

The Irish Catholic

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Indian Catholics geared up to revive Faith in Ireland

Chai Brady

The head of Ireland's biggest Indian Catholic community has said they have "a responsibility to revive the Faith" in Ireland, particularly as the Irish were missionary pioneers in India.

National coordinator of the Syro-Malabars in Ireland, Fr Joseph Mathew Oliakkattil highlighted the impact of secularism on Faith practice in Ireland and how "Government policies and new ideologies" are one of the reasons for the decline.

Fr Joseph said that the 17,000-strong Syro-Malabar Catholics on the island of Ireland are a migrant community, and as an Eastern Catholic Church, "we acknowledge our missionary responsibility to revive the Faith in this country".

He said that this can be done through their witness: "The strong family relationships, real Faith life, commitment to the Catholic life, new vocations to priesthood etc., would foster the revitalisation of Catholic faith. For instance, one of our children has started his journey to priesthood and is in the seminary now".

He warned that "secularism has affected Irish Faith life to a large extent" which is "reflected in all the spiritual life of people here".

"The Government policies and new ideologies are a reason for that. The

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A pair of angels and Buzz Lightyear



Caroline Bergin with her children Michael and Angela at the Mass in the church of St Mary of the Angels, Church St, in Dublin on the final day of 'Walk The Cross' and Eucharistic Procession through the streets of Dublin. Photo: John McElroy.

Growth in QUB Catholic Chaplaincy shows students want something 'lasting'

Brandon Scott

Two members of the Catholic Chaplaincy in Queen's University Belfast have described the recent upward trend in the number of students registering to take part in Chaplaincy-related activities for the forthcoming year as being indicative of student's natural "curiosity" to find something a little more "meaningful and lasting" in their young lives.

The latest statistics from the Chaplaincy reveal that 71% of the current student population who identify as Catholic have registered to receive Chaplaincy services, a growth of 60.9% when compared with last year's figures and overall accounts for around 7350 students of a total university population of 25,000.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Fr Dominic McGrattan, chaplain to the Chaplaincy, attributed the rising figures to the vast array of initiatives being rolled out by the Chaplaincy and young people's natural curiosity to search for something fresher, especially when they personally mightn't have had any negative experiences with the Church in their lifetime.

"We have a number of groups

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The Irish Catholic



Indian Catholics geared up to revive Faith in Ireland

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family bond and community aspects have decreased. Irish missionaries were the pioneers of the missionary work even in India. While the universal Church is flourishing there is a decrease in faith life today in Ireland," he said.

While catechism, family values, prayer life and more "are strong and well promoted" among the Syro-Malabars, Fr Joseph said that their "the youth and children face the situation of secularism at present, and this will continue into the future..."

"The Catholic Church grew up through struggles and suffering. The secularism and the anti-religious attitude of the people [in Ireland] has decreased the Faith life. Even

though we have institutions, good leadership: there are a lot of obstacles. Church-centred spirituality is to be developed and the definition of family as in the Constitution is to be regained through regular catechism, family visits, counselling, resolving the issues related to faith, making use of facilities and occasions for the revival of the Faith life," he said.

The Eastern Catholic Churches are different from the Western Catholic Church by their liturgy, spirituality, discipline and theology. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is one among 23 Eastern Churches and follow the East Syrian tradition. It is in full communion with the worldwide Catholic Church.

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Growth in QUB Catholic Chaplaincy shows students want something 'lasting'

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and societies providing input and contributing to the programme. Chief among them would be the small group Bible studies that we offer to students. About 105 of our core Chaplaincy members would be attending those Bible studies weekly and they're introducing them to scripture, to doctrine and encouraging them in Christian living and giving them opportunities to form wholesome friendships," he said.

"Students are naturally curious and I think this generation coming through are not encumbered by the conventions or even the baggage of the earlier generations and are curious to find out more. Because this generation is coming through not as culturally aware of Catholicism, they experience it as something new and fresh and something they're keen to know about and become more involved with."

Director of the Chaplaincy, Shannon Campbell, stressed

that student's knowledge of the faith does not need to be at an expert level – the ethos of the Chaplaincy is to welcome all in their various stages of their faith journey and create an environment where students can fully be themselves.

"Regardless of anything else or where you're at in your faith journey, you are part of this family and therefore we are here for you," she said. "We make that effort to break the ice and emphasise that we are here for you no matter where you're at on your faith journey."

