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Exclusive interview
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Catholic Primate 'alarmed' at unapproved school texts Says parents should always be consulted

Exclusive

Chai Brady

The Primate of All Ireland has said he is "alarmed" by the ongoing debates around school SPHE textbooks and training which include controversial lessons around gender ideology and sexuality, adding the Church has not approved the use of these resources.

Speaking exclusively to *The Irish Catholic* Archbishop Eamon Martin has said that no SPHE (Social Personal and Health Education) or RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) resources "should be in any school without consultation with parents".

"I know there's a bit of controversy at the moment over particular textbooks – we have not supported the use of any of those textbooks in Catholic schools," Archbishop Martin said.

The prelate warned that "many of our children are struggling with the issues of today, like gender, being bombarded with stuff online, and a lot of our children need to be able to talk about that and our teachers need to be equipped to be able to talk with them. But there's a big difference between that and the sort of ideological colonisation that seems to be happening among some people, but not very many".

His comments come after uproar from some parents and politicians regarding proposed textbooks for students in primary and secondary schools and training

» Continued on Page 2

Brazilians take to the streets for Our Lady



The Brazilian community filled Dublin roads on October 13 for a procession after afternoon Mass to celebrate Our Lady of Aparecida, Patroness of Brazil. The Mass in St Mary of the Angels, Church Street, was led by Bishop Paul Dempsey. People gathered for refreshments in the Church Hall afterwards. Photo: Católicos em Dublin.

LIMERICK MOURNS DONAL MURRAY

Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon
recalls the man

PAGE 6



I STAYED SILENT IN THE FACE OF FURY

Martina Purdy

PAGE 9



WILL I AND YOU BE REPLACED BY AI?

David Quinn

PAGE 8



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Catholic Primate 'alarmed' at unapproved school texts

» Continued from Page 1

for SPHE teachers, including a DCU course which taught about pornographic terms and other highly sexual content.

The archbishop, who is a former teacher and principal, said he believes that Catholic teachers "instinctively know that this stuff is not appropriate" adding that teachers are "simply there to support parents and I do feel that parents are critical to this".

"Most parents instinctively know what they want their children to learn and when and what is appropriate for their age, if some researcher or academic, comes and says, 'oh no, children should have the agency here, let's tell children everything'... that's like saying to children to go out and play with the traffic and you'll learn about road safety," he said.

"We teach children in every aspect of their lives to keep themselves safe and I do believe that parents today are endeavouring to steer their children through what is a very complex and confusing bombardment of messages and parents are trying to hold values, to teach children you are loved by God, we love you, but we want you to respect your body, respect the bodies of others, and respect the gift of sexuality."

Archbishop Martin believes parents are doing this and "want teachers to support them".

"The last thing they [parents] want is schools to say, 'don't listen to your parents, we know what is better for you'. And that's where we come in, in trying to provide

the materials that allow [Catholic] schools to discuss these topics, even the most controversial topics, like change of gender, like LGBT topics, like abortion, contraception. We have resources that allow those topics to be spoken about in a faith context, which we believe is consistent with the ethos of the school."

While he does not believe highly sexual or pornographic material "should be near schools", he adds this does not mean teachers do not need "to be able to understand terms".

He added: "I taught a lot of these programmes myself and I was always very careful not to put any young person into the position where they had to share intimate details about their own sexuality, or to have it discussed by other pupils in the classroom, and I think we know that instinctively. That's not to say that children will not be very interested. They will ask questions, and they will want to be given mature, adult answers – that can be done within the ethos of the school."

"We in the Catholic Church have been providing resources now to our schools so that they can have good quality resources. I think parents want their children to be educated in relationships and sexuality, but they do not want the agency of that to be taken entirely away from them and neither should it be."

i Full exclusive interview with the Primate of All Ireland next week discussing his 10 years as Archbishop of Armagh

Catholics told to lobby politicians about Assisted Dying Bill

Brandon Scott

In advance of the Final Report of the Joint Committee on Assisted Dying discussion, which takes place in the Dáil today, representatives from both politics and the Church, including Archbishop Eamon Martin, called on people to either "seek commitments" from TDs and senators or alternatively "lobby their politicians now and in the run up to the election" to ensure that the Government assists "people to live, not to die".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Senator Rónán Mullen, one of the most vocal critics of assisted dying, said that to enact a law of this nature would be "toxic for our society" and called on people to lobby their politicians by voicing their opposition.

"Campaigners for euthanasia are relentlessly pushing a culture of death in both Britain and Ireland," he said. "A euthanasia law would be toxic for our society. It would change forever the way society sees the old, the sick and the disabled. It would change the way our doctors see us. And it would change the way people see their own lives when they become more vulnerable."

"It is vital that people

lobby their politicians now and in the run up to the election – especially the parties who may be returned to Government or the people who may hold the balance of power. We need clear, written commitments on what politicians are going to do or not do and insist that these politicians go on the public record about their intentions before people vote."

President of Ógra Aontú John Bryan, whose organisation will be staging a protest outside of the Dáil later on Thursday to highlight young people's opposition to assisted suicide, decried the Bill and said that the Government must prioritise assisting people to live, not die.

"We believe the Government should be assisting people to live, not to die," he said. "The Assisted Dying Bill itself is a chilling piece of legislation in a so-called caring and compassionate society. Any prosperous, caring society would push for assisted living measures, not assisted dying."

"The question is, do we really want to go down this route? We want to call on the Government to choose life. Our goal is to show that young people care about this issue. This issue is not about a medical procedure, it's about

how we view and value life as a nation and we call on the Government to abandon this Bill."

Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin also strongly condemned the move towards legalising assisted suicide. In a recent statement, he described the legislation as "an affront to a safe and protective society", urging society to oppose it.

"As a society, we are defined by the extent to which we care for our most vulnerable persons," he said, calling on politicians and the public to resist any law that would undermine the sanctity of life. Archbishop Martin encouraged voters to seek commitments from their TDs and senators regarding investment in palliative and hospice care.

One step further in the journey



Deacon Giacomo Taffi from the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Dundalk was ordained to the diaconate on October 12 in St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh. The ordination liturgy was presided over by Archbishop Eamon Martin. Deacon Taffi will now continue his studies towards ordination to the priesthood.

Dublin hosts first Catholic career summit

Renata Milán Morales

A Catholic Career Summit will be held for the first time in Dublin on October 26 and will feature a range of speakers covering both professional and faith-oriented topics, including debate, business showcases, and plenty of time for discussion.

The summit was organised in response to a gap in the professional world for Catholics to come together and discuss not only career strategies but also how their faith influences their working lives. One of the organisers, Riain, noted, "We saw a gap in

the professional scene for Catholics to share not just career strategies, but how faith influences their working lives."

Catholic witness in the workplace, as the organiser defined it, is "living out our faith through integrity, service, and standing by one's principles... It's essential because embodying these values honours God and inspires others." The summit aims to encourage Catholics to express their faith tactfully in the workplace, promoting a culture of ethical behaviour and respect for human dignity.

The event will also address challenges that Catholic professionals face,

such as ethical conflicts and hesitancy about expressing personal beliefs. "Our event aims to create a supportive community where attendees can share experiences and find guidance," Riain explained. Long-term goals include mentorship programmes and international collaborations to help young Catholics "be confident, successful, and faithful at work."

Among the speakers is Senator Rónán Mullen, Fr Alan O'Sullivan OP, a Dominican priest and expert in moral theology and Cora Sherlock, a solicitor and international advocate for pro-life causes.

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Faith continues to help missionaries tackle 'evil' and alleviate suffering

Chai Brady and Brandon Scott

Irish missionaries continue to uphold dignity and human rights in some of the most challenging countries across the world, particularly where "there's a lot of suffering".

The Director of the Loreto Sisters mission in Rumbek, South Sudan, who runs two schools and a healthcare clinic said that "over the years we've had different wars in and out of the country and different disputes and hunger – there's a lot of suffering".

Sr Orla Treacy IBVM told The Irish Catholic her faith has helped her through very challenging times, and that "when you're dealing with people with a lot of suffering, there's a lot of trauma".

"You have to draw deep, and faith and prayer has been very important for me in the midst of all of that. Just putting myself at the feet of the cross and saying 'Here I am, God, what can I do? Give me the strength'," Sr Treacy said.

"When you hit a lot of pain, you have to dig deep in order to survive. And I've been very graced and very lucky to have had a good prayer life in the midst of it all."

She added that working with young people "will always give you life. Young people are the same the world over, they're always searching for more, searching for truth, searching for justice. And that's a beautiful ministry as well".

Fr Shay Cullen SSCME who is based



Sr Orla Treacy IBVM

in the Philippines and has been at the forefront of fighting against the sexual exploitation of children through the PREDA (People's Recovery Empowerment Development Assistance) foundation said his faith is based on "doing all the good we can do and always opposing the structures that create evil like Jesus of Nazareth did – this is our model".

"He stood against the structures of the time and tried to change them. He challenged the temple authorities and became a rebel and activist for justice and changing the whole society. Then they executed him ... now I hope

that won't happen to me but we have to take a stand in opposing the evils within the society and continually speaking against it," he said.

Vice-chair of the board of Misesan Cara Sr Josephine McCarthy, a Presentation Sister who spent over 20 years in Ecuador and Peru and who recently visited several missions in Kenya that are sponsored by Misesan Cara hailed the work being done by missionaries, adding that Irish people are not aware of how "immersed" they are in supporting communities around the world.

Sr McCarthy said: "Missionaries are very much on trend with international development and sometimes leading the way. People in Ireland maybe are not aware that they are so much at the forefront in development in those countries. With international development very often the emphasis was on huge projects coming into area whereas the thinking now in international development is that locally led development is actually much more sustainable in the long run. And they have stated that the people best placed for local development are missionaries because they live and work among the people.

"I think that Irish people aren't aware that they are so immersed in the development of societies especially the empowerment of girls and women and they're possibly not aware of the significance of that work. What I saw in all of the missions was great, and great value for money on the ground," she added.

'Peace is always achievable' says former Irish chaplain in Lebanon

Brandon Scott

A Wexford priest who has served as chaplain to the Irish Defence Forces in the Lebanon has urged all parties involved in the recent escalation of conflict in the country to actively cooperate and ensure that the "hatred, division and war" that plague the state are ended once and for all, adding that even in the face of despair, "peace is always achievable".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Patrick Mernagh of Kilmore Parish said that from his experiences in the country, the periodic conflict that breaks out has always been down to political differences and never religious.

"All religions got on so well," he said. "It was probably the best example of faith working in action regardless of what faith you were. One thing we tend to forget is that there was never any friction between faiths in

the country, it always had to do with politics, unfortunately. My heart is so saddened to see the way things are now panning out at this moment in time."

Citing the de-escalation of conflict in Northern Ireland as an example of "peace being achievable", Fr Mernagh said that it's imperative all parties involved sit down and negotiate for peace.

"I think you need to go back, because I worked in Northern Ireland as well from 1992 to 1994 in Newry," he said. "When you think the impossible is not possible, that's when you need to dream again. Peace is always achievable, even in the midst of total chaos and mistrust. My wish would be through a third body or agency, that's acceptable to all parties, that somebody needs to sit everybody down and bring them together to say that it's time to work to end this hatred, division and war."

'First of many', Muslim girl awarded a JP2 medal

Renata Steffens

A Muslim girl Afia Jahin Isha, who is a student at St Leo's College, a Mercy school in Co. Carlow, has been awarded a Gold Award during the Kildare and Leighlin Diocesan Pope John Paul II Award ceremony.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Cathriona Kelly, Parish Coordinator at the Parish of Graiguecullen/Killeslin said the "programme is open to everyone, of all faiths and none," but "to achieve a John Paul Award, she needs to do parish involvement."

"She came down with her friends who are involved in our parish and she asked, could she get involved to achieve her John Paul Award," Ms Kelly said.

They needed to get parental permission, as Mr Isha is not only from a different faith but also underaged. "Her parents were happy for her to take part in our parish, as long as it wasn't conflicting with her own faith."

"She would welcome peo-

ple at the doors every Sunday at 11.30 am Mass in St Claire's Church. She said she had such a positive experience...learning about the Catholic and Christian faith," said Ms Kelly.

"Afia always stewarded on the same door, they kind of get into a bit of a habit and she always picks the same door of the church. People found it strange at first but got used to seeing her at the door.

"When she received her medal at a recent ceremony...from Bishop Denis Nulty...her mam came to the cathedral. They were taking photos of her, so proud. It was really lovely to see both of them in their hijab in the cathedral," Ms Kelly said.

"She could be the first of many...I think she's definitely opened a new avenue for people to see how well it [the JP2 Award] can work," Ms Kelly said and concluded: "I really think it's opening up a lot of new opportunities for young people, and for both faiths to work better together."



Ms Isha receiving her John Paul II Award.



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Irish archbishop blocks Vatican interference in abuse case

Chai Brady

An attempt to reinstate a priest laicised for the sexual abuse of minors by the Vatican's *sostituto* Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra has been decried by a leading Irish child protection campaigner Marie Collins, who warned children would have been put in danger.

Archbishop Peña Parra tried to undo the laicisation of Ariel Alberto Principi, a former diocesan priest convicted of child sexual abuse while in Argentina, but was thwarted by Irishman Archbishop John Joseph Kennedy, head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith disciplinary section.

Archbishop Kennedy declared void the September order from the Secretariat of State to rescind the laicisation in one of the most controversial public clashes between Vatican departments in recent times.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Marie Collins said within

the Vatican "there is a great emphasis on authority and power and obviously somebody thought that they had enough authority to overturn something that the disciplinary department had set in place".

"No decision like that should ever be changed unless there's new evidence or an appeal and the whole case is re-judged and re-examined. I'm 100% behind Archbishop John Kennedy because if his department has decided that that is the appropriate sanction then it is not up to anyone else to undermine that decision," she said.

"It's a strong action and he is standing by the decision of his department. What would be the point of having sanctions if they can be just ripped up willy nilly? At the end of the day the safety of children is at stake and that's what the processes are there for and nobody should be allowed to interfere with that."

Archbishop Kennedy's

intervention reversed a September 23 signed by Archbishop Peña Parra.

Regarding Archbishop Peña Parra's order, Ms Collins said: "There is no place in a disciplinary procedure for anybody to come in with external influence or authority and overturn a decision."

"In the end it is future victims who will suffer... If somebody is walking around, to all intents and purposes to the outsider they are a priest and they will be trusted and respected and that puts any child that comes in their orbit in danger. If they are a convicted child abuser, they should never be allowed to walk around as a priest again."

"The Church knows this, and the disciplinary department knows this, and everyone in the Secretary of State department should know this and the priority should be the safety of children not the perpetrator. It is children that are being put at risk."

Ms Collins said that if



Archbishop John Kennedy at his desk in the DDF

"internal politics" in the Vatican almost led to a child abuser being put back in ministry "they need to sort it out".

"The first question I would have is where is the transparency? Why did it happen? Who gave instructions that it should happen? What has changed from the decision that he was deserving of being laicised to now he's not. As someone who has abused a child, he should not have the right to have his laicisation overturned, I would love to know what his victims or the

parents of his victims think," Ms Collins said.

Several complaints of sexual abuse against minors were made against Argentine Fr Ariel Alberto Principi in 2021. They centred around the abuse of 'healing prayers' in the context of charismatic prayer circles.

Following a years-long canonical process in June 2023 he was found guilty of multiple accounts of sexual abuse.

See pages 31-32

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sligo Knights celebrate 100th anniversary

The Sligo Knights of St Columbanus are celebrating 100 years. This lay order in the Church was established in Belfast in 1915, and the Sligo Council was founded in 1924.

During his homily at a Mass in Sligo Cathedral to mark the Knights' anniversary, Bishop of Elphin Kevin Doran said: "The founders of the Knights of St Columbanus were inspired by the social teaching of the Church, which is rooted in the teaching of Jesus, but which – in modern times – began to take shape in the teaching of the popes on questions like the rights and responsibilities of workers."

The bishop said that, over the past century, "individual Catholic men have responded to the call of Christ, through their commitment to prayer and service as members of the Knights of St Columbanus."

The Knights have been involved in Sligo Social Services and the Northwest Hospice. The bishop also said the order has supported many initiatives for young people over the years.

To mark the anniversary, the Sligo Knights of St Columbanus launched a 128-page book titled *The Knights of Columbanus - 1924-2024 CK25 Sligo - a Centenary Occasion*, which tells the story of the organisation through minutes of meetings since the foundation until 2024.

Kerry missionary (94) dies in Brazil

A Kerry missionary who worked in Brazil for over 60 years has died at the age of 94. Fr Seán Myers, from Barleymount in Fossa, was part of the first three-person group of the Redemptorist Order to travel to north-east Brazil in 1960.

Fr Myers was born in Barleymount in 1930 and received his education at Cahoreigh National School and St Brendan's College. The priest joined the Redemptorists in 1957 and studied in Rome before starting his missionary work in Brazil.

He was known as *Padre João* in his parish in Brazil and worked to improve access to education, healthcare, and basic necessities like water and roads in that community. For his humanitarian work, Fr Myers was awarded a Hugh O'Flaherty International Humanitarian Award in 2015 in Killarney.

His body was buried in Brazil, but Mass will be held in the Prince of Peace Church, Killarney, Co. Kerry on Saturday, November 2 at 12 noon.

Candlelight and prayers for St Bernadette

Renata Steffens

The Relics of St Bernadette are still travelling around Ireland and arrived at Down and Connor Diocese this week. To mark the moment, parishioners of St Mary's Church, Chapel Lane, Belfast had a Marian Candlelit Procession on Tuesday, October 15. All ceremonies with the relics were livestreamed via St Mary's webcam.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the

Diocesan Director of the Lourdes Pilgrimage, Fr Gerard Fox said the procession, which happened after Mass, was an opportunity "to evoke the spirit of the candlelight procession in Lourdes."

The parish has their own Lourdes Grotto, Fr Fox said, and the Church is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. That is "one of the reasons why the bishop thought it would be an appropriate place to receive the relics."

Actually, the route that the procession will follow is a route that the parish has used over the years for a procession they would have on August 15. We're restoring an old tradition."

Many volunteers helped to organise the visit to St Mary's. "As well as the Lourdes staff of the people who volunteer on the pilgrimage, the Knights of St Columbanus are assisting," said the priest. "There's a men's rosary group in the city who are also

helping, the Legion of Mary, as well as parish volunteers."

"The Lourdes Choir have come back together for this and they'll be assisted by members of choirs from across the diocese and a number of schools as well are also participating in the music."

"We have a real community gathering. Lots of people here, fulfilling all sorts of different roles."

Lighting candles for donors



Young transplant recipients are pictured lighting candles at the Irish Kidney Association's 39th Annual Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving for organ donors and transplant recipients in the Church of the Holy Child, Whitehall, Dublin 9. The October 13 service attracted almost 1,600 people. From left to right are Lexi Murphy (14) from Annewstown, Co. Waterford, Iarla Fahy Rabbitt (8) from Colemanstown, Co. Galway, Yan Sun (14), from Balbriggan, Dublin, Sam Kinahan (10) from Donaghmede, Dublin, and Laura McDowell (15) from Dalkey, Dublin. Photo: Conor McCabe Photography.

New lay ministry course available in Co. Laois

Renata Steffens

The Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin is inviting people to step forward and subscribe to the new Lay Pastoral Ministers programme.

The programme is a two-year level 7 diploma course, which will prepare the laity to undertake significant roles in their parishes and pastoral areas. The course offers part-time lessons and will be held over six weekends a year in Mount St Anne's in Killenard, Co. Laois.

The requirements to apply are being fluent in English and a devout Catholic. The course is free and the candi-

dates are expected to volunteer within the diocese for up to four years.

Bishop Denis Nulty told *Extra.ie*: "We are committed to empowering lay leaders within our diocese." This training will provide the necessary tools and knowledge for lay pastoral ministers to contribute meaningfully to our parish communities.

"The role of laypeople in our Church is crucial to ensure we invigorate faith in our communities. This is an exciting and important opportunity for people who want to explore their faith on a deeper level and be part of the future of our Church," the bishop said.



Mary Kenny will return next week

Mixed response to bishops' letter on immigration

Brandon Scott

The bishops' recently published advisory letter on immigration has provoked mixed responses, with Director of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice Dr Kevin Hargaden praising the bishops for issuing "a

very strong word against the fear-based politics that have been developing in the nation", while Dr Gerard Casey, a Catholic academic, was critical of the letter's "flaws" and "errors".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Dr Hargaden said that it is not the bishops'

job to devise public policy on the matter but merely affirm the underlying Christian message around immigration, which is to remind Catholics of their duty to welcome the migrant.

"The letter is very strong and clear," he said. "I would be very clear in terms of

communicating to others that it's not about the contentious and fraught topic of immigration in the sense of proposing any policy directions that need to be taken. The bishops are very clear that this is a matter for Government and encourage Catholics to inform their

consciences and involve themselves as actively as they possibly can in the political discourse.

"There's great freedom for the baptised to take different positions on these political questions. What this letter does is very clearly communicate a biblical and eternal teaching of the Church, which is that people have a right to migrate and the migrant who is actually in your country is your neighbour.

