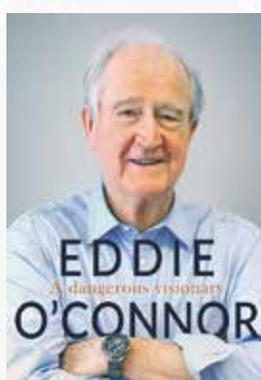
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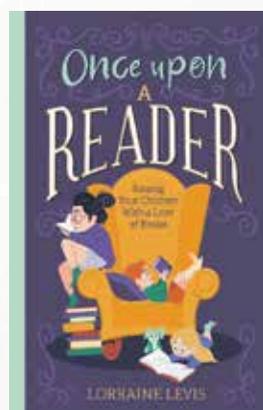
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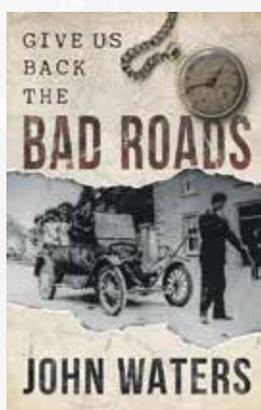
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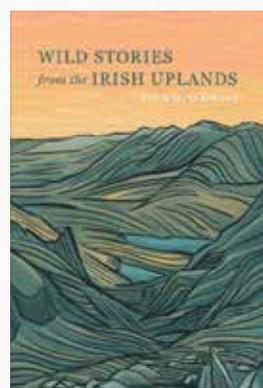
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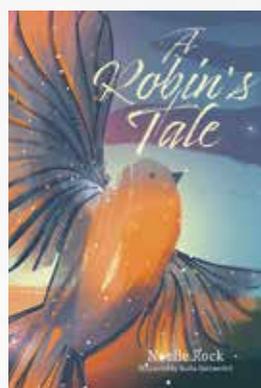
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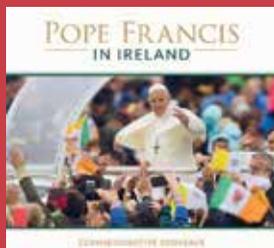
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# THE SYNODAL TIMES



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

## MINIMISING THE DEACONATE IN THE VATICAN

LUCA ATTANASIO

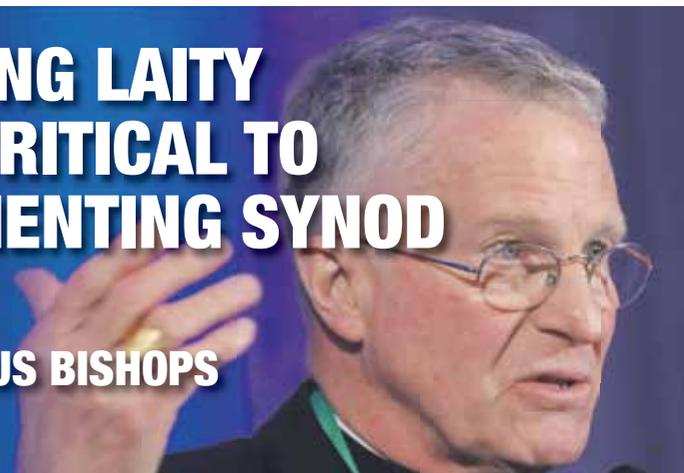
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## INVOLVING LAITY MORE CRITICAL TO IMPLEMENTING SYNOD

LEADER OF US BISHOPS

PAGE 26



# German bishops continue to disagree on Church reform debate

Catholic News Agency

In Rome, the Pope, bishops and laity have spent weeks discussing the future of the Catholic Church but what does this mean for the reform debate in Germany?

The debate on reforms in the Church in Germany initiated by bishops and the Central Committee of German Catholics will apparently have to continue without four conservative representatives. In a statement published on Monday, the bishops of Cologne, Regensburg, Passau and Eichstätt reiterated their fundamental criticism of the ongoing discussions.

The paper, signed by Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne and Bishops Rudolf Voderholzer (Regensburg), Stefan Oster (Passau) and Gregor Maria Hanke (Eichstätt), refers both to the recently concluded World Synod in Rome and to the synodal path in Germany.

### Differences between Rome and Germany

According to the bishops, there are still differences between the goals of the world Church process and the reform debate in Germany. For the first time, so-called laypeople, including women, were involved in the



Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne, Germany, waves as he attends Pope Francis' general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican October 5, 2022. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring.

consultations in Rome with the right to speak and vote. Among other things, the synod spoke out in favour of greater participation by non-clergy members and decided to keep the question of the lowest level of ordination open for women.

According to the four bishops, the plenary sessions during the Synodal Path in Germany “contradicted” what had happened in Rome in recent weeks. Spiritual discernment and mutual trusting listening were hardly present at the meetings. Instead, a majority with a liberal approach to Church politics wanted to push

through their issues “in a parliamentary-like process of pure majority procurement” and under “massive, public pressure”.

### “Bishops and laypeople want to continue their consultations on possible reforms in the Church, which they began in the Synodal Path launched in 2019”

Citing reservations from the Vatican, Woelki, Voderholzer, Oster and Hanke have not yet

taken part in the Synodal Committee's deliberations. The committee is a result of the reform debate and is intended to prepare the establishment of a Synodal Council.

In this body, bishops and laypeople want to continue their consultations on possible reforms in the Church, which they began in the Synodal Path launched in 2019. The next meeting of the Synodal Committee will take place on December 13-14 in Wiesbaden-Naurod.

### Development

With their recently published declaration, the four bishops wanted to ensure “that the clear

impulses of the World Synod also take effect in Germany”, said a spokesperson for the Diocese of Passau in response to an enquiry from the *katholisch.de* portal and clarified: “Participation in the next meeting of the Synodal Committee is not planned”.

When asked by the *Catholic News Agency (KNA)*, the Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics said: “The task now is to further develop and expand synodality in our dioceses and in our country with the help of the experiences of the World Synod and our Synodal Path. As agreed,

this is the task of the Synodal Committee”.

In their statement, the four bishops emphasise that they are “gladly prepared to engage anew with their fellow bishops and with as many other participants from as many Church groups as possible”. They are guided by the question of which forms and structures help them to walk together as “a people of disciples and missionaries”.

There is hope “that the continuation of the synodal path in Germany can also be a path of conversion”.

# Minimising the diaconate in the Vatican

Pope Francis speaks to members of the Synod of Bishops on synodality after they approved their final document October 26, 2024, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media.



**Luca Attanasio** spoke with **Donata Horak**, a professor of canon law at the Alberoni Theological College in Piacenza, and one of the women who attended the Pope's C9 meetings about the rollercoaster ride that is the argument for and against women deacons.

**T**he issue of the possibility for women to become deaconesses in the Church, from being an element of great novelty, is in danger of turning into a long and nerve-wracking dispute, also thanks to an undoubtedly bungled management that ends up communicating in a

confused manner. Yet on the reforms around the theme of the role of women in the Church and new approaches that it was hoped the Synod would propose, there was much expectation.

Things went wrong right from the start. On October 4, two days after the opening of the 2024 session of the Synod on Synodality, the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith Tucho Fernandez has announced a document on the role of women that caused displeasure in the synod hall.

The prefect had announced a magisterial document on the role of women and underlined that he did not believe that there would be a positive decision on the diaconate of women. He added also that the issue would be the subject of an investigation, which would be submitted to the Pope for assessment and approval.

The reaction, especially of the female Catholic activists, came soon after the words of the prefect. The European chairwoman of the reform group Catholic Women's Council (CWC) Regina Franken, for instance, deeply-criticised the Vatican's handling of the women's

issue at the World Synod and announced a protest. "I see no will," she stated "on the part of the Vatican to deal seriously with the question of women in church offices." She also defined "catastrophic" the Vatican's view of women and announced protests.

At this point, all anticipation shifted to the meeting, scheduled for October 18, where a discussion for members of the Synod of Bishops that was to include the question of female deacons was planned. Everyone thought that Cardinal Fernandez would take the opportunity to respond to criticism and shed light on the sensitive issue.

Contrary to all expectations, the prefect did not show up and sent in his stead two minor representatives who immediately made it clear that they would not be able to answer questions and that they would only take note of themes and issues that would emerge during the meeting.

The barrage of criticism for this, to say the least, pilatesque attitude generated responses worse than the attitude itself. Cardinal Fernandez, insisted on October 21, that Pope Francis has made it clear that now is not the time to resolve that issue, but that in the meantime other possibilities for

empowering women already on the books are being under-utilised. Fernandez then added a series of reflections on women community leaders, diaconate, refractory attitudes of bishops and more, which only added to the confusion.

**“A fundamental element of the reflection must be a deepening of the differences between sacred order and power, so that lay people and therefore also women could be entrusted with leadership roles in the Church”**

He then said he would speak at a new meeting scheduled for October 24. On this occasion he told the members of the synod on the work of 'Group 5' that the fact that he did not consider the decision on the female diaconate to be 'mature' did not mean closing off the possibility, and then added that a fundamental element of the reflection

must be a deepening of the differences between sacred order and power, so that lay people and therefore also women could be entrusted with leadership roles in the Church. The Cardinal, in agreement with the Synod Secretariat and the participants, in an exception to the synod rules, decided to make the full audio public and make it available to all through the Vatican media.

To try to understand a little more about the Church's moment of reflection on the role of women, *The Synodal Times* turned to Donata Horak, a professor of canon law at the Alberoni Theological College in Piacenza, affiliated with the Pontifical Angelicum University and one of the women who attended C9 meetings. Horak was the only external member to give a talk at a session of the Synod on Synodality.

**Dr Horak, is it true, as Cardinal Fernandez says, that there is a need for further studies and insights on the topic of women deacons?**

'Now from a theological point of view everything has been said and written. Franken is right when she



Theologian Donata Horak with Pope Francis.

Pope Francis and members of the Synod of Bishops on synodality pose for a photo after the synod's final working session October 26, 2024, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media.



speaks of 'delaying tactics'. Research and theological studies have been going on for over sixty years. The Vatican seems to forget about it and is constantly demanding new arguments but the arguments are there on the table. From the liturgical sources of the early Church, it is not possible to distinguish precisely between the ordination rites and the blessing rites of deacons, but this argument also applies to deacons, even if it is taken for granted that their diaconate was already an ordained ministry as we understand it today.

**“In many parts of the world, there is something very similar performed by women. I was recently at a conference where it was reported that in Brazil 82 per cent of community leaders are women”**

Instead, it is a ministry to be reinterpreted, because it has been largely abandoned over the centuries as a permanent

**“He insists on including women in the church government, even in the dicasteries, these are important steps on the admission of women in positions of power, which they never had before”**

ministry (it was only restored in 1967 with Paul VI's *motu proprio Sacrum diaconatus ordinem*). Considering the possibility of women performing this ministry, therefore, would not upset the tradition.

Not to mention that, *de facto*, in many parts of the world, there is something very similar performed by women. I was recently at a conference where it was reported that in Brazil 82 per cent of community leaders are women”.

**Speaking of the diaconate itself, is there not also a problem with how this figure is understood in the Church?**

Certainly. The diaconate for centuries has been a provisional, 'transient', non-autonomous ministry. All ministries, those that today we call 'instituted' or baptismal (reader, acolyte) were called 'minor orders', because - until the

reform introduced by the *motu proprio Ministeria quaedam* of 1972 - they were seen as stages in an ecclesiastical career that led to the one ministry that absorbed everything: the presbyterate.

**“Since that conciliar constitution, there is one people of equals with many ministries, among them the diaconate. The time has come to free ourselves forever from the ministry-power correspondence”**

Even today, we still carry that mentality with us and struggle to grasp that each ministry has its own profound dignity.

There may be faithful, for example, who choose to remain acolytes all their lives and who are happy and fully fulfilled in their vocation. To understand everything always on the basis of a single ministry that is superior to the others is something old-fashioned that no longer responds to the actuality of the Church.

In the ecclesiology of the era before *Lumen Gentium*, people imagined the Church as a perfect society, in which there were clear inequalities between faithful, clergy and people. But since that conciliar constitution, there is one people of equals with many ministries, among them the diaconate. The time has come to free ourselves forever from the ministry-power correspondence.”

**But what is the main fear within the Church in your opinion?**

In my opinion it is that, understanding the diaconate as a minor step in a career towards the presbyterate, there is a fear within the Church that women are thus aiming for the ordination of women priests. This shows that the diaconate is still thought of as the first step in a career:

this is a way of thinking of men who fear that women will first ask to become priests and then bishops.

