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School kids under ideological attack - TD

Chai Brady

The Government's SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) curriculum has been criticised for its extreme ideological stances and ignoring traditional values such as love, marriage and commitment and the understanding of male and female.

Carol Nolan TD of Laois-Offaly, and a former school teacher, told *The Irish Catholic* that issues with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) curriculum go deeper than the cartoon which negatively caricatured a 'traditional Irish family'.

The senior cycle SPHE curriculum states that gender identity "refers to a person's felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth".

Ms Nolan told *The Irish Catholic* that teachings around gender and sex are part of a "deliberate pattern that attempts to radically undermine basic sexual and biological realities".

"This in turn cannot but have disorientating and indeed distressing outcomes for many young children who are being presented with what are essentially extreme ideological representations of human sex and gender expression."

She continued: "Of course we must deal with gender confusion or gender dysphoria with compassion but we should avoid presentations of these conditions as the norm for childhood or adolescent sexual expression. The sense now is that children are not just being asked to explore these issues with respect but to support the underlying ideology as a given."

Writing in this paper, CEO of the Iona Institute David Quinn said the NCCA "has been steadily revising the SPHE

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Birthday Mass in Ballyheigue



Caroline O'Sullivan and her children Marie, Jarah and Callor O'Sullivan from Portmagee, Co. Kerry enjoy the Pattern Day annual Mass at Our Lady's Well and Grotto, Ballyheigue, Co. Kerry on Sunday September 8, Our Lady's birthday. Photo: John Cleary

Abuse inquiry must hold all schools accountable

Chai Brady and Brandon Scott

The Government's statutory inquiry into abuse must include all schools or "rapidly lose credibility" the Head of the Journalism in Griffith College Dublin has warned.

Following the publication of a scoping inquiry into religious run Catholic schools last week Dr Niall Meehan told *The Irish Catholic* that the Commission of Investigation should follow the report's recommendation to include all types of school or victims will be overlooked.

He said: "The statutory inquiry has to look at all schools, if it does not then it will not have credibility. With the scoping inquiry they got away with that because it was scoping, it was to establish the extent of abuse – it was still wrong that it had a sectarian basis – but if they have a statutory inquiry on that basis, I think it will rapidly lose credibility and it will be questioned."

Senator Ronan Mullen echoed the need to include all victims saying that "every person's story is of equal importance and every person, if they have been victimised in their school years, deserve to be treated with seriousness".

"It seems to be in everyone's interest, starting with victims who all deserve to be taken seriously, regardless of where they went to school, but also in fairness to religious orders and their members," he added.

The report of the scoping inquiry stated: "In our view, an approach that excludes from consideration all other schools where historical sexual abuse may have occurred would be arbitrary and difficult to justify. We recommend, therefore, that consideration be given to extending the remit of the future commission to all schools in due course."

The report added that this "should not delay the setting up of the commission to deal with sexual abuse in day or boarding schools run by the religious orders".

FOREIGN PRIESTS 'NOT THE SOLUTION'

Renata Steffens

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DOMINICANS BOGGED DOWN

Fr John Harris

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HOLINESS IS FOR EVERYONE

Following St Bernadette

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The Irish Catholic



School kids under ideological attack - TD

» Continued from Page 1

curricula for primary and secondary schools and for the most part the specifications are getting steadily worse".

"The world view underlying the new specifications is hyper-individualistic. Relationships are treated as come and go. Sex is viewed in the same way. You can be in a relationship or not before sex, but it doesn't really matter so long as you both consent to the act," he said.

"Gender is presented as fluid. Boys are to be taught they might not really be boys, and girls that they might not really be girls. Everything is up in the air. Diversity is emphasised because then all choices will be

equally respected.

"The specifications treat us as mainly solitary, unencumbered, individuals who float freely from one relationship to another and from one gender to another if we wish."

Mr Quinn added: "There is nothing about the sacrifices needed to make real, loving relationships work, nothing about what might really make us happy long-term, and whether something like marriage could play an important part in that.

"Probably unknown to itself, the NCCA is actually presenting a rather bleak view of life to young people. Our children deserve something much better than that."

First profession



Br Kevin Heffron pictured after making his first profession of vows with the Redemptorist Order in Clonard Monastery, Belfast, on September 7. Photo: Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University, Belfast

Religious respond to 'harrowing' details of scoping inquiry

Brandon Scott

The "distressing, harrowing and devastating" abuse revealed in religious-run schools has put faith to "the test yet again", the Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy said, while AMRI, the representative body of the Leadership of Missionaries and Religious in Ireland expressed its deep remorse and commended the bravery of the victims and survivors in response to the publication of the Scoping Inquiry into religious-run schools, which uncovered the systematic abuse of young children in some religious-run schools across the country.

In a letter last Sunday to parishes in the Diocese of Limerick, Bishop Leahy said the abuse had "destroyed

the lives of victims" and "overwhelmed many in the Church".

"What should have been places of sacred trust and care turned out to be locations of nightmarish horrors," he said and added: "We must see those who abused for what they are. Perpetrators of the most horrific and vile crimes that destroyed young lives."

Stressing that "justice must be brought to bear against this evil", Bishop Leahy, however, fell short of explicitly calling on religious orders to contribute to any redress scheme for survivors.

The inquiry offers, he said, expert opinions regarding both causes as well as processes and next steps that can help in moving forward. He also expressed solidarity with

priests and lay people surrounded by "a legitimate chorus of lament and criticism" and with those in religious orders who have "lived their life of vocation with love and kindness".

"They are suffering the experience of seeing so much good work done by their congregations to which they committed their lives, now being emptied before their eyes," he said.

In his letter, Bishop Leahy said: "Not a single case of abuse is understandable".

Praying for those who reported the 2,395 allegations of sexual abuse by 884 abusers in 308 schools run by religious orders, he said the destruction of innocence and of lives is "beyond comprehension".

AMRI, the representative body of the Leadership of Missionaries and Religious

in Ireland, welcomed the publication of the Scoping Inquiry and acknowledged the courage and bravery of the victims and survivors.

The press release stated that: "We are deeply sorry that they experienced abuse in religious-run schools. We are acutely aware that sharing personal, sensitive, and traumatic experiences can cause additional pain and suffering. We recognise that we can never know the depth of the pain and suffering survivors have endured and continue to endure."

"AMRI actively worked with those of its members who are involved in running schools to facilitate the fullest cooperation in this Inquiry. We will carefully examine the recommendations and respond accordingly".

Vatican rejects appeal to save Derry church

Renata Steffens

Parishioners in Culmore, Derry have been worrying about the future of their local church since 2022, when Derry Diocese decided to close the church following the Sisters of Mercy's decision to sell the church building they rented to the diocese. A group of parishioners appealed to the Vatican but received the news the diocese's decision "was to be upheld."

Over 1,350 parishioners joined in a campaign to 'Save Culmore Church'. The Church of the Immaculate Con-

ception is located in the grounds of the city's former Thornhill college and belongs to the Mercy Order. The Sisters of Mercy leased their old oratory, used when they had a boarding school, to Derry Diocese in 1995 to accommodate the growing numbers of Catholics in the area.

With the Vatican decision to continue with the church closure, the parishioners said in a statement: "Words are totally inadequate to express our heartfelt sorrow that the Vatican has turned down our appeal. Our barrister and legal team believed we had sufficient grounds to win the

appeal and the rejection has come as a devastating blow."

The Vatican justified its decision on the description of the church being an 'oratory' rather than a 'parish church'. The parishioners argued: "We submitted more than 100 witness statements to the contrary. The clue is in the title, as the road sign and former bulletins read 'Thornhill Church' and not 'Thornhill Oratory'".

"We already have three parishioners willing to buy the property and restore it to a place of worship. We look forward to participating in the sale which surely must be widely publicised", the group said.

St Kilian's relics stress the importance of Faith formation

Renata Milán Morales

This October, for the first time, the sacred relics of 7th-century Irish monk and martyr St Kilian will return to his homeland in Co.

Cavan from Germany.

Maynooth has been selected as a stop on this journey, where the relics will be available for public veneration in the College Chapel on October 2.

Rev. Prof. Michael Mullaney,

President of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, commented on Kildare's newspaper, *Kildare Now*, "The visit of St Kilian offers an opportunity to remember the significant role many Irish monk-scholars played in the cultural

and spiritual renewal of Europe."

He added, "The visit to St Patrick's College highlights the University's importance as a centre of learning and Faith, continuing the legacy of early Irish monasteries. The stories of St Kilian and

other Irish monk-scholars remind us of the College's mission as the National Seminary and Pontifical University to provide education and Faith formation for future ministers... and lay parish workers alike."

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‘If you can see it, you can be it!’ the message as Carlo Acutis relic graces parishes

Brandon Scott

The relic of Carlo Acutis continues on its journey around churches in Leinster and the respective parishes involved are excitedly gearing up to host the first-class relic and the message of ‘The Millennial Saint’ for the first time, a message that the Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown

says, whose diocese has been to the fore in promoting Blessed Carlo’s cause, is making sainthood tangible for the next generation.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Monsignor John Byrne of Portlaoise Parish said that he hoped the age and casual appearance of Blessed Carlo will inspire young people to come along and interact with his story

and his image, an image of “a saint for the 21st century”.

“It’s a privilege to have been asked to facilitate the visit,” Msgr Byrne said.

“We would hope during the time here that, we have a busy church anyway and thank God for it, but that we will have the involvement of students and young people who might think Carlo Acutis is particularly attractive

and whose story resonates very much with them.

“Here we have a young man dressed in jeans with an iPhone in his hand who’s wearing a sports jersey. It just presents a very different but apt and necessary image of a saint for the 21st century.”

Fr Robert McCabe of St Mary’s Parish Navan said although preparations were underway to host the

statue in the parish, many parishes and schoolchildren are already aware of Blessed Carlo’s cause, with some actively incorporating Blessed Carlo into their own personal faith journey.

“We are joyfully preparing”, he said. “Last year Carlo was one of the names taken by one of the boys for confirmation because he had done some research and found Carlo’s name and discovered that he would like to take this Italian as a role model as a teenager. Carlo is already known in some of our school communities and in our parish as a result.

prayer in the cathedral” and that his message is spurring young people to ask deep questions about the pathway to sainthood.

“Last year, shortly after the statue was placed in its spot, a mother went past me with her teenage son and primary-school daughter,” he said. “On the way down, the mother stopped and said ‘Bishop, do you know what my daughter just said? Mummy, can I become a saint, too?’

“The image of a teenage boy in jeans, T-shirt, trainers and with a watch seems to attract many people. If you can see it, you can be it!”

i The Relic will visit St Peter and Paul’s Church in Portlaoise on September 12+13 followed by St Mary’s Church in Navan on September 15+16. The relic will then visit the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in City Quay Parish, Dublin, on September 17.

‘Have courage, take the step,’ says Bishop Paul Dempsey to youth

Renata Milán Morales

Recently, Bishop Paul Dempsey visited two youth prayer groups, where he shared his faith journey and reflections on his first months as auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese.

“There’s so much criticism out there. We’ve come through a challenging time for the Church in Ireland - everyone knows that. Yet, the roots of the Church at the local level, particularly the relationship between priests and their people, remains strong. That’s something we don’t hear much about, but I’ve experienced it firsthand as a priest, and I thank God for it,” the bishop said.

Following his talk, Bishop Dempsey participated in a Q&A session where he was asked what advice he would offer to someone considering the priesthood.

“Even in my time, it was unusual to say you were entering the priesthood. Today, it’s even more challenging, though

people can also be very supportive. That witness can have a powerful impact. My advice is to have courage. Take the step and see where the Spirit leads you. That’s what I’d say to anyone considering a vocation to preserve our religious life.”

Reflecting on his Faith journey, Bishop Dempsey added, “I may not be a wealthy man, but my life as a priest has been rich. I love being a priest, and I love being a bishop.”

i See more on pages 15 and 29

Holy family gets a Crystal Swing



Renata Milán Morales

Mary Burke of Crystal Swing has always had a life deeply rooted in her Faith. In a recent interview with *The Echo*, a Cork newspaper, the singer shared, “My faith was passed down to

me from my parents.”

One expression of her devotion is her large collection of religious statues, which she has been gathering for the past 14 years. These statues, which fill an entire room in her home, include a variety of sacred figures. A statue of the Holy

Family takes pride of place on the shelf, surrounded by statues of the Virgin Mary, Jesus, the Angel Gabriel, the Angel Michael, Padre Pio, St Francis, the Child of Prague, St Patrick, St Thérèse of Lisieux, St Martin de Porres, and the three children of Fatima.

In her youth, Mary Murray was an active member of her local church in Leamlara, Co. Cork, where she met her future husband, Michael Burke. Reflecting on her life, Mary says, “God has been part of it all, and I can see that now.”



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Politicians: Calls to remove religious orders from schools politically 'opportunistic' and 'bigoted'

Brandon Scott

Two politicians have slammed the recent calls to remove religious orders from schools, with one saying that it is an example of "bigotry and opportunism" that seeks to promote a specific personal agenda rather than focus on the harms that have been inflicted on survivors of abuse in religious-run schools.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Senator Rónán Mullen called for more respect to be shown to the survivors of abuse in religious-run schools and to not manipulate their grief for certain ideological reasons, while TD for Kerry Michael Healy-Rae said that he would be "totally opposed" to the calls made by certain politicians who he feels are solely advancing their own political agenda.

"I would say that those political calls are an example

of bigotry and opportunism," Senator Mullen said. "Anybody who genuinely cares about the victims of abuse won't be trying to start a debate about faith-based schools when they know that huge strides have been taken in child protection and when they know that there's hardly any religious working in these schools on a day-to-day basis and that these schools are mostly run now by lay trusts.

"What is beyond dispute is that there are many, many people of strong faith and relatively weaker faith who still actually want faith-based schools because they think it's a good thing for society. To try and capitalise on the scandals of the past, which weren't confined to religious orders and to use them as a political lever in the present is a very cynical manoeuvre and actually very disrespectful toward victims."

Independent TD, Michael Healy-Rae, called for the good that has been carried out by religious orders to be recognised as he hopes the "bad actions of some people" will not cloud the good that was done in the past by religious orders "in Ireland and throughout the world".

"I would be totally opposed to the call from certain politicians to either remove religious orders from schools or accelerate this process," he said. "I believe an awful lot of good was done in the past by religious orders who were involved in our education system not just in Ireland but throughout the world. Of course it is now being over shadowed by the bad actions of some people but in no way should this be used as it seems to be by certain politicians to win the way with their agenda to remove religion from society altogether."

Public meetings to take place to discuss merging of dioceses

Staff reporter

Public meetings are set to take place in Strokestown, Athlone and Castlerea from next week to discuss the amalgamation of two local dioceses, the Diocese of Elphin and the Diocese of Achonry.

It was announced in April the Dioceses of Elphin and Achonry would merge, in a major reorganisation of the Catholic Church, spearheaded by Pope Francis, in the west of Ireland. The Diocese of Achonry no longer has a bishop, with Bishop

of Elphin Kevin Doran now serving as Apostolic Administrator and the former bishop of the diocese, Paul Dempsey, moving to the Archdiocese of Dublin to undertake the role of auxiliary bishop. Bishop Doran heads both dioceses, and, in time, one bishop will govern both dioceses.

Bishop Doran recently wrote to all parishes in Achonry and Elphin to outline his plans to have several meetings in September and October, involving priests and people from the two dioceses, to discuss their future. They will be open to

all to attend.

The first meeting will be held in the Percy French Hotel in Strokestown next Monday, September 16 at 7pm. Another one will be held at the same time the following night in the Sligo Park Hotel, and the following night in the Park Hotel in Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.

On September 25, a meeting will be held in the Athlone Springs Hotel at 7pm, and the same time on September 30 in An Chroí Digital Hub in Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo. The final meeting will be held on October 5 in Tully's Hotel, Castlerea, at 11am.

Diocese commences lay funeral ministry

Staff reporter

The Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly has recently commenced a lay funeral ministry initiative, which hopes to equip lay parishioners with the necessary skills to undertake a wide range of roles during funerals in the archdiocese.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* in the aftermath of the archdiocese's invitation to parishioners who are interested in the initiative and think they possess the skills to come forward, Fr Vincent Stapleton, who is a

curate in Thurles, said that although the process is in its "infancy", the archdiocese hopes to select appropriate candidates and forge a close collaboration between laity and priests during funerals in the archdiocese into the future.

"The Archdiocese of Cashel & Emly is engaged in a process whereby laity in parishes will assist their priests in funeral ministry going forward," he said. "This process is in its infancy in our diocese. An initial pilot programme will soon be undertaken in specific parish combinations to pro-

vide training and guidance for people who will help in the funeral context. Selected candidates will be given an overview of the Liturgies of the funeral – prayers at the funeral home/residence, reception of the body, assisting the priest with preparation of the funeral liturgy and prayers at the cemetery.

"It is also envisaged that ministry teams will work in pairs and in close collaboration with the priests of the area. After the experience of the pilot programme, it is envisaged that this initiative will be offered across the diocese."

Blessed salt and holy bells for the National Ploughing Championships

Renata Steffens

This year, the National Ploughing Championships, located in the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin, will take place from September 17-19 in Ratheniska, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The diocese will be represented in stand 221 and will highlight the suffering of victims in war torn areas such as Gaza and Ukraine.

In the stand, the visitors will be invited to collect a coloured pin and place it on a specially designed St Brigid's Cross, and to make a pledge for peace in response to the horrific wars around the world. That cross will be presented to the Pope in Rome next year during

World Youth Day.

The action called 'Pledge your Pin for Peace' is being led by Bishop Denis Nulty, who said the word 'pledge' "implies a commitment, and I encourage the faithful to make the pledge, to pray for peace and, if possible, donate financially to relief organisations working in conflict zones."

Another initiative launched during the Ploughing Championships will invite people to allow their phones to 'ping' for peace. Bishop Nulty said "People from rural Ireland naturally empathise with farmers in war torn places because agriculture is an important sector in many troubled

areas. The theme of peace resonates with the motto of the World Ploughing Organisation – 'Let Peace Cultivate the Fields'.

As part of the Diocese's anti-war actions in the Ploughing Championships, "the bell of Saint Columbanus will be rung for peace every hour", they said in a statement. Also, marking the 1500th anniversary of St Brigid, a handcrafted Cloak of St Brigid will be prominently displayed reflecting the folklore that tells of the saint spreading her cloak over the Curragh in Kildare.

Stand 221 will also provide blessed salt, as it is a tradition to use in farms and gardens for prosperity.

A blessing for the year ahead



Young students gather for the Blessing of School Bags in Termonmaguirc Parish, Co. Tyrone on September 1. Photo: Fr Peter McAnenly

Is the past now stained by present revelations?

How thought-provoking it is now to turn over the pages of the renowned Dictionary of Irish Biography (published by the Royal Irish Academy) and note how frequently Irish religious schools have been mentioned with honour.

Almost all of the revolutionary generation men were educated by priests and brothers; and even among noteworthy Irishmen who died in recent times, their Catholic schooling in Irish religious institutions often emerges as a contribution to their success.

Alumnus

Thus Stephen Gately of Boyzone is portrayed as a happy alumnus of the Christian Brothers (described by one of his teachers as "an absolute diamond"), as was Tony Ryan, the founder of Ryanair, Ronnie Drew of The Dubliners, chief justice Cearhbhall Ó Dálaigh, crusading TD



Mary Kenny

Tony Gregory and Liam Clancy, whose interest in music and literature was developed during his CBS education. And need we mention Gay Byrne, who always identified himself as a CBS boy?

“Belvedere College in Dublin satisfactorily educated Garret FitzGerald, Ulick O'Connor and Tony O'Reilly”

And thus the late Dr Anthony Clare's distinguished career as a psychiatrist had its roots in his Jesuit education at Gonzaga (and the influence of an

enlightened priest, Fr Joe Veale).

Here we read that Brendan O'Regan, the inspiring entrepreneur who developed Shannon Airport, was educated at Blackrock College where he shone at rugby and hurling; Anthony Cronin, author and poet was another successful pupil from Blackrock, as was the legendary Flann O'Brien, who died some years back.

Belvedere College in Dublin satisfactorily educated Garret FitzGerald, Ulick O'Connor and Tony O'Reilly. From my personal knowledge of both O'Connor and O'Reilly, both felt lifelong affection for their educators.

Critical

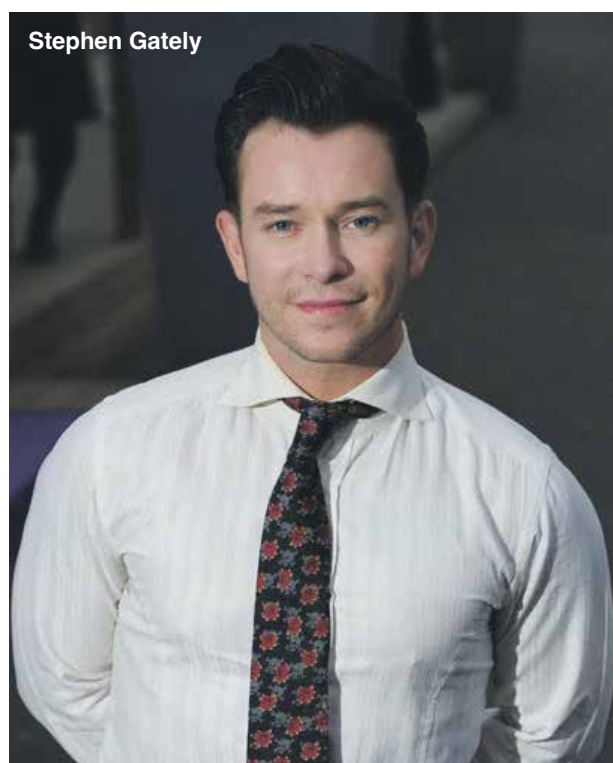
Some certainly were critical and grumbled about their teachers. Terry Wogan complained about corporal punishment at "The Cres" Jesuit college in Limerick, although he conceded it was routine in Britain and Ireland during his schooldays. The playwright Hugh Leonard reproached the Presentation Brothers in Glashule for being sexually repressive, but I suppose that

was par for the course at the time. Yet David Marcus, who was Jewish, and as an editor an important literary mentor to many contemporary writers, appreciated the education he received from the Presentation Brothers in Cork.

These biographical profiles represent just a glimpse of how Irish education, under the aegis of religious schools, has been such a strong part of the background of achievement in this country.

Is that picture now to be seen through the darker lens of sexual and physical abuse, with screaming headlines referencing 2,400 allegations of abuse across more than 300 religious-run schools?

So many people of an older generation would have been brought up with the idea that the system of education provided by Irish religious was the foundation of the modern Irish nation. Now what?



Stephen Gately

“Is that picture now to be seen through the darker lens of sexual and physical abuse, with screaming headlines referencing 2,400 allegations of abuse across more than 300 religious-run schools?”

Patriotism and values

When I was growing up, I knew Gaelgoiri families who – as depicted in the ridiculous cartoon published by the Educational Company of Ireland's – favoured Irish produce, wore Aran jumpers, embraced Irish dancing, and indeed, if they were in the GAA, were obliged to rebuff "foreign games". (Although I don't remember bacon and cabbage being an especial cuisine priority.)

Yet the significant thing

about these "Irish-Irelanders" – as they were known – was that they were also, usually, outward-looking in terms of being open to foreign cultures. The attitude of many Irish-Irelanders was to favour an alternative culture to the prevailing Anglo-American dominance – so they were often more universalist than the mainstream. They spoke Irish – but other languages too.

Edco have apologised for any "hurt" caused, but the real problem is the shallow-

ness of their thinking. Being patriotic about your own traditions doesn't mean you despise the values of others; on the contrary, it usually means you understand others' patriotism better.

That's also true of religion, in my view. If you have a sense of the sacred about your own faith, you can better grasp why Hindus bathe in the Ganges for the forgiveness of sins or Muslims make sacrifices to go on pilgrimage. I'm not sure the "woke" ideologues understand this.

The revenge theme is present, but so is its cost. Revenge ends with more death and destruction. Yet Dumas's story also helped to prompt campaigns in the 1830s against duelling, mostly supported by women, and especially mothers, who deplored the reckless way that young men were slain on the turn of a perceived challenge to honour.

And fair play to the Vatican – they had outlawed the duel in 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council!

The Vatican once banned Alexandre Dumas's rollicking adventure novel "The Count of Monte-Cristo" – on the grounds that the central storyline is about a man seeking revenge, and revenge is unChristian.

A new, epic French film version of the story has just come out, and it's vividly in the swashbuckling tradition. It shows both the awful brutality of a mariner's life in the 1820s and 30s, and the exquisite costumes and swordplay of the time.



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‘International priests are not the solution’, says bishop

Renata Steffens

The Irish Church is facing a period of distress with the numbers of active priests dropping every year, as more and more priests are retiring and ordinations are not happening at the same pace. Many dioceses are receiving help from foreign

priests, but Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois Paul Connell said that is “not the solution to the problems of the Irish Church.”

The Irish Catholic received stats from nine dioceses across the island of Ireland, and eight of those are receiving help from at least one international priest. Ferns has no foreign priests; Achonry, the diocese with the least

number from the stats provided, has one; and Armagh, the diocese with the highest number, has twelve.

