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Radical action needed to keep Faith of Irish youth alive

Chai Brady

The Irish Church has done little to counter the dramatic negative effects of secularism on younger Catholics' understanding of their faith and must take radical action, Baroness Nuala O'Loan has said.

She warned that people who have been preparing children for First Holy Communion and Confirmation "have been aware for quite a while that the wider cultural shift away from religion has made passing on the faith an extremely difficult task.

"But, even though we've been aware of this, very little has been done," she said.

Comments

Her comments come as the country's most senior Churchman is set to tell a major Dublin conference next week that the Church here may have been slow to face up to the impact of secularism in handing on faith to future generations.

Archbishop Eamon Martin will explore whether the traditional reliance on the relationship between parents, the local school and the parish is fit for purpose in a country where the

» Continued on Page 4

Going the extra mile for Mission



Bishop Denis Nulty leading some of 700 children to a balloons release after a prayer service at Carlow's Cathedral of the Assumption as part of celebrations organised by World Missions Ireland to mark October as 'Mission Month'. Photo: John McElroy

MARTIN MANSERGH

Building on, not wiping out, the past [PAGE 8](#)



MARY KENNY

Feminism's roots are pro-life
[PAGE 5](#)



DAVID QUINN

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[PAGE 11](#)



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Inside this week

Personal Profile

A life-changing partnership

Page 30



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Closing gaps, not gates

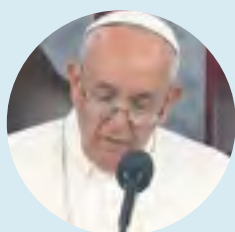
Page 26



Webwatch

Following in faithful footsteps

Page 33



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Priestly celibacy is likely to be a discussion that will rumble on

Pope Francis has convened a special synod meeting of bishops for 2019 that will address issues facing the Church in what's known as the Pan-Amazon region of South America. The meeting will look at Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Guyana, Peru, Venezuela and Surinam. Francis announced the move at the weekend and said the meeting would look "especially on indigenous people who are often forgotten".

Synods addressing particular regional issues are not new. In fact, during the long pontificate of St John Paul II the Pontiff convened synods to look at the Church in every continent.

But, the particular dynamic of ecclesial life in that part of South America is causing some commentators to speculate as to whether or not the meeting might look at the issue of married priests – long seen by some as a way of addressing the high proportion of people in the region who are unable to have Sunday Mass due to the absence of a priest.

The reference to indigenous people – rightly or wrongly – is adding fuel to this since it is often people in remote Amazonian communities who are most cut-off and therefore cannot regularly avail of the sacraments.

“The question of mandatory celibacy for most priests in the Latin rite of the Catholic Church has been debated heavily in recent years”

Francis has touched on the issue of married priests on a number of occasions. In an interview earlier this year with German newspaper *Die Zeit*, the Pope was asked about the possibility of allowing married ‘*virī probatī*’ – men of proven virtue – to become priests.

“We have to study whether ‘*virī probatī*’ are a possibility. We then



Editor's Comment Michael Kelly

also need to determine which tasks they could take on, such as in remote communities, for example,” Pope Francis said.

But, while commentators often look at what Pope Francis says as innovative, expressing a willingness to study the question of allowing married men to become priests is hardly a ground-breaking response given that the topic was explored in two meetings of the Synod of Bishops and by both Benedict XVI and John Paul II.

Limited access

During the 2005 Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist, the possibility of ordaining men of proven virtue was raised as a way to provide priests for areas of the world where Catholics have very limited access to Mass and the sacraments.

“Some participants made reference to ‘*virī probatī*’, but in the end the small discussion groups evaluated this hypothesis as a road not to follow,” a proposition from the synod said.

Eight years before he was elected Pope, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said that while married priests were not on the horizon in “the foreseeable future”, it was not an entirely closed subject.

In *Salt of the Earth*, an interview-book with Peter Seewald published in 1997, the future Pope said: “One ought not to declare that any custom of the Church's life, no matter how deeply-anchored and well-founded, is wholly absolute. To be sure, the Church will have to ask herself the question again and again; she has now done so in two synods.”

The question of mandatory celibacy for most priests in the Latin rite of

the Catholic Church has been debated heavily in recent years, with some people seeing it as a way to encourage more men to enter the priesthood since they would be able to serve without giving up marriage and the possibility of having a family.

In the book *On Heaven and Earth*, originally published in Spanish in 2010, the then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, acknowledged that while he is in favour of maintaining celibacy in the priesthood, it “is a matter of discipline, not of faith”.

“While celibacy ‘does not belong to the essence of priesthood’, Jesus himself proposed it as an ideal”

John Paul II had said the same. During an audience in 1993, he said that while celibacy “does not belong to the essence of priesthood”, Jesus himself proposed it as an ideal.

Similarly, then-Cardinal Ratzinger said the celibacy requirement “is not dogma” but rather a “form of life” that involves the priests' faith and not his dominion over his own nature.

“I think that what provokes people today against celibacy is that they see how many priests really aren't inwardly in agreement with it and either live it hypocritically, badly, not at all, or only live it in a tortured way,” he said.

Pope Francis' openness to considering an expanded possibility for married priests is not revolutionary, but is a continuation of a conversation that has gone on for decades and is likely to continue for some time.

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Failure to publish changes hides diocesan difficulties, priests say

Greg Daly

The repeated failure to publish annual clerical changes is having the effect of hiding how the Archdiocese of Dublin is struggling with serious manpower shortages, clergy have said.

2017 will be the second successive year when diocesan changes have not been made public, concealing the extent to which sick and retiring clergy are not being replaced across the diocese.

Late developments in terms of priests falling ill or needing time out have affected the process, one priest told *The Irish Catholic*.

"There were three or four of those, and all you need is three or four to wreck the whole thing because it has a knock on effect," he said, adding: "Increasingly we have an aged profile of priests in the diocese and we have guys who are starting to show serious signs of mental and physical burnout, and therefore as early as Christmas and as late as July and August, Archbishop (Diarmaid) Martin's headache is twisting and turning constantly," he said.

Shortage

A second priest said the failure to publicise changes is obscuring how bad the diocese's manpower shortage is.

"It's very hard to discern what exactly is happening," he said, adding that declining religious practice has not offset vocational shortages.

"The work has increased, insofar as even if people are not coming to Mass every Sunday, or even just once or twice a year, when they die or when they want a child baptised or that sort of stuff, they still come to the parish," he said.

Complexity

While acknowledging the complexity of clerical changes, another priest described the failure to publicise changes as "irritating", and damaging to diocesan transparency.

"It doesn't help what all of us are trying to do to help people be aware of the changing dynamics, particularly in numbers of clergy and appointments of clergy," he said, adding: "At the moment we don't have enough priests staffing for the appetite of the people for ministry and service."

A fourth priest said: "I think people are not aware of how serious it is. If you go through our parishes here and look at the priests, most of them are semi-retired." The diocese, he said, is "going off a cliff".

No new students entered clerical formation from the archdiocese this year.

Oireachtas committee is a propaganda exercise – members



Members of the Pro Life Campaign gathered outside Leinster House to raise concerns about the lack of balance in the Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment in terms of the guests who have been invited to present before it. Photo: John McElroy

Staff Reporter

A parliamentary committee to consider Ireland's constitutional protections for unborn children appears to be a pro-abortion "propaganda exercise", two committee members who are considering stepping down have said.

Highlighting how among the 'expert witnesses' addressing the committee was the New York-based Centre for Reproductive Rights, which has been fundraising in the US to overturn Ireland's pro-life laws, independent TD Mattie McGrath and Senator Ronan Mullen said this "shows how skewed

in favour of abortion the Committee's work has become".

The duo noted that when the committee began its work, much was made of how it would hear from expert witnesses but not from 'advocacy groups'.

"We already had serious concerns about the one-sided nature of the process but this latest revelation takes things to a whole new level," they said, emphasising that while they were not criticising individual committee members, "there's no escaping that this process is entirely skewed and unfair".

Pointing out how nobody

representing people whose lives had been saved by the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution had been called to address the committee, while over 20 groups and individuals arguing for legal abortion had been summoned, they said the process had "become a farce".

"The Citizens' Assembly never considered for a second the positive and life-saving impact of the Eighth Amendment and now the Oireachtas is shirking its responsibility too," they said, adding that they were actively considering whether there's any point in our remaining on as members.

Ophelia shuts up Luther

Staff reporter

Amongst the many events to fall victim to storm Ophelia was the much-anticipated launch of *Martin Luther: The Challenge Then and Now*.

The book, by Glenstal monk Fintan Lyons OSB, was due to be launched on Monday evening. It has now been re-scheduled for this coming Monday October 23 at Newman's University Church, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2 at 6.15pm.

As well as the launch, there will be music from the time of Luther at the event. If you would like to attend, please RSVP to anais@columba.ie



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Fatima

Online gambling games are gateway to children's addiction

Chai Brady

Catholic addiction counsellors and organisations are warning that unregulated online gambling is causing children to become problem gamblers in later life, in a phenomenon that could escalate.

Young people of any age can access gambling websites with the tick of a box that 'proves' they're 18. Games can be played online for free but players are enticed to deposit money, and are sometimes offered free bets to get them started.

Former star GAA player and gambling addict turned addiction counsellor, Oisín McConville, struggled with gambling for 16 years.

Mr McConville, who now works in Smarmore Castle Private Clinic, warns that the people he works with are getting younger.

Decisions

"Obviously I'm not meeting 14- or 15-year-olds that are in crisis, but I'm meeting kids that are 19-20 years of age who started gambling at 13-14 as I did and not making informed decisions at that stage," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

The difference between today's society compared to 10 years ago, he said, is that 'the accessibility is easier than it's ever been, in the fact it's two touches in an app and you've placed your bet'.

Mr McConville said he kept his gambling secret for most of his life, and he would regularly go to the bookies. "It's the most hidden addiction of all the addictions, there's not many physical signs," he said.

Faith played a big part in his recovery, as there were issues he felt he could not deal with without the help of God. "The first thing I did in the morning was get on my knees and say my prayers and the same thing at night. I would not consider myself to be an overly holy person, I suppose spiritual more than anything else, it had a huge role to play in recovery," he said.

Michael Guerin, an addiction counsellors in Catholic charity Cuan Mhuire, said that nowadays young people who present with drugs issues also have online gambling problems.

"They say that gambling doesn't kill people, but the suicide rate among active compulsive gamblers is four times higher than for any other addiction," he said.

He criticised the fact the Gambling Control Bill 2013 has not progressed for four years, leaving the online gambling industry largely unregulated according to the counsellor.

This comes as gambling sites appear to be targeting children with games themed on Peter Pan on the Paddy Power website, and Jack and the Beanstalk on the 888 website.

NET commissions most missionaries ever this year



National Evangelisation Teams (NET) Ministries Ireland will supply the highest number of missionaries ever to work in local parishes and schools around Ireland.

The 40 young people were all commissioned by Bishop Alan McGuckian. Nine are from Ireland, 15 are from America, 11 from Canada, four from the UK and one is from Australia.

Conor McNamee from Donegal, who signed up for a 10-month mission to help encourage young people in their faith, said: "The Church in Ireland is going through a

revival right now and NET has a huge part to play in that."

The missionaries will be placed in six teams. Four teams will be working in communities in Waterford, Cork, Letterkenny and Bohernmeen and will work with parishes, schools and put on youth groups and religious classes.

"We are blessed to have so many vibrant, dedicated and energetic young people this year," said Executive Director Tony Foy. He added NET ministries were grateful to get so many Irish men and women stepping up.

FF pro-life votes send vital 'cultural message' – bishop

Greg Daly

Bishop Kevin Doran has welcomed two votes at Fianna Fáil's Ard Fheis in support of Ireland's constitutional protections for the unborn, saying that they have sent an important message about the right to speak of the right to life.

Party members voted by three to one to back a motion urging the party "to oppose any attempt to diminish the constitutional rights of the unborn", while a second motion backing a "woman's right to choose" was heavily defeated.

"From a cultural point of view, this is quite significant," Dr Doran said. "It sends out a message that it's 'actually okay' to take a public stance in favour of the right to life of the unborn. Now we haven't heard that for quite a while. Hopefully others will take courage from this."

The Elphin bishop told *The Irish Catholic* that the wider importance of their vote lay in how it highlighted a determination to protect the rights of life of both mothers and unborn children is not a fringe phenomenon.

"Something which the commentariat have held to be 'untenable and unspeakable' – support for the right to life in all cases – has been publicly endorsed," he said.

Church urged to face up to secular effects on faith schools

» Continued from Page 1

religious landscape has shifted dramatically.

Archbishop Eamon will give the keynote address at the national education conference in Dublin's Gresham Hotel on Thursday October 26. In his remarks, he will reflect on the fact that "for years we have taken for granted an assumed 'alliance' of home, school and parish as three 'pillars' in handing on the faith, but perhaps have not been fully alert to the shifting sands, disturbed by waves of secularisation, which have been undermin-

ing these pillars at their foundations".

Vision

According to Archbishop Eamon, "the vision for evangelisation and catechesis articulated in the *National Catechetical Directory*, *Share the Good News*, sees a continued role for all three partners - home, school, and parish."

However, with family as the starting point, Archbishop Eamon says he "will attempt to re-imagine and re-configure the traditional 'triad' of home, parish and school, and draw out the positive contribution that all three, together, can

make to the building up and personalising Church and society in Ireland.

Other speakers at the conference will include Baroness O'Loan, David Quinn of The Iona Institute, Prof. Eamonn Conway of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Jonathan Tiernan from the Alliance for Catholic Education and Patrick Treacy from Faith in Our Schools.

Anyone wishing to attend the conference can register by calling 01.687.4024 or email events@irishcatholic.ie. Tickets for the all-day conference, including lunch and refreshment, are €65.

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Feminism's roots are pro-life

Participating in a feminist conversation in Northern Ireland last weekend (held at the stunning Mount Stewart stately home in Newtownards), I listened to a distinguished Oxford historian express her hopes that the coming Irish referendum on the Eighth Amendment “would give feminism a unified focus”. I very much hope that the abortion referendum will not give feminism a unified focus in the manner intended: that all feminists should line up behind the campaign to “repeal the Eighth”. I hope that it may be borne in mind that there are many feminists who are pro-life – indeed, in the United States, there's a growing movement of ‘Feminists for Life’.

Movements
American pro-life feminists rightly emphasise that the roots of feminism were essentially Christian – and anti-abortion. The founding mothers of the feminist movements, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were Christian women with a deep commitment to anti-slavery and a parallel commitment to



Mary Kenny



women's entitlement to dignity and respect as the bearers of life. On this side of the Atlantic, the early feminists – such as the great Josephine Butler, campaigner against the sexual exploitation of young girls, were often strongly Christian. Many of the early British

● Ireland coped valiantly – and efficiently – with storm Ophelia, but there are always some victims of a great natural force, and so it was. Always I come back to that passage in the New Testament about the unexpectedness of death in some circumstances: “One shall be taken, and one shall be left.” It's a great sorrow for the bereaved, but this is indeed, sadly, how it occurs.

suffragists were the daughters of clergymen. The demand for abortion rights arose in the 1930s, when Stella Browne, a sexual radical and a Communist, coined the (very clever) phrase “the right to choose”. The World League for Sexual Reform, a group advancing sexual revolution, first put abortion rights on the agenda – not feminism.

Debate
I hope the debate over the Eighth Amendment will be respectful of all points of view, and will genuinely allow all women their voices and their reflections on what is, by any measure, a complex issue. Maternity care and women's health should indeed be to the fore in this debate. But it is very much worth pointing out that pro-life feminists are entitled to call themselves feminists, and that they have a historic legitimacy in such a position.