"It's a very strong word against the fear-based politics that have been developing in the nation."

Speaking in the aftermath of the publication of the letter, Dr Casey said although some parts of it "merit consideration", it was mostly flawed and "rife" with errors for a number of reasons.

"There are parts of this document that merit reflection and consideration but, unfortunately, the document as a whole is flawed by the category mistake of

not distinguishing between what the New Testament requires of individuals and what, if anything, it requires of the State," he said. "The New Testament addresses its moral imperatives to individual believers, not to any political entity.

"The pastoral's category error, rife throughout the document, can be seen clearly in this sentence: 'Fearful and angry voices even call for us to close our borders and our hearts to the newcomer'. Who is 'us'? Borders are matters for the State; the opening or closing of our hearts are matters for individuals.

"I should note," he continued, "in passing, that one significant matter that, so far as I can tell, receives little or no attention in this document is the cultural/religious implications of migration. This is a topic that one might expect to have been explored in a pastoral letter on this topic."

'No such a thing as a bad person' says bishop

Renata Steffens

Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes, who is also the Bishop's Conference liaison to the Irish Prison Service drew attention to the work of Fr Greg Boyle SJ, founder of Homeboy Industries during Prisoners' Sunday on October 13.

Prisoners' Sunday is a day to direct thoughts and

prayers to prisoners and their families. "Fr Greg believes that there is no bad person, only people who have not yet discovered the good within them," the bishop said.

Homeboy Industries is a gang intervention and rehabilitation programme in Los Angeles, US. Bishop Hayes said Fr Boyle "started a school as there were no places for those gang mem-

bers in their local schools, and then he started Homeboy Industries as there was little appetite among employers to take on the graduates from his school."

Bishop Hayes said "People must see themselves as good and that we must remove the blindfold of our perceptions to see this goodness in others."

The bishop shared Fr Boyle's view that prisoners

are used to being watched but not to being seen for their potential to do good. "All of us are a whole lot more than the worst thing we have ever done."

"Fr Greg challenges us to look at new ways of intervening with, and rehabilitating, those who are prisoners today," Bishop Hayes concluded.

Parish centre nominated for all-island award

Renata Steffens

The Priorswood Parish Centre was selected as one of five Dublin nominees for the all-island Pride of Place Award. "It's a bit of a shock that we were nominated for this, but we are thrilled, absolutely thrilled," said Ann Tormey, chairperson for the Parish Centre.

The competition focus

"is about people coming together to shape, change and improve daily lives in their communities," clarifies the award's website.

The Priorswood Community Centre is celebrating five years of opening this Friday and has been having a positive impact on its community since the first day. "It has brought people from far and wide and it's a place of meeting

new friends and not being alone," said Ms Tormey.

The centre is open Monday to Friday and offers several classes and activities. On Mondays, they have knitting and crocheting groups, when they craft pieces for hospices and nursing homes.

Arts, sewing, aerobics, dancing, men's fitness, the number of classes offered is broad. "At the moment

we're having flower arranging classes and we do about 3 or 4 classes with that before Christmas."

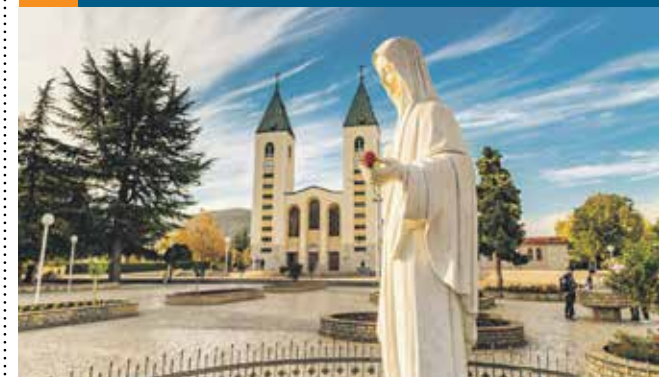
Ms Tormey said they were invited to Croke Park where they were presented with a certificate, "and told we'd be going up to Monaghan for the big final, which is on November 2." "The nomination is very important to the parish," Ms Tormey concluded.

Schoolchildren crown St Thérèse in Tyrone



Pupils from St Teresa's Primary School, Loughmacrory, Co. Tyrone, gather at St Teresa's Garden for a special prayer service on the Feast of St Thérèse se of Lisieux. Photo: Fr Peter McAnenly.

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Bishop Donal Murray: The outsider who became one of Limerick's own

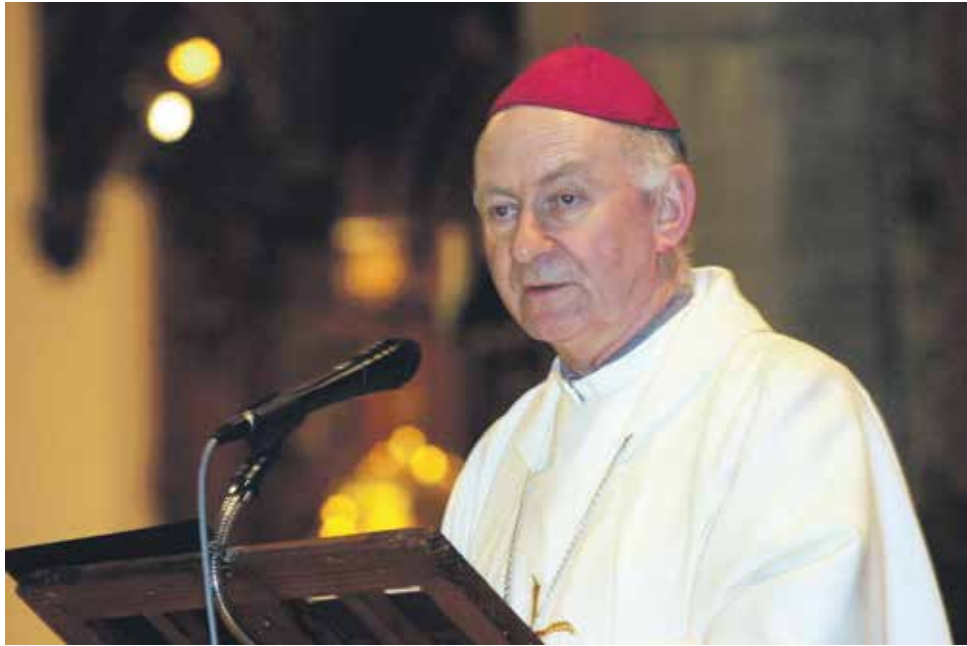
Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon

Of the many things that have been said and written about Bishop Donal Murray since his death on Sunday October 13, two lines have struck me forcibly in that they have captured something of the true essence of his ministry in Limerick. A contemporary of his in Clonliffe, Fr Fintan Lyons OSB remarked: "His ministry in Limerick is strikingly evocative of what we are all now recognising as the synodal path to a new way of being church".

His successor Bishop Brendan Leahy similarly noted: "His great mind was always working on building a Church of tomorrow, not on holding onto a Church of the past". Fintan's observation resonates with my experience of working closely with Bishop Donal.

Before synodality became a term that we are growing increasingly familiar with, Bishop Donal was already leading our diocese along a pathway which was entirely congruent with all that Pope Francis recommends as the path God expects of the Church in the third millennium.

Back in the late 1990s he launched a Diocesan Listen-



Former Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin and Bishop of Limerick, Donal Murray.

ing Process, reminiscent of the consultation recently promulgated by the Universal Church. That Listening process informed much of the subsequent work around pastoral renewal and development.

He was prophetic in the true sense of the word, in that he had the capacity to see clearly what was going on around him and was aware of the guidance of

the Holy Spirit leading us to something new. He actively promoted greater lay participation and responsibility, promoting pastoral councils and a variety of lay ministries at parish level and similarly he always surrounded himself with lay leadership groups at diocesan level.

Bishop Donal recognised the advantage of grouping parishes 25 years ago – he saw the possibilities of

parishes working together, sharing resources and offering each other support.

He had a particular concern and care for the *Eaglais Óg* – the young people of the diocese. He was a regular and welcome presence on *Muintearas Íosa* gatherings and I accompanied him on a number of World Youth Days.

I particularly recall WYD 2000 in Rome. His love of

the city and ease with the Italian language was something to behold. He also greatly enjoyed the annual diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes. It was there we saw him at his most relaxed and came to know his talent for writing (and delivering) hilarious songs.

I recall one day on the way from the hospital to the grotto with assisted pilgrims, he pointed out to me a senior consultant who worked in UHL who was pulling a patient in a *voiture*. Donal was struck by the man's humility and the overall example of Christian living created in Lourdes. He was blissfully unaware that he, a Bishop, was similarly pulling a *voiture* and the consultant was probably having similar thoughts about our humble bishop.

I know from experience as a young priest that he easily delegated and trusted others with responsibility. His style of decision-making was truly consultative. Early on, some clergy who were used to a different way, misinterpreted this as indecision on his part, wondering why he didn't simply tell us what he wanted. In fact, he wanted decisions to come

from the ground up, knowing that they would then be truly owned and so be more likely to succeed.

Perhaps his greatest gift was his extraordinary intellect. He was a fine theologian and writer whose Pastoral Letters were always inspiring and encouraging.

Shortly after coming to Limerick, Bishop Donal's successor, Bishop Brendan Leahy correctly diagnosed the next step for Limerick ought to be a Diocesan Synod. After all, his predecessor had laid the groundwork and prepared the way for something that felt like we were now ready for.

Many fond memories come to mind. On his first day in the diocese a senior clergyman in Limerick spoke truthfully and directly to Donal: "You know we were hoping for one of our own". He paused for dramatic effect and then continued, "But from this day forward you are one of our own".

These words came true – we in Limerick took Donal to our hearts and he also took Limerick to his heart, choosing to remain in the diocese after his resignation, staying on where he was so fondly regarded.

Limerick mourns Bishop Emeritus Donal Murray

Staff reporter

Bishop Murray died in the early hours of Sunday at Milford Care Centre where he had spent the past 18 months. He was in the company of Frs Noel Kirwan and Liam Enright on his passing.

Reflecting on his life, Bishop Leahy said that Bishop Murray made an enormous contribution to spiritual nourishment of the people Limerick since his appointment here in 1996 when he became the first priest form outside the diocese to assume the role in 200 years. In particular, he sought to play his part in building a Church of tomorrow and a church for all.

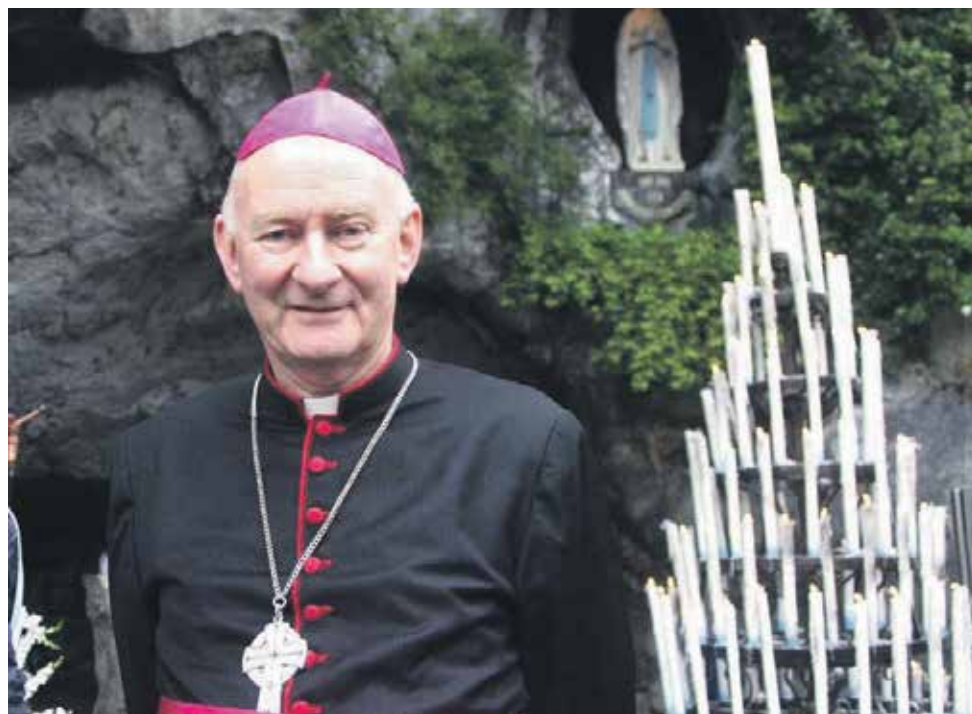
"Bishop Murray will be remembered for so much and, indeed, his work in Limerick overseeing the completion of the conservation works on St John's Cathedral is a lasting physical memory of his time here. But more than anything, he was attuned to the fast changing ecclesial and social context and the challenge of rebuilding the community of faith. His great mind was

always working on building a Church of tomorrow, not on holding onto a Church of the past.

"A hugely deep, wise and brilliant thinker, he addressed these questions in two significant pastorals, 'We are God's Temple' and 'How can we Know the Way?' At the same time, he acknowledged the implications of the steep fall in vocations to the priesthood and religious life for the future of the church in Limerick.

Bishop Leahy also cited the creation of a diocesan pastoral council in 2004 by Bishop Murray, which saw Limerick among the first diocese to take such a move. This was done, he said, to give expression to a renewed understanding of church which recognised the potential for lay people to take on a greater role in the church.

Bishop Murray also appointed a full-time chaplain to Limerick Prison, and in 2007 was involved in a joint initiative with Limerick, Killaloe and Kerry diocese to create St Senan's



Bishop Donal Murray

Education Office to support to the boards of management of the primary schools in each diocese.

Further evidence of his commitment to learning was his role as chairman of the trustees and board of management of Mary

Immaculate College.

Bishop Leahy said, however, that the later years of Bishop Murray's tenure were clouded, as in all dioceses in Ireland, by the revelations of child abuse involving both religious congregations and secular clergy. Criticisms

relating to his handling of abuse allegations during the 1980s in his period as auxiliary bishop in Dublin led to the resignation as Bishop of Limerick in 2009.

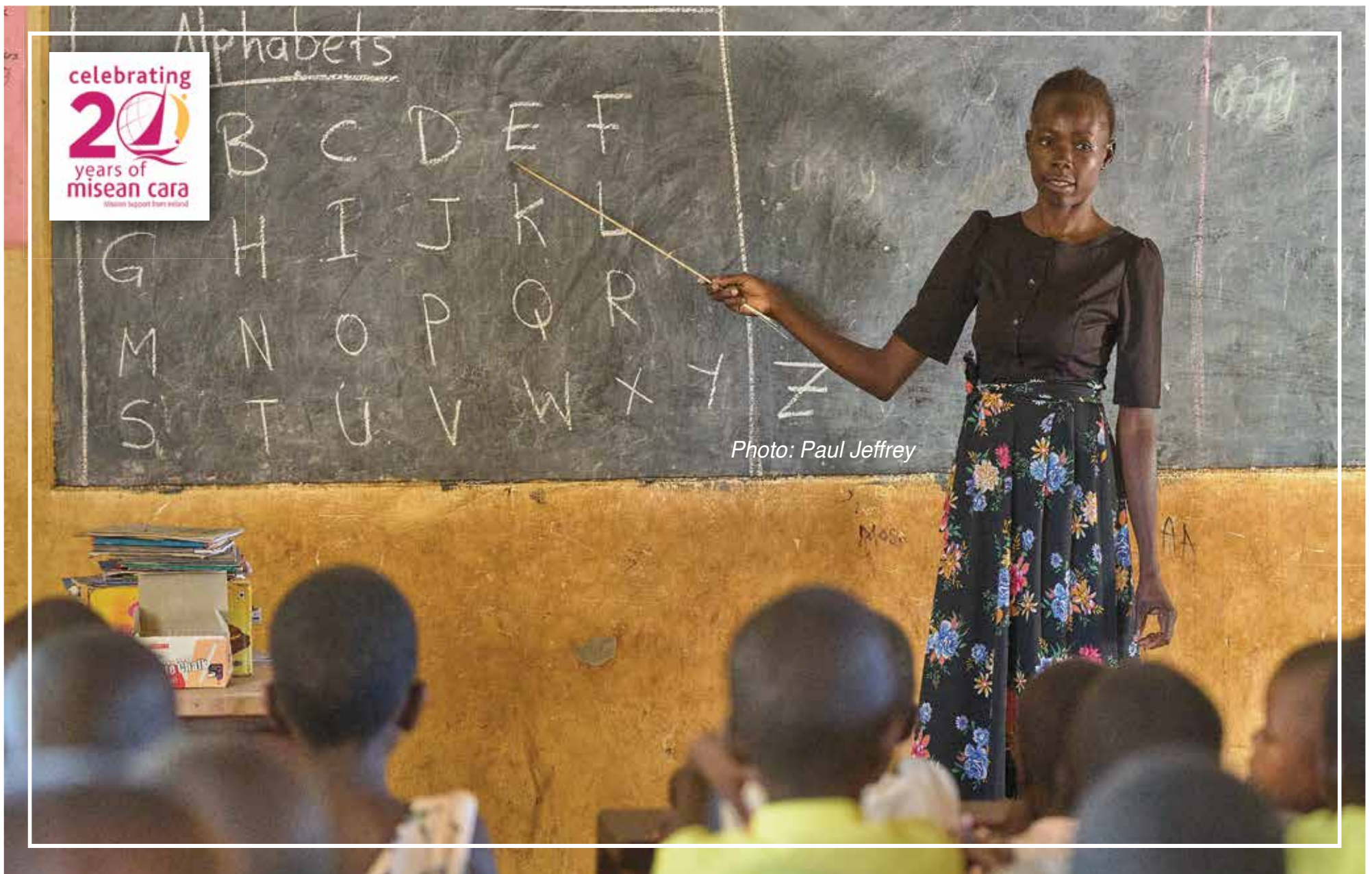
"Bishop Murray, in his resignation announcement, said that to remain

on would 'create difficulties for some of the survivors who must have first place in our thoughts and prayers'. While acknowledging, as Bishop Donal said himself, that his resignation could not 'undo the pain that survivors of abuse have suffered', we separately remember that in his time in Limerick he transformed child safeguarding standards with a robust system that the diocese continues to build on today. Three years after his retirement, these measures were positively recognised in a review by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland."

In retirement Bishop Murray continued to minister in the diocese of Limerick and chaired the Architectural and Heritage Advisory Committee of the diocese.

"Endowed with a brilliant mind, Bishop Donal treasured and communicated wisdom, was gentle in spirit and generous of heart. His contribution to faith was enormous and he will be sadly missed," said Bishop Leahy.

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Remaining silent in the face of fury



Martina Purdy

Standing on a street corner after Sunday Mass the other day, I was assailed by fury.

I had joined a silent pro-life protest, organised by the Canadian parish I was visiting, and was carrying a placard that read: "Abortion kills children."

A young woman, who had stopped at the traffic lights, rolled down her window, made a rude gesture and started shouting: "Team abortion!"

She also called me a name I prefer not to print.

As protests go, it was pretty pathetic. Both hers and ours.

My fellow protestors numbered no more than twenty and were spread out on four street corners between Main Street and 16th Avenue in Markham, a quaint village north of Toronto.

My sign had clearly triggered this woman and I suspect she might have physically assaulted me had she not had one hand on her steering wheel.

I said nothing as I had been instructed to remain silent and not react to abuse. I had also been assured that if there was any trouble there would be someone there to film it. Well, no one bothered to film the scene.

Apathy

And to be honest, I was more upset by the apathy of the parishioners. There were hundreds at Mass that day but only a handful came to join the protest.

Before we set out, the priest gave us a blessing.

But he did not join us, nor did he address the issue of abortion in his homily. Instead he spoke for twenty five minutes about the impact of social media on young people's self-image and quoted Psalm 139 - how we are all 'fearfully and wonderfully made'.

His only reference to the pro-life silent protest was



Pro-life demonstrators rally outside the US Supreme Court during the 51st annual March for Life in Washington on January 19, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Leslie E. Kossoff

at the end of Mass. I wondered whether the priest, an excellent speaker, might have inspired more parishioners to come along, had he focused his homily on the final (optional) lines of Sunday's Gospel. In Mark, Jesus declares: 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. In truth I tell you, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'

After Mass, we began to assemble with our signs, but most parishioners sailed past, looking the other way.

However, two curious children stopped to look at us. The older boy, who was about 12, told his little brother, who looked about seven: "Abortion is when a

mother kills her child."

A look of horror came over this child's face before he was led away.

There is a wise line in Proverbs: "Without vision, the people perish."

“Around 44 million little boys and girls, fearfully and wonderfully made, perished before birth in 2022. This compares to 8 million people who die from cancer”

The "vision" referred to in the Old Testament is the light of God's word - which

makes clear how precious each life truly is, even before birth.

And, let's face it, there is ample evidence that, without vision, people are perishing.

Abortion is the biggest cause of death on our planet today.

According to the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, around 44 million little boys and girls, fearfully and wonderfully made, perished before birth in 2022. This compares to 8 million people who die from cancer.

Blind

And yet our political leaders are not completely blind to the humanity of the unborn child. The problem is our politicians, media, and others speak out of

ity abortion care" and on the other, it laments the anguish and grief suffered in miscarriages - a "taboo subject" in "which a baby dies".