In the nine dioceses analysed (Ardagh and Clonmacnois, Achonry, Cloyne, Armagh, Kilmore, Down and Connor, Galway and Kilmacudagh, Tuam and Ferns), most of the foreign priests are Indian (22), Nigerian (14), and Polish (five). The Diocese

of Elphin refused to share any information about the number of active and/or foreign priests in that diocese.

Bishop Connell said the assistance from these foreign priests is “obviously very helpful”, but it is necessary to continue encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Similarly, Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes said the international priests are

“only part of the solution,” as these priests are here either to study or on a three-year contract and will leave eventually.

In an attempt to manage the drought in vocation callings, Bishop Connell is clustering parishes, having priests responsible for two or more parishes at the same time. He said merging parishes is not happening in the

foreseeable future. Bishop Hayes is focusing on involving laypeople more actively in ministries and parish administration.

Read more about the views of the Dioceses of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, Armagh, Down and Connor and Kilmore on international priests and the lack of Irish vocations on pages 12-13.

Relation between priests currently active and ordinations/retirements in the past 10 years

Diosece	Parishes	Churches	Active parishes	Foreign priests	Ordinations	Incardinations	Retirements
Achonry	23	47	26 working, 23 in ministry	1	0	0	4
Ardagh and Clonmacnois	41	80	45	4	1	0	18
Armagh	61	152	98	12	12	2	23
Cloyne	46	107	60	2	2	0	16
Down and Connor	88	151	97	6	8 to Priesthood and 15 to permanent diaconate	1	27
Ferns	49	101	53	0	2	1	19
Galways and Kilmacudagh	39	71	49	5	5	5	10
Kilmore	36	95	47	7	2	1	23
Tuam	56	131	54	9	4	2	26

A Republic that failed its children

Several inquiries needed on all schools, state facilities

Garry O’Sullivan

The most recent report revealing allegations of child sexual abuse in Catholic secondary schools makes for grim reading. The pain endured by victims of abuse in religious-run schools and the sense of scandal that it has given rise to cannot be minimised. Whatever the sense of injustice many Irish Catholics may feel concerning the unequivocal focus on abuse in Catholic schools only, the Catholic community is and must continue to be to the fore in developing and implementing the highest standards of child safeguarding in our country.

Since 2002 we have been dealing with reports and inquiries regarding the issue of child sexual abuse in Ireland. It’s harrowing and hollowing and we know how awful it is for victims because they have been forced to come forward

and recount and relive their abuse on national radio and television.

For the most part the focus has been on child sexual abuse involving clergy and religious and the recent scoping report would suggest strongly that the full extent of such abuse has yet to be revealed, not just by religious but by lay teachers and other pupils.

What is clear is that the young Republic which promised to cherish all its children equally failed miserably. Child protection was non-existent in the past. A culture of silence existed in the Church, but also among lay teachers and families. Children had no one in their corner. The state outsourced its responsibilities and needs to answer for that; it’s not good enough to just single out the religious while the State washes its hands.

There are some serious matters that will need now to be considered if we as a society want to truly uproot this shameful legacy

and let all victims get justice.

1. Include all secondary schools not just Catholic ones – there is ample evidence that abuse occurred in other denominational schools and other state-run schools, VECs and community schools.

2. Include all primary schools.

3. Voluntary agencies that operate within the State need to be included – sporting and recreational – and there’s good reason for this given revelations of abuse over many years in swimming and scouting organisations. Other groups involving children will need to be looked at.

4. The State’s own residential facilities, the children in foster care and the children whose welfare has been the responsibility of Tusla and the HSE. These need to be looked at especially so that the failures of the past are not allowed to be repeated, as we know they are currently, in the State care system.

The old adage that ‘unless it’s measured, it can’t be managed’ applies.

On the 75th anniversary of the declaration of an Irish Republic, let’s look at the aspiration of valuing all of the children of the nation equally once and for all.

How this will be effected in inquiry terms in the coming months is still undecided. To only include some would be unjust, to include all would be very unwieldy. Therefore a number of inquiries running at the same time makes sense, delivering reports on the different sectors. The inquiries should be representative of all elements of the Irish experience, across religions and across voluntary and statutory groups and agencies. The inquiries should include an honest evaluation by the State of its performance since both the Declaration of Independence in 1922 and the declaration of our being a republic in 1949. An honest appraisal of its ultimate

responsibility is required and how this has played out over the past 100 years.

Anything short of putting all on the table and a genuine desire to address the full extent of childhood abuse in Ireland raises the prospect of the next 22 years being some form of a mirror image of the past 22.

In the future, new generations of Irish people, freed from the grip of the current ideological consensus, are quite likely to recognise and appreciate these efforts to find justice for all, and not only for those whose suffering fits an ideological consensus. How they will feel about the ways current establishments in politics, law and media tended to highlight religious and clerical victims almost to the point of overlooking other types of victims will be a source of scandal to them, if the State now fails to step up. For the victims sake, this Republic should not fail them a second time.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bishop Duffy announces clerical changes in Clogher Diocese

Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy announced diocesan changes, which will take effect on October 1. The bishop also welcomed Fr Peter and Fr Gabriel to their ministry in that diocese. The appointments are as follows:

- Very Rev. Canon Patrick McGinn Adm Monaghan & Rackwallace, Tyholland and Kilmore & Drumsnatt, to be PP Ballybay (Tullycorbet), Latton (Aughnamullen West) and Rockcorry (Ematris).
- Very Rev. Canon Owen J McEaney PP, Ballybay (Tullycorbet), Latton (Aughnamullen West) and Rockcorry (Ematris) to be priest-in-residence in Carrickmacross (Machaire Rois).
- Fr Leo Creelman CC, Monaghan & Rackwallace to be Adm Monaghan & Rackwallace, Tyholland and Kilmore & Drumsnatt
- Fr Humphrey Ude to return as CC in Monaghan & Rackwallace as well as in Tyholland and Kilmore & Drumsnatt.
- Fr Kevin Connolly CC, Carrickmacross, to be CC in the Mid-Monaghan Pastoral Area and reside in Clontibret.
- Fr Kieran Danfulani CC, Ballybay (Tullycorbet) to be CC in the South-Monaghan Pastoral Area and reside in Magheracloone.
- Fr Gabriel Dolan SPS, to be CC in the Clones Pastoral Area and reside in Aghadrumsee.
- Fr Peter Edson Tambula (Diocese of Chikwawa, Malawi) to be CC in Monaghan & Rackwallace as well as in Tyholland and Kilmore & Drumsnatt.

Kerry Diocese to hold Season of Creation webminar

The Season of Creation has been happening since September 1. To mark the annual event, the Diocese of Kerry will hold a webminar on September 12 at 7.30pm, with writer and educator Dr Niamh Brennan as the speaker.

Themed 'The Cosmic Story', the talk will share scientific insights on Genesis and the world creation. Dr Brennan's research focuses on ecological crisis and its effects on daily life and the future.

This year, the Season of Creation has as theme 'A Call to Hope and Act with Creation'. The doctor's talk will help attendees to understand cosmology and how to move forward in equilibrium with the creation.

Shedding light to rebuild trust



The new report on abuse in religious-run schools is demoralising, and yet so much good work is being done writes **Michael Kelly**

The 'scoping inquiry' investigating historical allegations of abuse in religious-run schools again shines a light on a dark part of Irish history. It lifts the lid on a culture where predators abused with impunity, and children felt unable to tell either their parents or anyone in authority in the schools who could've acted to stop the abuse.

The pain endured by victims of abuse, and the sense of scandal that it has given rise to cannot be minimised or easily explained away. It will cast a long shadow over the Church in Ireland for generations and will forever now be a part of Irish ecclesiastical history.

We all rightly share the sense of horror and outrage that so much suffering went on, and so few people have been held to account. It's a sad fact of the criminal justice system that most people who do harm to children evade worldly justice. At the same time, experts say that the number of people who come forward to report childhood abuse is a minority of those who have suffered.

Again Catholics – not least the overwhelming majority of priests and religious whose ministry was nothing short of heroic – are dismayed. It has been a punishing 25 years for Catholics as they have seen the rug pulled out from under them. Scandalous revelations have shaken us all, and yet we go on loving the Church despite it all because it is the place where we see grace in action and touch the face of Christ in Word and Sacrament.

And yet, if there is some solace in times like this it is the fact that the team working on the scoping inquiry relied largely on the religious orders for compiling the report and tabulating the statistics.

Despite the awfulness, it is also reassuring to know that all the allegations were shared with both the gardaí and the Child and Family Agency, often years ago.

One of the frustrations is the superficial nature of much of the reporting. You could be forgiven this week for assuming that all these allegations are new and that the religious orders have learnt nothing over the past 25 years.

Thankfully, nothing could be farther from the truth. Gains in safeguarding in the Church have been hard won, and only come about after so many brave people came forward to speak of their experiences, but they are real.

The Church in Ireland now has world-class child safeguarding policies and procedures in place – any fair commentator will acknowledge this. Social workers will privately confess that they wish other organisations in Ireland would learn the hard lessons that the Catholic Church has learnt and embrace similar stringent policies.

Every allegation, even against someone who is now deceased, is immediately shared with the gardaí and Tusla. In the case of Northern Ireland, the PSNI and social services are contacted as soon as a concern is expressed, or an allegation is made.

The entire safeguarding culture in the Church is supervised by the independent National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) which carries out regular audits on how dioceses and religious orders are responding to allegations of abuse.

More than this, they assess the steps that are being taken to make it easier for people to come forward to make allegations and the sort of support that complainants receive.

Counselling, therapy and financial redress are a core part of the Church's response. Towards Healing is a professional service offering support and counselling to those who have suffered abuse by priests or religious or in an institutional setting.

At the same time, the organisation Towards Peace has emerged from the felt need of victims and survivors for spiritual support. It's a cruel fact of abuse in a Church setting that often those abused were people closest to the Church, and their faith has been profoundly shaken. With professional help, many

are now re-connecting with their faith and re-building their relationship with God.

In every parish and religious organisation in the country, there is a literal army of volunteers ensuring that safeguarding is always considered. Working groups are looking at safety around emerging technologies, and constantly keeping the conversation about protection alive in parish settings.

We need to keep victims of abuse at the centre of our thoughts (and prayers) and do everything in our power to ensure that they can find healing and peace.

We also need to recommit to ensure that we have a Church that is constantly calibrating itself by the light of the Gospel and walking humbly leading people towards spiritual wellness and holistic holiness.

Michael Kelly is Director of Public Affairs with Aid to the Church in Need, Ireland and a former Editor of The Irish Catholic.

Answering God's call



Three men who made solemn profession, taking their final vows, for the Irish Dominicans, in St Saviour's Church, Dublin, Sunday September 8 at the 11:30am Mass. From left to right: Br Mark Murphy, Br Bruno Mary Kelleher and Br Nathan Peer. Photo: Dominican Province of Ireland



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The strange and disturbing content of the new SPHE programme



David Quinn

There has been something of a hue and cry about a textbook for use in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) class in secondary schools. The textbook in question shows an extremely unflattering caricature of an Irish family and then compares it with a much nicer, more diverse and open-minded family and it is no mystery which one pupils are meant to prefer, and it's not the Irish family.

The caricature was so crude that it created a backlash and EdCo, the company behind the schoolbook, has now withdrawn the offending section from use. But this doesn't go anywhere like far enough because the book as a whole is a disaster and so are many other of the books used in SPHE class, which incorporates Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

As Eoin O'Malley, a lecturer in politics at Dublin City University put it: "Removing that page from the book won't fix it. The whole curriculum is ideologically-driven drivel".

Your average parent will be totally unaware of this as generally speaking they are kept in school and never brought home. In other words, parents don't know what their children are being taught in these classes and how extreme or unexpected it can sometimes be.

Teachings

For example, one book called *My Wellbeing Journey 2* has five pages on masturbation. The textbook is aimed at pupils studying for the Junior Certificate. At one point in this section, pupils learn "Even babies and young children know it feels good to touch their own genitals". What an extraordinary thing to be teaching schoolchildren.

Look up the book in question online and you will find it. I am not making this up. It is produced by Gill Education. Parents of a more 'liberated' kind might think teaching their children about masturbation in a school setting is the healthiest and most natural thing in the world, another sign that we have rejected our repressive past.

Lots of other parents might



Students sit in a classroom. Photo: CNS/Tyler Orsburn.

have a different point of view and might think their children would be better off doing a bit more maths or English or PE than hearing all about masturbation. But one way or the other, how about consulting them to find out what they do think?

“The schools are allowed to adapt these to their own ethos. The Catholic Church has been producing some of its own material for use in Catholic schools”

SPHE class in general pushes gender ideology on pupils extremely strongly. Gender ideology teaches that your biological sex and your 'gender' can be totally unrelated. Therefore, someone born male can later identify as 'female' or vice versa. They might also say there are 'gender non-binary'.

“Probably unknown to itself, the NCCA is actually presenting a rather bleak view of life to young people. Our children deserve something much better than that”

This is an extremely controversial and contentious point of view and yet pupils are taught it as though it as self-evident a truth as 2 and 2 equals 4.

Who decided that all secondary school children should be taught gender ideology without teaching them any of the problems with this theory?

One big source of it is the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), which is a very powerful body that sets out in broad terms the specifications for each subject in school. The schools are allowed to adapt these to their own ethos. The Catholic Church has been producing some of its own material for use in Catholic schools. SPHE material has been developed, for example, and some of it is excellent.

Content

It is hard to say how widely Catholic schools actually use them, however. What we do know is that the SPHE books produced by the big education publishers are mainly terrible, as we see from some of what I've outlined about, and all these publishers can truthfully say that they are

“There is nothing about the sacrifices needed to make real, loving relationships work, nothing about what might really make us happy long-term, and whether something like marriage could play an important part in that”

adapting the NCCA specifications in their own way. Are the schools then having a proper look at what is actually in these books?

The NCCA has been steadily revising the SPHE curricula for primary and secondary schools and for the most part the specifications are getting steadily worse.

But apart from what is in the SPHE specifications, what is left out is also a big problem.

“The SPHE specifications from 2011 that have just been replaced have a different take”

For example, the new SPHE specification for Senior Cycle pupils (basically Leaving Certificate students) has just been published by the NCCA. You must consider that the course incorporates relationships so it would seem reasonable to expect quite a bit about relationships within the family, or about long-term committed relationships with your peers and boyfriends/girlfriends. You might even expect a few mentions of love and marriage and the prospect of

relationships as potentially threatening, which they can be, but it is not very positive and hopeful, is it? The word 'healthy' is preferred to 'loving'.

The SPHE specifications from 2011 that have just been replaced have a different take. One of its aims was to "discuss the role of commitment and relationship skills in marriage and other committed relationships, that help to support lasting relationships and family life".

That is all gone. Why is that? Are students no longer to aspire to marrying one day?

The world view underlying the new specifications is hyper-individualistic. Relationships are treated as come and go. Sex is viewed in the same way. You can be in a relationship or not before sex, but it doesn't really matter so long as you both consent to the act.

“The specifications treat us as mainly solitary, unencumbered, individuals who floats freely from one relationship to another”

Sex is presented as being mainly about pleasure and people can treat one another as means to that end, again so long as there is consent. Love isn't even regarded as an afterthought in this context in the NCCA specifications.

Gender is presented as fluid. Boys are to be taught they might not really be boys, and girls that they might not really be girls. Everything is up in the air.

Diversity is emphasised because then all choices will be equally respected.

The specifications treat us as mainly solitary, unencumbered, individuals who float freely from one relationship to another and from one gender to another if we wish.

There is nothing about the sacrifices needed to make real, loving relationships work, nothing about what might really make us happy long-term, and whether something like marriage could play an important part in that.

Probably unknown to itself, the NCCA is actually presenting a rather bleak view of life to young people. Our children deserve something much better than that.

eventually having children.

But in the new specification there is either no mention of the above or very little. Marriage isn't mentioned at all. Love gets two mentions, and one of them is a reference to 'love of learning'.

One of the five references to family in the 24-page specification is in the context of domestic violence.

'Commitment' and 'committed' get no mention. 'Brothers', 'sisters' and 'siblings' get no mention. 'Parents' get one neutral mention. 'Friends' and 'friendship' get one mention.

But 'choice' gets nine mentions. 'Diversity' gets 11. 'Gender' receives 26, 'sex' 56. We have 11 mentions of 'inclusive'.

Relationships

One aim of the new specification is to help students develop "healthy relationships" as they go through life and learn how to "demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating effectively, navigating difficult conversations, preventing and managing conflict and dealing with break-ups".

That's a mouthful, but the passage mainly treats

A suffering Church



Martina Purdy

A few years ago, I was introduced to an American priest in Dublin. When I heard he was from Pennsylvania, the words were swiftly out of my mouth: "Oh boy, you guys have some *real problems* there right now".

I was referring to a massive sex abuse scandal. But when I saw the pained look on his face, I was sorry I spoke. I started to apologise but he interjected. "No," he said, "it's ok. It's just that I knew some of the priests mentioned in that report."

Suffering

He went on to tell me that one of them had been in seminary with him. This priest, he said, had serious mental health issues and ended up taking his own life after being caught with child pornography. "I shouldn't say this but he should never have been ordained."

He went on. "The priest who baptised me was also in that report. He was a good friend of my family. I looked up to him."

My eyes got wider, as he continued to unburden himself about this priest who had fallen from grace after paying a rent boy for sex. "And when I was ordained this man, he came to me. He was very broken, and he had lost everything. And he asked me for

my first blessing. And I gave it to him."

I was stunned. This was an unexpected thread in a very dark tapestry.

Here in Ireland, the black threads are still being woven and another inquiry is looming, following last week's government report into sexual abuse in Irish schools run by Catholic religious orders. It contained around 2,400 allegations of historic violent and sexual abuse, including rape. Most of those who gave testimony were men in their 50s and 60s, who suffered terribly at the hands of religious as well as lay Catholic employees.

“For once, the warnings from Fatima I heard as a child about priests and nuns being in hell made sense”

I listened to a very even-handed discussion on BBC Radio Ulster's Sunday Sequence programme, and it was painful. I was struck by the question posed by presenter Audrey Carville: How is the Catholic Church as an institution still in existence? If this was any other organisation with this history, would they not be wound up by now?

When I first heard about the sex abuse by priests and brothers, I was in my twenties. It was the 1980s and involved the Christian Brothers of Ireland in the Mount Cashel orphanage in Newfoundland, Canada. The newspapers were

packed with dark revelations. "How can this be?" we all thought. For once, the warnings from Fatima I heard as a child about priests and nuns being in hell made sense.

It is not just the sin of child sex abuse that wounds and diminishes us all but the crippling reality that those we trusted to uphold justice and righteousness failed so miserably: covering up the awful truth, and all too often reserving their compassion for abusers while treating victims with contempt. And they are still doing it!

Even now, justice is delayed and denied. I was astonished to read in July this year that the Catholic Church in Newfoundland is still grappling with compensation. It will have to pay out an estimated €65 million euros. (CDN \$104 million).

Challenges

The problem of sexual abuse in our Church and religious institutions can be viewed socially, psychologically, and culturally. But it must also be examined spiritually, as Bishop Robert Barron, in his *Letter to a Suffering Church*, rightly points out.

This is a demonic drama, a 'diabolic masterpiece'.

That's not to diminish the role played by sinful individuals, but to understand that the Church is always at war with

Satan, whose aim is to destroy the Church. The unspiritual will scorn these scriptural truths, but the spiritual will understand.

In the Book of Samuel, the priest and judge, Eli, is told that his two sons, also priests, are corrupt, and guilty of sexual and financial abuse. Eli speaks to his sons but fails to act.

The result is catastrophic.

The Church in Ireland is learning the lesson of Eli and like Israel, has been handed over to its enemies.

“The problem is the Church, which boasts of having the cure for sin, is supposed to be better”

There is nothing worse under the sun than the sexual abuse of an innocent child. Centuries after the Spanish Inquisition, the debacle was still being thrown at Catholic apologists. The even greater stain of sexual abuse will not be washed away in a generation or two.

The scandal is devastating. It has blighted the lives of victims and has diminished and compromised the mis-

“It is not just the sin of child sex abuse that wounds and diminishes us all but the crippling reality that those we trusted to uphold justice and righteousness failed so miserably”

sion Church in every way. It is shocking to know that those who have given their lives to God can behave in the most appalling ways.

Those of us who burn with zeal for the Church have had to burn with shame and anger too. It is a hard lesson to learn: that all the evil that is in the world is also in the Church. We are indeed a Church of sinners in a world of sinners and all of us, in one way or another, have fallen short of the glory of God.

Sexual abuse is rife across society and occurs every day in families who are supposed to love and care for each other. And it is covered up too.

The problem is the Church, which boasts of having the cure for sin, is supposed to be better. Instead, like the

world around us, we have our villains as well as our heroes and sometimes they are both those things.

Faith

There is an Old Testament metaphor in the Song of Songs about the bride who is "black but beautiful." The Church - *the Bride of Christ* - is black with sin, but also carries the beauty of Christ, her bridegroom.

Despite everything, I will never leave the Church. Because in the words of St Peter to Jesus: "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life".

As we walk the bitter valley, we know God's drama does not end with a curse, but with a blessing.

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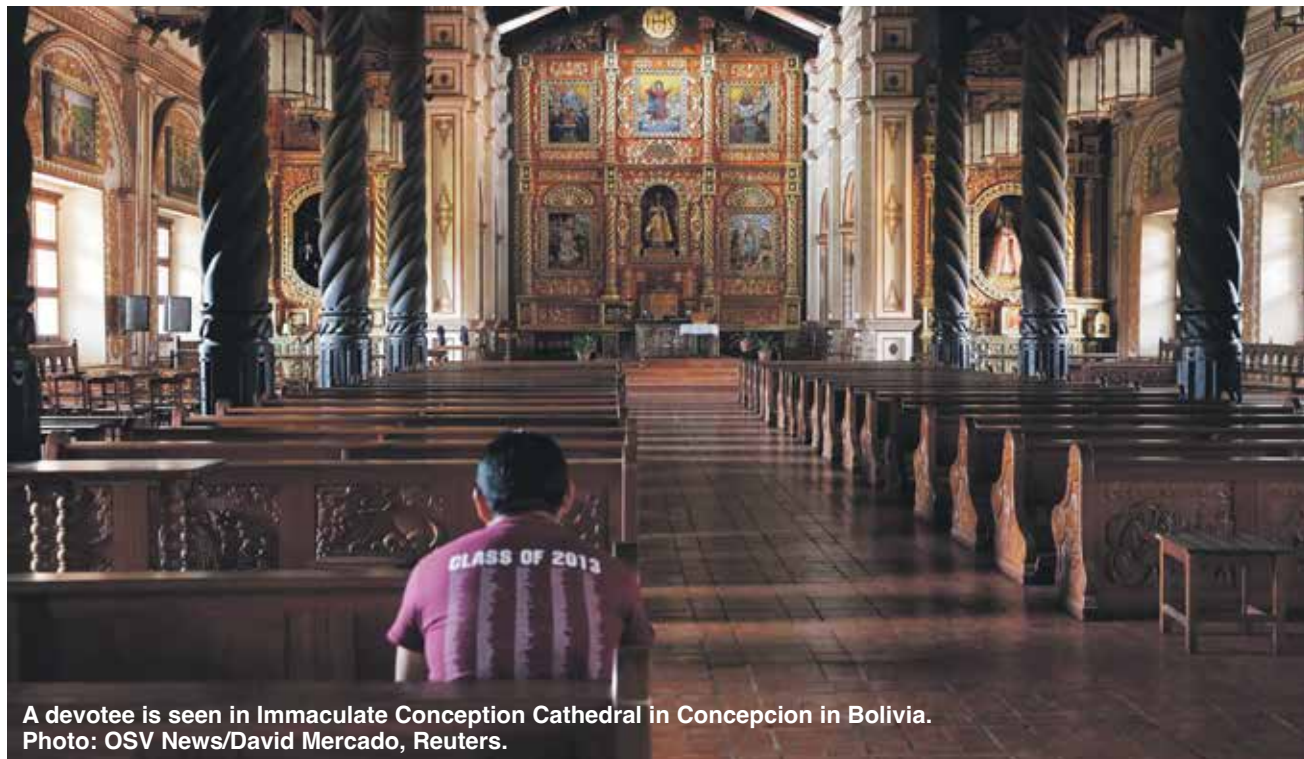
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A devotee is seen in Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Concepcion in Bolivia. Photo: OSV News/David Mercado, Reuters.

Senator Rónán Mullen

A view from the Seanad



Let justice be done for all

Before going into politics, I spent a brief period practising at the Bar. Going in and out of the Bridewell courthouse, I was often struck by the bold inscription above me: *'Fiat Iustitia Ruat Caelum'*, i.e. 'Let Justice be Done though the Heavens Fall'. It is an important statement of intent that should apply to every justice system and any consideration of wrongdoing and redress.

The scoping report into abuse at religious-run schools cries out for justice-though-the-Heavens-may-fall. Here we are again, wondering how men, mainly men, in religious life could have abused children, or failed to act if they found out what was going on.

Here we are, wondering at ourselves for being surprised when we know that the line between good and evil passes through every human heart, and when we know that membership of the Church does not abolish sin, only mediates the grace to fight and overcome it.