"There's a realisation that there's something more meaningful here than is being offered elsewhere in the Student's Union or in the city centre and in other places on campus – there's something lasting here. This is always going to be here and it's not fleeting or temporary. Perhaps Church or at the very least groups associated with the Church community is a place where they can feel at home and a place where they can truly be themselves."

New abortion law does 'nothing to help women', says charity

Renata Steffens

New legislation to 'protect' women going through abortion will come into operation next month. This new law will prohibit protests within 100 metres from any establishment providing services such as family planning.

The legislation called 'Health (Termination of Pregnancy Services) (Safe Access Zones) Act 2024' passed earlier this year and will be fully operating from October 17. "This draconian law will do nothing to help women in unplanned pregnancies," said Eilis Mulroy, spokesperson for the Pro Life Campaign.

Ms Mulroy explained "this law criminalises any perceived attempt to influence

one's decision to have an abortion within a 100-metre zone of a premises where abortion could be provided. This includes every GP practice, maternity hospital, or family planning clinic in the country."

"It isn't about preventing 'protests', as it will criminalise the possibility of a woman receiving an offer of help when she might need it most."

When the law passed last May, "Minister [for Health] Stephen Donnelly has said that he has 'listened to women, to families, to health care professionals who unequivocally expressed their support for this Bill'."

"It appears Mr Donnelly has only been talking to a very narrow section of the public, such as State-funded campaign groups

like the National Women's Council," Ms Mulroy has said.

Similarly, Independent Senator Rónán Mullen said during a debate on the Bill in the Seanad that Mr Donnelly "has got an easy win for himself by caving in to an activist group" and called the legislation a "sad piece of legislation."

Ms Mulroy also said "many people, including medical and legal professionals, have expressed concerns about the impact of this draconian law on fundamental rights. However, Mr Donnelly has failed to engage with their concerns and instead appears to believe genuine fears about this law's impact on freedom of expression can be papered over by just mouthing slogans."

South Sudan has challenges but faith is 'vibrant' – Irish papal nuncio

Brandon Scott

Beginning his first few weeks as the first resident Vatican representative to South Sudan, Archbishop Séamus Patrick Horgan, from Co. Clare, attests that the Church in South Sudan is alive, and despite the enormous challenges faced by the world's youngest nation, it tenaciously testifies to its unwavering faith and generosity.

Speaking to *Vatican News* about what he's experienced in his first few weeks in the fledgling nation, Archbishop Horgan stated that he felt "at home" after the warm welcome he received, coupled with the presence of religious institutes across the country, but has admitted that the ongoing conflict in the country has made life challenging and refugees arriving from neighbouring Sudan is a common occurrence.

"I must say, there is a significant presence of religious

institutes in the country," he said. "Then, there were also the faithful from the local parishes who welcomed me with joy and warmth. So, it was a great start, and, I must say, I immediately felt at home."

"The local Church is helping to welcome refugees from Sudan and is also bringing the Gospel to the refugee camps. From what I've seen so far, there are various camps across the country with internally displaced people and refugees coming from outside. This is a great challenge for a country that already has its internal difficulties."

Archbishop Horgan recalled a meeting he had with a group of Salesian Sisters at the coalface of humanitarian efforts and this, according to him, is the face of the missionary Church.

"I had a very moving meeting with a group of Salesian sisters who ran a centre for mothers and children in Khar-

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The National Women's Council, an NGO mainly funded by the government, created in 1973 to represent women has posted on their X (Twitter) page celebrating the passing of new legislation taking effect on October 17, which creates 'exclusion zones' prohibiting protests within 100m of abortion centres.

toum before the war, which broke out over a year ago," he said. "For the first year of the war, they stayed in Khartoum, unable to leave, but remaining with those under their care."

"This, in my view, is the face of the missionary Church.

This is the face of our wonderful missionaries, both men and women. It was a moving moment and, at the same time, a demonstration of what the Church can do in situations like this."

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Bishop 'thrilled' with strong catechism sales

Chai Brady

The Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults came in No. 5 in the bestselling non-fiction paperback list in the first week of September with the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore saying it is "a tremendous resource".

It was a strong week for religious books in the category with the *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul* coming in at number 7.

Reacting to the catechism book sales, Bishop Phonsie Cullinan told *The Irish Catholic*: "I'm thrilled to hear that the Irish Catechism for Adults is number 5 on the list of bestselling non-

fiction paperbacks. I think there are efforts around the country to reawaken adult faith-formation, which is essential.