**“The diaconate is minimised, and deacons compared to little more than altar boys”**

On this I believe that the firmness shown by John Paul II played a fundamental role. That pope basically forbade any talk of female priesthood. I can tell you with certainty that those who did so lost professorships, jobs.

But for the diaconate, I repeat, the question is another: are there theological impediments? Tell us. In this sense, Fernandez's babbling is precisely dictated by the fact that you have no real arguments. Meanwhile: the diaconate is minimised, and deacons compared to little more than altar boys.”

**You were one of the women speakers at one of the C9 sessions and, as you told me in an interview recently published in The Synodal Times, you breathed an air of serious collaboration, real parity. But in the end,**

**the choices, do not seem to go towards real parity...**

“The Pope keeps a double register, dictated by the fact that on the one hand he fears the excessive symbolic impact of a choice for women deacons and the subsequent splits within the Church that could also lead to schisms.

He feels pressure from the Eastern churches, from the conservatives. On the other hand, however, he insists on including women in the church government, even in the dicasteries, these are important steps on the admission of women in positions of power, which they never had before. He is also shuffling the cards with the reform of the Roman curia. I believe he wants to energise the Church and trigger processes that can lead to a shared evolution on the ministeriality of women of men’.

In the meantime, the Synod closed and the final document was approved by a majority. Interestingly, the proposition on women was the one with the most votes.

# Leader of US bishops says laity critical to implementing synod



John Lavenburg

Given the low level of participation by American Catholics in the process leading up to the Synod of Bishops on Synodality, the leader of the US bishops says that efforts to involve a greater share of the laity in the next stage, dubbed the “implementation phase”, will be crucial to success or failure.

“Striking was that less than 1% of the Catholics in the United States participated in the various moments of the synod process, and I know in other developed countries the percentage was similar, so I think if we’re going to make this a reality we’re going to have to work very hard to involve people in it,” Archbishop Timothy Broglio told *Crux*.

“Like most things, you have to keep inviting, and you also have to keep trying to find ways to involve people in the decision-making process,” he explained. “Sometimes that requires a lot of effort, but I think the effort is very, very worthwhile.”

Archbishop Broglio, who is the archbishop of the Archdiocese of Military Services, USA, and the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, spoke with *Crux* on October 30 after returning from the second and final session of the synod that took place October 2-27.

## Participation

About 700,000 of an estimated 66.8 million American Catholics – roughly one percent – participated in the

“Like most things, you have to keep inviting, and you also have to keep trying to find ways to involve people in the decision-making process,” he explained. “Sometimes that requires a lot of effort, but I think the effort is very, very worthwhile”

early phases of the process, according to the national synthesis document published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops last year.

Archbishop Broglio said the second synod gathering was a more “tranquil atmosphere” than the first because everyone involved was more familiar with the methodology. He also noted that the days were very long, and by the end of each “you could see people were drained”.

As for takeaways, Broglio said the biggest is the manner of governance – one that involves everyone in the decision-making process – that the synod wants to make the norm in the global Church, at least for those who want to participate.

“It’s one of those things that you learn a little bit by doing. I think as time moves forward there will be growth in that area, and that’s important”

Specifically in the United States, he emphasised the importance of the role of bishops in inviting the faith-

ful to participate, and the effort that needs to go into it. One thing that will be important, he noted, is for bishops to continue to hold diocesan synods.

“There was a feeling that there should be a certain regularity to [diocesan synod] gatherings,” Archbishop Broglio said. “So perhaps that would be a way to invite people to participate more directly in the life of the Church, and especially in the notion of decision making and walking together.”

Asked about the buy-in of American bishops in the synod process, Archbishop Broglio said that, like all things, “There is always room for more, and always room for improvement.”

“I think, though, there has been a genuine attempt to participate in the synodal process, and it’s one of those things that you learn a little bit by doing. I think as time moves forward there will be growth in that area, and that’s important, and I think the conference at the very least should be a resource that will help bishops as they try to develop some of these skills, and as they try to implement some of the conclusions of the synod in their diocese,” Archbishop Broglio said.

## Change

In the spirit of synodality, Archbishop Broglio also said there is “room for change” at the USCCB. He cited changes of recent years – less time in formal sessions, and more time allotted for private, small group sessions – could

declared “that they are always in need of their own conversion”. The highest-ranking signatory is Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki from Cologne.

The bishops linked this statement with the hope “that the continuation of



Archbishop Timothy P Broglio of the US Archdiocese for the Military Services, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, speaks during a news conference at a session of the bishops’ fall general assembly in Baltimore. Photo: OSV News/Bob Roller.

“The Church in the United States has always tried to be very faithful to the Holy See, and I don’t think that has changed. I think, if anything, the dialogue has become more cordial”

become even more commonplace.

“The bishops have found that very, very helpful,” he said.

Unrelated to the synod, Archbishop Broglio said that while in Rome the topic of the relationship between the United States and Vatican didn’t come up. He said

he met with a couple of dicastery heads, who gave him a “very, very cordial” reception, and had a “great deal of openness” in trying to respond to questions that were raised.

In general, he said the relationship between the United States and the Vatican is “very good.”

“The Church in the United States has always tried to be very faithful to the Holy See, and I don’t think that has changed. I think, if anything, the dialogue has become more cordial,” Archbishop Broglio said. “I have found the relationship very good.”

## Four German bishops issue own statement on the Synod

Following the conclusion of the World Synod in Rome, there is cautious movement in the continuation of the Catholic reform debate in Germany. On Monday, the four bishops who were not involved

in the Synodal Committee announced the results of their analysis of the deliberations in Rome.

In a joint press release, they reiterated their fundamental criticism of the discussions in Germany, but at the same time

the synodal path in Germany can also be a path of conversion”. According to their assessment, there are still differences between the goals of the global church process and those in Germany.

However, they are “will-

ing to re-engage with their fellow bishops and with as many other participants from as many church groups as possible”.

What this means for their future attitude towards the Synodal Committee is not clear from

the statement. In addition to Woelki, Bishops Gregor Maria Hanke from Eichstätt, Stefan Oster from Passau and Rudolf Voderholzer from Regensburg have signed the statement.

# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Vatican union sceptical about cutting cardinals' salaries

● Cardinals who work in the Vatican are to receive less money - a drop in the ocean in view of the budget shortfall. The Vatican trade union therefore senses a diversionary manoeuvre.

The Vatican trade union ADLV fears that the reduction in the salaries of curia cardinals is just a pretext to prepare further cuts for all Vatican employees. In a statement published on its website last Wednesday, the "Associazione Dipendenti Laici Vaticani" demanded that all austerity measures taken by the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy must fulfil the principles of solidarity, proportionality and fairness: "The cuts must be proportional to everyone's means and must not affect the families of the employees".

Last week, a letter from the head of the Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy became public, according to which the salaries of curia cardinals will be reduced by several hundred euros in order to support the Holy See's austerity measures. The Vatican trade union reacted sceptically to the announcement: Curia cardinals earn little compared to other executives anyway.

### Catholic Church still failing to deal with sexual abuse cases, says Vatican report

● For the first time, the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Children is publishing a report on church anti-abuse measures worldwide. An almost impossible endeavour that has met with much criticism.

The Church has failed to deal with abuse in the view of its own experts: "Nothing we do will ever be enough to completely heal what has hap-

pened." The president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Children, Cardinal Sean O'Malley, chose strong words this week at the presentation of the Catholic Church's first worldwide anti-abuse report. "We know that you have had enough of empty words," the former Archbishop of Boston addressed those affected.

### Victims feel 'betrayed' at Rupnik impasse

● One year after the Vatican announced it would open a canonical case on Fr Marko Rupnik — an artist and former Jesuit accused of spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse — victims say they feel disappointment and betrayal at the Church's lack of response and transparency.

Fr Rupnik has been accused of abusing adult women who were under his spiritual care as part of a religious community he helped found in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Some of these accusations became public through the media in early December 2022, although the priest's superiors and officials at the Vatican were aware even several years earlier.

Anne Barrett Doyle, a director of Bishop Accountability, a US-based nonprofit dedicated to helping victims of clerical abuse, told CNA: "The Vatican's delay in issuing a verdict in the Rupnik case inflicts further harm on his victims and scandalises the faithful".

### Ghana bishop calls for end to 'witch camps'

● A Catholic bishop in Ghana has called on Catholics in the African nation to go beyond simply providing charity to individuals accused of witchcraft, and to try to change the conditions that lead women accused of the practice to seek safety in so-called "witches' camps".

Bishop Alfred Agyenta of Navrongo-Bolgatanga was speaking during a homily to mark the 25th anniversary climax of the Diocese of Yendi in northeastern Ghana, near the border with Benin.

Bishop Agyenta emphasised the need to work towards dismantling the systemic factors that led to the establishment of these camps in the first place.

"Let us pray and work hard towards that day when we will move beyond doing charity to these women to dismantling the system that has produced these camps," he said.

## Empty Trevi Fountain with 'paddling pool' for coin toss



Tourists stand at Rome's Trevi Fountain. Photo: CNS/Max Rossi, Reuters.

The Fontana di Trevi in Rome is being restored - like so many sights in the Eternal City. However, tourists do not have to do without the coin toss.

The Fontana di Trevi in the historic centre of Rome has been pumped dry for renovation. The baroque masterpiece is to be given a footbridge by the end of the year, allowing around 12,000 visitors a day to cross the almost 50 metre wide basin and view the marble façade populated by sea creatures up close, according to Italian media reports.

A white basin with a light blue background has

now been installed in front of Rome's largest fountain for the traditional coin toss over the shoulder, which, according to legend, ensures a return to the Eternal City. On social media, the rectangular "paddling pool" in front of the monumental building caused much ridicule. Others are happy to at least be able to see the fountain through transparent walls, while many monuments in Rome are currently disappearing behind opaque construction fences. "Rome is always beautiful, with or without water in the Trevi Fountain," said a tourist from Buenos Aires to the

newspaper *La Repubblica*.

Rome's city council is financing the restoration and cleaning work with funds from the "Caput Mundi" project launched in 2022, which is also implementing hundreds of measures at cultural and archaeological sites with a view to the Holy Year 2025. Around 32 million visitors are expected in Rome for the major Catholic event.

The Trevi Fountain, designed by Nicola Salvi (1697-1751) on behalf of Pope Clement XII, was completed in 1762 after 30 years of construction. On the 49 metre wide and 26 metre high marble and travertine

façade, numerous water creatures cavort around the sea god Oceanus.

According to Rome's mayor Roberto Gualtieri, the planned walkway will also serve to count the number of visitors. Depending on the results, he does not rule out the possibility of limiting access to the fountain steps in the future and charging an entrance fee of around two euros from 2025. The coins that end up in the Trevi Fountain every year have been collected regularly since 2001 and donated to the local Caritas organisation.

## Church in Spain mobilises as severe flooding leaves more than 200 dead

Torrential rains have inundated southern and eastern Spain, leaving more than 200 people dead. In response, the Catholic Church has expressed its pain and condolences over the tragedy and Caritas has launched a

special campaign.

The flash flooding is considered the third largest natural disaster in Spain's contemporary history, which has primarily hit the territories of the Archdiocese of Valencia and

the Dioceses of Cuenca and Albacete.

The archbishop of Valencia, Enrique Benavent, celebrated a Eucharist last week in the Basilica of the Our Lady of the Abandoned, the city's patroness. Dur-

ing the homily, the prelate pointed out that "those most affected are those we must keep closest to our hearts, just as those who suffer the most are those who are closest to a mother's heart".

# Catholics conflicted about ‘Luce’

Tyler Arnold

The Vatican introduced an anime-style mascot named Luce to represent Catholic pilgrims in the 2025 Jubilee year last week and within a week the character has already become a viral internet sensation.

In less than seven days, hundreds of memes and fan art renditions of Luce (pronounced Lu-Chay) popped up on social media websites such as Facebook, X, Reddit, and TikTok and have been circulating the platforms.

The character has become particularly popular with Catholic meme accounts and groups but also has a presence in non-Catholic spaces, such as with amateur anime artists, Protestant meme accounts, and some secular and political meme accounts. It has also inspired Halloween costumes and the creation of a cryptocurrency called Luce Token, which has a market capitalisation that has surpassed €45 million.

Luce, which is Italian for “light”, is a blue-haired mascot who wears a rosary around her neck and a yellow raincoat that is meant to symbolise journeying through life’s storms and reflect the colour of the Vatican flag. She wears green muddy boots that represent a long and difficult journey and carries a staff meant to symbolise the pilgrimage toward eternity.