❗ Mary's book *Am I a Feminist? Are you?* will be published on October 23 by New Island.



Warm atmosphere of St Colmcille's
The Newtownards Road in Belfast is known as a stronghold of Ulster Unionism and the Orange tradition, but I was directed, all the same, to a Catholic church on the Upper Newtownards Road called St Colmcille [pictured]. A Catholic church in the North is always called ‘a chapel’, but St Colmcille's is a beautiful church of quite generous dimensions. It's decorated with an intricate Celtic filigree design (also seen at the Cathedral in Armagh), with a gold-leaf effect on the dome. The Stations of the Cross are modern, but not abstract, and there's a nice mixture of modern and traditional in the stained glass windows. Mass attendance was impressively multi-ethnic and the guitar added a touch of gospel sound. Fr Tony Fitzsimons presides over a warm family atmosphere.

Something alluring about the EU flag

Jean-Luc Mélanchon is a hard-left French politician – and, by the way, a gifted orator who mounted an impressive presidential opposition to the charismatic Emanuel Macron earlier this year. Mélanchon is anti-EU and vociferously objects to the EU flag being flown in preference to the tricolour of the French republic. Last week, he made a most astonishing claim – which was a revelation to me. He ranted against the EU flag because, he said, it was based on the symbols of the Blessed Virgin – the blue background and gold stars drawn on the design of the Miraculous Medal. This religious symbolism, he railed, had no place in the institutions of the French republic. Mélanchon's point puts the EU flag into an entirely new light. Apparently the flag's



main designer, the late Arsène Heitz, was a committed Catholic – converted from Judaism – and devoted to Our Lady and the image of the Miraculous Medal, which features twelve stars. It is vividly presented at the Chapel of the Miraculous Medal in the Rue du Bac in Paris. Twelve is a significant number in both the Old and New Testaments, and, by the way, psychologists say that 12 is an almost ideal number for any group – big enough for diversity, but compact enough for effective bonding and communication. Gisela Stuart, the German-born Labour MP for Birmingham, was in favour of the EU when it consisted of 12 members. She became critical of the European Union when it more than doubled to 28. Interesting. The flag, all the same, is rather lovely.



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'Discomfort' as Col shares in NAMA holding company are revealed

Chai Brady

Concerns have been raised after it emerged the Church of Ireland (Col) is a shareholder in the holding company behind NAMA, with a priest saying he would hate to think that the Church would profit from peoples' misfortune.

In an answer to a parliamentary question Finance Minister Pascal Donohue revealed that the Representative Church Body and the Church of Ireland Clergy Pensions Fund hold a 5.75% stake in the holding company of NAMA.

Rector Stephen Neill, of Celbridge and Straffan with Newcastle-Lyons, said it was "an area of potential concern".

Reaction

"Certainly my initial reaction was one of discomfort. I would want to investigate it further before I would make a judgement call on it, but certainly it's something that we should look into further as a Church – see what it actually

means and what the implications are," he told *The Irish Catholic*.

Fr Neill said he does not claim to understand the nature of investment policy, but added: "Obviously I would hate to think as a Church we would profit as an institution on the misfortune of others."

National Asset Management Agency Investment Limited (NAMAIL) is the holding company, established in 2009.

A UK hedge fund, Walbrook Capital, acquired a 17% stake in NAMAIL in 2012 at a large discount, and continue to hold 11.25%. It is believed investors have received millions of dividend to date.

A spokesperson for the Col said: "The Church of Ireland takes a principled view of investments and considers them against return, risk and ethics."

"The investment in the NAMA holding company was considered against each of these grounds and was considered to be a suitable one."

Monks light candles rather than curse Ophelia's darkness

Greg Daly and Mags Gargan

Members of two of Ireland's best-known monastic communities followed in their forerunners' footsteps on Monday night when Storm Ophelia left the monks without electricity and praying by candlelight.

"We were lucky, really," Roscrea Abbey's Bro. Malachy Thompson told *The Irish Catholic*, explaining that the Offaly Cistercian community had been on retreat when the storm struck, and had already had the day's main meal when power was lost.

"For some of the older men, the worry for us would have been heating – we've had a bad dose of flu going through the community over the last week or two," he said, adding that as the light faded the monks lit candles around their cells and along the cloister leading to the church, where they prayed Vespers by candlelight.

"There was something about it – the shadows danc-

ing from the candlelight, it can't help but affect you. Candlelight or natural light, there is something spiritual about it," he said, adding that the abbey's traditional Cistercian cloisters "looked amazing" by candlelight.

Candlelight

While Roscrea's power returned late on Monday night, the Benedictines of Limerick's Glenstal Abbey were less fortunate. Bro. Martin Browne told *The Irish Catholic* that with electricity gone from early Monday afternoon, the monks "filled the

church with candles and had Vespers by candlelight", doing the same for morning prayer. "Vespers by candlelight was lovely but once was enough!" he said, adding that the monks had prayed Compline – night prayer – around the fire in their common room.

Meanwhile, various churches around the country suffered damage to their roofs during the storm, with St Nicholas's Church in Kilcorney, Co. Cork, being especially badly damaged.

The roof of the church in Kilcullen, Co. Kildare, suffered some major damage in the

high winds, with slates being stripped off two sections of the roof and thrown around the area, one slate even making its way to the wall surrounding the library.

Ophelia also caused damage to the roof of the church in Allenwood, Co. Kildare. "A number of slates became dislodged, but the storm was not as bad here as in other parts," Fr Willie Byrne PP told *The Irish Catholic*. "There were some trees down in the area and powerlines came down, but the damage was minimum compared to other parts of the country."

Fatima statue gets stamp of approval



Rev. Martin Barlow holding an iPad showing the stamp design based on Archbishop Eamon Martin's statue.

An Post's new stamp commemorating the centenary of the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima is based on a statue owned by Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, and was designed by a permanent deacon of the Archdiocese.

Rev. Martin Barlow, a husband and father of two who was ordained to the permanent diaconate in December 2013, designed the €1.35 stamp based on a photo of the Primate of All Ireland's statue of Our Lady of Fatima. The permanent

deacon is a designer by profession, and is currently senior designer at the 2b:creative studio in Lisburn, Co. Down. The stamp marks the appearance of Mary to three shepherd children Lúcia Santos and her cousins Jacinta and Francisco Marto on six occasions between May and October 1917.

Dr Martin bought the statue while leading a pilgrimage of parishioners from Armagh and Belfast to the Portuguese shrine in 2015.

It is on display in his oratory.

RTÉ looks for participants in Christmas show

RTÉ are currently looking for people to take part in a Christmas-themed programme that asks 'what does Christmas mean to you?'

People are invited to express what brings the meaning and wonder to

Christmas for them whether it's presents, food or family.

"Or is it about giving rather than receiving, and celebrating the coming of baby Jesus – rather than Santa Claus?" RTÉ asks.

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Building on the past, not on its ruins

Few statues are not offensive to somebody. Fellow adviser, writer Anthony Cronin, once suggested that the statue of Fr Mathew should be removed from O'Connell Street, as it was offensive to drinkers. Fr Mathew warned the Irish poor against consumption of strong spirits, or they might soon find themselves before the bar of the Lord. His statue, once removed because of Luas works, will be gone from the capital's main thoroughfare with little public notification or debate.

Many years ago, there was a tall white statue of Christ the King overlooking a valley below with mountains opposite, a favourite spot for photos. There was probably an agenda behind its erection, a theology associated with Christus Rex and the encyclicals of Pope Pius XI giving a religious direction to social policy, but the statue was valued for itself. It was smashed by an unknown passer-by, but replaced. If there were religious motivation involved, beyond pure vandalism, there is a word for it, iconoclasm. Historically, there was

Martin Mansergh The View



much destruction of artistic heritage, in which religion was involved. Some early Christians cut limbs or heads off classical statues, one reason that many are torsos. In his celebrated BBC series *Civilisation* 40 years ago, Sir Kenneth Clark observed that the Reformation was very destructive of art. Puritan zeal destroyed Banbury Cross around 1600, and many mediaeval church treasures either perished or were hidden.

Monuments

Apart from human life, monuments and old buildings are inevitably lost in war and revolution. During the 1916 Rising, the statue of Daniel O'Connell miraculously escaped British shellfire. An upper floor of the GPO was level with the stone effigy of Admiral Nelson on top of the Pillar. A Volunteer asked Pearse if he could shoot him down. Pearse said no, to save

ammunition and to avoid injuring civilians below. Imprisoned in Arbour Hill, he expressed dismay to the Capuchin Fr Columbus over the loss of life and destruction, but added, "please God, it won't be in vain". The Free State Government under W.T. Cosgrave, advised by OPW chief architect T.J. Byrne, restored the city centre and landmark buildings.

In such times, there is always some discretion over what to keep and what to demolish. One human instinct, reflected in places in the Bible, is to make a clean sweep. What follows invariably falls far short of a bright new dawn. The more constructive approach is to find a blend of continuity and change.

A perfect example was the practice of painting the red pillar boxes green, leaving perfectly legible royal monograms, VR, EVIIR and



Edwardian post box in Cork, painted green after independence but with old red paint showing. Photo: Greg Daly

GR, added to by SÉ (Saorstát Éireann). There is to be a conservation order put on them. In Tobermory on the Scottish island of Mull, there is a rare red pillar box with EVIIR on it, marking the short reign of Edward VIII.

Exhibition

There was little sympathy in ruling circles in the 1950s for Georgian Dublin, given its associations with 'an alien Ascendancy'. As a new OPW exhibition in Dublin Castle, called 'Making Majesty: The Throne Room at Dublin Cas-

tle' explains, de Valera had a somewhat different view, and instructed that the State rooms were to be kept in good condition. He said in 1952:

"While some people held the view that the emblems of British rule should be removed, there was a case for preserving them for their historical significance and for the emphasis which they placed on the change to national independence. This applied particularly to places like St Patrick's Hall and the State Apartments generally where there is so much of value and artistic merit ..."

Dublin Castle today serves multiple purposes.

“There was little sympathy in ruling circles in the 1950s for Georgian Dublin”

Charles Haughey took the same view, when the College of Science, later the UCD School of Engineering, was converted into the centre block of Government Buildings. When OPW enquired whether large inscribed stones, recording that Edward VII laid the foundations in 1904 and George V opened it in 1911, should be reversed, he waved his hand and said: "We add to the past; we don't take it away."

Mao Zedong, who instigated the Cultural Revolution, contemplated destroying the Forbidden City, the vast palace

and administrative complex in central Beijing, but was dissuaded by his more reflective and tradition conscious Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. The French and Soviet Revolutions, both bloody affairs, preserved most royal palaces, even if they had to sell off furniture and jewels to raise money. Today, Presidents Macron and Putin regret the execution of Louis XVI and Tsar Nicholas II and family.

Bomber Command not Soviet tanks devastated Dresden in February 1945. Its core has been rebuilt with British and American donations, including the domed Frauenkirche, restoring the skyline to its appearance in Canaletto paintings. The Soviets overruled East German comrades, and saved two notable Wilhelmine monuments, the depiction of Kaiser Wilhelm I as the reawakened early mediaeval Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and the tall tower commemorating the 1813 battle of the nations at Leipzig against Napoleon.

Nelson Mandela in an act of magnanimity and reconciliation allowed his name to be associated with the great imperialist Cecil Rhodes in his Oxford library and jointly-named scholarships.

“The issue is what statues say today, and if they sanction continued supremacist attitudes”

There is great controversy about statues commemorating heroes of the South in the American Civil War, occasioned by its refusal to give up slavery, a stance backed perversely by Irish patriot John Mitchel. This mars, but does not cancel out, his service of protest against British mismanagement of the Famine. The issue is what statues say today, and if they sanction continued supremacist attitudes.

Statues are reminders of history. The temptation to block out unwelcome parts of Orwellian fashion should in general be resisted. In Fairview Park, Clontarf stands a dignified statue of IRA Chief of Staff Seán Russell, who died on a U-boat in 1940 returning to Ireland. It replaces one that was smashed to applause from a Sunday Independent columnist. While few Irish people today feel the slightest sympathy for Russell's ill-judged militancy, it is better to provide no occasion for tit-for-tat retaliations, whether inflicted on humans, community facilities or statues.

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Photo: Jennifer Nolan, Malawi, 2016

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

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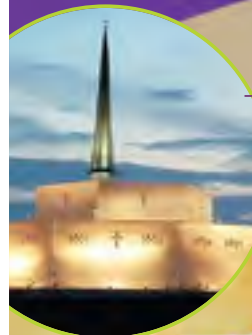
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Nourish your soul this Autumn at Knock Shrine



Autumn Events

The evenings may be getting longer and cold weather prevailing, but don't let that stop you stepping into the light at Knock Shrine with a fantastic series of events to see you through the cold months!

The latest series of events includes retreats, workshops and practical faith and information evenings focusing on prayer, reflection, deepening of faith and spiritual enrichment. These events are open to all and groups are welcome to attend.

Sacred Music & Day Retreats

A Music Workshop for Choirs with Liam Lawton will take place on Friday 27th October at 7.30pm. This is an ideal event for choirs or those involved in music ministry to learn more about Liam's new Mass setting, 'The Mass of St Patrick' which was composed for the Octo centenary Celebration of Ballintubber Abbey last year. Parish choirs and groups are welcome and early booking is advised.

Why not take some time out to experience a day retreat? Perfect for this time of year, the 'Quiet Day for Busy People' day retreats welcome you to a quiet space to experience peace and reflection,

Handel's Messiah

On Saturday 18th November, a sensational performance of this most wonderful work by Handel will take place at Knock Basilica.

The concert will feature the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, conducted by Proinnsias Ó Duinn with a 180-strong choir and an incomparable line-up of international soloists.

The concert will also feature Soprano Claudia Boyle, Alto Anne Marie Gibbons, Tenor Julian Hubbard and Bass Christopher Cull together with Our Lady's Choral Society, Cór Mhaigh Eo and Balling Chamber Choir. Presented by Liz Nolan, RTÉ Lyric FM.

Tickets €25 & €30 are available at www.knockmessiah.com and at the Witness to Hope office, Knock Shrine.

leaving you feeling nourished and recharged having taken time to reflect on your life.

The first retreat 'Shining a Light in the Darkness' will take place on Saturday 11th November. On Saturday 2nd December there will be a special 'Day of Reflection for Advent.'

These retreats will take place in the Prayer Guidance Centre and will be led by the prayer guides at Knock. New people and groups are always welcome. Fee €30 includes lunch.

Training & Information Events for Parishes

Parish Conversations on 'Amoris – The Joy of Love' information evening is to equip parish volunteers to run the 'Amoris' programme in their own parishes.

This event, facilitated by Martin Kennedy will take place on Tuesday 21st November at 7.30pm at Knock House Hotel.

On Saturday 25th of November, the Advent Day of Reflection with Dr Aoife McGrath will offer individuals and groups involved in parish life and ministry the opportunity to reflect on their own faith and the way they serve people. This day of reflection is open to all involved in parish ministry and volunteering; new people are always welcome. It will take place from 11am-3pm at Knock House Hotel.

Art Workshop with Imogen Stuart & PJ Lynch

There is a wealth of artistic and decorative features to reflect the religious culture of Knock Shrine. To discuss some of the

more prominent artworks, we are delighted to welcome artists Imogen Stuart and PJ Lynch to a one-day workshop to discuss the beautiful pieces they created for



Knock Shrine. The eighteen Holy Water Fonts at Knock were carved by Imogen Stuart in 1991. The main purpose of the Holy water fonts was to give meaning and dignity to the use of Holy Water at Knock. Imogen also carved the bronze Statue of St Joseph in the Basilica.