Herein lies the great chasm in the abortion debate: the humanity of the child in the womb is denied when little boys and girls are unwanted.

When I returned to Belfast from Toronto, Baby Loss Awareness Week (October 9-15) was in full swing, with plenty of sympathetic media coverage. Notably, a Devon woman has just won a nine year battle to have the five children she lost through miscarriage officially recognised.

She - and others like her - can now apply for a certificate recognising the loss of a baby before 24 weeks during pregnancy.

Previously only those parents who had lost babies after 2018 could apply.

And, in Northern Ireland two Stormont ministers got on board. Sinn Féin's Finance Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald and Ulster Unionist health minister Mike Nesbitt also committed themselves to delivering a baby loss certificate scheme.

Choice

Both are in the "choice" camp when it comes to abortion - and Dr Archibald is a particularly vocal and staunch advocate of a woman's right to choose.

Both these politicians have previously voted for "safe access zones" around abortion centres, where unwanted boys and girls are discarded as medical waste.

I do wonder if our politicians ever stop to think about their own choices.

both sides of their mouth when it comes to children in the womb.

“A Devon woman has just won a nine year battle to have the five children she lost through miscarriage officially recognised”

The World Health Organisation is a prime example. Check out its statements. On the one hand, it promotes "safe" abortions and "qual-

Although, for years, an avid reader, I never felt drawn to Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* - until now. This piece of literature, among others, now comes with a "trigger warning" from Nottingham University. It is among famous works of English Literature that contain "expressions of Christian faith". The rationale for this ridiculous policy? It "champions diversity." Who wants to tell them?

Quote of the week goes to a Muslim politician, the British justice Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, who is opposing attempts by the British prime minister Keir Starmer to fast-track "assisted dying", otherwise known as euthanasia or assisted suicide. Expressing her opposition, the minister declared: "For God's sake, we are not a nation of granny killers, what's wrong with you?" Indeed, the same question could be put to our Dublin ministers!

“The World Health Organisation is a prime example. Check out its statements. On the one hand, it promotes 'safe' abortions and 'quality abortion care' and on the other, it laments the anguish and grief suffered in miscarriages - a 'taboo subject' in "which a baby dies

An optimistic take on the coming of the robot-age

David Quinn

Last week you may have been very impressed to see on the news footage of walking, talking, humanoid-type robots of the sort portrayed in science fiction movies down the years. The robots spoke with humans in a human-like way, carried out tasks like folding clothes, and even danced.

The robots have been produced by a company owned by the tech multi-billionaire, Elon Musk, at this stage arguably the most powerful person in the world not occupying a public office.

Musk is the founder and owner of Tesla, the leading maker of electric cars. He is a key part of the drive to roll out ever more advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI). Another of his companies, SpaceX, is probably now the leader in putting humans and human-made objects into space.

The company recently put an Irish satellite in space, and Musk's ambition is to eventually put people on Mars. Last week, we saw SpaceX launch a rocket into space and then bring it back down to its launching pad for reuse, an incredible technical feat. In the past, each rocket had only a one-time use. Think back to the moon landings.

We also saw a driverless car in action last week, again thanks to Elon Musk. And now we have those robots. Other companies are developing similar technologies, but Musk is certainly at the cutting edge

of all of them. Oh, and he owns the social media platform 'X', formerly known as Twitter.

But before we get entirely carried away, those walking, talking, clothes-folding robots were not all they seemed because they were being operated remotely by humans who were also providing the voices. So, they were not as advanced or as autonomous as they appeared to be and therefore the future promised, or warned against, by sci-fi movies hasn't quite arrived yet.

Possibilities

When I read that, I was a bit disappointed and felt slightly conned. Yes, a future with advanced robots carries dangers, but also possibilities, and it is almost always exciting to see a major new technology being developed.

Still, the day when the sort of robots we appeared to be seeing last week cannot be too far off, and Musk is promising that before long you will be able to buy one for around €20,000 or €30,000, roughly the price of a new car, and as the years pass they will probably get cheaper, and as with cars, you'll eventually be able to buy a more affordable, second-hand one.

Therefore, in the future, many if not most households might have their robot helper who can cut the grass, prepare meals, do the washing, vacuum the floor and even chat to you in ways tailor-made especially for you.

Once upon a time it would have seemed impossible for

almost every household to eventually have a car, and now many households have more than one. Therefore, a future where every household has a robot helper is not as far-fetched as it seems.

How sophisticated and advanced will they be? Opinion seems to vary on this point but for the most part they are bound to be pretty good.

Let's sketch out the more encouraging possibilities. One is that hard-pressed parents, at work all day, long hours spent commuting, having dropped their children off to a carer and collected them afterwards, then get home to do the housework. Except in the not-so-distant future, there will be a robot-helper at home doing some of the more basic and menial tasks.

After you get home, they

can help with the dinner. They would have to become pretty advanced to cook a proper dinner, but you could easily imagine them being able to heat up those oven-ready meals, set the table, serve the meals and clear up afterwards.

“The robots, if they become good enough, will be able to help on both scores, both by providing companionship and by helping around the house”

Doing the laundry is not far-fetched either at some point in the future, and perhaps they

will be able to do the ironing, which would be really labour-saving.

A robot-helper would be the ultimate mod-con.

We already have Chat-GPT or other similar programmes which you can interact with you in various ways. This sort of 'chat' technology will become ever more advanced, and these robots will be able to have increasingly sophisticated conversations with you and their programming will respond to your interests.

Even better, they will never become tired or impatient.

Again, I am playing out the optimistic scenario here, but in the future they will be many more old people than there are now. Many of them will be widowed. A growing number will never have married and will never have had children, or maybe will have had only one child. That child may now be living elsewhere.

In other words, there will be a lot of loneliness, and as people age, they will become more infirm and less able to look after themselves. The robots, if they become good enough, will be able to help on both scores, both by providing companionship and by helping around the house.

Humanity

There can be no theological or moral objection to any of this, unless you simply reject technological solutions of this kind to problems.

A better line of argument than objecting to AI-robots per se, is that our future will

become less human, and these robots will replace many of us, if only because there will be fewer people due to shrinking populations. Instead of having human companions and human workers, we will have robot companions and robot workers. It should, of course, go without saying that a robot will not be able to love you, although it might eventually be able to give the impression of doing so.

I am assuming for the sake of the argument that the worst scenarios some warn against do not take place, chief among them being that AI simply turns on us. Sci-fi movies are full of this kind of thing and Elon Musk himself, among others, says this could happen, although they think it is an outside possibility, rather than probable.

Robots may in time take up a lot of the strain in nursing homes and hospitals. In Japan, primitive versions are already being used to help lift patients in and out of bed for instance, or distribute trays of food.

I am going to stick with the optimistic technology scenario this time out, however. I think it is a bad thing that our populations are growing older and will eventually shrink drastically and families will become much thinner on the ground.

But in a world of this kind, it would be a good thing if sophisticated robots can fill the gap and do the work and provide the companionship that would otherwise not be done due to fewer people being around.



Students demonstrate the Mini Cheetah, a quadruped robot, during presentations to celebrate the new MIT Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge. Photo: CNS/Brian Snyder, Reuters

Harris and Walz are terrifying on abortion

Breda O'Brien

If you listened to Democratic campaigners in the US Presidential elections, late-term abortions do not happen in America, or they happen so rarely that they are not worth mentioning, or they only happen in cases of life-limiting conditions and threats to the life of the mother.

Lyman Stone is a Lutheran demographer who works for the Institute of Family Studies, and he begs to differ.

He agrees that abortions after 32 weeks are a small share of total abortions, and suggests that they comprise perhaps 0.5 per cent. (He says he deliberately chose the lower end of possible figures.)

If we take away those abortions that were due to unsurvivable conditions, perhaps 0.25 % of these babies could have survived if born. Given that there are more or less 1 million abortions in the US, that's 2,500 such abortions.

He compares this to the figures of US homicides, about 23,000 in 2023.

Those so-called rare late-term abortions are the equivalent of more than one in ten of the homicide figures.

He goes on: "In 2023, there were only 11,000 deaths of all external causes (accidents, homicides, etc) of people under age 18."

"Using the CDC's multiple mortality data, these extremely rare late-term abortions are nonetheless the second biggest cause of death among people under 18 (after congenital immaturity)."

Lyman Stone's point is that liberals worry about all causes of death in under 18s - all causes of death except late-term abortions.

Care

Unfortunately, Donald Trump's rhetoric about 'executing babies' if they are born alive after abortion, allows pro-choice supporters of late-term abortions to declare that infanticide is illegal in every US state, so therefore no child is being executed. It allows them to side-step the question of whether babies are being allowed to die.

While Trump's bombastic rhetoric is unhelpful, the commitment to abortion of Kamala Harris and her vice presidential candidate, Tim Walz, is terrifying.

Tim Walz passed legislation in Minnesota that removed the legal obligation to "preserve the life and health" of born-alive infants and replaced it with the word "care", which the co-author of the legislative change, Rep. Tina Liebling, DFL-Rochester, described as "comfort language."

“When known beforehand, rates of survival plummet, perhaps because of low expectations”

In other words, born-alive infants receive only comfort care, that is, no life-saving medical intervention. But is comfort care just avoiding futile interventions?

Outside of the context of abortions, in the case of disabil-

ities like Trisomy 13, Dr Marty McCaffrey, a US neonatologist, says that "many physicians know medical care is not futile but believe the lives that result are not meaningful. A survey of trisomy support group families found 93% were told their child was "lethal," 61% felt pressure to abort and 94% were told their child would die before birth. The fact that many doctors still refer to these conditions as "lethal" speaks volumes. It exposes bias regarding the quality of life, not the ability to survive."

Dr McCaffrey's research shows that survival rates seem to depend on whether so-called 'lethal' conditions are diagnosed before birth. When discovered at birth, medical interventions such as oxygen are administered and the babies live longer. When known beforehand, rates of survival plummet, perhaps because of low expectations.

He states that the 'literature for trisomy [13] babies that receive medical care report survival to 50% at one year for children alive at one month and 20% at 10 years.'

Society

A society which deems life not worth living because of disability is already skidding down a slippery slope. The term used in Ireland is fatal foetal abnormality, yet children do stubbornly survive, albeit with profound disabilities. Their exhausted families have to fight for every support while a beloved child lives.

Children aborted for ableist reasons may have little chance of survival. However, it is not true that most US late-term abortions take place due to life-limiting conditions. Last year, journalist Elaine Godfrey interviewed an 84 year old doctor, Warren Hern, who carries out legal late-term abortions in Colorado.

He has even carried out sex-selection abortions, once for a woman who did not want a girl and once for a woman who did not want a boy. He says half the babies he aborts are not for health reasons.

He answered a hypothetical question about a woman with no health issues presenting at 30 weeks, confirming that he

would abort. He used to have nightmares about the babies he aborted but no longer suffers from them.

“Long after viability, children are being killed under the guise of medicine in US abortion facilities”

There is another kind of nightmare that Democratic candidates want to conceal. They are unwilling to condemn Dr Hern and his gruesome trade but they know that voters are repulsed by it so they pretend that it does not happen or only happens in extreme cases.

Tragically, neither of those defences is true. Instead, long after viability, children are being killed under the guise of medicine in US abortion facilities.

The faith journey of a Myanmar priest



Renata Steffens

Ireland is the host for many international priests and missionaries who come to study, either for a long period or on short trips. Fr Simon (Young) Ye Yint Naing Saw, from Myanmar, is one of those foreign priests. Fr Young lived in Knock and Portlaoise during the Summer months to improve his English, and in exchange, he helped in the parishes.

Talking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Young shared his views of Catholic life in the context of the dictatorship in his native country, his faith, his life as a student in Rome and his experiences in Ireland. Read the interview below.

Q: Myanmar is currently all over the news, as Pope Francis has offered the imprisoned prime minister Aung San Suu Kyi refuge in the Vatican. As a priest from Myanmar living in Rome, what is your opinion on that?

A: Pope Francis offering refuge to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is a significant gesture. It shows that the Holy Father stands in solidarity with the people of Myanmar, especially at a time when much of the world seems to have forgotten the ongoing civil war and suffering in our country. His invitation serves as a reminder to global leaders not to overlook the plight of Myanmar.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has dedicated her entire life to the people of Myanmar. She chose the well-being of her country over her own family. Even if she were released from prison, I believe she would continue to stand by the people. I recall her saying before the coup that her greatest hope is to witness real peace in Myanmar before she dies.

Q: You come from a country where only 1.3% of the population is Catholic. Please, tell us about the moment you heard the Vocation calling and decided to listen to it.



Fr Simon Young

A: Even though Catholics make up only a small percentage of the population in Myanmar, the deep faith in God among the faithful keeps vocations strong. From a young age, I sensed that God might be calling me to the priesthood. It was through my mother that I first encountered this possibility, as she would tell me bedtime stories from the Bible about Adam and Eve, Noah, and Moses. These stories, along with our nightly prayers, helped me develop a familiarity with the faith. However, it wasn't until a powerful moment of recognition, through prayer and reflection, that I truly heard and accepted God's call.

Though many young people in Myanmar are not called to religious life, they have a strong spirit of service and sacrifice for the Church, which is a source of hope for its future.

Q: What are the main difficulties of being a Catholic priest in Myanmar today?

A: Yes, absolutely there are challenges in being a Catholic priest in Myanmar today. Ongoing civil war creates instability and dangerous areas difficult to reach and

serve. Many studies have shown that the main active parishioners are young people and they do in fact end up emigrating because of limited job opportunities. Compulsory military service (most likely) is also a pressure — young men get conscripted and find themselves serving in different zones away from their families (and the Church). Poverty also is a factor, the needs of their families are more important, so young people have to go to work instead of being involved in the life of the Church or follow vocation.

“Everyone in the community poured out, crying with gratitude, just by laying eyes on me. Being able to say Mass with them, and listen to their stories of perseverance reminded me once again of how faith could really move mountains, and that my toil is not in vain”



Fr Young in Knock

Q: You commented in your article for the October issue of the *Intercom* about your ministry, travelling and evangelising. Is that what you plan for your future? To travel around and bring the word to distant villages?

A: Taking the gospel to remote villages has always been a touching aspect of my work as a minister and one I hope to keep up. One of the most heart-warming experiences for me was when I went to a small village that had been isolated without a priest for years in the Ayeyarwady Delta. Everyone in the community poured out, crying with gratitude, just by laying eyes on me. Being able to say Mass with them, and listen to their stories of perseverance reminded me once again of how faith could really move mountains, and that my toil is not in vain.

Since I am also a student of leadership and management at the Gregorian University, then it is my plan to put these skills into my pastoral work. I think this will enable me to not only go and evangelise but also to support the leadership of local churches and community service. And

so, while I still want to bring the word into these hard-to-reach areas, which is also important... I locate it within a context that can build sustainable support and leadership in these places.

Q: You are currently studying in Rome and living in the Irish College there. How did that happen? Could you tell us about your experience in Rome?

A: In 2021, I got an invitation letter from the Irish College but my plans to study abroad fell apart because of COVID-19. In the pandemic, I also lost my diocesan bishop, John Mahn Hsein Hgyi. Resulting from the COVID-19 lockdown, I shared three meals a day at the St Peter Cathedral compound in the Patheingyi Diocese.

Still, in the midst of these tribulations, God gave me a second opportunity to continue my study in Rome. My trip was so exciting because it was my first time travelling abroad alone. When I arrived in Rome, I was late for the start of the semester as classes had already begun, and as I had received a half scholarship,

“There is a large and loyal Catholic population in Ireland, for whom the parish once played a central part in their life. The public events and festivals built a sense of community, and Christianity played a major role in the social services provided to the people”

that almost made me lose this opportunity. But my new bishop sent me here, and with his permission, I quickly applied for my visa and made my way to Rome.

“I was fortunate to meet a family from Myanmar who live there. Their kindness made my transition much easier and I am grateful for their assistance during this important time in my life”

I love living in Rome. I feel I've truly experienced the essence of democracy here. Initially, I was afraid of the police, but now I feel more comfortable. This journey has pushed me out of my comfort zone, and I am grateful for the growth it has brought me.

Q: Did you have any previous Irish connections?

A: I do not have any previous Irish connections. Travelling to Ireland was challenging for me, however, when I arrived, I was fortunate to meet a family from Myanmar who live there. Their kindness made my transition much easier and I am grateful for their assistance during this important time in my life.

Q: You lived in Knock and Portlaoise during the Summer months. Could you tell me about this experience?

A: My encounters in Knock and Portlaoise were quite different. In Knock Shrine, my principal responsibilities were hearing confessions for three hours each day and anointing the sick in the Basilica. Knock is an extremely quiet and contemplative place, which made me feel somewhat like a hermit. The first week was challenging for me as I struggled with the language but eventually, I became more comfortable speaking.

In contrast, my time in Portlaoise offered a more active parish experience. I also participated in prayer meetings, heard confessions, delivered homilies, and celebrated Mass. This environment was much busier and allowed me to engage more with the community. Both experiences gave me an understanding of pastoral work, each in its own unique way.

Q: How is the Church life in Ireland compared to Myanmar and Rome?

A: Church life in Ireland, Myanmar and Rome have both unique qualities and challenges.

There is a large and loyal Catholic population in Ireland, for whom the parish once played a central part in their life. The public



Fr Young in St Peter and Paul's Church, Portlaoise

events and festivals built a sense of community, and Christianity played a major role in the social services provided to the people.

One small but committed Catholic community can be found in Myanmar, where the faithful endure active civil war. It provides support and hope by serving as a unifying force.

Rome is a rich spiritual arena, serving as the Headquarters of the Catholic Church offering possibilities to grow spiritually and to get involved in Global Church activities. The Vatican Palace has the presence of an able administration, giving rise to rational leadership and inspiring occasions.

Q: Do you ever plan to come back to Ireland? Even staying just for the summer months, did you leave friends behind when went back to Rome?

A: Yes, I plan to return to Ireland during the summer holidays, because I want to reconnect with my friends and the faithful community there. My time in Ireland was special, and I formed meaningful relationships that I truly cherish. Leaving those friends behind when I returned to Rome was difficult but I look forward to visiting them again and sharing more encounters.



Fr Young with friends in Ireland



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Out&About

Singing 'In Memory'



ARMAGH: The Jubilus Children's Choir accompanied Mass for the monthly 'Do This In Memory' programme at St Patrick's Cathedral. The Choir was established under the patronage of Archbishop Eamon Martin as a follow on of the successful Schools Singing Programme which has been launched in the Archdiocese of Armagh and the Diocese of Dromore



MAYO: Archbishop of Tuam Francis Duffy presided at the Investiture of Bishop of Ossory Niall Coll, who was admitted to the ancient chivalric Order of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Photo: Michael Donnelly.



LIMERICK: Canon John Daly, former curate, and Canon Des Mc Auliffe PP with parishioners at the Diamond Jubilee Mass in the Holy Rosary Church, Ennis Road.

IN SHORT

Derry Diocese's Children's Rosary

St Columba's Church, Long Tower in the Derry Diocese has launched a monthly children's rosary. The rosary will take place on the last Sunday of each month at 3pm and welcomes children of all ages accompanied by their parents/guardians.

"This prayer group for children is led by Shelaine and Marcella, in accordance with the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy," explained Fr Gerard Mongan, Adm.

This is not the first children's rosary in the diocese. A rosary for children is already happening on the first Saturday of each month at 2pm in St Patrick's Church, Claudy, and another one happens in St Brigid's Church, Carnhill, on the second Saturday of the month, at 2pm.

Children's Rosary is a movement founded in the US over 10 years ago. It is composed

and led by children aged 4-14, and facilitated by adult leaders. The movement, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, is in many parishes, schools and orphanages in more than 40 countries worldwide.

Nuns honoured for their service in Co. Offaly

The local youth centre, St Mary's Youth and Community Centre in Tullamore, Co. Offaly honoured two nuns in recognition of their many years of dedicated service to the youth clubs. Sr Genevieve Hassey and Sr Ann O'Neill were presented with mosaic artwork.

The pieces are portraits of Sr O'Neill and Sr Hassey and were handcrafted by the Ukrainian artist Anna Gorbenko at the centre through the Tús scheme, and were presented to the nuns on behalf of all members of the

youth centre.

Stephen Lawlor, Centre Manager, told the *Tullamore Tribune*: "We are deeply grateful for their contributions and wish them all the best in their future."

The two nuns dedicated much of their time to the young people in the community and have been retired from the centre's board of management since November 2023. However, the legacy of their support and inspiration remains.

Our Lady's Church, Carbally celebrates 200 years

The community of Tramore Parish, Co. Waterford came together to celebrate the bicentenary of Our Lady's Church, Carbally. The anniversary was marked by Mass attended by many members of the community, Bishop of Waterford

and Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan and some former parish priests.

The attendees heard about the church's history told by local Michael Farrell. He said there is little information in the church's records, but gave some insights into the church's construction during the Thanksgiving Mass.

Mr Farrell said the site was donated "by the local landlord, Lord Fortescue who was a protestant." The landlord and George Lymbery of Ballylough, also a protestant, donated money for the Church's construction. The Carbally Catholic population at the time did not have much money, so the building work was done by local volunteers.

