

# The Irish Catholic

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## Catechesis needs to teach the depth and richness of our prayer tradition

Renata Milán Morales

"The Church needs to look at the way it catechises. That we catechise not just by giving information, but by leading people into the experience of prayer and then also by making sure that people know the richness and the depth of our own prayer tradition." Br Richard Hendrick OFM Cap said speaking to *The Irish Catholic* in the wake of the launch of his new book *Calm-ing the Storms: Meditation as a Path to Inner Peace and Happiness*.

He also pointed that prayer could take away a lot of the stress of modern life. "I think when we fill our life with too many distractions, and we don't have reflective space... or quiet time, our bodies and our minds just find it difficult to recover. So that's one of the things that prayer gives: reflective space and quiet and calm in which we can reset and begin again."

Br Richard said that while some practices in our daily lives have the potential to be spiritual, they might be missing one of the greatest resources of the Catholic tradition, "I would also say they're missing something, which is the depth of a connection that is possible when we come to prayer because prayer of all kinds, whether it's praise or petition or the meditative forms of prayer, involves primarily trusting in God. And when we come to trust in God, we realise that no matter what is going on, we are held in

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### Is it a bird, is it a plane, no it's a PP!



Fr David Vard PP Stradbally parish, Co. Laois and a group of 10 parishioners took to the skies on October 6 in Clonbullogue Airfield to raise money for the parish. Photo: Ross Molloy.

**A KILLING DOCTOR'S GHOST  
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The Irish Catholic



Catechesis needs to teach the depth and richness of our prayer tradition

» **Continued from Page 1** in God's loving hands, and that allows us to begin to live our life from a position of fundamental trust."

"I think a huge number of people are very aware of this, but I think people find it difficult to talk about it because we have lost the language of faith, and we lose our ability to speak about these kinds of practises," concluded Br Richard.

# Cork launches a year of prayer

**Renata Steffens**

Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin in a new pastoral message has called for people in the diocese to commit to a year-long time of prayer, listening and discernment about the future of the Church.

The bishop said people are understandably concerned about their parishes' future when speaking to pilgrims attending the annual Mass at St Finbarr's Oratory, Gougane Barra.

He said "Many have a strong attachment to their local church, some worry

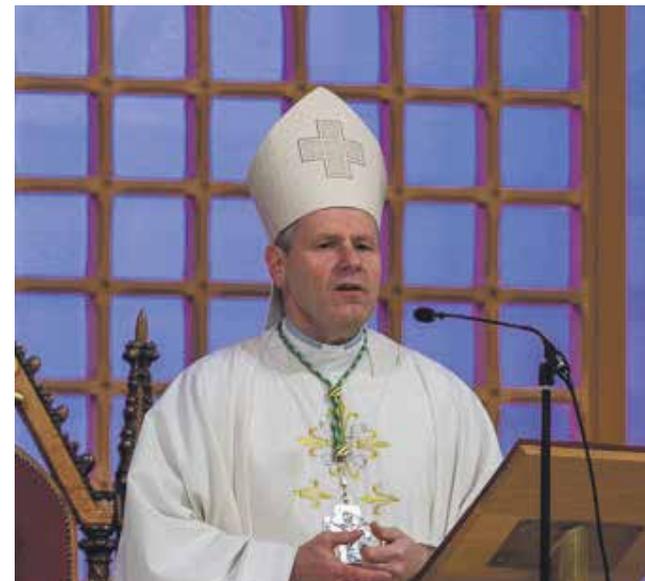
about the sustainability of their preferred Mass times, and some communities miss having a resident priest.

"Priests across the diocese continue to deal with unprecedented changes. I recognise and appreciate the selfless generosity of our priests as they meet increasing demands to provide sacramental and pastoral care."

The invitation says "It is clear that the Church of the present and the future will have an enhanced role for lay leaders." To support this lay involvement, the diocese will create a Diocesan Pastoral Centre

which will bring all Diocesan functions under the one roof, including Education, Mission and Ministry, Youth Ministry, Safeguarding, Communications and administrative functions including the Bishop's Office and the Diocesan Secretariat.

"I hope this will be a valuable resource for training and supporting people living out their baptismal calling and for ongoing support of our priests," said the bishop who is currently on a diocesan retreat with his priests.



Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin

# Book of Irish Missionaries' story launched

**Renata Steffens**

Over one hundred people gathered for a one-day symposium entitled 'Mission Now' organised by the Association of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI). The event hosted in Avila Retreat Centre in Dublin happened on October 4 and included the launch of the book *Retired Missionaries and Faith in a Changing Society*.

The publication is the result of a study undertaken by Dr Carmel Gallagher (TUD) and her deceased co-researcher Dr Ricca Edmondson (NUIG).

During the official launch Sean Fleming TD, Minister of State for International Development said "Our society owes you, the Irish Religious and Missionaries, a huge debt of gratitude for the work that you and your colleagues have embarked upon internationally."

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* previous to the event, Dr Gallagher said the research started in 2020 when she and her co-researcher had retired

from their lecturing jobs.

"We had often spoken about how we felt that this group of missionaries were somewhat forgotten in Irish society... We felt that they had been ignored, I suppose, with the decline in the Catholic Church and the scandals and the overall sort of negative discourse on Catholicism and Christianity in Ireland," Dr Gallagher said.

The researcher told this paper they used AMRI as the gatekeeper when contacting and selecting the missionaries. "We ended up interviewing 37 altogether, which was much, much bigger than we intended."

AMRI said in a statement that this book "details the extraordinary lives of women and men from ordinary backgrounds who, in their living witness to Gospel values, encountered some of the most challenging global social problems." "The author argues that the lives of these missionaries offer valuable perspectives on what it is to be Christian in contemporary society."



Dr Carmel Gallagher with Sean Fleming TD, Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora, Fr Tim Lehane President of AMRI and Gerard Gallagher Secretary General of AMRI. Pic John Mc Elroy.

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# Removal of references to Christmas in school book 'not consensus among teachers'

**Brandon Scott**

A primary school teacher based in Dublin who drew attention to the apparent removal of references to Christmas/Nollaig in the textbook *Abair Liom* for 5th class pupils, has described the change in language, which makes reference to 'winter markets' instead, as not something that teachers or parents have advocated for while others involved in Catholic education have labelled it as a "downgrading of anything Christian".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Aisling Considine, a primary school teacher and general election candidate for Aontú, said that although

the publisher of the book responded to queries saying that the changes were based on 'teacher feedback', this is not what Ms Considine has experienced in the profession.

"This is not the consensus among teachers," she said. "There was not an appetite among teachers at all. What I would say happened is that a handful of activist teachers got involved and they're the reason why or maybe the people who work for the publishers think that they know better. But I can tell you that it's not coming from parents and it's not coming from teachers."

Ms Considine said that radical activism on teachers' unions is distorting the culture and message being

promoted in the country's education system and although this development "blindsided" her, more and more people are becoming aware of the very specific ideological undertones.

"The teachers' unions have just been absolutely taken over with the whole 'Woke' causes and the activists in them have kind of taken over," she said. "Having said that, people really are waking up to what's going on and the nonsense of the ideologies that are invading the education system."

"This totally blindsided me and I don't think any of the teachers will realise it until they get to the chapter on Christmas this December and they'll be like, 'oh, where's all

the vocabulary around Christmas?'. That's why I posted on Twitter to reach out to people."

Catholic Secondary Schools Parents' Association President Alan Whelan said that this sort of occurrence is "widespread" and "deeply engrained in the national curriculum".

"This is widespread and the sad thing is, we are following some of the secular moves that took place across certain parts of Europe in recent years," he said.

"It's downgrading anything Christian and is just cutting out anything to do with the culture and certainly the traditions of families and it's counterproductive."

"It's something that's deeply engrained in the national curriculum and parents who used to have a voice have really been marginalised completely. It invades everywhere and wherever it goes the Catholic representatives and academics are just frightened to speak out."

## Community in Creeslough will need help for 'many years to come'

**Staff reporter**

Speaking after the second anniversary of the Creeslough tragedy, where 10 people lost their lives after a sudden explosion occurred on the premises of a petrol station in Co. Donegal, Fr John Joe Duffy, hailed for his ministry to the community as parish priest at the time, said that people are now attempting to "come to terms" with the tragedy and their struggles mean that they will need help for "many, many years to come".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Duffy detailed the commemorative events that took place over the last few days to keep the memories of the deceased alive. "We had a Mass for all those who died in the Creeslough tragedy on Saturday," he said. "Then we had a ringing of the church bell on Monday which was rung 10 times from St Michael's Church in Creeslough in memory of those who died. This was with the families and local clergy, both Catholic and Anglican. There was a prayer service on Monday for the 10 people who died."

Reflecting on the two years since the tragic event, Fr Duffy said that people in the community are only now starting to process the realities and these realities will cause the community to struggle for "many years to come".

"I think what is happening at the moment is the reality of what has happened is being talked about by the people - they're coming to terms after a period of it being surreal," he said. "People are opening up more in talking about how the tragedy is affecting them and I encourage people to seek the help that is being made available."

"Every day is difficult for some people and people are feeling it in different ways and going through their own experience - it's very painful. Families and the communities are struggling and we will need help for many, many years to come. Emotional and practical help."

"I want to thank the people who sent messages today and have been praying for us and the President in a very special way for all he has done for us and to thank the government as well."

## Faithful Irish tattoo artist honoured in new documentary



Michael Sheerin

**Renata Milán Morales**

'In God's Hands', a documentary by Roscommon native Niall Sheerin, tells the story of his late brother Michael, a renowned tattoo artist and illustrator who passed away in 2022 aged 42 from a short illness. The documentary premiered at the 2024 Roscommon International Film Festival at the Roscommon Arts Centre on October 5.

Michael, originally from Tulsk in Roscommon, had lived in Helsinki for several years but remained deeply connected to his Irish roots and his strong Faith. His art, which featured in

numerous national and international exhibitions, serves as a window into his life. Niall used Michael's own footage, including videos he made during his treatment, to create the documentary.

The film showcases Michael's artistic journey, from tattooing to fine art, revealing how his work reflected both his joys and struggles. Niall aims to expand the documentary into a feature-length film, pending funding. He expressed gratitude to the festival organisers, Christine Braithwaite and Andrew Hannon, for their support.

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# Maynooth President resigns unexpectedly



Professor Michael Mullaney

## Staff Reporter

Prof Michael Mullaney is stepping down as President of St Patrick's College Maynooth in a move that took friends and colleagues by surprise.

In a statement to *The Irish Catholic* Professor Mullaney wrote: "After 25 years of service to St Patrick's College in various roles and responsibilities, which have been immensely rewarding and a privilege, I have decided to retire from fulltime academic work and administration, and to return in the coming

months to my diocese where I have always continued to work in parish ministry at weekends. I will continue in my role as President of the European Federation of Catholic Universities until next summer.

"The past eight years as President have been demanding, having had to navigate the challenges of the times, in particular the Covid pandemic. Fortunately, the College came through it, and we succeeded in progressing many of the key objectives of our strategic plan (2020-30).

Of course, this was all possible only with the support and collaboration of so many committed colleagues, both academic and administrative.

"I will work with Rev Dr Michael Shortall, who has been appointed acting President, and ensure an orderly handover.

"I will leave Maynooth with many wholesome and fond memories and especially of the colleagues I worked with and the many benefactors who have been so encouraging, loyal, and generous over the years."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Irish parish raises money for the Holy Land

Parishioners from the Kingscourt Parish in Co. Cavan, located on the border with Co. Meath and belonging to the Meath Diocese have raised €12,000 to donate to the Holy Land. The small town has, according to the 2022 census, a population of 2,955.

The money "was distributed to [the] Holy Family Parish, Gaza, Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and Nino Diaz Orphanage also in Bethlehem through the Knights of Holy Sepulchre," said Fr Gerry MacCormack PP.

"Our parishioners were indeed very generous and it was wonderful how they responded both in the parish and through the schools. It was wonderful that the money raised went directly to the places mentioned through the Knights of Holy Sepulchre," Fr MacCormack concluded.

### Irish bishop who ministered in South Africa dies at 90

Bishop Hugh Slattery, who was born in Tipperary and joined the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1951, has died at the age of 90. Bishop Slattery was noted for his humanitarian work, particularly his dedication to combatting AIDS and HIV in South Africa.

Ordained a priest in 1958, Bishop Slattery was appointed Bishop of Louis Trichardt—Tzaneen, South Africa on June 22, 1984. His Episcopal Ordination was on September 30, 1984 at Dwarfs River Mission and he retired in January 2010.

Bishop Slattery co-edited *Pastoral Orientation in a Changing World* and was also instrumental in the writing of the book *HIV/AIDS A Call to Action – Responding as Christians*, which was inspired by the positive response he received to a pastoral letter he wrote on the issue.

His Funeral Mass will take place on Tuesday, October 15 at the Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity, Tzaneen, South Africa with burial immediately afterwards at the cathedral. A remembrance Mass will be celebrated in his native Puckane Parish, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, at a later date.

# Jewish community 'appalled' by Fine Gael Councillor's comments

## Brandon Scott

Members of the Jewish community in Ireland have responded to comments made by a Fine Gael Councillor, who stated that "the entire US economy is ruled by the Jews, is ruled by Israel" during a Dublin City Council meeting on Monday, saying that they're "appalled" and that statements like these show "it is no wonder that Ire-

land is labelled as the most antisemitic country in Europe".

Fine Gael Councillor Punam Rane, who made the comment on the one-year anniversary of the Hamas attack last October and subsequently issued a public apology, was told that her apology deserved "no credibility" by former Fine Gael TD Alan Shatter.

"Representing Kimmage/Rathmines she (Ms Rane) canvassed Jewish voters during local elections. Today's

apology deserves no credibility. Her comments starkly explain unanimous vote last night of Dublin City Council, including FG Cllrs, exhorting the gov to enact a boycott Israel Bill as a remembrance ceremony was held in a Dublin Synagogue for the 1200 murdered by Hamas on 7/10/2023. All aligned with Iran."

Chairman of the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland Maurice Cohen condemned Ms Pune's comments and

called on Fine Gael to remove her from the party.

"The Jewish Representative Council of Ireland is appalled at the remarks of the Fine Gael Dublin City Councillor at last night's Council meeting", Mr Cohen said. "Her subsequent apology is not accepted and she should be removed from the Fine Gael Party. It is no wonder that Ireland is labelled as the most antisemitic country in Europe."

## By his wounds you were healed...



Fr Gerry Comiskey unveils a sculpture at Staghall Church, Belturbet, Co. Cavan this week to mark the conclusion of Fr Gerry's ministry as parish priest after 14 years of service. The work, commissioned by Drumlane Parish was created by wood artist Joey Burns and crafted from an Ash tree that stood in the graveyard since famine times, which had died from Ash die back. The words on the base read 'Lord have mercy on our dead'. The unveiling was one of Fr Gerry's last events as he leaves the parish, he stands with (from left) Brendan McGowan, Fr Gerry Comiskey, Kate Monahan, Joey Burns, Kevin Fay and Nuala Corrigan (members of the pastoral and financial committee, Drumlane).

# Online Mass readings now available in Irish

## Renata Steffens

Daily Mass readings are now available in Irish through the Catholic lay association Evangelizo. The Irish language is among the seventeen other languages available for over half a million speakers worldwide.

Bishop of Down and Connor Alan McGuckian welcomed the initiative: "Reading the Scriptures in Irish, or indeed in any language, is an extraordinary way to discover and rediscover the richness of the words and images of the Holy Bible." It is especially gratifying for Irish language enthusiasts to see our language take its place among seventeen major world languages."

Evangelizo was founded in France in 2001 by Ber-

trand Couderc and Grégor Puppincq and provides free online Mass readings to more than 500,000 subscribers. Ciarán MacGuill, a native of Dundalk and currently based in Paris led the project to include Irish amongst the available languages.

"We now have 'Soiscéal an Lae', the Irish language version of Mass readings of the day. This is a great aid for studying the Bible, for following the liturgical year and building one's faith," said Mr MacGuill.

"I wish to commend Ciarán and the Irish language community in France for this work of evangelisation. May I encourage everyone of faith, and with a love of our language, to access Soiscéal an Lae," Bishop McGuckian concluded.

# How a killing doctor's ghost is influencing the euthanasia debate

Next week, on October 16, the British parliament will once again debate 'assisted dying', following a private member's bill to be introduced by Kim Leadbeater. Ms Leadbeater is the younger sister of the murdered MP Jo Cox – who was killed by a right-wing extremist in 2016 – and stepped forward to succeed her sister as a Labour member of parliament.

Government is supposed to remain neutral during the introduction of a private member's bill, in which members are free to vote with their conscience. But Sir Keir Starmer has also indicated his favourable view of "the right to die", as it is called, as has a senior Labour minister, Ed Miliband.

It's likely that legislation will also be proposed in Ireland, since a joint parliamentary committee recommended this course back in the spring (although an election may intervene.) But it's worth watching what hap-



Mary Kenny

pens in the UK next week, as the outcome may well affect Northern Ireland.

The public debate so far has been reasonably open and fair. There is, among the general public, support for legalising dying – one recent poll put it at 75% – although this is contested by other polls, in which a majority express concern about safety issues. The influential television personality, Esther Rantzen, who has terminal lung cancer (by the way, Esther never smoked) has had huge backing for her pro-euthanasia campaign. Starmer even said that he wished to honour a promise to Esther to see the issue debated in parliament – which prompts the question as to whether governments should form policy on the say-so of a popular TV celebrity?

And despite Dame Esther's following, there are many con-

scientious voices which oppose the measure – and point to the way in which this has proved a "slippery slope" in so many other legislatures, from Canada to Belgium.

And another very significant factor has emerged: the spectral influence of the late Dr Harold Shipman. Shipman, who died in 2004, is known as the most prolific serial killer in British history – he polished off at least 284 of his victims by deliberately administering lethal overdoses. After these crimes came to light, doctors were subjected to new draconian rules about how much morphine, or other painkillers, they could carry and prescribe.

It is well-established that physicians tending a patient on the path to dying quite honourably used morphine to curb pain – but which sometimes hastened death. This

was accepted, as we know, by the Catholic church, as the "double effect": the intention was to relieve suffering, even if death followed. But after Shipman, medics were no longer trusted. And so, people who have watched loved-ones suffer from lack of pain relief may now be inclined to call for assisted dying.

As I have mentioned previously, even in America, when my sister was in the last days of her life, I had to beg the hospice for sufficient morphine – the authorities were so terrified of being accused of manslaughter charges, or of causing "addiction" in a patient.

The Shipman factor has surely played a role in the rise of euthanasia demand, as well as other influences from a utilitarian and secularised society: the costs of maintaining the elderly and frail and the mistaken idea that we have 'autonomy' over every aspect of our bodies.

It would be indeed darkly ironic if one killing doctor – Shipman – turned out to be the cause of enabling all doctors to directly kill.

The late Mary O'Rourke, who died recently aged 87, was a well-liked politician – approachable and gregarious. She was known as part of the Athlone Lenihan political dynasty, daughter of TD Paddy, sister of Brian Lenihan Senior and aunt of the Brian Junior, and of Conor Lenihan. She wrote a genial memoir 'Just Mary', which was very touching about becoming a mother to her two sons: one, Feargal, was her biological child, and one Aongus, was adopted. She

wrote that she loved them both equally.

The "black sheep" in the Lenihan family was her uncle Joseph, whose life included being parachuted into Ireland as a German spy, and becoming a failed double agent for British Intelligence. He had also served a jail sentence for smuggling, fought against the Japanese in China, and was a potato digger in Jersey in 1940. Mary understandably omitted her Uncle Joe from her memoir, though his life does sound quite a yarn.

The Reformation meant that women were increasingly sidelined, according to a new academic book (*Women and the Reformation: A Global History*, by Merry Wiesner-Hanks). From the 14th to the 18th century, under Catholic rule, at least thirty women

had exercised sovereign authority in Europe.

Five Catholic women were executed for opposing Henry VIII's policies in England: Elizabeth Barton (a nun), Margaret Pole, Margaret Cheyne, Elizabeth Wood and Mabel Brigge. Henry certainly practised "patriarchy" at its most extreme.

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# ‘I did not call him a liar’

## Child protection campaigner refutes cardinal’s claims

**Exclusive**

**Chai Brady**

Leading child protection campaigner Marie Collins said she was “very angry” after seeing claims by a German cardinal that she had called him a liar in a recently published book.

Dublin-born Ms Collins, who is an abuse survivor, was responding to comments attributed to Cardinal Gerhard Müller by journalist Franca Giansoldati in her book *Vatican Confidential: A Candid Conversation with Cardinal Gerhard Müller*.

After sending legal letters to the author and the publisher of the book and receiving no response, Ms Collins decided to publicly defend herself.

This comes after a 2017 controversy which saw Ms Collins leave the Pope’s Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, saying there was resistance from members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) to the commission’s recommendations.

Cardinal Müller, head of the CDF at that time, rejected her criticisms in an Italian newspaper *Corriere della Serra*. Ms Collins subsequently wrote an open letter to the cardinal outlining her position but she says it received no response.

Ms Collins told *The Irish Catholic*: “Years later a book

comes out and he’s saying all the same things again. I think it’s based on him being very raw about the whole thing, I mean he didn’t last much longer in the CDC as far as I can remember. I think he’s still sore, he must be a man that carries a grudge.

“I have certainly put it behind me, I wrote the open letter, I addressed every point he had brought up and I had given the facts and if he wanted to, he could have come back and said ‘this is not right’ and ‘that is not right’, but he did not because he could not, because everything I said was true.

“All the years I was with the commission or since, I have always been very, very careful to have my facts right before I go public. I was never someone who went out and flew off into fancies about things or people, I would be very careful anything I said was fact before I said it,” she said.

Ms Collins sent solicitors’ letters to both author and publisher after the 2023 book was published – disputing the assertion she had called Cardinal Müller a liar – but says she has not received a response. Ms Collins added she will not be able to pursue a defamation case due to the cost.

“When I saw this book I was very, very angry because I felt he was just taking these shots at me, trying to make

me look bad with this sort of false patting me on the head... it’s quite sickening. He’s really having a go at me,” she said.

“It [the book] makes me look like somebody who was in the commission for three years but had not got a clue about how the Vatican worked, about how Canon Law worked, did not know what I was talking about. We had proposed an accountability tribunal to hold negligent bishops and priests to account, the Pope had approved it and when it had gone to the CDC it had been blocked and it did not go further. When I had said this – and I think this is what Cardinal Müller is referring to [in the book] he’s saying this never happened. But of course it did happen because as we know the accountability tribunal never came

about.”

However, in the book Cardinal Müller, dubbed Ms Collins’ criticisms as “unjust” and that they were “the fruit of a partial vision of how the Roman Curia works”.

“Obviously, Collins was speaking as a victim, weighed down by pain and her desire for justice, without knowing how the various congregations intervene in such cases,” Cardinal Müller said.

In the same paragraph the cardinal said: “I have never spoken personally with Ms Collins; I would have liked to converse with her. It would have been productive, and I could have illustrated to her the state of things. We could have collaborated. I was sorry to hear her call me a liar, and I don’t even know why she did so.”



Marie Collins

## Countdown to Jubilee Year 2025

**Staff reporter**

The Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference has appointed Bishop Fintan Monahan of Killaloe as its delegate for the 2025 Jubilee Year.

Bishop Monahan announced the launch of a countdown timer on CatholicBishops.ie to help people anticipate the Holy Year. Various groups, including clergy,

religious communities, and lay ministries, will mark special jubilee occasions both in Rome and locally throughout 2025. A key event will be a youth pilgrimage to Rome next August, where Pope Francis will celebrate Mass. Dioceses are already planning their attendance.

This significant year, marked by the Universal Church every twenty-five years, is a time for dedicated

prayer aimed at renewing our relationship with God, each other, and creation. The theme for 2025 is ‘Pilgrims of Hope,’ encouraging all to be bearers of hope in our troubled world. Pilgrims visiting designated sites will be granted a plenary indulgence.

The Holy Year will start on Christmas Eve, December 24, with the opening of the Holy Door at Saint Peter’s Basil-

ica. Each diocesan bishop will hold a Mass on Sunday, December 29, to mark this solemn occasion.

**i** Bishop Monahan invites everyone to participate in this Holy Year in person, by referring to your parish/diocesan website, by browsing <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html>, and by downloading the app IUBILAEUM25.