The Vatican’s Dicastery for Evangelisation commissioned the creation of the character, which was designed by Italian artist Simone Legno, who owns the company *tokidoki*, which creates products with Japanese-inspired designs. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the Vatican’s chief organiser for the jubilee, unveiled the mascot during a news conference.

## Social Media

Many of the Luce-inspired memes invoke Christian messages of prayer and warding off the devil. One popular meme, which parodies a famous scene from

“The social media manager for Catholic Answers, wrote in an article on Thursday that he worried at first that the character would be a failed attempt to “try to make Church cool and relevant”. However, he notes it was ultimately embraced by some Catholics within all age groups”



Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation’s section for new evangelisation and the chief organiser of the Holy Year 2025, presents the official mascot of the Jubilee Year during a news conference at the Vatican October 28, 2024. Photo: CNS/Justin McLellan.

*The Shining*, shows Luce use her staff to break a hole into a wooden door and stick her face through the hole as the devil cowers in the corner. Some others depict Luce kneeling in prayer.

Several Luce memes spreading around the internet also invoke pro-life messages, such as one that depicts Luce saving a baby from a Planned Parenthood abortion facility. Some memes have put Luce side by side with Crusaders.

Fr Matthew P Schneider, LC, a Catholic priest with a large social media following, has embraced the mascot, creating threads on X with more than 70 of his favourite fan art renditions of Luce. Some of the amateur artists are Catholic, but dozens of amateur anime artists who normally produce secular art have also

jumped on the trend.

“I like Luce, the mascot for the holy year 2025,” Fr Schneider said on X. “The images seem like a good Christian adaptation of modern culture or inculturation.”

“They nailed the look of childlike faith and innocence. And the pilgrimage symbols embedded in her character – muddy boots, Camino de Santiago shells in her eyes, pilgrim’s cross, and World Mission rosary – are subtle”

Thomas Graf, the social media manager for Catholic Answers, wrote in an article on Thursday that he worried at first that the character would be a failed attempt to “try to make Church cool and relevant”. However, he notes it was ultimately embraced by some Catholics within all age groups.

“Luce is undeniably adorable,” Graf wrote. “Maybe you disagree, but I have to hand it to the creators: They

nailed the look of childlike faith and innocence. And the pilgrimage symbols embedded in her character – muddy boots, Camino de Santiago shells in her eyes, pilgrim’s cross, and World Mission rosary – are subtle. Nothing evokes the overbearing ‘Jesus is COOL, kids!!’ lunkheadedness of, say, VBS mascots.”

## Reception

Christians who are not Catholic have also jumped on the Luce thread to create their own versions of the character.

One post in the Anglicanism subreddit developed an Anglican version of Luce with symbolism that represents their own denomination. Lutherans on Facebook and X have done the same, making Lutheran versions of Luce and claiming she converted – prompting strong responses from Catholics reclaiming the character. Some Orthodox Christians have made similar posts.

“Been seeing a ton of ‘I’m not Catholic, but Luce is so cute’ posts – THIS IS HOW WE WIN,” one Twitter user said.

In spite of the Luce success on social media, not all Catholics are fans of the character.

Traditionalist Catholic

“Traditionalist Catholic theologian Peter Kwasniewski wrote on X that “even if Luce is not ‘evil,’ the fact that she’s kitschy, cutesy, cringey, merchy, and childish is already offensive”

theologian Peter Kwasniewski wrote on X that “even if Luce is not ‘evil,’ the fact that she’s kitschy, cutesy, cringey, merchy, and childish is already offensive to the religion of the *Logos*.”

“Some traditionalist-minded Catholics, such as *The Daily Wire* host Michael Knowles, have been supportive of Luce”

Kwasniewski also criticised Legno, the artist who designed the character, calling him “a moral degenerate.” Legno’s company *tokidoki* has promoted homosexual pride and has partnered with one company to produce sex toys.

Edward Feser, a Catholic philosopher and professor at Pasadena City College, also criticised the character on X: “Infantilising the young with a dumbed down version of Catholicism does them a disservice.”

Some traditionalist-minded Catholics, such as *The Daily Wire* host Michael Knowles, have been supportive of Luce.

“I attend the Traditional Latin Mass,” Knowles wrote on X. “I wear bowties. I read old books. I smoke cigars. I’m married with three kids under 4. I’m what they call a ‘trad.’ And I stan [am a fan of] Luce.”

The Vatican intends to keep moving forward with the mascot. Luce made an appearance at the Lucca Comics and Games convention in Tuscany, Italy, this past weekend and will also appear at the Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan, next year.

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Shifting resources to support assisted dying

**Dear Editor,** Discussions about legalising assisted suicide raise serious concerns about the protection of the vulnerable and the potential consequences. If assisted suicide becomes law, the elderly, the sick, and people with disabilities may face subtle pressures, both social and economic, to choose death rather than life. A culture will emerge where individuals are made to feel like burdens, underlining a grim message: if you're not 'useful', your life has diminished value.

We only need to look to countries like Canada and the Netherlands to see where this path can lead. In Canada, for example, the availability of assisted dying

has expanded rapidly to include not only terminally ill patients but also individuals with chronic illnesses, disabilities, and even mental health conditions. Similarly, in the Netherlands, what began as an option for the terminally ill has now broadened to encompass those who feel they have 'completed' their life, creating a disturbing normalisation of assisted death over care.

Bishop Martin Hayes [*The Irish Catholic* – October 31, 2024] emphasises the importance of palliative care, which allows individuals to live out their final days with dignity, comfort, and the presence of loved ones. Shifting resources to

support assisted dying instead of palliative care is a troubling prospect that risks devaluing the care and compassion that should be at the heart of medicine.

Each life is precious, a gift with purpose and dignity, no matter the circumstances. Rather than pursuing a path that could lead to the erosion of respect for life, let us invest in compassionate care that honours each person's inherent worth.

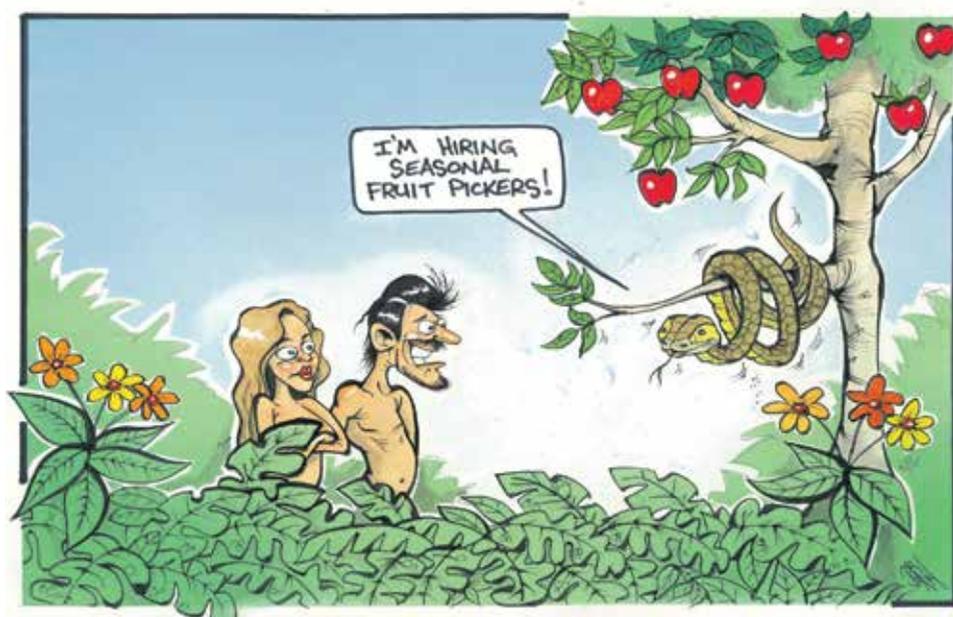
*Yours etc.,  
Michael Clancy  
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath*

## Countering the allure of the occult

**Dear Editor,** The current trend of moving away from Christianity in Ireland is creating a spiritual void that is being increasingly filled by the allure of occult practices, paganism, and superstition. This shift has dangerous implications, both spiritually and psychologically, for individuals – especially young people – who may not realise the depth of harm these practices can bring.

Ireland has a history rich in Christian faith, which brought moral clarity, community, and a sense of purpose that lifted people out of a more primitive spiritual landscape. By turning away from that heritage, our society is now reintroducing ideas and practices rooted in ancient paganism, which ultimately detract from a meaningful, grounded faith. Ouija boards, witchcraft, and fascination with occult practices are too often dismissed as harmless entertainment, yet their influence opens people to dark forces.

Such engagement with the occult doesn't just pull people away from God; it also breeds confusion about right and wrong, often resulting in spiritual emptiness and despair. This confusion leaves young people vulnerable, impacting their sense of identity and meaning. Many find themselves struggling with anxiety, depression, and a darker outlook on life, as dabbling in these practices can have a spiralling effect, leading them deeper into unsettling thoughts and behaviours.



## Appointing parish council members

**Dear Editor,** Chai Brady in his article [*The Irish Catholic* – October 31, 2024] reports that Bishop Leahy, who attended the Synod on Synodality in Rome, stated that we should move away from seeing the Church in terms of a pyramid structure – a Pope at the top, bishops, priests and then laity.

In the same issue, Eoin McCormack's conversation with Fr Eamonn Conway highlights that Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs), which are meant to have people on them who represent parish and community life broadly and who will practice deep listening, both to the Gospel and to one another and courageous speaking.

Ireland can become a beacon of light once again, standing firm against the tide of darkness that the secular world increasingly promotes. Only by embracing our Christian values can we counter the allure of these dangerous paths and offer a true sense of hope and meaning to future generations.

*Yours etc.,  
David Kenny  
Dublin 5, Artane*

When PPCs were first established, the members were selected by the parishioners in a secret ballot. When these PPCs were replaced, the parish priest selected and appointed the new members himself.

If the appointment by election to PPCs is restored, this would allow lay people to formally participate in decision making in their parish. This would be in line with the recent Report of the Synod on Synodality.

*Yours etc.,  
Daithi O'Muirneachain  
Drumcondra, Dublin*

## Do you love Luce?

**Dear Editor,** Recently the Vatican released its mascot for the Jubilee Year 2025. It is a cute anime (a form of Japanese animation) character called Luce. The idea is to encourage pilgrimages to holy sites such as the Vatican.

While it is adorable and has won over the hearts of

'netizens', children and Otaku (obsessive anime fans) alike, there is just one small problem. When the children arrive at the Vatican, will they want to see Pope Francis or Luce the anime pilgrim?

*Yours etc.,  
Dr John Jennings  
Knocknacarra, Galway*

## Begotten, not made

**'H**onour thy Father and Mother' is an instruction that comes to us from on High. But it is not just a Catholic or Christian demand. Until recently it had been timeless and universal. It was an instruction that was central to the proper organising of society. It was often taken as a given, an objective truth.

Why was that? Children were begotten, not made, so to speak. They came into the world through the natural ordering of society, where a man and woman came together, in union, two flesh becoming one. It was not just the social order too. Children were a gift, sometimes not necessarily a desired gift, but a gift nonetheless.

Parents were landed with children, usually – although not always and sometimes quite often – after fulfilling the social obligation of marriage, and its subsequent consummation. Parents did not will their children into the world, but they came into the world sometimes as a complete surprise, and had to be looked after and reared.

The rearing took sacrifice. Parents found themselves with a responsibility and a burden, where for each of them, and for each and every day, they had to choose again and again, whether to accept that responsibility and give the child a future, however imperfect. And for each day that responsibility was filled, in return was the expectation that the Father and Mother would be honoured in reciprocation.

But the world has changed now. No longer are children begotten, they are made. Whether it is through contraception, IVF and now surrogacy, the arrival of a child is much more deliberate. Abortion is involved here, too. The child's existence in the world is no longer the happy fault or the unexpected gift, but the product of a conscious decision of parents to create the child.

Contraception means that a child is no longer begotten but brought to life through an (often deliberate) act of omission

on the part of parents. IVF means that children are brought into the world through the willed commission (often paid for) of adults who desire that child to be created, not for its own sake, but for theirs.

Through surrogacy, the child is brought into the world by adults often for the exact same reasons but compounded by the selfish act of denying the willed child a relationship with their natural, genetic parents, for the sake of the commissioning parents.

Abortion and its legalisation, its promotion and its normalisation, provides parents with the means of decommissioning any child that is begotten into the world, for their own sake, not his or hers.