Here we are again, listening to the media doing its job, giving a voice back to victims and asking the experts what is to be done now. Here we are again, wondering if the same media is also feasting on the misery and seizing on the opportunity to demoralise people of faith.

Justice

"This pain cannot be dealt with on the airwaves," one leader of a religious congregation told me in a text during the week. "It is by meeting the victims, listening to their stories and being with them. But one can't say that. Prayer and penance..."

He is right. But, beyond meeting and listening to victims, what does doing justice mean in this sad situation? I could be wrong,

but here goes...

1. Facing the truth. Most Irish schools were run by the Catholic Church. That is something to be proud of. The Church was willing to provide education across all sectors of society when there was no Irish State to start it and later when the Irish State was too poor to fund it. It means however, that a large proportion of historical abuse in schools will be connected with religious or clergy.

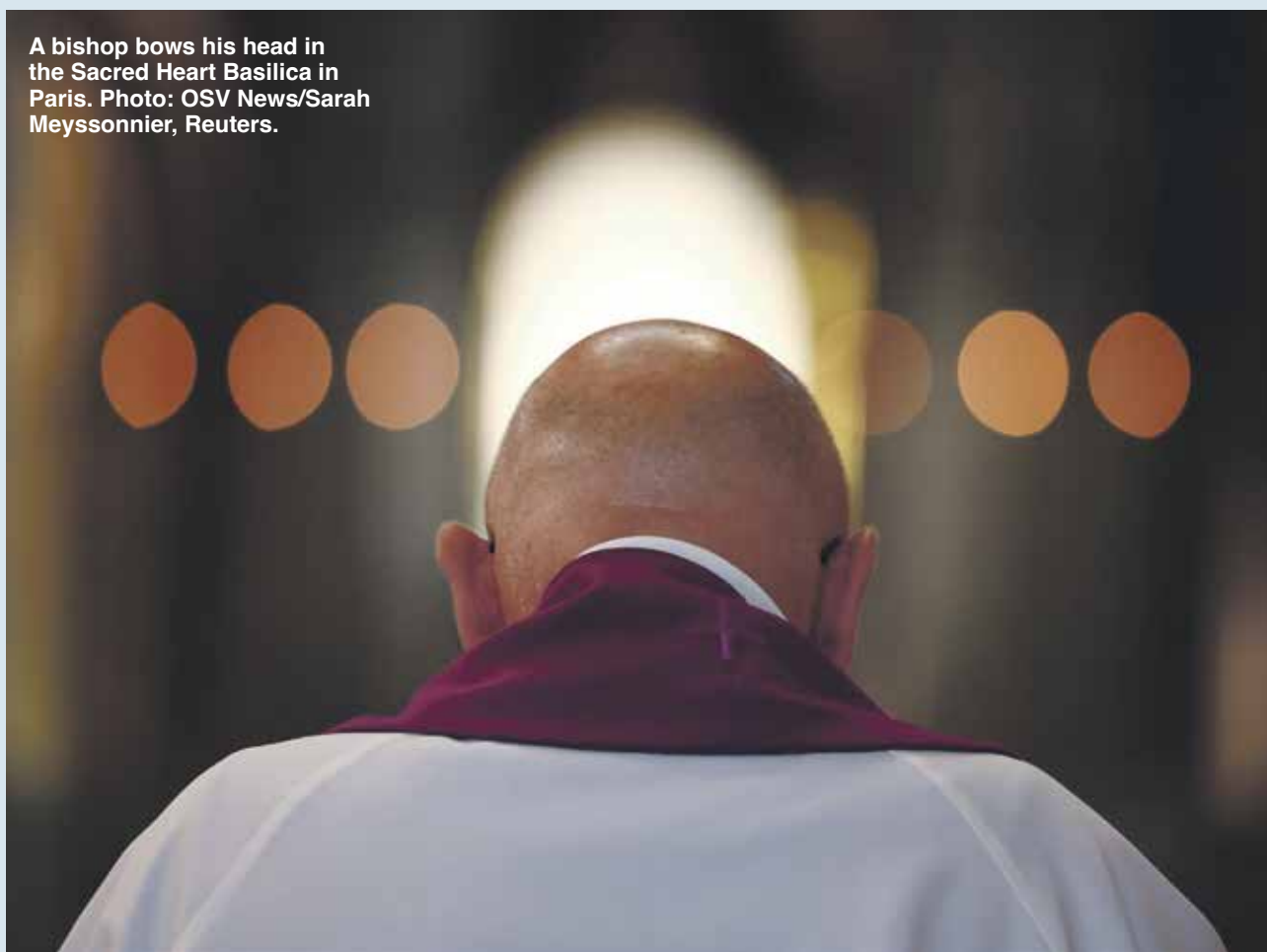
“With widespread media hostility to the Catholic Church, the Government will be tempted to court the media by keeping the heat on the religious orders”

Not only that, but because religious organisations have an internal structure and line of authority abusers will have been kept within the system. There was secrecy and shame and half-talk, so people didn't know, or know with certainty, what they needed to know. When they did suspect, it was easier to assume the best than to take action.

And even when they knew, there was not a culture of sacking people whether the abuser was religious, priest or lay. (I suspect that trade unions would also have backed their members, in cases of lay abusers, making it harder to take. We live in different times now.)

2. Treating all cases equally. This scoping report arose from the Blackrock Boys documentary but it was wrong that it dealt only with religious-run schools. Any statutory enquiry now must cover all schools, not just those run by religious—for example the vocational

A bishop bows his head in the Sacred Heart Basilica in Paris. Photo: OSV News/Sarah Meyssonier, Reuters.



schools.

We can't only be interested in victims when the abuser was a religious, a priest or an employee of a Catholic school. That sets up two classes of victim. And we can't only be interested in religious or clerical authorities when it comes to exposing past crimes.

That sets up two classes of abuser. With widespread media hostility to the Catholic Church, the Government will be tempted to court the media by keeping the heat on the religious orders. Ministers may hope to escape scrutiny of, for example, Tusla's failure to protect children in the present. People should push back against this. Let justice be done.

Support

3. Staying independent of any State redress scheme. Christian organisations must offer assistance with the process of healing, and pay compensation as far as possible, for wrong done by their members or in their schools.

They have already been doing this – and have spent millions of euro to date. The Church has also invested hugely in child protection structures in the pre-

“There are still lay believers who value all that has been, and is, good about Catholic schools. And who can speak with honesty and integrity into this situation. Recruit them. Inform them. Commission them”

sent. Redress schemes are designed to prevent victims from going through the trauma of litigation.

“Establish a panel of people who would take complaints, adjudicate them as fairly as possible”

The downside is that the State will always be the dominant partner, it has unlimited resources compared with religious organisations and it has a public relations incentive to never-be-happy with the response of the Church. Faced with an unsympathetic and opportunistic adversary,

the religious orders, and dioceses too, would do better to keep to their own system of supporting victims, and consider an independent redress mechanism for those not yet compensated.

They must be painfully realistic and open about the commitments they must keep – both to their older members and their charitable activities in Ireland and abroad. They must decide what further resources they can contribute to healing-and-redress, and establish a panel of people who would take complaints, adjudicate them as fairly as possible, and offer whatever restitution is possible.

The religious orders should make clear that this leaves victims free to pursue further compensation in the courts and from any Government redress fund designed

to meet the State's responsibilities.

4. Communicate, communicate. If Church representatives fail to tell people about their reconciliation, compensation and child protection work to date, nobody will know, and others with a different and more cynical agenda will fill the vacuum. It is not easy for religious representatives to speak. Many are older, there is a shortage of energy and very little trust in the media.

But there are still lay believers who value all that has been, and is, good about Catholic schools. And who can speak with honesty and integrity into this situation. Recruit them. Inform them. Commission them. The voice of the Church needs to be heard.

Better to suffer in the arena, offering an honourable response to painful realities, than to have the world think that you have been hunkering down, keeping schtum, trying to keep the costs down – and that you don't really care. When nothing could be further from the truth.

“We know that the line between good and evil passes through every human heart, and when we know that membership of the Church does not abolish sin, only mediates the grace to fight and overcome it”

Some saints can be extraordinarily ordinary



Brandon Scott

The traditional discourse associated with the concept of sainthood typically revolves around descriptions of heroism, daring defiance and grandiose gestures of faith. In time, this perception has begun to shift and allow for a more modest, grounded, even unassuming perception of saintly figures and their path to inclusion in the lofty litany.

Ireland's own Frank Duff, the founder of the Legion of Mary, produced a prophetic reflection on this exact topic in 1916 at the age of 27 with a pamphlet entitled 'Can we be Saints?' Duff concluded, after a number of compelling arguments and analyses, that in fact sainthood was achievable for all who desired to go about committing their lives to the corporal works of mercy, whether overtly or covertly.

Duff, who died in 1980, mightn't be a recognisable figure to those outside of the era he's primarily associated with but thankfully, it doesn't require a lot of research to identify a direct continuation of his thinking in the vastly different 21st century.

Unassuming

The embodiment of the word 'unassuming' fits the nature and profile of Blessed Carlo Acutis

seamlessly. Born in 1991 to a father who worked in insurance and a mother who worked in publishing (neither religious), his adolescence was as conventional and ordinary as any other young person's, even though the family was reasonably wealthy.

Although he was born into a secular family, Blessed Carlo was always inquisitive about faith matters and by 12 he became a catechist in his local parish. Distress entered Blessed Carlo's life at the age of 15 when he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukaemia. Within 12 days of the initial symptoms, Blessed Carlo breathed his last breaths, with the teenager stoically preparing himself to meet eternal life.

His story soon began to spread far and wide and his unwavering faith in the context of pain and suffering resonated

with many youth, who could relate to his ordinary image and contemporary appeal. On July 1 of this year Pope Francis approved the canonisation of Carlo Acutis, with two miracles being attributed to him.

One of the countless numbers of young people who gravitated to the story of Blessed Carlo is Mary-Aoife Ong, co-director of Carlo Acutis Youth Ireland, an organisation dedicated to promoting the legacy and message of Blessed Carlo.

Ms Ong, who wasn't aware of the prospective saint this time last year, told *The Irish Catholic* that she encountered his story by sheer coincidence but upon doing so, knew that she had to be a part of something that promoted his miraculous works.

“There are queues of people outside of pop and rock concerts, but there's nobody going in to see the creator of these pop singers; of the creator of the whole universe in the Eucharist in the churches”

“Myself and my brother knew nothing about Carlo this time last year,” Ms Ong said. “We had just finished college and we went over to Assisi to visit two Capuchin brothers who we originally met playing Irish music in Ireland. They invited us to come over to Assisi to see St Francis and see the set-up. When we went over we saw Blessed Carlo laying out in the tomb – just totally ordinary with the jeans and runners. We thought, ‘oh my goodness. There's something about this young guy that really touched our hearts.’

We came back and we said that we have to try and do something to try and bring that bit of peace that we experienced in Assisi to other people in Ireland because the churches are empty, as Carlo would say ‘there are queues of people outside of pop and rock concerts, but there's nobody going in to see the creator of these pop singers; of the creator of the whole universe in the Eucharist in the churches.’

“That's how we got involved in Carlo Acutis Youth Ireland. We came back and the primary relic had just started making its way over to Ireland and it had one of its first visits in the North

and then the next was in Dublin and we went to that visit and just got roped in.”

Ms Ong notices that engagement with the organisation has increased since the major announcement by the Pope to canonise Acutis and that young people are drawn to the qualities consistently attributed to him, such as his unfailing compassion for those considered on the margins of society.

“We're all kind of offering our trust in Carlo's hands,” Ms Ong said. “We can really see the increase in the interest in it this time as opposed to a couple of months ago where people didn't really know much about Blessed Carlo but now that the canonisation has been announced, there's definitely a lot more interest.

“He very much lived by example and always looked for people on the margins of society. The way he dressed, the way he talked, his language, it was the small, subtle things about Carlo – encouraging his friends to come outside and including the bullies, to say a kind word to the migrant and to help the homeless – the small actions.

“They all saw his joy and knew there was something different. People knew he was religious but I don't think they ever understood the extent of his faith until after he passed away.”

Sainthood

Sainthood is, of course, an extraordinary thing and the profoundness of being deemed worthy of the Church's highest accolade should never diminish in a world full of seemingly endless cacophony and noise. But Blessed Carlo believed that being ordinary in deeds and in appearance were not inhibitors to the gifts of a person being divinely recognised, in fact, in his mind, the biggest attribute one needs in the pursuit of sainthood is to simply desire it.

“His big thing was anyone can become a saint if you really, really desire it,” Ms Ong said. “He really just pushes the love side of God. One of my favourite sayings of his is that whatever perspective you look at life from, life is always great. It really brings you back down to earth to find God in the everyday bits and pieces of life.

“I think with Carlo, his view was on the infinite and not the finite and that's something that just speaks value. He used to say things like ‘money is just pieces of shredded paper’. He really didn't have any attachment to those things. He loved life but he just knew what was to come was just infinite and that God would be infinite with love and mercy – you can't even fathom how infinite and amazing the life to come was.”

Suffering is a key theme

Blessed Carlo Acutis, whose canonisation was announced by Pope Francis in July. Photo: CNS photo/courtesy Sainthood Cause of Carlo Acutis



in the considerably short but meaningful life of Blessed Carlo. In the days before his impending death, he endured tremendous pain but never faltered in serenity or faith. Ms Ong notes that the resilience of Blessed Carlo as he awaited his calling from the Lord can be used as inspiration for young Catholics to encourage them to continue to withstand and profess in a world that becomes less receptive,

and in some cases hostile, to their beliefs.

“One of his main points was to always be united with Jesus and I think that also helped a lot because when he was suffering with his illness and going through those difficult times, he knew that Jesus also went through this and he was able to unite himself with Christ on the basis of his experience.

“I know myself as a young person, it's very difficult

to find other Catholics and express your faith. If you go into a church it can be very difficult as a lot of people are much older. But then you look at someone like Carlo and you can just see that he was able to look beyond all of that and you can see that all of these little things don't really matter yes they're crosses to carry but they're such a small cross to the crosses that other people are carrying in the world.”

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The new multicultural face of the Irish Church



Renata Steffens

The Irish Church has been facing a big clerical challenge in the past few years, with many priests retiring – rightfully – at the age of 75. This challenge is not related to the retirements, but the lack of available priests, as ordinations are not occurring at the same pace.

Recently, Ireland witnessed a positive change in the vocation world with ten seminarians announced for three different dioceses around the island. However, even with the good news of new men listening to their vocation call, the challenges and concerns regarding clergy numbers is still very real.

Due to this drought in vocation, the Irish Church is facing many changes, from parishes closing to parishes clustering. Adding to all those changes, many international priests are coming to work in the dioceses, either on a contract, or assisting while in Ireland to study.

The Irish Catholic talked to a number of dioceses about their active priests and the relation between priests close to retirement age and the number of ordinations in the past ten years, which is discrepant.

Retirements

The Diocese of Kilmore, for example, had a total of 24 retirements in the past ten years, which wouldn't be considered too many if the diocese in the same period didn't have only two ordinations and one incardination. To balance the dropping numbers of active clergy, the diocese is counting on the assistance of international priests.

Currently, Kilmore has a total number of 47 active priests, seven being foreign, roughly 15% of the total

Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois Paul Connell



priests. Two of the foreign priests are Indian, four Nigerians are on loan and one Nigerian was incardinated into the diocese.

“For the first time we have one priest who was parish priest of two parishes”

The Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes said the international priests are “only part of the solution.” He explained some of the priests are in a contract of three years. “We do have a particular relationship with one particular group The Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria... because of the fact that their superior general worked here at one time,” and some of the older priests in the diocese worked in Nigeria for a while as well, he explained.

The other part of the solution the diocese found for the dropping numbers of active priests are partner-

ships between parishes. “For the first time we have one priest who is parish priest of two parishes,” the bishop explained.

Phenomena

“That’s going to become an increasing phenomena as well,” he said. Bishop Hayes said that: “in other words, there will be some parishes without a resident priest”.

“But what often happens... when a parish doesn’t have their own priest, it calls people forward and then those who are committed to parish and committed to their faith, they come forward and they find roles for themselves in ministry.”

No priest is due to retire in Kilmore for the next two years, “so, we don’t have an immediate issue,” Bishop Hayes explained. “But you can never account for the fact that people become ill, you have to allow for that as well.”

Another long-term solution for the vocations challenge Bishop Hayes believes in, is encouraging the growth

of the Ministry of Pastoral Care, “nurturing the faith,” visiting and ministering in schools and outside of them, “working with parents, in particular young parents, because that’s where, at the end of the day, faith is nurtured: at home.”

“The priest will always remain vital and we continue to encourage young men to consider priesthood”

For the bishop, it is important to make parents aware that, if they are having difficulties with their faith, “the little faith they have can be built upon. So we need people to work with them and to encourage them.”

Those young families, with their faith nourished, would have faithful children. And some of those children could grow up and received the call to priesthood, the bishop explained. “Because while obviously we’re very involved...in nurturing the lay ministry. At the end of the day, the priest will always remain vital and we continue to encourage young men to consider priesthood.”

The Diocese of Cloyne has 60 active priests working in

its 46 parishes and managing 107 churches. This number, even though higher than the number of parishes, is worrying, as the priest in many of the parishes is not ‘allowed’ to get sick as there would not be another priest to cover him.

In Cloyne, 58 of the working priests are Irish, one is Polish and one Romanian. In the last ten years, the diocese had a total of 16 retirements and only two ordinations.

Armagh

On the other side of the island, the Archdiocese of Armagh has the second highest percentage of international priests from the dioceses who provided their data to *The Irish Catholic*. With a total of 98 active priests, twelve are foreign, which accounts to over 12% of the active priests.

“The tradition here in Ireland has always been that we sent priests abroad. There’s always been this idea that priests travel, especially missionary priests. I think we’ve always been sort of mindful of missionary priests coming and going,” Fr Barry Matthews, Armagh Archdiocese’s Director of Vocations said.

Differently from Kilmore and Cloyne dioceses, Armagh had a higher number of ordinations (twelve) and incardinations (two) in the past ten

years, compared to their 23 retired priests in the same period.

“Our parishes now are more multicultural... So, many of the priests that are working in our diocese also have to be”

The international priests in Armagh today come from five different countries: Five from Nigeria, four from India, one from Zambia, one from Poland and one from Italy. Fr Matthews explains the reason for such a high number of foreign priests is inclusion, as the diocese has a big international community.

“Our parishes now are more multicultural... So, many of the priests that are working in our diocese also have to be” to minister to communities who are international. Fr Matthews explained that some communities in the diocese are Polish, African, or Indian, because of that “some of the priests that have come are coming to minister to those communities.”

Armagh foreign priests minister in both English and their own language. “If a

“The tradition here in Ireland has always been that we sent priests abroad. There’s always been this idea that priests travel and priests’ movement, especially missionary priests. I think we’ve always been sort of mindful of missionary priests coming and going”

“It takes a faith community to support vocations. God’s call to priestly service is nourished and nurtured within the home, the parish and wider society”

priest is here, maybe serving the Syro Malabar community, he would be ministering to that community with the language that is more suitable.” Fr Matthews said that “a priest that might be assigned to work with the Polish community, or a certain sort of geographical community” would be able to speak that language.

In relation to the lack of vocation in Ireland, Fr Matthews said that, as “Bishop Cullinan said last year...It’s really a problem of faith. Some people have turned away from the practise of the faith, so I suppose the key for the Church is to focus on encouraging young families, particularly to encourage their children and the young of their family members to attend Mass and to be part of the faith community and then once that is strengthened, then vocation will come.”

Similarly to Bishop Hayes, Fr Matthews believe that lay engagement is the first step for more vocations. “The priests will come from families who go to Mass... Vocations will come from faith filled families... Bring more people [to the church] and then the vocations will come.”

A little more south, 26 priests are working in the Achonry Diocese. 23 of them are in parish ministry, which means all parishes have at least one priest, and only one of them is foreign, from Nigeria.

In that diocese, from 2014 to 2024, no ordination or incardinations happened and a total of four priests retired.

Having only 39 parishes, and a total of 71 churches, the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora had, in the last ten years, ten priests retiring, five ordained and five incardinated. Around 10% of the active priests in that diocese are from abroad. Of the 49 active priests, two are Indian, one is Polish, one French and one Ukrainian.

Active

With almost 9% of active priest being from abroad, the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois has 45 active priests, of which three are Nigerians and one is Indian. In the past ten years, the diocese had only one ordination and 18 retirements.

Bishop Paul Connell understands that Ireland is receiving assistance from a number of international priests, and believes that is very helpful, but he doesn’t believe that

bringing priests from out of the country is “a solution to the problems of the Irish Church”.

He explained that many of the international priests are students in Maynooth, and are only helping while in Ireland to study. “But we always have to be conscious of the fact...as tight as things are in Europe, there still is a very much larger ratio of people without a priest in Africa. So we can’t be taking priests from other parts of the world where there is a greater need.”

Bishop Connell said the solution was not bringing more international priests. To counter the dropping numbers in priesthood vocation, Ardagh and Clonmacnois will need “to have more cooperation between parishes.” For that to happen, the bishop explained, more lay involvement will be necessary.

“People are needed catechists, as pastoral workers, as secretaries, to do a lot of the administrative work,” the bishop said. “We’re going to have much more of that going forward because there will be a smaller number of priests in this crisis.”

“Without priests, there can be no Eucharist, [and] without the Eucharist” there is no Church”

If all priests in that diocese were to retire at 75, by the year 2030 the diocese would have only 15 priests. The bishop mentioned the generosity of his priests, and how they agreed to wait a little before retiring or help in their parishes afterwards.

Currently, the diocese is working on clustering parishes, attempting to tackle the lack of priests. The necessity of grouping parishes was predicted years ago by Archbishop of Tuam Francis Duffy, when he was the bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois.

The bishop lamented that they had no seminarians in the past few years, and that is the reason priests are now having to take responsibility for multiple parishes. But even if new men start this year “it takes a long while to train seminarians.”

Bishop Connell said the diocese and community will keep praying and encouraging vocations to the priesthood and reli-

gious life. “Because without priests, there can be no Eucharist, [and] without the Eucharist” there is no Church.”

This lack in vocation is creating unprecedented issues in the Irish Church. St Patrick’s Parish in Belfast, for example, is operating with only one priest for the first time in 200 years.

In more positive news, Down and Connor Diocese will have six seminarians starting their studies this month, bringing the total number of seminarians for that diocese to nine.

“The rise in the numbers of seminarians discerning a vocation to the priesthood over the last number of years is very encouraging,” Fr Eddie McGee, Diocesan Communications Officer, said on behalf of the diocese.

At the moment, the diocese has 97 active priests, six being foreign in full-time positions, a bit more than 6% of all active priests. Down and Connor also has some foreign priests covering holidays, but those numbers were not provided. Five of the full-time international priests are Indian and the other one is Polish.

In the past ten years, Down and Connor had 27 retirements, one incardination and 23 ordinations, eight to priesthood and fifteen to permanent diaconate.

Challenging

“Vocations are particularly welcome during a time when it is increasingly challenging to meet the pastoral and sacramental needs within parishes across the Diocese,” Fr McGee said.

As Armagh and Kilmore dioceses, Down and Connor believes the vocation will start with faith shared at home. “It takes a faith community to support vocations. God’s call to priestly service is nourished and nurtured within the home, the parish and wider society. An increase in vocations therefore demonstrates the support and guidance offered by those who surround any individual discerning a vocation,” Fr McGee said.

Even though international priests can be found in every diocese across Ireland, they are not here to solve the vocational drought. They will help when necessary and they will minister to the growing international communities the country is embracing, but they are not the solution.



Bishop of Kilmore
Martin Hayes

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St Bernadette's relics remind Galway that Holiness is for everyone



Renata Milán Morales

Thousands gathered in Galway Cathedral on September 5 to 6 to venerate the relics of St Bernadette of Lourdes. Fr John Gerard Acton of Galway Cathedral said that it was an immense privilege for both the Diocese and the Cathedral parish to host the relics of the young saint, noting how the two-day event of Faith deeply moved people from near and far.

Galway Cathedral marked the first stop in Ireland for the relics of St Bernadette, who, at the age of 14, encountered the Blessed Virgin Mary in the then small, impoverished village of Lourdes in 1858. Since

then, Lourdes has become a renowned pilgrimage site.

The relics will continue their tour across Ireland, offering those who cannot make the pilgrimage to Lourdes a chance to connect with the saint.

Fr Acton highlighted Bernadette's humanity, saying, "The humility, devotion, and suffering of Bernadette reminds us that saints are real people who, in their time on Earth, faced the vagaries, challenges, and difficulties of life, just like the rest of us."

He emphasised that Bernadette's life serves as a reminder that sainthood is within reach for everyone. "Holiness is open to every person. Having, even for a very short time, the relics of St Bernadette in our city has been a reminder that each of us has the invitation and the potential to be saint-like in this world and Saints in the next," Fr Acton remarked.



St Bernadette's relics in Galway Cathedral.
Credit: Galway Cathedral Communications Office



Bishop Paul Dempsey visits archdiocese youth prayer groups

Renata Milán Morales

In two special visits on August 22 and 29, Bishop Paul Dempsey engaged with young people in Dublin, giving insightful talks to two youth prayer groups, 'Youth Rathmines' and 'Pure in Heart'. Bishop Dempsey focused on his personal vocation journey to the priesthood and his experiences as a bishop.