## ‘I have no doubt faith strengthened her life’, tributes to former minister and matriarch

**Brandon Scott**

Former minister and Fianna Fáil TD Mary O’Rourke, who was the first woman elected to Athlone Urban District Council and subsequently held cabinet positions as the Minister for Health and also the Minister for Education throughout the 1980s and 1990s, was described as a person of “strong character and personality” and somebody whose life was strengthened by faith at her funeral.

Addressing the congregation at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, Coosan, Athlone, Fr Patrick Murphy the administrator of the parish, recalled Ms O’Rourke’s life

and legacy during the homily. “Mary was blessed with that strong personality and character that allowed her to enter and to succeed in what was then a male dominated space,” he said.

Ms O’Rourke, who died last Thursday at the age of 87 and was born into a family steeped in Irish political history, was somebody, in the words of Fr Murphy, who let faith strengthen their life. “Where Christ has gone we too hope to follow,” he said. “This is the heart of our faith, the faith that assures us there is a life yet to be revealed. This is the faith that Mary shared in. I have no doubt it is a faith that strengthened her throughout her life.”

## A reward for serving the Lord



The altar servers for 2023-2024 in Inniskeen, Co. Monaghan were presented with a plaque for their service during the year. Also pictured are Canon Martin Treanor, Fr Peter Malawi and Tom Byrne (Sacristan).

Oliver and her family can see  
a brighter future ahead.

Photo: Chris Gagnon/Concern.

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# CONCERN worldwide

## Senator Rónán Mullen

### A view from the Seanad



# As an election looms, what do we ask the politicians?

**T**ake a €14 billion Apple windfall. Mix in the best-ever corporation tax returns, and what do you get? Election speculation. Lots of it. With Government coffers so awash with cash, the temptation may be too great for the Taoiseach. We may be days, or possibly weeks away from starters' orders. Why wait until the spring, when another overpriced bicycle shed could easily emerge to derail the momentum of a giveaway budget?

With the public finances in such robust health, there's good news for everyone. The Government will be putting money into people's pockets, not taking it out, this time around. Over in London, Sir Keir Starmer can look on in envy while an Irish Taoiseach pours out the cash. No slashing of anyone's winter fuel allowance in this jurisdiction.

#### Economy

A national election vote is primarily about returning someone to govern the economy. And since the governing parties are steering the ship in the good times, they are very confident right now.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have two things going for them. First, though much of their support base was disappointed with them in recent years, as they shifted radically on social issues, soft 'c' conservative voters remained, and still are, more afraid of Sinn Féin. 'Cling to nurse, for fear of getting something worse,' might sum up this attitude and Micheál Martin and Simon Harris know

how to play on people's fears in that quarter.

The Government parties are also benefitting from the recent estrangement between Sinn Féin and some of its existing supporters. The party has fallen from an opinion poll high of 38% not long ago to less than 20% recently.

Though not many will say it, migration is probably the single biggest cause of Sinn Féin's woes. For the most part, SF is run by left-wingers ranging from the fairly pragmatic to the highly ideological. Left-wingers tend to be more internationalist than nationalist in their loyalties.

**“The challenge is to avoid seeing the forthcoming election battle either as a spectator sport just to be enjoyed by political ‘anoraks’”**

But while some among the SF support-base are, in a good way, deeply patriotic, certain others are in a very bad way, narrowly nationalistic. However you read it, many Sinn Féiners are hostile to the demographic trends of recent years, and Mary Lou and co. haven't found a way to keep that wing on board. It has, for now, migrated. Its votes will help a lot of independents in the coming election, but this would leave FF/FG as the only show in town to form the core of the next administration.

For people of faith, the challenge is to avoid seeing the forthcoming election battle either as a spectator sport just to be enjoyed by political 'anoraks', or as a fait

**“There are huge ramifications for how the old, the vulnerable and the disabled are made to see themselves, and for happens to them, once the cheaper, less complicated and more bureaucratically efficient option of killing people is on the table”**



Taoiseach Simon Harris. Photo: Collins.

accompli, an affair with a predetermined outcome which we can't change. We need to think early about how we are going to use our votes. And about who else we can bring to use their votes for good.

If there is a smaller party like Aontú with a candidate running in your area, that's not a bad place to start, because Aontú has decent positions on social justice issues like child protection, parental rights in education, abortion and euthanasia.

#### Preferences

Another reason to lend Team Tóibín a No 1 is that it needs at least 2% of first preferences nationally, a target it narrowly missed last time, to be eligible for State funding for political parties. When you think of some of the ways the Government is spending taxpayers' money at the moment, that might motivate.

If a voter wants to support a traditional party, then it's worth seeking out the party candidate who has spoken up against the party whip on a conscience issue. Politicians who have told us lies

in the past, it goes without saying, don't deserve our support. How will they ever learn, if we reward them?

**“We need the removal of contentious SPHE programmes from schools, because parents are the primary educators and they are being insulted, not consulted”**

What do we want to ask our politicians in the coming months? A clear ban on the availability of pornography to children across digital media is an important ask. I have already tabled a Bill in this area, as has Aontú, and I think there is real potential to move the political establishment on this one. The Government's partial reversal on 'hate speech' legislation shows the impact people can have.

We need the removal of contentious SPHE pro-

grammes from schools, because parents are the primary educators and they are being insulted, not consulted. Financial provision of pro-life counselling is important and politicians seeking your vote should support the availability and promotion of abortion reversal treatment for women who change their mind after taking initial steps towards abortion.

Mandatory pain-relief to protect the unborn child from suffering in any late-term abortions, should be a basic ask in any civilised society. There should also be a commitment, especially with last March's referendum result in mind, that stay-home parents will do at least as well as working parents in any reallocation of State supports for childcare.

#### Euthanasia

The campaign for euthanasia is a big threat to our society. The sad reality is that it will be introduced by stealth by the major parties unless voters speak up. 'Assisted Dying' is one

of those issues that can be misrepresented as a matter of personal choice in a difficult situation.

In fact, there are huge ramifications for how the old, the vulnerable and the disabled are made to see themselves, and for what happens to them, once the cheaper, less complicated and more bureaucratically efficient option of killing people is on the table. It is especially important that caring people who work in the medical arena or with the elderly speak up about this.

Finally, if bishops, and religious leaders of all persuasions will forgive this unasked-for advice, please get your pre-election messages out early, not late, in the election campaign. Better again, contact your flock before the election is even called. People need your material and talking points for when they meet their politicians on the doorsteps. Those candidates are already calling.

# Protecting the vision of future generations



Dualta Roughneen

**T**oday, October 10, is World Sight Day. This year, this important international day focuses the world's attention on the importance of eye care in young people and inspiring children everywhere to love their eyes.

World Sight Day is an opportunity to highlight the importance of protecting our eyes and vision, raise awareness of vision impairment and blindness, and promote eye and vision care. This year, a particular emphasis is placed on child eye health.

Why is children's eye-health so important? Simply because the early years offers the greatest chance of identifying and correcting eye-health issues that are preventable, while at the same timing being the years where irreversible damage may be done to the eyes that cannot be rectified in later years.

Children's eyes learn to see, to process imagery. A newborn baby can see, but they are still forming connections between their retina and their brain. Without proper treatment, paediatric cataracts can cause abnormal connections between the brain and the eye that may become irreversible.

The good news is cataracts are often discovered during the eye screening at birth, or at subsequent paediatric vision screenings.

## Important

This is why looking after your child's eye health is so hugely important. While uncorrected vision impairment may impact education and social inclusion, simple solutions such as spectacles can make a world of difference.

Restoring a person's sight with a pair of spectacles or with cataract surgery is among the most cost-effective health interventions. Yet even in Europe on average less than 40% of those who would benefit from cataract surgery have



received it and achieved good outcomes as a result.

**“It has been almost impossible for infants and toddlers outside the main urban centres to have simple eye-screening to identify preventable eye-illnesses such as cataracts”**

Imagine what the situation may be like in areas outside Europe where the health systems and services are not as developed as they are here? We are extremely fortunate to live where we live and in the time that we live. Never have the opportunities to prevent

**“When living in Madagascar, where the average annual salary is less than the monthly minimum wage in Ireland, such extra – and unforeseen – costs are simply not affordable for a family”**

childhood eye-health problems been so great.

Yet, there are billions of children around the world who do not have access to the necessary healthcare.

At Christian Blind Mission Ireland, we are attempting to address this gap. With funding from Electric Aid, in partnership with the Arlight Project, this year we started a programme of infant eye-screening for preventable blindness in the rural regions of Madagascar.

## Shortage

Because there is a shortage of high-spec technical equipment, a shortage of qualified ophthalmologists and optometrists, because eye-clinics are not decentralised, it has been almost impossible for infants and toddlers outside the main urban centres to have simple

eye-screening to identify preventable eye-illnesses such as cataracts.

Because of this, many, many children are losing their sight unnecessarily, and at a time when it is impossible to reverse. Our project brings a very low-cost piece of equipment to community health workers in rural areas.

**“Parents may not have the money even for the transport to a national hospital where the operation can be carried out”**

What is the Arlight: it is a pocket-sized all-in-one ophthalmoscope-loupe-otoscope

for the 21st century. Because there is no need for replacing blown bulbs, no worrying if the battery is dead – it is ideal for low resource countries. It is easy to operate so avoids dependency on highly qualified health professionals.

It is portable – it can be carried in a shirt pocket or around the neck, and because it is tough, it isn't at risk of breakage like standard eye-care equipment.

It can be charged using solar power, so particularly useful for African setting and the charge lasts for a full day and it is powered with a USB port so can be charged directly from a laptop or in a car if needed.

## Intervention

This small intervention, alongside a training programme for rural health workers, could make all the difference to a young child, if it means a cataract is spotted early enough to ensure that an infant or toddler can be referred to a specialist and receive the necessary surgical care.

At the same time, parents

may not have the money even for the transport to a national hospital where the operation can be carried out, and the hospital, in the absence of state funding, cannot offer surgery for free.

This means that the next step in the process often requires CBM Ireland to provide financial support to families once their baby has been identified as needing a surgical intervention. Coming from Ireland, the amounts needed are small.

When living in Madagascar, where the average annual salary is less than the monthly minimum wage in Ireland, such extra – and unforeseen – costs are simply not affordable for a family. Often it is a Hobson's choice between sight-saving eye surgery and putting food on the table.

**“Dualta Roughneen is the CEO of CBM Ireland, an international disability rights organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and those at risk of disability, in low-income regions of the world.”**

# Pope's warning about a demonic addiction



Martina Purdy

About four years ago, I received a telephone call from a priest who invited a friend and I to a meeting. The priest didn't actually say what the meeting was about - he just wondered if we might be interested in learning about his mission. We travelled to the Donegal border, and the priest introduced us to a man who told a remarkable story.

He was a life-long Catholic, a weekly-mass goer, who was married with a family and for years had appeared to be living a good life. But he had a dark secret, a silent addiction, which had enslaved him for a long time: he could not stop himself looking at pornography.

He said he would go to confession and receive absolution but the compulsion always got the better of him. Eventually he went to a particular priest who warned him that he was on the road to hell. This frightened him and he turned to prayer.

The priest's comments were not unlike Pope Francis' warning last month when the Pontiff called pornography a work of the devil. He warned humanity to reject this form of evil, so easily accessed via the internet: "Any cellphone", he said, "has access to this brutality, this language of the devil".

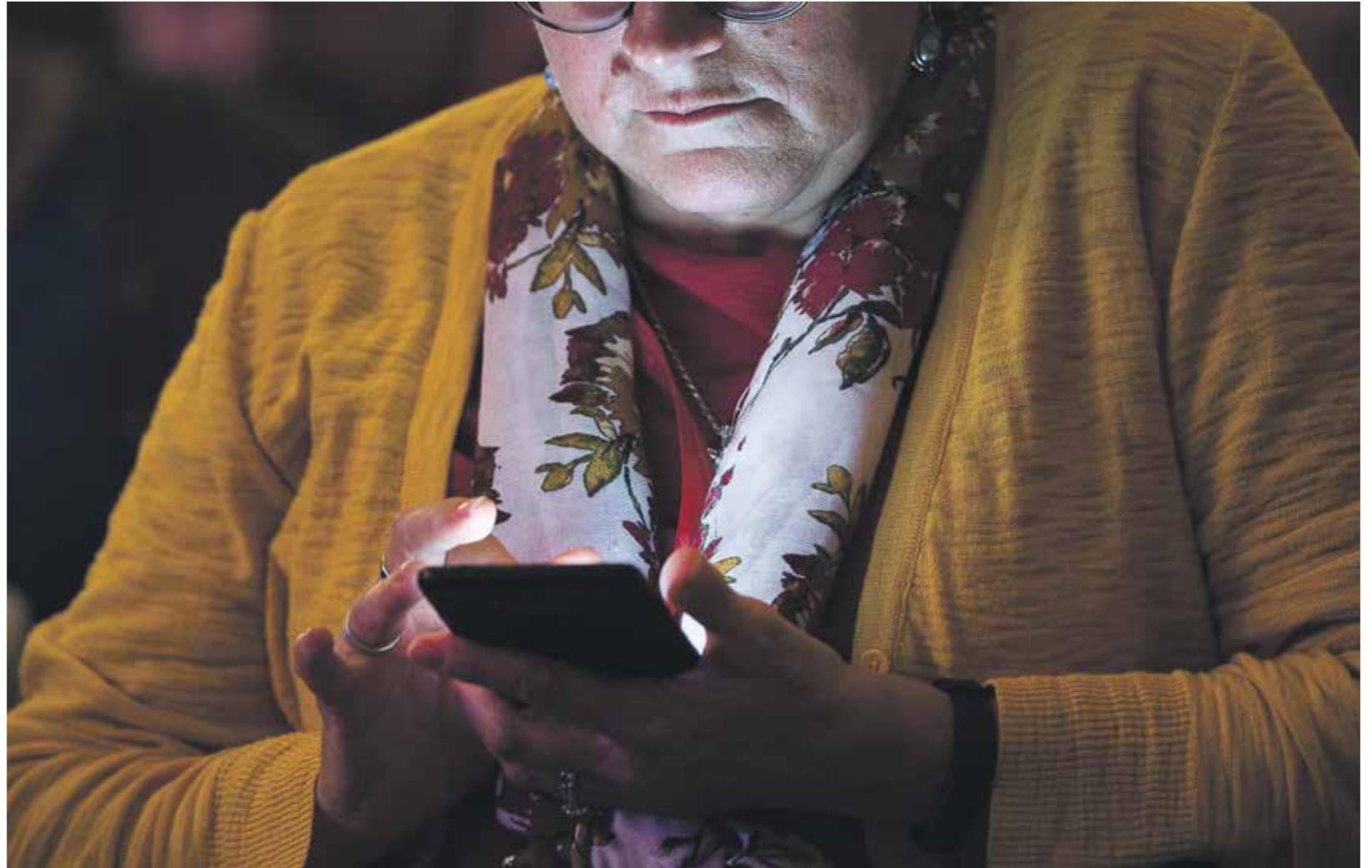
Indeed, anything objectifying another human being is vile - and pornography is no victimless pastime: someone, often vulnerable women and children, is being abused.

## Victims

Christ warned that a man who even looked at a woman with lust was sinning - and last Sunday's gospel made clear just how precious little children are to Jesus.

Yet this evil is spreading not just in the adult population - but also to our children through social media. It is abused children who often appear in the making of indecent images, too vile to mention.

When disgraced BBC presenter Huw Edwards was



A woman is pictured in a file photo using her smartphone. Photo: CNS/Tyler Orsburn

recently convicted of making indecent images of children as young as seven, it was shocking. But even more shocking was the sentence: six months jail suspended for two years. Some of the images he made fell into the worst categories.

**“What is wrong with admitting human weakness and selfishness and accepting responsibility for sin”**

But guess who was painted as the victim? Poor old Huw. We heard his father was cruel, he felt like an outsider at the BBC because he didn't go to Oxford, how he suffered from mental health issues.

What is wrong with admitting human weakness and selfishness and accepting responsibility for sin? What is wrong with focusing on the real victims?

Of course, Huw Edwards

deserves our pity and our prayers, as do all those before the courts.

As I ponder what one has to do to get locked up these days, the US Supreme Court resumed this week and will consider a case involving the porn industry. Basically, Texas law requires porn websites to verify the age of users. It is designed to protect minors by restricting their access to inappropriate material.

Yet adult entertainers and others in the industry have the gall to claim this is an infringement of free speech under the First Amendment. No date has yet been set for the arguments.

But frankly I'm speechless. This case coincides with a row over the €9m cost of keeping mobile phones out of children's hands while in school. The cost is ridiculous but it is a sound idea. For a start, young people's access to sexual images online has serious consequences.

Back in January, *The Guardian* reported that the National Police Chiefs Council was alarmed at the rise in sexual offending among those aged 17 or under. The data

showed children were now the biggest perpetrators of sexual abuse among children.

Women's Aid in Ireland has warned of the dangers of pornography. Following a 2022 study, the organisation stated that pornography harms both girls and boys and normalises disrespectful sexualised behaviour.

It is estimated that 3 out of five young people have viewed pornography.

## Education

This comes as our politicians appear to be completely out of touch about how to educate our children about sex.

The education minister Norma Foley's proposed new sex education programme, delivered through the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum for 12-15 year olds has drawn a lot of criticism.

Mary Creedon, a teacher for 30 years, attended teacher training in DCU recently. She said he was "horrified" by some of the resources and teaching methods. One teaching document was called, "*It's ok to watch porn*" - apparently designed to teach "crit-

ical thinking". Creedon also described a "sex map" of various positions for hetero and homosexual couples.

It was only through grace that the man I met at the Donegal border found deliverance from his unhealthy sexual attitudes and his porn addiction.

He spoke about how Christ himself had freed him.

**“As the coronavirus spread, so did the virus of pornography as the number of porn searches spiked during lockdown”**

When he had a compulsion to go online, he would kneel and look at the crucified Christ. And in a mysterious way, by looking at the figure of Christ, the wounds of Christ, and the face of Christ, he was healed of his compul-

sion.

As we left the meeting with this man and the priest my companion and I were given some literature with prayers and an icon of the face of Christ.

En route to Belfast, I received a phone call out of the blue: it was from someone whose close friend had just told him he was addicted to pornography. He asked me to pray for his friend. I told him about the meeting I just had and arranged for an icon with the prayer leaflet, to be sent to him.

Not long after that, the lockdown happened and things came to a halt.

And, as the coronavirus spread, so did the virus of pornography as the number of porn searches spiked during lockdown. Thank God there was also a surge in the number of searches for prayer.

Pope Francis is right: this is a demonic problem. I wonder if maybe this mission that was shared with me in early 2020 needs to be a little more visible in the Church.

Because, it's definitely not ok to watch porn.

# ‘Knowledge of God, foundation of all disciplines,’ St John Henry Newman



Renata Milán Morales

St John Henry Newman, patron saint of Newman Centres at secular universities and students, is celebrated on October 9, marking the day of his conversion from the Anglican to the Catholic Church. Newman University Church in Dublin recently commemorated his feast day on October 6 with two Masses. The first, at 11am, was led by Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin, and the second, at 6:15pm, by Bishop Paul Dempsey, with both featuring music from the University Church Singers and Vocare Ensemble. Refreshments followed each ceremony.

In his homily, Bishop Dempsey reflected on the inscription of a chalice he received 27 years ago, ‘Heart speaks unto heart’, a phrase used by Newman when he was named Cardinal in 1879. He noted how Pope Benedict XVI highlighted this at Newman’s beatification in 2010, taking the words as an invitation to a Christian life of holiness, which seeks communion with God’s heart.

The saint encouraged students to seek a truly Catholic education that shapes the mind and soul, rather than merely providing job training. He emphasised that knowledge of God is the foundation of all disciplines, without which education is incomplete and risks misleading students’ development as fully human beings. His intellect was rooted by prayer and meditation.

When Newman arrived in Dublin to establish the Catholic University of Ireland, he recognised the need for a large space for worship and lectures, purchasing 87 St Stephen’s Green. Today, the Notre Dame-Newman Centre for Faith and Reason, established in 2017 at the invitation of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, continues Newman’s legacy by inspiring dialogue between faith and intellectual analysis, deepening our understanding of God and the modern world, inspired by John Henry Newman.



Kay and Seoirse O’ haodha (front left behind children) who were married in Newman University Church 50 years ago and they gathered with family at the church on Sunday to celebrate the occasion.



(L/R) Meghan, Katherine, Fr Gary Chamberland C.S.C., Bishop Paul Dempsey and James pictured after 6:15pm Mass.



James, Katherine, Guillemette, Meghan, Anne, Mariana, Brendan and Tansu pictured after the 6:15pm Mass.



An image of Saint John Henry Newman on display during the Mass on Sunday.



Archbishop Dermot Farrell and Fr Gary Chamberland C.S.C. Priest in Residence. Photos: John McElroy.



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# Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit as the new legal year starts



Renata Milán Morales

The new legal year commenced on October 7 with the traditional Michaelmas Law Term services held at St Michan's Church, Halston Street, Dublin. The ceremony, attended by barristers, solicitors, and members of the judiciary, marks the beginning of the legal calendar, and offers prayers for those working within the justice system.

Bishop Paul Dempsey celebrated the Mass, drawing on the significance of the Holy Spirit. He noted that the Irish Constitution opens with an invocation of the Holy Trinity, with the Father and Son being more easily understood, but the Holy Spirit often seen as more abstract. The Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit was

offered as the new legal year began, acknowledging the Spirit's role as the "advocate" or "defender" in a court of law.

Addressing the legal professionals present, Bishop Dempsey reflected on "the complexity of human nature is indeed a great mystery," noting that, "Each citizen is called upon to contribute to the common good and stands equal before the law," calling those on the legal professions to find a balance between justice and mercy

He quoted the words of Seamus Heaney: "Hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good worth working for." With this, Bishop Dempsey encouraged the gathering to maintain hope. "As you begin this new year in this Votive Mass to the Holy Spirit, who is the 'giver of life,' may you know the conviction that, despite the complexities and tribulations of the human condition, there is good worth working for," he concluded.



Photos: John McElroy



# Signs of a mini-religious revival among young men?



David Quinn

Could there be straws in the wind of a mini-religious revival underway, not so much here in Ireland (yet), but in countries like the United States?

Recent data seem to show that among young American men in particular there has been a small uptick in the numbers regularly attending church services. Some opinion polls can be merely blips, but the recent data show that around 2 or 3% more American men born after 2000 attend church compared with men born in the 1970s, adding up to around one in four of the total.

A church attendance rate of 25% around young men in their early twenties might not seem like much, but if we had a similar attendance rate among that age group here, we would be delighted.

But even if the data I am quoting is only a blip and there has been no increase, at a minimum they appear to show that the ongoing decline in religious attendance among young American men seems to have stopped, and that is good news on its own. (The data come from an article written by American academic, Ryan Burge, which can be found on his 'Substack' page).

## Rise

For years now, there has been a rise in the number of young Americans describing themselves as 'nones' meaning they say they don't belong to any particular religion. This is not to be confused with being an atheist, by the way. Some people who don't belong to a specific religion might still be 'spiritual' in some other way.

Also, young Americans who never attend church still outnumber those who attend regularly, so this is all relative.

Nevertheless, something seems to be going on, and it is encouraging. What might that be? I think part of the answer is that as modern life becomes more chaotic,



more unstable, more individualistic, more every-person-for-themselves, some people are reacting to that by seeking something more solid, more stable, that offers answers to the great questions in life, and also offers a sense of community, and a good church will do all these things.

Here, I use lower case 'c' deliberately, because one Catholic parish can be better than another and one Protestant church better than another, even if they belong to the same Church overall.

Older people can underestimate how disorientating life can be for young people today. We might have many more personal freedoms than in the past, but we also lack the same sense of community we once had, and the personal freedom that is liberating in many ways, has also created a far more individualistic society.

**“I don't think it is any coincidence that mental health problems, especially among the young, are on the rise. If you create a crisis of meaning, that will have knock-on effects”**

The preeminent sign of this, in my view, is that people are a lot less likely to marry, and stay married, than they once were, and are also a lot less likely to have children. This means

a lot more people are going to feel lonely in the future. They have also been told to look inside for the answers to life's great questions, or else they are told to seek out materialistic goals, and not to trust organised religion to offer anything good.

I don't think it is any coincidence that mental health problems, especially among the young, are on the rise. If you create a crisis of meaning, that will have knock-on effects.