During Mass, thanks were given to Bishop Cullinan, Fr Richard O'Halloran PP, Fr Tadeusz Durajczyk, the many people who engage in church ministries and the community who have been supporting the church for 200 years.

After Mass, the congregation gathered at the local Parish Hall for refreshments and a chat.

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



CARLOW: Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty presented the Bene Merenti Medal to Dick Roche (Risteárd de Róiste) in the Askea Parish Church for a life of dedication to the Legion of Mary and a huge contribution to the people of Carlow including those he taught at South East Technological University, formerly Carlow College.



DERRY: Principals from across the Diocese of Derry gathered in prayer and reflection at the start of this school year to consider their vocation and the importance of prayer at the heart of a Catholic school.



CORK: Students from the boys' school Coláiste Chríost Rí celebrating their achievement of exceptional results in the Junior Certificate examinations 2024.



CORK: Fr Michael O'Leary SMA presents Herve Bund of Trócaire a cheque for €8,000 to support the work of Trócaire in Gaza. The money is the proceeds of a collection undertaken by the parish of St Joseph (SMA) Parish Wilton.



LIMERICK: Students from Ard Scoil Ris, North Circular Road, who acted as acolytes and cross bearers at the Diamond Jubilee Mass in the Holy Rosary Church, Ennis Road.



LIMERICK: Karen Franklin and Cathriona Stack at the Diamond Jubilee Mass in the Holy Rosary Church, Ennis Road.

ANTRIM

The Suicide Awareness and Support Group invites you to the Mass of Hope happening on November 10 at 3pm. The event will happen in the Clonard Monastery and all families bereaved and all denominations are welcome. For more info contact 028 9023 9967 or m.walker@suicideawareness.co.uk.

Franciscan Friars of the Renewal talk with the theme 'Marian devotion and the renewal of Church life' takes place at St Mary's Church, Rasharkin on November 12 at 7pm. Following the talk, there will be music and refreshments in St Olcan's Hall.

CLARE

Ennis Parish's blessing of the graves takes place on November 3, at 2pm at Corrovorrin cemetery and at 3pm at Drumcliff cemetery.

CORK

Two days of prayer, praise, worship and healing on November 2-3 from 9.30am to 5.30pm at the Charleville Park Hotel, Charleville, the key speaker is Ros Powell. Confessions, spiritual accompaniment and Mass on both days. Free admission. No booking is required for the conference. For more info contact Pat on 0872505528.

DUBLIN

The Relics of St Sharbel will be visiting the Church of the Holy Child, Whitehall from October 25-28. St Sharbel was a Lebanese Maronite monk who has the most amount of miracles ever recorded in Church history through the intercession of a monk.

KILDARE

The Ashgrove Residents Association is holding a Candle of Light Ceremony on October 18 at 7pm in the Cabin Area. This Ceremony is for the residents who passed away over the years and for the families who live in the estate. Fr John Fitzpatrick PP Carbury will be in attendance.

LEITRIM

Life in the Spirit Seminars happens at St Brigid's

Church, Drumcong, N41 CK74 at 8pm. The event started on October 10 and happens every Thursday until November 21. Every talk counts with a different special guest. All welcome.

LOUTH

Vocation Discernment Weekend for single women aged 18-35 happens on the weekend of October 18-20. For more info contact Sr Mairéad OP, Monastery of St Catherine of Siena, The Twenties, Drogheda, or by email at sienavoc@gmail.com.

MEATH

'Catholic Spirituality Today' happens on October 19 from 12noon to 2pm at Trim GAA Complex, Newhaggard Rd, C15 Y9VA. The talks will touch on themes like spirituality, religion and human formation. For more information or RSVP contact trimdfor@gmail.com.

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.

TYRONE

Rosary prayer every Tuesday at 12.15pm followed by Mass at 12.30pm at St Patrick's Church, Gortin. Adoration happens from 1pm to 5pm on the same day.

WATERFORD

All Saints Party will happen in the Aglish Community Hall on Monday, October 28 from 3pm to 5pm. The event will have games, treats and prizes.

WEXFORD

St Michael's Parish and Net Ministries are organising a Taize prayer evening on October 18 at 7pm. The event takes place in St Michael's Church and involves singing, psalm verses and simple chants with periods of silent reflection. All welcome.

St Bernadette's relics tour continues



Renata Milán Morales

The relics of St Bernadette have toured the dioceses of Clogher, Raphoe, Down and Connor, and Derry over recent weeks, drawing large numbers of Irish pilgrims. This unique visit offers the faithful an opportunity for a profound spiritual encounter with the saint known for her visions of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes, France.

St Bernadette Soubirous became famous after her

apparitions in 1858, which led to the discovery of the healing spring at Lourdes. Today, the site is one of the world's most significant pilgrimage destinations. However, as many Irish Catholics are unable to travel to France, the relics' visit holds special significance.

Ireland has a strong devotion to Lourdes and the apparitions of Our Lady. The arrival of St Bernadette's relics has allowed many to feel a closer connection to the holy site and the message of faith and healing associated with it. Special masses, prayer services, and personal moments of reflection have been held across the country as part of this spiritual event, which continues to inspire and uplift the faithful.



Bishop Lawrence Duffy of Clogher venerates St Bernadette's relics with parishioners. Photo: James McLoughlin



Parishioners from the Diocese of Clogher queuing to venerate St Bernadette's relics. Photo: James McLoughlin



Relics of Saint Bernadette arrive at Derry Saint Eugene's Cathedral, Diocese of Derry.



Parishioners venerating St Bernadette's relics in Derry. Photo: Michael Kelly



Bishop Lawrence Duffy of Clogher leading a prayer in the presence of St Bernadette's relics. Photo: James McLoughlin

THE SYNODAL TIMES

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

From Dublin to the heart of the Vatican: Archbishop John Kennedy reflects on his role in Church’s most crucial office

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
Eoin McCormack

Recently consecrated as an Archbishop in St Peter’s Basilica in Rome by Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Dublin native Archbishop John Kennedy sits down with Eoin McCormack for an exclusive interview on his role in the Dicastery and to discuss his recent ordination. Serving as secretary to the Dicastery since 2022, Archbishop Kennedy was appointed by Pope Francis as Titular Archbishop of Ossero in July of this year, making him one of the most senior Irish officials in the Roman Curia. Archbishop Kennedy was consecrated alongside Archbishop Philippe Curbelié from the Archdiocese of Toulouse, who serves as undersecretary of the Dicastery.

Q. Archbishop Kennedy, I had the great honour of being present at your recent ordination in St Peter’s Basilica in Rome. What was it like to be ordained an archbishop in the heart of the Church?

One of the things I find myself reflecting on, is that when I’m celebrating weddings here in Rome, people’s friends and family have travelled sometimes from very far away places and find themselves gathered in a place they’ve never been before, which itself adds a great amount of energy and dynamism to the proceedings. Probably for the first time in my life, I found myself in that situation. I have an understanding for what bride and grooms feel like! We had a lot of people who travelled from east and west; my family and then all the people who we work with here in the Roman Curia, so it was an incredible coalescing of friendship, support and prayer to celebrate along with my colleague who was ordained with me.

I also felt it to be a very spiritual experience. We began the ceremony at six o’clock and one of the things that we do here in the office

is pause every day and pray the angelus so I found myself as we processed out towards the papal altar just spontaneously praying the angelus – which if you look at the short prayers in between the Hail Marys could be described as a history of the whole event of salvation – so it was a moment of prayer and gratitude.

Q. Can you give readers an overview of your journey from Clontarf to Clonliffe to ultimately serving under Cardinal Ratzinger in what was then the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith?

I was born and baptised in Drumcondra and at age of nine the family moved to Clontarf where we’ve lived

since 1977. Four years later my father died when I was thirteen. He died at the very young age of thirty-seven after a very short illness. He got cancer and he was dead within weeks.

I think what sort of set me on a course from a very young age was the realisation that life could be short – not that it was

automatically going

to be that way – but that it could be.

I think I wanted to do something useful with my life, at least have a life that was meaningful, that you could look back on and say, “I was glad I did that.”

So, gradually I found myself going to mass probably in first year in secondary school, I used to get up early to set the table for the family, go to Mass, go back home, have breakfast and then go to school. And within the school – I was in a Christian Brother’s school on Griffith Avenue – you could perceive that there was an ethos, that this was not just ‘learning stuff for exams’. So, I got involved in helping with after-school



Archbishop John Kennedy

“The Dicastery or the Congregation as it was then – was really a ‘think-tank’ for theological ideas and in terms of the discipline work it was like ‘quality-control’. That was the idea when it was set up in 1542”

activities which included things like bingo and the running of the local disco, but there was an important event which took place on Friday nights which was a prayer meeting where one of the brothers – Br Monaghan, began introducing us to religious life. One of my colleagues went to train to be a Christian brother for some time and two of us became priests. The other is now the Bishop of Cork and Ross, Bishop Fintan Gavin. This group was a very formative experience for all of us which was a lovely preparation for entering Conliffe seminary which I did immediately after school in 1986.

I spent four years in Clonliffe College, three of which I studied at UCD, after which I came to the Irish College in Rome to do the last three years of theological training. I then went back to Dublin as a priest – curate –

in the parish of St Agnus in Crumlin where I still have contact with the parish to today. Thereafter I ministered in Nicholas of Myra in Francis Street until 1998.

After that I came back to Rome for further studies and I have never left since! I was then asked to take on a position here in what was then the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in January 2003 starting under Cardinal Ratzinger with whom I worked for two-and-a-half years.

Q. Did you work closely with Cardinal Ratzinger? What is your memory of him?

Oh yes, the whole dicastery works very closely with all the superiors. It was quite a normal thing to speak with him and to be with him in meetings where



things were decided in his presence.

I'm not sure how people always perceived him but I would probably say that my impressions of him were that he was the opposite of what everybody said. He was a very kind, humble, gentle, shy sort of man, very personable, an excellent sense of humour, incredibly intelligent and linguistically gifted. He had a very deep trust of those who worked

with him; if you came up with an idea, he would very much stand behind you. You could explore things with him and bounce ideas back and forth – we would use the word 'think-tank' these days – but the Dicastery or the Congregation as it was then – was really a 'think-tank' for theological ideas and in terms of the discipline work it was like 'quality-control'. That was the idea when it was set up in 1542,

it had this responsibility of deciding that if it had 'Catholic' written on the outside, it had to be Catholic on the inside. It was all about transparency and about being coherent.

Q. Your Episcopal motto is "Secundum Verbum Tuum" (May it be done to me according to your word). Why did you choose these words from Our Lady for your episcopal ministry?

It's a very familiar text from the Gospel of Luke and I discovered since that there are twelve other bishops worldwide who have chosen this motto. I've had a strong devotion to Our Lady probably from childhood being educated first by sisters, then by the Christian Brothers, and then for eight years I lived in the Teutonic College which is a German college dedicated to Our Lady.

One of the other inspirations for me was Cardinal Desmond Connell. When he became Archbishop of Dublin, he chose the very same motto, and he too had a very strong devotion to Our Lady. And so I chose this motto in many ways as an act of gratitude to him because it was he who released me to study and work in Rome. He could have said "No I need him back", but he had a great generosity towards the universal Church and towards the Pope. He was a member of this congregation, so he knew intimately the needs and workings of this office, so he said "Yes." So, in choosing the motto, it was very nice to carry on a link with Dublin and a link close to my faith.

Q. What are your current responsibilities as secretary to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith?

I am the secretary for the discipline section. In [the life of the Church] there are crimes, then there are more serious crimes which are so serious that they are reserved to the Vatican. When a crime like this happens involving the Eucharist, or the sacrament of penance, or when it involves the faith itself – heresy, schism and apostasy – and then there's what constitutes most of our work which are crimes against the sixth commandment committed with a minor by a cleric. That practically means that a deacon, priest, or a bishop, if they commit an act of sexual abuse with a minor (and that for us is

18 even though in some civil jurisdictions a minor is under 15 or sometimes 16) for us it's 18. It involves also crimes of pornography, downloading, transmitting or creating pornography as well. We have these serious crimes reserved to us. And I as the secretary, who works closely with the prefect and a team of canon lawyers, respond to these crimes.

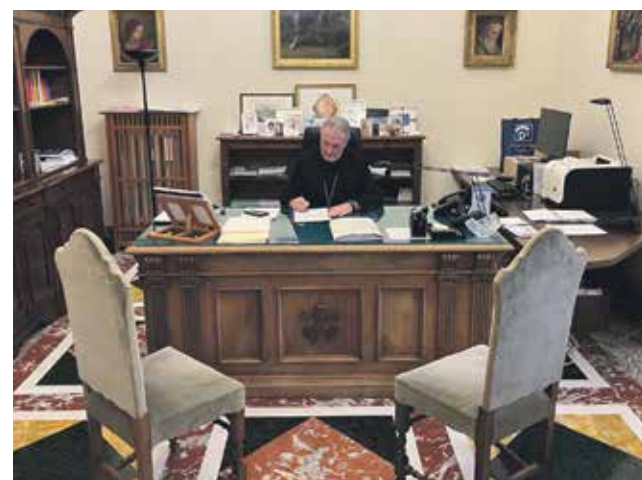
Q. During his recent visit to Belgium, Pope Francis said of the abuse crisis that "we must be ashamed and try to resolve the situation with Christian humility, making every effort to ensure this doesn't happen again." How do you see the Church learning from the mistakes of the past over your time here to prevent such failures in the future?

When you sit in this office and when you see the material that comes in on a daily basis, you are struck very deeply about what victims have gone through, what clerics have allegedly done, and for your part, you are trying to help the Pope in confronting this situation and the words you quoted from the Pope I completely agree with. There are so many effects of this crises, we've seen it in our own country, but we see it here all over the world. We've seen where countries have done incredibly well in responding quickly, we've seen how some individuals haven't responded as well, and we're watching for the places where cases have yet to be brought forward.

“Here we have a situation where the faith gets so damaged they lose their faith in God, but they also lose their faith in humanity”

I can't imagine what it's like to have experienced abuse as a child, and from the material that we read, we can see how deep and how lasting the impact can be on people's lives. It even crosses generations, because if a child is abused it affects his or her ability in so many ways, even in future relationships, even in marriage, in their ability to be a father or a mother, and I would say it even extends into the time when they become grandparents

“When you sit in this office and when you see the material that comes in on a daily basis, you are stuck very deeply about what victims have gone through, what clerics have allegedly done, and for your part, you are trying to help the pope in confronting this situation”



because it's something that they carry with them for their whole lives.

And then it also has an impact on people's faith. The other section in this curial office is the doctrinal section and they're trying to do everything they can to defend and teach the faith; and here we have a situation where the faith gets so damaged they lose their faith in God, but they also lose their faith in humanity.

So, we are at the coal face trying to help in every way that we can, in trying to bring justice to a situation that is crying out for justice. We're trying to restore people's faith in a Church which is trying to do better, which is trying to usher in a whole new culture of honesty and transparency knowing that we have to do better.

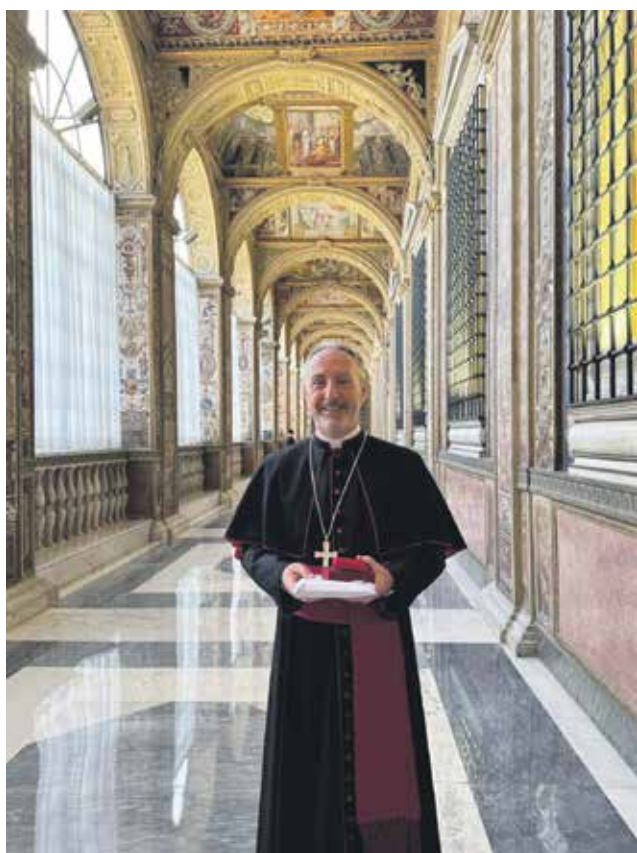
We have sixteen canon lawyers working here five days a week to respond to cases coming in from every country in the world so that we can actually be the Pope's hands and outreach to the world knowing that everything that we do is making some difference. I really would love to wave a magic-wand and make it all go away, that's just not going to happen, it's a fault in humanity but we have to keep vigilant, we have to keep trying and stand ready. And this is the task we have been given and we are doing it with every ounce of energy that we possibly can.

We may not get the publicity, but we're not seeking the publicity. We're like doctors in an operating theatre just helping. If I

can just give one message to the people who have experienced this (abuse) we are here to help and we are doing whatever we can. Just know that we're here.

Q. To finish on a lighter note perhaps, do you find yourself missing home... apart from the weather?!

One of the things you notice in ministry is that each appointment is a new challenge, and a new opportunity. In the parish you had a quite a range of things that could occupy your day – Mass, funerals, weddings, schools, visits to the sick – here your day isn't so varied. You work five days a week and the work that I do is predominantly on all these cases, so I miss the variety. At the same time, what I lack in variety in terms of pastoral ministry, I get to make up in other ways, for example, I get to do a number of weddings every year, already I've been asked to do two confirmations next year (they were very quick off the starting block!), but you get to see the whole world here. I don't travel for work but the whole of the episcopal world travels here, you get to meet practically every bishop in the world on their ad-limina visits, you have groups of students and people passing through. Life is very busy and very full, it's not that I don't miss Dublin but I've just kept going. I've also been to Dublin three times already this year...I don't miss the weather although the temperatures get high here even the Italians are complaining!



Synod participants invited to weigh in on document on women and ministry

KNA

On October 9, 343 of the 365 participants in the second and final session of the synod on synodality gathered in Paul VI Audience Hall for the third day of their four-day consideration of the session's second module, "Relations" (synod agenda).

"Relations" is the title of the first part of the session's *instrumentum laboris*, or working document.

Following the morning general congregation in Paul VI Audience Hall, participants gathered in St Peter's Basilica for a Maronite Divine Liturgy.

"We must remember throughout our synodal journey that the future of our churches and our respective countries, especially those in times of crisis, must not depend solely on geostrategic and geopolitical calculations and analyses," Auxiliary Bishop Paul Rouhana of Beirut, Lebanon, preached. "Let us pray so that the Lord may grant us the strength and the wisdom to overcome these difficulties and lead us toward a future of hope."

The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, led by Cardinal Mario Grech, has imposed tight secrecy on synod participants (Regulations, Article 24), binding them to confidentiality, even with respect to their own contributions,



Synod members, along with Pope Francis, attend the afternoon session in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican October 10, 2024. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez

and even after the session concludes.

Transparency

The regulations stand in marked contrast to the relative transparency of the Synod of Bishops under St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, during which the Vatican routinely published the synod fathers' interventions (speeches). The daily press briefing thus offers an impressionistic, if filtered, glimpse into the synod's proceedings.

Participants in the October 9 press briefing (video) included

- Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Dicastery for Communication and chair of the synod's Commission for Information

- Sheila Leocádia Pires, communications officer of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference and secretary of the synod's Commission for Information

- Archbishop Inácio Saure, IMC, of Nampula, Mozambique

- Archbishop Luis Fernando Ramos Pérez of Puerto Montt, Chile

“The role of the laity, their collaboration with bishops and priests, their involvement in decision-making processes, was one of the themes that emerged most”

- Belgian Deacon Geert De Cubber

The *Vatican newspaper* reported that “the most applauded testimony in the Paul VI Hall was given by a mother, who was deeply concerned about her children, so much so that she asked the Synod for a word of help to raise them in the Christian faith”.