During his presentation, Bishop Dempsey talked about his path to discerning the call to priesthood, sharing the doubts and challenges he faced in his youth. He connected with the groups by showing that these struggles are part of the journey and can be overcome by trusting in God. This message particularly resonated with the young audience.

Oscar Benavides, a member of Pure in Heart, expressed his joy in meeting the bishop, saying, "It was not only about meeting him as a bishop but also about experiencing firsthand the recommendation by Pope Francis for clergy to 'be shepherds living with the smell of the sheep.'" He noted that Bishop Dempsey's openness made him feel like a friend, despite it being

their first encounter. Benavides emphasised that having Bishop Dempsey engage with different Catholic communities is a great blessing.

Helen Vysotska, former Pure in Heart organiser, was particularly struck by the influence of Bishop Dempsey's mother on his vocation, as he shared how her daily prayers left a lasting impact on his faith and discernment. "We never know who we can impact by the way we live our lives," the bishop reminded the group, underlining the importance of Christian witness.

Eoin McCormack, coordinator of the Rathmines group, expressed gratitude for the bishop's visit. "We were delighted to welcome him to Rathmines and showcase the vibrant young adult Christian community that has developed in the parish," he said. McCormack also highlighted the bishop's extensive background in youth ministry and how his support is greatly appreciated by the group.

Following the talks, Bishop Dempsey led a Q&A session and blessed attendees with a first-class relic of St John Paul II, specifically his papal zucchetto. The evening concluded with a social gathering.



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Pope's Asian Pacific trip deals with the good and the bad

Last week, Pope Francis embarked on his 45th and most ambitious trip of his papacy, both in terms of distance and duration. It was a 12-day, four-country, two-continent odyssey; with stops in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Singapore. The trip, which enabled Catholics in remote regions to see the Pope in the flesh prompted him to address serious matters that have impacted some of the countries on the itinerary, such as witchcraft and abuse.

This was not his first journey to the region. Early in his pontificate, he made four long-distance trips to South Korea, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Japan. In more recent years he has also visited Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and, last year, Mongolia.

The historic voyage comes amid recent concerns regarding his health. The Pope suffers from mobility issues and has been repeatedly hospitalised with respiratory illnesses.

Indonesia

As he often does, last Monday he boarded the Papal plane in a wheelchair, using a lift. He later used a cane to walk down the aisle to greet reporters, but appeared to be in good spirits. The Pope turns 88 in just three months and this trip marked the first time he left Italy in almost a year.

The Pontiff offered broad smiles when he got off the plane from Rome in Indonesia last Tuesday, and again appeared refreshed and joyful when he met Indonesian president Joko Widodo on Wednesday morning in the first major set piece of his tour.

A marching band and the presidential guard, including some members on horseback, welcomed the Pope to the presidential palace. He arrived in a civilian Toyota car, sitting in the front passenger seat before getting out in a wheelchair to greet spectators.

Hundreds of children wearing traditional costumes screamed, shouting 'welcome

pope' and waving flags. He was greeted by Widodo and Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, the country's president-elect who will take office next month.

Inside the palace, the Pope signed a guestbook before heading into his meeting with Jokowi, without making comment. He got out of his wheelchair using a cane for talks with the Indonesian leader.

“Interfaith ties were the central theme of this stopover and he hosted a meeting last Thursday with representatives from all six religions at the Istiqlal Mosque”

Here, the Pope said that inter-religious ties must be “strengthened” to fight extremism and intolerance. Interfaith dialogue is “indispensable to confront common challenges, including that of countering extremism and intolerance”, he said in a speech after meeting the president.

“In order to foster a peaceful and fruitful harmony that ensures peace... the church desires to increase inter-religious dialogue,” he told officials at the presidential palace in Jakarta.

He signed a joint declaration with the mosque's grand imam focusing on 'dehumanisation' through the spread of conflict.

Last Wednesday he energised the local faithful with an address at Jakarta's cathedral, which sits across the road from the mosque.

The cathedral, linked to the mosque by a 'tunnel of friendship', was rebuilt at the end of the 19th century after a fire and in recent days Christians have been taking selfies with a life-sized Pope cutout there.

The Pope ended his day

with a meeting with young people who are part of a global network of schools aimed at helping disadvantaged children, which he established in 2013.

Interfaith ties were the central theme of this stopover and he hosted a meeting last Thursday with representatives from all six religions at the Istiqlal Mosque, the largest in Southeast Asia and a symbol of religious co-existence. The population of Indonesia's Catholic community is about 3.06% with roughly 8.6 million inhabitants professing the Faith in an overwhelmingly Muslim country.

On Thursday he participated in the main event of his Jakarta stopover - a Mass at the country's 80,000 national football stadium, which Catholics packed out to the rafters.

Papua New Guinea

The Pope then travelled to the remote jungles of Papua New Guinea last Sunday to celebrate the Catholic Church of the peripheries, taking with him a ton of medicine, musical instruments and a message of love for the people who live there.

The Pope flew in a Royal Australian Air Force C-130 transport plane from the South Pacific nation's capital, Port Moresby, to Vanimo, on the north-west coast, where he met the local Catholic community and missionaries from his native Argentina who have been ministering to them.

A crowd of an estimated 20,000 people gathered on the field in front of Vanimo Cathedral, singing and dancing when the Pope arrived, and he promptly put on a feathered headdress that was presented to him.

Speaking from a raised stage, he praised the Church workers who go out to try to spread the faith, but he urged the faithful to work closer to home at being good to one another and putting an end to the tribal rivalries and violence that are a regular part of the culture in Papua New Guinea.

He urged them to be like an orchestra, so that all members of the community come together harmoniously to overcome rivalries.

Doing so, he said, will help to end personal, family and tribal divisions “to drive out fear, superstition and magic from people's hearts, to put an end to destructive behaviours such as violence, infidelity, exploitation, alcohol and drug abuse, evils which imprison and take away the



Pope Francis receives wine from women in traditional Indonesian dress during the presentation of gifts as he celebrates Mass in Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta, Indonesia, Mass Sept. 5, 2024. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.



Pope Francis greets a woman in traditional dress upon his arrival at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, September 7, 2024. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.

happiness of so many of our brothers and sisters, even in this country”.

“They may well feel themselves distant from both their faith and the institutional Church, but that God is near to them”

It was a reference to the tribal violence over land and other disputes that have long characterised the country's culture but have grown more lethal in recent years.

The Pope arrived in Papua New Guinea to urge an end to the violence, including gender-based violence, and for

a sense of civic responsibility and co-operation to prevail.

He had started the day with a Mass in front of an estimated 35,000 people at the Sir John Guise Stadium in Port Moresby. Dancers in grass skirts and feathered headdresses performed to traditional drum beats as priests in green vestments processed to the altar.

In his homily, the Pope told the crowd they may well feel themselves distant from both their faith and the institutional Church, but that God is near to them.

“You who live on this large island in the Pacific Ocean may sometimes have thought of yourselves as a far away and distant land, situated at the edge of the world,” he said. “Yet today the Lord wants to draw near to you, to break down distances, to let you know that you are at the centre of his heart and that each one of you is important to him.”

There are about 2.5 million Catholics in Papua New Guinea, according to Vatican statistics, out of a population in the Commonwealth nation believed to be around 10 million. The Catholics practise the faith along with traditional indigenous beliefs, including animism and sorcery.

The Pope heard first-hand about how women are often falsely accused of witchcraft, then shunned by their families.

In remarks to priests, bishops and nuns, he urged Church leaders in Papua New Guinea to be particularly close to these people on the margins who have been wounded by “prejudice and superstition”.

“I think too of the marginalised and wounded, both morally and physically, by prejudice and superstition sometimes to the point of having to risk their lives,” he said.

“The Pope then travelled to the remote jungles of Papua New Guinea last Sunday to celebrate the Catholic Church of the peripheries, taking with him a ton of medicine, musical instruments and a message of love for the people who live there”

He urged the Church to be particularly close to such people on the peripheries, with "closeness, compassion and tenderness".

East Timor

As the Pope began his brief, two-day visit to East Timor, one of the key underlying issues marring the journey was the clerical sexual abuse crisis, with the nation reeling from allegations against highly revered members of the clergy.

He was greeted by thousands of locals who lined the streets to see him after his arrival in Dili. Speaking about social challenges that East Timor faces, such as alcohol abuse and gang violence by groups of young people trained in martial arts, the Pope said, "Instead of using this knowledge in the service of the defenceless, they use it as an opportunity to showcase the fleeting and harmful power of violence."

The Pope spoke on the topic in more depth while meeting with the country's bishops, clergy and religious on Tuesday.

In a speech to national authorities after his arrival in Dili Monday afternoon, Pope Francis made a veiled reference to the abuse issue, calling on authorities to "to prevent every kind of abuse and guarantee a healthy and

“We are all called to do everything possible to prevent every kind of abuse and guarantee a healthy and peaceful childhood for all young people”

peaceful childhood for all young people."

However, he did not apologise or link the abuse issue to the Catholic Church or to Church representatives.

"Let us not forget that these children and adolescents have their dignity violated," Francis said, adding in an impromptu remark that "the problem is flowering all over the world."

In response to this, he said "we are all called to do everything possible to prevent every kind of abuse and guarantee a healthy and peaceful childhood for all young people", but did not press the issue further.

Ahead of his arrival, the clerical abuse survivor advocacy group Bishop Accountability published an open letter to American Cardinal Sean O'Malley, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, asking the Pope to vocally address the issue while in East Timor.

In recent years, East Timor has been grappling with allegations of paedophilia

against prominent bishop and national hero Carlos Ximenes Belo, a Nobel laureate who has been sanctioned by the Vatican.

“If he explicitly condemns Belo and praises the bravery of their victims, his words could have an enormous positive impact”

Bishop Belo, believed to be residing in Portugal, is a former bishop of Dili who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 for his efforts in promoting human rights and self-determination for East Timorese during Indonesia's occupation from 1975-1999, and for promoting a fair and peaceful solution to the country's con-

flict as it fought for its independence.

He stepped down in 2002 at the unusually young age of 54, and in 2022 was publicly accused of the sexual abuse of minors, with the Vatican subsequently saying he had been barred from ministry when allegations that he raped and abused teenage boys arose in 2019.

In its letter to Cardinal O'Malley, Bishop Accountability asked Cardinal O'Malley to urge Pope Francis "to be the victims' champion" and to advise the Pope "to speak fiercely during his visit on their behalf. Help him understand how alone and frightened they must feel."

Anne Barret Doyle, co-director of Bishop Accountability, said in a statement that, "An untold number of child sex abuse victims in East Timor are likely afraid to report their suffering, as they watch powerful predators bask in public affirmation despite the serious abuse allegations against them".

"It is a grim situation for

victims, but Pope Francis could change it. He is revered in East Timor. If he explicitly condemns Belo and praises the bravery of their victims, his words could have an enormous positive impact," she said.

East Timor's last papal visit took place when Pope John Paul came in 1989, prior to the country's independence. The country declared independence in 1975, but it was not recognised until 2002.

The Pope acknowledged the violence of East Timor's recent past as it fought to obtain independence from Indonesian occupation, and he applauded the role the Catholic faith played in helping them to achieve that goal.

He also praised the country's commitment to pursuing full reconciliation with Indonesia despite the troubles of the recent past, an attitude he said, "found its first and purest source in the teachings of the Gospel".

East Timor is a majority Catholic nation, where roughly 97% of the local

population is Catholic and the Church enjoys broad support among political leaders, and collaboration with the national government.

The Pope touched on high levels of poverty, especially in rural areas, urging authorities to harness the country's natural resources, such as oil and gas, to promote social development. He called for proper training for political leaders, saying the Church's social doctrine ought to serve as "the foundation", as it promotes integral development and seeks to avoid "unacceptable inequalities" and care for those on society's margins.

Singapore

Concluding the tour, the Pope will make his first papal visit to Singapore, home to about 395,000 Catholics, from September 11 to September 13.

In Singapore, he will preside at Mass at the National Stadium for close to 50,000 Catholics, give a state address and have an inter-religious dialogue with young people from different religions, among other engagements such as meeting Singapore's leaders.

It marks the end of a hectic tour that has focussed on a disparate number of issues, including the joyful, life-affirming, inspirational and gravely serious.



Pope Francis and President of Timor-Leste José Ramos Horta share a moment during a welcome ceremony at the presidential palace in Dili, Timor-Leste, September 9, 2024. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.



Pope Francis rides around Sir John Guise Stadium in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, at the beginning of a meeting with some 10,000 young people September 9, 2024. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.

The Irish Catholic

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Out&About

100 years of Catholic Faith



DOWN: Archbishop Eamon Martin is pictured outside Drumnavaddy Church, surrounded by the congregation who attended the Centenary Mass of Thanksgiving on Sunday, August 18.



ITALY: The Irish group attending The 2024 international conference of Equipes Notre Dame (Teams of Our Lady). The conference took place between July 15-20 in Turin.



KERRY: A wedding anniversary Mass was celebrated on August 24 in St Agatha's Church, Glenflesk for all married couples from the parish celebrating significant anniversaries. The Mass was celebrated by Fr Jim Linehan PP, who presented each couple with a wooden cross. Celebrations continued after Mass in Spillane's Bar where a special cake and refreshments were enjoyed.

IN SHORT

Drumnavaddy church celebrates centenary

The Church of Our Lady, Queen of Peace, Drumnavaddy, Co. Down celebrated its centenary last month. To commemorate the anniversary, Mass was said on August 18 by Archbishop Eamon Martin.

Celebrating the Mass with the archbishop were Fr Andrew McMahon PP of Seapatrick and his immediate predecessor, Canon Liam Stevenson, now PP of Lurgan. Parish deacon, Rev. Michael Rooney assisted at the altar.

The current church, built in 1991 replaced a chapel, which was originally a dwelling house donated to Seapatrick Parish in 1924. Mass was first celebrated in the local on August 17, 1924.

That Mass was the last of three events arranged to mark the anniversary. On August 15 a large congregation had gathered to celebrate the Feast day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On August 16, the congregation members

and local people from other denominations came together to share memories and stories about Drumnavaddy. After the event, the present enjoyed socialising and refreshments.

New clerical appointments for the Diocese of Dromore

Apostolic Administrator of Dromore Diocese, Archbishop Eamon Martin has announced clergy changes for the diocese to take effect from the weekend of September 29-30.

- Very Rev Canon Liam Stevenson to retire as Parish Priest of St Peter's and St Paul's Parishes, Lurgan and as Vicar Forane (VF) of the St Ronan's Pastoral Area.

- Very Rev Feidhlimidh Magennis to conclude his period of Administration at the Parish of Magheralin while continuing his role as Parish Priest of St Colman's Parish, Dromore and his teaching and administrative role in St Mary's University College, Belfast.

- Very Rev Brian Fitzpatrick PP of the parishes of Moyraverty and Seagoe to be Vicar

Forane, St Ronan's Pastoral Area.

- Very Rev Colum Murphy CC Moyraverty and Seagoe Parishes to be Parish Priest of St Peter's and St Paul's Parishes, Lurgan.

- Rev Shajan Panachickal Michael, CC Magheralin to be CC in the Parishes of Moyraverty and Seagoe.

- Rev Maciej Zacharek CC St Peter's and St Paul's Parishes, Lurgan to become Parish Priest of Magheralin.

- Rev Kingsley Idoghor SMMM, on loan from the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy Congregation to be CC in St Peter's and St Paul's Parishes, Lurgan.

- Rev Francesco Campiello, newly ordained, to return to the Archdiocese of Armagh after his period as a Deacon in Newry Cathedral and Saval Parishes.

The olympics for couples in Turin

The international conference of Equipes Notre Dame (Teams of Our Lady) 2024 happened

in Turin, Italy last July. With over 80 countries, almost 8000 couples and 400 chaplains (mostly priests) gathering in the Inalpi Arena. The Irish delegation was composed by eight couples and two chaplains.

Teams of Our Lady is an international movement in the Catholic Church designed to enrich marriage spirituality and make good marriages better. The event, was like an 'Olympics for couples'. It began with a parade of national flags and with full bodied singing of the anthem and the sporting of national colours.

The week-long event had tours to the home places of the saints of Turin, musical drama, Eucharistic celebration, small group meetings between international couples and picnic lunches shared with men and women, diverse in culture and language but united in heart.

"The Irish pilgrims returned home with a renewed love for their Movement, Teams of Our Lady and with the hope of joining the next International Gathering in six years' time", the Irish delegation said in a statement.

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie

Events deadline is a week in
advance of publication



MONAGHAN: Fr Donal Byrne O Carm presenting Fr Tom Quigley with a first class relic of St Therese of Lisieux for the parish of Aughnamullen West (Bawn and Latton), after Mass in St Patrick's Church, Bawn. Bishop of Clogher Larry Duffy presided at the Mass and the congregation received individual blessings afterwards.



PORTUGAL: Pilgrims from Belfast visited Fatima and other Portuguese sites, led by Fr Patrick Devlin with Marian Pilgrimages guide. They also visited Santarém, where they prayed in front of the Eucharistic miracle that dates back to the 13th century.



MAYO: Fr Joseph Gavigan and altar server Róisín Reilly at the St Patrick Church, Glann, Kilkelly which celebrated its bicentenary on August 3.



KILDARE: Mass was celebrated on August 15 in thanksgiving for the restoration of the St Patrick's church Johnstownbridge. Back row left to right Ola Bryla, Ben O'Connor, Antos Bryla Bishop Dennis Nulty, Ailbhe Kelly, Danny Finn Baker. Front row left to right Beth Mooney Caroline Mc Nally, Fr Sean Maher and Donnacha Mooney.



MAYO: Recently a group of young people from the Dioceses of Galway and Clonfert took on the challenge of climbing Croagh Patrick. It was a day filled with faith, friendship, and fun.



US: An outdoor Mass attended by 8,500 people was celebrated in the morning of August 18, the last day of the Irish festival in the US 'Milwaukee Irish Festival 2024'. The festival attracted over 150,000 over the weekend, many of whom are of Irish descent and connection. L/R US Deacon Brent Enwright, Fr Frank MacBrady SJ, who was Chief Celebrant, Fr Michael Maher SJ and Deacon Leonard Cleary (Diocese of Cloyne, Ireland).



DOWN: Drumnavaddy Church sacristan, Mrs Rosaleen Johnston, helps Archbishop Martin cut the Centenary cake with Fr Andrew McMahon PP during the centenary celebration on August 18.

CAVAN

Eucharistic adoration takes place daily in St Clare's Chapel from 11am to 7pm. New people are welcome to a moment of prayer and devotion. To arrange your time, contact Liam on 087 235 8440.

CORK

Alpha Ireland welcomes all to participate in the ten-week experience of exploring the meaning of life and how God fits into our lives today in Clonakilty. The programme starts on September 18 from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. Alpha is free. For more info contact 087 483 4039 or alphaclonakilty@gmail.com.

DOWN

Confession at St Patrick's Church happens on Mondays from 6.45pm to 7.30pm, on Fridays from 3pm to 4pm, and on Saturdays from 12noon to 1pm.

DUBLIN

St Patrick's Church Ringsend are holding their annual Mass for the anointing of the sick on Sunday, September 15 at 3.00 pm. Refreshments will be available after Mass.

GALWAY

Poor Clares Galway are organising a Youth Pilgrimage to the Poor Clares Monastery in preparation for the Jubilee Year, 2025. The pilgrimage will be on September 14. It will begin at the Galway Franciscan Abbey at 1.45pm and will be guided by Friars Jacopo and Ronan. It will be a day of prayer and friendship. Confessions will be available. For more information contact eventspoorclaresgalway@gmail.com.

Poor Clares Galway Monastic Experience Day for women 18-35, will take place from 10am to 5pm on Saturday, September 21. This is an opportunity to explore and experience Poor Clare life and spirituality. Contact: vocations@poorclares.ie to book a place.

KILDARE

Parish Cell Community in Leixlip Parish are hosting

the 'Parish Cells National Seminar' on September 27 to 28. This seminar is open to all and is a good way for people to explore the Parish Cell System of Evangelisation and to hear the impact of parish cells on individuals and parishes. Further information is available on parishcellsireland.ie

LEITRIM

Kilmore Diocesan PTAA celebrations to mark 125 years of the founding of the association. Mass and presentation of pins in St Mary's Church Carrigallen on Sunday, September 15 at 2pm followed by Dinner in the Kilbracken Arms. Members due 10 year, Silver, Gold or Diamond pins please contact the Secretary Rosaleen 087 245 0692 on or before September 1.

LOUTH

Our Lady of Peace Pastoral Area and Divine Renovation are organising An Afternoon of Prayer and Reflection on: The Community of the Trinity at the St Mary's Church Knockbridge, A91 EV56 on September 21, from 3pm to 6pm, followed by light refreshments and Mass at 7.30pm. Speakers are Helen Stewart, Lorraine Quigley and Fr Gerry Campbell.

MONAGHAN

Mary Mother of Mercy, Inniskeen's Eucharistic Adoration happens each week on Tuesdays from 7pm-9pm, Wednesday from 10.30am-9pm and Thursday from 7pm-9pm. All welcome to join in adoration.

WATERFORD

Charismatic Day of Prayer happens on Sunday, September 29 in the Edmund Rice Chapel. from 10.30am to 5.30pm. The speaker is Fr Pat Collins and Mass celebrated by Bishop Phonsie Cullinan. Contact Word of God Outreach at 086 859 0394.

WESTMEATH

Legion of Mary's Our Lady Mother of Perpetual Succor Praesidium happens on Mondays at 6pm at the parish meeting room on St Mary Catholic Church, Athlone. More information contact 087 782 9434 or concilium@legion-of-mary.ie.

Almost 1,500 from Dublin make their way to Lourdes



Brandon Scott

The Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes departed Dublin Airport on five chartered aircraft last Thursday, with 97 sick pilgrims from parishes all over the archdiocese travelling to Our Lady's shrine in Lourdes.

Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell, led the five-day pilgrimage. Bishop Paul Dempsey, who was appointed an auxiliary bishop of Dublin earlier this year, also accompanied on his first trip to Lourdes with the Dublin Pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage group included 97 sick pilgrims, 14 doctors, 38 nurses, 550 helpers, 30 priests and two deacons. The 550 helpers included 250 young people, with 135 of those being sixth year students from 29 secondary schools around the archdiocese. In total, 1,400 pilgrims travelled.

In anticipation of the pilgrimage, Archbishop Farrell said he was "looking forward to leading the annual Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes again this year. I thank all those who are joining in the pilgrimage who will devote themselves to the care of the sick and all those who are united with us in prayer throughout the Archdiocese. I also welcome all the parish groups who have travelled to Lourdes at this time".

Opportunity

Many of the sick pilgrims who travelled would not have the opportunity to visit Lourdes if it had not been for the fantastic medical backup, care and assistance that the many volunteers offer.

The Pilgrimage Director, Fr Martin Noone, on this point said: "It was wonderful to see the sick pilgrims returning last year if in smaller numbers. We are hoping that over the next few years the numbers will rise again to pre-Covid numbers of more than 150 sick pilgrims".

He also noted out that despite rising costs of air travel and hotels accom-

modation, the numbers of general pilgrims was very strong this year with an extra 200 bookings over last year's figures.

Fr Noone also noted out that a great debt of gratitude must go to the many parishes across the diocese who support the pilgrimage financially and by their prayers in what is known as the Associate Membership. "It is because of these parishioners' generosity, that we are able to part subsidise the fares of sick pilgrims who otherwise would not be able to travel," he said.

"I have always had around me a wonderful committee, a Helpers Council and incredibly committed volunteers who have made my job so easy and always 'a labour of love' for Our Blessed Lady"

Fr Noone is stepping down from his role as Pilgrimage Director after 13 pilgrimages at the helm and more than 30 years of involvement with the Pilgrimage in a number of different roles. But he hopes to continue to travel into the future.

He said: "While there is a lot of work involved in organising the pilgrimage, I have always had around me a wonderful committee, a Helpers Council and incredibly committed volunteers who have made my job so easy and always 'a labour of love' for Our Blessed Lady, St Bernadette and for the sick pilgrims".

The opening Mass of the pilgrimage was celebrated by Archbishop Farrell on Friday, September 6, at the Grotto in Lourdes. This was followed by a full programme of liturgies and other events over the five days of the pilgrimage, supported by three Pilgrimage Music Groups. The closing Mass of the Pilgrimage was celebrated on the deferred feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Sunday, September 8.



Student helpers travelling to Lourdes from Ardscoil Ris, Loreto Abbey in Dalkey and Colaiste Chill Mhantain in Wicklow town. Photos: John McElroy.



Pilgrim Martina Perry, from Maynooth with student helper Charlotte Coyle from Loreto Abbey in Dalkey.



Pilgrim Rosemary Rafter from Drimnagh with student helper Keith Perocho from De La Salle College in Churchtown at Dublin Airport for the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.



Pilgrim Ada Dwan with Archbishop Dermot Farrell and Fr Robert Smyth.



Nurses travelling on the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes Helen Dunne Barron, Lisa Geoghan, Geraldine O' Grady, Breda Delaney, Frances Finn, Breda Minch, Claire Best, Fiona Concannon and Peter Butler.