Therefore, a certain number of young people are reaching out for things that offer meaning and purpose and timeless answers to the timeless questions.

But the recent data I am citing has uncovered something curious, namely that it is young American men specifically who are seeing a small uptick in the numbers coming to church regularly, and not young women.

In fact, this is the first generation ever recorded in which there are more young men than young women attending church, even if the difference is still small.

## Attendance

In every other time we know of, church attendance has been more a female than a male thing.

What is going on? We can't be sure yet, but perhaps young women regard the Churches as misogynistic because of issues like abortion (although this does not prevent them attending liberal churches which are very pro-choice and pro-LGBT).

Young men, for their part, may find that the churches they attend are among the only places they will not be told that masculinity is 'toxic', when this message is being constantly pumped at them by the general culture.

Is there also some kind of 'Jordan Peterson-effect'? Peterson is the Canadian psychologist and academic who shot to fame for opposing his university requiring staff to use students' 'preferred gender pronouns', denouncing this as an attack on free expression.

But he offers guidance on how to live a useful and responsible life and young men in particular are drawn to his message. He starts with the simple advice 'tidy your room'. In other words, begin restoring order to your life there.

**“Are some of the young men being drawn back to church genuinely sexist?”**

Peterson is not clear on what he actually believes from a religious point of view, but it is clear he is pro-religion, generally speaking, and maybe some of the tens of millions of young men who listen to him have responded by attending church?

Are some of the young men being drawn back to church genuinely sexist? It would not surprise me if that is sometimes true, but it is more likely that

Christianity will turn them into the sort of men women actually want to marry, instead of them remaining permanently adolescent in their attitudes and behaviour. Christianity encourages people to grow up, and to become morally responsible adults.

## Revival

Are there signs of any kind of revival in Ireland? Certainly, there isn't one big enough to be picked up in polls but there are certain early indicators. For example, the Dominicans are very successful at attracting young people to their events and have been managing to attract a healthy rate of vocations for years now.

A lot of young people seem to be drawn to the Latin Mass.

I was speaking to someone recently who works with a Christian ministry in one of our universities and she says the students are more responsive now to their outreach than they were a few years ago.

The Iona Institute (which I head) has just held a very successful event aimed at young people who were delighted to meet other young people like themselves.

Ireland is usually behind the curve on these things, but it would not surprise me if in the years to come we do see a small increase in church attendance among some young people alienated by the emptiness of modern individualism and seeking an antidote to that. Parishes and church best geared up to respond will bear the most fruit.

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# The centenary of the Tin church



Renata Steffens

**O**ur Lady of the Rosary and the Guardian Angels Church in Sallins, Co. Kildare is celebrating 100 years. The parishioner of the unusual church celebrated its anniversary with Mass led by Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty and Fr Liam Morgan PP. Also present were descendants of the parishioners who helped build the church.

The unique building is a prefabricated structure made of metal on the outside and has a wooden interior. The fairly unique building is known by some as 'The Tin Church'. That church has been bringing the Sallins community together in prayer for the past century.

Before World War 1, the people of Sallins asked the then parish priest of Naas Fr Michael Norris to build a chapel and save them the journey time to Naas for



Gathering for the centenary celebration Mass. Photo: Aishling Conway

Sunday Mass. The priest arranged the site and a committee raised £400, however, WWI and the War of Independence delayed the project, which was only resumed in 1923.

By then, it was resolved to assemble an economic building, so they decided to buy from one of the British Army camps' suppliers. The building arrived in something similar to an 'Ikea' flat-pack that took a few months to assemble. "Fr Norris thought outside the box and he ordered a church in a box," said local

historian Liam Kenny.

The parts were corrugated metal for the exterior and wood planks for the interior, all parts manufactured by Harrison & Co. in London. Local men joined the Harrison & Co. employees to build the church, and the chapel was ready for dedication on Sunday, October 5, 1924.

"Similar churches would be found in mission stations, frontier towns, mining camps and military outposts," told Bishop Nulty during his homily during the celebration of the 110th World Day of

Migrants and Refugees Mass in that church.

Fr Norris carried the dedication and celebrated the first Mass, as the bishop at the time, Bishop Patrick Foley was unable due to illness. He gave it the dual dedication of Our Lady of the Rosary and the Guardian Angels.

The interior of the chapel remained unchanged until 1972 when Sallins became a parish and the altar was moved to one side to allow people to gather around as recommended by the Sec-



Our Lady & the Guardian Angels Church, Sallins.

ond Vatican Council, and in 1990, a replacement floor was fitted. The building was listed as a protected structure by Kildare County Council in 2000.

To mark the centenary, the building received an upgrade, with a new sanctuary, new altar furniture, lighting, painting, door and carpeting. Sallins Parish said the parishioners welcomed the new look and that a member of the community said "It's so much brighter and lighter," while another mentioned: "you've brought it back to the way it used to be and it's beautiful." "Thank you for the

amazing job to the church," said a third parishioner.

Concluding the centenary celebration, the community gathered at the Parish Community Centre after Mass for "tea and goodies." The attendees were both families native from Sallins and new families who moved, some from other countries.

"There was a wonderful atmosphere in the Community Centre with lots of chat and laughter. The Local History Group had a very interesting display of photos and historical material concerning the Church which was much appreciated," concluded another parishioner.

# Making this election pro-life



Eilís Mulroy

**I**f a problem isn't measured, it won't be fixed, so the saying goes. It certainly rings true in politics – if there aren't enough voices raised on an issue, no matter how fundamental it is, then politicians will ignore it. This has been the case when it comes to abortion and other life issues, where politicians are happy not only to ignore, but trample over pro-life causes, safe in the assumption that it is only of concern to a minority.

## Motivated

They seem to forget that a sizeable portion of the public are motivated by the pro-life issue at election time. In the last general election in 2020, all 15 TDs who voted against the

abortion legislation in 2018 won back their seats, while many vocal advocates of repeal lost theirs.

**“The general election is our chance to remind the Government that the loss of over 10,000 unborn lives annually remains a massive issue of concern for many voters”**

It shows that all it takes is a few thousand principled voters in each area to raise their voices to burst the “self-censoring receptacle

**“With workshops on political engagement, grassroots and student activism and social media, the conference will provide an opportunity to learn how we can bring the pro-life message to every corner of Irish life”**

of bland, conformist ideas”, as former Minister for European Affairs Lucinda Creighton described contemporary Irish society at the recent *Ceiliúradh Cois Life* annual dinner.

## Imminent

With another general election imminent, the Pro Life Campaign National Conference taking place on October 19 in Cork comes at a vital moment to remind pro-life advocates across Ireland to support pro-life candidates and vote pro-life. We saw some excellent pro-life candidates succeed in the local elections this year – but the general election is our chance to remind the Government that the loss of over 10,000 unborn lives annually remains a massive issue of concern for

many voters.

The leader of Independent Ireland Michael Collins TD who will be speaking at the PLC National Conference is an example of a courageous politician who has steadfastly spoken up for the right to life in Dáil Éireann.

Recently elected Limerick City Councillor for Aontú Sarah Beasley, well known as a tireless and effective advocate for the most vulnerable in society and a strong defender of the right-to-life will also address the event.

Ruth O'Sullivan, who has made the courageous decision to come forward and tell her deeply personal and harrowing story about the impact of abortion on her life will also address the event. Ruth will share why she believes policy changes

are needed at a governmental level to inform women about alternatives prior to abortion.

**“Dr. Naughton will highlight how legalising assisted suicide/ euthanasia would gravely undermine the right-to-life and genuine healthcare”**

With the current push within Government for the cruel and heartless practice of euthanasia to be legalised in Ireland, it's timely to hear from Dr Margaret Naughton, who gave evidence before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying. Dr. Naughton will highlight how legalising assisted suicide/euthanasia would gravely undermine the right-to-life and genuine healthcare.

The political battle can

only be won if we have a culture that supports life. To build that culture requires voters but also engaged citizens determined to make use of all their skills, not only to end the horror of abortion, but also to make babies, older people, those with disabilities, and all those current Government policy seeks to exclude.

## Message

With workshops on political engagement, grassroots and student activism and social media, the conference will provide an opportunity to learn how we can bring the pro-life message to every corner of Irish life starting with working to get more pro-life politicians elected on polling day.

Our current Government thinks they have the measure of pro-life support – the upcoming election is our chance to prove them wrong.

**📍 To register for free for the Pro Life Campaign National Conference on 19th October in Cork, see [www.prolifecampaign.ie/plc2024](http://www.prolifecampaign.ie/plc2024) or telephone 01 662 9275.**

# St Bernadette's relics gather thousands of faithful

**Renata Milán Morales**

**T**he visit of the relics of St Bernadette continues to gather thousands of faithful across Ireland, with a recent stop drawing

parishioners from the dioceses of Tuam, Elphin, Killala, Achonry, and Kildare and Leighlin. Many travelled from across the country, drawn by the opportunity for devotion, reflection, and prayer. At St Muredach's

Cathedral, Ballina, in the Diocese of Killala, spiritual preparation to receive the relics began with a novena on September 25. Several events took place in the presence of the relics on October 3-4, including the Rosary, confessions, Masses, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, a talk on the French saint and

Lourdes, and a candlelit procession. On Monday, October 7, the relics were received at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Carlow, during a 10am Mass celebrated by Bishop Denis Nully. A water ritual, using water from the Grotto, followed at 12pm, with a Mass for the

Sick and the Sacrament of the Sick held at 3pm. The visit concluded with a torchlight procession at 8pm, which took place at Holy Family Church, Askea, and St Claire's Church, Graiguecullen. The tour of St Bernadette's relics is part of a wider international pilgrimage, offering the

faithful the chance to strengthen their connection with the saint. For many, this pilgrimage is a deeply moving and spiritual experience, providing both comfort and inspiration. The tour is set to continue throughout Ireland, with further stops planned in Raphoe, Derry, Down and Connor, and Dromore.



Mass celebrated on the occasion of St Bernadette's relics' visit to Knock Shrine. Photo: Knock Communications Office.



Faithful venerate St Bernadette's relics on their visit to Knock Shrine. Photo: Knock Communications Office.



School children from St Leo's College pictured with St Bernadette's relics at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Co. Carlow. Photo: Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin.



Faithful gather around St Bernadette's relics at Carlow's Cathedral. Photo: Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin.



Bishop Gerard Nash pictured with St Bernadette relics at St Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy. Photo: Communications Office Ferns.



Faithful queue to venerate St Bernadette's relics at St Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy. Photo: Communications Office Ferns.

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# Out&About

## A trip of Faith and prayer



**SPAIN:** Parishioners from Kingscourt, Co. Cavan at the Shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat on the 2024 parish pilgrimage in association with Navan Travel.



**DUBLIN:** Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin Paul Dempsey celebrated the Opening Year Mass for Loreto College, Crumlin on September 27.



**DOWN:** The Parish of Maghera in Newcastle unveiled a new wooden altar, fashioned by local farmer Damien Duggan, at a Mass celebrating the Season of Creation in the Sacred Garden, Bryansford. The Mass was celebrated by Fr Paul Byrne and music was led by Finbarr Keaveney. Tea was served afterwards and the parishioners took home a daffodil bulb.

## INSHORT

### Co. Fermanagh welcomes Bl. Carlo Acutis exhibition

An exhibition to honour the life and legacy of Blessed Carlo Acutis opened in St Michael's Parish Church, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh on September 28 and will continue until October 17. The displays are based on the life of Bl. Carlo Acutis and feature details of the many Eucharistic Miracles which have occurred throughout the world.

Commenting on the exhibition, Msgr. Peter O'Reilly said he hopes people will gain "a renewed sense of what the Eucharist is about".

Bl. Acutis, as a child and a teenager was known for his devotion to daily prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament. He used his computer skills to research and catalogue Eucharistic Miracles, encouraging others, particularly the youth to follow his example.

He described his devotion to the Eucharist as his "highway to Heaven".

The exhibition will be open to public until October 17 from 10.30am to 6.30pm. There will also be an opportunity to be blessed with the relic of Bl. Carlo Acutis at the 6pm Vigil Mass on October 12.

### Historian named 'Cork Person of the Month'

A historian and former teacher was named 'Cork Person of the Month'. Dermot Lucey, a native of Ballincollig was honoured with the award in recognition of his work as a historian and teacher, which had a lasting impact on the Cork community.

Being the secretary of the Muskerry Local History Society, Mr Lucey is also the editor of the bi-annual local history journal *Times Past*. He also played a role in the preservation and development of the Gunpowder

Mills, and the creation of the Regional Park in Ballincollig.

While teaching at Ballincollig Community School in the 1980s, Mr Lucey led the creation of the local History Society. He is the author of many history textbooks and contributed to the *Examiner's* series *History of Cork* to mark the Cork 800th celebrations in 1985.

Mr Lucey is an important part of Cork history and now has his name alongside other winners for a possible selection as 'Cork Person of the Year' announced in January.

### First age-friendly Sports Tastes Day in Ireland

Recently, as part of the 'European Week of Sport 2024' over 100 older people joined in the first 'Age Friendly Ireland Sports Taster Day', which happened at the Sport Ireland Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin.

The gathering had participants from 14

counties engaging in seven activities including Walking Football, Zumba Gold, Fitsticks Activator Poles, Yoga and Seated Volleyball. The event allowed older people to join in sports in a comfortable way, have peer support and help from fitness experts, and possibly seek similar activities in their community.

Louise Burke, Sport Ireland's Director of Participation said "there are over 830,000 people aged 65+ in Ireland, however, Healthy Ireland data suggests that only 33% of adults aged 65-74 meet physical activity recommendations.

"The Health Service Executive advises older people to be active for 150 minutes a week. This means at least 30 minutes a day of moderate-intensity activity, five days a week." We recognise the power of sport in bringing together people of all walks of life... and hopefully older people will feel encouraged to embrace the benefits of a more active lifestyle."

Edited by Renata Steffens  
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**TYRONE:** Staff and students from Dean Maguirc College, Carrickmore gathered for the Beginning of Year Mass in St Colmcille's Church. Photo: Fr Peter McAenely.



**VATICAN:** Professor Eamonn Conway with Sr Pat Murray IBVM, Secretary General of the International Union of Sisters General in St Peter's Basilica following the first Mass of the General Assembly of Bishops in the Vatican.



**MONAGHAN:** Fr Humphrey Ude with parishioners in St John the Evangelist Church, Raferagh. The priest gave individual blessings to the congregation after Mass with a first-class relic of St Therese of Lisieux.



**FERMANAGH:** Monsignor Peter O'Reilly and Gertie Hoy at the opening of the exhibition in St Michael's Parish Church, Enniskillen to celebrate the life and legacy of Bl Carlo Acutis and to raise awareness of his work regarding Eucharistic Miracles.



**DUBLIN:** Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin Most Rev Donal Roche celebrated the Mass of the Holy Spirit for the opening of the Academic Year of the Primary and Post-Primary Schools in the Archdiocese of Dublin in DCU, St Patrick's Campus in Drumcondra. Music was provided by St Mary's Holy Faith Secondary School Choir from Glasnevin. Photo: John McElroy.



**CORK:** The Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart presentation of gold and diamond pioneer emblems took place in the Church of the Ascension, Gurranabraher Parish on September 14.



**FRANCE:** (L/R) Marta Wolska, Fr Jim O'Reilly and Ryszard Pitera during a trip to the Polish Convent near Bartres, Lourdes. The two Polish pilgrims are holding the relics of Pope John Paul II and Maximilian Kolbe and prayed a decade of the rosary in Polish.

**ARMAGH**

From October 16 to 20 there will be a display of the activities of Irish missionaries in St Patrick's Cathedral. All are welcome to come and see this exhibition and rejoice in the varied ways in which Irish people shared their skills with others.

**CORK**

First Saturdays Conference to 'Help bring peace to our troubled world' happens on October 12 from 10am to 4pm at Firgrave Hotel, Mitchelstown. Event counts with four speakers and also includes Mass, rosary and meditation. Suggested donation €10-15. For more details see firstsaturdays.ie.

**DERRY**

Heal the Hurt Ministries invites you to 'The Unknown', a one-day workshop on using psychotherapy to engage with grief, anxiety, trauma, depression, etc. The event is facilitated by Liam and Claire Stewart on October 12 at St Pio House, BT48 8NU from 10.30am to 3.30pm. Book on ishealthehurt@gmail.com. Donations accepted.

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal's Healing Night with guest speaker Eddie Stones will happen on October 11 at St Joseph's Church, Galliagh at 7pm.

**DONEGAL**

Candlelight rosary procession in honour of Our Lady of Fatima happens on October 13, beginning at the Market Square, Letterkenny to the famine graveyard (High Road). The procession and rosary led by Fr Eamon Kelly starts at 7.15pm. All welcome.

**DOWN**

One-day retreat 'Come to the Well' facilitated by The Passionists happens on October 12 at Tobar Mhuire, Crossgar. The event will happen from 8.45am to 5pm, with Mass at 9am and Vigil Mass at 5.30pm. For more information contact 02844830242.

**DUBLIN**

'Decanting Dominic' an initiative of young adults with Dominican Friars invites people aged 18-25 to meet in a local bar to make friends and discuss the Catholic Faith. The next meeting will happen on October 16, at the Snug Bar at Lotts Café Bar 9 Lower Liffey Street, at 7.15pm. No booking necessary, for more info email

op.evangelisation@gmail.com.

**FERMANAGH**

After the Vigil Mass on October 12 at 6pm in St Michael's Church, Enniskillen everyone will have the opportunity to be blessed with the relic of Bl. Carlo Acutis. The exhibition to celebrate the life and legacy of Bl. Carlo Acutis and to raise awareness of his work regarding Eucharistic Miracles is open until Thursday, October 17.

**KILDARE**

Irish Theological Quarterly Lecture with them 'Equal Dignity and Agency: Catholic Social Teaching and the Lives of Women' happens on October 14 at 7.30pm at the Renehan Hall, St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth. Speaker will be American Prof. Meghan J. Clark. To register and more info contact specialevents@spcm.ie.

**LEITRIM**

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

**MEATH**

Introduction to the Bible on Kells webcam with Fr John. The priest will introduce the St Matthew's Gospel every Monday at 12pm. Each session lasts 25 minutes and are recorded. You can access the talks at www.kellsparish.ie/our-parish/webcam/. For more info contact Fr John at jplowebyrne@gmail.com.

**SLIGO**

A monthly Eucharistic Healing Service will take place on the second Monday of each month starting on October 14. It will happen in the public Chapel at Star of the Sea Retreat Centre, Mullaghmore, F91 CC98. The Services will be led by Deacon Frank McGuinness and Louise McGuinness from 7.30pm to 9pm. All are welcome.

**WATERFORD**

The Eucharistic adoration at the Holy Family Church, Luke Wadding St continues each Monday after 11am Mass until 4pm. All are welcome to come along and spend some quiet blessed time with the living presence of our Lord Jesus.

# Co. Cavan's saints visit home

Renata Steffens

Co. Cavan received the relics of its native St Kilian and his companions St Kolonat and St Totnan last week. The relics came from Würzburg, Germany, where the saints

lived and were killed over 1,300 years ago. The relics stayed in Ireland for four days, arriving on October 2 and returning to Germany on October 6.

"Brought together from different countries, cultures and social backgrounds, we are united in the veneration

of our patron saints," Bishop of Würzburg Franz Jung said during the visit.

The Würzburg Diocese presented Mullagh parish with a tall candle picturing St Kilian and his companions in a boat, representing the moment they left Ireland to spread God's

word. Fr Paul Prior PP said the candle represents "the light leading them [the saints] to new lands... It will shine warmly throughout this night of prayer. Like the joy and faith of the saints before us, it shines in the darkness through the night until the light of morning."

During the celebration of the Mass of Thanksgiving and the conclusion of the visit, Bishop Martin Hayes thanked all the pilgrims who came from Germany, the members of the team responsible for organising the visit and all attendees.

This visit was the result

of a strong connection and friendship between the Kilmore Diocese, Würzburg Diocese, Cavan County Council and Mullagh-Cross community.

*The Irish Catholic told St Kilian's full story in the September 26 issue.*



Cavan County Fire Service, Virginia Station's Gerry Smith and Patrick Farrelly bringing the relics out of the church in Mullagh to Edwin Carolan Park for the Saturday Procession.



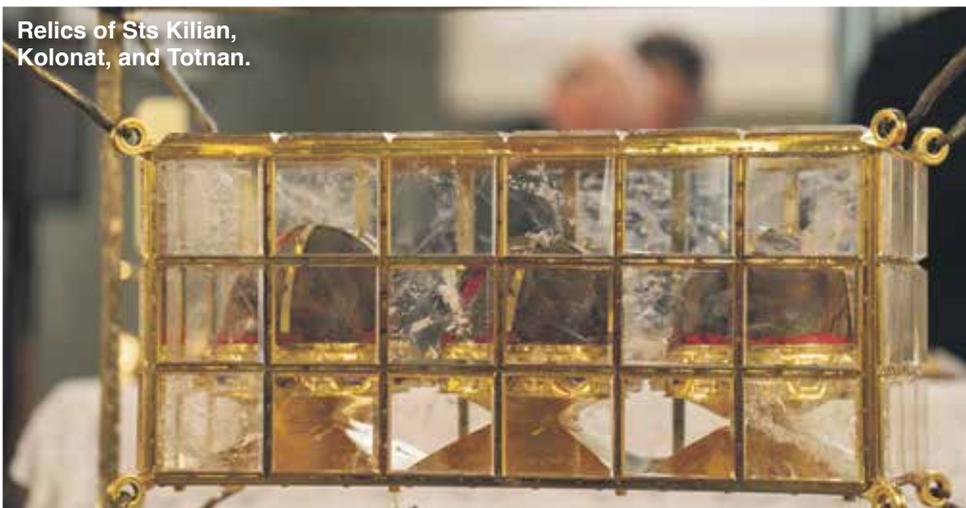
GAA club CLG Cúchulainn during the procession on October 5.



Procession in Mullagh on October 5.



Bishop Franz Jung and Bishop Martin Hayes.



Relics of Sts Kilian, Kolonat, and Totnan.



Visitors at the exposition in the St Kilian's Heritage Centre before the procession on October 5. Photo: Renata Steffens.



Chevaliers Peter Mc Govern (Kilmore), Dr Wilhelm Schraven and Christian Englert (Würzburg) and Thomas Kilduff (Kilmore).



(L/R) Liam Daly (St Kilian), Conor Shaffrey (St Kolonat), Fr Paul Prior PP Mullagh, Bishop Martin Hayes, Bishop Franz Jung, Cllr. TP O'Reilly Cathoirleach Cavan County Council and Darragh Smith (St Totnan).

# THE SYNODAL TIMES



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

## Tensions emerge as bishop wants west to stop obsessing over ‘niche issues’

KNA

**A** bishop in this month’s Synod of Bishops on Synodality condemned what he said is an overly western agenda obsessed with “niche issues” such as women’s ordination, which, he said, takes attention away from other important topics and is a “new form of colonialism”.

While conversely, a coalition of progressive reform groups referred to the handling of questions about the role of women in the Church at the current Synod as “catastrophic”, and announced plans to stage protests.

“I see no desire on the part of the Vatican to seriously address the issue of women in Church offices,” said Regina Franken, European chair of the Catholic Women’s Council, in remarks to KNA, the official news service of the Catholic bishops in Germany.

### Women

In an October 2 presentation to the synod, Argentine Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández said that the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, which he heads, has concluded there is “no room” for the ordination of women as deacons, while describing plans for a deeper study of ways in which women have exercised authority in the Church without sacramental ordination.

Ms Franken referred to that study as a “delaying tactic”, and said, “Women are no longer willing to accept these strategies”.

Yet, Ms Franken said, “frustration is now turning into productive anger”, saying there will be protests in Rome over the next few days.

“We want to make visible both in Rome and on social networks the strategies and manipulative tactics used to treat women in the

Bishop Anthony Randazzo of Broken Bay, Australia, speaks during a news conference at the Vatican October 4, 2024. Photo: CNS/Justin McLellan



Church,” she said.

**“So often we get caught up with niche issues that we talk about in Europe or in North America”**

Meanwhile, some of the representatives from more peripheral countries feel that the sessions are heavily focused on “niche issues” in the west that are not applicable to their lived realities, going as far to describe the trend as a “new form of colonialism”.