PJ Lynch created the illustration which formed the design of the stunning Apparition Mosaic at Knock Basilica. The workshop will be a wonderful opportunity to hear more about these amazing pieces from the creators themselves. It will take place on Saturday 4th November from 11am-3.30pm. Fee €30 includes lunch. Early booking is advised.



Imogen Stuart.

PJ Lynch.

Bookings can be made by contacting the Faith Renewal team:

Tel: (094) 93 75355

Email: faithrenewal@knockshrine.ie

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What will Pope Francis' visit to Ireland look like?

To celebrate Ireland hosting the World Meeting of Families next year, The Irish Catholic is asking children to write a letter of welcome to Pope Francis, accompanied by a drawing, to win one of these fantastic prizes for their school.



Each winner will also receive an icon of the Holy Family, hand-crafted by Christians in Bethlehem, for their school Christmas tree or Sacred Space.

The competition is open to children aged 6-9 years old. Please include child's name, age, class, school name and contact details. Some entries will be published.

Deadline: **Friday, November 24, 2017.**

Entries to: Fáilte Pope Francis competition, **The Irish Catholic, 23 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.**

Masters of maternity hospitals support right to abort babies with disabilities



Sally Phillips' BBC documentary *A World Without Down Syndrome?* revealed startling facts about abortion rates.

Various experts have been appearing before the Oireachtas committee that is considering what wording to put before the Irish people in next year's abortion referendum. Much of the focus on the hearings to date has been on their alleged bias. More on this anon, what is far more important is what was said last week to the committee by the Masters of the two biggest maternity hospitals in the country.

These doctors are respectively Rhona Mahony of the National Maternity Hospital on Holles Street, and Fergal Malone of the Rotunda. Between them, these hospitals perform almost 20,000 births per year. To cut a long story short, both of these doctors support repeal of the Eighth Amendment and a right to an abortion where the baby suffers from a disability, or 'fetal abnormality'. This includes Down Syndrome.

The testimony of both of these doctors should have received far more coverage than it did, and it should have focused on their recommendations that women who do not want to carry a badly disabled baby to term should be able to have these babies aborted in Irish hospitals.

Restriction

In the case of Dr Malone, he supports the right of a woman to abort a baby with a 'fetal abnormality' without any restriction as to the stage of pregnancy, and without any restriction as to the type of disability "eligible" for abortion. (Notably, he never uses the term 'abortion' preferring instead the term 'termination').

In his paper, he makes mention of severe fetal abnormalities like Down Syndrome, but makes no mention of the sheer number of Down Syndrome babies that are aborted in countries like Britain, the US, Denmark, the Netherlands, never mind Iceland where, according to the BBC documentary, *A World Without Down Syndrome?*, no Down Syndrome baby has

been born in five years.

Dr Malone says in his paper that he does not want to advocate for either a pro-life or a pro-choice position, but in effect he advocates for a pro-choice position because he talks throughout about the need for doctors to respect whatever choice the mother makes as to the fate of her child. The right to life of the unborn child is not considered.

Dr Malone speaks about foetuses with a fatal abnormality and those with a non-fatal one. He supports a right to an abortion in both cases.

“Even though the law in Britain oversees almost 200,000 abortions annually, it is not considered liberal enough by some”

He wants Ireland to decriminalise abortion “in the setting of fetal abnormalities”. He believes “obstetricians and maternity hospitals in Ireland should be able to provide legal termination of pregnancy in the setting of fatal or complex fetal abnormalities”.

He does not believe the law should say which “specific fetal abnormalities would be considered ‘eligible’ for pregnancy termination”. This would mean that the law could not forbid the aborting of Down Syndrome babies, for instance.

Finally, he does not believe the law should forbid doctors from aborting babies with a fetal abnormality at any stage in the pregnancy.

Dr Rhona Mahony's

paper is not as clear as Dr Malone's but what they seek in respect of our law is very similar. Like Dr Malone, she speaks of women who have gone to England to have a baby aborted because the baby had a “fetal anomaly”. She regrets that these women have to travel to England.

She mentions in a supportive way the highly controversial call by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in Britain to completely decriminalise abortion. This would effectively pave the way for abortion under any circumstances. This is what abortion providers in the UK want. Even though the law in Britain oversees almost 200,000 abortions there annually, it is not considered liberal enough by some.

Like Dr Malone, Dr Mahony does not give any real attention to the right to life of the unborn child. The focus is on the mother and the choices she wants to make.

The testimony of these very senior doctors has received almost no attention and has not sparked any debate. As a society, we should find it very concerning, or at a minimum as something worthy of major note, that two such senior medics would give testimony to an Oireachtas Committee that seeks to pave the way for a right to abort babies with 'fetal abnormalities' like Down Syndrome.

If we go down the path they recommend, it would be a break of the most important kind with past medical tradition in this country, a noble tradition, practised by generations

with Down Syndrome are born. In what way is this not eugenics?

“It is better now to highlight the enormous threat being posed to the right of life of the unborn”

We really ought to debate this. Both doctors should come forward and be asked on radio and television whether they are really comfortable about such a scenario? Interviewers must be prepared to ask them hard questions instead of the kid glove treatment both doctors customarily receive from interviewers.

Mattie McGrath TD and Senator Ronan Mullen did try asking the doctors some tough questions but were stymied by committee procedures which apparently are more important than

thorough cross-examination of expert witnesses.

Both McGrath and Mullen have threatened to resign from the committee out of frustration at how it is conducting its business. For example, out of the experts who have either appeared before it so far, or who are due to do so, pro-choice speakers outnumber pro-life speakers by an astonishing six-to-one. If this is not bias, then what is?

The participation of pro-life speakers and committee members in this process simply gives it a dignity it does not deserve. It is better now to highlight the enormous threat being posed to the right of life of the unborn, especially those with disabilities, from outside the committee, not within it. If we fail to do this, then Ireland will become a much more dangerous place for such children, which is a very unpalatable thought indeed.

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This summer, Ireland's Sacred Heart Missionaries (MSC) celebrated the 50th anniversary of their mission in Venezuela, but compared with 1992's silver jubilee, the mission's golden jubilee celebration was a low key affair.

"We had a Mass first," explains Fr Vincent Screene, the missionaries' regional leader in the South American country, briefly back in Ireland before attending the MSC general chapter in Rome. "The bishop and auxiliary came, and a big crowd, and then afterwards we had a little meal for the people. It consisted of two bread rolls with ham and cheese rolled up inside of them. It was a very simple meal, with soft drinks, that we distributed among the people after Mass. We showed a video too, showing the years we've been in Venezuela, and there were speeches as well, but all very simple."

He adds: "It was very simple in comparison with what we had 25 years ago, when we celebrated our 25th anniversary – that would have been very much bigger even though the occasion called for far more this time."

Times have changed since 1992, of course. Hardly a wealthy country 25 years ago, Venezuela is in turmoil now, torn by political strife, threatened with foreign military intervention, and facing an economic crisis that has left it desperately short of food and medication.

As Fr Vincent's provincial, Fr Joe McGee, told *The Irish Catholic* earlier in August, his visit to Venezuela for the golden jubilee celebrations was the first time he had seen people there scavenging for food in rubbish heaps, while deteriorating facilities, declining supplies, and a popular fear were all obvious.

Fr Joe has known Venezuela for 12 years just as a visitor; for Fr Vincent, on the other hand, it has been his home for 50 years.

Medicine

Born in Skehana, Co. Galway, he was just 25 when he was sent to Venezuela, one of four Irish priests who would build the first MSC community in the country. Roscommon's Fr Joe Ruddy, who returned to Ireland this month owing to a lack of necessary medicine in Venezuela, was – with Fr Damian Donohue and Fr Tony Boland – one of his companions in that pioneering mission.

Climate, food, language, and culture all posed challenges at the start, of course, but tasked with ministering to a vast parish of 50,000

Irish missionary work in Venezuela is worth celebrating even in troubled times, **Greg Daly** learns



people – though few were practicing – the young MSCs weren't short of work to focus on. "It was difficult work, and we weren't making a lot of headway, but we were working hard with the catechism in the schools and with groups of adults and so on" says Fr Vincent.

When the Irish missionaries first arrived, he says, petrol was about \$2 a barrel, but just five years later a barrel cost around \$40, which brought money into the oil-producing country on an unprecedented scale, enabling huge changes in education and healthcare.

“They’ve no subsidies, for instance, no children’s allowance, so it’s very difficult for single parents, who are far more numerous than here”

"It made a big impact on the country," he says. "Quality of life began to increase. There were still a lot of marginal people – this was not trickling down to them – but still there were a lot of big changes in the country, and gains in prestige as well."

Corruption unfortunately went hand in hand with progress during the 1970s and 1980s, and drastic economic reforms in the late 1980s came to a head with a wave of popular protests and riots in February 1989. Official figures put the numbers killed in the 'Caracazao' riots at 276, but it is commonly believed that the numbers killed were far higher.

"These were people from

the *barrios*," Fr Vincent says. "Ordinary people, not military people. They were crushed by the military."

Until the late 1980s the missionaries had focused mainly on pastoral work without a lot of social involvement, Fr Vincent says, but "in the late 80s and 90s especially we began packets of food to give to the poor and so on at that stage". Around that point they were also working with children in schools and social activities, he says.

"A lot of pastoral work has a big impact on the social conditions," he explains. "The family, for instance: one-parent families – if people are educated you've a better chance of having an established family, rather than one-parent ones. There are really many, many one-parent families, which makes life very difficult, both for the kids and the parent."

Strains on family life in such situations are immense, he observes. "The economic difficulties on the one hand, and of course as well other social areas – drugs and so on. They're very vulnerable in all areas really. The patterns of the family tend to repeat themselves, often for the worst – the parents, the kids, the grandchildren."

For all that one-parent families face grave challenges in Ireland, matters are rather more difficult in Latin America, he says. "Of course it affects the poverty level of the families; I would say here they have a lot better chance of making a living, the one-parent families, than there. They've no subsidies, for instance, no children's allowance, so it's very difficult for single parents, who are far more numerous than here."

Missionaries for the love of Christ



Explaining how the MSCs tend to work with and through such movements as the Christian family movement and Marriage Encounter in trying to help struggling families in the barrios, he says, "this is one of the areas where we have done a lot".

Pointing out that poor families in the barrios of Venezuela often have large numbers of children, Fr Vincent notes that single parents in these contexts often face stark choices. "Very stark, very difficult – and this is on a wide scale," he says.

The MSCs are doing their best to help people across their two parishes Maracaibo and Caracas, Fr Vincent says, explaining that they have about 20 centres out of which they work across the two. "There are big areas where we scarcely have a presence in, but we're trying to

get more involved," he says, adding as an example how "we've a school in a very poor area with a lot of local Indians, Wayú Indians from La Guajira".

Part of this, he says, is simply being there for people, "accompanying people, being available for people who come to talk, supporting people morally in the situation of

poverty they're in and the political situation they're in, helping people insofar as we can".

This means helping people with their material needs as much as possible, along with their spiritual ones, and Fr Vincent describes how one Sunday in Lent the community made soup for hundreds of people in the barrios.

"Before we used to have packets of food that we'd give out, but now, since food is so scarce and difficult to get and you might have to spend hours in queues to get it, we give a financial donation, and people would be able to extend this more than we could," he says.

"Of course, they don't like it in the queues, but if they have to do it they can get the food cheaper. So we would be helping out a lot in that way, giving donations to people and helping people



Fr Vincent Screene



Beyond such basic material needs, the felt need for the sacraments is if anything more profound now in times of hardship, he adds: "People are still coming, and I would say a bit more."

Church support is also notable on a national and prophetic level, with figures such as the Archbishop of Caracas, Cardinal Jorge Urosa Savino having conspicuously spoken up on behalf of the ordinary people.

"They also feel the support of the Church at the local level, and the national level," Fr Vincent says. "The Church would by far have the greatest prestige in the country with the people. The Church has been very supportive all over the country, really. They've been critical in general of the government, and the cardinal especially has been outspoken."

Unrest in the country may have only hit international headlines this spring when Venezuela's Supreme Court attempted to abolish the country's parliament, but difficulties had been building for years.

"The situation with the supreme court and the parliament was one of things that brought it to a head, but it was simmering there the whole time," says Fr Vincent, noting how government domination over all the instruments of the state have been in place for over 15 years.

Key to the situation, as international observers regularly note, is the collapse in oil prices: President Nicolas Maduro's predecessor, Hugo Chavez, had been popular but depended excessively on the country's oil revenues to enact his plans: with oil, currently 96% of Venezuela's exports, fetching far less in today's markets than in the heyday of Chavez, the country's autocratic government has become increasingly unpopular, while flaws in the socialist strongmen's policies have become all too clear.

"The expropriation of farms led as well to a lack of home production," Fr Vincent observes of the flagship policy theoretically intended to break up large farms and make individuals more self-sufficient but in practice a tool of political patronage that reduced agricultural production. "But since the money was there to import there was no big problem from that point of view. But then when the price of petrol went down a few years ago, of course it affected everything."

Resources

Those with resources to leave – especially young professionals – have been fleeing the country, threatening Venezuela with a future 'brain drain', while

many thousands of others have simply tried their luck and sought refuge in Brazil, Columbia, and even Peru, raising the spectre of a South American refugee crisis.

"I would say that a lot at the moment have lost hope, and there's a sense of depression with a lot of people. They don't see a way forward," he says, continuing, "That is one of the reasons you need to be with people at this time, in that situation of impotence and fear."

It's not always easy to stay put in such situations, of course, as the recent return to Ireland of Fr Joe Ruddy showed – "We don't have structures for us to remain permanently if we get sick and especially with the current situation," Fr Vincent observes, grateful that the Irish-led missions are now houses of formation where Venezuelan MSCs are themselves being trained.

In the meantime, though, he is committed to staying put with his fellow Irish missionaries – Cloyne's Fr Tom O'Brien, Cork City's Fr John Jennings, and Galway's Fr Tom Jordan, who like Fr Vincent hails from Skehana. Another veteran of decades in Venezuela, Killarney's Fr Seamus Kelly has been back in Ireland for a few months, but hopes to return to the missions soon.

“In Venezuela, you’ve a much more personal relationship with people”

The obvious question this invites is why the MSCs feel such commitment to their adopted homes, one that's often a hallmark of Irish missionaries.

"It's partly necessity of the moment and the people, Fr Vincent says. "There's one thing you'll find more in the Latin American Church than you will find here. Here you'll find a very professional role of the priest, and he's changed and he moves on; there you've a much more personal relationship with people, and people are far more attached to the priest, and especially in a crisis like this, one feels more attached."

Adding that when missionaries are needed they should stay put, whether they're wanted or not, he admits that right now the MSCs seem to be both necessary and popular in Venezuela.

Supportive

"We have been there for 50 years, and the people have been so good to us over the years," he says. "We've been supportive of them, they've been supportive of us – we've been very close to the people. And now at this time of need we think that we should



In June, Irish and Venezuelan MSCs joined together with local parishioners in Maracaibo and Caracas to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Venezuelan mission.

continue to support them in a big way as far as we can.

"A lot of people are suffering," he continues. "When I was going away people were saying to me 'are you sure you're coming back?' People want me to come back. People like me to be there. And I would like to be with them especially in this hour of need to support them in any way we can."

His view might be personal, but it's shared by his brother priests, he believes.

"I think my fellow missionaries feel the same way: they want to be of support to the people insofar as they can. We're Sacred Heart Missionaries – missionaries of the love of Christ – and especially in this moment we try to not alone speak the love of Christ but be the love of Christ of them, be support, be compassion for them."

It looks like the MSCs will tend to their flock for a while yet.

to help themselves in small ways," he continues, adding that the community would also help in supplying people with things as diverse as beds, mattresses and sheet iron for roofs. "We help people as far as we can, and the demands there are – really – without limits," he says.