Pilgrim Carmel Power from Clondalkin chatting with teacher Anne Doyle from Ardscoil Ris who is travelling with her students on the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.



Pilgrim Jimmy Lyons with Dr Brendan Cuddihy at Dublin Airport morning for the departure of the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.



Nurses from the Mater Private hospital Stephanie Sands and Siobhan Murray.



Greg Pepper, John Patrick Doherty, Denis Barror, Frankie McSwiney and Dave Furlong who helped check in pilgrims at Dublin Airport for the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.



Pilgrims Margaret Molone and her niece Margaret Duffy.

Legionaries gather to fan the spark of faith



Brandon Scott

Hundreds of young legionaries gathered at De Montfort House in Dublin, to take part in the annual Legion of Mary Youth Conference on August 24.

Attendees were treated to talks, workshops and given the opportunity to socialise with members of different praesidia from all around the country. Speakers touched

upon the significance of the Legion's works and how membership continues to enrich the spiritual lives of millions around the globe.

Speakers on the day included Fr Vincent Stapleton of Thurles Parish in Tipperary, Ruth O'Connell who holds a master's in art history and Luke McCann, a member of the Legion of Mary in Belfast.

The schedule included a detailed tour of Frank Duff's house, a visit to the oratories of the Morning Star and Regina Coeli hostels, Mass and Eucharistic Adoration and fellowship with legionaries, many of whom were meeting up with each other for the first time since last year's conference.



Luke McCann of the Belfast Legion speaks at the conference. Pictures: Aine Blake.



Fr Vincent Stapleton speaks during the conference.



A young legionary giving a personal testimony at the event.



Legionaries who attended the event on August 24.



Hundreds of legionaries gathered at De Montfort House.



Legionaries in the chapel in De Montfort House preparing for prayer and Mass.

How the Catholic faith has helped East Timor forgive



Hannah Brockhaus

Pope Francis landed in Dili, the capital city of East Timor, on Monday last in the third stop on a September 2–13 trip to four countries in Southeast Asia and Oceania.

One of the world's newest nations — it became a sovereign state in 2002 — the majority-Catholic country is on a journey of reconciliation after a century of colonisation, a decades-long invasion by neighbouring Indonesia, and brutal internal violence.

"During the struggle for independence, if it were not for the [Catholic] Church sheltering people, saving lives, speaking out, I don't know whether we would be free today," East Timor's President José Ramos-Horta told EWTN *'News In Depth'* during an interview in Dili last month.

A co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 for his efforts to promote justice and peace in East Timor, also referred to as Timor-Leste, President Ramos-Horta conveyed a pride in the country's Catholic identity.

"The role of the Church is very important," the politician said. "The Church provided us [with] two things. One, identity. The Catholic faith, embraced by 96% of the people, makes Timor ... one of the most homogeneous countries in the world in terms of religion. Second, it is the Catholic Church that made Tetum, which was a minority language in the past ... a national language."

History

Missionaries first brought the Catholic faith to the island of Timor, off the northern coast of Australia, in 1515.

The Portuguese settled there five years later, with the Spanish arriving shortly afterward. Nearly a century later, the Dutch took possession of the island's western portion. After a fight between the Dutch and the Portuguese, Portuguese sovereignty over the eastern part of the island (now East Timor) was established in the latter half of the 19th century.

The Portuguese colonisation of East Timor province



East Timorese children walk in procession during Palm Sunday Mass in Dili, East Timor. Photo: CNS/Beawiharta, Reuters.

continued until 1975, when a major political party gained control of the territory and declared independence. But at the end of the same year, Indonesian forces invaded and claimed the province to be part of Indonesia.

“Indonesia rescinded its annexation of the territory, but the transition was marred by violence from anti-independence militants”

Between 100,000 and 200,000 people died over the next two decades, whether from resisting the Indonesian occupation or from famine and disease.

Under growing international pressure, the Indonesian government held a referendum in 1999 to determine East Timor's future. When voters overwhelmingly supported independence, Indonesia rescinded its annexation of the territory, but the transition was marred by violence from anti-

independence militants who killed hundreds of civilians.

After years of difficult struggle, in 2002, the country's first president was elected and East Timor achieved full status as a sovereign state.

Reconciliation

As the new nation continues to develop economically and confront its high rates of poverty and malnourishment among children, the country's first cardinal credits faith with helping the Timorese forgive Indonesia — and each other — for decades of violence.

"Though we are saying that with our neighbouring Indonesia we were able to reconcile, we also can say that the work of reconciliation is not finished yet," Cardinal Virgílio do Carmo da Silva told EWTN *News* in an interview in Dili in August. "You have to work inside the country too." The cardinal said after 22 years as an independent nation, the Timorese people have not entirely forgotten the harm and death they have experienced, but "the fruit of reconciliation that [has been achieved] has contributed to that peaceful, joyful relationship that we are now enjoying with Indonesia".

President Ramos-Horta called reconciliation among Timorese people one of the country's "greatest achievements" alongside reconciliation with Indonesia. "And the Indonesian side showed their utter, mature statesmanship and accepted the normalisation of relations with us today."

“We need to affirm, as Catholics, how to be builders of peace, to continue to build [up] love, pardon, forgiveness, which still we have to work on”

"There are some pains," Cardinal Carmo da Silva said. "But I think we are also seeing [that] reconciling does not mean there is no justice. There is always room for justice."

"We need to affirm, as Catholics, how to be builders of peace, to continue to build [up] love, pardon, forgiveness, which still we have to

work on."

Both President Ramos-Horta and Cardinal Carmo da Silva credit the 1998 visit of Pope John Paul II to East Timor for having reinforced the faith of the Timorese people and for putting the country on the map.

"It was the faith in God and the hope generated by their faith that yes, things will change and things changed, beginning with the visit [of Pope John Paul II]," President Ramos-Horta said.

Diplomacy

Cardinal Carmo da Silva said the Pope's 1998 visit had a huge impact: "The message [he gave] is still echoing in the mind, in the heart, of many Timorese — that you are the salt and the light of the world. In spite of all these difficulties you are facing, be firm in your faith".

When John Paul II visited East Timor, it was still under Indonesian control. During an earlier part of the trip, he had kissed the ground in Indonesia's capital of Jakarta, as he would do every time he visited a new country.

"It was a fascinating diplomatic exercise by the Holy See," President Ramos-Horta explained. "He had

already kissed the ground in Jakarta, so he shouldn't kiss the ground in Timor-Leste."

He explained that kissing the ground in East Timor would have infuriated the Indonesians, but to do nothing would have been an implicit recognition of Indonesia's annexation of the country.

“His mere presence, if he doesn't say a word, would already be very important”

So a pillow with a cross was placed on the ground and John Paul II kissed the cross. "That was genius, diplomatic genius," the East Timor president said. He said Pope Francis' visit will also be important for the country.

During one and a half days in Dili, Pope Francis will meet with government officials, local Catholics, priests, young adults, and children with disabilities.

"His mere presence, if he doesn't say a word, would already be very important," President Ramos-Horta said.



World Report

IN BRIEF

US college ministry passes out holy water on campus

For three years, members of Detroit Catholic Campus Ministry have kicked off the academic year at local colleges and universities by offering new students a small, simple bottle of holy water and a prayer.

The gesture attracts students to its table at local college campus involvement fairs, serving as an invitation for new students not only to join in fellowship with Catholics on campus but also to take a blessing with them wherever they live during their first year at college.

Detroit Catholic Campus Ministry serves students at Wayne State University, the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and surrounding campuses, including Henry Ford College and the College for Creative Studies.

Mexico making progress in translating Bible into Indigenous languages

In September — the month the Catholic Church especially dedicates to the Bible — Mexico, a country with rich linguistic diversity, stands out for its efforts to translate the holy Scriptures into various Indigenous languages.

According to official data, Mexico has 69 national languages - 68 Indigenous and Spanish - which places it "among the top 10 nations with the most native languages and occupies second place with

this characteristic in Latin America after Brazil".

Cardinal Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel, the bishop emeritus of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas state, has led the Mexican bishops' initiatives to bring the word of God to Indigenous communities. In an interview with *ACI Prensa*, CNA's Spanish-language news partner, the cardinal stated that the Bibles that have been translated are mainly found in communities in the Chiapas highlands.

African Catholics: Synodality is also a call to Christian unity

As Rome prepares for the denouement of Pope Francis's long-running Synod of Bishops on Synodality next month, Catholics and other Christian leaders in Africa are exploring the possible implications of the process for closer ties among the various Christian communities on the continent. During a recent exchange known as the 'African Palaver Conversation Series', which concluded September 6, African Catholics and leaders from other Christian denominations highlighted the importance of cross-denominational cooperation.

"Christians, regardless of denomination, have a common mandate," said Professor Mary Getui, a member of the Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network (Pactpan), which sponsored the event, and a Seventh-day Adventist scholar.

By "common mandate," Professor Getui was referencing Christ's call to make disciples of all nations.

"Synodality is about more than structures; it's about relationships," she said, and noted that ecumenism is seen in action "when people come together across denominations".

Catholic university investigates 'potential hate crimes'

The Georgetown University Police Department is investigating two "potential hate crimes" after a processional crucifix was found damaged inside the university's chapel and a statue of the Blessed Mother was found to be displaced and on the ground.

"We are currently investigating them as potential hate crimes," Vice President for Mission and Ministry Fr Mark Bosco and Associate Vice President of Public Safety Jay Gruber wrote in a jointly signed letter sent out to Georgetown staff and students.

"Anti-Catholic acts and desecration of religious symbols are deeply concerning, hurtful, and offensive," the letter read. "Acts of vandalism, especially of sacred spaces, have no place in our campus community."

New Maori Queen in New Zealand is Catholic

The Maori people, the Indigenous population of mainland New Zealand, have crowned a new queen after the death of their king — and she's Catholic.

King Tuheitia Potatau Te Wherowhero VII died on August 30 at the age of 69. His death came days after his 18th anniversary as king of the Kingitanga, also known as the Maori King Movement, founded in 1858 to unite the Maori under one sovereign. It is one of the longest-running political organisations in New Zealand.

The late king's youngest daughter, Nga Wai hono i te po, was named his successor at the age of 27. She made her first appearance as queen on September 5 and took her place on the throne near her father's coffin.

Queen Nga Wai hono i te po is the second Maori queen. The first was her grandmother Queen Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangi-kaahu.

According to *CathNews New Zealand*, it was Queen Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangi-kaahu who asked that her granddaughter be baptised by the late Auxiliary Bishop Max Takuira Matthew Mariu of Hamilton, the first Maori



The new Maori Queen Kuini Nga wai hono i te po — who is Catholic — leaves the waka (canoe) following her father, Maori king Tuheitia Pootatau Te Wherowhero VII, on September 5, 2024, in Hamilton, New Zealand. Photo: Phil Walter/Getty Images

Catholic bishop.

The late queen's intention behind having her granddaughter baptised was not only to unite Maori tribes near the Waikato and Whanganui rivers but also to be a

unification of faiths, bridging the Kingitanga movement and the Catholic Church.

The new queen's name, Ngawai Hono ki Parakino, which translates to "Joining of the Rivers" in Maori, was

inspired by the symbolism of her baptism.

Queen Ngawai Hono ki Parakino becomes the eighth Maori monarch and continues the direct lineage from the first Maori king.

Iraqi Christians are leaving their homeland once again

The exodus of Iraqi Christians from their ancestral homeland is once again making headlines. Many families are fleeing the country, seeking refuge in neighbouring nations as a temporary stopover before heading to distant destinations such as Australia.

Some believe this new wave of emigration began in late 2023 following a tragic fire in Bakhdida in northern Iraq. In its aftermath, despair and frustration permeated the Christian community. However, the exodus has now become alarming, affecting even

Christians residing in the relatively secure Kurdistan Region.

The reasons behind this mass departure extend beyond the pursuit of secure job opportunities abroad that guarantee a decent living. Within Iraq, Christians grapple with numerous crises, including delayed salaries, power outages, water scarcity, and other challenges. Some are seeking citizenship elsewhere to secure a better future for their children, while others aim to reunite with extended family members abroad rather than

remain isolated in their homeland.

In an interview with *ACI Mena*, CNA's Arabic-language news partner, civil activist Basma Azuz explained the rationale behind this tragic decision.

"Emigration reflects a deep conflict between one's identity and homeland versus the search for security and rights. It's not always a negative phenomenon or an escape; it may be the only way to secure a better future. This phenomenon is a consecrated human right," she said.

British bishop calls for respect for life before parliament debate

A Catholic bishop in England is warning that the legalisation of assisted suicide "undermines the sanctity and dignity of human life." Britain's Parliament returned this week, and the 'Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults Bill' — which seeks to legalise assisted suicide — will be discussed in the

House of Lords.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide are illegal under English, Welsh, and Northern Irish law and is considered manslaughter or murder. In Scotland, there is no specific legislation on the particular issue, but people can be prosecuted for murder if they are involved.

Bishop John Sherrington, Lead Bishop for Life Issues for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, is encouraging Catholics to unite in prayer and compassionate action as Parliament prepares to renew the debate around assisted suicide.

"I wish to reaffirm that the Catholic Church has always

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



Edited by Brandon Scott
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Sisterly duties



Sr Martha Mary Carpenter, principal at St Peter Indian Mission Catholic School on the Gila River Indian Reservation in Arizona, US, gathers students for morning prayer outside St Peter Church on the school campus September 4, 2024. Photo: OSV.

Devastating attack on church in France renews concerns over security in places of worship

The historic Church of the Immaculate Conception in Saint-Omer, in the Pas-de-Calais department of northern France, was ravaged by arson on the night of September 2.

The suspect, a multi-recidivist who has attempted to set fire to numerous places of worship in the past, was apprehended a few hours after the blaze was brought under control.

According to local authorities, the fire started at around 4am. It then spread to the side and central aisles, then to the roof and bell tower, which rapidly collapsed. The fire was contained by 7:15am thanks to the efforts of 120 firefighters.

While no injuries were reported, some 60 local residents living near the building were evacuated as a precaution.

The initial investigation revealed that a 39-year-old individual allegedly broke into the premises, smashing a stained-glass window. Arrested and taken into police custody on the evening of September 2, the suspect, identified as Joël Vigoureux, is said to have been convicted on numerous occasions of similar acts of destruction by fire in recent years.

While the images released by the media showed only the metal skeleton of the church steeple and the exact extent of the damage has yet to be determined, the intervention of the parish priest, Fr Sébastien Roussel, enabled the rescue of the Blessed Sacrament and some 20 other religious artifacts, including the reliquary bust of St Corneille.

"With the authorisation and under the supervision of the firefighters, I was able

to enter the church when the fire was under control to take what is most important, namely the ciborium in the tabernacle at first, then several statues and elements of the liturgical furniture," he told CNA.

In another interview, Roussel added that "the stained-glass windows, particularly the beautiful ones in the choir, dedicated to Mary, are not too damaged".

Of neo-Gothic inspiration, the church was completed in 1859 and was completely renovated by the municipality in 2018 at a cost of 5 million euros.

Quoted in Le Figaro, the president of the Hauts de France region, Xavier Bertrand, assured that his administration "will be at the side of the town of Saint-Omer for the reconstruction, to see this heritage brought back to life".

The French outlet also reported that a meeting was held Tuesday at the town hall and attended by the architect who coordinated the renovation and prefectural officials to rapidly envisage the reconstruction, which is nevertheless expected to take several years.

On July 12, the Observatoire du Patrimoine Religieux, an association working to preserve and promote France's religious heritage, told AFP that 27 churches had been burnt down in 2023 and 12 in the first six months of 2024. Attacks on religious monuments in recent years account for approximately 90% of the 1,000 or so anti-Christian acts recorded annually by the country's Ministry of Interior.

Vatican roundup

Vatican bank takes hard line with its version of Romeo and Juliet

● "To safeguard marriage, in fact, means to safeguard an entire family, it means to save all the relationships generated by marriage: the love between spouses, between parents and children, between grandparents and grandchildren," Pope Francis said in May. In a grand irony, that principle seemingly applies everywhere except the Pope's own bank, where getting married, it turns out, is now a fireable offense.

In a recent note to the media, the Institute for the Works of Religion, popularly known as the 'Vatican bank', defended a new regulation which stipulates that if two employees decide to marry, their work contracts will expire thirty days from the wedding unless one of the two decides to resign beforehand.

It's not a hypothetical matter, as a young couple, whose names have not been made public but who have dubbed in the media as the bank's 'Romeo and Juliet', are currently on the clock for being let go after getting married in a Roman parish August 31. Their appeal to the bank's directors has been turned down, leaving a direct papal intervention as the only way for the couple to keep their jobs.

Vatican representative to Cameroon calls on separatists to allow schools to function

● As Cameroon prepares for the start of the 2024/2025 academic year on September 9, the Vatican representative to the country has made a heartfelt appeal for children to be allowed to exercise their right to education. Separatists fighting for the independence of Cameroon's two English-speaking regions have made school boycotts a key part of their struggle.

For the upcoming academic year, they have declared a two-week lockdown from September 9 to September 23, aiming to disrupt the school year.

The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Jose Avelino Bettencourt, argues that such actions deprive children of their fundamental right to education.

Italian based priest's exit for wife, renews celibacy debate

● A Slovakian priest who's spent the last twenty years in Italy has announced that he's leaving the priesthood in order to marry a woman with whom he said he's "madly" in love, and with whom he's expecting a child who's been diagnosed with a serious heart condition.

The decision, which was announced Sunday by Bishop Marco Brunetti of the northern Italian diocese of Alba, who praised the "great transparency and sense of responsibility" of 44-year-old Fr Tomas Hlavaty, who will now be formally removed from the priesthood and returned to the lay state.

The case has renewed debate over priestly celibacy, in part because, by all accounts, Fr Hlavaty was a popular pastor whose departure has been publicly lamented by Catholics in the six small towns he served, including the mayor of one of those communities. In an interview with La Repubblica, Italy's most widely read daily newspaper, Fr Hlavaty described the circumstances that led to his decision.

Vatican again calls for a moratorium on killer robots

● A representative of Pope Francis recently reaffirmed the Vatican's opposition to lethal autonomous weapons systems, known popularly as 'killer robots', with the Vatican stressing that "no machine should ever choose to take the life of a human being".

Archbishop Ettore Balestrero, the Holy See's permanent observer to the United Nations in Geneva since 2023, spoke at a United Nations forum in Geneva, the Second Session of the 2024 Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

Archbishop Balestrero strongly urged countries to consider the ethical implications of new weapons and lamented the fact that new and more sophisticated armaments are often tested on real battlefields.

Venezuelan dictator decrees October 1 to be start of Christmas season

"This year, in homage and gratitude to you, I am going to decree that the Christmas season [begins] on October 1," declared Nicolás Maduro, leader of the ruling socialist regime in Venezuela, September 2 on national television.

"For everyone, Christmas has arrived with peace, happiness, and security,"

Maduro added. According to the Spanish newspaper El Mundo, this is not the first time the socialist regime has done this, as in 2019, 2020, and 2021 it also decreed the "advance" of the Christmas season.

Maduro's announcement came just hours after the Venezuelan justice system issued an arrest warrant for

Edmundo González Urrutia, who won the July 28 presidential elections by a wide margin, according to vote tallies published by the opposition. However, the National Electoral Council, controlled by the governing socialist party, declared Maduro the winner.



Letter from Rome

A glimpse of the turbulent side of Catholic-Orthodox relations



John L. Allen

If ever proof were needed of Pope Francis's indefatigable commitment to outreach, the fact that today he's travelled to Vanimo in Papua New Guinea, the most remote corner of a country which already represents the world's peripheries, to meet with people utterly unaccustomed to having world leaders come calling, surely delivers it. This is a Pope, in other words, literally willing to go the extra mile for an outstretched hand.

From another part of the world, however, recent days also have offered the Pontiff a reminder of a hard truth about such outreach, which is that sometimes when you extend your hand, the other party is more inclined to slap it away than to grasp it.

Banning

The point arises in Ukraine, after Pope Francis recently spoke out against a new law banning Moscow-aligned religious organisations, which is clearly targeted at what remains of the Russian Orthodox Church in the country. Notably, the Pope risked the ire of his own flock, which had backed the new law, in order to voice solidarity with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which traditionally has been part of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Under the heading of no good deed goes unpunished, a leading hierarchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church delivered an emphatic "thanks, but no thanks" in reply, warning that any movement towards closer ties with the Vatican would lead his flock by a short path into what he called — obviously



Pope Francis poses for a photo with members of the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches at the Vatican January 26, 2024. Photo: CNS photo/Vatican Media

not one to pull his punches — "a stinking spiritual swamp".

“Zelensky signed the new law providing any religious body in the country with links to Moscow 90 days to sever them, or risk being banned”

In the end, Ukraine seems ever more like a “high risk, low reward” scenario for Pope Francis: He risks alienation among the country's Catholics, many of whom regard him as already too inclined to placate their invaders, as well as strained relations with a government under President Volodymyr Zelensky trying to proclaim the country's “spiritual independence”, without much to show for it so far in terms of reciproc-

ity on the Orthodox side.

The current dynamics began in late August, when Zelensky signed the new law providing any religious body in the country with links to Moscow 90 days to sever them, or risk being banned.

(As a footnote, it's not clear precisely what the law actually portends, since the UOC argues that it declared full independence from Moscow in May 2022 and thus should be exempt from any ban. The declaration stopped short of autocephaly, but it's unclear if that ecclesiastical distinction will matter in Ukrainian courts.)

Sovereignty

In any event, Zelensky hailed the law as a defence of national sovereignty. “This is a law that protects Ukrainian Orthodoxy from dependence on Moscow and guarantees the dignity of the shrines of our Ukrainian people,” Zelensky said at the

signing ceremony, staged on the eve of Ukraine's August 23 Independence Day.

“Please, let no Christian church be abolished directly or indirectly. Churches are not to be touched!”

The measure has drawn international criticism as a restriction on religious freedom and an unjustified form of collective punishment for believers who simply want to maintain the spiritual traditions of their ancestors, without posing any threat to national security.

Among the voices raising such concerns was Pope Francis, who spoke out in his August 25 Sunday Angelus address. “Let those who want to pray be allowed to pray in what they consider their church,” Pope Francis said at the time. “Please, let no Christian church be abolished directly or indirectly. Churches are not to be touched!”

If he was expecting gratitude from the traditionally Moscow-aligned Orthodox in Ukraine, that's not exactly what followed. On the day the new law took effect, Metropolitan Luke

Kovalenko of Zaporizhzhia, the city in southeastern Ukraine whose nuclear power plant is currently under Russian occupation, held a diocesan assembly to discuss their response.

Widely considered an important, hardline force in Orthodox affairs, Metropolitan Kovalenko laid out four options: Joining another branch of Orthodoxy in Ukraine, affiliating with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople instead of Moscow, privately transferring parishes and communities to other jurisdictions, and proclaiming full autocephaly.

Rejected

In the end, Metropolitan Kovalenko rejected all four. He recommended instead that his church go underground if the new law is actually enforced, even recommending that priests begin hiding their vestments and sacred vessels to prepare for life in the catacombs. Vis-à-vis the Pope, most telling were Metropolitan Kovalenko's reasons for rejecting any link-age with Constantinople.

Here's what he said, according to a summary provided by the press service of his diocese. “Next year Patriarch Bartholomew is going to make a ‘breakthrough’ in the matter

of ‘restoring unity’ with the Roman Catholic Church,” he said.

“In particular, the Phanariots [a disparaging term for followers of Constantinople] are publicly talking about the possibility of a common celebration of Easter with the Catholic world in the very near future. After which the restoration of Eucharistic and prayerful communion should follow.”

“Do we want to plunge into a new union, a stinking spiritual swamp, together with the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the future?”

“In light of this, our transition under Constantinople means only one thing: We will move further and further away from the Orthodox faith, following the Phanar's course towards unity with the Vatican,” the metropolitan said.

“By the way, with the Vatican, which every year more and more openly supports LGBT issues and other ‘values’ alien to Christianity,” he added. “Do we want to plunge into a new union, a stinking spiritual swamp, together with the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the future?”

“I think this question can safely be considered rhetorical,” Metropolitan Kovalenko concluded. To sum up, in the metropolitan's logic, Constantinople equals Rome, and Rome, especially under Francis, means heresy ... which is, needless to say, not exactly a prescription for détente. Granted, not everyone in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church likely feels the same way.

Nonetheless, Metropolitan Kovalenko's open contempt is a reminder that there's a hard core in the broader Russian Orthodox universe that simply will never accept any overtures from Rome, no matter how ardently a pope may propose them.

To put the point differently, this Ukrainian prelate has offered confirmation of an ineluctable truth about dialogue and reconciliation, one which an Argentine Pope, of all people, should be in a position to grasp: To wit, it always takes two to tango.

“Metropolitan Kovalenko's open contempt is a reminder that there's a hard core in the broader Russian Orthodox universe that simply will never accept any overtures from Rome, no matter how ardently a pope may propose them”

Letters

Letter of the week

Left with uncompromising ideologies...

Dear Editor, I find it disturbing that a Junior Cert school book presenting a course that aims at promoting inclusion, has had a cartoon and write-up depicting traditional Irish families as boring, wearing Aran jumpers, red heads, knowing nothing of the world outside their immediate surroundings or non-GAA sports, who eat bacon and cabbage every day. It sounds laughable.