Speaking during an October 4 news briefing on the third day of the

**“We want to make visible both in Rome and on social networks the strategies and manipulative tactics used to treat women in the Church**

Synod, Bishop Anthony Randazzo of Broken Bay, Australia and president of the Federation of Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of Oceania lamented that, “So often we get caught up with niche issues that we talk about in Europe or in North America”.

### Niche

Oftentimes, he said, these issues come from “churches and communities that have great wealth, great access to technology, and resources”.

“Those issues become all-consuming, to the point that they then become an imposition on people who sometimes struggle simply to feed their families,

to survive the rising sea levels, or the dangerous journeys across wild oceans to resettle in new lands,” he said.

Bishop Randazzo called this “a new form of colonialism” that oppresses the vulnerable and which is “certainly not the mind of the synodal Church in mission”.

**“Please, do not forget the most vulnerable, and remember, when you come to Oceania, you here in Europe are the periphery”**

While these niche issues are important and need to be discussed, he said, “they must not be so all-consuming to the point that others cannot live or exist on the face of

**“They must not be so all-consuming to the point that others cannot live or exist on the face of this planet simply because people of might and power and authority and wealth decide that those niche issues are the most important ones”**

this planet simply because people of might and power and authority and wealth decide that those niche issues are the most important ones”.

“Please, do not forget the most vulnerable, and remember, when you come to Oceania, you here in Europe are the periphery,” he said.

Bishop Randazzo is one of the 368 participants in this year’s October closing session of the Synod, and represents the region of Oceania, which, he noted,

covers a third of the planet and is home to 41 million people, and is an extremely “fragile” environment.

### Events

Ms Franken’s movement, Catholic Women’s Council plans to host two public events in Rome planned for October 12: One is a gathering outside the Synod Hall in the evening to distribute postcards to participants reading “equality”, and the other a theatrical spoof in the afternoon called ‘Vaticanelle’, in which characters described as “female bishops” and “Sister Pope” will discuss whether men are eligible for the priesthood.

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# Women who have the Pope's ear – Inside the Pope's inner circle the C9



Pope Francis with participants of the meeting. Photo: Luca Attanasio.



Luca Attanasio

As is well known, on 28 September 2013 Pope Francis established, for the first time in the history of the Church, a body composed of 9 cardinals with the aim of assisting and advising the Pontiff himself in the governance of the Catholic Church and in the revision of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* regarding the structure of the Roman Curia. This revision merged into the new Constitution of reorganisation, the *Praedicate Evangelium* published in 2022. The Council of Cardinals, commonly known as the 'C9', held its first meeting on 1 October 2013, cur-

rently comprised of Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State; Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, President of the Pontifical Commission and of the Governorate of Vatican City State; Fridolin Ambongo Besungu Archbishop of Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo); Oswald Gracias Archbishop of Bombay (India); Sean Patrick O'Malley Archbishop of Boston (USA) and President of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors; Juan José Omella, Archbishop of Barcelona; Gerald Lacroix Archbishop of Quebec (Canada); Jean-Claude Hollerich Archbishop of Luxembourg; Sergio da Rocha Archbishop of San Salvador de Bahia (Brazil).

The work is always overseen by a secretary and the current one is Monsignor Marco Mellino, titular bishop of Cresima. For the past year, Pope Francis has wanted to introduce a disruptive novelty in the organisation of the Council meetings, the constant presence of three women with

a defined role as lecturers able to offer a series of *lectio magistralis* or reflections on the role of women in the universal Church.

**“The topics discussed were the role of women in the Church, the protection of minors and attention to ongoing wars”**

The last four meetings, therefore, have always been held with the constant presence of three women. In some cases they were theologians, in others canonists, or economists. In one meeting,

**“I also felt it was important to offer a critical contribution for reflection and not pre-packaged solutions. The contents of the four meetings are currently being published. By October they will all be available in bookshops”**

Jo Bailey Wells, bishop of the Anglican Church, was present.

In the case of the most recent Council meeting, held on 17 and 18 June at Casa Santa Marta, the topics discussed were the role of women in the Church, the protection of minors and attention to ongoing wars. And addressing them were also three women, one consecrated and two not, who offered their reports on topics they are specialised in: Sr Linda Pocher, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, theologian and lecturer in Christology and Mariology at the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences Auxilium in Rome, Valentina Rotondi, lecturer in economics at Supsi in Lugano and research associate at the sociology department of

Oxford University, and Donata Horak lecturer in canon law at the Alberoni Theological Studio in Piacenza, affiliated to the Pontifical Angelicum University.

Reached by *The Irish Catholic*, all three accepted the request to talk about their experience within such an important body for the Church. Each one, from her own angle of observation and study, first offered the cardinals her own reflection and then to *The Irish Catholic* her own impressions.

**Sr Linda, you were always present at the last four C9 meetings where the Holy Father wanted a qualified female presence, so I imagine you were also involved in the organisation, can you explain the genesis**

**and vision?**

“In June 2023, I was contacted by the Holy Father to organise a series of meetings on the topic of women in the Church for the C9. In entrusting me with this task, the Pope left me complete freedom, asking only to start from Balthasar's thought on the Marian principle in the Church. The criteria that guided me in planning the meetings were adherence to reality, listening to concrete women, interdisciplinarity and, as far as possible, internationality.

“I also felt it was important to offer a critical contribution for reflection and not pre-packaged solutions. The contents of the four meetings are currently being published. By October they will all be available in bookshops”.

**What themes did you address?**

“Each meeting had a main theme: in the first meeting we took Balthasar's proposal “head on”, highlighting its weaknesses and trying to sketch out some alternatives. The contents of this meeting are already available in the book “Demasculating the

Church" (already translated into Spanish, Portuguese and soon into English).

**“My contribution was rather introductory, on the need to rethink the formation of candidates for ministry and all pastoral workers taking into account the change of epoch we are going through”**

“In the second meeting we reflected on ministries, my contribution was on the subject of the male reserve at ordination. The book will be available around mid-July with the title ‘Women and Ministries in the Synod Church’.

“In the third meeting we tried to explore the relationship between the gospel and cultures and how it affects the way of thinking about the co-presence and collaboration of women and men in the church, my contribution was rather introductory, on the need to rethink the formation of candidates for ministry and all pastoral workers taking into account the change of epoch we are going through.

“The fourth meeting addressed the issue of power in the church, from an economic and legal perspective. Here too I introduced the theme, starting with a theological reflection on power and its ambiguity. The third and fourth volumes will be published after the summer”.

**And you Donata Horak?**

“As the canonist that I am, I addressed the issue of power in the Church, seen from the perspective of law. I have tried to propose a reflection on the current set-up of powers that should have as their main objective that every baptised subject should be able to let his or her vocation flourish in fullness.

“Law, which should be the main instrument for promoting rights and the full realisation of a vocation, is actually perceived as a cage. The structures of the Catholic Church sometimes hinder the full expression of life because there are great knots to unravel within our legal system,

also due to an ecclesiology that no longer corresponds to current times”.

**Can you give us some examples?**

“In the Church there are two approaches to the question of power in the canonical order. The code has systematised matters according to a theological-sacramental criterion, in line with the ecclesiology of *Lumen gentium*: the Church is a people of baptised persons, each sharing in the *tria munera Christi* (tasks but also gifts of Christ), *munus regendi* (the task of governing), *munus docendi* (of teaching) and *munus sanctificandi* (of contributing to sanctification).

**“Canon law in the future will have to overcome the impasse of these two models: it is not a matter of finding compromises, but of going beyond them, embracing a more evangelical model”**

“Each person is responsible for the mission that God has entrusted to the church, and law should promote that each person be able to realise his or her vocation. But despite the post-conciliar framework, the ecclesiology of *societas perfecta inaequalium*, a society founded on inequality, persists in the code. Too many institutes, bodies and offices exclude a large part of the people of God (all non-ordained males and all women) even though they would not require a power of order, but the simple exercise of the power of government, which is based on common baptism. Monarchical forms of government, based on inequality, persist.

“Canon law in the future will have to overcome the impasse of these two models: it is not a matter of finding compromises, but of going beyond them, embracing a more evangelical model”.

“I am trained as an economist,” explains Valentina Rotondi, “and so I focused on the situation of women in the contemporary economy. First I wanted to reiterate that the economy was born as a discipline for the common good, the reason they exchange goods is to care for each other. Then I



Sr Polcher

wanted to emphasise how, in a global economy, women are in a fragile situation, just think of the disparity in wages for the same education and profession.

“I spoke about what is called the *motherhood penalty* and *fatherhood bonus*, and the disadvantages women experience if they become mothers. Then I addressed the issue of women in the global south where much discrimination still persists especially in access to education. In all this framework I believe that the church does a lot in improving the condition of women both inside and outside the church, just think of the promotion of health and education, but that at the same time it could do much more.

“I took the liberty of giving an example: if we look at our side of the world, in the north, we women are portrayed as fit for caring and

nurturing, society paints us that way, it wants us to be loving mothers, possibly with impeccable physiques, it wants us always smiling and able to be mothers, wives and good at work even if they pay us less.

“I explicitly asked the pope to tell the eulogy of fragility, let us be fragile, tired, exhausted but no less willing to care. But put us alongside men who know how to take care of those in need, children, the elderly, the environment, help us make care a shared theme between men and women”.

**And the Pope, and the Cardinals, how did they react?**

“The pope and the cardinals,” Sr Linda interjects, “have shown a sincere desire to listen, openness to different visions and the capacity for serene confrontation, even on the thorniest topics, such as the ordination of women”.

“In spite of what I expected,” Rotondi echoed her, “I perceived a great welcome from the pope and the cardinals, an interest that was not window dressing and a great willingness to listen. I confess that at the beginning I was terrified also because I recently had Gregorio, our third child and I had to bring him with

me, he is only three months old, and he was present at the whole meeting. My husband was supposed to accompany me but the other two children were sick, so his brother, who is a priest, came (and during the meeting he changed the first nappy of his life....).

“But it was a wonderful experience, the pope and the cardinals then took breaks according to my needs (when, for example, he had to breastfeed, ed)”. “The C9,” Horak, has a universal *afflatus*, with many differences, and it has never seemed to me a select group of yesmen, but there is real discussion.

“It is very significant that the Pope focuses on the gender issue, which for me is the issue that will decide the future. The risk was: well, we listened, interesting but now goodbye. I did not perceive it that way, the cardinals experienced our reports as a moment of formation, lots of questions, notes, I felt a genuine listening.

“My report provoked a lot of debate, even frank debate, not everyone was united and the pope spoke several times during my and the others’ interventions. Even for the cardinals, the pope was a moment of freedom”.

**And now? What will these meetings and, above all, the contributions of women bring?**

“I believe that the pope’s decision to entrust the formation of the C9 to women,” Sr Polcher is sure, “also leaving them complete freedom in the choice of topics and speakers, can be included among the many prophetic gestures that have characterised the pontificate of Francis.

“The authentic encounter with the other never leaves one indifferent. Profound changes, however, especially when it comes to deep-rooted habits and ways of thinking, require time and patience. It is not yet time, in other words, to reap the fruits of this journey. The future will tell us!”

**“It is conceivable, in the meantime, to proceed by local decisions, if, for example, the Amazonian and German churches are ready, one can imagine greater autonomy”**

“The meeting,” adds Horak, “was not supposed to produce any decisions or public releases. Was it of little use? Actually it is a very important sign, it introduces a symbolic novelty. I do not expect immediate changes in the magisterium, I believe that at this stage it is decisive to give the church the tools to take steps, to induce processes that are irreversible, because at this time making decisions on the diaconate or women’s ordination or on the general order of the church could split the communion.

“It is conceivable, in the meantime, to proceed by local decisions, if, for example, the Amazonian and German churches are ready, one can imagine greater autonomy”.

“In general,” Rotondi concludes, “I think the Church is seriously questioning itself and much has been done, but there is still much to be done, not only in the ecclesiastical institutions but also in the world.

“I believe that these reflections are bringing about changes starting from the creation of a new awareness, small but concrete steps forward are needed recognising and properly valuing the work in ecclesiastical institutions and in particular that carried out by consecrated women not only responds to a need for justice, but also contributes to the strengthening of the ecclesial community and the collective wellbeing”.

**“I believe that these reflections are bringing about changes starting from the creation of a new awareness, small but concrete steps forward are needed recognising and properly valuing the work in ecclesiastical institutions”**

# The Synod calls for patience and perseverance



Fr Eamonn Conway

It is difficult to imagine another Pope reversing the reforms of the synodal process implemented by Pope Francis. There are several reasons for this but here I will mention just two.

The first is that synodality enables the entire People of God to fulfil their respective roles in discerning and implementing the Church's mission. For this reason, the changes under Pope Francis constitute a new and authentic stage in the appropriation of the teaching of Vatican II, one that has been impeded for too long.

**“A second reason why a synodal style in the Church is here to stay is that it is the only means by which a genuinely global Church can preserve its unity”**

Vatican II recovered the understanding of baptism as foundational to the life and mission of the Church. It repositioned ordained ministry as a distinctive service to the baptised, one that enables and empowers co-responsibility and guarantees unity and communion within the Church.

Counter-intuitive as it might seem to some, the virtual collapse of vocations to ordained ministry in many local churches contains an important message that we need to hear. It is telling us that the exercise of ordained ministry in such a way that stifles and

suffocates the charisms and gifts of God's people is not part of God's plan for the Church.

A second reason why a synodal style in the Church is here to stay is that it is the only means by which a genuinely global Church can preserve its unity. It is not overstating things to say that the choice is between synodality and schism.

For too long the universal Church 'got by' with an imposed uniformity rather than an organic unity; in practice, with a euro-centric model of the Church that was exported and implemented across the world. Governance through uniformity is no longer an option.

The reality is that, as the only continent haemorrhaging Catholics annually, European ideas on how to be Church, and those of the west generally, have little credibility globally. More importantly, as Pope Francis wrote in 2013, the life of the Church has to find its own legitimate forms of expression in each cultural context.

“In expressing their Christian faith,” he said, peoples of diverse continents cannot be expected to “imitate modes of expression which European nations developed at a particular moment of their history”.

Half-way through this Assembly we will be discussing the need for a model of unity that underlies and completes the “vibrant plurality” of cultures. We will also consider the authority of individual episcopal conferences to deal with matters that do not impact on “the Church's unity of doctrine, discipline and communion”.

Currently, Canon Law does not specifically confer teaching authority on episcopal conferences and previous pontificates have been reluctant to go down this road because of the potential negative impact it could have on unity.



Synod participant Fr Eamonn Conway pictured with Pope Francis at last year's Synod assembly. Photo: Fr Eamonn Conway.

**What can we expect from this General Assembly?**

The most important outcome of Synod 2021-2024 will be the normalisation within pastoral communities of practices of discussion, discernment and decision-making that involve all the People of God.

The culture-shift that has already taken place globally regarding this is not insignificant; in Ireland, this is thanks in particular to Julianne Moran and her Synodal Pathway colleagues who have developed synodal teams countrywide. At the end of the day, local churches have to take responsibility for implementing synodality, while being inspired and encouraged by the World Synod of Bishops.

Specific outcomes from this General Assembly are likely to centre on the concretisation of co-responsibility within the Church. We can anticipate recommendations as to how the gifts and charisms of lay people should be formally recognised within parish communities.

This will involve institut-

ing new ministries according to local circumstances. Lay ministers of baptism, preaching and witnessing at marriages are tabled in the Working Document. We can also expect recommendations for a revision of Canon Law to ensure that pastoral councils, for instance, and other bodies both nationally and regionally are needed, not only to foster but to guarantee co-responsibility.

**“We can expect recommendations for laity and clergy to be formed for ministries together and for direct lay involvement in the formation of priests”**

Concretisation of co-responsibility will require fostering “a renewed vision of ordained ministry... to bring out, recognise and animate the different baptismal charisms and ministries”. It is therefore essential that those currently in seminary formation understand that a “pyramidal way of exercising authority” not only has no traction in contemporary culture but is also contrary to the Gospel. Given that each of Pope Francis' spontaneous interventions at last year's General Assembly related to the topic of formation, we can expect

recommendations for laity and clergy to be formed for ministries together and for direct lay involvement in the formation of priests.

The Working Document states bluntly that “the accountability of authority to the community must be recovered” and that this will require the implementation of “effective forms of transparency and accountability”. Legislating for this will need work beyond the Synod but the General Assembly will hear reports on progress on this and other issues.

Some people are disappointed that issues such as the ordination of women to the permanent diaconate, same-sex relationships, irregular unions etc that emerged in the consultation phase are not explicitly tabled for discussion. It is not the case that these issues are simply being avoided.

This meeting of the Synod is focused on one question only: how to become a synodal Church on mission. Last year's General Assembly revealed deeper questions about the diaconate, not least that in parts of the universal Church it is virtually unheard of including where the Church is growing most.

That further consideration has been funnelled off to a stable working group means that consideration will continue post-Synod. Overcoming the culture of clericalism and hierarchicalism is the most pressing priority, however, without which we won't be able to

envisage clearly matters relating to ministry more generally.

**“The Author of Nature appears deliberate throughout His operations, accomplishing His natural ends by slow successive steps”**

In regard to marriage and sexuality, *The Joy of Love* (2016), which followed two synods, dealt with these matters as comprehensively as can be expected for the foreseeable future and its important recommendations on pastoral accompaniment still, for the most part, await implementation in many local churches.

**The need for patience and perseverance**

There is no doubt that urgent change is needed if the Church is to remain faithful to its mission of proclaiming the Gospel in an increasingly troubled world. At the same time authentic change takes time and perseverance. What we are learning from synodality is that it is not just the content of decisions that matters but also the manner in which they are taken.

John Henry Newman understood better than most how change in Church doctrine and practice evolves: “Men are impatient, and for precipitating things,” he wrote, “but the Author of Nature appears deliberate throughout His operations, accomplishing His natural ends by slow successive steps”.

Often, he noted, God operates “through a progressive series of means, which extend, both backward and forward, beyond our utmost view.” At the end of the day, the outcomes of Synod 2021-24 that matter will be on God's time and terms, not ours.

**i** Fr Eamonn Conway is the Professor of Integral Human Development at the University of Notre Dame Australia and has been appointed by Pope Francis as an expert theologian to the 16th World Synod of Bishops.

**“Overcoming the culture of clericalism and hierarchicalism is the most pressing priority, however, without which we won't be able to envisage clearly matters relating to ministry more generally”**

# Pope gives nods to peripheries and pals in naming 21 new cardinals



Elise Ann Allen

**P**ope Francis last Sunday announced a consistory in December for the creation of 21 new cardinals from all over the world, representing yet again the Pope's love of the peripheries and his inclination to reward key allies.

Speaking during his October 6 Angelus address, the Pope announced that "on December 8, a consistory will be held for the creation of new cardinals." December 8 is the feast of the Immaculate Conception on the Church's calendar and a public holiday in Rome, widely seen as the beginning of the Christmas season.

The Pope emphasised the universality of his picks in announcing them during his traditional noon Angelus address.

"Their provenance expresses the universality of the Church, which continues to announce the merciful love of God to all men on earth," he said.

## Peripheries

The new cardinal-designates showcase the Pope's love of the global peripheries, featuring appointees from Peru, Ecuador, Iran, Japan, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Serbia and more.

Aside from a handful of Italians, only two of the new cardinals – Dominican preacher Timothy Radcliffe, former master general of the Dominican order, and Archbishop Francis Leo of Toronto – come from the West, signaling Pope Francis's ongoing push to shift the leadership of the Catholic Church away from being primarily Western and towards a more global outlook.

Radcliffe is currently leading the spiritual retreats for the Pope's October 2-27 Synod of Bishops on Synodality.

Pope Francis's new cardinal appointees also represent another instance of him handing a red hat to individuals who have been key allies in his papacy, including Fr Radcliffe; Fr Fabio Baggio, Under Secretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; and Monsignor George Koovakad of India, who is in charge of organising papal trips.

Also on the list is Archbishop Carlos Castillo of Lima, who has had the challenging



Members of the Synod of Bishops, pilgrims, ambassadors accredited to the Vatican and Catholics from the Diocese of Rome pray the rosary for peace with Pope Francis in the Basilica of St. Mary Major October 6, 2024. Photo: CNS photo/Vatican Media

task of navigating fallout from the scandals surrounding the Peru-based *Sodalitium Christianae Vitae* (SCV), which is currently under Vatican investigation.

The full list of cardinal designates includes:

- Archbishop Angelo Acerbi, former papal ambassador
- Archbishop Carlos Gustavo Castillo Mattasoglio of Lima, Peru
- Archbishop Vicente Bokalic Iglic of Santiago del Estero, Argentina
- Archbishop Luis Gerardo Cabrera Herrera of Guayaquil, Ecuador
- Archbishop Fernando Natalio Chomali Garib of Santiago, Chile
- Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo, Japan
- Bishop Pablo Virgilio Siongco David of Kalookan, Philippines
- Archbishop Ladislav Nemet of Belgrade, Serbia
- Archbishop Jaime Spengler of Porto Alegre, Brazil
- Archbishop Ignace Bessi Dogbo of Abidjan, Ivory Coast
- Archbishop Jean-Paul Vesco of Alger, Algeria
- Bishop Paskalis Bruno Syukur of Bogor, Indonesia
- Archbishop Dominique Joseph Mathieu of Tehran, Iran
- Archbishop Roberto Repole of Turin, Italy

• Bishop Baldassare Reina, auxiliary bishop of Rome, former Vice-Regent and, as of Sunday, Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome

- Archbishop Francis Leo of Toronto, Canada
- Archbishop Rolandas Makrickas, Coadjutor Archbishop of the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major
- Bishop Mykola Bychok of the Eparchy of Saints Peter and Paul of Melbourne of the Ukrainians
- Fr Timothy Radcliffe, theologian
- Fr Fabio Baggio, Under Secretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
- Monsignor George Jacob Koovakad, Official of the Secretariat of State, Responsible for Papal Trips

There are currently 236 cardinals, of whom 122 are under

80 and are therefore eligible to vote in the next conclave.

**“With the exception of 2021 (Covid), Pope Francis has held a consistory every year of his 11-year papacy. This year's consistory will be his 10th”**

Two of those cardinals will age out by the end of the year: Venezuelan Cardinal Balthazar Porras Cardoz, former archbishop of Caracas, will turn 80 this month, and Indian Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay and a member of Pope Francis's Council of Cardinals advising him on matters of governance and reform, will hit the mile-

stone in December.

With the exception of 2021 (Covid), Pope Francis has held a consistory every year of his 11-year papacy. This year's consistory will be his 10th.

## Protection of Minors

After Cardinal Sean O'Malley, former archbishop of Boston and ongoing president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors turned 80 earlier this year, there are still 10 American cardinal-electors. They include Cardinal Daniel Di Nardo of Galveston-Houston; Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago; Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York; Cardinal Wilton Gregory of Washington; Cardinal Robert McElroy of San Diego; and Cardinal Joe Tobin of Newark.

Other Americans still of voting age are Cardinal Kevin

Farrell, head of the Vatican Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life and president of several Vatican commissions; Cardinal James Harvey, archpriest of the papal basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Wall in Rome; Cardinal Robert Prevost, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Bishops; and Cardinal Raymond Burke.

Americans make up the second largest national block in the College of Cardinals after the Italians with 16, counting Italians who also serve in other countries, such as Cardinal Giorgio Marengo of Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia and Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Of the new appointees, all are under the age of 80 and therefore eligible to vote for the next pope except Archbishop Acerbi, who, at 99, is likely the oldest man ever to be named a cardinal, outpacing even the late Cardinal Loris Capovilla, who received the red hat at 98. Fr Radcliffe, however, is 79, and will turn 80 next August.

Close papal friends and aides have said the Pope is in good condition, despite the ailments expected at 87-years-old, and that his health does not appear to be at any immediate risk. However, he is clearly looking to further cement his legacy in the appointment of these 21 new cardinals.

**“Close papal friends and aides have said Francis is in good condition, despite the ailments expected at 87-years-old, and that his health does not appear to be at any immediate risk. However, he is clearly looking to further cement his legacy in the appointment of these 21 new cardinals”**

# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### New film on Irish priest hopes to advance cause for canonisation

● A new film depicting the life and work of Fr Edward J. Flanagan titled 'Heart of a Servant: The Father Flanagan Story' was released in theatres across the United States for one night only on Tuesday, October 8.