This reshaping of the parent child relationship has a profound effect on society, one that we are only starting to see. Increasingly, children look not to their parents as people who sacrificed for their sake but as the people who are responsible for the sufferings and imperfections in life they have to endure.

The relationship is turned on its head. A child now finds the source of any suffering, sadness, pain, loneliness, in the wilful commissioning by their parents. No longer is filial duty owed in response to a sacrifice, instead there is a growing phenomenon of children choosing to divorce from their parents as intergenerational resentment rises. Children blame parents for bringing them into a brutish world instead of thanking them for preparing them for, protecting them from, its harshest vagaries.

Irish governments continue to adopt increasingly 'progressive' social policy options, with surrogacy being the most recent but unlikely to be the last or most extreme, that place the interests of prospective parents ahead of what is best for children.

The truism that every child should be a wanted child, often touted as a justification for liberal abortion regimes, is one that will have social ramifications into the future that have not yet been considered.

## 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.

# Your Faith

Do most people make it to Heaven?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Page 31

The Irish Catholic, November 7, 2024



## Power, authority, and leadership in Christ the King



Fr Barry White

The Solemnity of Christ the King, instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925, emerged amid a post-war Europe facing political disruption, where ideologies like fascism, socialism, and communism were spreading, challenging traditional structures and values. This feast was intended to reaffirm the kingship of Christ as an authority above all worldly powers, reminding the faithful of a higher source of truth.

When I think of a king, I envision a historical figure – crowned, ruthless and commanding. Such authority, centred on one individual, feels distant from modern values, especially in republics, though some countries still find cultural and national identity in a monarchy. So, what does Jesus' kingship mean, and how does his model of leadership differ?

### Authority

This solemnity celebrates Jesus' kingship as the fulfilment of God's reign, transcending any earthly authority. Each liturgical year emphasises a different aspect of His kingship: in Year A, Matthew's Gos-

pel presents Jesus as the judge who rewards those who recognise and serve him in the vulnerable; in Year C, Luke portrays a crucified king who offers salvation even from the cross. In Year B, instead of Mark, John's Gospel recounts Jesus' dialogue with Pilate, contrasting Jesus' kingdom of truth with the empire's reliance on power and control.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' kingship is rooted in *exousia* (Greek for 'authority' or referring to 'out of his very being'). This is a divine authority emanating from his very identity as the Son of God. Mark illustrates Jesus' authority not through dominance, but through his power over sin, nature, and over unclean spirits.

**“We reflect on the nature of power and leadership, especially here in Ireland”**

When James and John request positions of honour in his glory (Mark 10), Jesus teaches that his kingdom values service over status. In Mark 10:47, Bartimaeus calls Jesus “Son of David” acknowledging his royal lineage, yet Jesus' actions reveal compassion over conquest. His triumphant but humble entry into Jerusalem on a colt (Mark 11) contrasts with worldly displays of power. This is further exemplified at the crucifixion, where a Roman centurion, a symbol of imperial allegiance, acknowledges Jesus as “Son of God” (Mark 15:39), recognising a

kingship beyond Rome's grasp.

Approaching this solemnity on November 24, we reflect on the nature of power and leadership, especially here in Ireland, where we recently had local and European elections and a General Election approaching. In 2024, labelled the “ultimate year of elections” by *Time* magazine, elections are taking place in 64 countries. From ancient philosophy to modern political theory, leadership and power have taken diverse forms. Plato envisioned philosopher-kings as wise rulers serving the common good. Aristotle believed in authority grounded in justice and virtue. Niccolò Machiavelli, in the 16th century, however, proposed in *The Prince* that leadership required ruthlessness and deception: “It is better to be feared than loved”.

### Order

Thomas Hobbes, during the English Civil War, argued for an absolute authority to maintain social order, while later John Locke laid a framework for democracy and advanced the idea of limited government, rooted in the people's consent. In the 19th century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels critiqued power structures as tools of capitalist oppression, advocating for a ‘classless’ society. Power, when aligned with ethical authority, it has the potential to serve the common good. In the satirical *Yes Minister*, there is the humorous remark of Sir Humphrey Appleby: “The people are ignorant. They don't know what they want, so it's

our job to tell them”.

In our technocratic age, true power can seem elusive with unseen powers like algorithms, and AI influencing people choices. What does true leadership look like?

**“This is the model Christ offers - a king who rules with love, truth, and justice”**

The Synod's Synthesis Report from the First Session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 4-29, 2023) highlighted the Church's need to overcome clericalism. It advocates a synodal model where leadership is collaborative and inclusive, aligning with Christ's own example: a kingship that is strong yet humble, leading by service, rooted in truth and life. This approach invites all to share in the Church's mission that empowers rather than dominates.

Christ's kingship calls us to transcend worldly definitions of power and success. Through baptism, we share in Christ's identity as priest, prophet, and king, and this ‘kingly’ role is a call to serve rather than to rule. We are called to lead by example, beyond self-interest or worldly ambition. This kingly mission, especially crucial for parents, teachers, and leaders, invites us to shepherd others with humility, compassion, and a deep

sense of responsibility.

The essence of this kingship lies in submission to Christ, allowing his voice - not the transient lures of fame, wealth or influence accentuated through social media - to guide our actions. We are called to a kingdom not of this world, but one to liberate and transform lives in service of others.

This solemnity highlights that leadership exists along a spectrum. At one end is timidity, where a leader's reluctance to take charge under the guise of ‘humble service’ results in inaction or ambiguity. At the opposite end, authoritarianism arises when leaders pursue power solely for control, rationalised as ‘strong leadership’. Authority strikes a balance, demonstrating strength while serving with humility.

This is the model Christ offers - a king who rules with love, truth, and justice. The preface for the Solemnity of Christ the King describes his kingdom as “an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace”. This kingdom transcends worldly power structures, inviting all to live as Christ did: serving humbly, leading justly, and loving unconditionally.

**i** Fr Barry White, based in Mullingar Parish, studied Philosophy, History and Theology at the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth and holds a Licentiate in Canon Law.

# Meditations on the interior life

AC

**S**t Teresa of Avila said, 'Prayer is friendly conversation with the One by whom I know I am loved.' It is precious, this friendly conversation with You. To talk face to face with God.

Are we qualified? We are poor and fragile. Are we good enough? I can't even open my lips to pray unless You allow me. Am I worthy to be Your friend? Is anyone? Yet You seek friends, You want us to be. We are tiny creatures in Your presence, and You alone great. You alone hold the stars in the palm of Your hand. And we strike matches. The only thing is for us to humble ourselves. The sun rising is like a small coin in Your fingers, and when miracles and healings occur, we say, 'it is the finger of God' and yet we speak with You, we worship, adore, thank, trust You. It seems a miracle to me that You love us and care for us.

There can be joy and creativity in prayer - in saying things to You. What a lovely gift You give us. It is a huge privilege. We cannot speak directly to the Pope, but we can speak directly to You, Creator and Ruler of all.

Father, You truly are a father to us, and each day we call You 'Our Father'. We are Your children, Your



St Teresa of Avila

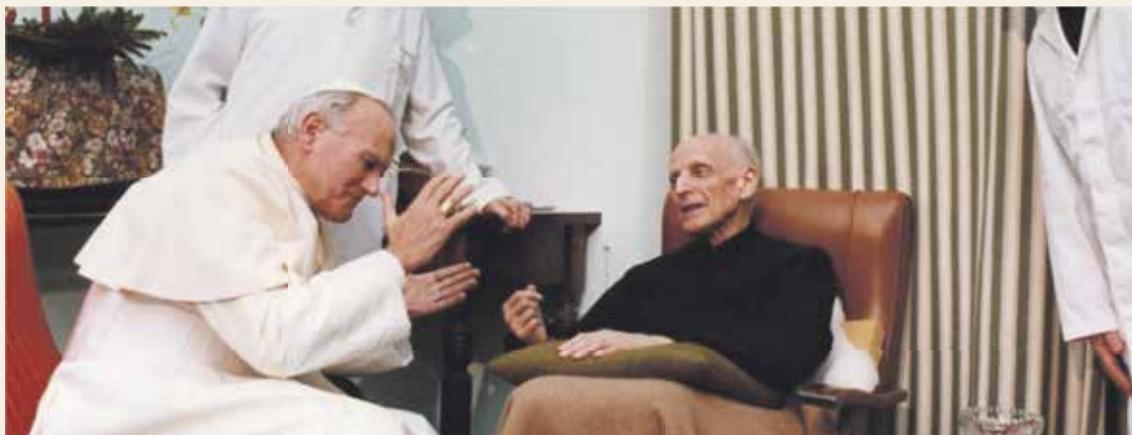
family, Your sons and daughters. Nothing could be better, dearest Father, than if I could walk through today with You. Thoughtful and united with You, and that I could please You. If at the end of the day You would say "Yes, I am pleased with you, well-pleased," how good it would be!

Let me do Your will. Perhaps the best of all is that I will receive the gift of Jesus in Holy Communion. You are active and creative, be much in my day and active in me. Open my mind

to see what I should do. I remember Mother Teresa's words 'Let us be carriers of the love of Christ.' This is quite something. Forgive me Lord if I haven't.

All our days are like Nazareth days, full of ordinary things. For love of You I offer all I do, say and decide: my work, my words, my faith-link with You, be glorified in all. If I can be a carrier of the love of Christ it would be truly a great thing. It is the most precious possession I have. This love.

## Beatification of Jesuit General Arrupe one step further



St John Paul II with Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ

**T**he beatification process for the former Jesuit General Pedro Arrupe (1907-1991) has taken an important step. The diocesan phase of the process will be completed on November 14, the Vicariate of Rome announced recently. The beatification process was formally opened in 2019 at the request of the Jesuits.

Arrupe was born in 1907 in the Basque Country and joined the Jesuit order in 1927 after studying medicine. He went to Japan as a missionary in 1938. From 1942, he worked as a novice master in Hiroshima, where he witnessed the dropping of the atomic bomb and subsequently turned his order's novitiate into a field hospital. In 1965, shortly before the end of Vatican II, he was elected Superior General of the order.

When a stroke incapacitated Arrupe in 1981, St

John Paul II appointed a "personal delegate" to lead the order, plunging the Jesuits into a crisis that only ended in 1983 with the election of a successor. Arrupe died in Rome in 1991.

A beatification is preceded by a defined ecclesiastical investigation procedure. The relevant diocese must collect information about the person's life and death and prove a miracle or martyrdom as well as virtue and a "reputation for holiness". Once the procedure has been completed, the files are forwarded to the Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. It checks the authenticity of the documents and witness statements and, if necessary, obtains expert opinions on miracles. Once the process has been successfully completed, the Pope declares that the deceased may be declared blessed and publicly honoured.

**i** Reported by KNA

## Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

### Do most people make it to Heaven?

**Q: I recently took a six-week theology class, and the priest teaching it was emphatic that most don't make it to Heaven. First, we must be without mortal sin. So, all those who forsake Mass or the Holy Sabbath would not be eligible. I have also heard other well-known priests state the same thing. One used the parable of the sower (the one with rocks, weeds, path and rich soil) to illustrate that per Jesus only 25% make it to Heaven. Yet often I hear priests say the opposite. What is your take on the parable?**

**A:** To me, it seems that looking at this parable in terms of celestial statistics is a fairly unusual interpretation.

The parable of the sower is found in the three 'synoptic Gospels' of Matthew (Mt 13:3-9), Mark (Mk 4:3-9), and Luke (Lk 8:5-8). As we read in Luke's account:

"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it grew, it withered for lack of moisture. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold."

One special thing about this particular parable is that Jesus himself is recorded as sharing a detailed explanation of it with his disciples in subsequent verses. That is, the seed represents the word of God, and the different kinds of soils represent those who hear it. Jesus states that the hard path is like the hard hearts of those who are never open to receiving God's word; the rocky ground represents those who have some faith, but only in a shallow way; and the thorns represent the worldly distractions that can choke out the faith of even sincere believers. And of course, those in whose souls the word of God takes root and flourishes are like the "good soil" at the end of the parable.

So, we know with certainty

that Jesus was trying to make a point about hearing the 'Good News', and the ways in which it might bear fruit or not bear fruit in us. Jesus was trying to explain the goal and some possible pitfalls to avoid. He never suggests that he was giving us a breakdown of who attains salvation in terms of percentages.

Granted, in some cases it is possible to legitimately find an extra layer of symbolic meaning in some scriptural passages. But such extra layers must always be in harmony with the Church's constant teaching. And the Church has never taught that only a specific numerical ratio of souls would be saved.