After a storm of parental protest and media mockery this page was removed from the book. But how did it get

there in the first place? Was it okayed by the NCCA, Department of Education officials, and the book publisher? What other misinformation and disinformation does their programme contain? Could their attempt to write off 'natives' as unworthy of full parity-of-esteem, labelling us in effect as quaint curiosities to be sidelined in the new Ireland they are busy forging, be regarded as a form of hate-speech?

I think that a public inquiry ought to be set up to get to

the bottom of this, or are we to conclude that these unaccountable, faceless bureaucrats, who hate everything distinctive about us as a people are beyond reproach? The words come to mind: "To learn who is really ruling you, simply see who is never criticised".

It is equally disturbing that in a local national school a parent had to buy a new blazer for her son, because the school changed the crest from depicting a cross to a book and quill (feather). Wearing the

old one to school could insult non-Christians. Meanwhile in the girl's school, some wear headscarves as an expression of their religion, and nobody is bothered. Why is it that an emblem proclaiming the love of God is purged from a self-declared Catholic school? When we eliminate love, we are left with uncompromising ideologies, which inevitably clash, resulting in sectarianism and wars.

*Yours etc.,
Gearóid Duffy
Lee Road, Cork*

Using an opponents age against them

Dear Editor, For a party that has embraced political correctness with a vengeance, the Democrats don't seem shy about using their opponent's age against him. Surely this falls under the category of offensive 'ageism'. I suppose we shouldn't be surprised given the undignified way they ditched their incumbent president, on the same grounds. They obviously don't mind offending the 'grey' vote.

Still it's gratifying to learn that their multimillionaire (make that billionaire) supporter, Oprah Winfrey, is putting her fire-fighting talents at the service of her local community. The only problem is, as she lives in grand isolation (well away from the plebs) in a gated mansion, it may be too late. I'd throw the cat (onto a soft surface, of course) out the window and jump out after him, ASAP. Just in case Oprah doesn't get there.

*Yours etc.,
Eric Conway
Navan, Co. Meath.*



A change for the worse in the Irish moral climate

Dear Editor, To date over 40,000 little babies have been aborted from the island of Ireland.

These innocent babies could be future doctors, nurses, scientists, teachers, etc.

Grandparents are being deprived of their loving grandchildren.

Rather than concern ourselves with the new secular religion of climate change surely our worries should be about the change for the worse in the Irish moral climate.

The silence from the hierarchy is deafening indeed.

Surely, we could have one weekend holy Mass every

month to remember these babies and their unfortunate parents.

How about planting 100 white crosses in every parish church ground to remember their lost lives?

*Yours etc.,
Liam de Paor
Carrickane, Co. Cavan*

Give victims justice but defend the blameless

Dear Editor, It must be depressing for many, to have our Church portrayed again negatively in the media, but in the interest of understanding how we neglected the best interest of children, we should read the 'Scoping Inquiry into Historical Sexual Abuse in Day

and Boarding Schools Run by Religious Orders'. While a minority of children were sexually abused, the reality is with corporal punishment practiced in our schools up to 1982, many children were abused in some way. Today, child safeguarding procedures

are robust within our catholic schools and parishes and the men still active in ministry have nothing to answer for, but those in leadership roles do have to be proactive in responding to all the challenging questions that the public will want answered. They

need to ensure those abused are treated with respect and receive justice, while also defending our priests and religious who were blameless.

*Yours etc.,
Deacon Frank Browne,
Ballyroan Parish,
Rathfarnham, Dublin 14*

Freedom of Catholic schools being reduced

Our readers are likely, by now, to be familiar with the offensive, and some may say, racist, section in a Junior Certificate textbook that depicted a 'traditional' Irish family as a plastic Paddy-type trope in contrast to a multi-cultural uber-progressive family.

The publishers, EdCo – the Educational Company of Ireland – has apologised for this insulting caricature and committed to removing the section from its Junior Cycle Health and Wellbeing SPHE 1 textbook.

In a section entitled 'All Different, All Equal', an Aran-jumper wearing Irish family is described as eating bacon, cabbage and potatoes every day and not liking change or difference, while a mixed-race family is depicted as eating more varied foods and travelling internationally. The contrast can only be taken as portraying the 'traditional' family in a negative light, ironically, informing the student that all families are not equal. The traditional Irish family is something to be laughed at and avoided.

While the apology and removal of the offensive section is welcome, it does not resolve the underlying problems. Firstly, how was such offensive stereotyping allowed into a textbook in the first place given that stereotyping of any race or culture is supposedly off the agenda? Clearly, the publishers and the authors, were not able to recognise the prejudice and unconscious bias that they hold for anything 'traditionally' Irish. Yet, there were no gatekeepers at the publishers or the Department of Education that felt it necessary to say no.

Anyone that had the opportunity to read the draft Senior Cycle curriculum would be forgiven for not understanding exactly what was being proposed to be taught to students. The documentation is filled with vague language that gives parents little idea as to what their children will actually learn, and what exactly will be taught in schools. The focus on literacy and numeracy is minimal, while the focus is on (mal)forming the students' outlook on life.

Specific subjects are instrumentalised for a greater 'good'.

The SPHE Health and Wellbeing 1 publication by EdCo is a product of a similar process of curriculum development for the Junior Certificate. Under the guise of seemingly benign language, an ideology is being imposed on children and young people, unbeknownst to their parents. What is this ideology? One only needs to turn a few pages past the offending section of the textbook to encounter discussions about gender identity, and the adoption of language that is at odds with Catholic teaching as objective fact.

Children learn that recently created words such as 'cisgender', 'non-binary' are an accepted part of the English language, that sex 'is assigned at birth', and that everyone has a 'gender identity' that can be at odds with the sex one was 'assigned'. All this is treated as fact. This is being taught in schools. In Catholic schools. David Quinn, in his column this week highlights a textbook that dedicates five pages to discussing masturbation in a junior cycle textbook. Pupils learn "Even babies and young children know it feels good to touch their own genitals".

All this has been highlighted before. The WHO has previously issued guidance on comprehensive sexuality education that says the exact same thing but those that tried to highlight this were dismissed repeatedly for scaremongering. And now it is in our schools.

At the same time, the freedom of Catholic schools to teach through a Catholic lens is being reduced. The time allowed for religious education is reduced while 'SPHE' and 'Relationship & Sexuality Education' is now a requirement. The reshaping of the curriculum to 'integrate' an undefined 'ethic' across all subjects means that it is increasingly impossible for a parent to know with a reasonable degree of certainty what their child will be learning by way of morals, and even more difficult to 'opt out' when English or Maths is infused with subtle and not-so-subtle messaging.

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.

‘Religious Conversations’: Why do you go to Mass?



Eoin McCormack

Have you ever found yourself in the often-awkward position in work or in another social setting where you are somehow elected the spokesperson for all things Catholic? Over the next several weeks this column is exploring how we can better prepare for those uncomfortable conversations that many Catholics find themselves in today.

Last week's column explored the most fundamental issue secular-rationalist culture has with religion in the world today. The first line of our creed, "I believe in God." While a lot of non-believers may cite many 'surface-level' topics when discussing Catholicism such as the various scandals, research tells us that something much more philosophical lies underneath the culture. As Catholic numbers continue to decline in the census and the 'no-religion' bracket continues to rise, people are not just leaving Catholicism behind, they are leaving behind any understanding or relationship with the triune God. Belief in God is understood as an irrational concept from the past and therefore it is irrelevant. To see how we can respond to these critiques as Catholics, be sure to check out last week's article on www.irishcatholic.com.

This week I explore how we might respond in conversation to a query that largely comes from 'cradle' or lapsed Catholics who very often have received a full sacramental initiation but have never experienced joy or meaning from their religious upbringing. That question, so often asked with bafflement rather than curiosity, is "Why do you go to Mass?"

Mission

Before being tempted to give a quick, bland, 'tolerant' response that might seem acceptable by modern secular standards like "Well, it's just something I personally do" or "It's a family tradition", take time to prepare some authentic and compelling reasons and wisely use this evangelisation opportunity. If you want to reinforce someone's perceptions that the Mass is indeed boring or a waste of time, however, bland "I'm ok if you're ok" answers are probably the best way of doing just that. Your Mass attendance will be understood in the same vein as someone else might play golf on Sundays. If you want to at least appear sincere about who you are and what you believe, or better, share the joy and meaning that your faith gives you, a much more compelling answer is going to be required.



When asked "Why do you go to Mass?", you are in fact being offered your very own opportunity to 'do' Mass. How so? The word Mass, by definition, means 'mission'. In the Latin form of the Mass, the priest would conclude the liturgy with the dismissal "*Ite, missa est*", which does not mean the Mass has now 'ended', but much more profoundly: "It is the Mass". The Mass, or the mission, is now in your hands by the grace of God. You are being tasked with the 'kerygma', the great proclamation to "Go and make disciples of all nations." Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to partake in the divine mandate Christ has set before you. So, be confident, do not be afraid. By the grace of God, 'do' the *missa* (mission).

Cultural Catholicism

But what exactly are the cultural attitudes that makes your friend balk at the idea that you're going to Mass?

The reality for generations of Irish Catholics is that the Church is something that happened in the past. It is not in contemporary society's capacity to imagine that faith might be a living thing. Underlying a question like "Why do you go to Mass?", is a whole philosophy of rationalist secularist relativism.

"Did you not know Ireland has moved on? We've matured as a nation; we have grown-up from all that nonsense."

These are very often the impressions underlying much of modern man's image of religion in contemporary culture. The Mass for many people might be remembered as some kind of superstitious act that granny used to fill her time with because she had nothing better to do, or perhaps it's remembered vaguely as a boring formality that used to mark various

“Perhaps now more than ever we are called to be people of joy and display our practice of the faith as not a mere option amongst many like golf on the weekends, but rather as the most profound and meaningful experience of our lives

milestones. Giving a positive, meaningful answer to a question like this, may just be the first time your questioner has ever considered faith as a life-giving phenomenon.

Understanding and humility are also required on our part when approached with a query like this. On one level, for many Irish Catholics, their exposure to the Mass and religion in general may in fact have been a bland, boring and meaningless experience. For reasons which will certainly not be exhausted in this article, our catechetical output in the past half-century has been increasingly dumbed down to feed a simplistic reductionist understanding of religion to the moral platitude of 'be nice, be kind'. In this worldview, liturgy does indeed seem like an out-dated unnecessary activity. It is up to you, however, the formed and committed Catholic, to counteract this impression with something authentic and meaningful.

Live giving

So how can we begin to change perceptions for the better?

For the formed and committed Catholic, the reaction to a question like "Why do you go to Mass?", might be to wonder "What on Earth could they possibly mean?" If they only knew the splendour and beauty of the gift that is the Mass, there would be queues outside the door of every Church rather than at the local cinema, as the

soon-to-be saint Blessed Carlo Acutis once said. The Mass is the source and summit of the Christian life, the most sublime mystery made present before our eyes, the most life-giving, and life-changing channel through which God is made present to us.

Responding with something along those lines or perhaps even more simply, "It's the most meaningful part of my week", may just do the trick in taking your colleague by complete surprise and make them wonder, "Really? How could Mass be that important?"

Communion

Perhaps simply reflecting on two words that are associated with the Mass ('Communion' and 'Eucharist') could also be an easy way to assess how we might respond.

Consider the word Communion, a word we so often repeat but rarely take the time to reflect on. By definition, 'communion' alludes to some form of 'connection', it means we are coming into contact with something, or someone. Translated further, 'communion' from the Latin '*communio*' can also be understood as 'community.' The Mass, therefore, is by definition the establishment of a community between God and Man. This could be something to call to mind when responding to the question and perhaps summarised with, "I go to Mass because of the deep sense of connection (*communio*) with God."

Or how about the word 'Eucharist'? Again, another word we constantly use when speaking about the Mass - but why 'Eucharist'? Where is that word in the Last Supper account? Why don't we just say 'host' when referring to the Body of Christ? You may struggle to find 'Eucharist' in your bible's accounts of the Last Supper because 'Eucharist' is in fact a Greek word. Translated into English, '*Eucharistia*' means 'thanks-giving.' Perhaps this is also something you could call to mind when confronted with a question about going to Mass; "I go to Mass because I want encounter God and routinely give thanks (*Eucharistia*) for all he has given."

Confident Catholicism

It could also happen that your bright, well thought through answer might just confirm their initial thought that you're one of those religious nutters, who believes in the hocus pocus of religion. And that's ok. In this secular age, we're going to have to learn to be comfortable in our 'religious skin'.

Faith and culture have diverged to a point that may not be reconciled for a long time yet. In Ireland, we are perhaps too used to Catholicism being accepted as the cultural norm in the recent past that we have forgotten its unique majesty. But since the time of Christ, Christianity has been divisive. John's Gospel tells us when Christ taught about the Eucharist, many of his disciples left him. We should not expect everyone in the contemporary world to be enamoured by the fact that we find the ultimate purpose and meaning in our Faith. At least not at first. What is instead required of us is the confidence to joyfully witness to our faith and not let people's bafflement privatise our beliefs like an embarrassing secret.

Fully alive

What's more is that the very fact they are asking you this question alludes to the possibility that they have a reason to be surprised you go to Mass. You evidently don't 'fit the bill' of what they misappropriated as a 'religious nutter' - especially if Mass after all is something 'granny did to keep busy'. As this person gets to know you, through your very witness as a joyful person of faith who has a 'normal' enriching life, you are already evangelising and changing perceptions over time.

As St Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is the human being fully alive." In our evangelising mission in the contemporary secular world, perhaps now more than ever we are called to be people of joy and display our practice of the Faith as not a mere option amongst many like golf on the weekends, but rather as the most profound and meaningful experience of our lives.

Next week's article tackles the question of faith and science. How can we respond to charges that science makes religion obsolete?

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, September 12, 2024

Leaving
slavery and
Pharaoh
behind

Fr Rolheiser

Page 34



The Lord oversees tomorrow



At the age of 18, I made the decision to enter the seminary. Some might think, “God, that was a very young time to become a priest.” Of course, I wasn’t becoming a priest at that age – I was beginning a journey of discernment. Like many aspects of life, it’s about being open and having the courage to take that first step. Now, at 53, I understand that I am the youngest Bishop in Ireland.

I was born in Co. Carlow, into a very normal family. I’m the youngest in my family. I have a brother and two sisters. When I look back at my life, sometimes I wonder, “how in the name of God I ended up in the priesthood?” My parents were not theologians. They were very normal, ordinary people. My father came from businesspeople. My mother came from farming background. There are three things I remember from my childhood that I think are



I was very conscious that if I said ‘yes’ my life would change in a radical way, says Bishop Paul Dempsey

very significant on my Faith journey.

The first thing I remember is that we always went to Mass on a Sunday. That was a significant thing for us. On a Saturday night you’d have your bath. Believe it or not, we didn’t have daily showers. Your bath on a Saturday night was really important. Then your good clothes – we used to call them your ‘Sunday best’ – would be put out ready for Sunday morning. Then, you go to Mass with your family. Normally, we would have the Sunday roast together after. There

was a lovely sense of family. Looking back now, in a sense, there was a significant message coming through to me as a child, ‘what was happening on Sunday morning was important’. I didn’t realise it at the time, but that was the message that was coming across. That was significant in the early stages of my Faith journey.

The second thing I remember is that when I would be going to bed as a child, my mom or my dad would bring me up to tuck me in and would say a little prayer. It was

a simple little prayer. Might be, ‘God bless Mommy. God bless daddy. God bless my brother and my sisters. God bless the dog,’ the usual thing. You’re getting that sense of prayer being important. The lovely little prayer to my guardian Angel, I think, was the first prayer ever learned.

The third thing was seeing my mother praying, kneeling by her bedside in the morning. She had a little black prayer book. I think the witness of that was really important. Sometimes you might not realise the power that you have in witnessing before others. That’s where the seeds of Faith were sown in my life. It wasn’t from some big, complicated theological book.

I wanted to be a ‘Garda’. A policeman. We moved from Carlow to a town called Athy in Co. Kildare where there were two churches. There was the parish church, St Michaels, and there was the Dominican church,

which was a most unusual church. It was built in the early 60s. Unfortunately, it’s a library now. But in my time, when I was a young boy, it was a church. We used to go to the Dominicans every Saturday evening. We didn’t go to the parish church. I was 11 years of age, wanting to be a Guard, wanting to be a policeman. There was a 6:15pm Mass in the Dominicans. My mother was one of these people that would have to go early to Mass because you want to get a seat down towards the back of the church. Typical Irish person. Sit down in the back. We had 15 minutes before Mass. The priest came out to say Mass. Fr Ray O’Donovan was his name. I probably didn’t even realise what he was saying. I was only 11. I remember looking up at him and something came over me. I don’t know what that was. To this day I can’t explain it, but something hit me during Mass. I recall looking

up at Fr O'Donovan and saying, "there's something about what he's doing that I want to do with my life." That was the seed of my vocation to the priesthood, because that thought never ever left me afterwards. I said it to my mother, who was a very wise woman, and she didn't praise it nor knock it. She didn't want influence to be one way or the other.

It was something that stayed with me during my secondary school years. I didn't say it loudly to anybody. I did my Leaving Certificate when I was 17 years of age. I felt at 17 I was too young to go into the seminary. I worked for a year. But the niggling thing about the priesthood kept coming back to me. I decided to get in contact with the vocations director. We went through the talks. I was accepted for the priesthood. I joined the seminary at 18 years of age. I was only entering a discernment process to see if the priesthood was for me. I loved my formation. There's the intellectual part: theology, philosophy, scripture. There's also the pastoral end of things such as in my formation. I worked in Dublin, in hospitals, I worked in homeless hostels, in youth clubs as well. All sorts of different things, so it was a great formation for life.

There was another man with me. Paul was his name. We were going to be ordained together. He came to me towards the end of his formation and all he says is, "I don't think the priesthood is for me." He continued, "But I don't regret the six years I spent in the seminary because it's good formation for life." He was open to the Lord in his formation. I did his wedding, and he's married now over in the West of Ireland.

Ordained

I was ordained in July 1997 in the cathedral town of my home, Co. Carlow. I had studied for eight years for the priesthood. You're kind of at the height of the ordination and the first Mass. Then, you wait for your first appointment. Where's the bishop going to send you? I remember getting the phone call from the bishop on a Saturday morning to go down to see him. He said he was sending me to Clane, in Co. Kildare. I never lived on my own before. There wasn't a sound in the house. This was all new to me. I remember thinking to



myself, "Paul, you've made the biggest mistake of your life."

“What you learn from the richness of people's experience is very powerful. God brings you into those moments with people on their life story, which is a great privilege”

Here I was ordained. You transition from being a student to seminarian. Now you're a priest. I wasn't too sure what I was supposed to do. I was only getting used to how to say Mass. September started up, schools opened, my ministry and service to people started up in relation to the weddings, the funerals, the baptisms. What you learn from the richness of people's experience is very powerful. God brings you into those moments with people on their life story, which is a great privilege. I was seven years in Clane. I loved every minute of it. The most difficult part of my

priesthood was moving from a parish. I had to leave Clane. You leave all the people you know and all the experience and hours to start off in another parish. I remember going into Kildare town as my second parish, feeling a little bit sorry for myself. The first morning had been a bit lonely. I didn't know anybody. I remember walking down on the street. My head was down. I met a woman, and I looked up at her and she said "you must be Fr Paul. You're welcome to the parish. We're delighted to have you." She said it with a big smile on her face. And on she went. She gave me such a lift in that moment.

Involved

Then I got into other areas of ministry that I never thought I would be involved with. I was appointed to look after youth ministry in Kildare and Leighlin dioceses. I was also appointed as Vocations Director for the dioceses and in local media. I was writing for local newspapers. I also got involved in local radio. I used to have an hour long show every Sunday morning on radio. I hadn't a clue of any of that. I was on several World

Youth days. Then I went on to be a curate in Naas. Then I went on to Newbridge in Co. Kildare.

“‘Pope Francis has appointed you as Bishop of Achroiny.’ All I remember was him kind of laughing because my face just fell. I had a sleepless night that night”

It came to December 2019, after saying the 9:30am Mass in Newbridge. I picked up the phone and a voice says, "Is that Fr Paul?" he continued, "this is Jude Okolo here, the Papal Nuncio. I would like to speak with you." We arranged to meet that afternoon in Dublin. So up I went to Dublin. We went into a big sitting room. Small talk initially. Then he said, "You probably think you're going to be put on the commission." He continued, "Pope Francis has appointed you as Bishop of Achroiny." All I remember was him kind of laughing because my face just fell. I had a sleepless night that night. I was very conscious that if I say 'yes', it was going to change my life in a radical way. I was going to have to leave Newbridge, which I loved. I was going to have to go to a different part of the country that I wasn't familiar with. I also thought that peo-

ple's perception changes when you become a bishop.

All these things were going through my mind. I had to pray about it and think about it deeply. I thought of Pope Francis during that time. He was about to retire in Buenos Aires, in Argentina. He's voted in by the Cardinals, by the Holy Spirit to become the Holy Father, and he accepted that. I was thinking to myself, "if Pope can take that all upon his shoulders of that responsibility. If he has the confidence that he wants to appoint me as a Bishop, then maybe I should say yes to the call." I got back to the nuncio, and I said, "I accept the appointment." Then you're not allowed to say it to anybody until it's publicly announced.

Announced

Towards the end of January 2020, it was announced publicly in the cathedral in Co. Roscommon. It is a rural diocese over in the West of Ireland covering a little bit of Roscommon, Mayo and Sligo. It's a very different part of the country from what I was used to.

I was ordained bishop on August 30, 2020. We were still during COVID at that stage. It was another chapter, another beginning in my life. You're trained to be a priest, but not to be a bishop. I had to get to know the priests and the people. They were most welcoming to me. I was trying to set up parish pastoral councils and parishes finance committees. Trying to get lay involvement more in the diocese,

getting around visiting parishes, visiting schools, doing the confirmations. It was a wonderful experience.

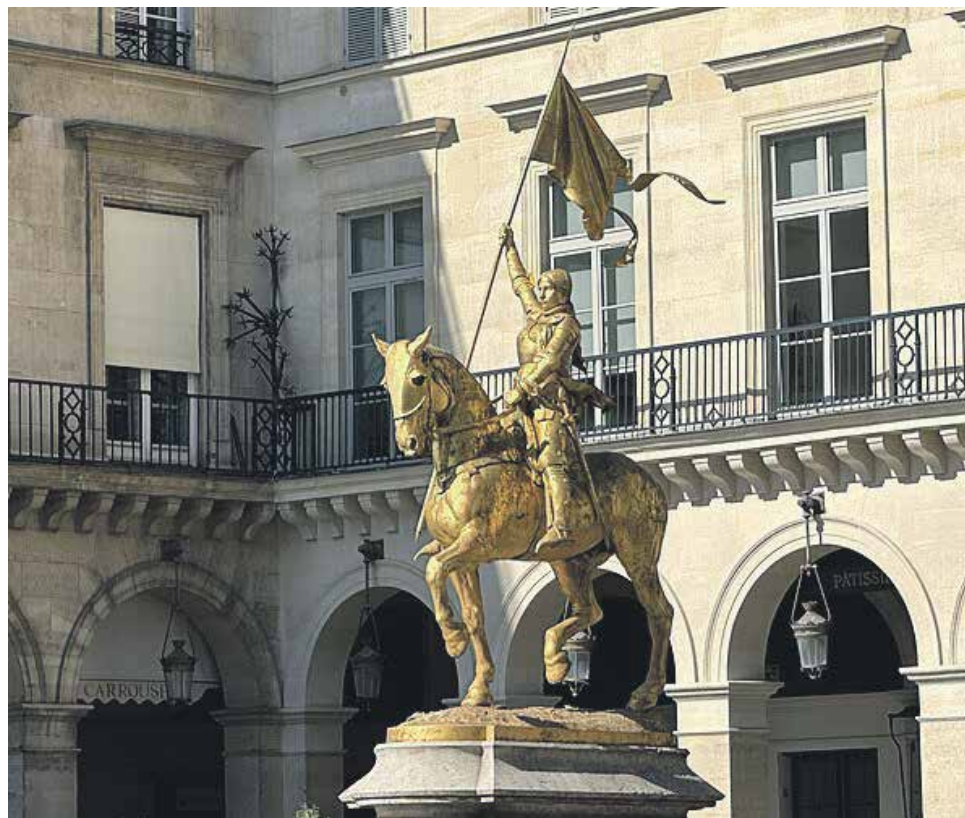
“I don't know what the future holds. The Lord oversees tomorrow. That's the same for us all on our own personal stories”

I was asked would I come to Dublin as an auxiliary Bishop. I was glad to say "absolutely". I've always said yes to an appointment. I've never turned down an appointment. It has always worked out. We can all start off in a chapter analysis of all sorts of fears, like my fears about going over to the West of Ireland being a Bishop. But you could also say, "Lord, this is bigger than me. I'm handing it over to you." There's a plan there somewhere that we don't see. I just started in Dublin a couple of months ago. Huge diocese. Huge number of priests. There are many challenges in Dublin. Of course there are. But there's great things happening in Dublin too. I've been in different parishes every weekend and there's fantastic things happening. Certainly, positive things.