The film portrays the Catholic priest's unwavering commitment to caring for abandoned and orphaned youth starting from the Great Depression to after World War II, all while defying racist laws in order to serve the most vulnerable and give them hope for a future. The film covers a range of topics — from Fr Flanagan's health issues to his immigrating to the United States to his founding of Boys Town, Nebraska.

The film is narrated by popular Catholic actor Jonathan Roumie, known for his role as Jesus Christ in 'The Chosen'.

### Catholic Church laments Mexican army's shooting of migrants

● Six migrants traveling through southern Mexico in a pickup truck lost their lives and 10 more have been wounded after being fired upon by Mexican soldiers.

According to information shared by Mexico's National Defense Secretariat (Sedena, by its Spanish acronym), the incident occurred October 1 on a stretch of the Villa Comalatlán-Huixtla highway in

the Mexican state of Chiapas, which borders Guatemala.

The migrants were of various nationalities, which included Egyptians, Cubans, and Pakistanis. Bishop José Guadalupe Torres Campos, head of the migrant ministry of the country's Catholic bishops, denounced the "disproportionate use of lethal force by agents of the state" that led to the tragedy.

### Church leaders in UK call for 'no' vote on assisted dying bill

● UK Church leaders have warned Prime Minister Keir Starmer that plans to introduce assisted suicide will put vulnerable people at risk.

Labour Member of Parliament Kim Leadbeater is proposing a bill that would give terminally ill people in England and Wales the right to end their life. The issue was last voted on in 2015, when members of Parliament roundly rejected assisted suicide. This time they will vote on the bill October 16.

Bishop John Sherrington, head of life issues for the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, pointed to places where euthanasia has been legalised, such as Canada and Oregon, as a warning sign.

"The legalisation of assisted suicide undermines the sanctity and dignity of human life. There is also now ample evidence across the world that the legalisation of assisted suicide puts the most vulnerable members of society at risk," he said.

### Canadian cardinal-elect on assisted suicide: 'It is a travesty'

● Toronto Archbishop and cardinal-elect Francis Leo told EWTN News last week that Catholics "must keep firm in our faith, proclaiming the gospel of life and a civilisation of love" as assisted suicide grows in popularity around the world.

Physician-assisted suicide was legalised in Canada under the "Medical Aid in Dying" (MAID) program in June 2016. In the US assisted suicide is legal in 10 states including Oregon, Washington, and Colorado as well as Washington, DC.

"It is a travesty, honestly, that euthanasia is going strong," Bishop Leo told EWTN News President and COO Montse Alvarado on "EWTN Pro-Life Weekly" on last Thursday.

### India advocate: discrimination against Dalit Catholics must be addressed

● As bishops around the world meet at the Vatican for the Synod on Synodality, some Catholics in India say they must address the "draconian casteism, caste discrimination and domination prevailing historically in the Catholic Church" especially among the dominant Dalit population in the Church.

"The ecclesial tradition of the Catholic Church in India is the caste tradition of the Indian Catholic hierarchy and clergy. This is most conspicuously evident from the Catholic hierarchy that continues to be caste dominant. It calls for Imminent Intervention of the Holy See in the spirit of Synodality to stop this contemptuous situation," said Professor M. Mary John, the president of the Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM).

## Cardinal Ambongo sets out roadmap for polygamy text

Africa's bishops will discuss a draft document on the Church's pastoral response to polygamy in July 2025, Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo announced last Wednesday.

Addressing participants in the synod on synodality's second session October 2, the president of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) said the document would offer "a comprehensive answer" to the question "What is the most appropriate form of pastoral care to support people in polygamous relationships?"

He said that SECAM's standing committee had developed a four-phase plan for the document's development.

In the first phase, a working group of experts identified "certain fundamental elements for an appropriate pastoral response" to polygamy.

Cardinal Ambongo, the Archbishop of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, noted that polygamy appeared in two forms: "polygyny, the marriage of a man with several wives, and polyandry, the marriage of a woman with several husbands".

He said the practice also varied in scale, from two to three wives, to more than 10 wives, in the case of traditional chiefs.

"On the other hand, in modern Africa, we are witnessing the emergence of new forms of polygamy through new forms of cohabitation involving children recognised as legitimate," he noted.

The cardinal underlined that the Catholic Church in Africa upheld monogamy. "However, affirming the



Congolese Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo of Kinshasa, celebrates Mass as part of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Altar of the Chair in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican October 13, 2023. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

doctrinal elements is not enough," he said. "Pastoral accompaniment for polygamists is urgently needed."

Cardinal Ambongo, who played a leading role in opposition to the Vatican's declaration on same-sex blessings, *Fiducia supplicans*, said the Church faced two main scenarios.

In the first, baptised Catholics engaged in polygamy while continuing to take part in Church activities and have parish responsibilities.

In the second, unbaptised people living in polygamy were drawn to the Church.

"In both cases, a respectful and fraternal dialogue must be established between these people and the pastor, the

representative of the merciful Christ who goes in search of the sheep lying in spiritual or existential peripheries," the cardinal said.

After the working group creates a draft document, the second phase will begin, with the text's distribution to African bishops' conferences for comment.

Cardinal Ambongo said this stage was significant because "the prevalence and characteristics of polygamy vary considerably from region to region."

In the second stage, the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith will also be asked to comment on the text.

In the third phase, African

bishops attending SECAM's July 2025 plenary meeting will review the draft together.

If the bishops approve the document, the fourth phase will begin with the text's submission to the doctrinal dicastery, "for additional theological and doctrinal guidance," Cardinal Ambongo said.

Polygamy emerged as an issue in the working document for the "continental stage" of the global synodal process, published in October 2022.

At the synod on synodality's first session in October 2023, the term did not appear in an early draft of the concluding "synthesis report".

## Lebanese bishop says political, economic interests work against peace

After the one-year anniversary of a Hamas attack on Israel that sparked a full-blown war in Gaza, and which now threatens to expand into a wider regional conflict, a Lebanese prelate asked that individual agendas be set aside in order to achieve peace.

Speaking during an October 5 news briefing on the Synod of Bishops on synodality, Bishop Mounir Khairallah of Batrun of the Maronites lamented to

journalists that amid a surge of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon in recent days, "The world is quiet, it doesn't say anything".

"It even gives the green light for this violence because there are too many interests, at the political and economic level, so the world is silent," Bishop Khairallah said, saying these private interests "have nothing to do with our Christian values".

Values such as human dignity and freedom "don't count for anything anymore when interests are placed before all else", he said, but voiced hope in the potential role the pope and Vatican diplomacy can play.

To this end, Bishop Khairallah noted that popes have consistently referred to Lebanon as a "message-country" for the region and for the world due to its history of religious co-existence.

## Melania Trump frustrates pro-life movement with abortion support

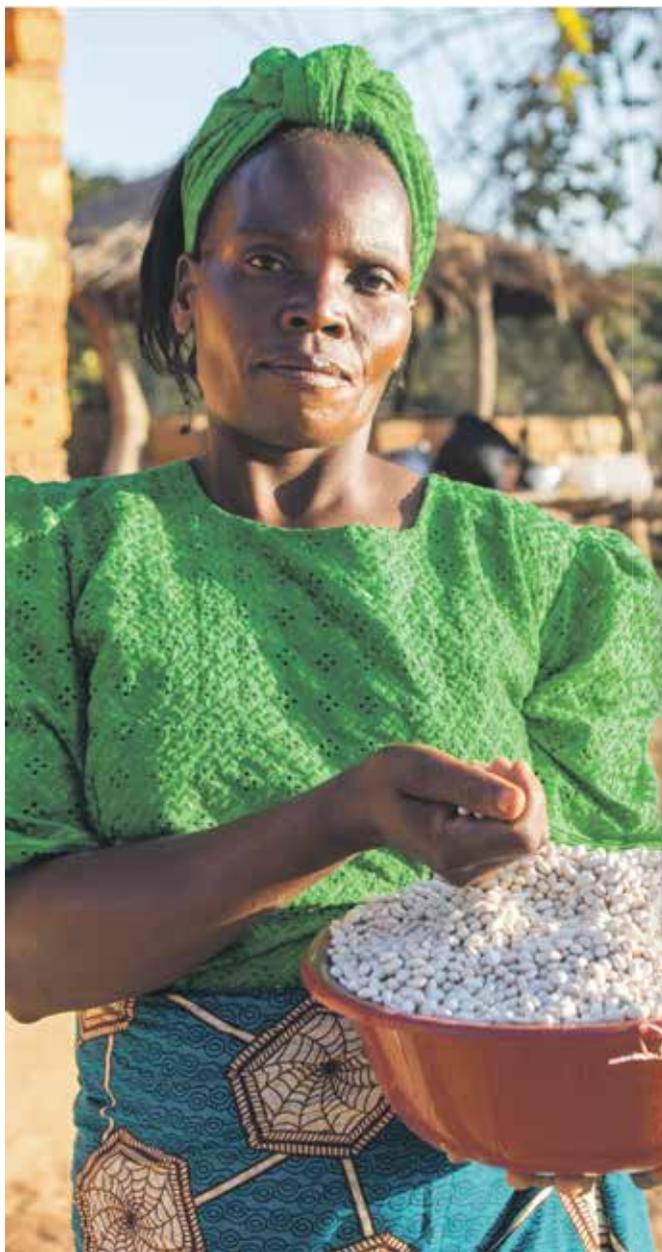
Former first lady Melania Trump has stirred criticism from the pro-life movement after sharing her pro-abortion views in her upcoming memoir and in a video message on X.

In her self-titled memoir *Melania*, released on October 8, one month before

Election Day, the former first lady writes about her life, her family, her time in the White House, and briefly about her support for legal abortion. Some excerpts from the book were published by The Guardian on Wednesday evening.

"It is imperative to guarantee that

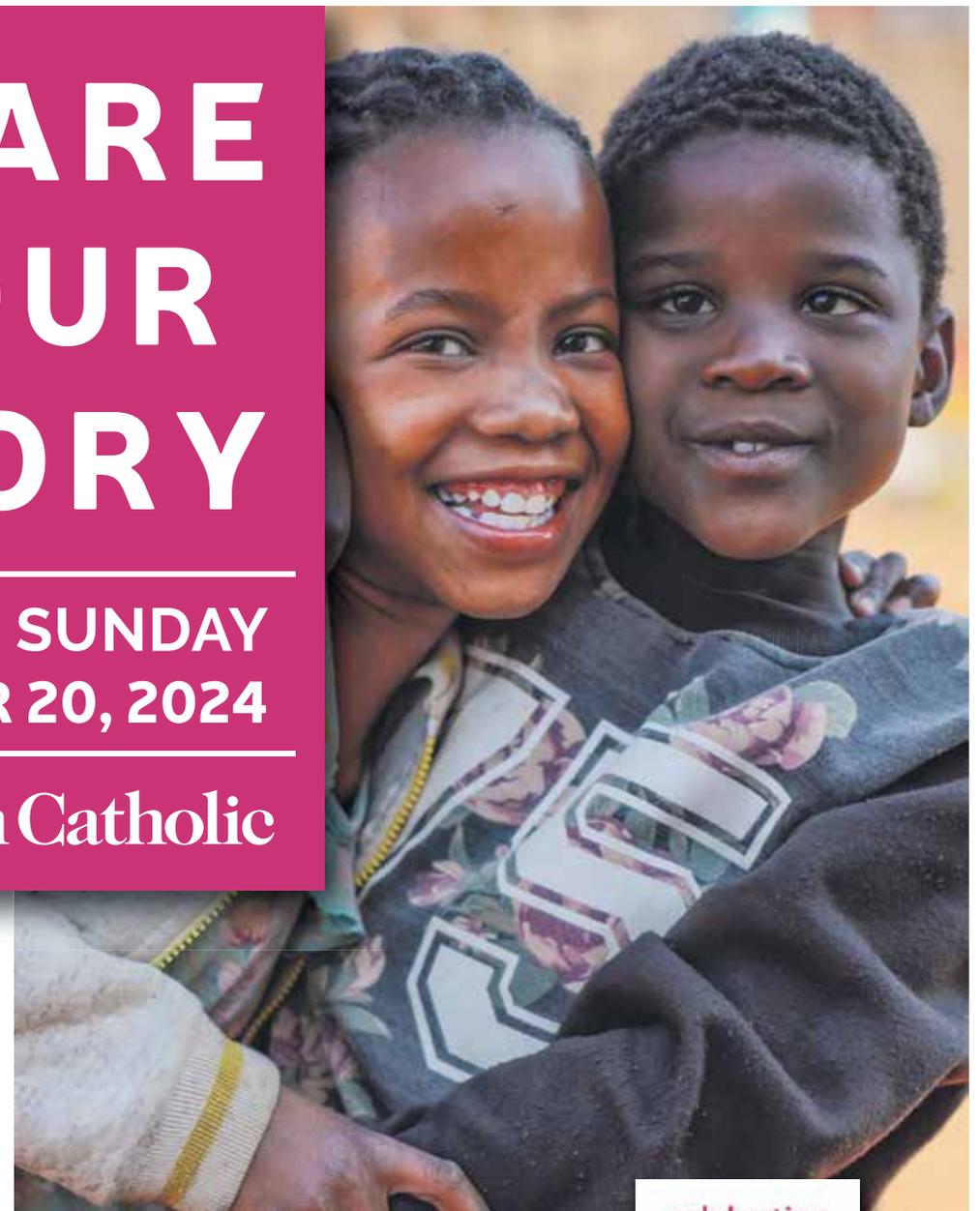
women have autonomy in deciding their preference of having children, based on their own convictions, free from any intervention or pressure from the government," Melania Trump, the second Catholic first lady in American history, wrote in the autobiographical book.



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# Letter from Rome

## As synod opens, Vatican says 'no' to women deacons



Elise Ann Allen

**O**n the first day of the final session of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality, a study group responsible for evaluating the female diaconate has said that, while still exploring other forms of women's involvement in the Church, they will not become deacons.

Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, made the announcement during the synod's afternoon session October 2, the first official working day of the October 2-27 synod.

On the women's diaconate, he said, "We would like to share from the outset that, based on the analysis conducted so far – which also takes into account the work done by the two Commissions established by Pope Francis on the female diaconate – the dicastery judges that there is still no room for a positive decision by the Magisterium regarding the access of women to the diaconate, understood as a degree of the Sacrament of Holy Orders".

"The Holy Father himself recently confirmed this consideration publicly. In any event, the Dicastery judges that the opportunity to continue the work of in-depth study remains open," he said.

### Diaconate

Pope Francis has previously established two different commissions to study the issue of the women's diaconate, with the first being established in 2016. Both commissions presented their findings, which were ultimately inconclusive, to the Pope.

The topic of the women's diaconate was among the most hotly debated during last year's synod gathering, which touched on other sensitive issues such as priestly celibacy, women's priestly



Pope Francis and leaders of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops attend the first working session of the synod in the Vatican's Paul VI Audience Hall October 2, 2024. Photo: CNS photo/Lola Gomez

ordination, and a broader inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community.

**“Women are of great service as women, not as ministers, as ministers in this regard, within the Holy Orders”**

However, Pope Francis in May took these questions off of the synod discussion table, instead assigning them to study groups he formed to continue reflection on various points that emerged during the synod discussion.

Francis also appeared to take the question off the table during a conversation with CBS News that aired in May.

When asked by CBS journalist Norah O'Donnell if women will ever have "the opportunity to be a deacon and participate as a clergy member in the Church?", the pope said, "No."

"If it is deacons with Holy Orders, no. But women have always had, I would say, the function of deaconesses without being deacons, right?

Women are of great service as women, not as ministers, as ministers in this regard, within the Holy Orders."

Announced by the synod's organisational team in March, the synod study groups have been assigned the following subjects:

- The relationship between the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin Church
- Listening to the Cry of the Poor

- The mission in the digital environment

- The revision of the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* in a missionary synodal perspective

- Theological and canonical matters regarding specific ministerial forms

- The revision, in a synodal missionary perspective, of the documents touching on the relationship between Bishops, consecrated life, and ecclesial associations

- Some aspects of the person and ministry of the bishop (criteria for selecting candidates to episcopacy, judicial function of the bishops, nature and course of *ad limina apostolorum* visits) from a missionary synodal perspective
- The role of papal repre-

sentatives in a missionary synodal perspective

- Theological criteria and synodal methodologies for shared discernment of controversial doctrinal, pastoral, and ethical issues

- The reception of the fruits of the ecumenical journey in ecclesial practices

The groups, comprised of curial officials and experts from around the world, have been tasked with developing a working plan that they were to present to this year's synod assembly, and with the goal of concluding their studies so as to present the results to the Pope by June 2025.

### Entrusted

Study of the women's diaconate was entrusted to the DDF as part of the working ground on "Some theological and canonical matters regarding specific ministerial forms".

Membership of that working group has not been announced, but according to images available online, it includes not only Fernández, but also Archbishop John Joseph Kennedy, Secretary for the Disciplinary Section of DDF, Archbishop Philippe Curbelié, undersec-

retary of the dicastery, and a handful of women. Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta, an adjunct secretary of the dicastery, is also a member.

**“Cardinal Fernández said, it will be possible ‘to give proper attention to the pressing issue of women’s participation in the life and leadership of the Church’”**

Fernández said the group has decided to proceed with drafting a document on their study topic, and that the "most interesting" parts of the findings of the two commissions for the women's diaconate will be included.

In order to properly develop the place of women in the Church and in decision-making processes as well as in leadership positions, he said the document would dwell on a series of different subjects.

These subjects, Cardinal Fernández said, include the nature of sacramental power, the relationship between this sacramental power as deriving from the Eucharist, and other ecclesial ministries "needed for the care and growth of God's Holy People with a view to mission".

They will also include the origin of ministries, the charismatic nature of the Church, an exploration of the various ecclesial functions and ministries that do not require the Sacrament of Holy Orders, Holy Orders as service, and problems arising "from an erroneous conception of ecclesial authority".

Only after conducting this reflection, Cardinal Fernández said, it will be possible "to give proper attention to the pressing issue of women's participation in the life and leadership of the Church. This includes the question of women's access to the diaconate."

Cardinal Fernández said the study conducted by the DDF so far has sought to conduct an in-depth analysis of the lives of women who have had "genuine authority and power in support of the Church's mission."

### Charisms

The reflection, he said, would be on "charisms or the establishment of roles of ecclesial service" that are not directly connected to the sacraments, but which are rooted in baptism and confirmation.

He pointed to the historic examples such as Matilda of Canossa, Hildegard of Bingen, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Ávila, Juana Inés de la Cruz, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Maria Montessori, Armida Barelli, Dorothy Day, and Madeleine Delbrêl.

"Equally, it will be crucial to listen to those women today who hold leading roles within the People of God and to the churches to which they belong," he said.

In this sense, Fernández said that apart from the question of the women's diaconate, "the in-depth study of their multifaceted Christian witness can help today imagine new forms of ministry that can create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church."

# Letters

## Letter of the week

### Avoid pitting communities against each other

**Dear Editor,** I support Fr Peter McVerry and Sr Stan's views regarding the pressure on Ireland's homeless services and the need for compassion towards asylum seekers and migrants.

While it is true that increased numbers of people exiting direct provision add strain to an already burdened housing system, it is essential that we resist allowing this issue to fuel xenophobia.

As Fr McVerry rightly pointed out, it is not the fault of asylum seekers that

they find themselves homeless. These individuals have been granted permission to stay in Ireland, and, like our own homeless population, they deserve dignity and safety in their pursuit of a better life. The responsibility lies squarely with the Government, which has failed to adequately anticipate and address both the housing crisis and the rise in people seeking international protection.

Blaming asylum seekers for the housing shortage would be not only unjust

but also harmful, as it risks stoking anti-immigrant sentiment. Instead, we must demand that the Government tackle the root of the problem: the chronic lack of affordable housing. When enough homes are not built, vulnerable populations—whether Irish or migrant—are forced into unsafe, drug-ridden environments that harm both groups.

There is space in Ireland's heart for both our own homeless and those seeking refuge, as Sr Stan so

beautifully articulated. It is our moral duty to advocate for proper solutions and avoid pitting vulnerable communities against each other. With careful planning, it is entirely possible to provide for everyone in need, and doing so will prevent the dangerous rise of xenophobia that is sweeping through other parts of Europe.

*Yours etc.,  
Jack O'Donoghue  
Greystones, Co. Wicklow*

## The truth must be preached fearlessly on Sunday

**Dear Editor,** On September 29 we had the powerful gospel of St Mark, Chapter 9 which outlines God's detestation of sin. Jesus warns us to avoid sin at all costs with the famous warning to pluck out your eye or cut off your leg if these cause you to sin because it is better to enter life with one eye or leg rather than go to hell. While Jesus may be indulging in hyperbole, he is not mincing his words because of the serious possibility of losing one's salvation. This is not the only time in the Gospels where Jesus warns of the possibility of going to hell – in fact hell is mentioned more often by him than heaven. Despite this, the priest at my local Mass on Sunday said that Jesus was indulging in hyperbole and that what he really meant was for us not to hold onto negative thoughts.

Where was the mention of hell? Why wasn't the very real positive possibility of eternal damnation mentioned? It is a priest's duty to tell people what they need to hear rather than what they want to hear. I want to hear the truth preached fearlessly on Sunday not some trite pop psychology. The hier-



## Jewish warmly welcomed in Delvin during WWII

**Dear Editor,** While living in Delvin, Co. Westmeath last year, I found out that Delvin was the only centre of welcome for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. About 100 orphans of Auschwitz victims were housed there for a year before they found permanent housing in the

US and the UK.

I was heartened to learn that many of these visitors later came back to visit Delvin as they were warmly received there by the locals.

The truth is that it was the Irish Government and not the local Irish people who were so restrictive to

the Jews in their hour of need.

I propose that a national Holocaust Memorial Day be held in Delvin every year to remember their great loss.

*Yours etc.,  
Andrew Kieran  
Bristol, UK*

archy in this country has much to answer for; priests who do preach the truth (like Fr Sean Sheehy) are censured by their bishops. Priests and bishops will (like everyone else) have to stand before the Judgment

seat one day and would do well to read the story of Fr Steven Scheier and the parable of the fig tree (readily available online) – which is a very sobering but ultimately uplifting account of the consequences of not carry-

ing out ones priestly duties. Now, more than ever, we need the truth: Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep!

*Yours etc.,  
Pat O'Neill  
Crosshaven, Co. Cork*

## 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.

## Stars of David in a dark sky

**W**hen Bono of U2 tweaked the lyrics of the song 'Pride' a year ago in the wake of the massacre of young people at a music festival in Israel he came in for immense criticism. "Early morning, October 7, the sun is rising in the desert sky. Stars of David, they took your life but they could not take your pride." For many the horror of that event was to be equivocated, dismissed or even justified and yet for those who know peace and decency in their hearts there was only innocent young people celebrating life and youth when all the politics and lies and whataboutery is stripped away, young people who had every right to live and not be slaughtered.

Our President Michael D Higgins has not equivocated. He wrote on social media this week: "The month of October is and will always be a month full of sorrow for so many families."

It will include those innocent people, so many of them young people, horrifically murdered by Hamas while attending the Supernova Sukkot Gathering music festival in Israel on October 7, the outrageous killing and brutal assault, including sexual assault, of so many others, and the taking of hostages, the anxiety for the safety of so many of whom is permanently in the hearts of their families."

There is a growing antisemitism in Europe and America, and yes, here in Ireland. Outrage at Israel for the civilian toll the war has taken is justified. Yet only a fool would think that there is not something a lot more sinister at play in a lot of the more forceful criticism, that is in fact undisguised hatred. This is not new since October last year, it has been growing.

In 2013 the now late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks gave a speech that the "never again" of the Holocaust was beginning to sound like "ever

again". He said: "And at the heart of it is hostility to Israel. Of course, not all criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic. But make no mistake what has happened. In the Middle Ages Jews were hated because of their religion. In the 19th century and the 20th, they were hated because of their race. Today, when it's no longer done to hate people for their religion or their race -- today they are hated because of their State. The reason changes, but the hate stays the same. Anti-Zionism is the new anti-Semitism."

He went on: "Friends, anti-Zionism is today rife throughout the world. All our students on campuses know about it. And what is our crime? What is Israel's crime? It's that we have chutzpah. Let me tell you the chutzpah we have. After all, there are 56 Islamic states. There are 125 nations whose majority is Christian. And now Jews want a State of their own. How dare they? Friends, we dare because we are human. We dare because to be denied the right to self-defense is to be treated as less than human."