Pires said that the following topics were discussed in 56

interventions (35 on the afternoon of October 8, and 21 on the morning of October 9):

- “the role of the laity, their collaboration with bishops and priests, their involvement in decision-making processes, was one of the themes that emerged most”

- “the importance of encouraging collaboration between priests and lay people and the need for greater participation of lay people—men and women—in leadership roles was emphasized”

- “the presence of lay people is indispensable; they work together for the good of the Church”

- on the suitability of candidates for the episcopate and priesthood, “the bishop decides, but in a synodal Church it is the People of God who must feel responsible for the choice” and know “the requirements of the human and spiritual profile that candidates must have”

- a proposal to “deepen the reflection on the role of lay people in the exercise of pastoral ministry in parishes, because many priests do not have the vocation to be parish priests, instead many lay people who live a peaceful married and family life can carry out functions in the communities”

- “avoiding any type of sexual discrimination” in the ministry of acolyte

- women's contribution to decision-making processes

- “entrusting women with the ministry of listening—that is, thinking of listening as a

predominantly female ministry, complementary to that of the parish priest, the deacon, the catechist”: “women know how to listen, they listen in a different way—it was said in the Hall—and they could do it as a service, totally different from confession”

- “involve women more in diplomacy in a divided and war-torn world”

Ruffini added that the following topics were discussed:

- “the need to connect with the new generations through digital pastoral care”

- African youth must be part of ecclesiastical discernment

- youth ministry should be entrusted to youth—“not to adults who act young”—“so as to enter into dialogue with peers trapped in new age or nihilistic ideologies”

- “children forced to marry young for family reasons; girls forced into prostitution; minors who are victims of human trafficking”

- “seminarians who come from non-Christian families, or who are forced into the priesthood for honour, of people who have to deal with their homosexuality”

- “the Synod does not have the objective of producing documents, but of inspiring actions; therefore, it was reiterated that it will not be enough just to listen to Christian and parish voices, but also to courageous voices that come from outside, so as to create safe spaces for people to come forward”

- “there is little or nothing on childhood initiation: what does the assembly say about the role of parents, grandparents, Christian godparents in contributing to synodality on listening and discernment from childhood? We must raise children so that when they grow up they go towards Christ.”

- an encouragement of the roles of co-responsibility of parents

- the family as a model of synodality

- “the need to accompany victims of abuse within the Church”

- “the Church must approach the vulnerable, and power must be a service and never clericalism”

- “to give greater centrality to the poor, also in the formation of the clergy,” for “the poor are closer to the heart of God, they have authority”

- the loneliness of priests, overloaded with tasks—a burden that has distanced them from the synodal process

- “structures that involve several parishes to help the parish priests in their service”

- a strong “invitation to dialogue, between the churches and in the Church”

- the synod session should “focus more on reality, even in drafting the Final Document ... it was said that it seems that the Church, instead of playing the game, is focused on training, as if a training manual were being written,” instead of a “mission diary”

i Reported by KNA

A growing desire for concrete resolutions at the World Synod

Ludwig Ring-Eifel (KNA)

On 26 October, the World Synod in Rome is to adopt proposals for change for the Catholic Church. It is about transparency, accountability and participation in decision-making. But the path to this is still shrouded in fog.

“Presenting theological platitudes has become rarer. You get to the point more quickly!” With these words, one synod participant sums up the difference between the first and second plenary assembly of the World Synod of the Catholic Church, which has been meeting in the Vatican since 2 October. But will the 320 or so men and 45 or so women come to concrete decisions this time, unlike in October 2023?

The journalists' question elicits hearty laughter: “Of course we will. Or do you think we could travel home and report that it was nice to have spent four weeks talking and praying together?” However, the way in which these decisions are reached and what is ultimately included in the synod's “list of proposals” to the Pope is not only

confusing and at times puzzling for outsiders.

No debates like in parliament

Media observers only learn indirectly how the meetings are organised. This much is certain - they are not debates like those in the Anglican Church Parliament or the Synodal Way in Germany.

At the general assemblies, five speakers present what they consider important, followed by meditation and then the meeting continues. Sometimes a thematic focus is achieved through cleverly coordinated sequences of speeches. And then the number of speeches on certain topics emphasises their urgency. This was the case, for example, for the issue of women's ministries in the church and the treatment of sexual minorities - but also for the official topic of the synod, the “participation of the people of God in decision-making processes.”

The discussions at the tables are different. Although the rules of respectful listening also apply here,

participants occasionally report “very clear” responses. The tables are organised by language - although German is no longer an official conference language at the Vatican.

German speakers at a disadvantage

This puts some participants from German-speaking countries, who cannot speak Italian or Spanish, at a disadvantage. If they try to speak in English in the plenary session, it is unlikely that the Pope, who has little talent for languages, will be able to follow them. He almost never listens to the simultaneous translation and therefore probably only really hears the contributions that are made in one of his native languages. After all, the Synod Secretariat is organised on a polyglot basis, so that not only the ideas presented in Romance languages can find their way into the final document.

In addition to languages, cultures and church-political leanings also lead to the formation of blocs. Unlike in the past, the often conservative participants from Eastern Europe were less defensive and showed

more willingness to accept more liberal opinions, which they would have opposed as “heretical” a year ago. They were also more relaxed in their dealings with Germans, who were labelled “ultra-liberal” in the Italian media.

The pressure from “pressure groups” on the right-wing fringe, which used to flood participants' mailboxes with notes, has decreased. And at the events on the fringes of the synod, the reformers clearly dominate this time.

Self-confident Africans

In the plenary session, the bishops from Africa are reported to be very self-confident. They set standards with their rebellion against the homosexual blessing paper “Fiducia supplicans” in December 2023. Even synod members who do not agree with this “conservative” rebellion agree with the Africans in the proceedings. “The days of solitary decisions by a prefect of the faith are over. And when Cardinal Fernandez tried this again with his rejection of the diaconate for women, the synod did not let him get away with it,” said one synod participant, summa-

rising the events of the first week surrounding the “Fernandez report” on the issue of women.

A new debate was therefore scheduled for 18 October. On this day, the working groups on ten special topics (including hot topics such as the women's issue or celibacy), which had actually been removed from the synod, were to answer questions from the synod members.

The spirits that Francis called

Some are now calling for a similar debate on these topics to take place in June 2025, when the working groups present their final results. They would actually have to present these to the Pope alone. However, the “courage for more synodality at all levels” called for by Francis now seems to be a spirit that he called for and can no longer get rid of.

“It is astonishing that a pope like Francis, who tends to make lone decisions, has set the principle of co-determination in motion and can no longer put the brakes on it,” say synod participants. Whether the Pope feels comfortable with this is not certain. It is said that he spoke even less frequently in the plenary session than in the previous year.



World Report



Edited by Brandon Scott
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When all else fails, pray



Members of the Polk County Sheriff's Office pray outside a shelter in Lakeland, Florida as Hurricane Milton approached. Photo: OSV News/Jose Luis Gonzalez, Reuters

Abortion decriminalised in Jalisco, Mexican cardinal decries 'murder of innocents'

Cardinal Francisco Robles Ortega, archbishop of Guadalajara, the capital of the Mexican state of Jalisco, spoke out strongly against the recent decision of that state's Legislature to decriminalise abortion up to 12 weeks of gestation, calling it the "murder of innocents".

Following debate and a vote, the penal code of the state of Jalisco was amended October 4 to make it the 11th Mexican state that decriminalises abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Sinaloa state decriminalised abortion up to 13 weeks of pregnancy. In Coahuila, where the law related to how abortion is to be punished has been invalidated, clear limits have not yet been established.

The push for decrimi-

nalising abortion in Mexico accelerated during the recently concluded six-year term of former president Andrés Manuel López Obrador. His party, the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA, by its Spanish acronym), took advantage of its large majority in many states to push for pro-abortion legislation.

On social media, Cardinal Robles charged October 6 that both the governor and the legislators want to make people believe that if abortion is performed in the first 12 weeks, "nothing happens to the new being" and that it's possible to "eliminate the foetus", which they seek to normalise as a "legal right to terminate a pregnancy".

However, the cardinal insisted that "it should be called what it is: murdering

the innocent", and emphasised that the work of legislators "should be focused on protecting life, not ending it".

"One day they will stand before God and have to answer why they passed a law intended to destroy innocent lives, which is what abortion is," the cardinal warned.

The governor of Jalisco, Enrique Alfaro, is expected to publish the reform in the state's official newspaper in the next few days to make official the changes to the penal code, as he will not veto the law, according to declarations he made to the media.

ACI Prensa, CNA's Spanish-language news partner, consulted the Archdiocese of Jalisco's Life Ministry on the subject, which in a written response urged the governor

to reconsider his decision, stating that "there is still time to stop this calamity, with the courage to not go down in history as the governor who supported a legislature [approving] of death".

In a text sent to ACI Prensa, the ministry also emphasised the need for "the reasons that support the arguments of those of us who are in favour of life to be heard".

The ministry also criticised that the state Legislature's vote "does not reflect the opinion of the majority of people in the state of Jalisco". However, the Life Ministry recognised and lamented that "the anti-culture of death has been gaining ground and has come to dominate the mentality of a representative portion of the population".

Franciscan friar (40), noted for support to LGBTQ community, leaves ministry

A Franciscan friar has left ministry after 12 years. Fr Daniel Horan is currently the director of the Centre for the Study of Spirituality and professor of Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Theology at St Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana and has spoken publicly on theological matters related to justice and inclusion in support of the LGBTQ+ community in the Catholic Church and society, including offering scholarly supported criti-

cism of US bishops' statements.

Speaking after the decision, Fr Horan said: "After a substantial period of prayerful discernment, I have concluded that I am no longer called to remain a friar minor. I share this news publicly, with the support of my religious superiors, on an important and symbolically significant day for the Franciscan family.

"For a number of years already, I have been reflecting on where the Holy Spirit

is calling me and what that might mean for my vocation to religious life and priestly ministry. Like so many people in all walks of life, the global pandemic was a particular catalyst for this discernment, providing an occasion for deeper reflection on key and even existential issues. I was wrestling with what was most important in life, where my passions rested, and where and how God was calling me to serve the Church and world."

Vatican roundup

Cardinals say Europe is becoming the Church's new 'peripheries'

● Cardinals-designate from three continents have recently said the Church in the global south has a lot of nonmaterial gifts to share with the West, including the richness of priestly vocations and a joy-filled faith.

"When the Holy Father is talking about peripheries, I think the peripheries are moving. ... Maybe the peripheries are moving towards Europe," Tokyo's Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi, SVD, said in response to a question from CNA during a press briefing on the Synod.

The Japanese bishop's comments on the contributions of the Church outside Europe were echoed by Archbishop Ignace Bessi Dogbo of Korhogo, Ivory Coast, and Archbishop Jaime Spengler, OFM, of Porto Alegre, Brazil, who also participated in the press briefing.

Vatican to unveil restored baldacchino in St Peter's Basilica this month

● The Vatican has announced that the completed restorations on the soaring baldacchino over the central altar of St Peter's Basilica designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini will be unveiled on October 27.

Journalists donned hard hats on Tuesday to get a sneak peek of the nearly finished restorations, climbing the scaffolding all the way to the top of the 94-foot-tall canopy.

The lofty vantage point revealed how the baldacchino's intricately decorated Baroque angels, cherubs, bees, and golden laurel branches — formerly darkened by centuries of dust and grime — have now been restored to their bright gilded glory.

Film composer to conduct Vatican concert for poor and homeless

● The Vatican announced Thursday that Oscar-winning film composer Hans Zimmer will conduct a special concert for the poor and homeless at a Vatican City venue.

Mr Zimmer, known for his scores of films like 'Gladiator', 'The Lion King', 'Interstellar', and 'Pirates of the Caribbean', will conduct some of his most memorable movie melodies at the event.

The legendary composer will take centre stage at the Vatican's 'Concert with the Poor' on December 7 in the Paul VI Hall.

Three thousand people in need, cared for by volunteer organisations around Rome, will be invited to enjoy the live performance. At the end of the concert, they will receive a takeaway dinner and other necessities.

Conflict between Opus Dei and Spanish diocese

● Pope Francis has appointed the dean of the Roman Rota Tribunal, Archbishop Alejandro Arellano Cedillo, as pontifical commissioner to address the conflict between Opus Dei and the Diocese of Barbastro-Monzón over the "Torreciudad complex" in Spain.

The Holy See Press Office announced the appointment on October 9, after the bishop of Barbastro-Monzón, Ángel Pérez Pueyo, indicated last month that he had requested the Vatican's intervention.

Upon learning the news, Opus Dei issued a brief statement in which it said that "the authorities of the prelature will be at the complete disposal of Archbishop Arellano, collaborating in whatever is necessary, with filial adherence to the Holy Father".

Brazilian cardinal open to ordaining married priests in region

● Brazilian Archbishop Jaime Spengler, OFM, one of the 21 men chosen by Pope Francis to become a cardinal in the next consistory on December 8, confirmed plans for a trial run of an Amazonian rite of the Mass and urged "openness" to the idea of married priests to serve certain communities facing a shortage of priests.

The 64-year-old is a prominent figure in the Church in his home country and throughout South America, heading both the Catholic bishops' conference of Brazil and the Latin American bishops' conference (CELAM).

A descendant of German immigrants, Archbishop Spengler has been a member of the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor for more than 40 years and a priest for almost 34 years.

British cardinal says a legalised 'right to die' becomes a 'duty to die'



Charles Collins

If assisted suicide is legalised in Britain, "a key protection of human life falls away", according to Cardinal Vincent Nichols, President of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and Archbishop of Westminster.

In a statement that was read to all his parishes last weekend, the English cardinal says the right to die "can become a duty to die".

Last week, Labour MP Kim Leadbeater announced she was introducing a private members Bill allowing terminally ill, mentally competent people to end their own life with a doctor's assistance.

Labour Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer – who has supported assisted suicide – has promised MPs a "free vote" on the issue, meaning they could choose to vote with their conscience rather than along party lines.

The "Choice at the End of Life Bill" was introduced to Parliament on October 16.

"Compassion has to be at the heart of this conversation and I hope that, for the small part that I will play in this piece of work, I can try and facilitate a robust but also respectful and compassionate debate, which gives you guys some comfort and hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel," Leadbeater told reporters.

"Things need to change. The law as it stands is not fit for purpose," she said.

Debate

In his message, Cardinal Nichols acknowledged the debate on legalising assisted suicide will continue for months, both in society and in Parliament,



Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster. Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

before a definitive vote is taken.

The cardinal warns supporters of the issue need to "be careful what you wish for".

“That the circumstances in which the taking of a life is permitted are widened and widened, making assisted suicide and medical killing, or euthanasia, more and more available and accepted”

"No doubt the bill put before Parliament will be carefully framed, providing clear and very limited circumstances in which it would become lawful to assist, directly and deliberately, in the ending of a person's life," he says.

"But please remember, the

evidence from every single country in which such a law has been passed is clear: That the circumstances in which the taking of a life is permitted are widened and widened, making assisted suicide and medical killing, or euthanasia, more and more available and accepted."

Legal

Some form of assisted suicide is legal in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, parts of the United States and all six states of Australia.

Gordon Macdonald, CEO for Care Not Killing, last month noted the expansion of the use of assisted dying

in the countries where it has been legalised.

"At a time when we see how quickly the safeguards in countries like Canada, Belgium and the Netherlands have been eroded so disabled people and those with mental health problems, even eating disorders are now being euthanised, I would strongly urge the Government to focus on fixing our broken palliative care system that sees up to one in four Brits who would benefit from this type of care being unable to access it, rather than discussing again this dangerous and ideological policy. With suicides in the UK being at record levels financial worries and the NHS in crisis, now is not the time to encourage or facilitate more suicides

“The suffering of a human being is not meaningless. It does not destroy that dignity. It is an intrinsic part of our human journey, a journey embraced by the Eternal Word of God, Christ Jesus himself. He brings our humanity to its full glory precisely through the gateway of suffering and death”

by legalising assisted suicide and euthanasia," he said.

In his statement read out in the Diocese of Westminster last weekend, Cardinal Nichols admitted the proposed change in the law may be "a source of relief to some," but added "it will bring great fear and trepidation to many, especially those who have vulnerabilities and those living with disabilities".

"What is now proposed will not be the end of the story," the cardinal said.

He also warned a "right to die" can become "a duty to die".

"A law which prohibits an action is a clear deterrent. A law which permits an action changes attitudes: That which is permitted is often and easily encouraged. Once assisted suicide is approved by the law, a key protection of human life falls away," Cardinal Nichols writes.

Pressure

"Pressure mounts on those who are nearing death, from others or even from themselves, to end their life in order to take away a perceived burden of care from their family, for the avoidance of pain, or for the sake of an inheritance," he continues.

"I know that, for many people, there is profound fear at the prospect of prolonged suffering and loss of dignity. Yet such suffering itself can be eased. Part of this debate, then, must be the need and duty to enhance palliative care and hospice provision, so that there can genuinely be, for all of us, the prospect of living our last days in the company of loved ones and caring medical professionals. This is truly dying with dignity," the cardinal said.

Nichols adds the "radical change in the law" being proposed risks bringing about for all medical professionals "a

slow change from a duty to care to a duty to kill".

The cardinal, of course, also turned to more religious reasons to oppose the proposed law, saying it is "being forgetful of God belittles our humanity".

"For people of faith in God – the vast majority of the population of the world – the first truth is that life, ultimately, is a gift of the Creator. Our life flows from God and will find its fulfilment in God," he writes.

“Our life is not our own possession, to dispose of as we feel fit. This is not a freedom of choice we can take for ourselves”

He said the clearest expression of the Christian faith is "every human being is made in the image and likeness of God".

"That is the source of our dignity and it is unique to the human person. The suffering of a human being is not meaningless. It does not destroy that dignity. It is an intrinsic part of our human journey, a journey embraced by the Eternal Word of God, Christ Jesus himself. He brings our humanity to its full glory precisely through the gateway of suffering and death," Cardinal Nichols writes.

"We know, only too well, that suffering can bring people to a most dreadful state of mind, even driving them to take their own lives, in circumstances most often when they lack true freedom of mind and will, and so bear no culpability," he continues.

"But this proposed legislation is quite different. It seeks to give a person of sound will and mind the right to act in a way that is clearly contrary to a fundamental truth: Our life is not our own possession, to dispose of as we feel fit. This is not a freedom of choice we can take for ourselves without undermining the foundations of trust and shared dignity on which a stable society rests," the cardinal says.

Catholic university to explore faith-based ethical uses of AI

John Lavenburg

About five months after Pope Francis spoke of the responsibility political leaders have to ensure that artificial intelligence is used ethically, the University of Notre Dame has announced that it will develop faith-based frameworks for ethical uses of the technology.

Notre Dame, one of the preeminent Catholic universities in the United

States located in South Bend, Indiana, announced on October 10 that it has been awarded a €493,000 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to develop the frameworks – a process that will begin with a one year planning project.

The development of the frameworks will be led by the Notre Dame Institute for Ethics and the Common Good. Meghan Sullivan, the institute's director, said that "this is a pivotal moment for technology ethics".

"[Artificial General Intelligence] is

developing quickly and has the potential to change our economies, our systems of education and the fabric of our social lives," Ms Sullivan, who is also the university's Wilsey Family College Professor of Philosophy, said in a statement. "We believe that the wisdom of faith traditions can make a significant contribution to the development of ethical frameworks for AGI."

According to an announcement from the university, the one-year planning project to begin the process

of developing the frameworks will engage and build a network of leaders in higher education and technology, as well as those of different faiths to broach the topic of ethical uses of AI, and eventually create the faith-based ethical frameworks.

"This project will encourage broader dialogue about the role that concepts such as dignity, embodiment, love, transcendence and being created in the image of God should play in how we understand and use

this technology," Ms Sullivan said. "These concepts – as the bedrock of many faith-based traditions – are vital for how we advance the common good in the era of AGI."

The project will culminate in September 2025 with a conference that will focus on the most pressing faith-based issues relating to the proliferation of AGI and provide training and networking opportunities for leaders who attend, according to the university.

Letters

Ensuring next generation holds faith

Dear Editor, I must comment on Bro. Richard Hendrick's insights on the need for deeper and more meaningful catechesis [*The Irish Catholic* – October 10, 2024]. His emphasis on not just imparting information, but leading people into an experience of prayer and connecting them with the rich heritage of our faith, is both timely and essential.

Ireland is at a critical juncture, as secular ideologies increasingly shape our culture

and politics. This ideological wave has resulted in many distancing themselves from the Church and its teachings. Unfortunately, politicians play a significant role in pushing this agenda which often marginalises the faith and moral values that once grounded Irish society. In this context, the Church must redouble its efforts to provide good catechesis, not just for the young but for all people who seek truth and spiritual nourishment.

As Bro. Richard points out, prayer offers something far deeper than any secular mindfulness trend or self-help solution. It brings us into a trusting relationship with God, allowing us to navigate life's challenges with peace and a sense of being held in God's loving hands. This is precisely the message that needs to be heard in today's world, where many are overwhelmed by distractions, stress, and the absence of a spiritual foundation.

If we fail to teach the richness of our prayer tradition, we risk losing the language of faith altogether, as Bro. Richard notes. The Church must rise to the challenge and offer catechesis that awakens not just the mind but also the soul. Only through this holistic approach can we ensure that the next generation holds firm in faith, despite the secular forces around them.

*Yours etc.,
Kevin Doherty
Wexford Town*

A brave commitment to truth and justice

Marie Collins has been brave in the face of unjust accusations, particularly in light of recent comments by Cardinal Gerhard Müller [*The Irish Catholic* – October 10, 2024]. Her decision to speak out once again, after being unfairly portrayed in the book *Vatican Confidential*, demonstrates her commitment to truth and justice.

As an abuse survivor and a leading advocate for child protection she has shown incredible courage over the years, becoming a voice for the vulnerable and marginalised. Her departure from the Pope's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in 2017 underscored her frustration with the Vatican's slow response to critical reforms. To see these same issues resurface, with her integrity being questioned in a public forum, must have been profoundly disheartening.