“I’ve gone myself looking for medicine in my car, going from one pharmacy to another trying to get medication”

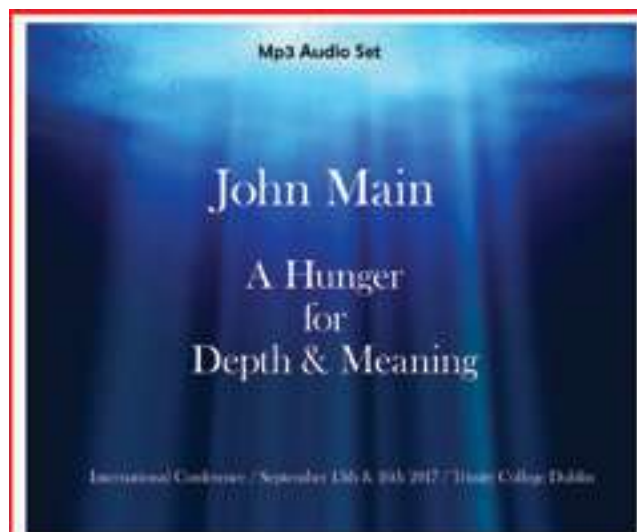
Commenting on how Fr Joe had witnessed people scavenging for food when he visited the country, Fr Vincent says: "Anywhere you go you'd see it, but you won't see a lot of people – you'll see individuals here and there. People are in dire necessity. That is something you wouldn't have

seen before."

Noting that "the shortage of food is affecting an awful lot of people at all levels" Fr Vincent says a lack of medicine is in its own way as challenging.

"We don't have any statistics but they say there's a 90% shortage of medicine, and I've found myself that I find it very hard to get medicine out there," he says, continuing, "it's very widespread and very sad: people just can't get their medicines. I would say some mentally ill people especially – it's very difficult for them, and for ourselves, because a lot of them would tend to come to church."

"I've gone myself looking for medicine in my car, going from one pharmacy to another trying to get medication, I've gone round several times looking for medicine for some of these people, and I've come back often without it. It's one of the worst areas, I would say, the lack of medicine."



John Main
A Hunger For Depth & Meaning

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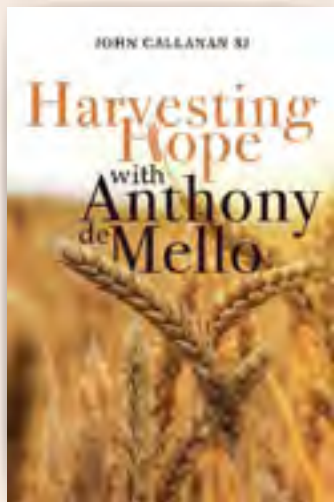
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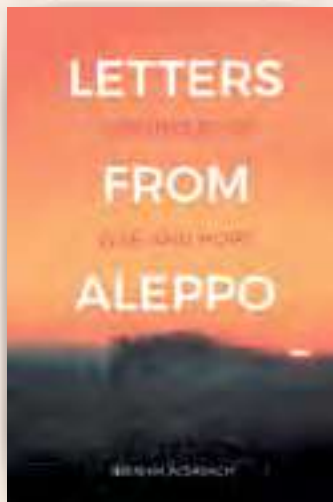
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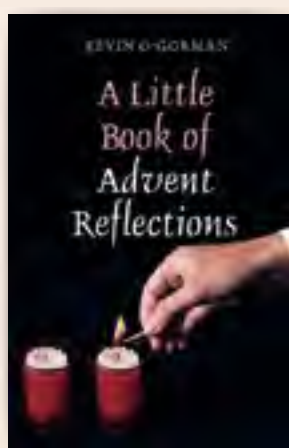
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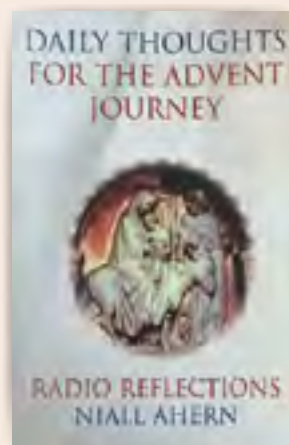
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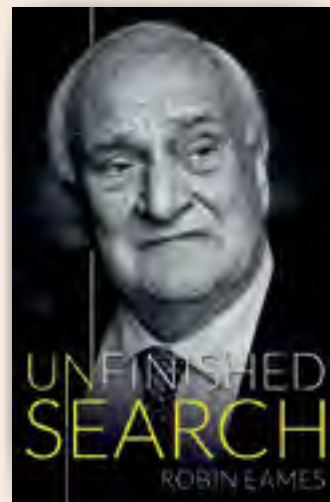
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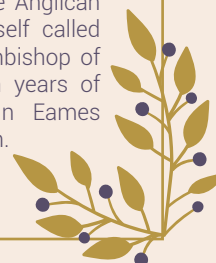
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World Report



Edited by Chai Brady
chai@irishcatholic.ie

Special Synod of Bishops to discuss evangelisation in Pan-Amazon region

Pope Francis has announced there will be a special assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October next year on the state of evangelisation in the Pan-Amazon region of South America, with special attention paid to indigenous people.

The purpose of the assembly will be to “identify new paths for the evangelisation” of people in the Pan-Amazon region of South America, meaning Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Guyana, Peru, Venezuela and Surinam, “especially the indigenous people, often forgotten”.

The Pope said he was: “Accepting the desire of some Catholic bishops’ conferences in Latin America, as well as the voice of various pastors and faithful from other parts of the world.”

The assembly will also address the “crisis of the Amazonian Forest, a lung of great importance to our planet”.

Recently Catholic Church



Indigenous people of the Mundurucu tribe are seen as they occupy the construction site of the hydropower plant of Sao Manoel this summer, near the Teles Pires river, in the Amazon, Brazil. Photo: Lunae Parracho

leaders in Bolivia have spoken against a new law that strips protection from the country’s national park and indigenous peoples’ territory allowing a highway to be cut through it. Bishop Eugenio Coter, Bolivian coordinator of the Pan-Amazonian Church Network, criticised the country’s government this summer saying it does not listen to the people, especially indigenous people.

The upcoming synod is also believed to be a rein-

forcement of the Church’s effort to promote economic development while protecting the Amazon rainforest in the region.

Advisory body

Serving as an advisory body to the Pope, the Synod of Bishops was established by Pope Paul VI in 1965.

It consists of a group of bishops from around the world who meet every three years “to foster closer unity between the Roman Pontiff

and bishops, to assist the Roman Pontiff with their counsel...and to consider questions pertaining to the activity of the Church in the world,” according to canon law. Extraordinary general assemblies can also be organised in the case of an urgent matter.

The 50th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is set to take place in October 2018, and will discuss “Young People, the Faith and the Discernment of Vocation”.

The Pope’s announcement was made in St Peter’s Square before the recitation of the Angelus, and following the canonisation Mass of 35 new saints.

New saints Andre de Sovere, Ambrosio Francisco Ferro, and Mateo Moreira and 27 companions were all martyred in Brazil. Three teenage boys, Cristobal, Antonio and Juan, also martyred, were from Mexico.

The other new saints are Faustino Miguez of Spain and Angelo of Aciri, Italy.

US Catholic schools help Puerto Rican students enrol after hurricane

Catholic schools in the US are accepting students and enrolment inquiries from Puerto Rican families displaced to Florida after the devastating impact of Hurricane Maria.

An informal survey conducted in early October by the Miami Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools indicated that some 50 students from Puerto Rico had already been placed in Catholic elementary and secondary schools within the archdiocese and more enrolments are expected in the coming months.

“They are still in the process of arriving since flights out of Puerto Rico are difficult to get and very

expensive. We expect to receive more students in the coming weeks,” said Hope Sadowski, coordinator of foreign students and administrative executive assistant in the Office of Catholic Schools in Miami.

Sadowski said the Miami Archdiocese is asking the schools to keep a tally of the Puerto Rican enrolments and to do everything they can to facilitate the emergency enrolments wherever possible. She said Catholic schools are working with the families on an individual basis to determine financial arrangements and in some cases may offer a waiver or partial waiver of tuition fees in the

short term.

The situation draws comparisons to the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake when many families were resettled in South Florida and enrolled their children in local private schools, although Sadowski points out that the Puerto Ricans are US citizens who are able to access US public education and stay in the US mainland indefinitely if they so choose.

Puerto Rican students are generally fluent in English, making for a slightly easier transition to academic life in the US, she noted in an interview with the Florida Catholic, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Miami.

Sri Lanka Church defends media criticism



The president of the Sri Lanka Catholic Bishops’ Conference has called on local media not to attack Church leaders over their anti-abortion stance.

Bishop Winston Fernando [pictured] said that media freedom does not constitute a right to target religious leaders who condemned a government decision to allow abortion in a broader range of circumstances.

“We can’t accept either condemnation of the Catholic teaching on morality or any personal attacks, insults or disrespectful remarks of the authorised teachers of the Catholic Church,” said Bishop Fernando.

“The Catholic Church has the mandate and the right to teach whether the Faithful or other people

accept the teaching or not,” said Bishop Fernando.

“Anyone is free to accept or reject the teaching, but no one can cast aspersions on the teachers or writers.”

Currently abortion is only legal to save the life of the mother. However, the country’s cabinet approved legislation to be presented to parliament which would legalise abortion when a pregnancy is due to rape or if a foetus is diagnosed with a ‘lethal congenital malformation’.

According to media reports, 10 to 12% of maternal deaths are due to excessive bleeding and infections after unsafe and illegal abortions. An estimated 650 illegal abortions take place in Sri Lanka every day.

IN BRIEF

Decline of Catholicism in West damages African Church

● A Nigerian bishop speaking in Liverpool has said the Catholic Church in his country is beginning to lose its public influence because of the decline of religious Faith in the West.

Bishop Matthew Kukah of Sokoto accused European and American politicians and diplomats of publicly “pandering” to Islam at the expense of Christianity.

The result, he said, was the ascendancy of Islam and evangelical Christianity in Nigeria and the decline of Catholicism. He said the loss of Christian faith in the West is among the causes of the diminishing influence of the Catholic Church in his own country.

“From my own experience, I find that the British high commissioner, the ambassadors from European countries, the American ambassador – they are pandering more to Islam than to Christianity, because most of them have turned their backs on Christianity,” Bishop Kukah said.

Guadalupe building world’s tallest Mary statue

The tallest statue of the Virgin Mary in the world is set to be built on an island in Central America. At 47 metres high the statue is expected to cost 80 million pesos, just over €3.57 million, and will be built on San Simón hill in a marginalised area of Guadalupe. The project began in 2004, but construction will begin again with the municipality and the state paying 30 million. The rest of the cost will be paid by private enterprises according to *Mexico News Daily*.

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Letters

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Letter of the week

Loss of reverence part of Church decline

Dear Editor, I note in Fr Joe McDonald's interview (IC 05/10/2017) that he doesn't hazard a guess as to why he thinks time is running out on the Church in Ireland. There is, however, one interesting passage in the article with which I agree wholeheartedly: "Instead of asking (he says) how many people go to Mass in a certain place... maybe we should be doing more to ask why - even if the answers might be uncomfortable for individual priests."

One possible reason, in my view, has to do with the way our church buildings are being used. I notice a

tendency over the past number of years to turn our church buildings into entertainment venues where musical shows are put on so that they now risk becoming associated in people's minds, not as houses of prayer and worship (as the Lord explicitly says), but as places where people expect to be entertained. One stand-out example of this is the use of a church in my town as a cinema to project a film that has no association whatsoever with prayer or worship.

Another possible reason is the manner in which the Eucharist is being celebrated. Very often it is

rushed through as if on automatic pilot and when communion is being distributed it is done as if handing out sweets.

I'm sure there a number of reasons for the present state of the Church in Ireland, but I think if more reverence for the place of worship and more reverence for the act of worship were shown, perhaps we would go some way to slowing the decline.

*Yours etc.,
John Cleary,
Redmondstown,
Co. Wexford.*

Church's institutional structure not fit for purpose

Dear Editor, As a priest of some 30 years' service and having spent the last three years reflecting on the nature of the Church at KU Leuven, I offer my response to Fr Joe McDonald's sentence of death for the Church (IC 05/10/2017). First off, what's dying is an institu-

tional structure no longer fit for purpose and not the Church; this process has a way to go yet. Second, the off repeated statement that priests are unaccountable would be truer in the past: in my experience parishioners are quite willing to offer criticism and a mountain

of letters in the chancery testifies to this. Thirdly, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has put in place many systems of accountability and will and does act if the need arises. My modest proposal is the model offered by St Francis of Assisi "start with what's necessary, then go on

to the possible and finally yes we can do the impossible". In short the Church in Ireland needs to rediscover the absolute necessity of God's Grace.

*Yours etc.,
Fr Peter O'Reilly,
Portmarnock,
Co Dublin.*

Where did celibacy rule come from?

Dear Editor, In the epistle of St Paul to Titus, chapter one, verses five to seven, there is no mention of presbyters having to be celibate. So how did anyone come to the conclusion that this had to be so? As my cousin said to me with regard to this, most men would like to have a female companion.

*Yours etc.,
Colm O'Connor,
Dublin 14.*



Consequences of choice to terminate

Dear Editor, I was in Dublin City Centre during the recent March for Choice. While I disagreed with the sentiments expressed by the marchers, I was profoundly glad that we live in a country where their voices could be freely expressed and freely heard.

It struck me later, however, that if the mothers of the men and women who took part in the march had made the choice to terminate those

marchers' lives before they were even born, then their bodies, their choices, their hopes and dreams and of course their lives would have been forever lost.

And for those of us who know and love people who took part in the march, the absence of those lives, never touching ours, is difficult to contemplate.

*Yours etc.,
Brendan Conroy,
Windy Arbour, Dublin 14.*

Public needs to hear more balanced debate on abortion

Dear Editor, I agree with TD Peadar Kirby (05/10/2017) that the pro-choice advocates appear to be dominating the debate around the Eighth Amendment. A debate can only be a debate if both sides are given equal air time and the chance to defend their opinions.

With this in mind, Julie Christie's inspiring story was very welcome and proved that good can overcome evil; light shines in the darkest of situations. I fully appreciate that not everyone would have had her positive attitude to

her unborn baby who certainly wasn't conceived in love but, however he may have been conceived, is a gift from, and was created by, God out of love. If the general public were given the opportunity to hear more stories like Julie's the debate wouldn't be stifled but allowed to flow freely, and so enable people to make their own informed decision as to how to vote next May.

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

Who do you think is turning up the heat?

Dear Editor, As a Manorhamilton man I am writing to you from Japan where for the past 47 years I have the privilege of sharing the great gift of the Faith I inherited from the people of Leitrim.

I read in *The Japan News* recently that there is going to be a referendum in Ireland on the question of abortion. I am at a loss to understand how anybody can be silent when the State is asking people to agree that it is all right to pass the death sentence on the weakest member of society, the child in the womb?

We all know that one day we will stand before God and give an account of our lives. There will be no excuses because we will be in the presence of 'Truth' itself. We know what the basis of each one's judgement will be. How did you look after the sick, the poor, the hungry, the elderly, the prisoner, the refugee, the migrant and the unborn child? He tells us "What you did to one of these small ones you did to me".

So the conclusion is very clear. Every single vote to legalise the killing of the unborn child is in fact once again a roar in the face of Heaven "Crucify Him!"

I can see that many people who call themselves Christians might be confused when the political world and the weight of mass media opinion are so vociferous in their support for what is called the 'liberal agenda'. The presumption is that these are good and intelligent people who would never do anything underhanded. They think that if these people say it's ok, then it must be so. And so the result is one election after another, which have been an unrelenting attack on and an undermining of the family and life, its transmission and all that supports it.