Speaking in 2013 he predicted: "Today, the struggle against Israel is no longer just against Israel. Today what is at stake in Israel's survival is the future of freedom itself. Because make no mistake, this will be the defining battle of the 21st century."

"How likely is it that after 2,000 years of exile our people should have come back to our land and there in -- having stood eyeball to eyeball in Auschwitz a mere three years earlier, eyeball to eyeball with the Angel of Death, in 1948 said, despite the worst crime of man against man, *lo amut kiechye* -- "I will not die but I will live?" Israel is the greatest collective affirmation of life in the whole of Jewish history."

Let us pray for peace among the children of Abraham.

# A letter to my Mother

A brief testimony of St Thérèse of Lisieux showering down roses



Little Flower, in your presence of pardon and peace you showed me Heaven. I quit addictions and I was Confirmed in the Catholic Church, says **Gabriel Dupén**

**Y**ou gave birth to a late-born child in our Lord Jesus Christ. A shadowed soul exhaustingly downgraded by its sins, thirsty for the truth, light, and salvation, surrendered to you. Thus, in Jesus. Overwhelmed, doubtful, hopeless, empty, you have found me. Accidentally contemplating you, Little Flower, I realised you had been silently following my soul and suffered for it. Though shameful, skeptical, and challenging, St Thérèse, I boldly called you, Mother.

## Worse

However, only God, Jesus, and specially you, Mother, know that things went even worse. Substance abuse, debts, superstition, dragged that lost soul to humble live in shelters. Little Flower, I almost gave my soul to the beast. But you, Mother, empowered by the Holy Spirit were there to save your son. In a brief sober moment, the decision to meet St Thérèse for my birthday gave me a reason to live. Assuming as a 'fair gesture' that a son visits his mother, I hastily trav-



Basilica of Sainte-Thérèse, Lisieux, France

elled to know you, Mother, in Lisieux.

**“Exactly in the same confessional where you determined to follow Jesus, along with St Gabriel Archangel, you played with me in the Cathedral of Lisieux”**

Our Father modelled the trip to your heart. Disclosing the passion of St Joan of Arc opened my heart to what was waiting for me in Lisieux. Those heresy flames that burnt our 'Maid of Orleans' began to unmask a higher plan of God to his souls. Once in Lisieux, a smile was on my lips when I was praying my Rosary in your Cathedral. Some tears dropped. Mother, you were with me in every step. I felt

your love in my heart. An example of a good mother. Exactly in the same confessional where you determined to follow Jesus, along with St Gabriel Archangel, you played with me in the Cathedral of Lisieux. More tears fell. Further, your Dear Carmel embraced your son with your Holy and eternal life in Jesus and Mary. Only you know, Mother, my promise to surrender and follow Jesus with you commenced from my soul to your pure heart in Carmel. This son gave you a little weep in his eyes.

## Converted

On that sunny November 22, 2021, in Les Buissonnets, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, converted a soul to God through his Son, Jesus Christ. I followed your invitation to your Holy House. Little Flower, you made me feel like I was part of it for a long time. Your sacred room inspired me to pray to Our Lady. The one

who healed you with her peaceful smile. Your Saint parents Louis and Zélie, your sisters have asked Her for your health there.

**“Thank you, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus for giving me a new birth in Jesus as a true Mother”**

Nevertheless, nothing in life could have been compared to visiting you garden. For twenty minutes, Mother, I could not stop crying. From my toes to my head unstoppable feelings moved to the core of my chest turning it into an ocean of tears. St Thérèse, that moment you gave a soul to Jesus. Heaven celebrated that a lost sheep was back to the Good Shepherd. I became a victim of a pure and Divine love that had been there before.

Thank you, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus for giving me a new birth in Jesus as a true Mother.

In Sr Clare's voice, I could also humbly resemble, 'I do not ask Him why He has chosen me, I just accept it.' Accept, surrender, and follow you, God.

After that trip, you bestowed more than your love. Little Flower, in your presence of pardon and

peace you showed me Heaven. I quit addictions, was confirmed in the Catholic Church and I was professed as a Lay Carmelite. However, St Thérèse, you know how deeply I suffered even after your visit. Thanks to you, always alive in my prayers, in the name of Jesus, I experienced miracles that science could not explain. It was simply you showering down roses.

## Immense

Thank you, Little Thérèse, the Immense one of Lisieux, gift of God to Carmel, hidden Sister of all, Doctor of the Church, Patron of Missionaries, mother of a multitude, for the shower of roses to the heart of your souls. Souls that belong to the merciful love of Jesus, our Lord. Your roses from Heaven shine your endless merciful love for of sinners. These roses bestow us many reasons to live and to die for: God our Father, Jesus the only Begotten Son, Our Lady. Our Holy Catholic Church, Our Holy Martyrs and Saints, too.

Thank you, Mother, for the profound thorns piercing our bones in storms because you are modelling pure roses for our Father Almighty. You, Little Sister, guide souls through His Holy Face adoring the vivid example of Our Lord carrying His cross trusting in God, Our Father, regardless pains, humiliations, and

even facing death. The same endless Faith in the Creator that Jesus demands to everyone who love Him, especially when our soul bleeds. Therefore, every thorn makes a perfect Rose to God through your love, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus, in the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary, our Holy Mother.

**“Blessed be God for ever, and ever. Blessed be Jesus Christ, His Holy Body and Blood”**

My dear Mother, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, Love in the Heart of the Church, pray for us, all our Priests and Sisters, souls in purgatory, Missionaries, our Holy Church and beloved Carmelites, every nation in this world, the sick, the elder, the poor, unemployed, everyone suffering addictions, the hunger, and the thirsty. I bed this to you in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessed be God for ever, and ever. Blessed be Jesus Christ, His Holy Body and Blood. Blessed be the Holy Spirit. One God for ever and ever. God Bless you St Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, doing good upon the Earth, showering down roses from Heaven for ever and ever. Amen.

**“The same endless Faith in the Creator that Jesus demands to everyone who love Him, especially when our soul bleeds. Therefore, every thorn makes a perfect Rose to God through your love, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus, in the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary, our Holy Mother”**

# The lasting mission legacy of Blessed Pauline Jaricot

D.D. Emmons

In Church history, few lay people have had more positive effect on the success of Catholic worldwide missionary activities than a Frenchwoman named Pauline Jaricot. Born into an aristocratic family in 1799, she used her influence to not only help spread the Gospel but rejuvenate devotion to the rosary and highlight deplorable conditions of the working class.

More than 160 years after her death, the visionary programs Jaricot conceived still resonate and are universally observed throughout the Church. Her life of heroic virtue is exemplified by a pledge of perpetual virginity to Our Lord Jesus Christ, ultimately leading to her beatification in 2022.

As a teenager, Jaricot exhibited zealous interest in the efforts of the French Church to evangelise people in foreign nations, particularly in China.

She wanted to serve in China, but for a variety of reasons, including lifelong poor health, Jaricot never became a foreign missionary. She instead committed herself to fundraising programs that financed the spread of Christianity to places and people unaware of the Gospel.

Around age 19, this prayerful and devout young woman originated a simple yet effective fundraising promotion to support the China mission, a promotion combining prayer and almsgiving.

## Persuasion

Using her God-given grace of persuasion, Jaricot committed nine friends, plus herself, to daily praying for the French missionaries in China and to weekly contributing one 'sou' (a penny) to that cause. She then asked those friends to solicit 10 of their friends to do the same, and those 10 to ask 10 more and so on; all offered daily prayers and weekly contributions in support of the China missionaries.

She called the groups 'circles of 10'. This initiative was eventually so productive that in 1822 it was expanded to fund all for-



Bl. Pauline Jaricot

eign French missions. Jaricot's circle of 10 became known as the Society of the Propagation of the Faith and would be adopted by the worldwide Church.

In 1922, Pope Pius XI declared the Society of the Propagation of the Faith as the official fundraising society of the Church and included it as a Pontifical mission. Today, the society assists more than 1,100 Catholic dioceses and is coordinated by the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation.

All Catholics are asked to continuously pray for our Church missions.

**“15 coals: one well lighted, three or four partially so and others with no warmth at all. Bring them together and you have a furnace”**

In 1826, disheartened by the antireligious culture spawned by the French Revolution, Jaricot began

promoting the notion of a living rosary. This idea divides the rosary's 15 traditional decades among 15 different people who commit to daily praying one decade of a specific mystery. Thus, each group prays daily all the mysteries, and each person involved receives all the graces of the rosary. Those 15 people enlist 15 friends who similarly pray the rosary. Jaricot said of this eagerly received idea, “15 coals: one well lighted, three or four partially so and others with no warmth at all. Bring them together and you have a furnace.”

## Canonical

In 1832, Pope Gregory XVI gave canonical status to the Living Rosary Association.

Pauline Jaricot is also forever associated with St Philomena. In 1835, diagnosed with an incurable heart disease, Jaricot was miraculously cured through the intercession of a virgin and martyr named Philomena. Prompted by Jaricot's



well-witnessed cure and other documented miracles ascribed to Philomena, the Vatican in 1837 beatified Philomena.

**“The Church beatified Philomena based on the numerous documented miracles - the supernatural interventions attributed to her”**

This decision was made without historical evidence regarding Philomena's existence. A tomb inscribed with the name Philomena had been discovered in 1802 and believed to contain the remains of a 13- or 14-year-old second-century virgin and martyr. There were no other confirmable records of Philomena's life - no evidence of where she lived and no way to trace the kind of life she lived. The Church beatified Philomena based on the numerous documented miracles - the

supernatural interventions attributed to her.

This action led to controversy in the 20th century when questions arose as to whether Philomena ever existed. Eventually, the Church removed Philomena from all Church liturgical calendars. While the Church does not promote her, Philomena's sainthood was never formally denied and Catholics around the world remain devoted to her.

## Oppressive

The Industrial Revolution of Jaricot's era had created oppressive working conditions, low wages and poor treatment among common labourers. Jaricot attempted to finance a factory where workers would be properly paid and treated fairly. She turned her own funds and money she borrowed over to businessmen who embezzled the money and used it for their own profits. She lost everything, was unable to pay back the loans, was bankrupt and died poverty stricken in 1862.

Although the factory project failed, Jaricot's recognition of the plight of the

working class would eventually be substantiated.

**“Jaricot's cause for canonisation was opened in 1930, and in 1963 Pope John XXIII declared her venerable”**

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* ('Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor'), addressed the deplorable working conditions and wages of the working class and for the first time involved the Church in social issues.

To those who endeavour in Catholic missions or promote the rosary, Jaricot is a perpetual inspiration. Her life demonstrates what one person of love, faith and conviction can achieve for God's glory. Jaricot's cause for canonisation was opened in 1930, and in 1963 Pope John XXIII declared her venerable. She was beatified in 2022 during a Mass celebrated in Lyon, France.

**i** D.D. Emmons writes from Pennsylvania.

**“To those who endeavour in Catholic missions or promote the rosary, Jaricot is a perpetual inspiration. Her life demonstrates what one person of love, faith and conviction can achieve for God's glory”**

# ‘Rosary priest’ Irish-born Fr Peyton: ‘The family that prays together stays together’



Gerald Korson

“The family that prays together stays together” has been an international Catholic catchphrase for 80 years, a truism that is instinctively self-evident even if it admits of exceptions. Another popular slogan, “A world at prayer is a world at peace,” likewise proposes prayer as a prevention or remedy for conflict and disunity on a much larger scale.

Both axioms owe their origin to the late Fr Patrick Peyton, a priest of the Congregation of Holy Cross and longtime promoter of the family rosary. October is the month of the rosary, with the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary October 7.

Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, Fr Peyton was perhaps the best-known ‘media priest’. Fr Peyton stayed mainly behind the scenes, hosting a nationally broadcast radio program for more than 22 years and producing more than 70 films and television programs through his Family Theatre Productions, in addition to his numerous rosary rallies conducted around the globe.

## Beginnings

The man they would someday call ‘The Rosary Priest’ had his inauspicious beginnings in Carracastle, Co. Mayo, Ireland. Born in January 9, 1909, he was the sixth of what would become nine children in a poor but devout farming family. His father was asthmatic and often unable to work, so all family members did what they could to manage the farm and make ends meet. At one point, Patrick lived with a nearby family and worked on their farm. There he launched his first prayer crusade, one might say: He persuaded the father to initiate a regular family



Holy Cross Fr Peyton takes part in a broadcast for Family Theatre Productions with actors Bobby Driscoll and Rita Johnson in this undated photo. Fr Peyton, a candidate for sainthood, founded the Catholic production company in 1947. Photo: OSV/courtesy Family Theatre Productions

rosary, something that was a daily ritual in the Peyton household and would prove highly influential in Patrick’s religious formation.

“Because of the daily family rosary, my home was for me a cradle, a school, a university, a library and, most of all, a little Church”

“From my earliest memories, I saw my father with the rosary beads in his hands and my mother holding hers,” Fr Peyton would write in *All for Her*, his 1967 autobiography. “My older brothers and sisters and I knelt around them, praying. ... Because of the daily family rosary, my home was for me a cradle, a school, a university, a library and, most of all, a little Church.”

At the age of 19, Patrick and his older brother, Thomas, immigrated to the United States, joining their three older sisters who previously had made the move to Scranton, Pennsylvania, where the Peyton children

had maternal relatives. The brothers found gainful employment, but in little more than a year, both would answer the call to the priesthood and enter the seminary of the Congregation of the Holy Cross at Notre Dame, Indiana.

Two years from ordination, Patrick was stricken with tuberculosis and was given little hope for recovery. Inexplicably cured 15 months later, he credited the miracle to the intercession of Mary, to whom he had turned in prayer. By a special indult from the Vatican, Patrick was able to be ordained alongside his brother in 1941, despite the formation time lost because of the illness.

## Inspired

A mere seven months after his ordination, Fr Patrick Peyton felt inspired by God to start the Family Rosary Crusade. He was motivated in part by his sincere belief that prayer was the answer to the breakdown of the American family, and in part by his eagerness to repay Mary for restoring his health. He also believed the family Rosary would bring an end to World War II and bring special favours from Mary to America.

Over the next several years, Fr Peyton went about soliciting support and seed money for his crusade while still fulfilling his pastoral work as a Holy Cross priest. By 1943, he had a weekly 15-minute radio slot for reciting the rosary in the Albany, New York, area. In 1945, his weekly half-hour ‘Evening Time’ program was broadcast on the local ABC affiliate.

“He travelled to Hollywood and enlisted the help of Loretta Young, Ethel Barrymore, Gregory Peck, James Cagney, Maureen O’Sullivan and many other stars”

Wishing to go national, Fr Peyton secured support for ‘The Catholic Hour’ on the Mutual Broadcasting Network. The program was launched on May 13 - which was Mother’s Day, the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, and a day of thanksgiving for the end of the war in Europe, as Fr Peyton would note. The young priest had on the program Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York and beloved singer and film star Bing Crosby as a special guest, and invited the Sullivan family of Waterloo, Iowa, who had lost all five sons in the sinking of the USS Juneau, to lead the glorious mysteries of the rosary. Despite poor preparation, the show was a resounding

success.

The participation of celebrity Catholics quickly became a hallmark of Fr Peyton’s crusade. He travelled to Hollywood and enlisted the help of Loretta Young, Ethel Barrymore, Gregory Peck, James Cagney, Maureen O’Sullivan and many other stars. His shy humility was matched by his zeal and sincerity, combining for a magnetic charm. “Somehow, when Fr Peyton asked you for something, there was no way to say no,” actress Jane Wyman once said.

## Artists

“These artists of stage, screen, radio and television used the mass media to make the world a village where families of all faiths and of none could come to know that ‘the family that prays together stays together’ and that ‘a world at prayer is a world at peace,’” Fr Peyton would write in his autobiography. Human reason and wisdom would never have set the Family Rosary Crusade on the course it took in those beginning years. To Our Lord must go the credit for inspiring the best and only way to go: the mass media.

In 1947, he launched “Family Theatre of the Air,” a series of dramas extolling the value of family prayer. Response was strong and positive, and soon the program was picked up nationally and around the world. Soon there were special broadcasts on the mysteries of the rosary and feature films produced for the new

media of television. Business mogul J. Peter Grace became a major financial backer for Fr Peyton’s work and helped establish the Family Prayer Foundation to solicit major donations to support the media apostolate.

“During one span in the mid-1950s alone he spent four months conducting rallies in 59 dioceses and archdiocese in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Thailand”

From the 1950s and into the late 1960s, International Rosary Crusades were a major focus of Fr Peyton’s ministry. Securing large gathering places and aided by hundreds of volunteers in each location, he took his message to six continents and led the rosary in front of sometimes hundreds of thousands of faithful at a time. During one span in the mid-1950s alone he spent four months conducting rallies in 59 dioceses and archdiocese in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Thailand. In the United States, too, he would fill stadiums and amphitheatres with his message of Marian devotion and family prayer.

Family Theatre enjoyed resurgence in the 1980s as Fr Peyton began producing new short films on rosary mysteries and persuaded Princess Grace of Monaco to participate in three of them. He revived rosary crusades overseas, praying with some 2 million people at a 1985 rally in the Philippines. Back home, billboards and booklets promoted family prayer and Marian intercession.

His health was in decline even as he announced a campaign to collect a million rosaries for the people of Russia. He died June 3, 1992, at the age of 83 and is buried in Easton, Massachusetts. Fr Peyton’s cause for canonisation was opened in 2001. Pope Francis declared him venerable in December 2017.

Today, 32 years after his death, his legacy of promoting prayer and the rosary continues through Holy Cross Family Ministries, which offers prayer events, formation ministries and family-focused media.

✎ Gerald Korson writes from Indiana.

“Securing large gathering places and aided by hundreds of volunteers in each location, he took his message to six continents and led the rosary in front of sometimes hundreds of thousands of faithful at a time”

# Human dignity and the digital explosion



Sr Hosea Rupprecht

Think for just a moment about the pace at which digital technology has grown over the past 20 years. Saying 'fast' would be a bit of an understatement. Most of the time, the expansion and innovations of the digital culture leave our heads spinning. Now, with generative artificial intelligence, or AI, there's more digital power in our hands than ever before. What is a person of Faith to do before the enormity of AI and all the other digital technologies we have in our hands? Trust in God and make sure to keep the human person at the centre for all our digital interactions.

Here's five things to keep in mind as we navigate the digital ocean in which we all swim, trying our best to stay faithful to God's plan.

1. Don't be afraid of new technologies.

St John Paul II's last official document, *The Rapid Development*, was all about the media and its growing power in our world. Here's what he said, "Do not be afraid of new technologies! These rank among the marvellous things which God has placed at our disposal to discover, to use and to make known the truth, also the truth about our dignity and about our destiny as his children, heirs of his eternal Kingdom."

## Applicability

Technology has come a long way since St John Paul II wrote these words, but their applicability remains true. Do not be afraid of AI, of social media, of whatever the digital world throws our way. God has placed them at our disposal to use to proclaim his kingdom.

2. Human dignity should stay at the centre.

The Church has already given us a way to make sure that we remain the masters of technology and that it doesn't master us: Catho-



lic social teaching. If we make a conscious effort to live the seven themes of this teaching as we engage with others through digital means, then making sure the dignity of the human person is respected will be the outcome.

**“Algorithms must not be allowed to determine how we understand human rights, to set aside the essential human values of compassion, mercy, and forgiveness”**

Catholic social teaching asks us to keep in mind: 1. The rights and responsibilities of all; 2. The dignity of the human person;

3. Care for the poor; 4. Family and community; 5.

**“Wisdom, a gift of the Holy Spirit, enables us to look at things with God's eyes, to see connections, situations, events and to uncover their real meaning... Such wisdom cannot be sought from machines...”**

The dignity and rights of workers; 6. Solidarity; 7. Care for God's creation.

## Dignity

Pope Francis, in the 2024 World Day of Peace message says, "Fundamental respect for human dignity demands that we refuse to allow the uniqueness of the person to be identified with a set of data. Algorithms must not be allowed to determine how we understand human rights, to set aside the essential human values of compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, or to eliminate the possibility of an individual changing and leaving his or her past behind."

The February 2020 'Rome Call for AI Ethics', which has been signed by IBM, Microsoft, the Italian government and many religious leaders, has introduced the term 'algorithics' and gives principles for ensuring that AI systems remain focused on the

common good of all people.

3. Practice digital authenticity.

**“If our digital life is out of balance, other relationships will be as well - including our relationship with God”**

As much as we might think that it's only teenagers that need to lay off their devices at times, we adults could always use that reminder, too. Modelling good digital behaviour is so important, especially for parents. Being digitally authentic means being true to your values as a follower of Jesus, even when choosing and interacting with technology in all its forms.

To practice authenticity and integrity in the digital realm

every limit through technology, in an obsessive desire to control everything, we risk losing control over ourselves... Recognising and accepting our limits as creatures is an indispensable condition for reaching, or better, welcoming fulfilment as a gift."

5. Call on God's wisdom.

As we are faced daily with the digital explosion and the consequences of being immersed in a digital culture, we need to acknowledge the fact that we don't have all the answers, as much as we might like to think we do. We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's gift of wisdom in order to make sure that the human person remains as the focus of all our digital and technological interactions.

**“Machines possess a limitlessly greater capacity than human beings for storing and correlating data, but human beings alone are capable of making sense of that data”**

In the 2024 World Communications Day Message, Pope Francis insists that people call on God's wisdom when designing or working with AI and digital technology. He says, "Wisdom, a gift of the Holy Spirit, enables us to look at things with God's eyes, to see connections, situations, events and to uncover their real meaning... Such wisdom cannot be sought from machines... No doubt, machines possess a limitlessly greater capacity than human beings for storing and correlating data, but human beings alone are capable of making sense of that data."

So, next time you feel like pitching your (or your teen's) digital devices off a bridge into the rushing waters below, make a commitment to keep the human person at the centre of all your digital interactions, embrace your imperfections, and let St John Paul II remind you: do not be afraid.

**📍 Sr Hosea Rupprecht, a Daughter of St Paul, is the associate director of the Pauline Centre for Media Studies.**

takes effort. We need discipline and balance in our digital lives. If our digital life is out of balance, other relationships will be as well - including our relationship with God. We need to take responsibility for the way in which we use digital technology. Bringing the Holy Spirit into our decisions via prayerful discernment will surely give us a leg up in this regard. And don't forget silence, that seemingly elusive state which is necessary to find and encourage so we have the head and heart space to listen to God's promptings in our lives.

4. It's OK to be imperfect.

As much as we might love the phrase 'nobody's perfect', imperfection is something that our society doesn't tolerate well. In the employment world, if you don't do your job perfectly, you get fired. The rise of AI means that jobs can be done faster and more accurately than people can do them. How can we influence society to have a better attitude toward imperfection? By embracing our own imperfections and being patient with those of others. After all, if we were perfect, we wouldn't need Jesus to save us.

## Mortal

In the same World Day of Peace message quoted above, Pope Francis said, "Human beings are, by definition, mortal; by proposing to overcome

# Deer in the dusky evening



Effie Caldarola

**O**n a dusky fall evening, I take a walk down a familiar neighbourhood street. Ahead of me, a small deer looks my way at the same moment I spot him. Freezing, I realise he's being followed by seven companions. They dash across the street and disappear into a backyard.

I gaze into the yard, where I see a maze of fences. But I suppose deer can easily jump them.

The encounter brings thoughts of the juxtaposition of our natural environment and the challenges it faces. When I check the local weather, I note how often the day is above normal for warmth. Today, as I write this, it's four degrees above the average daily high. We face melting glaciers, coastal flooding (even when it hasn't been raining), landslides, fires, brutal heat waves.

## Beautiful

My town, with walking trails through a beautiful park, is a lovely place. But a major freeway borders one side of town. To disguise this, an embankment was built, and trees were planted. If you gaze down a dead-end street in that part of town, you see lovely homes, a bucolic setting of grasses, trees

and, yes, deer. But listening, you hear the continual rumble of fast-moving traffic. It's the sound of our dependence on fossil fuel, a nagging reminder of our environmental challenge.

We long for technological answers, and, hopefully, some will be forthcoming. But at heart, does not our fate rest on our personal commitment to living a more sustainable and simpler lifestyle?

**“The dangerous individualism that we Americans cultivate sometimes makes us forget the poor and the earth itself in our quest for economic growth, success and more ‘stuff’”**

Addressing an environmental conference in 2021, Cardinal Blase Cupich of the Archdiocese of Chicago said, “I am convinced that it is useless to talk about advancing a culture of life absent a vigorous commitment - both by individuals and communities - to making the sacrifices required for improving the socioeconomic, ecological and political crises of our time.”