Yet, Marie Collins has responded with dignity, highlighting once more her deep commitment to truth. It is regrettable that she has had to endure such challenges when her sole aim has been to hold Church leaders accountable and ensure justice for survivors. Her thoroughness and care in presenting the facts show a commitment to transparency that the Church should be supporting, not undermining.

In an era where the Church's moral authority is under scrutiny, it is people like Marie Collins who bring hope for

real change. Her voice has been, and continues to be, an essential reminder that the Church must not only apologise but also act with integrity when it comes to safeguarding children and addressing past failures.

*Yours etc.,
Sally Doyle
Cherry Orchard, Dublin 10*



Combat antisemitism in all its forms

Dear Editor, The recent anti-Semitic slur made by Fine Gael Councillor Punam Rane, where she claimed that "the entire US economy is ruled by the Jews, is ruled by Israel" was shocking. Such statements feed into stereotypes that have long fuelled hatred and discrimination against the Jewish community.

Antisemitism in Ireland is alarmingly on the rise. Ireland has garnered a reputation as one of the most antisemitic

countries in Europe. How has this come to pass? Why does this ancient and vile prejudice remains so rife in our society today?

While it is important to critique political actions and policies – such as those of the Israeli government – this must never translate into targeting Jewish individuals or communities. The two are not synonymous, and conflating them only serves to heighten fear and division. Jewish people in Ireland, who

already face isolation, now feel even more vulnerable and unwelcome in a country that prides itself on tolerance and inclusivity.

Councillor Rane's public apology, while necessary, does little to undo the harm caused by her words. We must take stronger steps as a society to combat antisemitism in all its forms.

*Yours etc.,
Anthony Kennedy
Donegal Town, Donegal*

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.

The erosion of our rights

Today is the day that the Health (Termination of Pregnancy Services) (Safe Access Zones) Act 2024 comes into operation in Ireland, marking an important landmark in Ireland's drift towards authoritarianism and progressive restrictions on civil liberties.

This Act designates 100m Safe Access Zones around certain premises where abortions are or may be taking place, where "conduct" aimed at impeding access or influencing decisions in relation to termination of pregnancy services will be prohibited.

What this will mean in the practical application of the law remains to be seen but it is certain to have a chilling effect. In the UK, Isabel Vaughan-Spruce was arrested in November 2022 for silently praying in a censored "buffer zone" in Birmingham. She was subsequently released, re-arrested and then won a payout of £13,000 from West Midlands Police in acknowledgement of her unjust treatment, and the breach of her human rights, for unlawful arrest.

Vaughan-Spruce was arrested under a local authority 'Public Space Protection Order' which attempted to ban all expressions of "approval or disapproval with respect to issues related to abortion services, by any means". While Vaughan-Spruce was vindicated in her arrest for thoughtcrime, the UK Government has announced that from October 31 2024 "safe access zones" will take effect around all abortion clinics in England and Wales. Similar rules were implemented in Northern Ireland in September 2023, and in Scotland last month.

This means that after October 31 there will be "safe access zones" in place across the whole of the two neighbouring islands. In the UK, "safe access zones" will apply in all public areas within 150 metres of all abortion clinics compared to the 100m in Ireland.

Only time will tell whether arrests similar to that of Vaughan-Spruce will be carried out under the different legislative acts. It is also unclear whether Vaughan-Spruce's defence will hold up under the new laws – either in the UK or in Ireland.

The wording of the legislation in each of the jurisdictions is remarkably similar, with any

conduct that will either intentionally or recklessly influence a person in relation to availing of, or providing, abortion services. Under such wording, even blessing oneself for the Angelus when walking in the vicinity of a healthcare clinic could be construed as 'recklessly influencing'.

Notwithstanding the ridiculousness of such a scenario, it should not be considered far-fetched to imagine that malicious complaints will be manufactured by activists against anyone it considers to be in disagreement with them. The nature of thoughtcrime is that it is impossible to prove what is in someone's mind but also impossible to disprove whether someone may have been recklessly influenced by something that may or may not have happened inside your head.

Under the Act, 'places of religious worship' are exempt from the legislation meaning that prayers in a nearby Church or the hospital Chapel, are protected – but that the adjoining grounds of such buildings (it should be noted that it is only places of worship that are 'buildings' are protected) fall under the new legislation.

It is easy to think of a Church that is within 100m for a healthcare facility providing abortion, especially as nearly all of the healthcare facilities in Ireland were established by religious orders. The effect of the law in Ireland is that prayer in private grounds owned by the Church or orders within 100m of an abortion provider may be subject to the long arm of the law.

The State may argue that this is a necessary, proportionate and legitimate restriction on freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and religious freedom, for what it considers to be a 'public good' but the arguments put forward may be used for any policy of restriction that future governments wish to put forward as a public good.

What has happened is that the right to worship, assembly, free speech have all been subordinated to the right to 'reproductive services', also known as abortion. Rights that were inalienable and sacrosanct have become secondary rights. Ultimately, in this form, they are not rights at all but benefits to be offered or taken away by the government of the day as it sees fit.

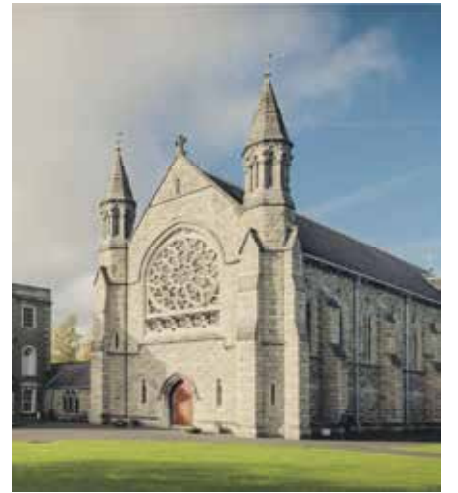
Your Faith

A career of
service and
pastoral care

Jackie Whelan

Page 39

The Irish Catholic, October 17, 2024



Fr Martin Hunter OP

Fr Martin Hunter's missionary life

“May that missionary spirit never decline in the hearts of Irish priests, whether members of missionary institutes or of the diocesan clergy or of religious congregations devoted to other apostolates,” said St John Paul II to the audience in Maynooth in 1979, encouraging all attendants to live the missionary call of the Church.

Fr Martin Hunter's life as a missionary has been marked by faith, commitment, and service across various countries and cultures. His journey reflects the Church's mission as described in *Ad Gentes* from the Second Vatican Council: “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.”

After seven years of Dominican formation, Fr Martin was assigned to St Aengus Parish, Tallaght. Reflecting on his early ministry, he says, “There I learnt a lot: how to baptise, marry, and sadly, to bury. Also, how to sit and teach seven, eight-year-olds all about Holy Communion.”

Jessica

In preparing children for their First Communion, he created an imaginary friend, Jessica, to help them understand their faith. “Jessica was very sick, and we were all invited to write get-well cards. A whole Christian Communion Community was created around Jessica.”

However, his ministry soon took a new direction. “With my first year hardly completed, I received



Fr Martin's life is a proof of the Church's missionary spirit that continues to inspire priests, religious, and laity, says Renata Milán Morales

a phone call from the Provincial, Fr Damian Byrne OP, assigning me to our Retreat Centre to take over the school retreat programme.” Lacking experience with this age group, Fr Martin was assisted by two Dominican sisters, Maire and Geraldine, who helped him renew the youth retreat dynamic. “My Dominican sisters, with international missionary experience, were to be my professors in this new evangelisation mission.”

“During the four years in Portugal, my eyes, ears, and heart were opening to an extraordinary and challenging world”

Fr Martin's next assignment took him to Portugal, where language and cultural challenges were present. “I tried to get a grip on the language but failed. I learnt to ‘say’ the Mass perfectly in Portuguese, but talking to the locals was a problem.” Despite this, he focused on ministering to the English-speaking community, working with international schools and foreigners whose first language was English. His work with the Irish Dominican Sisters at an international

school further strengthened his pastoral ministry. “During the four years in Portugal, my eyes, ears, and heart were opening to an extraordinary and challenging world.”

After Portugal, Fr Martin was given the opportunity to serve in Argentina. “My motivation to opt for Argentina was more personal than provincial.” Despite being unfamiliar with Spanish or the mission's specifics, he soon found his way in Paraná. “Paraná won my heart because I arrived in a time of cultural celebration: folklore, music, dance, and *asado*. But the reality of the *barrio* in the morning was clear that people struggled for work.”

Challenging

His work in Paraná, particularly in the San Agustín barrio, was both challenging and rewarding. The Irish Dominican community, including the Dominican sisters, played a key role in building Christian communities and addressing the needs of the poor. Family catechesis, led by the sisters, was especially important in strengthening these communities. Fr Martin recalls a moving moment early in his time in San Agustín: “Someone in the parish died. I was nervous, but Sr Caitriona OP took over and

guided the prayer. She invited the family to make one last gesture of farewell, drawing the sign of the cross on the deceased's forehead. I did too. If there was ever an evangelising moment of grace, peace, and love, that was one.”

“Thanks to the generosity of the Irish Dominicans, ‘Radio Santo Domingo’ became a reality, offering spiritual and practical support to the people”

After 33 years in Argentina, Fr Martin's mission ended in 2021. “A very difficult goodbye had to be endured. Argentina was socially in dire straits, and our farewell was sore.” From there, he was sent to Chimbote, Peru, where social conditions were even worse. “The city of Chimbote was pretty ‘wild west’ territory,” with poverty, unemployment, and a difficult environment.

In Chimbote, Fr Martin became involved in a Dominican project focused on social communication, helping establish a radio station to serve the community. “Thanks to the generosity of the Irish Dominicans, ‘Radio Santo Domingo’ became a reality, offering spiritual and practical support to the people. Our evangelising reaches farmers in the distant mountains and fishermen in Chimbote who need Good News.”

Fr Martin's journey then took

him to Uruguay, where he became involved in *Lectio Divina*, a form of contemplative Scripture reading. “I had the good fortune to obtain a diploma in *Lectio Divina* under the tutelage of Carlos Mesters.” This practice became central to his ministry in Montevideo and other parts of Uruguay.

Fr Martin's final years of missionary work were spent back in Argentina, this time in Buenos Aires. His pastoral work took him into the *barrios*, including the parish of Santa Brígida de Irlanda. “The Irish Dominican Sisters, alongside some Argentinians, lived among the people and promoted community building and spirituality.” These years were marked by a deep connection to Dominican spirituality, which had been at the heart of his ministry from the beginning.

Important

“What is most important is the mission. It has been gifted to me to mission as an Irish Dominican.” His story shows the missionary spirit of the Church - a spirit that has driven him across borders and cultures, bringing the Gospel to countless people along the way.

In the words of St John Paul II, “May a spirit of partnership grow between the home dioceses and the home religious congregations in the total mission of the Church, until each local diocesan church and each religious congregation and community is fully seen to be ‘missionary of its very nature.’” Fr Martin's life is a proof of the Church's missionary spirit, one that continues to inspire priests, religious, and laity.

Finding meaning in wonder: A journey of the heart



Brenda Noriega-flores

Have you ever found yourself pondering the meaning of life? If so, you're not alone! Most people, especially between 13 to 30 years of age, frequently wrestle with these big questions. Wonder is part of what it means to be human and, as St Thomas Aquinas wisely noted, it's a deep desire for knowledge.

During our younger years, it's natural to seek answers about who we are, where we come from, and where we want to go. These questions can be both exhilarating and daunting. But here's the truth: Life without wonder feels empty. Genuine wonder doesn't just come from grappling with the unknown; it originates from a deeper source within us. It's God who plants that sense of wonder in our hearts, inviting us to seek him out and all goodness, truth and beauty in the world.

When we move through life on autopilot - just going through the motions without dreaming or being surprised by new experiences - we risk losing touch with our true essence. Our hearts can become weary and unresponsive. In other words, our hearts get old.

Abundantly

Jesus tells us that he came so we could have life abundantly (Jn 10:10). This isn't just about our hearts beating faster or our lungs taking in more air. It speaks to two deeper realities: eternal life and how we perceive and engage with the world around us.

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis' letter to young people (and the rest of the Church), reminds us that Christ is alive and that he desires for us to be fully alive. But what does this mean, especially when we're tossed by life's challenges?

When someone asks for directions, we typically start by understanding where they are. Similarly, to navigate our lives effectively, we must first recognise our own starting point. This involves understanding who we are, how we feel and our relationship with God.

By reflecting on our place in the world and articulating our under-

standing of ourselves in relation to God, we can chart a path toward the ultimate goal for every Christian: holiness. In other words, we can learn to live in abundance.

Now, I am not talking about a financial abundance, but the type of abundance that - with or without material possessions - makes life matter. Abundance in Christian discipleship means to leave it all so that we can receive. I know that sounds contradictory but please, bear with me. We are invited to renounce any type of security and usually, it is more about mental securities or comfort zones. When we have grown wounds or resentments toward a friend, relative, classmate, co-worker or even a stranger, it is easier to walk away from that relationship than to do the hard work of reflection, healing and reconciliation. Similarly, when we have biases against a person for whatever 'otherness' we may perceive. It is more comfortable to ignore differences and a Christian call to communion and recognise God in the other and all of creation.

The same goes for those times when we opt against getting involved in the face of suffering or injustice and we turn a blind eye for fear of being negatively affected if we are to speak up; or when we get so wrapped up in our list of tasks and accomplishments that we leave no time for listening attentively to the pain and needs of others.

“As we grow and mature, we should strive to maintain our enthusiasm and openness to new realities. Every moment offers a chance to renew our sense of youthfulness”

When we withdraw from a suffering world or challenging conversations or relationships due to fear, resentment, apathy or anger, our hearts start getting old, and instead of living, we turn into walking bodies that breathe and even reason but do not dream and love. Trust me, I've been there. But Pope Francis reminds us that seeking security and comfort can limit our horizons and dampen that youthful excitement we should carry throughout life. As we grow and mature, we should strive to

“Embrace the capacity of wonder and dreaming that define youthfulness, and don't let comfort or apathy rob you of that joy. Ask questions, explore your feelings and don't be afraid to seek out Christ who the greatest mystery of life is”



A pilgrim prays during the closing Mass during World Youth Day at Campo da Graça in Park Tejo in Lisbon, Portugal, August 2023. Photo: OSV/Bob Roller

maintain our enthusiasm and openness to new realities. Every moment offers a chance to renew our sense of youthfulness (*Christus Vivit*, 160).

Stepping out of our comfort zones may feel challenging, but it's essential for growth as disciples. Living in abundance means fostering relationships with God and all of creation, allowing our hearts to be renewed by love, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and

patience (Col 3:12-14). To do otherwise is to live in scarcity.

So, dear friends, I invite you to ponder God's infinite love for you. Allow yourself to wrestle with and rest in the idea that you are cherished beyond measure. Let God heal any biases, divisive thoughts, narratives or worldly expectations about success.

Embrace the capacity of wonder and dreaming that define youthfulness, and don't let comfort or

apathy rob you of that joy. Ask questions, explore your feelings and don't be afraid to seek out Christ who the greatest mystery of life is. Each step you take on this journey brings you closer to discovering the meaning and fullness of your unique life.

i Brenda Noriega-flores is a doctoral candidate in theology and education at Boston College Clough School of Theology and Education.

A career of service and pastoral care



Jackie Whelan

My brother, Paul McLeod, was diagnosed with a brain tumour at the age of twenty-five. He died eighteen months later, in March 1990. He was the youngest in the family, loved by everyone. We were totally devastated, but our parents' faith was strong. They spoke about 'God's will'. I questioned how a loving God would want to take away the life of a young man who was just starting out in life. Could I have faith in this God any longer?

Fundamental

In search of answers to the fundamental question, I discovered a BA degree in Theology and Philosophy at All Hallows College, Drumcondra. Four years of college! My husband and I wondered if we could afford for me to give up my job as a preschool Montessori teacher. We were raising three children and money was tight. The children were seven, ten and fourteen years old. I was firmly committed to my primary calling as a wife and mother and I wanted to be in the kitchen when the children got home from school, just as my mother had been for my siblings and for me. I was happy to discover that I would be home almost every day before them. My mother said, "I spoke to Fr X and he said that you'll never get a job with a theology degree". My friends thought I was mad. "You'll be the most qualified flower arranger in the parish" was their argument. My husband, who was, and still is a saint, was fully supportive of my plan.

In September 1994, at the age of thirty-eight, I embarked on my degree. It was a voyage of discovery, 'faith seeking understanding', permission to argue about Church teachings, to explore the question of free will. Mind-blowing! Managing family needs as well as classes and assignments was very challenging,



DCU All Hallows Campus, Dublin

but we got through the first year and I passed my exams.

“I was at a retreat in all Hallows last week. What a beautiful place! I'm not surprised that people abandon their children to go there”

At the beginning of second year, I discovered that our fourth child was on the way, a complete surprise! We wondered whether God was guiding me to abandon my studies because childcare costs would put a further strain on our finances. Our daughter, Emma was born in June 1996, a delightful, happy little girl. With the support of family and friends, I was able to return to All Hallows that September. However, where would I be without a good measure of Catholic guilt? Throughout my time in All Hallows, I worried about the

impact of my studies on my family, in terms of the time and financial commitments. When a neighbour stopped me on the road one day and said, "I was at a retreat in All Hallows last week. What a beautiful place! I'm not surprised that people abandon their children to go there", another layer was added to my guilt. I prayed for guidance and plodded on.

Years passed

The next couple of years passed. My classmates and I spoke about life after All Hallows, including job opportunities. I began to wonder if Fr X and my friends had been right in their opinion about the value of a theology degree. I was convinced that God would show me the way but, in the meantime, I needed a job. Soon after I finished in All Hallows, I started working for Aer Rianta marketing, based in Dublin Airport duty-free. As I was standing one day beside shelves stacked with Irish whiskey, a former lecturer from All Hallows came along. He smiled and said, "I see you've moved

from promoting one Spirit to another".

“The staff and students were very welcoming, but some older Marist Fathers weren't too keen on the idea of a female chaplain. A parent asked, 'Why are you the chaplain, could they not get a priest?'”

Life's direction changed once again when I met a classmate who asked if I had ever considered school chaplaincy. Was this a new calling? I secured an interview with the Dublin Diocesan Chaplaincy Team. Though I was unsuccessful, the team directed me to a post-graduate course in Chaplaincy Studies. The part-time course was in Mater Dei Institute and lectures were held in the evening. I was able to continue working in

Dublin Airport!

Towards the end of the Chaplaincy course, I heard that the Marist Fathers in Chanel College, Coolock were looking for a part-time chaplain. After a successful interview, I started my new job in February 2000. It wasn't without its challenges. The staff and students were very welcoming, but some older Marist Fathers weren't too keen on the idea of a female chaplain. A parent asked, "Why are you the chaplain, could they not get a priest?"

Over twenty-four years later, I still work in Chanel College. In my early days, I realised that without a teaching qualification, my position would always be temporary. While continuing to work as chaplain, I completed the Higher Diploma in Education in UCD. I later wrote a thesis and gained my master's degree in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care.

Curriculum

As a religious education teacher, I followed the Junior Cycle curriculum, which included teaching about the major world religions. It had never occurred to me when I was studying in All Hallows, a Catholic college, that one day I might be teaching a group of students about the five pillars of Islam!

A career in education is a career of service and pastoral care. My work over the years has taken many twists

and turns but the guiding principle has always been my belief in doing God's will and helping others as best I can. Apart from chaplaincy and teaching, I worked as the Home-School-Community Liaison Coordinator for a few years, and I currently teach students with special educational needs. Becoming a special education teacher involved another training course, this time in the Church of Ireland College, Rathmines. I was asked one day if I had "gone over to the Protestants"!

I've been fortunate to have had some great experiences. Some highlights were a visit to Rhode Island and on another occasion, Idaho, USA with Cooperation Ireland, an award from President Mary McEleese for my work with Gaisce, the President's Award, and earlier this year, participation in a global forum on Educational Inclusion at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. For all the positives, there are heart-breaking times in school. In 2016, one of my students took his own life in the middle of the Leaving Cert exams. In 2024 alone, I have attended the funerals of a former student who was killed in a car accident, another who died following a drug overdose and a third who died by suicide. It's hard to find words of comfort to offer heartbroken families. They often feel the need to place the blame somewhere: on society, the education system, including God.

Some time ago, I was asked if all my studies had given me the answers to the 'Faith Question' that led me to All Hallows thirty years ago. There is no simple answer to this question. However, if faith can be defined as, "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrew 11:1), then surely, we must look for signs all around us, in order to nurture the seeds of our faith. St Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) the mystical doctor of the Church, wrote, "Christ has no body now on Earth but yours."

I firmly believe that every time we reach out in love to help others, and every time others reach out to us in the same manner, we encounter God as a real presence in our lives. We can say, 'Yes, I have faith'.

“If faith can be defined as, ‘the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’ (Hebrew 11:1), then surely, we must look for signs all around us, in order to nurture the seeds of our faith”

The battles we fight



Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

‘Choose your battles’ is generally good advice. It’s wise to acknowledge that not every fight can be won; that we may not have the resources to sustain a war on many fronts; that victory sometimes costs us more than we can afford. But if you’re born (or baptised) on the battlefield, things become more complicated. It’s hard to resist the urge to take up the cross and march like a crusader into every engagement, especially when we see the destruction around us, know the stakes are high and suspect we are outnumbered.