"In Ireland... we form children and we give the adults a blessing when they turn up and that's it, whereas it should really be the other way around. Certainly, we do have to form children in school, but we cannot leave people with a sixth-class knowledge of their Faith for life, it is not adequate," he said.

He added that there are people promoting study of the catechism around the country and "they are to be congratulated too".

Looking at the sales of the book related to St

Faustina, Bishop Cullinan described it as "wonderful news", adding that "St John Paul II was instrumental in her story – in the story of her canonisation and in the story of spreading devotion to Divine Mercy – and of course he himself died on the eve of the feast of Divine Mercy Sunday.

"To link it with St Bernadette [whose relics visit the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore this week]," Bishop Cullinan said, "Our Lady asked her to pray, pray, pray, penance, penance, penance, for poor sinners, and that is very much in tune with the mission of imploring the Divine Mercy of God on us all."

A peppering of religious interest...

The top-ten selling Paperback Non-Fiction list for the first week in September is peppered with religious interest. *The Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults* comes in at Number 5 published by Veritas, just beaten out of fourth

place by *Mad, Isn't It?* from Gill Books and beating *Surrounded by Idiots: The Four Types of Human Behaviour* which comes sixth.

The Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul published by Marian Press comes in at number 7.

The self-declared agnostic religious correspondent of *The Irish Times* came in

at ninth with *Well, Holy God: My Life as an Irish, Catholic, Agnostic Correspondent* published by Merrion Press just beating *Want: Sexual Fantasies by Anonymous* which to be fair, also came in 8th on the hard back list. Mr McGarry the agnostic may well feel he is *Surrounded by Idiots*, but Faith in Ireland is not dead yet! *Mad* isn't it.

Carlo rules the waves



The relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis travels down the River Liffey before its arrival at City Quay Church, Dublin. Photo: John McElroy.

Late Late Show host reveals fear he gave Pope Francis shingles

Staff reporter

Patrick Kielty has revealed he thought he had given Pope Francis shingles after meeting him at the Vatican over the summer.

The Late Late Show host travelled to the Vatican in June and was among an audience of 100 international comedians and artists who met the Pope. The Co. Down man described meeting the Pontiff as "surreal".

"That was sort of like a weird fever dream, if I'm being honest with you," he said. "There's a point when that call came in and as a comedian, you're always reasonably sort of... is this for real? I thought it was a joke.

"It was very weird. Then you see (actor) Ardal (O'Hanlon) is there and like everybody else, you're going, right Father Ted.

"So just when you're thinking Fr Dougal's going to meet the Pope then Whoopi Goldberg arrives in a car, who was by far the most popular person in the Vatican that day. Sister Act, apparently, at the Vatican."

Kielty said that during his



Late Late Show host, Patrick Kielty. Picture: Andres Poveda

trip to Rome, part of his face had swollen up, which he had blamed on DIY work he had carried out at home.

"The week beforehand, we were doing up a house, and I was lifting loft insulation and I thought I actually got loft insulation in my face. (My face) had all swollen up," he added.

"When meeting the Pope, I took off my sunglasses and

could sort of see him physically recoiling, 'what's going on with this fella'?

"It was only afterwards that I actually found out I had shingles. So there was a chance that I had given the Pope shingles, but I was never so glad to actually see him the week after in full health, giving the blessings. It was a surreal experience."



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‘Missionary saint a rock for migrants’ says Bishop

Renata Steffens

For the first time after over 1,300 years the relics of St Kilian, a missionary native from Mullagh, Co. Cavan are coming back home. The saint left Ireland with a few companions in the 7th century to spread Christianity through mainland Europe and never came back.

The relics of St Kilian and his two companions, St Totnan and St Kol-

onat will arrive in Ireland on October 2, when they will be celebrated in St Patrick's College Maynooth. On October 3 they will arrive in Mullagh and travel around Co. Cavan until October 6, when they will go back to Würzburg, the saints' place of death and home of their relics for the past few centuries.

Fr Paul Prior, parish priest of Mullagh Parish said that St Kilian could be considered one of the first Irish

migrants. Like him, many men and women had left their places for new horizons. Fr Prior said that St Kilian might “inspire the migrants to trust in the journey, to trust in God”.