I don't know what the future holds. The Lord oversees tomorrow. That's the same for us all on our own personal stories. I didn't see it at the time, but the Lord was there.

“We can all start off in a chapter analysis of all sorts of fears, like my fears about going over to the West of Ireland being a Bishop. But you could also say, ‘Lord, this is bigger than me. I'm handing it over to you.’ There's a plan there somewhere that we don't see”

Missionary disciples pray: St Joan of Arc



Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

Whether our hopes for this summer have been fulfilled or not, the season is waning. Most kids have returned to school, and the full force of the fall calendar is poised to kick in. All we can do now is hope that whatever rest and recreation we managed to get will be enough to draw on in the months ahead, enough to motivate us, enough to see us to the winter and through it.

Joan

Sometimes, though, one summer can change everything that follows it. That's what happened to one young French girl in 1424. Sometime during that summer six centuries ago, Joan of Arc heard 'voices' for the very first time. The exact date was never recorded. But what happened to Joan set her on a path that would

change her life and the history of her country. This is how she described it at her infamous trial, on February 22, 1431, "In my thirteenth year, I had a voice from God to help and guide me. The first time I heard this voice, I was very much afraid. The voice came around noon, in the summer, in my father's garden. ... It seemed to me a worthy voice, and I believe it was sent from God."

“Over those first five years, Joan learned how to discern the voices that came to her and how to listen”

I've been thinking a lot about Joan of Arc lately, and not just because I've spent close to a year writing two books about

“Joan placed all her confidence in God and continually sought his counsel in prayer. And she never stopped listening, not even when she was captured”

her. It's that Joan has so much to teach us about prayer. And in this papally designated year of prayer, I'm hard-pressed to find a better example. Joan of Arc's life shows us what it looks like when a Christian missionary disciple makes prayer a first response rather than a last resort.

Joan listened to her heavenly voices - those of St Catherine of Alexandria and St Margaret of Antioch - for five years before beginning her mission. Over those first five years, Joan learned how to discern the voices that came to her and how to listen. But even more importantly, she learned that the voices she was hearing - and the God who sent them - could be trusted.

Trust

To Joan, however, prayer wasn't just a tool of initial formation; it was an ongoing source of direction and guidance, the wellspring of her purpose

and mission. When she left home at the age of 17, Joan was illiterate and untrained - unqualified to command the king's army and lead men into battle. But she knew better than to trust in her own abilities. Instead, Joan placed all her confidence in God and continually sought his counsel in prayer. And she never stopped listening, not even when she was captured and tried by a panel of corrupt ecclesial judges. Joan prevailed. After her death, France defeated the English. She was vindicated, her greatest enemy posthumously excommunicated. And now she is counted among the most popular saints of all time.

“We may not be facing any extreme kinds of persecution, but we are facing other issues”

Joan of Arc's historic mission was inspired and fueled entirely by prayer. Apparently, however, ours are not. In a recent blog post, founder of Catholic Missionary Disciples

“We do not achieve the victories we long for because we do not take prayer seriously enough to seek God first, to discern and listen to his voice, and then do only what he commands”

Marcel Lejeune spoke openly about the role of prayer among today's Catholic leaders. Prayer, he says, often “takes a back seat to strategy, discussion, plans, etc.” Unlike the first Christians, Lejeune observes, “we may not be facing any extreme kinds of persecution, but we are facing other issues. Our response has been training, classes, best practices, etc. But what about prayer? Why is it done so little? Why have we not prioritized it?” Why indeed!

Heard

Six-hundred years is a long time. But if we quiet ourselves down long enough to listen, we can still hear the voices that startled Joan of Arc echo in our own lives and faith communities. Contrary to popular belief, the King of

the Universe is not silent. God does not shut up. His call and his invitation are issued in every age. And he is speaking to us. What has changed is our willingness to hear him out.

Our missions and apostolates suffer because we too often pray in a perfunctory way. We do not achieve the victories we long for because we do not take prayer seriously enough to seek God first, to discern and listen to his voice, and then do only what he commands. St Joan of Arc, pray for us.

i Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.

And became man



Laura Kelly Fanucci

Every week my sons stand in the pew at Mass. Like staircases, all five in a row by age and height. Or like a motley crew, mixed together by shapes and sizes.

Five boys in the midst of becoming men.

They are the reason why the short line tucked within the Nicene Creed catches me with a lump in the throat, "... and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

We bow at this line, and rightly so. The marvel and mystery of the Incarnation asks every knee to bend. (And everyone who has witnessed the power of pregnancy and birth knows that Mary's labour was well worth our honour, too!)

But the second half of the phrase can get neglected. What does it mean to "become man"?

Growth

For Jesus, it meant the Incarnation that made God human - including his growth over nine months within Mary's womb and his years of maturing from child to adult. All these parts of his earthly life are

“On Sundays when my jostling sons in the pews pull me back to earth, they remind me that ‘becoming’ is a long process. We are each changing and growing in wisdom, even the smallest among us”

evoked by the simple, short phrase we profess.

Yet the words also invite us to reflect on our own becoming.

The original Latin reads, "Et homo factus est": "and became human" (since "homo" means human, not "vir" which means male). These words thus invite all of us to meditate on what it is to be human - for Christ and for us.

“The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life”

When I look at my sons, each becoming a man in his own way, I stand in awe of the untold moments and milestones that go into shaping who we are.

Every adult who loves and cares for children knows how much work it takes to raise the youngest among us: long days, sleepless nights, attentive care and boundless love. But most of this work of "becoming human" is ordinary and unremarkable.

When did Jesus learn to smile or laugh, to talk or walk? How did he learn to share, forgive, make friends and help his parents? His growth unfolded over years as it does for all of us - in everyday moments that are rarely recorded. The catechism

reminds us of this relatable truth: "The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life" (CCC 553).

Scripture shares only a sliver about Jesus' growth into adulthood. The Gospel of Luke sums up his first 12 years - between his presentation and his teaching in the temple - with a single line: "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him" (Lk 2:40).

Becoming

Then the next 18 years, between his time in the temple at age 12 and his public ministry at age 30, are also gathered into one sentence: "And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man" (Lk 2:52). Luke's words show us what it meant for Jesus to become man: to grow in faithfulness, wisdom, strength and obedience.

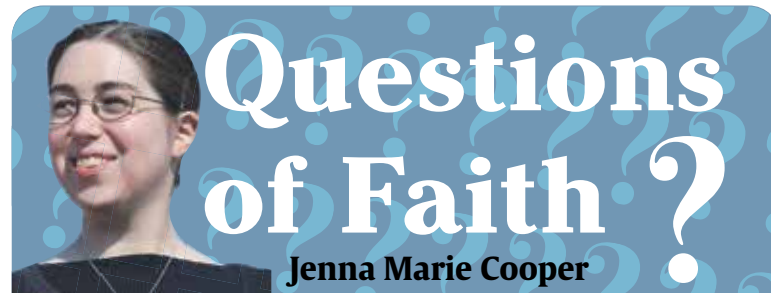
Jesus embodied the fullness of humanity. Not simply that his DNA would have looked like ours under a microscope, but also that he understood intimately all that it meant to be human: our joys, fears, hopes, struggles and suffering. His body changed from child to man. His voice deepened; his limbs lengthened; his muscles strengthened; his language skills advanced.

All these ordinary miracles brought forth by his Incarnation can be gathered into our prayer with this phrase: "and became man."

On Sundays when my jostling sons in the pews pull me back to earth, they remind me that 'becoming' is a long process. We are each changing and growing in wisdom, even the smallest among us.

May we learn to look with gentleness on each other's becoming human - and our own.

i Laura Kelly Fanucci is an author, speaker and founder of Mothering Spirit, an online gathering place on parenting and spirituality.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper

Who can wear a clerical collar and is it sinful to eliminate animal pests?

Q: What is the criteria determining who can wear a 'clerical collar'? I'm not sure if it varies from one seminary/diocese to another, but I'm curious why seminary students would wear a collar since they are not a member of the clergy just yet? It's caused a bit of confusion for adults and children alike when they refer to a young man as 'father' because of his collar when the man has more years left for discernment.

A: As far as I can tell, the timing of when a seminarian begins wearing distinctive clerical clothes depends largely on local custom and the practice of individual seminaries.

Some important background information to keep in mind is that discerning a priestly vocation is not meant by the Church to be an 'all or nothing' or 'all at once' process. That is, the Church has traditionally envisioned the journey to priesthood as involving several well-defined steps and states. Although seminarians are not clergy until they are ordained transitional deacons in their final year, one of the purposes of seminary formation is to allow the students to take on the various elements and obligations of priestly life in a gradual way.

Often, seminarians begin dressing like priests when they begin their four years of dedicated theological studies, which occurs after several years of initial formation based around spirituality and the study of academic philosophy. Some seminaries attach the wearing of clerical clothes to a specific stage of formation called 'candidacy', but candidacy can also occur at different times in different places. A few seminaries have the custom of only allowing students to wear clerical clothes once they become official members of the clergy as transitional deacons.

In any case, the positive side to the confusion you have experienced is the blessing of having new vocations in your midst!

Q: I know it is a sin to torture animals, but is that sin mortal or venial? What about rats, mice, etc.? Wasps, ants, etc.? Is there a way to kill without torture?

A: In and of itself, killing animals is not intrinsically evil. That

is, there can be times and occasions where it is perfectly fine to take an animal's life. The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that it is morally legitimate to kill animals to meet basic human needs such as food and clothing, and that it can also be acceptable to use animals for scientific research if such research is meant to contribute towards the "caring for or saving human lives" (see CCC 2417).

But at the same time, the catechism also tells us: "Animals are God's creatures. ... Thus men owe them kindness" (CCC 2416). And that: "It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly" (CCC 2418).

So I think it's clear that 'torturing' animals - causing them to suffer needlessly - is certainly a sin. The Church does not tell us whether this would be mortal or venial. But my own opinion is that, like so many sinful acts, a lot would depend on the exact circumstances, motivations and people involved. For instance, a school-aged child who pulls apart an insect out of curiosity would clearly not be committing as grave a sin as an adult who enjoyed watching the pain of a higher-level mammal.

The catechism does not mention pest control specifically, but I think we can come to the conclusion that reasonable pest control is legitimate, as many nuisance animals can negatively impact human health and well-being. Yet it is possible to kill pests in ways that would not be considered 'torture', and I think we are obliged to choose humane methods of pest control whenever possible.

For example, there are some modes of extermination which kill the animal instantly or quickly, and these are preferable to methods which involve a more drawn-out death. Or, in some cases, it may even be possible to deter pests from coming into one's home in the first place.

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Leaving slavery and Pharaoh behind



One of the great religious stories in history is the biblical story of the Exodus, the story of a people being set free from slavery, passing miraculously through the Red Sea, and finding themselves standing in freedom, on a new shore.

Most of us are familiar with this story. A nation of people, Israel, was living under the burden of slavery in Egypt for many years. During all those years, they prayed for liberation, but for more than four hundred years none came.

Then God acted. God sent a man, Moses, to confront the Pharaoh who was enslaving the Israelites and when the Pharaoh resisted, God sent a series of plagues which eventually forced the Pharaoh to release the people from slavery and allow them to leave.

Moses began to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, but as they were leaving, the Pharaoh changed his mind and with his armies began to pursue them, catching them just as they found themselves trapped on the shore of the Red Sea, unable to go forward.

Grounded

It is then that God performs the great miracle upon which the Jewish faith is grounded. He miraculously parts the water and lets the people walk through the sea on dry ground. Then, as the Egyptian armies pursue them, the waters flow back and drown the entire army, so that those fleeing slavery now stand free of their oppressors, on a new shore.

Both Christians and Jews believe



Fr Rolheiser

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that this miracle actually happened historically and is one of the two great foundational miracles God has worked in history. For Christians, the other great foundational miracle is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Jewish faith depends on the truth of the miracle at the Red Sea and the Christian faith depends on the truth of the resurrection of Jesus.

“They aren’t just remembering a historical event; they are actively participating in that event”

Moreover, both Judaism and Christianity say these great miracles (which happened historically

only once, in one time and place) are intended for all time and all places and can be participated in through ritual (in a way that is real, albeit outside of history).

In Judaism, the algebra runs this way: in parting the Red Sea and letting the Israelites escape, God performs a miracle, physically altering reality. However, even though historically only one generation of people actually walked through the Red Sea, this is a miracle that goes beyond time, place, history, and normal metaphysics. It is timeless and can be participated in by subsequent generations.

Commemorating

How? Through ritual, through ritually commemorating that original miracle through the Passover supper.

When religious Jews celebrate the Passover supper, they believe

that they aren’t just remembering something that happened once when God parted the waters of the Red Sea; they believe that each of them, all these centuries later, is actually walking through the Red Sea. They aren’t just remembering a historical event; they are actively participating in that event.

How can this be explained? How can we explain how an event can exist outside of time and space? We can’t. Miracles, by definition, don’t have an explicable phenomenology. That’s why they are called miracles. Hence, we can’t explain either the historical parting of the waters, nor the availability of that event outside of time.

“The Eucharistic prayer (the Canon) is not just a prayer to make Christ present in the bread and the wine; it is also a prayer to make the event of Jesus’ death and resurrection present for us to participate in”

Christians believe the same thing about Jesus’ exodus through death to resurrection. We believe that this happened once historically, for real, in an event that miraculously altered the Earth’s normal physics. And, like our Jewish sisters and brothers, we also believe that this one-time event, Jesus’ death and resurrection, can be

participated in, for real, through ritual, namely, by the ritual commemorating of it through the scriptures and especially through the celebration of the Eucharist.

Celebration

For Christians, this is the specific function of the Eucharistic prayer at a Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharistic prayer (the Canon) is not just a prayer to make Christ present in the bread and the wine; it is also a prayer to make the event of Jesus’ death and resurrection present for us to participate in. Just as Judaism believes that at a Passover supper those present are actually walking through a miraculous passage God created for them to walk through on route to a new freedom, so too as Christians we believe that at the Eucharist we also are really (actually) walking through the miraculous passage from death to life that Jesus created through his journey from death to resurrection.

And, in this there’s an invitation to all who participate in the Eucharist: as the Eucharistic prayer is being prayed, ask yourself: what forces are enslaving me? What pharaoh is keeping me in bondage? A bad self-image? Paranoia? Fear? A certain wound? Trauma? An addiction? Can I journey with Christ to a new place that’s free of this slavery?

The miracle of Jesus’ resurrection, like the Exodus, happened once historically, but it is also outside of time and place and available to us as a way to leave behind the pharaohs that enslave us, so as to arrive in freedom, on a new shore.

“What forces are enslaving me? What pharaoh is keeping me in bondage? A bad self-image? Paranoia? Fear? A certain wound? Trauma? An addiction? Can I journey with Christ to a new place that’s free of this slavery?”

Who do you say I am?

Is 50:5-9a

Ps 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

Jas 2:14-18

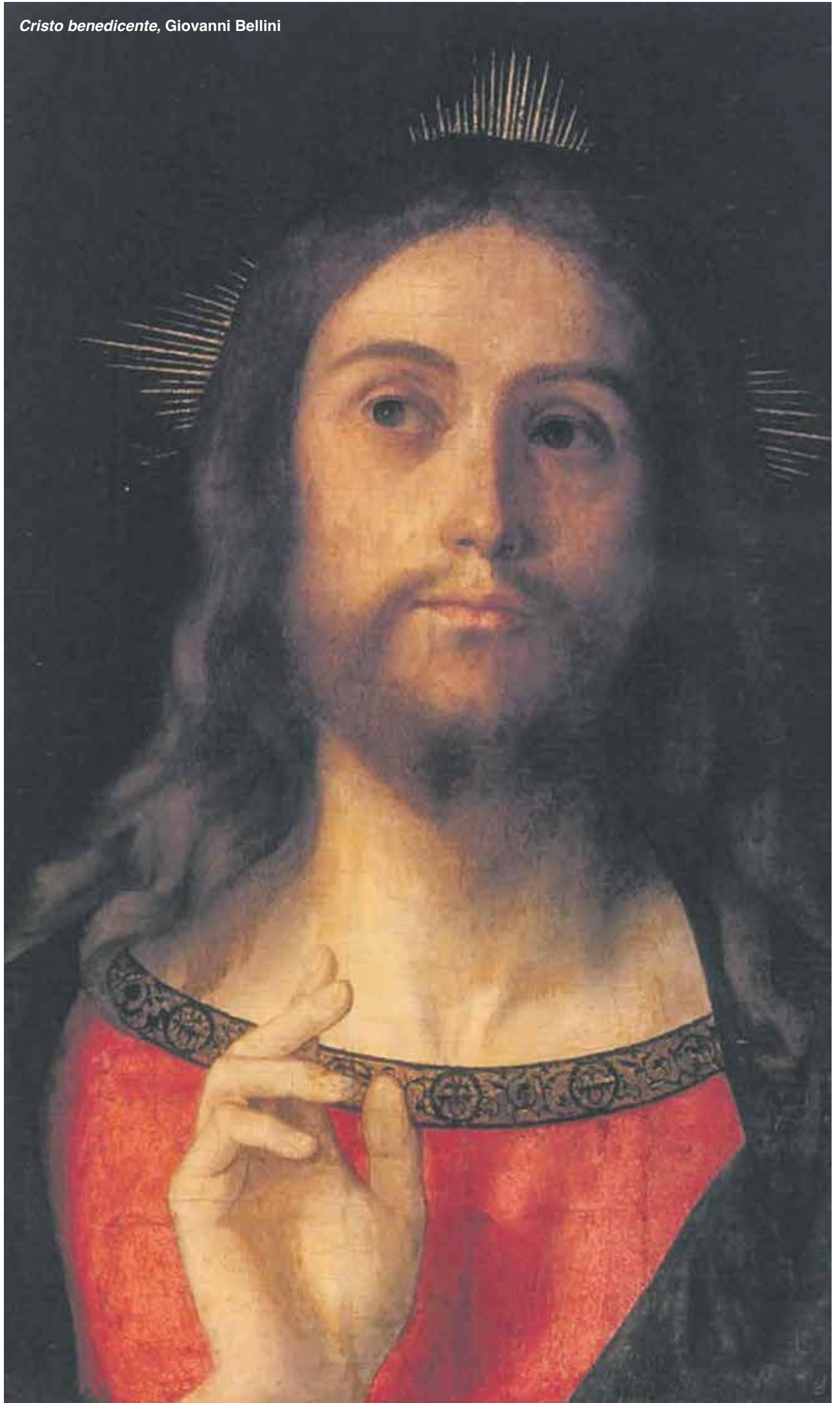
Mk 8:27-35

The Sunday Gospel

Deacon Greg Kandra



Cristo benedicente, Giovanni Bellini



I can still remember the priest who taught us Scripture during diocesan formation talking about the passage from the Gospel that we hear this Sunday, and then asking us what seemed an irrelevant question.

"Where does it come in?" he asked us. "Where does it appear in St Mark's Gospel?" A few people called out, "Chapter 8." That was stating the obvious. The priest smiled. "But where is it? Where IS it?"

Awkward silence. A few of us cleared our throats and looked at our notes. And then he provided the answer we should have noticed from the start.

"It's right in the very middle, the very centre, of Mark's Gospel. Mark has 16 chapters. It's here in chapter 8." He let that sink in and explained. "This is the very heart of the Gospel message. Smack dab in the middle. This is the centre of everything." And he paused for dramatic effect. "Who do you say that I am?"

Of course! But this passage does more than challenge the apostles to define Jesus. It challenges us, here and now, to make a declaration of faith, to believe, to act - not just think about what Christ means and who he is, but to say it. To make a declaration of faith.

Committment

But how do we do that? Jesus offered an answer many may not want to hear. "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

Among other things, this passage affirms, once again, that Jesus never offered his followers the easy way out. What he was offering, instead, required sacrifice, hardship, suffering - carrying a cross, bearing a burden, even to the point of persecution and death.

For many Christians around the world today, the cross might involve punishment or imprisonment, possibly even death, for declaring oneself a follower of Christ. But for most of us, the cross is very different, almost abstract. It isn't necessarily made of wood.

To be a Christian can mean carrying the cross of mercy - forgiving others and praying

for them, when it is so much easier and gratifying to hate. It can mean carrying the cross of patience - living with a thousand small setbacks and annoyances to perform acts of kindness, generosity or love for another.

“Caring for others who might hunger for food or friendship or who yearn simply for someone to lend a hand or lend an ear”

Maybe it means carrying the cross of self-sacrifice - caring for others who might hunger for food or friendship or who yearn simply for someone to lend a hand or lend an ear.

A great old hymn tells us that the cross, whatever it may be for each of us, isn't something to be borne like a heavy weight, but to be raised in triumph.

"Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim, 'til all the world adore his sacred name..."

In ways large and small, we are compelled to face the central question at the heart of Mark's Gospel - "Who do you say that I am?" - and answer it not only with words, but with our lives. We are called to do nothing less than to proclaim the love of Christ.

Are we doing it? Are we doing it enough? It's worth taking the time this week to consider it and act on it.

Who do we believe Jesus is? Who do we say that he is? How do we reveal that to others - at home, at work, in the supermarket, at the gym?

What do we do in our daily lives that tells others, "I follow Jesus." Can they see that without us even saying a word?

Whether we realise it or not, that charge lies - literally - at the centre of the Gospel. It should also be at the centre of our lives.

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

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Frightening numbers and a call for vigilance

There are some stories you just can't ignore, even if you want to because they are so repulsive. And so it was with the release last week of the O'Toole Report into child sexual abuse at schools run by religious orders, effectively Catholic schools.

It should be immediately clear that something is wrong here – surely the 'scoping' exercise should have covered all schools, regardless of management structure or patronage? The approach seemed discriminatory and sectarian. Inevitably, given the demographics, most schools will be Catholic anyway, and during the week in media coverage most if not all commentators reckoned the subsequent inquiry will have to widen its remit to cover all schools.

The results of that enquiry dominated news and current affairs throughout the week. On the **News at One** (RTE One, Wednesday) Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children described 'diabolical behaviour' against children, and it was hard to disagree. On the same programme Deirdre Kenny, CEO of One in Four, a group that seeks to help adult survivors of child sexual abuse, argued that the subsequent enquiry should include all schools, otherwise certain victims would be isolated. That other schools should, or are likely to be, included was a point made also by Patsy McGarry on *The Irish Times*, on **Today with Claire Byrne** (RTE Radio 1 Tuesday) and by Ailbhe



Conneely, RTE's Religious and Social Affairs Correspondent in her various reports for RTE News.

Unsurprisingly, **Liveline** (RTE Radio 1) was full of it for the week. The stories of survivors or victims were heart breaking. It was so hard to take stories of children not feeling able to tell parents and then

not being believed when they did pluck up enough courage or even vocabulary. Some had positive things to say about the value of the Spiritans' restorative justice initiative – separately this was well explained by one survivor John Coulter, on **Morning Ireland** (RTE Radio 1) last Monday. Others on **Liveline** were not so keen, and oth-

ers weaponised the suffering to take a broad swipe at the Catholic Church – one caller on the Tuesday wanted the Catholic Church removed from education altogether.

As the dust began to settle a little there was an interesting interview with former Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin on **Today with Claire Byrne** (RTE radio 1, Thursday). 'This is worse', he said, comparing the new report to his earlier experiences with abuse cases – the numbers were 'frightening'. He was especially shocked by abuse of children in special schools – 'very hard to stomach'. Child abusers, he said, were not 'sexually starved' but were interested only in small children. As with sports bodies and the like, in the Church they found privileged access to children, and, even, dammingly, in some cases, protection. When safeguarding was properly working, they would move elsewhere – the incidence of paedophilia does not change in society. Now that was concerning and effectively a huge call for vigilance.

He was critical of some church authorities for not listening in particular to working class parents with serious concerns and also critical of religious orders being too concerned with protecting the order from damage, when, in fact, their actions did much more damage.

By Friday **Liveline** seemed to

PICK OF THE WEEK

FORGOTTEN HERITAGE

EWTN Saturday September 14, 7am

Fr Owen Gorman and Fr John Hogan relate the history of Frank Duff in Dublin, founding the Legion of Mary, which currently has missions worldwide.

DOCUMENTARY ON ONE: NASTINESS

RTE Radio 1 Saturday September 14, 2pm

A Crisis in Irish politics? - There's more personal abuse in Irish politics. Could this discourage new candidates? If so, are there solutions?

FILM: EVAN ALMIGHTY

RTE 2 Sunday September 15, 9pm

God recruits a politician to build an ark and save the world's animals from an impending cataclysm. Comedy sequel.

have run out of steam and the horror stories mainly concerned corporal punishment in schools. In a way that's the low hanging fruit – people of a certain age all have stories of school cruelties of all sorts. Unlike sexual abuse, corporal punishment largely had societal and even parental approval, though I was glad to hear presenter Joe Duffy drawing attention to early campaigners against corporal punishment. At least in its moderate and controlled manifestations it was seen as good discipline. Unfortunately, many of the accounts on that show were of extreme, uncontrolled and even, one might suspect, psychotic punishments. The stories of sexual abuse from

earlier in the week were of a different order, more devastating for later life and usually done in a secrecy enforced by menace and threat. I was hugely impressed by those few who gave accounts of abuse but who were still practising their Catholic faith. As one caller said, he wasn't going to let the abusers come between him and his relationship with God.