No court, no state, no politician, no study group, no international organisation, no individual has the right to pass the death sentence on the unborn child. I write to you because silence is taken as agreement and evil flourishes when good people are silent.

Looking at Ireland over these last several years, I am reminded of what they say about the frog. That if you put the frog into boiling water it will jump out, but that if you put it into lukewarm water and turn up the heat slowly it will adjust itself to the rising temperature and eventually be cooked. I would like to be able to shout to the whole of Ireland: "Wake up! You have been lulled into a kind of stupor! You are losing your soul!" The frog is almost cooked! Who do you think is turning up the heat?

*Yours etc.,
Fr Harry O'Carroll SSC,
Yatsushiro Shi, Japan.*

Meaning of the 'right to choose'

Dear Editor, Recently William Binchy made a very important remark before the Committee on the Eight Amendment. He said that the phrase the 'right to choose' is a 'half sentence' and if completed would translate as "the right to choose to end the life of a human being". How can anyone not believe that small unborn babies are human beings?

*Yours etc.,
Raymond Cullen,
Clones, Co. Monaghan.*

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.

Will you help change the future for a child living in poverty?

Shahid is only 11 years old. Having lost his mother as a baby, and being shunned from his family home means the odds are already stacked against him. But Shahid has another problem that's casting a shadow over his chance at a bright future. Shahid needs glasses.

When Sightsavers first met him, Shahid looked like he was carrying the weight of the world on his small shoulders. He lost his mother when he was a baby. His father remarried and had more children, and his stepmother, unwilling to support another child, sent Shahid to live with his grandmother in a one room house next door. Shahid had to live with that rejection every day, the proximity to his old home a constant reminder that his father and stepmother didn't want him.

Shahid had to live with that rejection every day, the proximity to his old home a constant reminder that his father and stepmother didn't want him.

Being short-sighted made Shahid's already difficult life even harder. When asked what his favourite toy was, he replied without hesitation that it was his cricket ball – and his face lit up for the first time when he spoke about playing the game with his friends. But his poor vision meant that Shahid could no longer see the ball properly, so he had to stay in while the other children played. School was even more of a worry. Shahid couldn't see well enough to read his books and his eyes watered

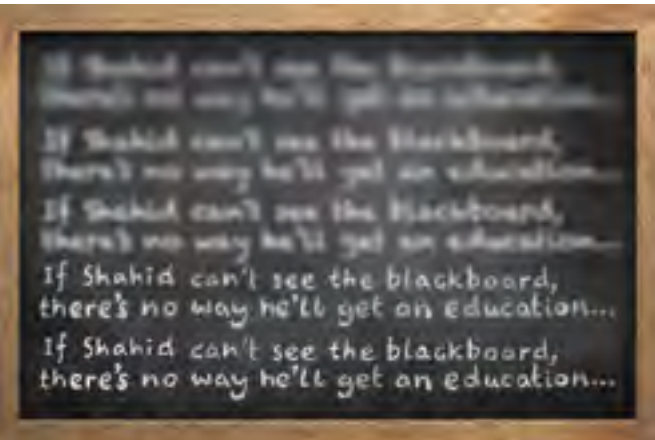


Shahid and his grandmother at their home.

when they tried to focus on the blackboard. He was a hard-working little boy, and wanted to be a religious teacher when he grew up. But what hope did Shahid have of achieving in school if he could not see clearly?

Thankfully, Shahid was able to participate in class once more. With the help of

donations from Sightsavers supporters, we trained Shahid's teacher to provide eye screenings for her students so that Shahid could receive the glasses he so desperately needed. Teachers like his perform screenings once a year, then the children's glasses are sent to the school a couple of weeks later. Children are even



Shahid enjoying class again thanks to his new glasses.

All Photos: © Sightsavers/Animesh Datta Snapa

able to choose the colour and frames of their glasses themselves, which helps to remove some of the stigma of wearing them.

Your gift of €35 could provide an eye screening and glasses for 10 children like Shahid. Please will you send your gift today?

When Shahid received his glasses at school it was a special moment. When he put them on, he seemed to grow taller with a new-found confidence and he had an excited smile on his face. It was a huge relief that he could see clearly once more, and he quickly began reading with his classmates.

Hope

When Sightsavers visited Shahid at home with his grandmother, Sahjahan, it became even more apparent how much glasses could

change his life. They lived in a slum not far from the school, with open sewers running down outside their small, single room.

Sahjahan knew that, one day, she would not be around to take care of Shahid – and with no other relatives to support him, she knew that doing well at school was his one and only way out of poverty. Sahjahan felt incredibly grateful that the glasses her beloved grandson had been given could offer him the chance of

a better life. Of course, a child like Shahid will never have it easy. They face challenges our children and grandchildren won't ever have to deal with. We might take glasses for granted in Ireland, but they give a child with vision difficulties the chance to achieve at school – and could be their only hope of a brighter future. Your gift today could change everything for children living in extreme poverty.



Shahid loves learning and wants to be a religious teacher when he grows up.

About Sightsavers

Our vision

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

Our mission

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

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



Shahid now has a chance of a better future.

A gift of €35.00 to Sightsavers would be enough to provide an eye screening and glasses for 10 children like Shahid.

Donate today at www.sightsavers.ie or call 01 663 76 66



Close the distance not the gate



Nobel-prizing winning author Toni Morrison, assessing the times, asks this question: "Why should we want to know a stranger when it is easier to estrange another? Why should we want to close the distance when we can close the gate?" Except this isn't a question, it's a judgment.

It's a negative judgment on both our society and our churches. Where are our hearts really at? Are we trying more to close the distance between us and what's foreign, or are we into closing gates to keep strangers estranged?

In fairness, it might be pointed out that this has always been a struggle. There hasn't been a golden age within which people wholeheartedly welcomed the stranger. There have been golden individuals and even golden communities who were welcoming, but never society or Church as a whole.

Politics

Much as this issue is so front and centre in our politics today, as countries everywhere struggle with their immigration policies and with what to do with millions of refugees and migrants wanting to enter their country, I want to take Morrison's challenge, to close the distance rather than close the gate, to our churches: are we inviting in the stranger? Or, are we content to let the estranged remain outside? There is a challenging motif



Fr Rolheiser

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Toni Morrison.

within Jesus' parable of the over-generous vineyard owner which can easily be missed because of the overall lesson within the story. It concerns the question that the vineyard owner asks the last group of workers, those who will work for only one hour. Unlike the first group, he doesn't ask them: "Do you want to work in my vineyard?" Rather he asks them: "Why aren't you working?" Their answer: "Because no one has hired us!"

Notice they don't answer by saying that their non-employment is because they are lazy, incompetent, or disinterested.

Neither does the vineyard owner's question imply that.

They aren't working simply because no one has given them the invitation to work!

Indifferent

Sadly, I believe this is the case for so many people who are seemingly cold or indifferent to religion and our churches. Nobody has invited them in! And that was true too at the time of Jesus. Whole groups of people were seen as being indifferent and hostile to religion and were deemed simply as sinners. This included prostitutes,

tax-collectors, foreigners, and criminals. Jesus invited them in and many of them responded with a sincerity, contrition, and devotion that shamed those who considered themselves true believers. For the so-called sinners, all that stood between them and entry into the kingdom was a genuine invitation.

Why aren't you practicing a faith? No one has invited us!

Just in my own, admittedly limited, pastoral experience, I have seen a number of individuals who from childhood to early or late mid-life were indifferent to, and even somewhat paranoid about, religion and Church. It was a world from which they had always felt excluded.

“We are that crowd around Jesus, blocking access to him by our presence”

But, thanks to some gracious person or fortunate circumstance, at a moment, they felt invited in and they gave themselves over to their new religious family with a disarming warmth, fervour and gratitude, often taking a fierce pride in their new identity.

Witnessing this several times, I now understand why the prostitutes and tax-collectors, more than the church people at the time, believed in Jesus. He was the first religious person to truly invite them in.

Sadly, too, there's a reverse side to this is where, all too often, in all religious sincerity, we not only

don't invite certain others in, we positively close the gates on them. We see that, for example, a number of times in the Gospels where those around Jesus block others from having access to him, as is the case in that rather colourful story where some people are trying to bring a paralytic to Jesus but are blocked by the crowds surrounding him and consequently have to make a hole in the roof in order to lower the paralytic into Jesus' presence.

Too frequently, unknowingly, sincerely, but blindly, we are that crowd around Jesus, blocking access to him by our presence. This is an occupational danger especially for all of us who are in ministry.

We so easily, in all sincerity, in the name of Christ, in the name of orthodox theology, and in the name of sound pastoral practice set ourselves up as gatekeepers, as guardians of our churches, through whom others must pass in order to have access to God. We need to more clearly remember that Christ is the gatekeeper, and the only gatekeeper, and we need to refresh ourselves on what that means by looking at why Jesus chased the moneychangers out of the temple in John's Gospel.

They, the moneychangers, had set themselves up as a medium through which people has to pass in order to offer workshop to God. Jesus would have none of it.

Our mission as disciples of Jesus is not to be gatekeepers. We need instead to work at closing the distance rather than closing the gate.

Family & Lifestyle

The Irish Catholic, October 19, 2017

Personal Profile

A partnership
that's changing
lives

Page 30



How to fuel your inner flame



Research in positive psychology suggests that while around 50% of our happiness levels are influenced by genetic components, only 10% are attributable to external circumstances, despite the huge amount of energy we invest in ensuring we drive the best car, buy the biggest house etc.

The remaining 40% is something we can cultivate through committing to life-giving choices and intentional activity congruent with our values. Maybe Scripture is telling us the same thing when it advises us not to worry about material things (the 10%) but to seek first the things of the soul (life-giving choices) (Mt 6: 33).



Each of us has a divine spark that can fuel our own happiness and brighten the lives of those around us, writes Martina Lehan Sheehan

Numerous studies tell us that when we integrate more resourceful habits in our thoughts, attitudes and behavioural choices, we can increase our level of activities whereby we use our gifts and talents to create a meaningful life. We can also choose to heal the early memories that may have caused emotional shutdown.

From what I have explored

in psychology, and what I have learned from my own life, and from the life of my clients in counselling and spiritual direction, I would conclude that this 40% necessitates that we live with a degree of uncertainty, a willingness to live with the complexity of life, an ability to trust and to take risks and to stop trying to control the uncontrollable!

It requires an ability to deal

with setbacks in such a way that they become opportunities for learning. It invites us to practise altruism, drawing us to live a bigger life where, alongside caring for ourselves, we actively contribute to the well-being of others and of the planet.

Psychologist Martin Seligman, who, since the year 2000, has been promoting the field of positive psychology, tells us that "happiness is not just about obtaining momentary subjective states. Happiness also includes the idea that one's life has been authentic".

He explored, in depth, those thoughts and behaviours that serve to give people a sense of purpose and which, therefore, help to maintain people's

happiness. Among them are:

- counting one's blessings
- setting goals to help us develop our strength
- practising a religious faith that gives us meaning
- engaging in activities that help humanity
- avoiding obsessive rumination or comparisons with others.

I decided to ask a few 'happy people' what they thought. Most of them said that an attitude of gratitude is a prerequisite to experiencing happiness. In fact, many said it even helps to be grateful when we are experiencing difficulties or challenges.

Really? Yes, I too felt a bit dubious about that one. What

» Continued on Page 29

Family News

AND EVENTS

Splasztastic events for little swimmers

The first-ever National Baby Swimming Week, organised by Water Babies, will run from next Monday, October 31. The goal is to encourage mums and dads across Ireland to take their little ones to their nearest swimming pool or swimming class for some fun family time, while gaining a host of health benefits along the way.



Recent research conducted by Water Babies in Ireland, shows that those who start learning to swim from an early age have benefited in many ways. "Over the years we have seen countless babies and parents reap huge benefits from taking swimming classes with our highly qualified teachers," said Carol McNally, Water Babies Ireland. "Sadly though, far too many young children are missing out on all the positive benefits that come with swimming simply because they have never learned this potentially life-saving skill."

MAKING DUBLIN MORE PLAYFUL:

A Playful City is a project exploring and responding to the need for more inclusive, child-friendly and playful spaces in Dublin city. This week the project held a 'Design Meets Play' International Conference and Hackathon, a consultation event that will ultimately lead to more playful installations and interventions in the 'spaces between spaces' of Dublin city.

A partnership between Connect the Dots and Upon a Tree, the aim of the

project is to carve out areas in public spaces where people of all ages and abilities can engage and interact.

"Children need to be consulted and planned for, not tucked away into corners of parks behind fences," says Aaron Copeland, co-founder of Upon a Tree. "They represent a necessary starting point to designing spaces. Once you design for a child, it becomes safe and accessible for everyone."

● See www.aplayfulcity.com

Cups against cancer coffee mornings

The Irish Cancer Society is calling on all women to become aware of the signs and symptoms of breast cancer during this breast cancer awareness month.

The five year survival rate for breast cancer patients in Ireland is currently at 85% and the society says early detection of the disease is a key factor in this. As part of its Cups against Cancer fundraising campaign, the society is urging members of the public to host a fundraising coffee

morning during the month of October, donations from which will help fund lifesaving research and free services to support the 2,900 people who will get a breast cancer diagnosis this year. They are also encouraging people to use these events to talk about signs and symptoms of breast cancer.

All women aged 50 to 69 are invited to have a free mammogram every two years, see www.breastcheck.ie for more information.

Failure is a powerful motivator

We all make mistakes and we all experience failure. Failure is a painful experience and the conventional psychological advice is that we should not dwell on failure and we should try not to feel bad. However, new research just published by Noelle Nelson and others in the *Journal of Behavioural Decision Making* found that, when processing failure, feeling the pain of the failure leads to greater effort to not fail again in future than simply thinking about what went wrong. Our emotional response to failure helps us more than simply thinking (cognitive response) about the failure.

Interviewed about the study, co-author Selin Malkoc said: "When faced with a failure it is better to focus on one's emotions – when people concentrate on how they feel and how they don't want to experience these feelings again, they are more likely to try harder next time." On the other hand, people who simply reflect on a failure tend not to focus on ways to avoid a similar mistake again, mostly focusing on protecting their own ego and thinking, for example, how the failure wasn't really their fault or how it wasn't really such a big deal anyway. "If your thoughts are all about how to distance yourself from your failure, you're not going to learn from your mistakes," Malkoc said.

Response

Nelson and colleagues carried out several studies. In one, 98 college students were asked to search online for a particular type of blender, with the possibility of a cash prize for the finder of the lowest priced blender.

Before they were told the result, half the students were told to concentrate on their emotional response to winning or losing and the other half were told to concentrate on their



Science of life
Prof. William Reville

thoughts about how they did. The students were not aware that the experiment was rigged – each participant was told the lowest price was \$3.27 less than what they found.

Each student was asked to write about how they felt about their failure. Students who thought about their failures wrote significantly more self-protective thoughts (e.g. "This wasn't my fault") than self-improvement thoughts (e.g. "I know how I can do better next time").

Students who thought about their failures wrote more self-protective thoughts

In the second half of the experiment the experimenters set out to find if the effort expended by the students in carrying out a new task would be related to whether they focused on emotions or thoughts regarding their previous failure. The new task was designed to be similar to the first task – a search for the lowest price – because the experimenters believed that a similar task would trigger the participants to recall their previous unsuccessful attempt whereas an unrelated task would not.

Half the students were asked to search for a gift book for a friend that would best fit their small student budget, i.e. they were to search for the lowest price. The other half of the students were asked to search for a book that would be the

best choice for their friend, i.e. a non-similar task to their first task.

The results showed that previous emotional responses to failure motivated the participants much more than cognitive responses when the students were faced with another similar task. Emotionally motivated students spent 25% more time searching for a lower-priced book than the students who did not dwell on the pain of their previous failure, but merely thought about the failure.