Bishop of Kilmore Martin Hayes said “people who leave their home, they need an anchor. They need a rock...and I think Killian represents that.” Independent of the reason for moving, Bishop Hayes believes these

migrations are also an “opportunity for different peoples to meet...and to have an influence upon each other...”

“To bring their faith as well and without imposing it on anyone else, bring the example of their faith in coping with their difficulties... To bring that example of faith and endurance and resilience to others.

i Full article on St Kilian and the relics visit in next week's issue.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bishop Nash invites faithful to hear people's stories

The Pilgrimage Season at Our Lady's Island has closed this month. During his homily at the closing Mass, Bishop of Ferns Ger Nash has invited people to hear. “My interest in hearing this evening comes from the Gospel of St Mark” he said. “Jesus gave his hearing back to a deaf man, not as a social experiment, or an enticing trick to show his power.”

The bishop explained Jesus had two purposes with that miracle: To show God's power worked through him, and to bring the disadvantaged, the poor back into community life.

“We are invited to recognise the ways in which we have been deaf to the invitation of Christ through scripture, prayer and also when he speaks to us through the power of the poor, the marginalised and the outsider,” the Bishop said and mentioned that Christ invited us to hear the stories of the people on their faith journey.”

Bishop Nash finished his homily expressing the hope that “like Christ we will be people who will listen deeply to the stories of others and who will give them a voice. At the end of our pilgrimage season here in Our Lady's Island, we can say of this place - it has done all things well, because people have told their stories and have been heard.”

Belfast gears up for rosary festival with ‘Divine Goals’

Staff reporter

Sports legends and Eurovision's Dana will share their faith stories at Belfast's 21st annual Rosary festival next month.

The week-long festival will include famed GAA manager Mickey Harte and former professional footballer turned friar Fr Philip Mulryne – who played for

Manchester United and Norwich.

Running from October 5-13, it begins with a camino walk from St Peter's Cathedral on the Falls Road to St Michael the Archangel in Finaghy, taking in places where the Blessed Sacrament resides.

Mickey Harte will speak about the importance of his faith amid the challenges of life and Fr Mulryne will

reflect on how his life in the premier league does not compare to Christ. “This is called ‘Divine Goals’ and is about sport and faith. And we are hoping to attract people who ordinarily might not darken the door of a church, especially people who are into football or the GAA,” said coordinator Luke McCann.

Divine Goals takes place on October 10 at Immacu-

late Heart of Mary Church Hall, Antrim Road, Belfast.

A ‘Night Fever’ event is scheduled at St Mary's Chapel Lane on Tuesday, October 8 on the theme ‘Be Reconciled’ with confession and adoration.

The programme for the week also includes a traditional Irish music and dance Ceili in the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church hall on the Antrim Road on Sun-

day, October 6.

On Saturday October 12, Youth 2000 has organised a Blessed Carlos Acutis retreat with adoration at St Paul's church and parish centre from noon, beginning with a light lunch, and includes Mass and personal testimonies.

The week ends with a rosary procession along the Falls Road from St Peter's to St John's.

Double trouble with a 100 thousand welcomes



Céad Míle Fáilte to the newest members of Tulla Parish in the Ceantar na Lochanna Pastoral Area of the Diocese of Killaloe. The parish welcomed twins Fiachra and Caoimhín in the joyful ceremony of their baptism.

Courtmacsherry Grotto in Co. Cork celebrates 70 years

Barryroe Parish in Tiranean, Co. Cork has celebrated the 70th anniversary of one of their two grottos. The Courtmacsherry Grotto was dedicated on September 8, 1954 with a rosary organised by Ms Edel Jones on the Feast of Our Lady's nativity.

Earlier this year, parishioners led by Ms Teresa Egger cleaned the grotto for the big event. During the celebration, the rosary was prayed in front of Our Lady's image with the decades elaborated by verses of Marian hymns led by Courtmacsherry Church Choir.

Over seventy people attended the public prayer. Following the prayer, Ms Margaret O'Dwyer gave a talk about the grotto's history, how it came to be built and opened. Some of those seventy people present, also attended the grotto's opening in 1954.

The public fall of Huw Edwards – why?

We live at a time when public scandals appear so ubiquitous that their shock value seems diminished; yet the case of Huw Edwards, the BBC newsreader convicted this week of viewing child pornographic images, has had a huge impact in Britain.