The practice of offering an abbreviated form of Pope Leo XIII’s prayer to St Michael at the end of every Mass is, once again, widespread. And that’s a good thing, because if living our Catholic faith in today’s world could be summarised in a single word, ‘embattled’ would be a strong contender.

Fight

And yet, God does not call any of us to go looking for a fight. That’s because we’re not often equipped to win a contest against an enemy that prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour, (see 1

Pt 5:8). Perhaps more importantly, we also tend to forget that the battle God calls every one of us to engage in is a spiritual one, fought on the open fields of our hearts.

That is why the Catechism of the Catholic Church includes an entire section devoted to what it calls ‘The Battle of Prayer’. As the Catechism explains, “Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer... all teach us this: prayer is a battle. ... The ‘spiritual battle’ of the Christian’s new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer” (CCC 2725).

“We skip time with God when we are pressed for time. And that makes us vulnerable to one of the enemy’s most effective traps: self-sufficiency”

After we’ve abandoned mortal sin, after we’ve decided to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, prayer is most often where we falter. Prayer is the most sustained battle of the Christian life. It is where our faith is both fed and tested. It is how our quest for salvation plays out. In prayer, we open our hearts to God. Through prayer, God opens his heart to us.

If we want to follow Christ, we must pray. And that is never easy. What is easy is the discouragement we face when we try and fail. Despite our best intentions, the daily Rosary or Mass easily become more

like every other day. We skip time with God when we are pressed for time. And that makes us vulnerable to one of the enemy’s most effective traps: self-sufficiency.

Approaching life and all its challenges alone and on our own power separates us from the grace of perseverance and sets us up for failure. We know that we cannot live the life of Christ apart from Christ. And yet, that is precisely what many of us attempt to do.

But it’s also easy for us to get distracted; to allow the values of our world to get a foothold in our hearts. When that happens, prayer can seem like a waste of time, an empty exercise in futility, a font of false hope, or an escape from reality. In the cloud of the disappointment that descends when God does not give us everything we want, we struggle to carry on. We ask ourselves whether prayer makes any difference. And when we aren’t convinced that it does, we either give up or seek our fortunes in battles we were never called to fight.

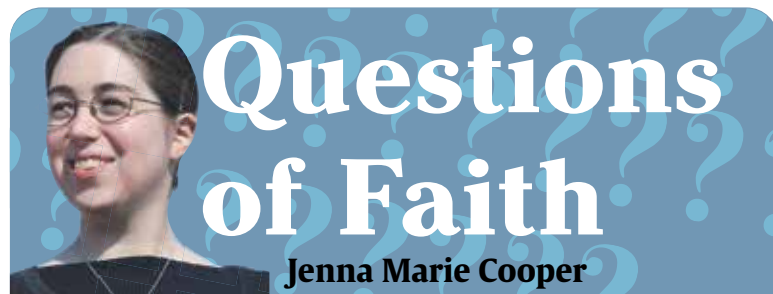
Victorious

But to be victorious in the battle of prayer, we must acquire and cultivate the virtues that, ironically, arise from prayer: humility, trust and perseverance. Humility teaches us not to be surprised by our own weaknesses. It considers how the distractions we face in prayer reveal our attachments to things other than God. Trust teaches us to rely completely on the Holy Spirit, the divine presence and power given to us in God’s time and in his way. Perseverance overcomes our laziness, but it also purifies our motivations and draws us into the love that makes all things possible.

In the great scheme of things, all the other battles we choose to fight serve only to distract us from the main event. Because prayer is what transforms and guides us, it is the only battle worth fighting, and the only one we must - by God’s grace and our effort - win.

Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, wife and mom of eight grown children.

“To be victorious in the battle of prayer, we must acquire and cultivate the virtues that, ironically, arise from prayer: humility, trust and perseverance”



Questions of Faith

Jenna Marie Cooper

What are ‘non-sacramental’ marriages?

Q: I have heard some priests refer to ‘non-sacramental’ marriages on the annulment question. I presume these are civil marriages. Is it so? Or do these marriages become ‘non-sacramental’ due to the various other faults in the couple’s status?

A: Terms like ‘sacramental marriage’, ‘non-sacramental marriage’, ‘civil marriage’, and ‘valid marriage’ all refer to slightly different things, even though they often involve overlapping concepts.

The Code of Canon Law gives us a basic definition of marriage itself in Canon 1055, when it describes the marriage covenant as that “by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children.” The code goes on to note that marriage is a permanent union (see Canon 1056) which can only be contracted by the free consent of the parties involved (see Canon 1057).

A matrimonial union that includes all the necessary elements - i.e., the true freedom of the parties, a basic knowledge of what marriage involves, an openness to begetting new life and the honest intention of both parties to enter into a permanent and exclusive relationship - is called a valid marriage. A valid marriage is essentially a marriage where the wedding ‘worked’ and produced a true bond. In contrast, an attempted marriage where one of these necessary elements was absent would be considered an ‘invalid’ or ‘null’ marriage.

Understood in this way, marriage is an ancient institution, as old as human society itself. Since marriage has existed since the dawn of history, it obviously pre-dates the Church and, therefore, also the sacraments. And even today, marriage is not uniquely Christian. God created marriage as part of his creation of humanity in general. Thus, men and women from all cultures and religions can and do enter into true matrimony.

A valid marriage that is not a Christian marriage is a non-sacramental marriage, which is more properly called a ‘natural marriage’. A natural marriage is not a sacramental marriage, but this does not mean that a natural marriage is somehow sinful or bad. It’s good to

recall that holy Old Testament figures like Abraham and Sarah had a merely natural marriage, as did Mary and Joseph.

But when we are considering Christian marriage, the Code of Canon Law tells us that “(marriage) has, between the baptised, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. Consequently, a valid marriage contract cannot exist between baptised persons without its being by that very fact a sacrament” (Canon 1055). So, for Christian spouses, their marriage has essentially been ‘upgraded’ by Christ to include the graces of a sacrament in addition to the goodness found in a natural marriage.

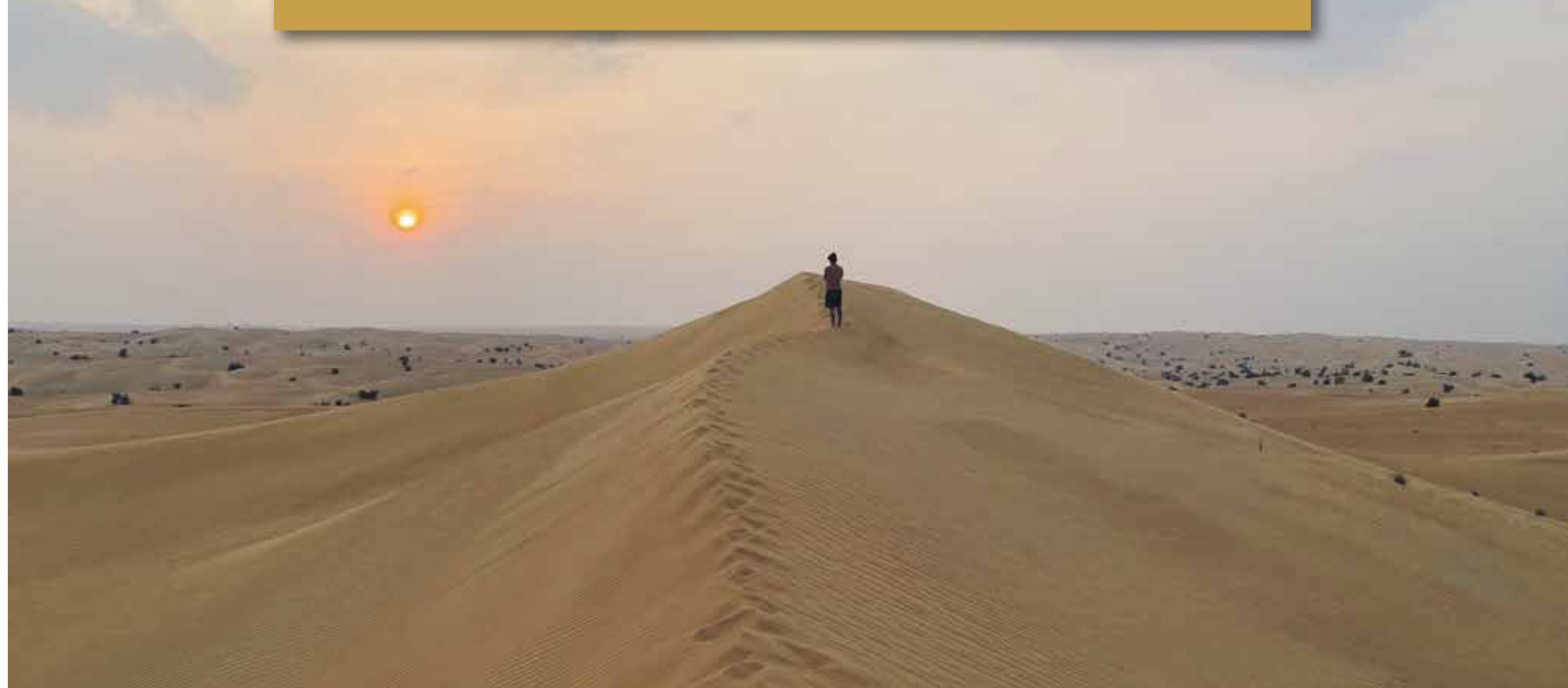
In broad terms, a ‘civil marriage’ simply describes any marriage, religious or not, that is recognised by the secular state government. But the phrase often takes on a particular nuance when applied to Catholics. This is because Catholics, and only Catholics, are bound to observe ‘canonical form’, meaning that Catholics are required to marry in a specifically Catholic ceremony, or else to obtain a special dispensation from their local diocese.

If a Catholic marries in a non-Catholic ceremony without a dispensation from canonical form, then their attempted marriage is not valid in the eyes of God and the Church, even if their union is recognised by the secular government. So, for Catholics who are, for example, married by a justice of the peace without the needed dispensation, we might call the resulting invalid union a ‘merely civil marriage’.

Although it might sound surprising, the sacramentality of a marriage is not usually relevant to the work of a marriage tribunal. Typically, a tribunal seeks to investigate only whether or not a true marriage - that is, either a valid but merely natural marriage, or a sacramental marriage between Christians - ever took place. Since a non-sacramental marriage can still be a valid marriage, and because the tribunal’s concern is with whether the marriage in question was valid, a tribunal generally would not investigate whether a marriage was sacramental.

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.

Refugees, immigrants and Jesus



On borders everywhere in the world today we find refugees, millions of them. They're easily demonised, seen as a nuisance, a threat, as invaders, as criminals fleeing justice in their homelands. But mostly they are decent, honest people fleeing poverty, hunger, victimisation, and violence. And these reasons for fleeing their homelands strongly suggest that most of them are not criminals.

Irrespective of the fact that most of them are good people, they are still seen most everywhere as a problem. We need to keep them out! They are a threat! Indeed, politicians frequently use the verb 'invasion' to describe their presence on our borders.

What's to be said about this? Do we just let everyone in? Do we select judiciously among them, letting some in and keeping others out? Do we put up walls and barbed wire to block their entry? What's to be our response?

Perspectives

These questions need to be examined from two perspectives: pragmatically and biblically.

Pragmatically this is a huge issue. We cannot simply open all borders and let millions of people flood into our countries. That's unrealistic. On the other hand, we may not justify our reluctance to let refugees into our countries by appealing to the bible, or to Jesus, or to the naïve rationalisation that 'our' countries are ours and we have a right to be here while



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

others don't unless we grant them entrance. Why not?

For Christians, there are a number of non-negotiable biblical principles at play here.

“Any teaching, preaching, pastoral practice, political policy, or action that is not good news for the poor is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, whatever its political or ecclesial expediency”

First, God made the world for everybody. We are stewards of a property not our own. We don't

own anything, God does, and God made the world for everybody. That's a principle we too easily ignore when we speak of barring others from entering 'our' country. We happen to be stewards here, in a country that belongs to the whole world.

Challenging

Second, the Bible everywhere, in both testaments of scripture, is clear (and strong) in challenging us to welcome the stranger and the immigrant. This is everywhere present in the Jewish scriptures and is a strong motif at the very heart of Jesus' message. Indeed, Jesus begins his ministry by telling us that he has come to bring good news to the poor. Hence, any teaching, preaching, pasto-

ral practice, political policy, or action that is not good news for the poor is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, whatever its political or ecclesial expediency. And, if it is not good news for the poor, it may not cloak itself with the Gospel or with Jesus. Hence, any decisions we make vis-à-vis refugees and immigrants should not be antithetical to the fact that the Gospels are about bringing good news to the poor.

Moreover, Jesus makes this even clearer when he identifies the poor with his own person (Whatever you do to the least of my people, you do to me) and tells us that at the end of the day we will be judged by how we treat the immigrants and refugees (Depart from me because I was a stranger and you didn't welcome me). There are few texts in scripture as raw and challenging as this one (Matthew 25, 35-40)

“A more compelling moral case can be made suggesting it can be rather self-serving to close the borders after we ourselves are in”

Finally, we also find this challenge in scripture: God challenges us to welcome foreigners (immigrants) and share our love, food, and clothing with them because we ourselves were once immigrants (Deuteronomy 10, 18-19).

And this isn't just some abstract biblical axiom. We are all immigrants here and are challenged by our faith never to forget this, not least when dealing with hungry people on our borders. Of course, those of us who have been here for a number of generations can make the moral case that we have been here a long time and are no longer immigrants. But perhaps a more compelling moral case can be made suggesting it can be rather self-serving to close the borders after we ourselves are in.

Biblical

These are biblical challenges. However, after they are affirmed, we are still left with the practical question; what realistically do we (and many countries around the world) do with the millions and millions of men, women, and children arriving at our border? How do we honor the fact that the land we live in belongs to everyone? How do we honor that fact that, as Christians, we have to think first about the poor? How will we face Jesus in judgment when he asks us why we didn't welcome him when he was in the guise of a refugee? And how do we honor the fact that almost every one of us is an immigrant, living in a country we forcibly took from someone else?

There are no easy answers to those questions, even while at the end of the day we still need to make some practical political decisions.

However, in our pragmatism, in sorting this out, we should never be confused about which side Jesus and the Bible are on.

“How do we honor the fact that the land we live in belongs to everyone? How do we honor that fact that, as Christians, we have to think first about the poor? How will we face Jesus in judgment when he asks us why we didn't welcome him when he was in the guise of a refugee?”

You do not know what you are asking

Is 53:10-11
Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22
Heb 4:14-16
Mk 10:35-45 or 10:42-45

The Sunday Gospel

Fr Joshua J. Whitfield



Simone Weil, that strange yet beautiful soul, once wrote that genuine love of neighbour meant being able to ask the question, "What are you going through?" What she meant was that neighbourly love demands sympathy and empathy. It demands that a person cares, beyond the self, for the other.

'What are you going through?' Real love asks such questions; that was her point. There is no such thing as love otherwise.

Which, if true, is tough to think about. Especially given the behaviour of James and John in this passage from Mark's Gospel. Such a question - What are you going through? - even the inkling of the question, seems light years away from the minds and hearts of these sons of thunder. I've always considered this one of the coldest moments in all the gospels.

Context

Step back and note the context. Just moments before, in a moment of vulnerable prophecy, Jesus dares to open himself to his disciples, his friends. "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem," Jesus tells them. He tells them that he, the "Son of man," will be condemned, mocked, spit upon, scourged, and killed (Mk 10:33-34). I've always imagined Jesus saying this not with calm, cool clarity - like he's reading an agenda or an itinerary - but with the

sort of tender apprehension of a person who in hard times seeks the solace of friends. I imagine Jesus' voice a bit timorous as he risks sharing this prophecy with those he thought cared for him. It is a poignant moment.

“What is on the minds of James and John? What is making them so emotionally deaf to the words of Jesus? It's their own pathetically imagined glory”

Which is why I think it so cold, so lacking in empathy, that in almost the same breath James and John say to Jesus, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask you...Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (Mk 10:35-37). It's shocking, really. It's as if they don't even hear him.

Jesus had just confided in them about his impending suffering and death. But what is on the minds of James and John? What is making them so emotionally deaf to the words of Jesus? It's their own pathetically imagined glory.

Matthew, I've long wondered, was perhaps so embarrassed by the question that the way he tells the

story, it's their mother who makes the awkward request (Mt 20:20-21). But it doesn't matter. Whoever asked the question, it was a cruel moment. And it's a haunting reminder to me of just how cold my soul can get sometimes, how sometimes I can get so self-infatuated that I forget the One who suffered for me, died for me, with an often-unrequited love. It reminds me of the cruelty of selfishness.

So, what are we supposed to do with that? First, I think it's helpful to remember how God is not like us; at least, he is not like us when we are being self-centred. Or, to put it better: we are not like God - not at all - when we're being selfish. In this, as Isaiah said, his ways are certainly not our ways (Is 55:8).

Compassionate

Rather, God is compassionate. He is the 'servant' Isaiah hoped would bear the guilt of others in suffering (Is 53:11). As the author of Hebrews put it, he is a priest who can sympathise with our weakness (Heb 4:15). That's what Jesus shows us - the beautiful condescension, the compassion, the philanthropy of God. He shows us in himself - because, of course, he is one with the Father - that God doesn't do to us what James and John did to him. Because God cares; his desire includes us.

Which means, in the end, that if the Christian life is a matter of conforming ourselves to Christ, if holiness is a matter of union with Jesus, then a measure of such conformity and union should be our capacity for sympathy. "If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar" is how John put it (1 Jn 4:20).

Or, as we began - but now knowing where such love comes from - it's as Simone Weil said. To love means to be able to ask your neighbour what he or she is going through. And then it means to listen and to care.

i Fr Joshua J. Whitfield is pastor of St Rita Catholic Community in Dallas and author of *The Crisis of Bad Preaching* and other books.



St James the Great, Guido Reni, 1575-1642.

“If the Christian life is a matter of conforming ourselves to Christ, if holiness is a matter of union with Jesus, then a measure of such conformity and union should be our capacity for sympathy. “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar” is how John put it”

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



The impact of political and social dynamics

There are many things that make me proud to be Irish – high on the list is our peace keeping service with the United Nations.

On **The Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Tuesday) security expert Declan Power outlined the work our troops do overseas, with particular reference to our peacekeepers in Lebanon, under pressure at the moment because of the spreading war in the Middle East. He didn't want to see them pulling out because they were providing useful and independent information on what was going on in the area and supporting vulnerable civilians during lulls in the fighting and bombing.

The topic resurfaced on the same show last Friday, after UN positions had come under attack, by Israeli defence forces. Fortunately, there were no fatalities and no injuries to Irish soldiers, but the situation continues to be worrying. Lieutenant General Sean Clancy, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, stressed how the UN troops were putting themselves in the way of harm in the service of others and for that we should be grateful. He pointed out how it was tough on their families as well, though they managed to keep Wi-Fi going so the troops could stay in regular contact with home.

That evening on **Driv-**



United Nations

etime (RTÉ Radio 1) it was reported that the UN force's cameras were being sniped at and that the Israeli Defence Forces were conducting a review of what happened. Minister of State Jennifer Carroll MacNeill spoke of the 'escalating and dangerous situation', criticised Israel's 'overwhelming overreach' and wanted the return of hostages.

There's a lot in the media of late about conspiracies and the far right. On **Drivetime** (RTÉ Radio 1, Friday). David Gilbert of online magazine **Wired** spoke to Sarah McInerney, but his comments begged a few questions. For example, he suggested that right wing conspiracy theories were born in part out of mistrust of mainstream

media, governments and institutions. But there was little insight into why this was. It might be Government misinformation, or politicians getting elected on one policy (e.g. flaunting their pro-life credentials) and then changing position when elected, sometimes to the complete opposite. It seems they go 'on a journey' (mysterious!) This mistrust was seen as a problem, yet we are constantly told that to counter far right disinformation, we must have a healthy mistrust as a default position, and be fact checking everything.

Controversy

Protests at libraries about the questionable gender and sex related content in school and

library books was given as another example of far-right theories being 'taken wholesale' from the USA, but there was no acknowledgement of the legitimate concerns of parent in this matter.

The Hard Shoulder (Newstalk, Friday) dealt with the related topic of hate speech and hate crime. Senator Eileen Flynn was not happy that the hate speech element of the upcoming bill was being removed, as she thought there was a need for it. Shaykh Dr Umar Al-Qadri, a Muslim cleric, was more moderate – favouring hate speech legislation but more concerned of the need to protect free speech and have clear definitions. People should have a right to criticise his religious ideas and

PICK OF THE WEEK

THE MEANING OF LIFE

RTE One Sunday October 20, 10:30pm

Joe Duffy speaks with CEO of Tilting the Lens, disability advocate and accessibility consultant, Sinéad Burke.