On the other hand there was no significant difference between emotionally and cognitively motivated students when the second task (searching for the best book) was not like the first task (searching for the cheapest blender). People who focused on how bad they felt about their first failure tried harder than the others when they had another similar



opportunity. But the new situation has to be similar to the first to trigger the pain of the first failure.

Malkoc thinks that in most situations people probably experience both emotional and cognitive responses to failure. However, the important thing is not to avoid the emotional pain but to use it to fuel improvement. Emotional responses make you feel pain

and that's why many choose rather to think self-protective thoughts after failures. But if you focus more on the pain, you will work harder to ensure you don't make the same mistake again.

All that said, it is also vitally important that, when you set out to achieve something, you set realistic goals for yourself. For example, if you have no ear for music there is no point in embarking on a rigorous training programme to become a professional pianist and then trying to use the pain of failing your exams to help you perform better in future. The power of feeling the pain of failure can only help you to achieve goals that are realistic.

The important thing is not to avoid the emotional pain but to use it to fuel improvement

Also, although Malkoc's study didn't examine this, thinking about how to improve from past mistakes can be helpful so long as you don't focus on protecting your ego with self-statements like – "This failure was not my fault". Thomas Edison is said to have failed 10,000 times when inventing the lightbulb. This didn't bother him and he said "I have found 10,000 ways something won't work – I am not discouraged because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward".

Samuel Beckett wrote extensively about how the human will to succeed is inevitably defied by an inherently hostile universe. Nevertheless his good humoured reaction was: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

William Reville is an Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry at UCC.

» Continued from Page 27



about the therapeutic benefit of having a good old rant instead? However, gratitude can help access good in a difficult situation. Gratitude is rather like a vaccine, a reliable preventative for many kinds of depression.

While, therefore, we have predispositions that may make us more vulnerable towards such things as anxiety, one of the most exciting discoveries of this era is that we can change our lives (according to findings in neuroplasticity, we can even alter our brain structure).

“Nothing is wasted; mistakes can be turned to key lessons, obstacles and setbacks can be turned to opportunities”

These changes can come about through an intentional and dedicated changing of our attitudes, habits etc. When we activate our energy for life, it is like the acorn mobilising itself towards the oak, the mustard seed towards the mighty tree, the dancer towards the dance, the clay towards the hands of the potter. Our sleeping souls uncurl and turn towards the light as every part of our being, and even our immune system, is enlivened.

Each new dawn tells us we can rise again because it is never too late to exchange mediocrity for the miraculous. As one elderly woman said to me, “I want to learn these things so I don’t die with the fire still inside me”. Perhaps you don’t want to exit with the poetry, or the music or the love still inside you.

A relentless force

The Olympic athlete grasps the flaming torch and carries it with all his might before passing it on. Likewise, we are called to take hold of the spark we are each given; we are called to carry it for a while, allowing it to blaze brightly before passing it on to those who are coming after us.

Unlike the Olympic athletes, this fire is not ‘handed’ to us from external sources, but rises from within, where it animates us and moves us forward. Maybe this has something to do with what the ancient Greeks refer to as our daemon, or our indwelling spirit. In psychological terms, we say it is ‘our



true self’. Once we see it, we can never again ‘un-see’ it (although we can certainly neglect or ignore it).

Even if, therefore, you did not inherit the happy gene, or do not enjoy many of the world’s lucky circumstances, you have a compelling life force, a divine orientation towards life continually seeks entry into your consciousness. Just as the snowdrop emerges through the hard ground after the winter, time and time again we heroically re-emerge from our own hard ground situations. Something in us relentlessly chooses life and light.

Increased resilience

When you fully awaken to this exquisite reality, you not only increase your resilience, you also help raise the vibrational energy of those around you: in fact you become a bridge that allows others to also cross over from stuck-ness to freedom.

The film *Billy Elliott* tells the story of a young boy, the son of a coal miner, who wants to be a professional dancer. At the interview for the ballet school, he describes a relentless fire inside of him: “It starts stiff and that, but once I get going then I – like – forget everything and sort of disappear. Like I feel a change in my whole body.

There’s fire in me. I’m just there, flyin’ like a bird, like electricity, yeah, like electricity.”

For us it also ‘starts stiff and that’ until we know that the spark that has been ignited cannot now be quenched, and we ‘sort of disappear’ as we ourselves become fire.

Once we embark on the journey

of finding our flame, life can no longer be seen as a mere haphazard or random string of lucky or unlucky events. Scripture tells us it is an indwelling divine spark, which is not timid but powerful, and it is our responsibility to fan it into flame (2 Tim 1:6). We are called, therefore, to be continually open to transformation, whereby we allow the past to become the compost that produces new growth for the present and a compelling vision for the future. Seen in this way, nothing is wasted; mistakes can be turned to key lessons, obstacles and setbacks can be turned to opportunities. There is, after all, nothing like that joyous thump in the heart when we have unburdened ourselves of an old negative habit or dared to take a new risk.

“We are part of the flame that sparked the universe into being; the same energy that lit the sun”

Every snowdrop, every blade of grass, every tiny insect is sharing this life force with you, as all creation seeks life, emergence and growth. We have, moving within us, a dynamic force, which Dante tells us also “moves the sun and other stars”.

We are part of the flame that sparked the universe into being; the same energy that lit the sun, breathed the planets into orbit and ignites new dreams in the human heart. We have to be spark throwers in a universe that longs for hope. George Bernard Shaw tells us we have to burn our light brightly because we have it for only a short while before passing it on to future generations: “Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment before handing it to future generations.”

✦ Martina Lehan Sheehan is an accredited psychotherapist, counsellor, keynote speaker and spiritual director. This extract is taken from her new book *Surprised by Fire*, published by Currach Press (€14.99).

Faith — IN THE — family



Bairbre Cahill

Dorcas Lane was the village postmistress in a TV series called *Lark Rise to Candleford* which we used to watch on a Sunday evening when our children were younger. Any time that Dorcas was caught doing something she felt she shouldn’t be doing, like eating a cream cake, buying another new hat or reading a book during work, she would announce with a mischievous smile: “It is my one weakness!”

I feel a bit the same about a programme that I enjoy watching when I can. It is called *Ambulance* and is a BBC programme which follows ambulance crews around the greater Birmingham area, from the call being answered in the control centre to the crews on the ground arriving at the scene. I am sure there is probably something more useful and productive I could be doing with that hour, but there is something about this programme that

captivates me – and that is the humanity of the staff involved.

There was one week where a crew spent half their night trying to get a young lad with a facial injury off the streets and into a hostel. The lad was living a troubled life, messing with drugs, thrown out of home, vulnerable on the streets. The crew came back two or three times over the course of the night trying to persuade him to accept help. Why were they so involved? One of the crew saw in this lad her own son, who had also gone off the rails, was estranged from her and living on the streets. Her hope was that someone would look after her boy like she was trying to look after this young lad.

Important

Last week there was an elderly man who had terminal cancer and dementia and had lost the power of speech. Called to the nursing home the crew assessed him for transfer to hospital. This man could not speak but reached out to the paramedic who sat down and took his hand. It was powerful to see how important human touch and tenderness were

to this man. Throughout the journey to hospital the paramedic sat with him, holding his hand, talking to him, clearly understanding the patient’s silent distress.

I am sure there are text books and protocols that outline how patients should be treated but nothing can capture the beauty of what happens when people allow their humanity and tenderness to shine. And this is what captivates me about this programme – it is a testament to incarnation. Ideas and concepts are all very well but it is when they are expressed in our lives, incarnated – “given skin” as Fr Ronald Rolheiser says – that something very special happens.

Here in these people, under highly pressurised and stressful working conditions, their humanity shines forth. They bring great skill and



professionalism to what they do but what transforms their role is their own warmth and compassion.

I have no idea whether these people believe in God or

not, but I do believe that when we allow the goodness of our humanity to shine the image of God shines in us.

In these weeks when there seems to be so much in the news about shootings and violence and the trading of threats between countries, we need to remind ourselves of the goodness of humanity.

When we are talking round the dinner table, we need to be able to draw upon images of tenderness, goodness, selflessness and compassion. We need to highlight such virtues when we see them, in each other, in our community and even in the real-life actions of people we see on the television. We are created in the image and likeness of God. That is the core of our humanity.

Ambulance nurtures my hope and confidence in the goodness of humanity even amidst frailty, brokenness and harsh realities. It is ‘my one weakness’ – or one of them at least and I’m not giving you the list of all the rest!

Personal Profile



Colm Fitzpatrick speaks with missionaries about their impact in South Sudan

In a place of despair, starvation and even death, Irish missionaries have begun to bring hope back into the down-trodden lives of thousands.

South Sudan remains one of the world's poorest countries, and continues to be ravaged by violence, illness and extreme poverty which affect millions of lives. The severity of the conditions cannot be exaggerated, and statistics coming from there are fodder to the bleak reality of the compared situation. To get an idea however; there is one trained doctor per 65,000 people; a 15-year-old girl is more likely to die in childbirth than she is to finish secondary school; and there are jobs that pay as little as €2.27 a month.

Speaking about the crisis, Sr Orla Treacy, a member of Loreto Sisters who has been working in South Sudan for over 10 years said: "Things are bad, and there isn't a lot of hope for the immediate situation and things look like they are getting worse."

Crisis

"Our community is in the crisis stage of food insecurity, and has been for over two years without any respite from the hunger. Things will get worse now coming into the dry season."

In 2008, the Loreto Sisters began

working in the rural community of Maker Kuei, Rumbek, an environment of constant struggle with over 1,000 families who are fighting to survive. Although tribal violence and riots are prominent, health care and health education are vital issues that need addressing.

"This area has a strong culture of traditional medicine (witch doctors) and this has become just as fatal as malaria, pneumonia, or infections," says Sr Orla. "Preventative health care is an extremely new concept, but one that the children are eager to take advantage of."

In July 2016, the Loreto Sisters established the Loreto Primary Health Care Unit (PHCU) in Rumbek. This medical centre provides life-saving aid to local people, especially to women and children, who are most vulnerable to disease and ailment. In the first six months of the PHCU, professional nursing staff saw an average of 250 people per week, with most common illnesses treated at the clinic such as malaria, pneumonia and fungal

infections. In addition to this, the PHCU have begun running programmes to educate the local community about basic sanitary hygiene.

Alongside these health-care developments, there have been remarkable improvements in education of the children in the area in spite of adverse cultural practices.

“This education has had an overwhelming impact on the families living in the area”

"Education, and especially girl child education, has a low cultural value in this community where the size of a family's cattle herds determines wealth and position," says Sr Orla. Cattle are the currency of exchange for brides and some Loreto girls from this area have been offered as many as 300 cows for their hand in marriage.

"In our community, what is needed is development through

aid; working to develop the communities position and understanding on critical issues of child protection and education, gender empowerment, and other critical life-skills, while simultaneously supporting these children throughout the ongoing crisis."

To address the scarcity, the Loreto Primary School was established, which caters to almost 700 students both male and female. Students are given a quality education and also have access to healthcare, nutritious meals and clean water.

The Loreto Secondary School was also founded as an all-girls' boarding school which 240 girls attend, with Sr Orla Treacy who works with families to protect young women from enforced marriage, as the principal.

This education has had an overwhelming impact on the families living in the area. "The school provides a safe and secure environment for these children to not only learn, but to play," Sr Orla says.



Sr Orla Tracey at the Loreto Primary School; inset, a student at the Loreto Secondary School. Photos: Paul Jeffrey

"What they gain in the school lays a foundation for their lives, but in the current context the school also offers critical services: health care, sanitation facilities, clean potable water access, and meals. Each child is covered, through their enrolment, for each of these life altering services."

This year, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart have joined forces with the Loreto Sisters for further outreach to struggling families. Speaking about the undertakings Fr Alan Neville MSC, who visited Rumbek while conducting research into Catholic peace-zones, says that the "schools are educating kids and working with them to become builders of peace, but women are especially disempowered".

Articulate

"In the midst of all this, they're being educated and becoming articulate and incredible young women. Girls teach each other tribal dances and girls are paired with others not part of their ethnic group, so it's breaking down barriers," he says.

"The completion rate for school is also spectacular - all of the kids usually finish school and the schools will fund it most of the time."

This missionary work for Fr Alan means that we are "unleashing a group of young women into the world" who can become nurses and teachers.

"This is an absolute good, in the midst of everything. It's a challenging mission, but they're not walking away."

As part of their 2017 Summer Appeal, the Loreto Sisters are calling upon all mission friends to join with the MSC community to support the crucial work in South Sudan which is in need of urgent aid.

i To donate, visit: <https://www.mscmissions.ie/donate/>

Sweet Treats

Erin Fox



Pumpkin bruschetta makes a perfect starter

When it's October, there's no such thing as too much pumpkin. So, if you're planning an all-pumpkin menu this Halloween, then it's got to include pumpkin bruschetta. It makes a delicious starter to a main course of pumpkin risotto or pumpkin curry or a snack to have at a Halloween party. And if you use butternut squash, you can have it all year round.

This recipe is inspired by Delia Smith's roast pumpkin soup with stringy gruyere cheese but if you're not a fan of gruyere, swap it for parmesan or pecorino instead.

It's much easier to get perfect cubes of pumpkin if you just cut the whole thing up instead of scooping out the flesh but make the effort to keep the pumpkin intact for jack-o'-lantern on Halloween night.

Pumpkin bruschetta ingredients

- Sour dough or ciabatta cut into thick slices
- One small to medium sized pumpkin
- Groundnut oil
- Small handful fresh sage leaves

- 100g pine nuts toasted
- 75g Gruyere cheese grated
- Salt and pepper for seasoning
- 2 garlic cloves
- ¼ teaspoon of fresh nutmeg grated
- Good quality balsamic vinegar

Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Scoop the flesh out of the pumpkin and place the seeds aside in a bowl to roast later.

Cut the pumpkin flesh into small cubes and place on a baking tray. Drizzle with the groundnut oil and season with salt and pepper.

Roast in the preheated oven for 35 to 40 minutes, giving it a stir halfway, and then allow it to cool for 10 minutes when you remove it from the oven. Transfer the pumpkin to a warm heatproof bowl and stir in the grated gruyere to allow it to melt slightly and become stringy. Keep the bowl

warm on a hot plate.

Meanwhile toast the pine nuts. Place a heavy frying pan over a medium high heat and toss the pine nuts in. Toast for 1 to 2 minutes, taking care not to burn them.

Bowl

Remove the pine nuts from the pan and toss into the bowl with the roasted pumpkin.

Place the pan back over the heat and add 1tbsp of groundnut oil. Gently fry the sage leaves in the oil until crispy and then when they're cool enough to handle, chop them up and add to the pumpkin.

Season the bruschetta with the salt, pepper and nutmeg and then start assembling the bruschetta.

Cut each garlic clove in half and toast the slices of bread under the grill. While it's still hot, rub a garlic clove all over the bread and then spoon the pumpkin mixture on top.

Drizzle with some balsamic vinegar and don't forget to light the tealight in your carved pumpkin before tucking in!



TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Scabs peeled off Vietnam War once again

Ken Burns has a name for excellent historical documentaries and his current series *The Vietnam War* (RTÉ 1 and BBC 4, Monday nights) is top notch.

There's a wealth of archive footage, much of it quite harrowing, along with interviews with those involved – ex-soldiers, bereaved parents, and Vietnamese civilians, all from both sides of the conflict. You're left with a sense of the awfulness of war, heroism in war, the humanity of ordinary people, the dilemmas of politicians, the pursuit of a cause without empathy and a crushing disbelief at the cruelty displayed by both sides.

Last Monday night's episode on RTÉ 1 showed the increasing opposition at home to American involvement – American society seemed as polarised as today as we watched the rival demonstrations.