It's the fact that Edwards was such a decent, reassuring, familiar face in every living room in the country – the most public face of the BBC since David Dimbleby, or even David Attenborough. He was the trusted anchorman who presided over great public events of the nation, including the ceremonial funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, as well as being the steadying, patently fair figure presiding over general elections.

This married father of five seemed the epitome of solidness and respectability. He was paid a lot



Mary Kenny

of money from the public purse – £479,000 annually – not just for the skill and unflappability of his delivery, but for the profile he represented: the traditional BBC, which had once commanded global admiration for its upstanding reputation.

Repercussions

Unsurprisingly, the Beeb was scathing in its condemnation of their former employee when the truth came out – that he had paid for indecent images of children, some as young as

seven, from that very salary they had supplied.

There was some outrage, too, at the lightness of his sentence – six months suspended, (and he will remain on the sex offenders' register for seven years.) The magistrate, Paul Goldspring, said that Edwards would not be a danger to the public, or to children, which was why there would be no custodial sentence.

But still, real children had been used to compose these images, and women, in particular, stressed that point should have meant

“The magistrate, Paul Goldspring, said that Edwards would not be a danger to the public, or to children, which was why there would be no custodial sentence”

a more punitive response. Besides which, people have been committed to jail for sending an offending Tweet; protesting eco-warriors have had three or four years slapped on them for causing a public nuisance.

The more thoughtful reactions reflected on the puzzling question as to why – what psychological impulse prompts a man of apparently normal, even reliable character in every other way, to such actions? What is the wellspring of such an awful perversion? And what kind of ordeal is

his family going through, asking the same questions?

“Excuses about ‘mental health issues’ should not distract from an atrocious industry which supplies pornographic images of children”

Freud spoke about certain psychological self-destructive urges which can lie in the human heart – the “Thanatos” which

drives negativity, risk and destruction. People sometimes carry out evil actions because they want to destroy themselves, be mortified and shamed.

Yet psychobabble and excuses about “mental health issues” should not distract from an atrocious industry which supplies pornographic images of children, and to which Huw Edwards yielded, to the dismay of so many who had admired and trusted his image, over the years, on their TV screens.

Lee Carsley, England's football manager, was somewhat criticised for not singing *God Save the King* when his team played Ireland recently, but some Brits agreed with his choice. It was pointed out that not everyone in England believes in God or supports the monarchy; and also that the tune is a bit of a dirge.

Perhaps it doesn't do to analyse too closely the lyrics, or even the titles, of national anthems. They are seldom nowadays intended literally. Amhráin na bhFiann – The Soldiers' Song – has a most unsuitable title, and lyrics, for a neutral, non-militarised nation, promising to fight the Bearnna Baoil (whoever they may be) “mid cannon's roar and rifle's peal” (“le gun-

naí scréach, trí lámhach na bpiléar”). The French national anthem seems offensively aggressive, hauling high the “bloody standard” especially to repel those of “impure blood”, who would “slit our soldiers' throats”.

Spain may have taken the wisest decision – to have no words at all accompanying their national anthem.

Rooney hits the high notes in *Intermezzo*

Sally Rooney



I am much looking forward to reading Sally Rooney's new novel, *Intermezzo*, published on September 24. She of course came to fame with her first book *Normal People*, and she was lucky with the timing of that publication: it was made into a TV drama just as Covid-related lockdown was launched, leaving kept-at-home audiences eager for screen entertainment. She has since been rated, by

Time Magazine, as among the hundred most culturally influential people in the world.

Ms Rooney really is a fine writer – I've read an extract of the new book – who explores character with honesty and subtlety. And unlike most contemporary Irish literary authors, she does not loathe and disparage religion. Although she calls herself a Marxist, she told Martin Doyle of *The Irish*

Times last weekend, that she is a cultural Catholic, and finds “meaning and beauty in Scripture, ethical inspiration in Simone Weil and solace in the poetry of the Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins.” Questions of faith and Christianity are important to her work, she said.

Marx did call religion “the opium of the people”, but it's always forgotten that he added: “the heart in a heartless world.”



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Catholic doctor: Conscientious objection being 'shockingly affronted'

Brandon Scott

Speaking in advance of the Catholic Medical Association of Ireland's 7th annual conference this Saturday, President of the association, Dr Keith Holmes, has described the current treatment of Catholic healthcare professionals who are forced to deal with a radically different end-of-life culture, as a "shocking affront" to the principle of conscientious objection and has caused worries within the medical profession.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Dr Holmes said that "the whole issue of end-of-life issues, including suicide and euthanasia, has really called into question the role of the doctor; whether a doctor is to uphold and support life. It really is that critical and it's hard to

put it more bluntly than that".