Further, while the Church has the canonisation process for formally recognising that some especially holy people are already in Heaven, the reverse does not hold true. That is, although the Church does teach that going to hell is a real possibility, the Church has never and will never declare definitively that any individual is known to be in hell.

In fact, although this is educated speculation rather than Church teaching, some theologians - such as, perhaps most notably, the 20th-century Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar - have even proposed that we could at least entertain the hope that all might be saved.

Whether or not we personally see this theory of von Balthasar's as being practically realistic, it does hint at a real and uncontroversial truth of our faith. Namely, that God desires the salvation of all, and is patient and ready to forgive even the worst sinner who repents. As Jesus states in John's Gospel: "And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day" (Jn 6:39).

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



# Writing your own obituary



**Fr Rolheiser**

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

**T**here comes a time in life when it's time to stop writing your resume and begin to write your obituary." I'm not sure who first coined that line, but there's wisdom in it.

What's the difference between a resume and an obituary? Well, the former details your achievements, the latter expresses how you want to be remembered and what kind of oxygen and blessing you want to leave behind. But, how exactly do you write an obituary so that it's not, in effect, just another version of your resume? Here's a suggestion.

There's a custom in Judaism where as an adult you make out a spiritual will each year. Originally, this will was more in line with the type of will we typically make, where the focus is on burial instructions, on who

gets what when we die, and on how to legally and practically tie up the unfinished details of our lives. This evolved so that today this will is focused more on a review of your life, the highlighting of what's been most precious in your life, the honest expression of regrets and apologies, and the blessing, by name, of those persons to whom you want to say a special goodbye. The will is reviewed and renewed each year so that it is always current, and it's read aloud at your funeral as the final words you want to leave behind for your loved ones.

This can be a very helpful exercise for each of us to do, except that such a will is not done in a lawyer's office, but in prayer, perhaps with a spiritual director, a counsellor, or a confessor helping us. Very practically, what might go

into a spiritual will of this sort?

**“All of us have some sense of having a vocation, of having a purpose for being in this world, of having been given some task to fulfill in life”**

If you are looking for help in doing this, I recommend the work and the writings of Richard Groves, the co-founder of the *Sacred Art of Living Center*. He has been working in the field of end-of-life spirituality for more than thirty years and offers some very helpful guidance vis-à-vis creating a spiritual will and renewing it regularly. It focus on three questions.

**“When we die, we're meant to leave our spirit behind as sustenance for everyone; but there are some people, whom we want to name, to whom we want to leave a double portion. In this will, we name those people”**

First: “What, in life, did God want me to do? Did I do it?” All of us have some sense of having a vocation, of having a purpose for being in this world, of having been given some task to fulfill in life. Perhaps we might only be dimly aware of this, but, at some level of soul, all of us sense a certain duty and purpose. The first task in a spiritual will is to try to come to grips with that. What did God want me to do in this life? How well or poorly have I been doing it?

## Regrets

Second: “To whom do I need to say, ‘I'm sorry’? What are my regrets?” Just as others have hurt us, we have hurt others. Unless we die very young, all of us have made mistakes, hurt others, and done things we regret. A spiritual will is meant to address this with searing honesty and deep contrition. We are never more big-hearted,

noble, prayerful, and deserving of respect than when we are down on our knees sincerely recognising our weaknesses, apologising, asking where we need to make amends.

Third: “Who, very specifically, by name, do I want to bless before I die and gift with some special oxygen?” We are most like God (infusing divine energy into life) when we are admiring others, affirming them, and offering them whatever we can from our own lives as a help to them in theirs. Our task is to do this for everyone, but we cannot do this for everyone, individually, by name. In a spiritual will, we are given the chance to name those people we most want to bless. When the prophet Elijah was dying, his servant, Elisha, begged him to leave him “a double portion” of his spirit. When we die, we're meant to leave our spirit behind as sustenance for everyone; but

there are some people, whom we want to name, to whom we want to leave a double portion. In this will, we name those people.

## Challenging

In a wonderfully challenging book, *The Four Things That Matter Most*, Ira Byock, a medical doctor who works with the dying, submits that there are four things we need to say to our loved ones before we die: “Please forgive me,” “I forgive you,” “Thank you,” and “I love you.” He's right; but, given the contingencies, tensions, wounds, heartaches, and ups and downs within our relationships, even with those we love dearly, it isn't always easy (or sometimes even existentially possible) to say those words clearly, without any equivocation. A spiritual will gives us the chance to say them from a place that we can create which is beyond the tensions that generally cloud our relationships and prevent us from speaking clearly, so that at our funeral, after the eulogy, we will have no unfinished business with those we have left behind.

## Catechism of the Catholic Church



By Renata Milán Morales

# The life of man - to know and love God

**T**he Catechism of the Catholic Church is an essential text for understanding Catholic teachings and faith. Whether you're familiar with Catholic teachings or exploring them for the first time, this catechism is an important tool for knowing and understanding the Christian faith. In this series, we will explain its central messages, beginning with the purpose of humanity, the role of catechesis, and its mission – found in paragraphs 1 to 25.

## God's purpose for humanity

At the heart of the Catechism is a message about God's intention for every person. God, “infinitely perfect and blessed in himself,” created humanity to share in His blessed life. In other words, our purpose is connected to a

divine invitation – to seek, know, and love God – to enter a life that shares in His goodness, peace, and joy.

The Church, is where believers are gathered, healed from the divisions caused by sin, and drawn toward a shared purpose. To make this invitation accessible to all, God sent His Son, Jesus, whose mission was to extend this call to everyone, inviting us to become “adopted children” of God, filled with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus's mission was, and remains, central to the catechism's teachings. His life, death, and resurrection reveal the path to God and open a door for us. Through Jesus, believers are called into a deeper relationship with God. Every Catholic is called to share this mission.

## The role of catechesis

Catechesis, the process of teaching and deepening faith, comes from

this mission. It's more than just education – it's a way to initiate others into the full life of the Christian faith. Through catechesis, the teachings of Jesus are passed down, enabling each generation to grow in faith, live, and share their beliefs through prayer, liturgy, and community.

The catechism is a guide for this task, presenting Catholic doctrine in a way that helps believers mature in faith. It draws from different sources: the Bible, writings of the early Church Fathers, the traditions of the Church, and the Magisterium.

Catechesis is not just for new believers. It is a lifelong journey. The growth of the Church relies on this education to keep faith alive and active in each member's life, encouraging them to live in alignment with God's plan.

## Why catechism matters today

Periods of renewal in the Church are often marked by intense catechetical focus. The Fathers of the Church dedicated their ministry to writing and teaching the faith, creating works that continue to inspire and guide believers today. The Second Vatican Council revived this focus, leading to a renewed emphasis on catechesis.

While doctrine can sometimes feel complex, the Catechism reminds us that every teaching is directed towards a single goal: love. This love – rooted in God's love for humanity – is the ultimate end of all belief, hope, and action.

**i** Next week we will explore paragraphs 26 to 49, ‘Man's Capacity for God’.

# To hold nothing back

1 Kgs 17:10-16  
Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10  
Heb 9:24-28  
Mk 12:38-44 or 12:41-44

## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



The story of this encounter in this Sunday's gospel is often referred to as 'The Widow's Mite', a mite being the smallest of coins.

But it could be the lesson of 'The Widow's Might'. Here, in this isolated story of a poor woman, we find a story of remarkable, unexpected power. Whether we realise it or not, she is a mighty woman - a figure who teaches important lessons to the disciples and, two thousand years later, offers one to us here and now.

First: this is a profound lesson in generosity. We see in this widow someone who has nothing but gives everything - perhaps keeping food off her own table (if she even has a table.) How many of us would do the same? How many of us would have that kind of courage, that kind of selflessness?

### Willing

When it counts, how much of ourselves are we willing to give? How much do we give of our time, our patience, our attention, our talents? How much of that do we waste?

Secondly: this is a humbling lesson in perception and prejudice. This gospel passage begins with Jesus mentioning the scribes in their long robes who "devour the houses of widows." They appear to have everything - admiration, money, power, respect.

Yet, Jesus condemns these people who have everything,

but then turns his attention to this woman who has nothing. She is a person most in the community probably overlook or ignore, a figure on the margins. But she matters. Jesus tells his followers to take note: "This poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury."

He opens their eyes - and ours - to another way of thinking about the poor, the neglected, the people who are shoved aside. He gives this widow something she probably hasn't had in years: dignity. He gives her honour and respect.

**“What are the things that give us a false sense of security? What are the things that are keeping us from giving ourselves over to God?”**

It challenges us today, in our own time, to ask how we judge others like her. How do we view the poor, the destitute, the outcast? What about the elderly, the needy or the infirm? Do we consider what they must give to our world?

Finally, and perhaps most importantly: this is a breath-taking lesson in trust.

This woman's greatest power, her might, lies in her courageous ability to let go



The pennies of the poor widow, Paulus Lesire

and let God. She gives without holding back and trusts that God will provide.

This episode in the Gospel provokes us to reconsider what we have, what we hold onto, and what we so often refuse to give up. What are the things that give us a false sense of security? What are the things that are keeping us from giving ourselves over to God?

### Remembering

It's worth remembering that all of this is happening

just days before Jesus will suffer and die. In Mark's gospel, Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem to get ready for the Passover - but his eyes are on Calvary. So, at this moment, the one who will give everything on the cross pays tribute to an anonymous woman who gives everything at the treasury.

These final days of his are an opportunity to impart his final lessons to his disciples.

Last Sunday, we heard

the two greatest commandments - love God, love your neighbour. Next week, we will hear Christ's warnings about the end times. On our calendar, our liturgical year is drawing to a close; but in Mark's account, so is Jesus's life. There are some things he wants us to know before he is gone.

He is reminding us of the central tenet of the gospel, his message for generations to come: a message of love, of mercy,

of sacrifice.

But it is also a message of unflinching, unwavering faith. It says: We are meant to hold nothing back. Give. Notice what others miss. Remember those who are often forgotten. And trust.

Need an example? Just remember the mightiness of the widow's mite.

**Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog The Deacon's Bench.**

## Saint — of the — week

By Renata Milán Morales



St Elizabeth of the Trinity

## St Elizabeth of the Trinity: Heaven in faith

St Elizabeth of the Trinity, born Elizabeth Catez in 1880, is an inspiring model of Christian life. From a young age, Elizabeth had a fiery temperament, with "furious eyes" that expressed her strong will. Over time, this intensity transformed into a spirituality that drove her towards a deep awareness of God's presence within her. She lived with an intense sense of the indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity in her soul, a reality that shaped her inner life and outward actions.

Throughout her life, she cultivated a profound awareness of the Holy Trinity's presence within her soul. Her prayer to the Trinity, "O my God, Trinity whom I adore... Immerse yourself in me so that I may be immersed in you until I go to contemplate in your light the abyss of your splendour!" captures her deep spiritual longing and dedication.

She wrote, "There in the depths of my heart, in the Heaven of my soul, I love to find Him, since He never leaves me." This awareness developed

into an intimate, living relationship with the Trinity, which she described as "finding her Heaven on Earth, for Heaven is God, and God is in my soul." Her relationship with God was not an abstract idea but a reality that was part of every moment of her life, filling her with a radiant joy that touched everyone around her.

Elizabeth's approach to faith shows that what matters in our spiritual journey is not our circumstances but the inward direction of our souls. In her short life, Elizabeth encouraged others to cultivate a practice of inner silence, where the soul could be still enough to hear God's voice and experience His presence. Drawing on St Catherine of Siena's concept of creating a "cell of the heart," Elizabeth advised her correspondents - busy mothers, priests and friends - to cultivate a silent, sacred space within, where they could dwell with God in prayer.

For Elizabeth, prayer was a heartfelt conversation with a God who is "all love." This conviction was central to her spirituality and

the source of the joy she radiated to others. Her relationship with God was based on the belief that she was deeply loved.

Elizabeth's manuscripts described the work of God in her soul with great clarity. She witnessed that a life devoted to God is open to everyone, but it requires only an openness to His presence and a willingness to be transformed. Her life reminds us that the saints' experience of God is not inaccessible but rather an example for all Christians to follow.

Elizabeth's life and message are especially relevant in today's fast-paced world. She calls each of us to experience God in our depths, to find a sanctuary of silence and faith within ourselves where we can dwell with the Trinity.

She shows that what matters is not our physical location but the direction in which we are moving - toward God. Far from being an unattainable ideal, Elizabeth's life exemplifies a model that invites every Christian to experience the living presence of the Trinity within.