Martin Luther King decided to weigh in against the war having been reluctant to do that while he was making progress on the civil rights front with the help of President Lyndon Johnson. We saw Johnson's self-doubt about the whole venture, wary of harming civilians but still continuing the bombing of North Vietnam.

The story of 19-year-old US soldier 'Mogie' Crocker hit hard – he was an idealist, eager for adventure and then



A scene from Ken Burns' *The Vietnam War*.

shocked and disillusioned when a friend was killed beside him. It was hard to watch his mother and sister describing the day a priest and a soldier arrived to tell them that he had been killed in battle.

Satisfaction

At home the census figures on religious affiliation produced lots of coverage. If I was cynical I'd say that the media were reporting the small drop in the number of those identifying as Catholics and the rise in those declaring 'no reli-

gion' with a certain amount of satisfaction. In most of the coverage the figures for the Protestant Churches, Islam and Judaism were virtually ignored. And weren't these figures released a few months ago, with much the same media reaction?

Fr Iggy O'Donovan was interviewed about what he called 'misleading figures' on Newstalk's *Breakfast* last Friday morning. He outlined the declining state of traditional religious practice, but when asked twice by Shane Coleman what could be done to

improve matters, he just continued (apart from suggesting a 'purgatory period') to outline the problems. In the end Coleman put that question out to the listeners in hope of an answer from them. Overall, the thrust of the coverage was that the census questions produced inflated figures for the number of Catholics – but can a scientific instrument like a census really deduce the quality, nuances and even ambiguities of one's religious observance?

I thought the Budget would mean the Eighth Amendment controversy getting a rest, but if anything the temperature increased. On the *Pat Kenny Show* (Newstalk) last Thursday the host, in the context of controversy over the Oireachtas Committee, made an awful comment. Responding to a mean-spirited text seeking pro-lifers people to be dubbed 'the no-choice side', he offered this alleged

insight: 'if a woman loses her life on foot of the Eighth being in place that cannot make the people who approve of that situation pro-life'.

Later Jerry Buttimer TD appeared on the *News at One* (RTÉ Radio 1), got some challenging questions from Áine Lawlor, but got away with suggesting it's 'too early to pre-empt what happens'. Surely that's exactly what the Government has done – health minister Simon Harris has already been tasked with planning the referendum.

By Thursday evening it was clear that Senator Rónán Mullen and Mattie McGrath TD were deeply frustrated with the Committee – Fergal Keane's report on Thursday's *Drivetime* (RTÉ Radio 1) outlined their concerns – that 20 'witnesses' invited before the committee were pro-choice while only four were pro-life, and that they weren't given enough time to question these witnesses.

In a later report on the same show Chairperson Senator Catherine Noone dealt only with the issue of time – she didn't deal with, and wasn't pressed on, the imbalance of witnesses – surely the greater unfairness.

The final episode of *Ministry of Hope* aired on RTÉ 1 last Thursday night and the high standards I outlined when the series started were maintained to the end. That last episode was filled



Jerry Buttimer TD.

PICK OF THE WEEK

SONGS OF PRAISE
BBC 1, Sunday, October 22, 4.15 pm

Claire McCollum is in Dungannon introducing music and inspirational stories of faith from across Ireland.

RETREAT: MEDITATIONS FROM A MONASTERY
BBC 4, Tuesday, October 24, 9.00 pm, also

Wednesday, Thursday
Series which goes in search of inner peace in three Benedictine monasteries around Britain.

THE LEAP OF FAITH
RTÉ Radio 1, Friday, October 27

Topical religious affairs with Michael Comyn.

with generous measures of faith, hope and love. It was empathic, inspiring, spiritual and deeply human.

And if you wanted more hope you could also catch up on Fr Joe McDonald's moving story of forgiveness after abuse on last Friday's *Late Late Show*.

1 boregan@hotmail.com



Aubrey Malone

Film

Pythonesque lunacy in the corridors of the Kremlin

The Death of Stalin (15A)

This hilarious black comedy puts one in mind of the Irving Berlin apothegm, "The world would not be in such a snarl/Had Marx been born Groucho instead of Karl". The cast become cartoon figures as the politburo is transformed into a comedy of (t)errors.

With the exception of Dr Strangelove, where Peter Bull was so good as a Brezhnev lookalike (who can ever forget the line, "You can't fight in here – it's the War Room"!)



A scene from *The Death of Stalin*.

Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* and Mel Brooks' *To Be or Not to Be*.

Armando Iannucci's film pushes different buttons. We're not long into it before Stalin laughs himself to death as he reads a note from a concert pianist denouncing

his terrorist regime. Adrian McLoughlin does the part. A Russian with a cockney accent is being played by a Paddy (Joe O'Stalin, anyone?)

His buffoonish cabinet members engage in an elaborate PR exercise to posthumously whitewash him.

The internecine squabbles of these muppets begins with one of them saying over his body, "I need a vodka".

So will Vladimir Putin if he ever sees this film. The only person missing is John Cleese. You can't help seeing Basil Fawlty in every scene, foostering around the place saying things like, "Where's Mrs Stalin going to sit at the funeral? Or has she popped her clogs already?" Oh well, at least we have Michael Palin.

There are also spot-on performances from Andrea Riseborough, Jason Isaacs and Richard Brake. And of course Steve Buscemi – though he's miscast as Khrushchev. Simon Russell Beale looks much more like him but for some

reason he plays a character called Beria instead.

How can the casting director have made such a mistake? That's not to say Buscemi doesn't do everything that's expected of him. But taking on the Beria role would have played better into his versatility.

This is a small caveat in a devilishly engrossing film. It's got a razor sharp script from David Schneider and Ian Martin. They cut a swathe through every sacred cow imaginable. Be prepared for a lot of profanity. They use their pens like scalpels. There are repeated verbal slaughters of the era they so deliciously subvert.

The frivolous mood of the

film echoes the recent *Grand Budapest Hotel* in its eccentricity – if not a Brecht farce. But it changes dramatically in the last ten minutes.

Beria is arraigned on a raft of crimes against the state and is frogmarched to his fate. Suddenly we're not laughing anymore. It's as if your parents have hauled you away from a children's party just when you were beginning to enjoy yourself.

We realise, if we could ever have forgotten, that fascism isn't very funny after all. People die. Actions have consequences. The poker face falls. Pagliacci takes his foot out of the bucket of paint.

Realpolitik.

Excellent

★★★★★

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Recent books in brief

Forgiveness Remembers: A Journey into the heart of God
by Paul Farren & Robert Miller, forewords by Bishop Richard Chartres and the late Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor
(Instant Apostle, £6.99)

The is a small book with a big – and important – message. Paul Farren is Administrator of St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry, and his friend Robert Miller is Rector of the united parishes of Christ Church, Culmore, Muff and St Peter. Here they are bridging the divide with a book based on their experiences of the situation in Northern Ireland. There is message that "true forgiveness lies the other side of grace-filled remembering. The past cannot be denied; it must be come to terms with."

This they have to admit calls for patience and the growth of understanding to achieve these; we have all to break out of the repetitive cycles of fear, hate and violence. They are filled with hope for the future, which is reassuring.

Readers will find this short but well expressed book illuminating, far more so than many a larger text, though this book reinforces much of what is discussed by David Rieff's *In Praise of Forgetting* (Yale, £10.99).

Let Advent be Advent
by Vincent Sherlock
(Messenger Publications, €3.95)

Fr Sherlock's earlier publications will be familiar to many readers. In this pamphlet (which easily fits pocket or purse) he provides a small but effective resource for those with busy lives. In the sections he covers the three weeks of Advent as well as the eight days leading to the Nativity.

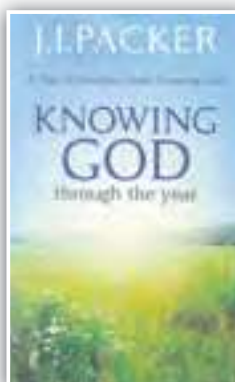
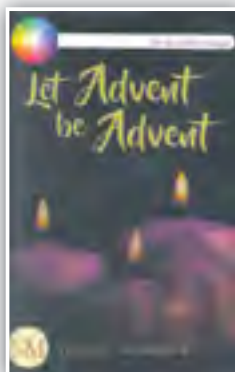
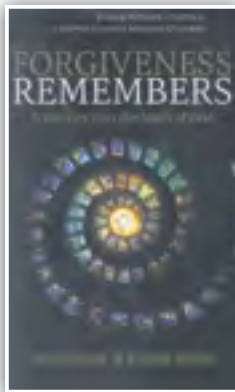
His reflections are drawn not only from scriptural passages, but also passages in his life. They are brief and very much to the point, simple yet expressive. There is also a surprising end piece, a lovely poem which I take to be his own called 'They Walk to the Back of their Home' which somehow serves to bring it all together and to summarise the spirit of Christmas. The booklet is worth purchasing for the poem alone!

Knowing God Through the Year
by J. I. Packer
(Hodder, £5.99)

J. I. Packer has been the theologian emeritus of the Anglican Church in North America since its inception in 2009. The essence of this book is drawn from his earlier book *Knowing God* (1973). It provides reading for six days of the weeks of the year, arranged in a simple order of weeks, rather than by the more familiar canonical calendar.

There is no reading for Sundays as he assumes his readers will be at the services of their own churches on the Sunday. It does have to start in the New Year, the buyer can begin on the Monday of the week after they purchase it. Being based on quotations from the Old and New Testaments it provides a series of reflections which will be found of service to many Christians in other traditions.

Among the writers who profoundly influenced his ecumenical spirit was C. S. Lewis.



Science and the creator God

Mike McHargue.



Finding God in the Waves: How I Lost my Faith and Found it Again Through Science
by Mike McHargue
(Hodder & Stoughton, £9.99)

Christopher Moriarty

An intense reading of the entire Bible, following a deeply traumatic incident in his life, led the Southern Baptist author Mike McHargue to a spell of atheism which lasted for two years. It ended quite abruptly when he became one of the relatively few individuals to experience a transcendental vision. In this he heard a voice speaking to him and saw an impossible tidal effect on the Californian sea shore.

While he is far from being the only believer who has written of a comparable sequence of events, Mike McHargue is different in having to hand knowledge that has become available to humanity only in recent decades.

He is also a scientist with particular skills in information technology. A talented communicator with a flair for honest and rational self-examination, his book provides both a readable digest of some key developments, in knowledge of the universe and of the human psyche, which lead to an impressive statement of the rationality of belief in the Divine.

The book follows an autobiographical track with diversions into the Christianity of the Southern Baptists, the structure and meaning of the Bible, the immensity of the universe and the scarcely credible complexity of the human brain.

“The Bible led the way – but its leading was backed by the discoveries of astro-physics”

The Baptist church provided, besides its underlying worship of the Trinity and belief in the Divine authorship and infallibility of the King James Bible, a warm-hearted and caring community with an admirable reputation for charitable work both at home and in far-flung countries.

Bible-study led to the realisation – heretical to his church – that the good book is a collection of books written by human authors, edited over and over again, a book reflecting the beliefs and views of a great variety of people.

The fact that it begins with a pair of contradictory accounts of Creation and cites numerous instances of a cruel and capricious God was a major factor in the author's turn to atheism. So the Bible led the way – but its leading was backed by the discoveries of astro-physics on the puny size and the age of the earth in relation to those of the universe.

Arguments

The human being is smaller still and yet believers claim that the Creator of this immensity takes a personal interest in the individual. The arguments in

favour of atheism, supported by a number of gifted writers, won the day and the author accepted this supposedly rational belief. But his love for his church, family and community led him to conceal his loss of faith until after he had he regained it.

“Mike McHargue certainly provides believers with a scientific basis”

Physicists have known a great deal about the size and complexity of the universe for more than a century.

The revelations of human brain scans, within the past 20 or 30 years, have provided amazing insights on the growth and mechanisms of this organ. Perhaps most remarkable of all are the facts, not only of network systems, but of actual physical growth in parts of the brain resulting from a variety of psychological inputs – amongst them belief in God.

While nobody can prove the existence of a Creator with a personal interest in individual human beings, Mike McHargue certainly provides believers with a scientific basis that can be used to refute the claims of those who hold that our very existence is a result of blind chance.



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.

The consequences of war in North Kerry

Wounds: A Memoir of Love & War
by Fergal Keane
(William Collins, £18.99)

J. Anthony Gaughan

Fergal Keane is well-known as a foreign correspondent, especially for his coverage of Africa and Serbia. His main area of interest is war and its effect on those who have been caught up in it. In his latest book he looks closer to home, towards a conflict in which his grandmother and granduncle were involved.

Hannah Purtill (later Mrs William Keane) and Mick Purtill were active in the War of Independence in north Kerry from 1919 to 1921 – the former as a member of Cumann mBan, the latter as an IRA Volunteer.

The struggle in north Kerry between the Crown forces and the IRA was no different from that reported throughout the rest of the province of Munster. However, in Kerry there were two high-profile assassinations, that of District Inspector Tobias O'Sullivan and Sir Arthur Vicars.

O'Sullivan attracted attention, when as sergeant in charge of the RIC barracks at Kilmallock in Co. Limerick he, with his comrades, courageously defended it against an attack by some 40 members of the IRA in May 1920. He was decorated and promoted to be district inspector in north Kerry. The aim behind his appointment was clear.

Mutiny

Earlier there had been a mutiny by some members of the police in the Listowel barracks. O'Sullivan was expected to stiffen the resolve of his colleagues in carrying out the policy of seeking out and destroying the IRA. He did not disappoint the authorities and thus became an IRA target.

Three members of the local Moyvane company shot O'Sullivan down in the street just yards from his home and in the sight of his wife and one of his children. With the town



Fergal Keane.

awash with members of the Crown forces it was a reckless act and because of some extraordinary circumstances those involved were most fortunate to escape alive from the scene.

Sir Arthur Vicars served as Ulster King of Arms and principal herald of Ireland from 1893 to 1908. He was responsible for the Irish office of arms in Dublin Castle, and was keeper of the Regalia of the Order of St Patrick, the so-called 'Irish crown Jewels'.

Keane weaves the incidents in the War of Independence in north Kerry into an interesting narrative

These were stolen in 1907 and when they were not recovered he was dismissed (largely at the insistence of Edward VII) from his post. He retired to reside in the mansion of his deceased half-brother, George Gun Mahony, at Kilmorna, three miles from Listowel.

As the struggle between the Crown forces and the IRA became more intense he was strongly advised to leave his vulnerable location. He ignored the advice and when there was an influx of military into the area he frequently entertained the officers.

In April 1921 the IRA ambushed some officers and their guard returning to Listowel from a visit to Vicars. A member of the IRA was killed. The IRA blamed Vicars for his death and a

week later he was taken from his home and shot dead. At the same time his house was looted and burned.

While there was widespread regret in Listowel at the manner in which the lives of D. I. O'Sullivan and Sir Arthur Vicars had been ended, many people in the town were heart-broken at the killing of their neighbour, Fishery Inspector James Kane. He was a retired RIC sergeant and the IRA intercepted information he had provided with regard to the O'Sullivan assassination.

The local IRA were directed to shoot him as an informer. Keane describes in detail his abduction and his poignant last hours. Two years before Kane's body was found by his family with a sign claiming he was an informer, his son, who was a cripple, was robbed on the 'Big Bridge' and thrown to his death into the river.

It was generally known who the culprit was. He was neither a member of the Crown forces, nor the IRA; but owing to the unsettled times, was never brought to justice. Subsequently just the mention of the Kane family was enough to bring tears to the eyes of the family's former neighbours.

Excellent chronicler that he is, Keane weaves the incidents in the War of Independence in north Kerry into an interesting narrative. G.K. Chesterton once wrote: "The great Gaels of Ireland / Are the men that God made mad, / For all their wars are merry, / And all their songs are sad."