The chief victims were the unfortunate children subjected to these cruelties, but I still feel I have to speak up for some marvellous and idealistic Christian Brothers that taught and inspired me.



Pat O'Kelly

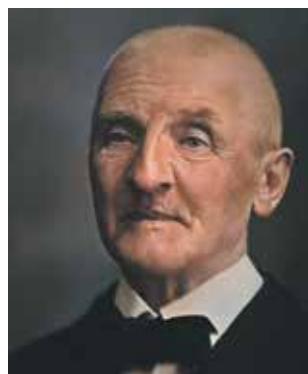
Music

A spiritual voyage through music infused by Faith

This month commemorates the bicentenary of the birth of the Austrian organist/composer Anton Bruckner. The anniversary was celebrated at the NCH last week through his 4th Symphony (*Romantic*) played by the visiting Bavarian Radio Orchestra, one of Europe's finest broadcasting ensembles, under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle.

Born in Ansfelden in Upper Austria, Bruckner initially planned on a teaching career but as time evolved music became the dominant force as he emerged from his rural background to become a particularly notable figure in the musical life of Vienna.

His first music lessons



Anton Bruckner, Austrian composer

came from his father, also named Anton, and a talented cousin, Johann Baptist Weiss. Following Anton senior's death in 1837, the Bruckner

family moved to near St Florian where Anton joined the choir of the city's Augustinian monastery and where he received a thorough musical and general education. Finally deciding on a career in music, Bruckner became the organist of Linz cathedral in 1855.

However, as Linz provided relatively little scope for his further development, Bruckner set his heart on Vienna where he was eventually successful in obtaining a position as teacher of harmony and counterpoint at the city's conservatoire as well as being appointed one of the unpaid supernumerary organists at the Hofkapalle. While Bruckner remained in Vienna

until his death in 1896, his mortal remains lie beneath the organ in the Augustinian church in St Florian, which he played for almost eleven years prior to 1855.

In Salzburg last month I had the good fortune of hearing Bruckner's magisterial 8th Symphony superbly performed by the Vienna Philharmonic under veteran Italian conductor Riccardo Muti. Excellent programme notes by English musicologist Nigel Simeone recalled one of Brahms' comments on Bruckner's music, 'he hasn't a clue about musical coherence and has no idea about orderly musical development'. That may be so as, in matters of

composition, Bruckner was indeed a late developer.

Bruckner's later years found him feted by the Austro-Hungarian establishment. He received an honorary doctorate from Vienna's University and towards the end of his life a 'grace and favour' apartment in the Belvedere Palace provided by the Imperial Court. In a prudent reciprocal gesture Bruckner dedicated his 8th Symphony to the Emperor.

As he did with most of his works, Bruckner revised his 8th Symphony more than once and while he had completed the piece in 1890 the first performance only took place in Vienna on December 18, 1892 by the Philharmonic under

the then doyen of conductors, Hans Richter. The Vienna Philharmonic now almost considers Bruckner's 8th Symphony as something of its own.

A man of deep Faith, Bruckner believed his music to be divinely inspired, and his 8th Symphony has come to be regarded by some as a 'spiritual voyage through music infused by Faith and by the composer's love of nature, expressed through a world of sound which evokes tragedy, radiant beauty and blazing triumph on an epic scale'.

The composer Hugo Wolf was convinced Bruckner's 8th Symphony represented 'a complete victory of light over darkness'.



BookReviews

Peter Costello



An antidote to the vile rubbish people talk

Vexed: Ethics beyond Political Tribes,
by James Mumford
(Bloomsbury
Continuum, £16.99 /
€20.50)

Frank Litton

Politics are everywhere. We've had the British general election, currently the drama of the United States' presidential election, and the prospect of our own general election in November.

As the tumult, the divisions, the competition fill our screens and the pages of our newspapers, one thing is clear: *bullshit*, that vulgarity of the American barnyard and legislative chamber, is a central element of democratic politics.

The US philosopher, Harry Frankfurt was the first to provide a precise analysis of this inelegant term in an essay published in 1986. This appeared as a best-selling book in 2005.

We suppose two possibilities when we write or speak. So, I can intend to tell the truth or to lie. Of course, I may fail in my intention, but these remain my only options.

Not so says Frankfurt. He explains that there is a third option: discourse in which truth or falsehood is not an issue. He calls it *b******. When we speak this way, we seek to impress, to bring you on board, to make you feel good about me (and yourself). It's waving a flag.

(Many people rightly find the term offensive, and it is intended to be. As it arises from people "yakking" too much, we might substitute the term "yak-dung", which is culturally less offensive, but equally effective.)

Politics

It is easy to see why such an expression plays so important a role in politics. Political parties with any chance of gaining power are necessarily involved in building coalitions among divergent views and conflicting interests.

Finding unity in reasoned compromises is difficult, maybe impossible. Finding it while portraying you and your party as good and your



JD Vance speaks out on the issues

competitors as evil is easier. Insults beat arguments. Melodrama is the most attractive narrative, hatred the most potent political emotion.

Both are best served by this vile language. Think of the recent Republican and Democratic conventions. Supporters were energised, unity confirmed, good vibes generated, with no policies promulgated or positions argued.

Of course, tradition, culture, and socio-economic realities combine to give each nation's politics its own distinctive shape.

“Though published a little while, it is a book for today, for this very moment in fact, a sparkling antidote to these distressing trends”

Nonetheless, I reckon that trends we see in the US where such yakking, always an element in democratic politics, becomes the dominant one and partisanship increases at a cost to the solidarity that once contained divisions, are visible in all western democracies.

All this I find dispiriting. This is why I welcome James Mumford's *Vexed*. Though published a little while, it is a book for today, for this very moment in fact, a sparkling antidote to these distressing

trends.

James Mumford, now resident in England, lived for several years in the US when he taught at the University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture. He undertook postgraduate studies at Oxford, where he was awarded a Ph.D, and later at Yale University.

He has been described as “one of the most exciting young ethicists working today”, a description warranted by this book.

Tasks

Mumford accomplishes two tasks. He reveals the incoherence of the packages parties put together to win votes. When he shows you that the belief that commits you to the party (for example its stance for or against abortion) is contradicted by other elements in its position, your temptation to strongly identify with it is weakened.

His examples resonate most strongly with US politics, though they are relevant wherever “progressives” contend with “conserva-

tives.” The way he goes about this valuable task is just as important, perhaps more important. He demonstrates that it is possible to argue, in plain English, about important moral issues.

For example, progressives support assisted suicide. Focusing on the plight of individual cases, they find a “right to die” that only bigoted conservatives would deny.

“The health system will come to see the dying elderly as an expensive burden. And the elderly themselves will all too readily agree”

Mumford observes that “inclusiveness” has been, and, is an important aim of progressives. We can thank them for the old age pension (since 1908) and, indeed, the post-war welfare state. Not to mention compulsory education.

He shows that if we widen

our focus bringing into consideration the consequences of a regime where assisted suicide is accepted, matters become more complicated and questions of inclusivity come into play.

In a detailed argument he shows how it could, and most likely would lead, given evidence from countries where euthanasia is current, to the exclusion of the elderly and chronically ill from the care and compassion that was once considered their due.

The health system will come to see the dying elderly as an expensive burden. And the elderly themselves will all too readily agree. A movement that congratulates itself on its commitment to the care of all, is found to exclude those who are among the most vulnerable in society.

Traditional

Conservatives promote “family values” against progressives who see the traditional family as one setting, and not necessarily the best, for the rearing of children. They demand respect for “durable relationships”, praise the benefits of “blended families”, and decry the stigmatisation of single-parent families. Traditional family values for others belong to an out-dated, patriarchal, authoritarian culture.

Now, the evidence overwhelmingly supports the conservative position: children reared in stable families with parents in an enduring committed relationship do best.

Conservatives, Mumford observes, see it as a matter of culture. Again, he invites us to widen the context, taking economics into account. “Living at the edge of destitution is no formula for a flourishing marriage”. As the balance of power is tilted even further in favour of the employers, more and more are brought closer to that edge,

especially in the US.

He gives examples of how “zero hour” contracts make life precarious for those living at the bottom of the scale stymieing their efforts to form families. Conservatives are reluctant to address these problems and the damage they inflict on parents and children. They bring into question their reverence for capitalism and its supposed mechanisms.

“They fail to recognise how the sexual revolution has brought sexual relationships into a market style regime”

The “sex positivity” facilitated by the contraceptive pill banished inhibitions, freed us from repression, lifted the burden of guilt, ushering in a sexual revolution celebrated by progressives.

Mumford, with well-chosen examples, argues that elements within the progressive tradition should, at the very least, temper the welcome. Progressives have resisted consumerism with its presumption that the good is to be found in having, not being.

They fail to recognise how the sexual revolution has brought sexual relationships into a market style regime where the satisfaction of desires is traded, love and commitment are out, consent is everything. The equality given by the market is superficial; in reality it serves male sexual proclivities.

Space does not allow me to indicate the illumination that comes when Mumford joins his case against abortion with consideration of gun law (especially in the US, or his account of how unreasonable is an emphasis on punishment that ignores forgiveness and rehabilitation).

In his last chapter he calls for a moral imagination that can move beyond a particular issue to the wider context in which it is embedded, that is capable of nuance, that respects the facts.

This book is a marvellous example of such an imagination at work on issues that roil our politics.

“The evidence overwhelmingly supports the conservative position: children reared in stable families with parents in an enduring committed relationship do best”

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 Resurrection of Notre Dame: The coming spectacle



The face of Christ rises from the ashes of Notre Dame. Photo: Denis Gliksman, courtesy INRAP

Peter Costello

What with the Olympic Games followed by the Paralympics, let alone the normal goings on and a clamour of French politics, Paris has been satiated by spectacle these last few months.

There had been hopes of another kind of spectacle. It was hoped by many who had followed as well as they could the great efforts being made since the terrible fire in 2019 to stabilise and preserve the fabric of the great cathedral, and to rebuild and restore, would reach a conclusion this summer too.

Knowing

But as we all know, once you get in the builder, the architect and the civil engineer, there is no knowing when you will get them out. But a date has now been set

for that great re-opening, December 8. This, of course, is the feast day of the Immaculate Conception, and is a special day through the Catholic cultures of the world, one which finds echoes too in Orthodox traditions, despite their differing views. It may be a public holiday in Monaco, but not in France. Nevertheless we can expect it will be a memorable event.

“The fabric of Notre Dame as it has been known in the last two centuries is not that of the middle ages in its entirety”

But the re-opening is only a part of the matter. Over the course of the years of work much insight and experience has been gained, the full discussion and absorption

of which will take an even longer time, I suspect.

The fabric of Notre Dame as it has been known in the last two centuries is not that of the middle ages in its entirety. In the 19th century, when Paris was being reorganised by Baron Haussmann with all the ruthlessness of that father of all town planners, Notre Dame was also renovated by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, a man with his own ideas of how medieval architecture should be seen. He was quite prepared to tidy up what the medieval builders had left. The wooden fleche, at the peak of the roof of the cathedral, the burning of which was so symbolic in the photographs of the destruction in 2019, was actually his work.

Best

The archaeologists, engineers, and architects at work also have their own idea

of what is best. So initially what is restored will in many ways be different from what we once knew. But it is the new light to cast on the past, especially the past we could not see because the centuries had covered it up. From the ashes of the fire artefacts of medieval making have re-emerged.

I was very taken by one official photograph I have seen: it is a fragment of the medieval jube, the rood screen or rather the gallery above it, which collapsed. Among all the debris sifted by the archaeologists of the Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives, there is a fragment of a carved stone head – can it be of Christ himself – which in the medieval manner had been painted. The blue eyes glow out of the pink, beige and gray tones of the visage. It is a moving symbol in itself of what has been going on at Notre Dame.

The opening having been pushed back to December by events, many are looking forward to the revelations of more such fragments of the real past. It is these rather than the 19th century “restoration” which are perhaps the real treasures of this great task.

Faites Vos Jeux



Playing dice with God

Playing Dice with God, by Richard Clarke (Dominican Publications. €10.00 / £8.50)

Peter Costello

Richard Clarke, who was born in 1949, is a retired Irish Anglican Archbishop and author. From 2012 to 2020, he served as the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.

A long varied and distinguished career in the Church of Ireland, which included a time at St Bartholomew's in Dublin, as well as a succession of posts rising to Dean of Cork, Bishop of Meath and Kildare, and eventually Archbishop of Armagh.

Clearly a man of energy with a mission, he is now devoting his retirement (at least in part) to writing. He has already *And Is It True?* (2000), *The Unharmless Blacksmith* (2002), *A Whisper of God* (2006), and *Shouldering the Lamb: Reflections on an Icon* (2017). In the preface to his latest book, he begins by musing on the remark attributed to Albert Einstein that “God does not Play Dice” – to express his own thoughts on the role of chance and necessity in the working of the universe, and in a more intimate way, in the running of our own lives.

He develops these views in 12 chapters that follow. He makes striking use of poets throughout, starting with R. S. Thomas, a pastor of the Church of Wales, who when asked whether he believed in a God and what kind of God it might be, remarked “He’s a poet who sang the Creation and He’s also an intellect with an ultra-mathematical mind who formed the entire universe in it.”

On this Clarke comments that, “And herein is surely the core of mature religious belief, a narrow corridor to be negotiated between absolutes and imprecision.” One might wonder though if those seeming “imprecisions” arise from our inability to fully penetrate all the mysteries of both the universe and of humanity.

But uncertainty is a theme at the heart of this book. The argument is that life is an adventure, in the original sense of a setting out like a Columbus of the spirit, onto the sea of both the unknown and the unknowable. He suggests that rather than fearing that ocean of faith, those sandbars of doubt, we might in time reach a new world, but perhaps not one we could ever have imagined.

“We have to play dice with God and our faith, rather than be satisfied with a self-obsessed wager on our own survival beyond this life”

So this is an interesting read, filled with many allusions to ideas and authors of all kinds, as to fully occupy a reader for some time. It is, as his friend Brendan Leahy, the Bishop of Limerick, remarked “a journey of exploration to the heart of reality”. The book runs to 97 pages, and one feels in places that Dr Clarke might have let himself expand more on his ideas.

If the aim of philosophy as it appeared to many Greeks was to ‘Know thyself’, the aim of spiritual exploration might be to know thyself and God.

“We can never hope,” he concludes, “to grow into what St Paul calls the full stature of Christ” if we are so unsure of ourselves or our faith that we refuse to set out into deep water, the great adventure of living faith. Hence we have to play dice with God and our faith, rather than be satisfied with a self-obsessed wager on our own survival beyond this life.”

This is a short, but effective book, which might well, over the bleak months of winter, provide insights into the possibilities of a new spring.

“The blue eyes glow out of the pink, beige and gray tones of the visage. It is a moving symbol in itself of what has been going on at Notre Dame”

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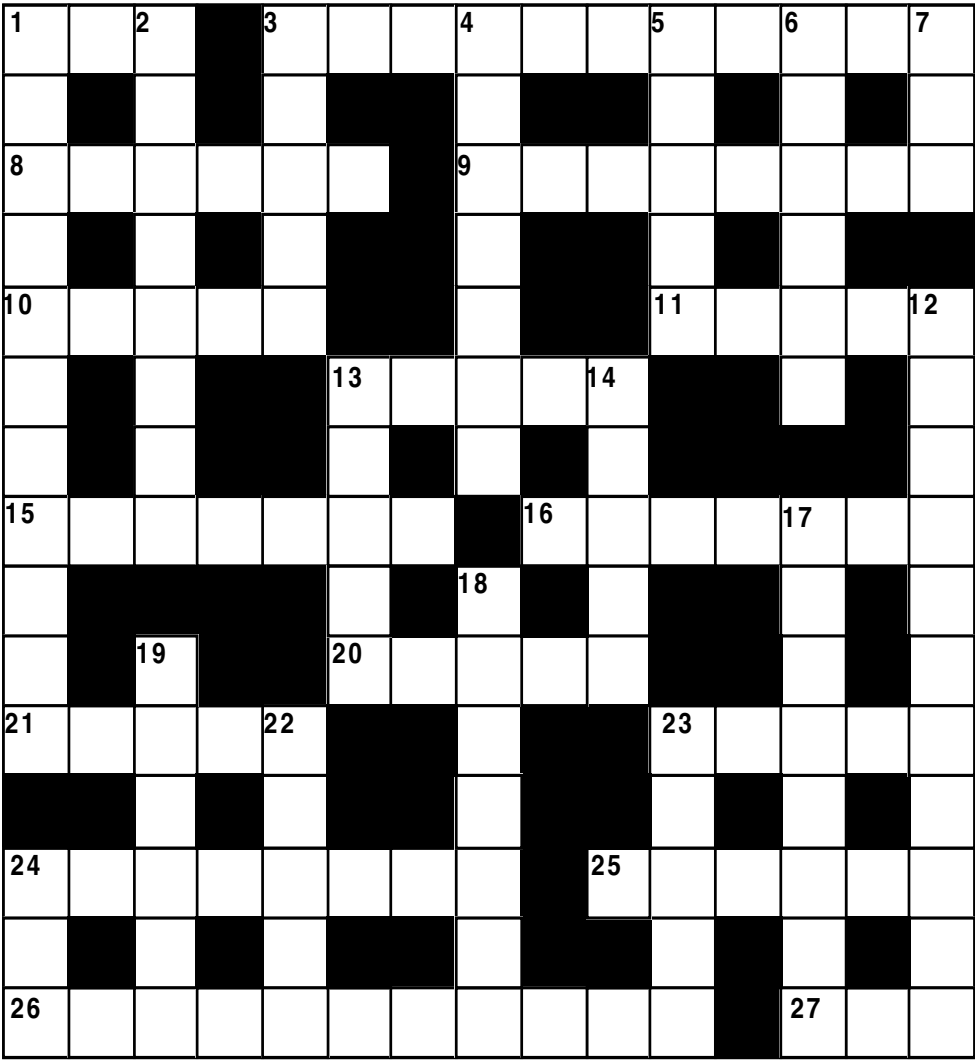
The Irish Catholic

Crossword

Gordius 680

- Across**
- 1 Peaked headgear (3)
 - 3 Rugby player wearing the number 6 or 7 (4,7)
 - 8 Opposed to (6)
 - 9 Orbital thoroughfare (4,4)
 - 10 Great push (5)
 - 11 Freshwater fish of the carp family (5)
 - 13 Clumps of wool or pile (4)
 - 15 Anxious (7)
 - 16 Continuous, unabating (3-4)
 - 20 Fit out (5)
 - 21 Resided (5)
 - 23 Stomach upset (5)
 - 24 Censer (8)
 - 25 The humble spud (6)
 - 26 Alcoholic drink associated with French monks (11)
 - 27 Young goat (3)

- Down**
- 1 Grounded an aircraft in a damaging way (5-6)
 - 2 Hunter (8)
 - 3 Squander (5)
 - 4 The tallest land animal (7)
 - 5 Correct (5)
 - 6 Flourish, be widely present (6)
 - 7 Failure (3)
 - 12 Musical instrument somewhat like a piano (11)
 - 13 Cease-fire (5)
 - 14 Exclusive story (5)
 - 17 A symptom of traffic congestion (8)
 - 18 Acrid (7)
 - 19 Sparkling disc sewn onto a costume (6)
 - 22 Bronze medal position (5)
 - 23 Nearby (5)
 - 24 Bill (3)



SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 5

GORDIUS No. 679

Across

1 Formula One 6 Acts 10 Input 11 Papal bull 12 Deleted 15 Enemy 17 Iron 18 Acid 19 Torso 21 Deceive 23 Lehar 24 Scot 25 Item 26 Offal 28 Assault 33 Red pepper 34. Beech 35 Seep 36 Anemometer

Down

1 Flit 2 Replenish 3 Untie 4 Ample 5 Nape 7 Cause 8 Sally forth 9 Al dente 13 Tore 14 Dilemma 16. Call to arms 20 Recollect 21 Drilled 22 Vows 27 Fudge 29 Scrum 30 Album 31 Span 32 Char

Sudoku Corner

550

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 549

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

Last week's Hard 549

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

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Serving from a log cabin in a local bog

If you pray the Angelus on a Sunday evening while watching RTÉ you will be familiar with the Abbey of Ballindoon. Each Sunday this wonderful structure acts as the backdrop to the ringing of the bells calling us to prayers.

Recently I was invited by Fr Cullen and the parish of Geevagh in Co. Sligo to celebrate Mass in the remains of the old Dominican priory at the beautiful Abbey of Ballindoon. It is the last of the Irish Dominican medieval houses to be founded, in 1507, and was presumably one of the Observant Friars convents, living a strict religious life as part of the network of Con-nacht houses. The Dominicans who lived there were men strong in faith, seeking only the things of the Lord and focusing their lives on welcoming others into the same supernatural life of grace by means of their preaching.

Dissolution

Henry VIII's reformation, commenced in 1534 with the passing of the Act of Supremacy and the dissolution of religious houses began in 1536, less than 30 years after construction had begun at Ballindoon. While the Act of Supremacy applied equally to the Church in Ireland, ini-



Ballindoon Abbey on the shore of Lough Arrow in Co. Sligo.

tial confiscations were much more successful in England and Wales. It was not until 1603 under James I that the Dominicans were forced to leave the abbey. The land passing into the hands of those more in line with government thinking.

The Dominicans might have lost the property but they continued to serve the sacramental needs of the local people, no longer from a great abbey but from a tiny log cabin in the midst of the local bog called Friarstown, about two miles from the Abbey. For over 150 years, until 1760, the seclusion afforded by the abode in Friarstown preserved the

community allowing them to minister to the local area from this cabin. In 1702 there were two friars in hiding, 1756 there were three, in 1760 there were five. This little group continued in the midst of persecution and poverty until, the greed of a local Catholic landlord forced them to leave. It appears that, being financially destitute the small Dominican community were unable to pay the rent demanded for the small piece of reclaimed land surrounding their log cabin, their cattle were seized by the landlord and they were compelled to abandon their home and their people. The glorious story of the Domin-

icans in this beautiful area of Co. Sligo was ended not by persecution but by a fellow Catholic's avarice.

Important

Maybe this part of the story of the Dominicans in and around Ballindoon is more important for us Catholics in the Ireland of today. Rather than the story of the glory days of the abbey with its magnificent rood screen but the story of a local Catholic landlord who for money forced the Dominicans to abandon their mission, needs to be the focus of our attention. What the English troops, poverty and persecution failed to do, the desire for the things of this world in the heart of a Catholic landlord, brought the story of the Dominicans of Ballindoon to an end.


A blessed future...

Recently I attended the annual summer festival of Youth 2000 in Clongowes Wood College. I want to thank all the wonderful volunteers who give of their time, talents and energy to the mission of youth bringing youth to the heart of the Church. Seeing such goodness in these young people reassures me of the blessed future of the Catholic mission in Ireland.


30 years married

Recently I was at a celebration marking 30 years of the marriage of friends of mine. One of their daughters had come back to Ireland from the continent for the weekend. Needless to say, she had told her work colleagues why she was going home for the weekend. She soon discovered their amazement that her parents could still be married and living together after 30 years. None of them came from families where their parents were still together. These work colleagues, all in their early 30s, came from all over Europe. What does that tell us about the future of our civilization if marriage and the family is meant to be the basic building block of society?





The Little Way Association



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

THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION
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www.littlewayassociation.com

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

IC/9/12


Funds are urgently needed for Metahara Clinic in Ethiopia

Sr Fikrte Motto of the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady has contacted The Little Way Association from Metahara Health Clinic which is run by the Sisters with many lay helpers. She tells us that the Catholic Mission in Metahara began providing health care to the community in 1981. Despite difficulties, a clinic was established to help the sick. Now, 60 to 80 new patients visit the clinic daily for various conditions which include malaria, eye diseases, typhoid and typhus, as well as skin infections.

Sister writes: "We urgently need financial help, and that is why I am turning to The Little Way Association. Prices of medicine and our running costs have risen unexpectedly. We lack funds to reach needy communities in the district, we have no ambulance, we need to tackle the malnutrition and chronic diseases of many of those who come to our clinic. These, and other, reasons make me turn to you and your friends and supporters with confidence. Please help us. Many needy people, as well as our Sisters, will be eternally grateful."

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

Every euro that we receive in response to this Appeal will be sent, without deduction, to the Sisters for this project or a similar Health Clinic project in Ethiopia, run by Sisters, in need of help.



"Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing." - St Therese

LITTLE WAY THERESIAN CENTRES AT OUR LADY'S NATIONAL SHRINES OFFERING ACCOMMODATION TO PILGRIMS

WALSINGHAM (UK)
For reservations please contact Maggie on 00 44 1328 820 222

KNOCK (Ireland)
Tel: (0) 94 938 8406

MISSION CHAPELS

St. Therese, our patroness, wished to spread the Gospel throughout the world "until the end of time". We receive many requests for help from bishops and priests to build, renovate or complete their mission chapels. We are often asked for funds to provide a permanent roof for a chapel. In many places the only roofing chapels have is made of straw or other flimsy material which, as you may imagine, is easily damaged or destroyed in bad weather.

Your donation will help a priest in a mission country to provide a decent chapel for his congregation, a fitting place for the celebration of Holy Mass.