# BookReviews

Peter Costello



# How the Irish fared in early cartoons

**Caricature and the Irish: Satirical prints from the Library of Trinity College Dublin, c.1780–1830,**

by Nicholas K. Robinson (Four Courts Press, €40.00 / £35.00)

Felix M. Larkin

**E**.B. White, the noted children's author, for decades a literary stalwart of the *New Yorker*, that great home for cartoonists of all kinds over the last century, once wrote that "humour can be dissected, as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process". Being a friend of James Thurber, he knew all about the problem.

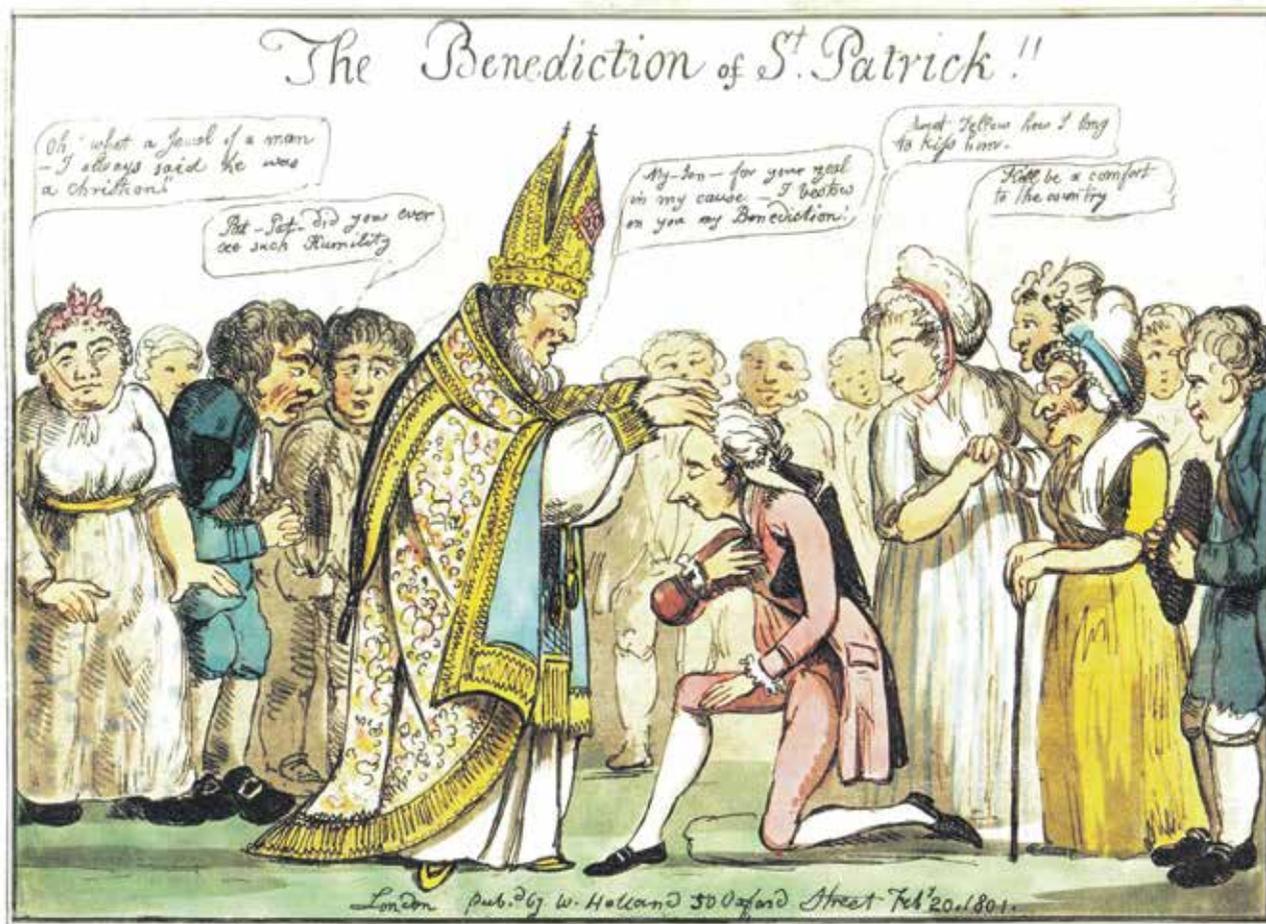
The challenge, therefore, for anyone writing about historical cartoons is to provide sufficient context to make the cartoon intelligible, but then to let the cartoon speak for itself without much further elaboration.

Nicholas Robinson gets the balance just right in this book of 105 cartoons from what is generally regarded as the golden age of British satire, 1780–1830. The book is lavishly produced by Four Courts Press, easily the most beautiful volume published in Ireland this year.

Robinson states in a short introduction: "My task, about two hundred years after the publication of the prints, is to offer some explanation in substitution for the immediacy long vanished".

## Notes

This he does in pithy notes that accompany each cartoon. He brings to these notes a sensitivity that is grounded in the fact that he himself in his younger days had been an accomplished cartoonist. His work appeared regularly in the *Irish Times* in the 1970s. He is, however, better known now as the husband of our former president, Mary Robinson – and his role as Ireland's first 'First Gentleman' was explored in a recent book by Bernadette Whelan, *Irish First Ladies and First Gentlemen, 1919–2011* (Cork University Press, €49.00 / £45.00).



*The Benediction of St. Patrick !!*, an anonymous London cartoon of 1801 showing the national saint blessing the former Prime minister, a satire on the public reaction in Ireland to Pitt's resignation due to the King's opposition to measures of Catholic emancipation.

The cartoons are selected from his own personal collection, which was donated to the Library of Trinity College Dublin in 1996. Their theme – as the title of the book indicates – is the Irish, and Robinson points out that the Irish began to appear in various guises in London cartoons from about 1780.

The London cartoonists whose work features in this book include the three greatest practitioners of the art of visual satire in the period in question – James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson and Isaac Cruikshank – but there are also many examples of

**“The arcane and archaic rituals of the law invite ridicule, and so too does the showy – sometimes bombastic – style of many of its successful practitioners. Lawyers and the law are easy targets for the cartoonist”**

the work of notable Dublin publishers such as James Sidebotham and William McCleary.

Unlike today's cartoons, cartoons of this period were published and sold as prints on single sheets of about A3 size – artefacts in their own right, as distinct from embedded in a newspaper or magazine.

## Prints

These were sold directly from print shops. They were rarely framed, but were usually kept in large portfolios away from the direct sunlight, so preserving their bright prime

colours, applied by hand at the press. These carefully curated prints are the ones most sought after by connoisseurs, such as Nick Robinson.

**“St Patrick lays his hands on Pitt's head and intones: ‘My son, for your zeal in my cause I bestow on you my Benediction’”**

The Act of Union of 1800 and the place of religion

in Irish life are the focus of some of the best of the cartoons. I particularly like the cartoon published by W. Holland of Oxford Street, London, in February 1801, entitled 'The Benediction of St. Patrick' (no. 51 in this book).

## Emancipation

As Robinson points out, the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland had been "negotiated by William Pitt on the promise of Catholic emancipation". When he failed to deliver Catholic emancipation because of the king's uncompromising opposition to it, he felt obliged to resign as Prime Minister. The cartoonist's response to this is to show Pitt kneeling before our national saint – curiously, depicted as representing the Catholic interest despite being claimed also by the other Christian churches in Ireland. St Pat-

rick lays his hands on Pitt's head and intones: "My son, for your zeal in my cause I bestow on you my Benediction".

Many Irish personalities feature in the cartoons, most notably Edmund Burke and Daniel O'Connell. Robinson has, in fact, written previously about the caricatures of Edmund Burke in a volume published by Yale University Press in 1996.

**“Dr Linda Doyle, Provost of Trinity College, describes this collection of cartoons as ‘a timely reminder of the valuable role of satire in a liberal democracy’”**

There are also several cartoons poking fun at the legal profession, of which Nicholas Robinson is a member; he practised as a solicitor for some years after his stint as a cartoonist. The arcane and archaic rituals of the law invite ridicule, and so too does the showy – sometimes bombastic – style of many of its successful practitioners. Lawyers and the law are easy targets for the cartoonist.

In a foreword, Dr Linda Doyle, Provost of Trinity College, describes this collection of cartoons as "a timely reminder of the valuable role of satire in a liberal democracy". She adds that it "should never be taken for granted".

It would certainly be wrong to take for granted how satire has been tolerated, and enjoyed, in Britain and Ireland since the late 18th century. Such tolerance is not normal in many parts of the world, and never has been – and it is under threat today even in liberal democracies from an ever-increasing emphasis on "political correctness" and political orthodoxy.

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.

# Notre Dame Restored: lessons for all to learn from

Peter Costello

**T**he formal reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, now fully restored after the disastrous fire on April 15 2019, will take place a month from now, on December 8. It will be an occasion with important lessons for all the world to learn from, but also one surrounded by controversy.

With this important event looming, however, disputes and disagreements still rage between the various parties involved, the French State, the Catholic Archbishop of Paris, and the experts of various kinds involved in the work. Of all of these the French government, headed by President Macron, has the final word, as the actual owners of the fabric, an outcome of the chequered history of religious institutions in France since the Revolution; the Catholic Church is merely a tenant.

## Graced

The occasion will be graced by a new setting of the *Te Deum*, especially composed by Thierry Escaich, the new organist of the Cathedral. In an interview a couple of weeks ago with *Le Figaro*, he said that in his composition "I wish to capture the breath of Notre-Dame". In this he echoes the mind of Victor Hugo, who wished to attempt the same thing in his historical novel about the cathedral, an 1831 classic of the Romantic movement in Europe. The new work will have a central part to play in the reopening service.

If the reopening will be marked by a moment in musical history, other aspects of the restoration have proved more controversial, as reported recently by *La Vie*, the independent Catholic magazine edited by and for the laity.

Macron and the Minister of Culture are determined by the force of their authority to imprint on the fabric of the Cathedral this "mark of the XXth century", just as every



Putting a refreshed face on the medieval cathedral of Paris

other century since its creation has done.

**“Around the only surviving glass, an image of the Tree of Jesse, they wish to arrange eight panels by living artists on the general theme of the Pentecost”**

The Archbishop of Paris, Laurent Ulrich, a man of advanced views who is close to both Pope Francis and Macron, has his own ambitions too. The archbishop, in opposition to the view of the experts in heritage projects, wished to replace the stained glass that was lost in the chapel on the south side of the Cathedral with new images.

Around the only surviving glass, an image of the Tree of Jesse, they wish to arrange eight panels by living artists on the general theme of the Pentecost. They want to have images showing "the bodies, the faces, the reactions of the first Christian assembly" -- in which, of course, the Virgin Mary will be prominent.

But how this will be worked out remains unknown. Some fear that the result may follow that of Nevers Cathedral, where windows lost in the war were later replaced not

by religious images but abstract designs. Doubts about the new scheme brought a petition with 225,000 signatures; but Macron, Dati and the Archbishop pressed ahead. We shall soon see what we shall see.

## Finest

Notre Dame de Paris is seen as one of the finest examples of French gothic architecture. Before the fire it was visited annually by some 13 million tourists. All this summer across the southern countries of Europe there had been vigorous protests against mass tourism of this kind. In Venice, for instance, new taxes and restrictions have come into operation.

Though in the past local people (as in Spain and Greece) saw tourism as vital to their economic welfare. This seems no longer to be true. Tourists are still wanted but not of the all-night partying, beer swilling kind. A more select, more cultured, and one supposes, more monied tourist is sought. Only in this way can the places and the people who live in them be preserved.

Last week Minister Dati proposed that there would have to be a charge of €5 to visit the cathedral, with exceptions made for those attending mass, other services, or simply wishing to pray. Though similar charges are levied in other countries from Ireland to

Greece, the Catholic Church in France and elsewhere is firmly opposed to them.

**“She claimed, indeed, that ‘Notre Dame would save all the churches of France. It would be a magnificent symbol’**

In response, Dati said this small charge on the 13 million visitors a year to the Cathedral would raise some €75 million euros which would go into the state fund for the preservation of heritage religious buildings. She claimed, indeed, that "Notre Dame would save all the churches of France. It would be a magnificent symbol".

Across Christian Europe only some buildings of religious heritage are to be preserved; others will be found reused as everything from business offices and pubs, to community centres and theatres. It seems, in modern Europe at least, faith alone is not enough to save our physical churches, whatever about the church as a spiritual body.