This includes a commitment by churches and Church leadership. Cardinal Cupich announced in 2023 that the Chicago Archdiocese, including its nearly 400 parishes, schools, and offices, is shifting its entire electricity purchase to 100% renewable in 2024.

In 2015, Pope Francis gave the world his first environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si, on Care*

*for Our Common Home*. It's a beautiful, thought-provoking call to end the greed and consumerism that threaten our mother Earth. In it, he quotes from other popes, John XXIII, Paul VI, Benedict XVI who also warned of the dangers to the earth, to the poor and to our children from our unbridled consumption. The dangerous individualism that we Americans cultivate sometimes makes us forget the poor and the earth itself in our quest for economic growth, success and more “stuff.” Are we challenged on this issue from the pulpit?

## Burdened

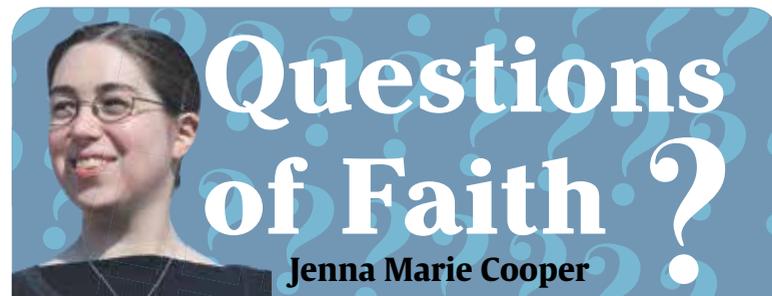
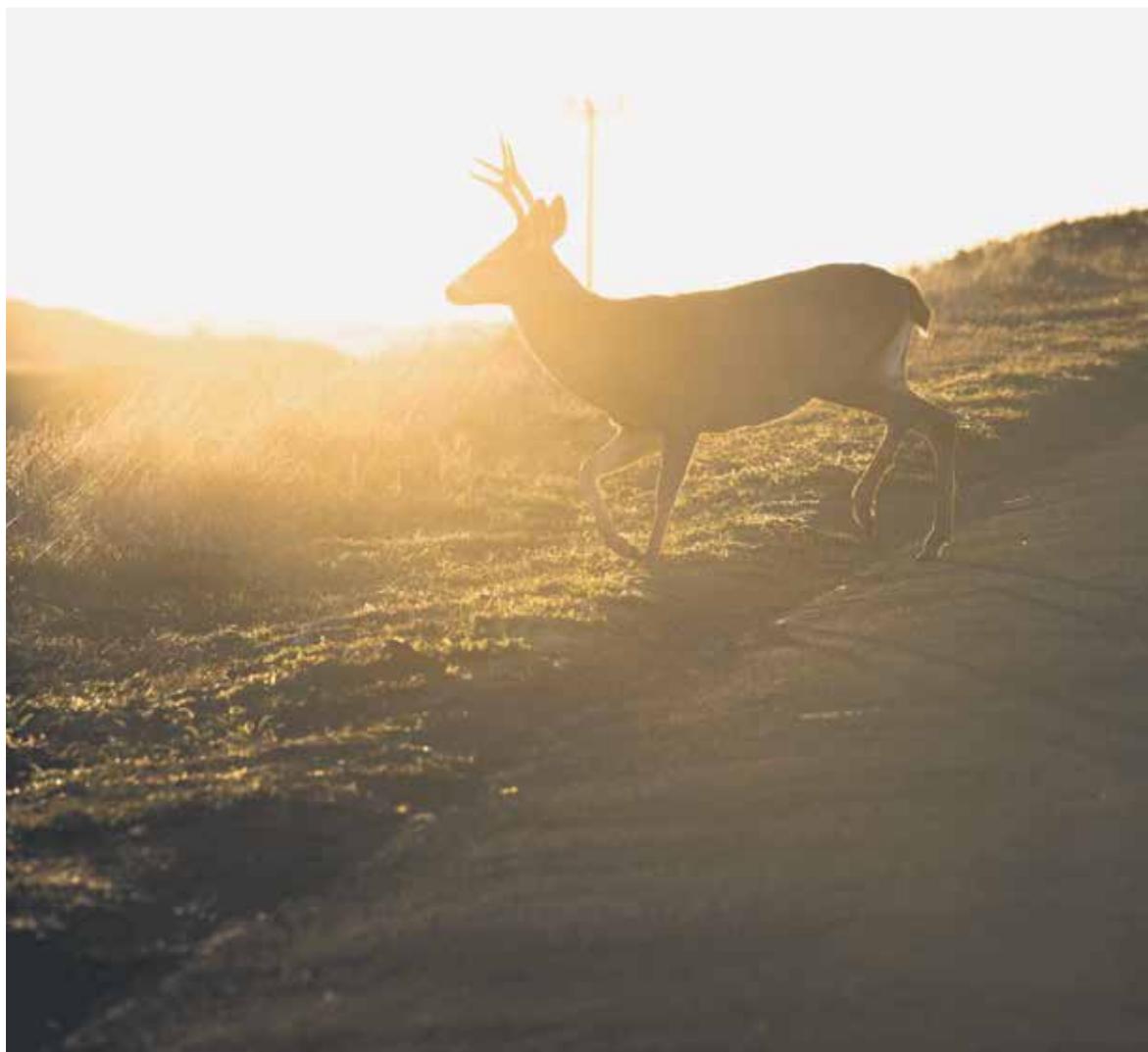
“This is why the Earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor,” writes Francis.

Pope Francis chose his name as pontiff from St Francis of Assisi, and in the introduction to *Laudato Si*, he quotes from the Canticle of the Creatures given us by this saint: “Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. ‘Praise be to you, my Lord, through our sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us ...’”

Viewed in this light, our buying habits, our consumerism and our wastefulness become moral choices.

May we pray to St Francis for the freedom of simplicity and a renewed commitment to our mother Earth.

**i** Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother who received her master's degree in pastoral studies from Seattle University.



Jenna Marie Cooper

## Why did God send Lucifer down to Earth?

**Q: Why did God send Lucifer down to Earth to live and rule amongst his beloved creations?**

**A:** I don't think we can say that God truly sent the devil - also known as Lucifer, or later as Satan - down to Earth in quite the way your question envisions. While the devil was cast out of God's direct presence in Heaven, this did not happen because God actively wanted Satan to have sway over his creatures.

We can read a poetic description of Lucifer being forced out of Heaven in the Book of Revelation:

“Then war broke out in Heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in Heaven. The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to Earth, and its angels were thrown down with it” (Rv 12:7-9).

In St Luke's Gospel, it seems that Jesus himself makes a brief and somewhat mysterious reference to this same event when he says to his disciples: “...I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky” (Luke 10:18).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church fills in some of the more technical details of how to understand this bit of celestial pre-history, noting that “the Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing. Scripture speaks of a sin of these angels. This ‘fall’ consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably rejected God and his reign” (CCC 391-392).

In other words, Lucifer was created by God as a good angel, meant to fulfil a properly angelic mission of praising God's glory and communicating God's word. But Lucifer, despite having perfect freedom and insight, nevertheless chose to reject God's plan, and convinced many other angels to do likewise. These

angels' fall from Heaven was the natural consequence of their own free decisions to separate themselves from God; it was certainly not, as the Catechism puts it: “a defect in the infinite divine mercy” (CCC 393). Their fall was also not any kind of backwards evil divine mission, which is why it would not be accurate to describe the devil and the bad angels as being “sent to Earth” by God.

That said, here are a few passages in the Gospel which suggest that Satan is the “ruler of this world.” For example, prior to Jesus beginning his public ministry, Satan tempted Jesus in the desert by offering Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world” if Jesus would bow down and worship him (See Luke 4:5-7). However, the idea that Satan is the ‘ruler’ or ‘prince’ of this world only means that Satan has some command over the passing things of this present life and is thus able to tempt us with the ‘empty promises’ we renounce at our baptism. It does not mean that Satan has any true power over God's cosmic ordering of the universe, time and history.

The Catechism echoes this point when it tells us: “The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign” (CCC 395).

And when Jesus refers to the worldly reign of Satan in the Gospel of John, he does so only to indicate that this reign will soon be destroyed. Looking ahead to his imminent passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus states: “Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the Earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (Jn 12:31-32).

**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.

# Our unfinished symphony

**“I**n the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable we come to understand that here, in this life, all symphonies remain unfinished.”

Karl Rahner wrote those words and to not understand them is to risk letting restlessness become a cancer in our lives. What does it mean to be tormented by the insufficiency of everything attainable? How are we tortured by what we cannot have?

We all experience this daily. In fact, for all but a few privileged, peaceful times in our lives, this torment is like an undertow in everything we experience. Beauty makes us restless when it should give us peace. The love we experience with our spouse does not fulfil our longings. The relationships we have within our families seem too petty and domestic to be fulfilling. Our job is inadequate to the dream we have for ourselves. The place where we live seems boring in comparison to other places. We are too restless to sit peacefully at our own tables, sleep peacefully in our own beds, and be at ease in our own skins.

## Waiting

When we feel this way, our lives will forever seem too small for us and we live them in such a way that we are always waiting, waiting for something or somebody to come along and change things so that real life, as we imagine it, might begin.

I remember a story a man once shared with me. He was forty-five years old, had a good marriage, was



Fr Rolheiser

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

the father of three healthy children, had a secure, if unexciting job, and lived in a peaceful, if equally unexciting neighborhood. Yet, to use his words, he was never fully inside of his own life. Here's his confession:

**“I'm always at some other place inside of myself, too restless to really be where I'm at, too restless to live in my own house, too restless to be inside of my own skin”**

“For most of my life, and especially for the past twenty years,

**“Here, in this world, there is no such a thing as a clear-cut, pure joy. Rather, in every satisfaction, there is an awareness of limitations. Behind every smile, there is a tear. In every embrace, there is loneliness. In every friendship, distance”**

I have been too restless to really live my own life. I have never really accepted what I am – a forty-five-year-old man, working in a grocery store in a small town, married to a good woman, aware that my marriage will never fulfil my deep sexual yearnings, and aware that, despite all my daydreaming, I'm not going anywhere, I will never fulfill my dreams, I will only be here, as I am now, in this small town, in this particular marriage, with these people, in this body, for the rest of my life. I will only grow older, balder, and physically less healthy and attractive. But what's sad in all of this is that, from every indication, I have a good life. I'm lucky really. I'm healthy, loved, secure,

in a good marriage, living in a country of peace and plenty. Yet, inside of myself I'm too restless to ever fully appreciate my own life, my wife, my kids, my job, and the place where I live. I'm always at some other place inside of myself, too restless to really be where I'm at, too restless to live in my own house, too restless to be inside of my own skin.”

**“We are infinite spirits living inside a finite world, hearts made for union with everything and everybody but meeting only mortal persons and mortal things”**

That is what the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable feels like in actual life. But Rahner's insight is more than diagnostic, it is prescriptive too. It points out how we might move beyond that torment, beyond the cancer of restlessness. How do we do that?

Precisely by understanding and accepting that here in this life all symphonies remain unfinished. By understanding and accepting that the reason we are tormented is not because we are over-sexed, neurotic, ungrateful persons who are too greedy to be satisfied with this life. Not that. The deep reason is that we are congenitally over-charged and over-built for this Earth. Built that way by God. We

are infinite spirits living inside a finite world, hearts made for union with everything and everybody but meeting only mortal persons and mortal things. Small wonder we have problems with insatiability, daydreams, loneliness, and restlessness! We are Grand Canyons without a bottom. Nothing, short of union with all that is, can ever fill that void.

## Restlessness

To be tormented by restlessness is to be human. Moreover, in accepting that we are human and that therefore, for us, there can be no finished symphony this side of eternity, we can become more easeful in our restlessness. Why? Because we now know that everything comes to us with an undertow of restlessness and inadequacy, and that this is normal and true for everyone.

As Henri Nouwen once put it: “Here, in this world, there is no such a thing as a clear-cut, pure joy. Rather, in every satisfaction, there is an awareness of limitations. Behind every smile, there is a tear. In every embrace, there is loneliness. In every friendship, distance.”

Peace and restfulness can come to us only when we accept that limitation within the human condition because it is only then that we will stop demanding that life – our spouses, our families, our friends, our jobs, our vocations and vacations – give us something that they cannot give, namely, clear-cut pure joy, full consumption.

# What must I do to inherit eternal life?



Jesus and the rich young ruler, Heinrich Karl Hofmann (1824-1911)

Wis 7:7-11  
Ps 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17  
Heb 4:12-13  
Mk 10:17-30 or 10:17-27

**T**hink it's easy to gain eternal life? Think again. That message lies at the heart of this Sunday's Gospel, the familiar story from St Mark about a rich young man who approached Jesus with a sincere question - but who got an answer he didn't expect or, frankly, want.

Getting into Heaven, it turns out, involves more than just being good and following rules. It involves a kind of complete surrender - and for the rich young man, it was more than he bargained on.

"You are lacking in one thing," Jesus told him. "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in Heaven; then come, follow me."

That's hard enough for someone young and rich with many possessions; but what

## The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



about the rest of us? Christ's message here goes beyond money and wealth. It is not only about the things we possess, but about the things that possess us.

"Children," Jesus explained, "how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!" Only after he said that did Jesus qualify it to refer explicitly to someone with great wealth. The fact remains: salvation doesn't come easily, no matter what your circumstances in life.

### Provocative

Confronted with this provocative episode, it's worth asking ourselves: what are the things we own - or that own us - that make it hard for us to enter the kingdom of Heaven? What is holding us back or weighing us down?

For some, of course, it might be material wealth. But for others, it may be harder to name. Are we being held back by fear? Are we anxious or unable to place our trust in God? Are we too attached to our own sins - pride, greed, pettiness, bigotry, anger?

**“Among our possessions, do we think at all about our capacity to love God and serve one another?”**

Do we measure our lives by what we get, win, achieve, earn - rather than by what we

sacrifice or give for others?

Among our possessions, do we think at all about our capacity to love God and serve one another?

It's notable that when Jesus addressed the rich young man, he didn't ask him to simply do away with worldly things; no, he commanded him to do something else, to sacrifice for others in a very particular way. Here, as he did so often, Jesus was showing his compassion and preferential option for the poor.

### Poverty

It's also worth remembering that there are many kinds of poverty and many types of need. How do we try to

address those needs in our own world? What about those who need consolation, or empathy, or prayer? Do we strive in our own lives to help those who are poor in self-esteem or hungry for dignity? Do we try to defend the defenceless or help the helpless?

A lot of us are wealthy in ways that have nothing to do with material possessions or money. We may have loving families, supportive spouses, a sense of peace and self-worth that might elude some of our neighbours. Do we open our arms and our hearts to those who feel cut off, marginalised, alone, lost?

Here and elsewhere, Jesus

showed that gaining the kingdom of Heaven requires more than simple piety and faithful obedience. It demands a sense of charity and surrender - not just giving what we own but giving who we are. It demands, in a real sense, to be like Christ.

Are we ready to do that?

### Matters

Among other things, the scriptures this Sunday call on us to remember what really matters. The first reading, from Wisdom, compares gold to sand and silver to mire. Wisdom and prudence are what have the most value.

Likewise, in Christ's teaching, generosity, sacrifice and charity are priceless. They point the way to eternal life, and this invaluable lesson: we are saved not by what we get, but by what we give - and how we love.

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

**“Jesus showed that gaining the kingdom of Heaven requires more than simple piety and faithful obedience. It demands a sense of charity and surrender - not just giving what we own but giving who we are. It demands, in a real sense, to be like Christ”**

# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Debating the hot button issues

The battle between good and evil is a reality in life and a staple source of plots in fiction.

The struggle is particularly prominent on the *Lord of the Rings* universe. The second season of the spin-off *Rings of Power* (Amazon Prime, Thursday) came to an end last week. I stuck it out to the end though much of it was talky and turgid, with interweaving plotlines that didn't integrate very well. They did pick up the pace in the last two episodes, with some dramatic battle scenes, though I thought the violence was unnecessarily gruesome. There were religious resonances, with themes of temptation, greed, pride and corruption particularly prominent towards the end. We were left in no doubt as to the corrosive and destructive nature of such negative traits. One scene was reminiscent of the gruesome martyrdom of St Sebastian (death by many arrows), while another was a rather obvious variation of the crucifixion moment when the side of Jesus was pierced by a lance. There were a few false finishes before they finally let go, with a tying up of loose ends, but leaving enough of those to have options open



Danny Kruger MP

for a third series.

There was more moral ambiguity, not as clear a delineation between good and evil, in *Nightsleeper* (BBC One) which I reviewed last week after five episodes. It finished on Monday of last week and the last episode, while it was exciting enough, didn't serve to make my overall assessment less negative. It was noteworthy however that in the height of the crisis on the hijacked train that people started to pray – a natural reaction in a life-threatening crisis, but one that rarely fea-

tures in TV drama or in the movies. The prayers were led by the gay porter!

No doubt some (including Irish media commentators) would see the US presidential campaign as a battle between good and evil. The *US Vice Presidential Debate* (Sky News, Wednesday) was much anticipated, and in the line of duty I watched it all and actually enjoyed it. It was cordial and respectful, with Tim Walz and JD Vance debating policy, listening to each other and actually agreeing with each other at times. The ugly

polarisation of US politics was muted and the debate was all the better for it. Where there was any harsh criticism, it was mostly the participants attacking the other's running mate - Walz attacking Trump and Vance attacking Harris. Biden hardly got a mention.

The abortion issue figured large, with Walz reluctant (as Kamala Harris was in the presidential debate) to be clear on what if any restrictions he'd place on abortion. Vance said he wanted to protect innocent human life and concentrated on what supports could be put in place to ensure that women wouldn't feel they had no choice but to have an abortion.

Another right-to-life issue, 'assisted dying', became prominent in the UK with a new private member's bill being launched. On *Sky News* (Thursday) Danny Kruger MP (Conservative) was concerned about the development, wary of this move towards what he called 'artificial death'. There was also a disability campaigner who feared the pressure that would come on the disabled. Proponents also featured, but generally the debate on the matter was more thorough and more balanced than we get over here. On *Times Radio Breakfast*

### PICK OF THE WEEK

**FILM: TWELVE ANGRY MEN**  
RTE One Saturday October 12, 4pm

(1957) A dissenting juror (Henry Fonda) in a murder trial slowly manages to convince the others that the case is not as obviously clear as it seemed in court. Justice theme is central.

**SUNDAY**

**BBC Radio 4 Sunday October 13, 7am**

In-depth coverage of topical religious and ethical issues.

**I AM WITH YOU- A DOCUMENTARY ON CARLO ACUTIS**  
EWTN Tuesday October 15, 11.30pm

Filmed on location in Italy, this EWTN original documentary chronicles the life and witness of Blessed Carlo Acutis. It features photos, interviews and recollections with family, friends and others who knew him.

(Friday) there was a sensible and balanced debate, with presenter Chloe Tilly asking lots of challenging questions of a supporter of assisted dying, Lord Falconer. These questions must be asked more consistently over here, before it's too late.

Finally, on *Lunchtime Live* (Newstalk, Tuesday) the question of godparents was discussed – did godparents need to be religious? Yes, I thought, duh! But not all callers thought so. Some fellow called Brendan rang in to provide useful information on what the Catholic Church taught – quoting from the

Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Code of Canon Law, primary sources I would have thought. He did understand also that issues can arise in families, and people wouldn't want to offend – though this would be a poor reason to choose a person with no faith for the role. One woman referenced the idea of a 'guidemother', implying presumably a complementary 'guidefather'. This, it seems, is the way people are approaching it in an increasingly secular context. It just shows that the original religious concept makes sense on a human level.

# Music

Pat O'Kelly



## Wexford's 73rd Opera Festival

October and eyes and ears turn to Wexford where the town's seventy-third Opera Festival runs from October 18 until November 2. Now, one might be forgiven in thinking the most often performed composers in Wexford might be either Verdi or Puccini but, in fact, the honours fall on Gaetano Donizetti. Born in Bergamo in 1797, he died there in 1848.

The first Donizetti opera at Wexford was *L'elisir d'amore* in 1952 and since then sixteen others of his operas have been staged in Wexford with *Don Pasquale* enjoying two productions – 1953 and 1963 – the only opera to experience that distinction at Wexford.

For all that, another Donizetti work – *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali*

(Conventions and Inconveniences of the Stage) – is the festival's opening work on October 18. Since its inception Wexford's policy has been the revival of neglected or forgotten operas and this undoubtedly is the case with *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali*.

Here the conventions of the title relate to the rules relating to the ranking of singers in 19th century Italian operas and the number of scenes and arias they might be entitled to expect. Maybe with such a subject the opera had little chance of success.

Originally Donizetti conceived the piece in one act but following its first performance in Naples added further scenes and arias with the final two-act version produced in Milan in

1831. Despite that the opera enjoyed little success and fell from the repertoire relatively quickly.

A BBC broadcast in 1969 revived some interest but its first staging in the UK waited until 1976. Monte Carlo Opera tried its hand with it in 2004 and *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali* reached La Scala in 2009. It has since been produced in Prague and at the Buxton International

Festival in 2022.

In Wexford Danila Grassi will conduct the opera in Orpha Phelan's staging. I am intrigued by some of the characters' sources of income with one being described as bowel ripper, another rooster slaughterer and another cat castrator. But this is opera after all.

Wexford's second presentation this year comes closer to home with Charles Villiers

Stanford's *The Critic*, which is loosely based on the play by Richard Brindley Sheridan. The production by Conan Hanratty commemorates the centenary of Stanford's death in 1924. *The Critic*, first seen in London's Shaftsbury Theatre in 1916, has a convoluted plot but, as I mentioned earlier, this is opera.

Wexford's final 2024 offering is Pietro Mascagni's *Le maschere* (The Masks). The

opera is Mascagni's homage to Rossini and, very remarkably, was premiered simultaneously in six Italian opera houses – La Scala, Milan conducted by Toscanini, Genoa, Turin, Rome with the composer conducting, Venice and Verona on January 17, 1901. Naples waited another two days for its premiere there.

However, the opera was not well received with the Genoa performance suspended halfway through due to the audience's vociferous expressions of displeasure. Mascagni made a number of revisions but without any lasting success.

No doubt Wexford will rise to the challenge when directed by Stefano Ricci and with Francesco Cilluffo conducting.