EWTN NEWS PRESENTS: THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

EWTN Monday October 21, midday

Coverage of the synod in Rome.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

RTE One Wednesday October 23, 10.35pm

Fact based drama series about a seminary student who inveigles his way into the lives of vulnerable elderly people - especially a celibate homosexual professor who is a man of genuine faith.

values, he said. A reference to an increase in hate crime was mentioned, but how can this be when there isn't yet any hate crime legislation? He mentioned people inciting others, but incitement is already illegal, so the need for fresh legislation wasn't clear. It was a rather one-sided item, balanced only by a clip at the start from Senator Michael McDowell criticising the proposed legislation.

Another controversy was discussed on **Lunchtime Live** (Newstalk, Tuesday) – teachers wishing to be employed in Catholic schools having to have a certificate in Religious Education. That sounds reasonable enough, but some are not happy about it and see it as an obstacle to

employment, as most schools are Catholic run and many teachers are not Catholic or not practising if they are.

Whatever the case you'd certainly want those teaching the Catholic faith and preparing children for the sacraments to be people of faith themselves. Sadly, that's not always the case.

There were no fewer than four voices against the measure, with no-one to defend the requirement, apart from a few texters. Presenter Andrea Gilligan did ask a few challenging questions and made some points for the other side of the argument, but, in the cause of fairness and impartiality, they should have had some defenders speaking on the show.

Film

Aubrey Malone



Assuaging a decade of monetary guilt

The secret of acting, as Spencer Tracy liked to say, is not to be caught at it. A lot of praise has been heaped on the Irish film industry in recent years but one of the faults I find about many of its features is the tendency to strive too hard after its effects, which often means they're lost.

King Frankie (15A), on the contrary, is a masterpiece of understatement. There isn't a false note struck in its 134-minute running time. Every member of the cast creates a unique impression on us through some verbal or visual expression, most of them having only a very limited amount of screen time to

do so.

The film is vividly shot. There are some gorgeous vistas of Dollymount Beach and its environs as well as of a salubrious country hotel. Behind these pretty facades lurk secrets and lies.

Frank Burke (Peter Coonan) is a Dublin taxi driver attending the funeral of his father. Flash back ten years to his daughter's eighth birthday party.

He was pulling strings then to stay economically afloat. This brought out an ugly streak in him. Can he forgive himself for it and find peace at last?

Exactly what strings he pulled isn't fully explained. The film works on implication



King Frankie (15A)

and innuendo. By the end, in many ways, we're no wiser than his long-suffering wife Jenny (Olivia Caffrey).

Writer-director Dermot Malone's debut presents us with a fundamentally decent

man. He's keeping a tenuous hold on his life as circumstances spin out of control. Malone builds the tension in a manner that threatens to explode in every scene.

It only does once. I won't

say how. But even here he keeps a lid on it, directing it in an almost poetic manner. The music score becomes a kind of orchestral counterpoint here as elsewhere in this cathartically atmospheric work.

Coonan is a revelation, conveying false slickness as he tries to stave off creditors and prevent further debts amassing. His desperation put me in mind of everyone from Jack Lemmon in *Glengarry Glen Ross* to the Willie Loman of *Death of a Salesman*.

When the Celtic Tiger stopped roaring in this country many people lost their jobs, their marriages, their fortunes – and in some cases even their lives. The memory of such tragedies is what

makes this film so resonant. King' Frankie becomes a kind of microcosm of these people. He searches for the holy grail of consumerism before becoming swamped under its excesses.

Marlon Brando once said that no matter how many films he made, people kept asking him about a particular scene he did, the one in *On the Waterfront* where he tells his brother "I could have been a contender." He believed the reason was because everyone in the world could identify with a character who fell short of his ambitions.

Frank Burke is such a character. His path to a tenuous redemption is transmitted to us with vision and depth.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



The Armada, Spain's great descent on England

1588: The Spanish Armada and the 24 Ships Lost on Ireland's Shores,

by Michael B. Barry
(Andalus Press, €23.99 / £19.99)

Peter Costello

Legends of "Spanish gold" haunt the western shores of Scotland and Ireland, from Tobermory to the Blasket Sound.

As his subtitle indicates a good part of Michael Barry's space in his latest book is taken up with tracking down and unravelling the often complicated reports and claims made over the centuries about the twenty-four Irish shipwrecks, which will provide Irish readers with a localised interest in the Spanish Armada. But only as part of the aftermath of what was the original Spanish plan, the invasion of England itself.

Back in 1988 a plethora of books about the Armada were published in England, for the most part reflecting the long standing patriotic celebration of Queen Elizabeth I, Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh.

Vast

However, since then a vast amount of new material has appeared in Spanish, derived for the most part from the great maritime archive in Madrid. With his grasp of Spanish Michael Barry has been able to take advantage of these publications (little known in England) to write a book for a popular readership which is truly based on the very latest scholarship. So if you want a book to read to understand what happened in 1588 this would be the one to begin with.

The essential heart of this book is what the Spanish really intended. Their scheme was to use their huge fleet to gain control of the Channel and part of the North Sea, and under its protection to transfer from the



Wreck of the *Girona* on Antrim coast

Spanish Netherlands their soldiers in barges across the water to land at Margate. This has always seemed to me to be a strange notion.

A little while ago, researching the wreck of the *Deutschland* about which G. M. Hopkins wrote his famous poem, I found that it was not a unique incident. In the days of sail over three hundred ships a year were being lost along the Channel and the lower North Sea. It was one of the most danger-

ous sea areas in the world.

The idea that one could land troops at Margate -- Margate of all places -- and then simply march on London, capture the Queen and remove her from the throne, installing a selected Catholic monarch in her stead, was unlikely to have ever succeeded.

Neutralise

It seems that the Spanish did not plan to occupy the whole country, merely to neutralise

it and stop English pirates preying on the Spanish ships carrying gold and silver from America to Europe. But the new aristocratic elite in Tudor England, grown rich on lands confiscated from the Church, were unlikely to have given in easily. This project would surely have become King Philip's "March on Moscow" if the Spanish had got ashore.

As it was, as Barry describes in fresh detail, the Armada was damaged by fire-ships at the battle of Gravelines, and the decision was made to return to Spain, sailing north around Scotland and striking out into the Atlantic, well away, it was planned, from the coastlines of Scotland (then a separate country) and Ireland.

Barry emphasises that the Armada was not defeated in the conventional sense; it merely "retreated in good order" as the military say: only a fraction of its ships were lost, the other two thirds reached Spain safely. So though it was not a victory for the Spanish, it was no spectacular victory for England. It was all down in any case to what became known as the "Protestant Wind" that scattered the Spanish fleet.

Deceived

But it has been argued that the navigators were deceived by the maps of Ireland, on which our west coast was misdrawn. Coming down from Scotland the Spanish ran into the north coast of Mayo, which they did not know was there, which

meant disaster and death for some ships.

“This is all vividly narrated. But one aspect Barry passes over. The defeat of the Armada gave England a false belief that the country could not be invaded”

Even for the Spaniards who got ashore there was little welcome. Some got away to Scotland, among them Francisco de Cuéllar, whose narrative of his misadventures gives a rather unflattering description of Gaelic society in that time. Well over 1,110 Spaniards, it was reported to the Queen, were "put to the sword".

This is all vividly narrated. But one aspect Barry passes over. The defeat of the Armada gave England a false belief that the country could not be invaded. Belloc in his book about warfare in England refused to discuss the historic invasions of the country. Later foreign armies might land in Ireland or Scotland, but they were defeated. England was safely secured by her surrounding sea.

In the time of Napoleon the Keeper of the State Paper Office, John Bruce, was ordered by Prime Minister Pitt to draw up a report on the preparations made in 1588, in case they might have some help in defending England from the revolutionary French. (Barry does not refer to this report, or to a later publication in 1902 by a French scholar, Edouard Desbrière.) When the two World Wars came the British government went about developing its plans without reference to 1588.

Barry may not mention these odd aspects of the aftermath of the Armada, but he finds room in his crisp richly illustrated account for everything else. Altogether a great read.

This, by the way, is the Irish edition; there is also a Spanish edition appearing simultaneously, and Spanish language books can have as large a universal sale as anything in English, so good luck with that.

“Barry may not mention these odd aspects of the aftermath of the Armada, but he finds room in his crisp richly illustrated account for everything else. Altogether a great read”

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.

'To be a pilgrim' in our modern day



Pilgrim with symbolic shell on the path to Santiago

Another Day in Paradise: Stories of Transformation from the Camino and other places, by Eddie Gilmore (Brimstone Press, £10.99 / €12.99)

Peter Costello

Eddie Gilmore will be known to many Irish people through his work with Irish emigrants, travellers and seniors in England, in addition to his activities with L'Arche, his principal vocation.

His most recent publication last year was a sort of memoir called *The Universe Provides: Finding Miracles and Inspiration in Unexpected Places* (Darton, Longman and Todd, £9.99), a very personal account which made a most affecting tale.

At that time he had just come to work in Ireland with the L'Arche Community established in Kilkenny. This promised well at first, but as he mentions briefly in this new book, the change of nations was not to work out. He and his wife left the post three months ago.

But nothing daunted, here he has a new book out,

and on a theme close to his heart, which I think will attract many readers, not all of them perhaps of the same religious inclinations as the author.

“The source of the pilgrimage ideal began with the ambition of those in the very early middle ages to visit Jerusalem, the scene of Christ's passion”

He deals with his experiences as a pilgrim in life generally. As the familiar English hymn (inspired by John Bunyan) says: “I'll fear not what men say, / I'll labour night and day / to be a pilgrim”. So he turns his back on one task, and takes up another.

In these pages he discusses in turn experiences on the Camino to Santiago, on the road to Canterbury and the shrine of Thomas à Becket, to Rome itself, to Jerusalem, Lourdes, Walsingham, and finally our very own Croagh Patrick.

The source of the pilgrim-

age ideal began with the ambition of those in the very early middle ages to visit Jerusalem, the scene of Christ's passion, where they could follow the Via Dolorosa, and visit other Holy Places.

Popular

When Jerusalem was cut off by religious changes, Rome took its place. National pilgrimages such as the Camino became popular - we should not forget that the route from Ireland began at St James's Gate! These became less penitential and more of an excursion in summer before returning home for harvest. Those who went on them were indeed seeking a different kind of harvest. The notion, not of penance, but of personal spiritual development began to engage people more and more.

Lourdes, however, belongs to a different class, as the example of the Marian

shrines that were once popular as local pilgrimages, but one which became the most important sacred shrine in the age of the railway and the airplane. A more traditional medieval flavour is maintained by Christian pilgrimages of several kinds at Walsingham in England, which though it attracts far fewer people has its own special devotional charms.

“What began with the Via Dolorosa has over the centuries become nowadays a search for a very different experience”

But it was his Irish encounters over his working life that made Ireland

“It's about positivity, trying to engage with people, and just enjoy the moment. Faith is supposed to be joyful . . . anything that can help you, and trying to be a better person . . . that's what I take away from this: positivity, and just do it while you can!”

A poem a day keeps the soul in good sway

Every Day is a Fresh Beginning: Meaningful Poems for Life, edited by Aobhín Garrihy (Eriu / Bonnier Books, £12.99 / €9.99)

Peter Costello

Once out of school and the demands of exams, most adults have little time for poetry. They are aware of Ireland's poetic tradition, how could they not be. But these days most poetry seems to be concerned with matters that do not come close to the lives of ordinary people. Or at least that is what “ordinary people” seem to think.

Here, however, is an anthology which can truly be said to be for everybody. The editor was once a familiar face on Irish television, but she is now living with her family in the west of Ireland trying out a new way of life. This anthology then is for all those who live or aspire to the same kind of active, yet insightful, life.

It contains some sixty-six poems, old and new, Irish and British. Some will be familiar, some are classics, known even to grandmothers, and others will be quite new.

There is certainly great variety. There is a truly touching poem by Gabriel Fitzmaurice about the tenderness of long married life, but also that once famous poem “*We are the music makers*” by Arthur O'Shaughnessy (1844-1881), a memory of which I believe haunts the memory of every poet in English who has written since.

Indeed, it is one of the virtues of this book that it will arouse many readers to take a renewed interest in poems and poetry. So perhaps these pages may well be the stimulus not only to a greater enjoyment of reading, but also to personal creativity. Readers may be inspired to try something similar about their own lives.

Who knows? One never can predict the curious effects that poetry, taken up as a private passion, can have on people.

and climbing Croagh Patrick inevitable. Irish readers will here discover their own national pilgrimage set into a universal pattern of the quest for insight, inspiration and affirmation.

What began with the Via Dolorosa has over the centuries become nowadays a search for a very different experience, the happiness of repose and peace after great effort and application.

Shrines

It is curious though that the shrines of North American, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe and St Kateri Tekakwitha, seem to attract little interest from Europeans. Perhaps this will change with the fresh focus on Asia and South America in the Catholic Church. Perhaps the tomb of St Thomas the Apostle in Kerala will see more white pilgrims in future.

Just as every pilgrim trail is different, so every pilgrim is different. Gilmore quotes an unlikely pilgrim, the feisty actor Sue Pollard on her experiences of pilgrimage.

“Many of those on the Camino these days are more New Age than New Covenant”

It reinforces what I've always believed. It's about positivity, trying to engage with people, and just enjoy the moment. Faith is supposed to be joyful . . . anything that can help you, and trying to be a better person . . . that's what I take away from this: positivity, and just do it while you can!

Many of those on the Camino these days are more New Age than New Covenant. This does not disturb Eddie Gilmore. For he at least can still declaim: “Come wind, come weather; / there's no discouragement / shall make him once relent / his first avowed intent / to be a pilgrim”.

Reading, and writing, poetry can be an aid to mindfulness

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Crossword

Gordius 685

- Across**
- 1 Orwellian character from '1984' (3,7)
 - 6 As well (4)
 - 10 Range, scope (5)
 - 11 A jet, perhaps (9)
 - 12 Showed annoyance (7)
 - 15 Notions (5)
 - 17 M Cantona or Mr Idle, perhaps (4)
 - 18 Produced an egg (4)
 - 19 Fertile spot in a desert (5)
 - 21 Safeguard, defend (7)
 - 23 Angler's wicker basket (5)
 - 24 Hare's home (4)
 - 25 Goes out like the tide (4)
 - 26 The capital of Bulgaria (5)
 - 28 Classic race run at Epsom (3,4)
 - 33 Absolve of blame (9)
 - 34 Misgiving (5)
 - 35 Fortified wine (4)
 - 36 Clergyman's residence (10)

- Down**
- 1 Boast (4)
 - 2 Durable material used in coats (9)
 - 3 Judged (5)
 - 4 Do business, swap (5)
 - 5 Organs of hearing (4)
 - 7 Tenancy agreement (5)

1		2		3		4		5			6	7		8
										9				
10						11								
	12				13		14			15				
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18										19		20		
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23											24			
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26		27					28	29		30				
						31								32
33										34				
35						36								

- 8 Pantomime password member (5,5)
- 9 Type of fruit (7)
- 13 Fibber (4)
- 14 Oral professional (7)
- 16 Disreputable family
- 20 Versatile ingredient (5,4)
- 21 Delighted (7)
- 22 The centre - of an apple, for example (4)
- 27 Baking ingredient (5)
- 29 The backs of the feet (5)
- 30 Strangely (5)
- 31 Den (4)
- 32 Remain (4)

SOLUTIONS, OCTOBER 10

GORDIUS No. 684

Across

- 1 Bat 3 Case history 8 Trowel 9 Cherubim 10 Elgar 11 Motet 13 Venus 15 La Scala 16 Corsair 20 Adapt 21 Spies 23 There 24 Cardinal 25 Number 26 Needle match 27 Eve

Down

- 1 Butterflies 2 Thoughts 3 Cheer 4 Etching 5 Strum 6 Orbits 7 Yam 12 Third degree 13 Villa 14 Stoat 17 Assemble 18 Patella 19 Fierce 22 Still 23 Truth 24 Can

Sudoku Corner 555

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 554

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

Last week's Hard 554

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

Notebook

Fr Martin Delaney



How a conspiracy of silence evolves in time

This month I want to share three distinct reflections with a common thread.

1. The recent scoping enquiry into abuse perpetrated in schools run by Catholic religious orders revealed another very sad chapter in our Irish social history. The media follow up inevitably led to an avalanche of personal stories detailing the physical, emotional and sexual abuse suffered by many people during their school days, often in the distant past.

The state authorities and in particular the Department of Education now must decide where the enquiry process goes from here. There is an ongoing debate about the shape of any such enquiry. I can understand why some would want to limit the perimeters to ensure a more efficient outcome. However, any enquiry which does not include schools beyond those operated by Catholic leadership would be woefully unbalanced and unfair.

Such a limited scope could be open to the charge of being sectarian in nature. While the majority of primary and post primary schools in Ireland have traditionally been under Catholic patronage there have been many schools run by other religious denominations and



by the state itself i.e. the vocational secondary schools which have been in place since the 1930s. Despite the impression sometimes given surely it was not only children who attended Catholic schools who were vulnerable to abuse in all its various forms.

2. During the recent television coverage of the scoping enquiry, day after day we were presented with images of statues of Our Lady and the Sacred Heart, crucifixes and rosary beads hanging from bibles.

Images and pictures are very powerful tools when you want to create a certain narrative. I just wonder what the graphics department in RTÉ will do if they have to

report on enquiries into abuse at State schools and ones run by other religious denominations? What images will be presented to illustrate those stories?

I can recall back in the 1990s when RTÉ was covering the infamous Kilkenny incest case they again resorted to Catholic religious images to illustrate their reporting of the awful case. However, the perpetrator at the centre of that case was not a Catholic but this did not stop RTÉ from presuming he was.

3. "Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me"

The above passage from St Mark has been the gospel of the day in a number of Masses recently. Conscious of that scoping report and the many others that have gone before, it is clear that we in Ireland did not always come close to what Jesus asked of us in that gospel passage. We welcomed children if they arrived through a socially or religiously acceptable door.

However, if they arrived through the door of a mother and baby home or an orphanage and as a result of an unplanned pregnancy, then our welcome for the little child or indeed

for his or her mother fell far short of what Jesus had in mind.

As we hear new harrowing accounts of how children and young people were treated and ostracised in the past, we become very angry with those political and religious figures who controlled society. We would like to believe that we have learned from the mistakes of the past and we are in a better place and closer to what Jesus asks of us in that lovely gospel passage.

Truth

I'm not altogether convinced that we are in a significantly better place. Why did it take so many decades for the truth to be exposed about what happened in the schools and institutions which were caring for and educating our children and the most vulnerable in society? There are various reasons put forward but fundamentally there was a conspiracy of silence at the heart of much of our society. Whenever there is a conspiracy of silence in any community, in any institution, in any family then evil happens.

In many ways we have broken that conspiracy of silence about the past. But it begs a very awkward question. In fifty years' time, will there be RTÉ investigations pro-

grammes exposing wrongs and evils that happened in our society in 2024.

What will it say about the 240,000 children who are living in poverty in Ireland, one of the richest countries in the world? What about 4,000 children who are homeless in our country and the substantial increase in the number of children taken into care in the early decades of this century.

Can we even mention the 10,000 children every year whose lives are terminated before they even get a chance to be born? And behind all those numbers and more there are children very vulnerable to all kinds of abuse. Why do these numbers not spark anything like the same outrage as do horror stories from the past?

Is it back to that conspiracy of silence again.



The Little Way Association



LITTLE WAY MISSIONARY SISTERS ASSISTING DISPLACED FAMILIES

The Little Way Missionary Priests, Sisters and Seminarians in Myanmar urgently need our help

Many of our supporters will be aware of the difficult situation and hardships facing the Little Way Priests and Sisters of St Therese at present in Myanmar. These two religious congregations were founded by Msgr Nicholas Mang Thang, when Bishop of Hakha, with the assistance of the late Miss Mary Doohan, foundress of The Little Way Association, in Myanmar. There are now more than 200 Sisters, 27 priests, six major seminarians and 77 minor seminarians in various dioceses in Myanmar.

Mgr Nicholas urgently appeals for help to support them. The young men are Myanmar's future priests, carrying the Gospel and message of Christ's love to people who would otherwise have little or no opportunity of hearing it. The Sisters serve the poor, the sick, the displaced and the uneducated, they bear witness to the Faith they profess and provide a presence where the love of God and neighbour can be recognised far and wide. They are doing the work which St Therese longed to do, and need our help.

**Can you spare a donation for the Sisters?
Even the smallest donation will help them.**

ANY gift you can send, large or small, to support the Sisters work amongst the needy and poorest of the poor, or to help train and educate a young man for the missionary priesthood, will be most gratefully received.

Mgr Nicholas, the Little Way Priests, Sisters and seminarians pray fervently and daily for our donors and their intentions. Please pray for them, for Myanmar and for all its people, in the ongoing conflict.



"I would travel to every land to preach Thy name, O my Beloved, and raise on heathen soil the glorious standard of Thy Cross."

— St Therese —

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Tel: (0) 94 938 8406

It was St Therese's vocation to be "love in the heart of the Church, and to assist priests, missionaries and the entire Church", and this has been the continuing inspiration of The Little Way Association. Ever since the death of St Therese on 30 September 1897, countless priests and missionaries have given witness to the extraordinary way in which she has helped them. Let us pray for the fulfilment of her desire that the Gospel message would be spread throughout the world.

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

THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
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