We will have to see what transpires in December: Christmas celebrations this year in Notre Dame at least will be very different.

## Homeward Bound from Compostela

**Living the Camino Back Home,**  
by Brendan McManus SJ and Katherine O'Flynn FCJ  
(Messenger Publications, €9.95 / £8.95)

Peter Costello

**H**ere is a book which can be seriously said to fill a pressing need. Books about the Camino and the experiences of those walking it, for their various reasons - which are not always quite as "religious" as some might imagine or hope -- are common enough, and enjoy a popular sale.

In 2023 it was officially reported that some 446,035 pilgrims walked the route: mass tourism indeed. However, the walk is one thing. But what does the pilgrim, of whatever kind, do to keep up the value of the experience on their return home to "ordinary life"?

This is exactly the question that the two authors of this little pamphlet try to address. Both have been involved for years with the Camino Companions, a ministry for welcoming pilgrims to Santiago itself.

The authors' intention is to provide "Ignatian tips for keeping the Camino spirit alive". Just how can the experience be relived, its insights maintained, while sitting on the LUAS tram into work, or while negotiating the one way system of Cork city, or even the more difficult task of making one's way around still divided Belfast. It is a problem.

**“If you have been on the Camino, or are planning to take the route in the near future, this might be a little book to buy along with those guides that are so common”**

The authors clearly state that "the book provides food for thought and practical support along with the authors' own colour photographs of the Camino throughout", to assist pilgrims to integrate "the Camino feeling" into life at home.

I suspect this has always been a problem for pilgrims. The daily grind allows too little free mental space to contemplate the ordinary course of affairs. So if you have been on the Camino, or are planning to take the route



A modern route marker on the Camino Way across Northern Spain

in the near future, this might be a little book to buy along with those guides that are so common.

Planning in advance what to do in the future after the event is always a good idea, as philosophers have suggested to us for millennia. Buying this book might be the first step in the right direction for many people.

The authors apply themselves to the task of suggesting the ways in which pilgrims can "bring the spiritual learnings and experiences from their Camino journey back home and apply them in their daily lives - the real Camino" - of which the walk is only the symbol.

It makes me wonder though what became of Chaucer's pilgrims when they returned from Canterbury to their everyday lives in London and elsewhere.

I had forgotten that Chaucer never finished the tales, as he brings his pilgrims only to the edge of Canterbury. It was intended that there would be a set of tales told on the return journey, but these were never written.

Later other writers tried to produce sequels; but these are little read today by anyone but scholars. But the ambiguities between the often secular nature of the tales and the essential spiritual nature of a visit to the Shrine of Thomas Becket suggests that the conflict that many people must often feel today between the Camino experience and their road to work existed also in medieval times on all pilgrimages, even those in Ireland.

We so often think that times change; but essentially many human experiences remain the same throughout the centuries, especially those which are coloured by faith and spirituality. All pilgrimages, of all kinds, are essentially «unfinished» - there is always more to see, more to learn, more to unlearn.

# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Magnifying the de-humanisation of Ireland

It's a trend these days for people to loathe their past – especially the past history and culture of their country. There are lots of serious faults with our past in Ireland, but when the past becomes the all-consuming bogeyman, present abuses slip under the radar. Present and ongoing abuses are the ones we can do something about, and they often get ignored, waiting for a future generation to get outraged when it's too late for many.

The latest instalment of our national self-flagellation, ironically enough, was the documentary **Leathered: Violence in Irish Schools** (RTE One, Wednesday). It seems to have been prompted by accounts of corporal punishment that featured strongly on RTE Radio's **Liveline** a few months ago, which in turn was prompted by stories of sexual abuse in a **Documentary on One** programme, **Blackrock Boys**. It made for uneasy watching and the stories of extreme corporal punishment were believable and upsetting. I remembered examples from my own school days, though not as extreme as some of these accounts.

I thought the programme made the mistake of conflating slapping with beatings and uncontrolled violence that smacked of sadism and



Michael Kelly

psychosis. Unfortunately, slapping was tolerated and even approved by the culture, seen as an effective means of discipline, but the extremes never were and so there were several examples of brave parents and doctors confronting teachers and schools. The culture defence is poor – religious-run schools should have set a far higher standard, guided by beatitudes rather than bad attitudes.

Unlike the sexual abuse,

the physical punishment was public, so in a way the stories were not at all surprising. Apart from the grim personal testimonies, the parts I found most interesting were the stories of those campaigning against corporal punishment in the 1960s and even earlier. Eventually they brought about change, though it was slow in coming. I was also taken with the testimony of one teacher who used corporal punishment initially but

gave it up as he found it 'de-humanising' for the students and himself. The wads of text at the end were informative and concerning – including a lay teacher denying the many accusations against him.

What took from the programme was the sense of an axe being ground, of a not-so-hidden agenda to demonise the Church – the obligatory shots of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, with creepy music accompanying images of shadowy religious swinging leathers and rosary beads. I thought the central story was ill served by the melodramatic reconstructions. This was only part of the story of the Church in Irish education – once again the teachers who were inspiring and kind were sidelined – it suits the agenda.

On **Talkback** (BBC Radio Ulster, Thursday) former *The Irish Catholic* editor Michael Kelly made this very point about the full story not being told. This time it was in relation to yet another film about the Magdalen Laundries – **Small Things Like These**, based on the novel by Claire Keegan. He wasn't trying to whitewash any abuses but just pointing out that there was another side to the nuns' story – e.g. the wonderful humanitarian work some of them did abroad, even when they were of advanced years. Also in the

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### FILM: QUIZ SHOW

TG4: Saturday November 9, 9:35pm

(1994) Starring Ralph Fiennes, John Turturro, Paul Schofield. A potentially fixed game show is investigated. Intelligent film, with moral dilemmas. Directed by Robert Redford.

#### FILM: FATHER STU

Channel 4 Saturday November 9, 10pm

(2022) Writer and director Rosalind Ross's biographical drama about a hapless boxer-turned-priest whose gloves are off in the fight for the Lord.

#### THE MEANING OF LIFE

RTE One Sunday November 10, 10:30pm

Author and journalist Fintan O'Toole tells Joe Duffy about his Catholic, working class, Crumlin upbringing.

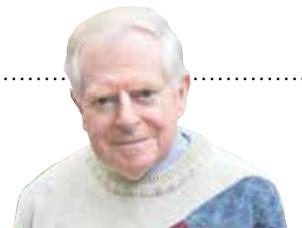
conversation with presenter William Crawley was Patsy McGarry of the *Irish Times* who, at one stage was accusing Michael Kelly of 'distraction'. The latter called on him to quit the ad hominem attack. Mr McGarry backed off, and later said that most priests were 'very fine men' and that his problem was for Church authorities involved in cover up. Helen O'Hara of *Empire* magazine pointed out that not all modern film representations of clergy served to demonise – she instanced the priests in **Lady Bird** and **Calvary** – but we were a long way from the **Bells of St Mary's!**

With all this negativity you'd long for green shoots. On **The Pat Kenny Show**

(Newstalk, Thursday) Breda O'Brien, columnist with *The Irish Catholic* and the *Irish Times*, discussed with Fr Iggy O'Donovan and presenter Anton Savage, a religious revival among young men, especially in the USA. While there was a danger that it was too closely allied to right wing political views, she regarded it as an interesting phenomenon and also noticed an enthusiasm for faith among some youth movements in Ireland – e.g. Youth 2000. She welcomed this as a positive thing and expanded on these thoughts in her *Irish Times* column last weekend – well worth a read.

# Music

Pat O'Kelly



## Fanny Mendelssohn's fruitful work

A recent event at the National Concert Hall commemorated the centenary of the death in 1924 of Giacomo Puccini through his *Messa di Gloria*. An early work, the piece still has considerable merit to its credit. However, I felt the respectable performance under visiting conductor Carlo Rizzi with tenor and bass soloists – Gwyn Hughes Jones and Simon Shibambu – and the NSO Chorus was somewhat less than elevating.

The first half of the evening had been devoted to the sister and brother Mendelssohns – Fanny and Felix – with her Overture in C and his ever-popular 4th Symphony (*The Italian*). Not surprisingly there is a similarity of style



Fanny Mendelssohn

connecting both works written in 1830 and 1833 respectively.

Fanny Cäcilie Mendelssohn, born into a wealthy

Hamburg family who moved to Berlin in 1811, was the eldest of Abraham and Leah Mendelssohn's four children. Showing prodigious qualities on the piano, she was pronounced by her mother to have 'Bach fugue fingers', and by the age of thirteen Fanny, who also had a phenomenal memory, could play the first book of Bach's Preludes and Fugues by heart.

Together with her younger brother, Felix, with whom she had a close personal and musical relationship, she was sent to study with the director of Berlin's Singakademie, Carl Friedrich Zelter. Brilliant pianists, both children had also shown decided inclinations towards composition,

but their father was adamant only Felix would be allowed to follow a career in music. Abraham Mendelssohn told his daughter that "while music will perhaps become Felix's profession, for you it can, and must, be only an ornament."

Fanny married the Prussian court painter Wilhelm Hensel in 1829. Soon, her *Sonntagsmusiken* (Sunday salon concerts) became part and parcel of Berlin's social scene and attracted the intellectual and artistic elite into her home.

Despite her father's earlier opposition, she continued to compose and rear her only child Sebastian Ludwig (1830-1898). With her hus-

band's support she published several volumes of her songs and piano pieces, many of them entitled *Lied ohne worte* (Song without words), in 1846.

Because of the scepticism regarding women composers at the time quite a number of Fanny's compositions were published under Felix's name. On one occasion when visiting Buckingham Palace Felix had to admit to Queen Victoria that the song *Italien* in which he had accompanied her was actually composed by Fanny and not by him as the monarch had thought.

Fanny Mendelssohn's prolific output runs to over 450 works around 250 of which

are songs. While some considered her music as gifted as that of her genius brother, Felix, others found it had a far more passionate nature than his. This surprised Fanny and she is on record as saying she wondered how she could have written such emotional music as she felt she was neither an eccentric nor an overly sentimental person.

While rehearsing Felix' secular cantata *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* for one of her Sunday concerts in 1847, Fanny suffered a cerebral haemorrhage and died later that evening. Sadly, Felix also died from a cerebral haemorrhage on November 4, 1847, while in Leipzig to conduct his Gewandhaus Orchestra.

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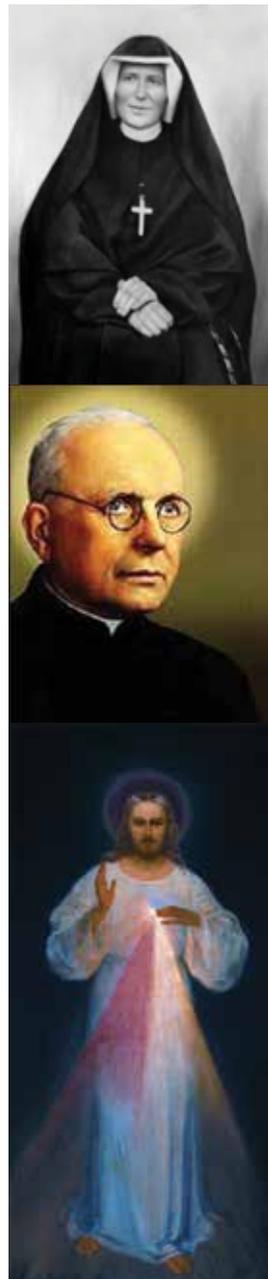
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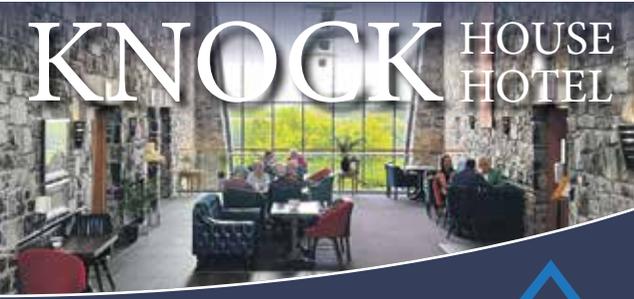
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**MEJUDGORJE EASTER 2025**

**MEDJUGORJE EASTER 2025** Ex Dublin with spiritual director April 15, one week. More info from Bernie at 087 935 3953

**SERVICES**

**ALL UNWANTED** home waste removed. Cookers, fridges, beds, suites, wardrobes, carpets etc. Removed and disposed of in a proper manner. No job too small or big. Contact Tommy, 087 6406015.