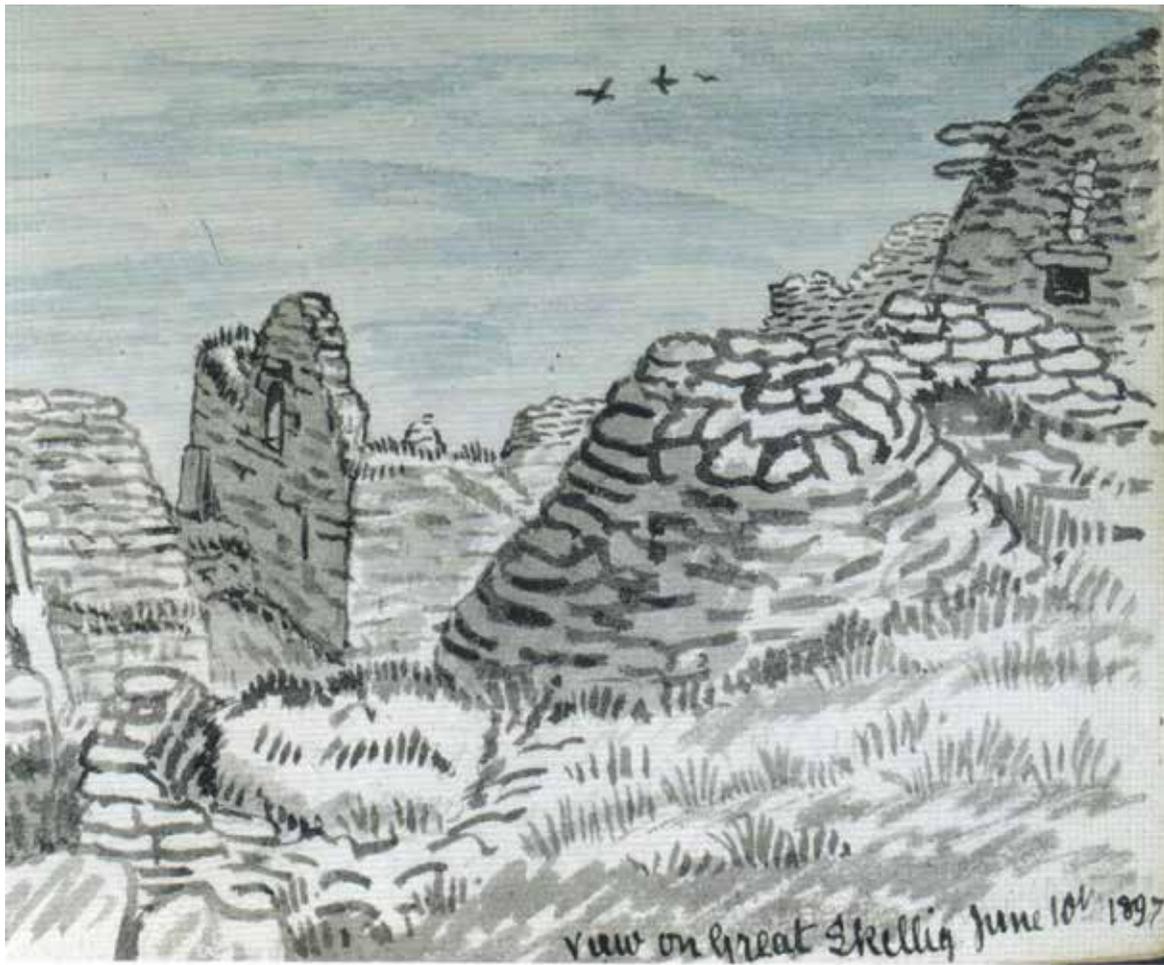


# BookReviews

Peter Costello



## Revealing light on Medieval Irish monasticism



The monastic cells on Great Skellig, drawn by Thomas J. Westropp RIA, on June 10, 1897

**Monasticism in Ireland AD 900-1250,**  
by Edel Bhreathnach  
(Four Courts Press, €45 / £51.50)

Catherine Swift

This volume arises from the *Monastic Ireland* project begun in 2011 and is a follow-up to *Monastic Europe* (Brepols, 2019), edited by the author. It provides an extremely wide-ranging overview of academic developments in the almost hundred years since John Ryan's seminal work: *Irish monasticism: origins and early development* (Talbot Press, 1931).

Ryan's stated purpose was not to supply conclusions, but to stimulate scholarly interest in early Irish ecclesiastical history. This book has a similar aim: the author refers throughout to the fact that she is providing an illustrative selection of the evidence and to the need for further debates on particular questions.

The book is divided into nine chapters, each covering around fifty pages, with a focus on the ninth to twelfth centuries. Unlike Ryan, Bhreathnach is uninterested in pinpointing origins, and the definition of monasticism used is intentionally broad: a community or solitaries living a committed religious life under the direction of a

superior, often within a separate area on larger church settlements.

**“The book breaks new ground in, among other matters, its very extensive use of Middle Irish poetry and in highlighting the diversity of terms used in this era for monastic personnel”**

They were distinguished by dedication to constant prayer, penitential exercises, celebrating canonical hours and following a liturgical calendar. Humility and obedience were central to their lives, but permanent chastity was less so (p. xi-xii).

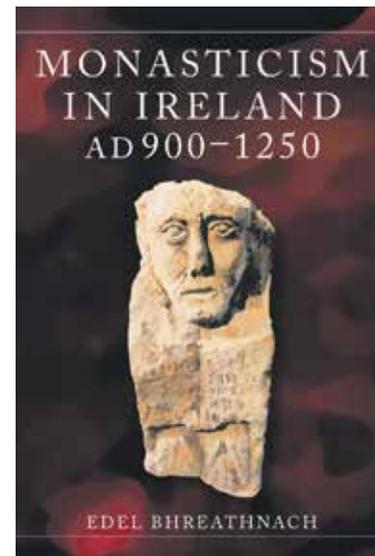
Key to the discussion is the extent to which Ireland shared in a rich and diverse group of Christian 'monasti-

cisms'. The very diverse texts written in Irish provide a vivid counterpoint to descriptions of the latter and lead to the conclusion that, while the substantive Christian beliefs and values were held in common with the contemporary universal Church, cultural forms observable in documentation and material remains have tended to highlight Irish distinctiveness.

### Diversity

The book breaks new ground in, among other matters, its very extensive use of Middle Irish poetry and in highlighting the diversity of terms used in this era for monastic personnel. These include the replacement of older words for superiors with phrases based on *cenn* and *toisech* (modern *Taoiseach*); the use of *sámud* for the wider church community, especially where it engaged in temporal matters and the identification of the adjective *cráibdech* (meaning pious

**“The vast and diverse amount of detail means that everyone reading this book will find new insights. While no single author can cover modern scholarship in its entirety, the bibliography is extremely impressive”**



or devout) with a learned monastic élite who may have held supervisory positions over the committed religious of Ireland.

Divisions between spiritual and worldly affairs - what Liam Breatnach terms the *gráda ecalsa* and the *gráda uird ecalsa*, “grades of office of the church” - are seen as the concerns of separate groups.

**“Remarks on Skellig Michael are emblematic of changes in perspective. Instead of lives lived in isolation, the emphasis is on height, of leaning towards heaven and creating a New Jerusalem”**

It is worth noting that Augustine argued somewhat differently, suggesting that a life lived without service to others could be viewed as potentially self-indulgent although the Rule of the Master, as pointed out here (p.202), advises against spiritual men involving themselves in worldly affairs. In this, as in so much else in this volume, there is much for readers to ponder and debate.

The task of sustaining a shared ideal is compared to contemporary evidence for bonds uniting kinship groups, warrior brotherhoods and specialised professions. It is repeatedly stressed that the Rule of Benedict, as the dominant medieval rule in the

Latin west, was still being formalised in this period and so did not provide a universal blueprint.

Given the harsh tone of much discourse today, it is perhaps worth stressing that the Irish Rule of Ailbhe lays stress on compassion and leniency to those who transgress and that, while some texts refer to ascetic practices such as fasting and even flagellation, others stress a stable existence, self-criticism, prayer and, for at least some, reading, learning and pondering the Scriptures as key tools in combating Cassian's eight deadly sins.

Since the advent of digital scanning and the *Irish Script on Screen* project, manuscript studies have grown substantially and this book graphically illustrates the value of the new insights.

### Emblematic

Remarks on Skellig Michael are emblematic of changes in perspective. Instead of lives lived in isolation, the emphasis is on height, of leaning towards heaven and creating a New Jerusalem (p.268). Michael the Archangel was the role model for the monk as *miles Christi* and archaeological investigations show its inhabitants, like other armies, were largely dependent on foodstuffs provided by others and brought from the mainland (p.249).

Though the author states that it was inhabited ‘probably continuously’ in this era (p.306), the relatively busy community demonstrated by the existence of various monuments, may, in fact, have been largely limited to a summer season bringing pilgrims and people on retreat (p.375).

The vast and diverse amount of detail means that everyone reading this book will find new insights. While no single author can cover modern scholarship in its entirety, the bibliography is extremely impressive.

The book is a worthy successor to John Ryan's work and one which, like his, is likely to become a key reference for at least another three generations.

Dr Catherine Swift lectures at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

### Note by the Books Editor

The art work on the book's jacket is worth more than a glance. It is by theatrical artist and designer Rosie Mears. She has painted the medieval sculptured image in warm colours rather than cold gray tones, so giving it a most lifelike appearance, as if it were the portrait of a living monk of medieval times; a reminder that the monks we often talk about so airily were once human beings like us.

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.

## Rathfarnham Castle revisited

Another in a series of reviews of heritage sites for family visiting

**Rathfarnham Castle Guidebook,**  
by Jane Fenlon and  
others  
(OPW, €5.00)

**Peter Costello**

**T**here must be thousands of living Dubliners who have memories of Rathfarnham Castle as it was back in the last century under the auspices of the Jesuits, when it was a noted Jesuit seminary and retreat centre.

The Jesuits, who had taken over the estate in 1913, put it on the market in 1986. There was a local outcry that the ancient mansion might be swept away by development. The Castle was declared an Ancient Monument and passed into the care of the Office of Public Works. The extensive grounds were taken into the care of the South Dublin Council as a public park.

At the castle the Jesuits House of Studies and the retreat centre were demolished, and a programme to restore the castle to something like its former style was begun. This programme continues; restoration takes time. But what is to be seen is well worth a visit. The official guide book, aside from being most informative, is really good value at the price.

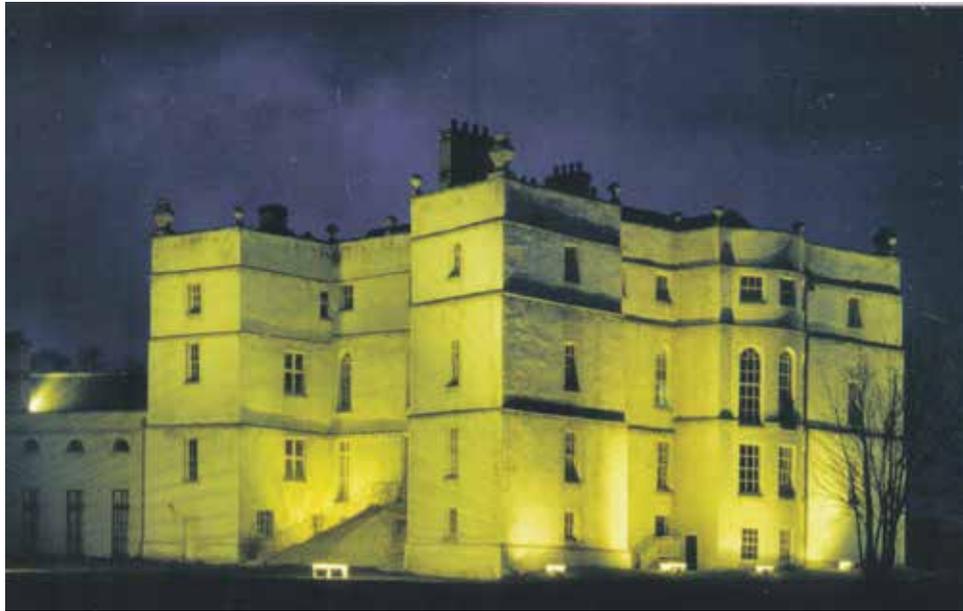
### Presence

The Jesuit presence is not quite forgotten. Visitors interested in that period can ask at the reception desk where tickets are issued for an album of photos and recollections that recalls those days. Many familiar names, of which Blessed John Sullivan, who was rector there for a time, would be the best known.

Retreatants of old will not be surprised that prominent in the memories of others of that clan is the memory of the food served, which was a further penitential exercise for some.

The history of the castle is complicated. It seems that the site was originally fortified at the time of the Norman invasion, to help keep at bay those warlike clans in the mountain to the south.

After the Desmond rebel-



The almost ghostly presence of Rathfarnham Castle at night, haunted by its past (photo courtesy of the OPW)

lion in 1583 the lands were confiscated by the Crown, and passed into the ownership of Adam Loftus, who was the chaplain of the Lord Deputy, Lord Sussex, who was to become Anglican archbishop of Dublin and Chancellor in 1581.

**“In the saloon the original panels which originally showed the scenes from *The Odyssey of Ulysses and Calypso*; these were replaced by the Jesuits with a series on the life of Christ painted by Patrick Tuohy”**

The castle we see today was erected in 1583. It is not an actual castle in the old medieval sense, but rather a fortified house. And as a house was fitted out in great luxury, the surviving remnants of which can be seen today in the public rooms. The castle changed hands in the Parliamentary wars.

However, in 1767 it was sold by one of the Loftus family to the notorious Speaker Connolly, but he rightly proffered his great house at Castletown. The Loftus family returned, and the house was once again

an epitome of fine style. But it slowly decayed and was said to be abandoned by the end of the century. It then became the property of the Blackburne family who brought it up to date with such useful conveniences as bathrooms. The Blackburnes sold it to the Jesuits in 1913, and its more familiar period began.

### Restoration

What visitors can see today though still in the process of restoration is of great interest. One enters through the basement where the kitchen and the servants quarters would have been, as well as the wine cellar. This is severely practical: on the day we visited, it housed a display of avant garde modern glass making.

Above this on the first floor are the entrance hall, the Saloon and the Dining room. A relic of the old fence system can be seen in the two towers where windows overlook the space between them for the convenience of gunners.

In the saloon the original panels which originally showed the scenes from *The Odyssey of Ulysses and Calypso*; these were replaced by the Jesuits with a series on the life of Christ painted by Patrick Tuohy. These must now be the most extensive display of his art in Ireland, and have in themselves become an important element in the pre-

sent day decor.

On the second floor the most important room in the castle, the Gallery / Ballroom, which the Jesuits had used as a chapel was closed for the day on our visit, but this represents the peak of the decoration.

There are lessons here for everyone. For the history of the place is something of an epitome of the changing nature of Irish society since the days of Elizabeth I. Great care is going into the full realisation of the restoration in another decade or so.

Yet there will be many visitors - among many who came here once to use the library that the Jesuits had here, and to take part in retreats. Back in 1913 it was full of ongoing enterprise for the Catholic religion; now all that has vanished.

On the afternoon of our visit the grounds were being used by families and dog walkers, and by parties practising Tai Chi and Oriental martial arts.

Former retreatants will find it a strange experience revisiting what was once a place of spiritual renewal. There is somewhere here a parable seeking to make itself understood.

Seasonal opening times: May - September - Open daily - 9:30 - 17:30; October - April - Wednesday to Sunday and Bank Holiday Mon - 10:30 - 17:00.

Guided tours available. Group tours must be booked in advance by calling 01 493 9462 or emailing rathfarnhamcastle@opw.ie. Admission charges: Adult: €5.00; Senior/Group: €4.00; Child/Student: €3.00; Family: €13.00.

## Voices from Dublin in “the olden days”



Three generations, and a horse, enjoy a hot summer's day in old Dublin. Photo: K. C. Kearns.

**In Our Day: An Oral History of Dublin's Bygone Days,**  
by Kevin C. Kearns  
(Gill Books, €24.99 / £18.99)

**Peter Costello**

**B**ack when the world was young I had “a friend next door” who always referred to “the olden days”, not referring to the Middle Ages, but it transpired to the days when his parents were young. Now however with the passing of time what we saw and heard then is indeed “the olden days”, the very streets we knew having passed into history and been built over.

It is the extraordinary changes that make the work and writings of Professor Kearns so valuable.

This is an oral history, that is a book built around not what has been culled from the dry pages of public records, but recorded from the lips of the people of Dublin themselves, often in their curt and colourful language.

This is the latest book by an Irish-American academic who has been researching and writing about Dublin since the 1980s, making in all some twenty eight visits to the city interviewing and photographing its people and places.

The subtitle of this book well sums up what he has been about. He divides his account into some twelve chapters, perhaps one for every month of the year, moving from early life and innocence through to “nos-

talgia, sorrow and death.” As a now infamous newspaper once claimed, all human life is here.

**“His books as a whole are an invaluable account of an urban culture in Dublin that has vanished and in which Irish students of folklife had little interest”**

A special feature of the book are Kearns' own photographs of Dublin life and its personalities, which are all very striking and human.

But readers of this book will realise that it is the portal to a small library of other books by Kearns from the same publisher reaching back to 1980s in which the passing of an urban culture is recorded as it happened. No Irish writer has produced anything like this.

But compared with the work of say Studs Terkel in Chicago, or the anthropologist Oscar Lewis in Mexico in *The Children of Sanchez*, Kearns leaves wide areas of experience unexplored. But nevertheless his books as a whole are an invaluable account of an urban culture in Dublin that has vanished and in which Irish students of folklife had little interest.

Kevin Kearns has created a treasury of Dublin experience that becomes more valuable with every passing month.

**“There are lessons here for everyone. For the history of the place is something of an epitome of the changing nature of Irish society since the days of Elizabeth I. Great care is going into the full realisation of the restoration in another decade or so”**

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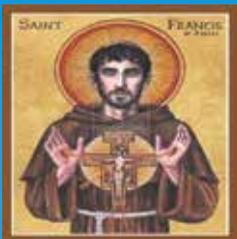


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Say this prayer for 3 days, promise publication and favour will be granted, no matter how impossible.

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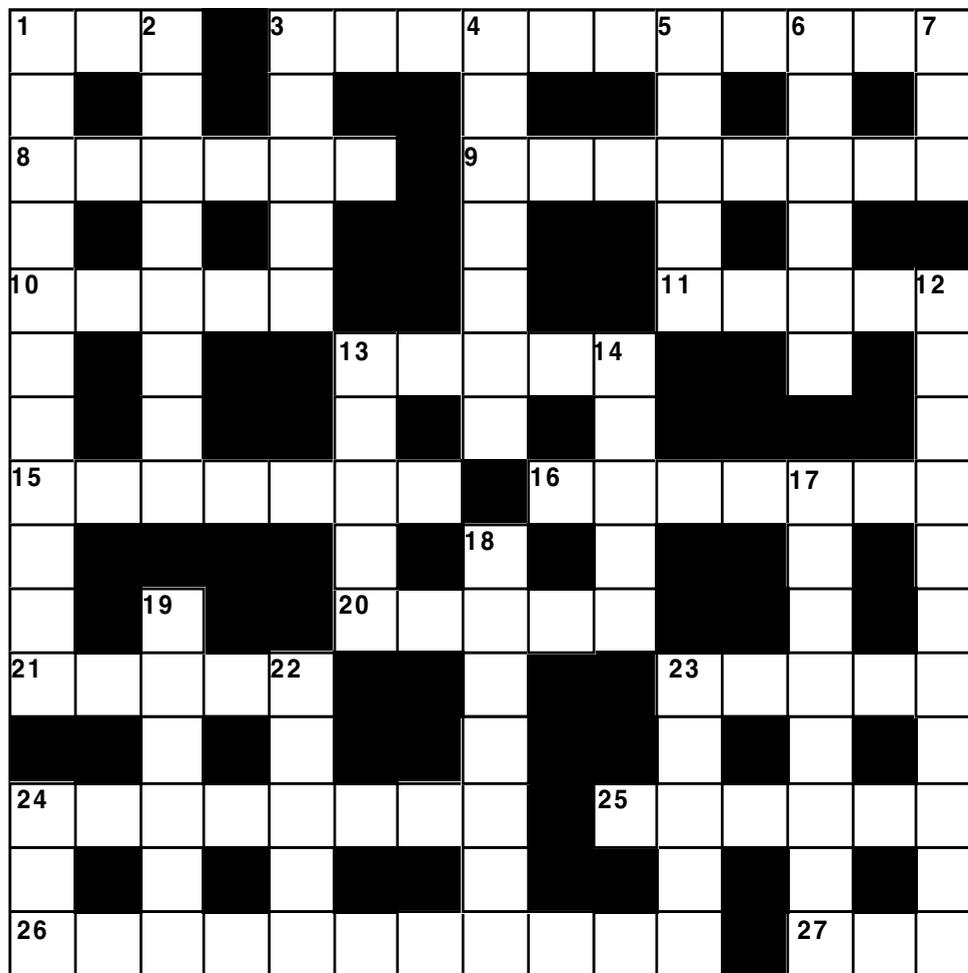
The Irish Catholic

## Crossword

Gordius 684

### Across

- 1 A pipistrelle, for example (3)
- 3 Complete professional summation (4,7)
- 8 Builder's or gardener's implement (6)
- 9 Angels other than seraphs (8)
- 10 English composer of 'The Enigma Variations', 'Pomp and Circumstance' etc (5)
- 11 Short religious musical composition (5)
- 13 The second planet from the sun (5)
- 15 Famous opera venue in Milan (2,5)
- 16 Pirate (7)
- 20 Change to suit a particular requirement (5)
- 21 Secret agents (5)
- 23 In that place (5)
- 24 Churchman with a red hat (8)
- 25 Digit (6)
- 26 Tempestuous fixture between inveterate rivals (6,5)
- 27 The first woman in the Bible (3)



- with acid (7)
- 5 Way to play the guitar (5)
- 6 Goes around as a planet does (6)
- 7 Sweet potato (3)
- 12 Strenuous interroga- tion (5,6)
- 13 Luxury holiday home (5)
- 14 Animal of the weasel family (5)
- 17 Gather or put together (8)
- 18 Kneecap (7)
- 19 Wild, savage (6)
- 22 Device for making spirits (5)
- 23 Veracity (5)
- 24 Tin (3)

### SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 3

#### GORDIUS No. 683

##### Across

- 1 Web 3 Cholesterol 8 Tongue 9 Diplomat 10 Heath 11 Thumb 13 Cited 15 Codicil 16 Catcall 20 Sleet 21 Reach 23 Abele 24 Surmised 25 Divine inspiration 27 Kit

##### Down

- 1 Witch-doctor 2 Bandaged 3 Couch 4 Luddite 5 To let 6 Rumour 7 Lot 12 Belligerent 13 Chips 14 Draft 17 Asterisk 18 Peridot 19 Taurus 22 Haiti 23 Alien 24 Ski

## Sudoku Corner 554

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

### Last week's Easy 553

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

### Last week's Hard 553

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

Notebook

Fr John Harris OP



# Love is the bridge between Heaven and Earth

As the Dominicans were arriving in Ireland 800 years ago, St Francis of Assisi and a few companions were on their way to mount La Verna, (about 115km north of Assisi) for a time of solitude and retreat, a time which Francis claimed for himself as an opportunity to meditate on the Passion of the Lord.

After Pope Honorius III approved the rule of the Friars Minor in November 1223 it is said that Francis became more withdrawn, the historical records portraying him as undergoing deep inner conflict. The Order was changing, on March 18, 1224 a group of friars became priests, making them the first friars to be ordained. There were tensions within the Order as to its future. It seems from the sources that Francis felt these divisions very deeply.

When St Francis and his close companions arrived at La Verna in the August of 1224, it is said that Francis was suffering from insomnia, spiritual dryness and indeed a lack of patience with himself and the brothers.

In the midst of these struggles, Francis remained faithful to his silence and prayer. Bro. Leo wrote that while at La Verna, Fran-



Domenico Ghirlandaio, St Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata, 1483-1486, fresco, Sassetti Chapel, Santa Trinita, Florence.

cis had a vision of a seraph angel. The traditional day given for this is September 17, 1224. The seraph angel spoke with him and afterwards Francis noticed the marks of the stigmata on his hands and in his side. The marks of the nails didn't weep but the wound at the side did.

St Clare said that when he returned to Assisi from La Verna Francis had changed, it was not that he loved any longer but that

he was transformed into love. She said he had become love.

How are we to understand Francis' receiving the stigmata. I think it can be a help for us to look at the picture of the Divine Mercy. For a long time when looking at the picture of the Divine Mercy I had a question. Where are the marks of the crown of thorns, where are the marks of the scourging? Why just the mark of the nails and the open side?

Then I read from a letter of St Catherine of Siena. She asked: "What held God to the cross?" Was it the nails? How could they, she asked, these nails hold the all-powerful God to the cross. She exclaims it was love that held Jesus to the Cross, not the nails. In the gloried body of Christ there are no longer the marks of hatred and jealousy, mockery and suffering, but only the marks of love. The Risen Lord is transformed into love.

## Love

This is the key for me to understanding the mystical experience of La Verna, 800 years ago this year. I think it is true to say that the mystical experience was not so much that Francis embraced Jesus and the cross as it is Jesus embracing Francis. Francis of Assisi being burned by love. Francis carries now in his body, not the marks of the crucifixion, the signs of the inhumanity that we are capable of, but the marks of the love that held Jesus to the cross, a love that unites him to his heavenly Father and also unites him to our suffering world. Love is the bridge between Heaven and Earth. From then on Francis sees things in a new way. He knows that his death is approaching, as

## Jesus is no longer my son-in-law

After a retreat recently a man approached me and said that he had come to realise that his approach to Jesus had been like that of a son-in-law. While he was part of the family... but not really. He was kept at a distance but still in the picture. Now after spending time in prayer he realised that he had to accept Jesus as a son, truly part of the family and truly part of his life.

his physical body is decaying, but love is all embracing.

Pope Benedict XVI said Christians are those who have been conquered by love. In Francis we see a Christian who does not simply love but becomes love. Our vocation is not to love but to become love.



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— St Therese —

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