Nothing merry here. Fergal Keane's narrative is just immensely sad.

WebWatch

Following in faithful footsteps

Catholic debate has revolved around a literal life-and-death issue since Pope Francis' declaration last week that the death penalty is "contrary to the Gospel" and should be abolished.

As usual, it's always better to read the Pope's own words in full – for example at en.radiovaticana.va – than to get embroiled in others' comments, but for all that, it's interesting to see how the seemingly innocuous statement, rooted as it is in the Church's longstanding teaching that all life is sacred, has sparked feverish reactions.

Predictably enough, Steve Skojec has called the Pontiff out at onepeterfive.com, maintaining that capital punishment finds its roots in both the Scriptures and the Magisterium. "Whatever the present Pope's desire, therefore, to eradicate capital punishment, he can't – because even a Pope lacks the authority to make such a change," he writes.

Skojec acknowledges that the then Cardinal Ratzinger, before his election to the papacy, admitted that "Catholics had room to disagree on this issue" but argues that Francis has taken this position even further by saying that the Catechism should be revised to reflect this.

"In order to advance his position, Pope Francis would have to declare several of his predecessors – as well as St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, St Thomas More (who prosecuted heretics in an England where that was a capital offense), a papal decree, an apostolic constitution, and also divinely-inspired Sacred Scriptures – to be in error," he writes.

'Wrong'

Similar sentiments are expressed by 'Aelianus' at exlaodicea.wordpress.com: "This seems pretty much as explicit as it gets. Scripture is wrong. The Fathers are wrong. The Doctors are wrong. The Ecumenical Councils are wrong. The Popes are wrong. The



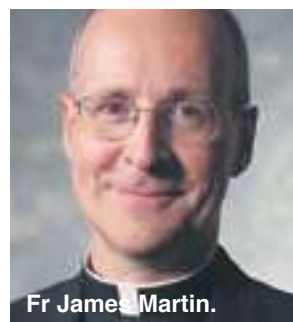
Pope Francis addressing the US Senate.

changing consciousness of the Christian people has told Pope Francis that the death penalty is always and everywhere inadmissible and he is jolly well going to change the Catechism to reflect it."

These kinds of objections aren't new. As early as 2015 Catholic commentators and scholars have objected to Francis' position on the death penalty, when he called for its complete abolition. On thecatholicthing.org, Fr C. John McCloskey III said "the Catholic Church's Magisterium does not and never has advocated unqualified abolition of the death penalty".

But let's get things straight – Pope Francis is neither breaking with tradition nor espousing heresy on some personal whim. In fact, he is vitally developing the work of his predecessors who have consistently limited the moral use of the death penalty. Catholicnews.com explains that although St John Paul's original 1992 edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* allowed for the death penalty in limited circumstances, its legitimacy was dramatically narrowed in the 1997 edition.

Pope Francis is simply continuing this precedent, placing a clear emphasis on



Fr James Martin.

the increased recognition of human dignity that was so central to St John Paul's 1995 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and led the Polish Pope to call at Christmas 1998 for the death penalty, which he later called "cruel and unnecessary", to be ended.

Pope Francis is neither breaking with tradition nor espousing heresy

Capital punishment, the Pope said, "heavily wounds human dignity" and is an "inhuman measure". Rather than flying in the face of Tradition, this is an example of how teachings develop in light of a growing and deepening of Faith. As the Holy Father better puts it: "Tradition is a living reality and only a partial vision would lead to thinking of 'the deposit of faith' as something static."

So far, *America* editor Fr James Martin is one of few prominent Catholics to have praised the move, telling ThinkProgress.org: "It's a strong and necessary statement of what we have long held in the Church: every life is sacred", while Austen Ivereigh tweeted that this was an endorsement of the "consistent bold witness" of the US bishops on this issue as listed at uscbb.org.

Instead of fixating on rigidity, and jumping on Pope Francis whenever he speaks, perhaps it would be more fruitful for his critics to take time to consider how Catholic Tradition grows and develops while paying homage to its history.

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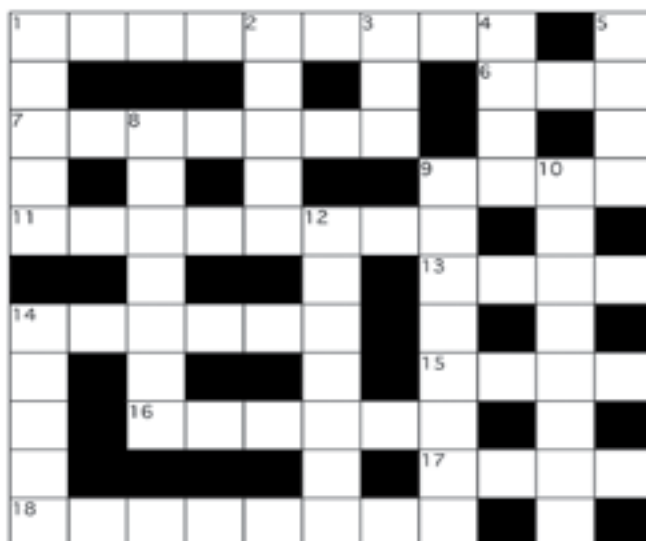


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Leisure time

Crossword Junior

Gordius 204



ACROSS

- 1 Head teacher, like Mr Skinner in 'The Simpsons' (9)
- 6 Hatchet (3)
- 7 This English king was nicknamed 'The Lionheart' (7)
- 9 Baby deer (4)
- 11 You put a letter in this before posting (8)
- 13 The World's largest continent (4)
- 14 You can buy things at the stalls here (6)
- 15 A walk across countryside, mountains, etc (4)
- 16 Kerry town with a famous dolphin, or the name of a large family in 'Emmerdale' (6)
- 17 Uncommon (4)

- 18 Wild horses of North America (8)

DOWN

- 1 Money-container (5)
- 2 Move on your hands and knees (5)
- 3 Peas grow in it (3)
- 4 This pours out of a volcano (4)
- 5 Your blood flows through this (4)
- 8 Placed a lid on something (7)
- 9 You can pluck them from a bird (8)
- 10 Hairs growing from the face of a cat, for example (8)
- 12 This shape has eight sides (7)
- 14 You might write 'Dear Sir or _____' (5)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

GORDIUS No.320

Across – 1 Add 3 Pterodactyl 8 Rabbit 9 Inferred 10 Tithe 11 Music 13 Stoa 15 Petunia 16 Octagon 20 Holst 21 Speak 23 Feast 24 Turn down 25 Zodiac 26 Parish clerk 27 Eft

Down – 1 A pretty pass 2 Debutant 3 Pride 4 Reign of terror 5 Abeam 6 Thrush 7 Lid 12 Connecticut 13 Smith 14 Tacit 17 Gelatine 18 Flannel 22 Kudos 23 Frock 24 Tup

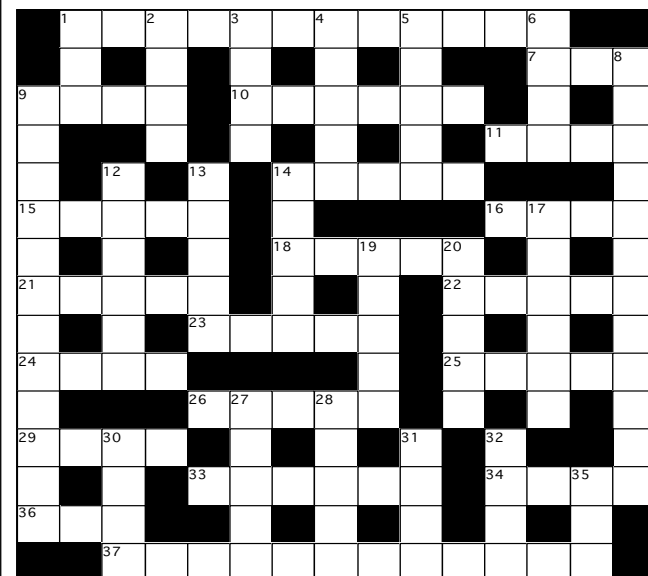
CHILDREN'S No.203

Across – 1 Ring tone 7 Uniform 8 Pen 9 Doh 10 Special 11 Boot 13 Eggs 15 Fell 16 Blew 17 Leo 18 Bikes 19 Week

Down – Roundabout 2 Neighbour 3 Tools 4 Number 5 Candles 6 Spring 12 Bells 13 Elbow 14 Geese

Crossword

Gordius 321



ACROSS

- 1 Provide Pope John Paul II, perhaps, with a job identifying the best spot to start a race (4,8)
- 7 Nearer to the stern (3)
- 9 It flies about between points (4)
- 10 Irrational fear (6)
- 11 Head of faculty (4)
- 14 Articles in French and English identify a mythological river (5)
- 15 Follow on from (5)
- 16 Napoleon was imprisoned here (4)
- 18 The fists of nobility (5)
- 21 Heroic Native American (5)
- 22 Cherub or seraph (5)
- 23 Respond to a stimulus (5)
- 24 Imperial units of length (4)
- 25 It adds flavour to part of a locum interview (5)
- 26 Get the cardinal to ask God for some flowers (5)
- 29 European mountain range (4)
- 33 Dress I treat to a makeover (6)
- 34 Scheme; plan conspiratorially (4)
- 36 It's mined in Central Korea (3)
- 37 Of low quality, yet a popular whiskey, blessed one! (4,2,6)

DOWN

- 1 & 28d It directs that communication should be flighty (3,5)
- 2 Soft material used for dressing

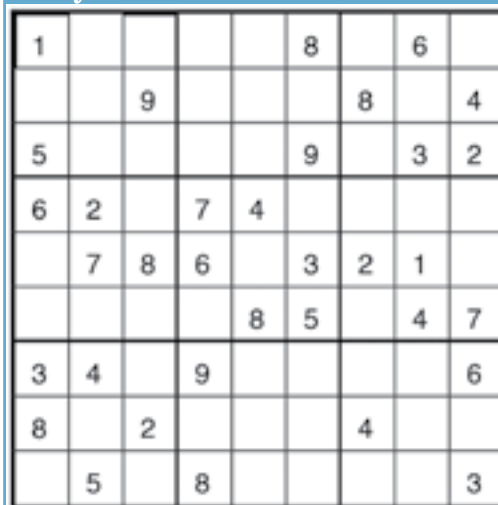
wounds (4)

- 3 Fruit seeds (4)
- 4 Addressed part of the wheel (5)
- 5 Upper leg (5)
- 6 Where in church to see a headless varlet (4)
- 8 Is this item of millinery an indication of brain capacity? (3-6,3)
- 9 Creature whose milk is used to make mozzarella (5,7)
- 12 Get away from confinement (6)
- 13 Is the novice always to provide a crowbar? (5)
- 14 She gets confused daily (5)
- 17 Vegetable with a pod (6)
- 19 If you want to win her, put your cards on the table (5)
- 20 Impudent (5)
- 27 & 35d Dwindle away on finding the first pope is not at home (5,3)
- 28 See 1 down
- 30 Look up and down (4)
- 31 Profound (4)
- 32 Goading attachment to a cowboy's boot (4)
- 35 See 27 down

Sudoku Corner

204

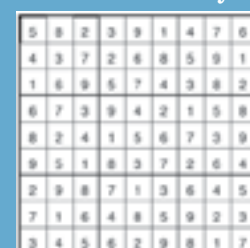
Easy



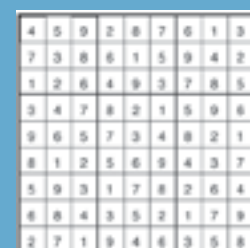
Hard



Last week's Easy 203



Last week's Hard 203





Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter

Reflections on matching and dispatching

I ONCE CARRIED out a survey of priests in a deanery conference regarding weddings and funerals. People generally would see a wedding as a happy occasion, something to enjoy, while funerals might be seen as events to be avoided. The priests in my circle were asked which they preferred to be involved in leading - weddings or funerals. The reply was unanimous: funerals.

One priest put it like this: "At funerals, people really want us to be involved, we have something to say, we contribute something that helps. At weddings, we just seem to be in the way."

Another priest suggested a ratio: he would preside at ten funerals in preference to one wedding! I am not sure what Irish priests generally would think of this summary, but it certainly resonates with me.

Breakdown

Weddings are hard going. People are tense; all family difficulties are close to the surface. Families which have experienced marital breakdown often have an array of husbands, wives, ex-wives and partners: who is talking to who? The people attending the



wedding are unfamiliar with the surrounding of a church and often unsure how to act. (This also applies to the bride and groom in a growing number of cases, and even to their parents.) Stock Mass responses receive a quiet response, or none at all.

Other professionals share the sacred space with the priest and the marrying couple; photographers, videographers, musicians. Some are impeccably

behaved and respectful of the sacred surroundings, others less so (and doubtless, they tell stories to each other of the oddities of priests also). Flowers can enhance the occasion when tasteful and simple; when less-sensitively arranged, they can become a hedge on top of the altar, over which the priest has to peer wearily while standing on his tippy-toes!

And yet, even with all these

handicaps, priests can do a lot to keep the wedding celebration prayerful. A tip I learned from a colleague always seems to defuse tension. Instead of personally welcoming all and sundry to the celebration at the start of Mass, the priest can invite those in the church to briefly greet each other - even crossing to the other side of the aisle to welcome strangers and make them feel at home. A little gesture like this can go a long way to taking the tension out of the air.

Prayers

When less tense, people may feel like praying. Silence helps too. In those moments when prayers are said for the couple, at the start, middle and end of the Mass, the priest can invite people to pray in their hearts for the couple for a few moments - and for themselves. Particularly after Communion, talking to God quietly is a must, but the priest saying the Mass has to gently draw people into the silence. People are not used to it any more. Who knows, the priest may re-introduce some people to the God from whom they have grown distant - which would probably make God fairly happy too!

Expensive way to 'tie the knot'

A recent issue of *The Phoenix* reports on ructions in the Humanist Association of Ireland (HAI) regarding the approval of wedding celebrants to officiate at humanist weddings (i.e. ceremonies with no mention of God). What caught my eye was the information that the humanist celebrant's guideline fee is €475 to €500 (though this includes a €70 fee to the HAI). *The Phoenix* wisely comments that "most parish priests charge a lot less".

(In fact, parish priests charge nothing at all, but they hope people will be taken into the account the work priests put in, when they freely make a donation.)



A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE...FOR A PRIEST: To make a good job of a nuptial Mass, the priest has to be in the right frame of mind. A priest who is tired can be cranky and will very likely get into a row. Priests are wise to schedule nothing else on wedding days; the best support other parishioners can give is to insist their priest relaxes (something not every parishioner sees as an aim in life!). Put it another way: be nice to your priest, so that he can be nice to others - and keep them in the Church you love.

PLEASE HELP NEEDY ORPHANS IN INDIA



The Salesians in Tamil Nadu, India, have asked The Little Way Association for help with a project to benefit children orphaned because of HIV/AIDS. Fr Antony Joseph SDB, provincial, writes that many of the children are child-labourers, have become socially stigmatised, and are at risk from the drug culture. He says: "These children often lack hope for the future and have low self-esteem." He wants the children to be able to "live peacefully, and receive education, care and guidance for their future employment."

The scheme involves running an orphanage for 60 street-children at Namakkal and providing support for a further 100 children living nearby with grandparents or foster-families. All the children (aged 10 to 18 and not themselves HIV/AIDS sufferers) will receive healthcare and education. Those at home will receive visits from counsellors, while those in the orphanage will need to be fed and clothed.

Please help give these children and teenagers practical help and hope for the future. Donations to our children fund will support the Salesians' work in Namakkal, and similar projects.

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