**LOOKING FOR A ROOM TO RENT**

**A MALE, CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONAL** is looking for a room to rent in Cork City/suburb/commuter town. Excellent references. Please contact 089 464 0132.

*Please pray for the beatification of*

**Little Nellie of Holy God**

“May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls proposing Nellie as their model”

– Pope St Pius X, June 4, 1912

## The Irish Catholic

### PREPAID CLASSIFIED AD COUPON

Number of insertions: \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

Do you require a Box number? (€6 extra charge)  Yes  No

Please provide us with the heading you would like the ad to appear under:  
 (For eg. Looking to buy, Pilgrimage to..., etc)

**Please print your advertisement in the space below, placing one word in each box**

Minimum charge of €24.60 (including VAT) for 5 lines/25 words. Additional lines cost €4.92 each.

1				
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3				
4				
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City/County \_\_\_\_\_

Eircode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Pay by: Cheque/Postal order  
 For € \_\_\_\_\_ payable to: The Irish Catholic

Pay by: Credit Card  
 Card number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# Leisure time

**We will pass on the flame of faith.**

**For over 130 years, *The Irish Catholic* has been a voice of hope and inspiration for Catholics in Ireland.**



**For more information about leaving a legacy to *The Irish Catholic*, phone 01 687 4027 or email [info@irishcatholic.ie](mailto:info@irishcatholic.ie)**

**The Irish Catholic**

## Crossword

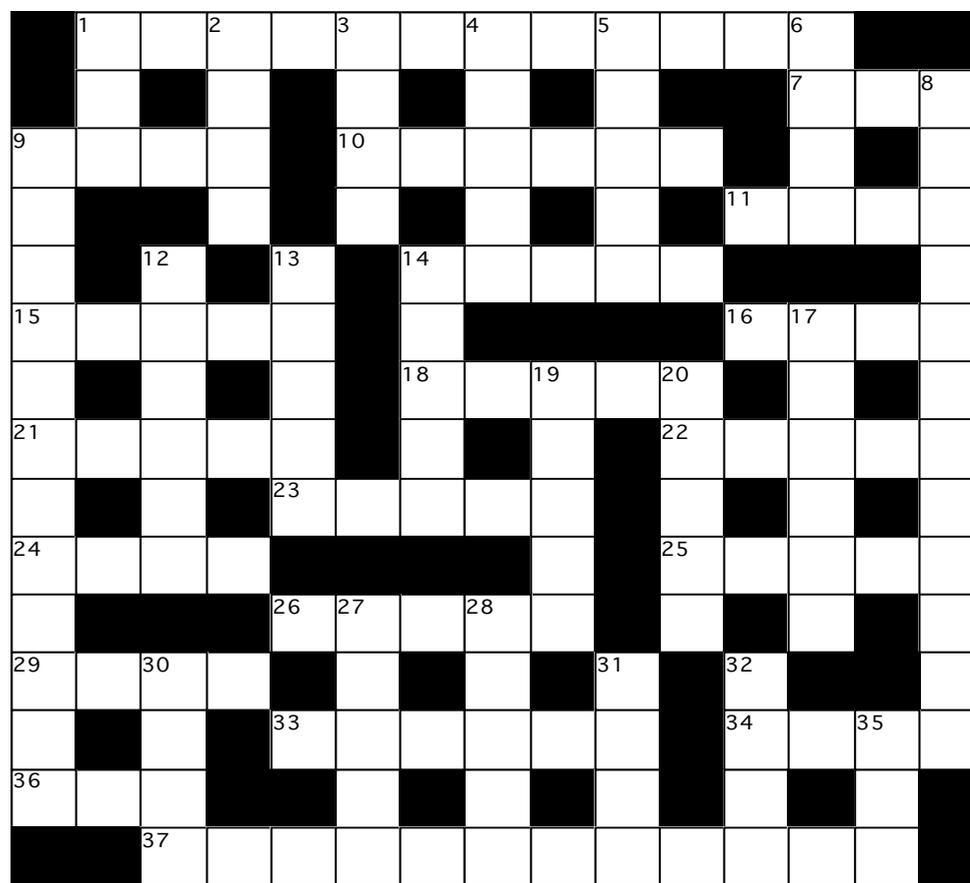
Gordius 688

### Across

- 1 Taper you may wish to light in the church (6,6)
- 7 Append (3)
- 9 Archaic term for an attractive young man (4)
- 10 Cooking directions (6)
- 11 A grouping of powers (4)
- 14 One end of a house (5)
- 15 Enumerate (5)
- 16 Pleasantly hot (4)
- 18 Gemstones associated with October (5)
- 21 Brook (5)
- 22 Catch fish with a bag-net (5)
- 23 Odds of one-to-one (5)
- 24 Row on a chessboard, as opposed to a file (4)
- 25 Large stringed instrument (5)
- 26 Illegally occupy a disused building (5)
- 29 The first man, according to the Bible (4)
- 33 Usually yellow fruit (6)
- 34 Mail (4)
- 36 Popular beverage (3)
- 37 Important date (3,6,3)

### Down

- 1 Compete, contend (3)
- 2 Hawker (4)
- 3 In grammar, a 'doing' word (4)



- 4 Chocolate-flavoured beverage (5)
- 5 Country in the Himalayas (5)
- 6 Nobleman (4)
- 8 Mathematical symbol that looks like a full stop (7,5)
- 9 Fruit that is high in vitamin C (12)
- 12 From which to serve soup, etc (6)
- 13 The amount of a wager (5)
- 14 Group of trees (5)
- 17 Such land is suitable for tillage (6)
- 19 Something worth having (5)
- 20 Adhere (5)
- 27 Small bird farmed for its meat and eggs (5)
- 28 Linger in anticipation (5)
- 30 Slightly open (4)
- 31 Make bread (4)
- 32 Mimicked (4)
- 35 Pigpen (3)

## SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 31

### GORDIUS No. 687

#### Across

- 1 Somersault 6 Stir 10 Fades 11 Outhouses 12 Mastiff 15 Kneel 17 Rain 18 Hate 19 Exact 21 Naughty 23 Corfu 24 Polo 25 Nail 26 Logic 28 Escorts 33 Tricolour 34 Bully 35 Sped 36 Chopsticks

#### Down

- 1 Safe 2 Mad Hatter 3 Resit 4 Aloof 5 Late 7 Taste 8 Resolution 9 Cockney 13 Inca 14 Fragile 16. Chocolates 20 Apostolic Nuncios 22 Talc 27 Guile 29 Syrup 30 Orbit 31 Both 32 Eyes

## Sudoku Corner 558

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 557

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

### Last week's Hard 557

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

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



# Drawing comfort from Faith despite deep loss

**I like music!** I particularly like songs that tell stories or take us to a place where reflection is possible. Often, to the joy of some and the annoyance of others (including my dog, Indy), I have a go at singing them! To make matters worse – for Indy and others – last year I bought a ukelele and have been trying to play along with some of the songs I sing, resulting in barks and barbs in equal measure but, the show must go on.

In this month of November, there is a song that I like to hear and, in very recent days, sing. Written by the late (and great) Christie Hennessy, it is a song called 'Remember Me'. In it, Christie speaks for those who are gone. He reminds us that they are inviting us to remember. Remembering is an invitation to peace of mind and heart, as those gone seek to wrap themselves around us in a blanket of security. Wrapped in this blanket called memory, the "faithful departed" continue to shelter us, reassure us and journey with us throughout the days and especially those days that are more difficult than others.

Every night and every day  
I'll be by your side  
just reach out and take my hand  
and I will be your guide  
And anytime you feel like  
you can't make it through



remember me  
and I will be with you".

**Soulful**

Christie's soulful and distinctive voice adds to the poignancy of this invitation to remember. In his voice, we hear others – the voices of those we have known and loved who have gone to their eternal reward. As in Christie's lyrics, those gone before us invite us to remember, not out of morbidity but rather that we might find peace and strength.

In this month of November, the Church calls us to enter a place of remembrance. Every parish and church will feature names of loved ones, some of whom have died in the recent past and others gone for many years. These lists are important and

speak to a reverence that is inherently present in the hearts of those who grieve, remember and pray.

**“I imagine the empty sheet of paper, touched by the pen, held in the hand of one who sees this as an important act of connection”**

I try to read through the lists that people submit for November Masses. I might not always get to do this, but it is something I have tried to do through the years. Though many of the names may be unknown to me, I

like to let my eyes roll over the names, in the awareness that someone sat at a kitchen table or a quietened sitting room to compile the list. I imagine the empty sheet of paper, touched by the pen, held in the hand of one who sees this as an important act of connection. The paper absorbs the ink as the hand forms the letters that tell the story of a life, a loss and a lasting connection. There is something very powerful being done in this simple act of recollection. Many of the names come quickly to mind, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives and, sadly for some, sons and daughters. Other names come from the home-place – neighbours, old school friends, teachers and others who had a part to play in the shaping of life. I feel a sense of contentment when I see the names of priests who might have ministered in the parish decades ago. There is something reassuring in seeing their names included. There is honesty too, in the awareness that the priest, like the parishioner, is a pilgrim who may have fallen short along the way and for whom a prayer seems a natural response to genuine gratitude. Though I am certainly in no rush, I would like to think that someday, someone might include my name on a November list.

In reflecting on Christie's lyric, I pray that all who feel the deep loss of

a loved one, might draw comfort in faith, certainty in doubt and peace in that invitation to "remember".

**Headstones and inscriptions**

I noticed a picture online recently of a mother's headstone. The family clearly had a sense of humour and the mother must have as well. The front of the headstone bore the usual details you would expect, name, date of birth and date of death with an invitation to pray. On the reverse of the headstone was one of the mother's favourite recipes for bread. When people asked for it, she would reply: "over my dead body!"

That's where the family placed it.



## A bishop in Mozambique badly needs funds to construct a parish church

Bishop Diamantino Antunes IMC of Tete in Mozambique has written to The Little Way Association to tell us of the situation in the new parish of St Martin de Porres in Mpadue. A parish church will be an immense blessing to this parish where Catholics now pray in the open air, and Bishop Diamantino earnestly hopes The Little Way can help him.

"Located in central Mozambique the population of the diocese is estimated to be 3 million, of whom 700,000 are Catholics," the bishop writes. "Evangelization began here with the arrival of Jesuit Fathers in the sixteenth century. The future parish church of St Martin is located in the surroundings of the city of Tete. The people here suffer from poor housing and much poverty, both material and spiritual. Our Catholics have to pray under trees in the parish grounds and there are many sects here which prey on the faithful, making them false promises of healing and prosperity.

"The new church will improve pastoral care and provide a proper setting for the celebration of the Eucharist, catechesis and formation meetings. The new church, when finished, will make it possible to carry out more effective religious and social work among the children, young people and the poorest, in particular.

"May Saint Therese, whose great desire was always to be childlike in her approach to God, inspire your supporters in that spirit to give generously to our appeal. I assure you that all donations will be much appreciated and will help us greatly with this project."

**Please can you help?**

**Every euro you send will be gratefully received, and will be sent without deduction to Bishop Diamantino in Mozambique, to build the parish church of St Martin de Porres.**



*"A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul." - St Therese*

**REMEMBER THE HOLY SOULS IN NOVEMBER**

If you wish to have Masses offered for friends or loved ones who have died, please send us a list of intentions and a minimum stipend of €7 (but more is very welcome) as an offering to the priest who will celebrate each Mass.

By helping poor priests in this way you are aiding the work of the Church in mission lands.

**YOUR MASS IN THE MISSIONS**

Our benefactors will be glad to know that in addition to the daily Mass offered for their intentions, Mass is offered each day for all deceased Little Way benefactors and friends.

**CAN YOU HELP PROVIDE A WELL?**

The Little Way is constantly receiving requests for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk approx. three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Every euro you send will be sent direct.

Crossed POs and cheques should be sent and made payable to:

**THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION**  
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR  
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466  
[www.littlewayassociation.com](http://www.littlewayassociation.com)

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

- €..... **TO BUILD ST MARTIN DE PORRES CHURCH,**  
Bishop Diamantino Antunes, Mozambique
- €..... **WELLS AND CLEAN WATER**
- €..... **HUNGRY, SICK, AND DEPRIVED**
- €..... **MASSES** (please state number of Masses ....)
- €..... **LITTLEWAY ADMIN EXPENSES**

To donate online go to  
[www.littlewaysassociation.com](http://www.littlewaysassociation.com)

**DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.**

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss)

(Block letters please)

Address

IC/11/7