"Most doctors of my acquaintance are very worried about these developments but the biggest worry is that it gets a foothold at all. One these things get a foothold and once the exception is established as being acceptable then what you find is that the whole argument becomes distorted, the language becomes distorted, the word compassion becomes weaponised and suddenly the slippery slope starts again.

Dr Holmes believes that governments dishonouring their promises has led to an abrupt shift in some of the aims in modern healthcare, particularly after the repeal of the 8th Amendment, and now that this continues to repeatedly happen, the "floodgates open" to all sorts of disturbing possibilities in the future.

"Even when the repeal of the 8th Amendment happened, abortion was meant to be something that was in exceptional circumstances and now with the recent review of it the criticism of it is that it's not more widely available more quickly," Dr Holmes said. "So clearly what may start as a founding premise very quickly becomes pushed aside and the floodgates open."

The principle of conscientious objection must be fundamental at all times in a line-of-work as sensitive as the medical profession, but the conditional approach to the principle "flies in the face of what proper conscientious objection is", according to Dr Holmes.

"I think with regard to abortion, the issue of conscientious objection, it's very clear the direction things are going,"

Dr Holmes said. "People are allowed to conscientiously object as long as they organise for the procedure to be carried out elsewhere, which of course absolutely flies in the face of what proper conscientious objection is. Our fear is that the same line of undermining will continue – particularly with euthanasia and assisted suicide if it becomes law.

"Conscientious objection will merely mean that you're left with the responsibility to arrange even though technically you don't get your own hands dirty and that's just a shocking affront to conscientious objection." The 7th Annual Conference will take place September 21 at the St Charles Centre, Mount Argus, Harolds Cross, Dublin 6W. Register online: www.icdln.ie.

'Massive revival' of Faith set for Ireland – pilgrimage organisers

Renata Milán Morales

Nearly 1,000 people filled the streets of Dublin recently in a powerful display of Faith, following the Blessed Sacrament as the conclusion of the 'Walk The Cross' pilgrimage. It was a procession that highlighted the continued strength of Irish Catholicism.

Karen, one of the organisers, was moved by the public's reaction to the event. "The reaction was incredible. People were on their knees, blessing themselves as we

passed. You could see the joy in their hearts, people really proud of their Catholic faith."

Anto Crossey, who started the 'Walk The Cross' pilgrimage, shared his thoughts on the spiritual significance of the event. "There's something spiritually happening beyond my understanding. I believe the Faith is not dead in Ireland; it's like a bird in hibernation. When it awakens, the people of Ireland will come out of their spiritual slumber, seeking more about the faith. There will be a massive revival."

Crossey also spoke about the deeper meaning of the pilgrimage for Ireland,

saying, "This walk is truly given by Jesus Christ for this island. Ireland is anointed... and sealed with the blood of the martyrs and our ancestors who carried the torch of Faith. Many years ago, Ireland evangelised the world, and it's going to happen again."

For Crossey, the procession and pilgrimage signify the end of what he described as a "spiritual famine" in Ireland, with the faithful hungry for a renewed connection to their Faith. The event marks a step towards what he believes will be a resurgence of Catholicism in Ireland.

[i](#) See more in pages 20-21

Bishop Hayes encourages action to sustain creation on 'Environment Day'

Brandon Scott

On 7 September, Bishop Martin Hayes of Kilmore, Episcopal Coordinator for *Laudato Si'*/*Laudate Deum*, and a member of the *Laudato Si'* Working Group (LSWG) of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, was invited to speak in Kinsale,

Co Cork, as part of the current Season of Creation celebrations. In his presentation, Bishop Hayes highlighted the main theme of *Laudato Si'*, namely: we are called to live simply, and create awareness of our interrelationships with each other, with nature and with God our Creator.

He said, "*Laudato Si'* also asks us to embrace integral ecology, cultivate a spirituality of caring for each other and the Earth, and to be open to an ecological conversion.

Bishop Hayes spoke about the opportunity to celebrate the Season of Creation – which started on 1 September and

goes to 4 October, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi patron of ecology – whose theme this year is 'to hope and to act with creation'. He highlighted "this Season provides us with the chance to offer appreciation for creation, to enter its rhythm and to recognise that we are all creatures of God".

Anglican Archbishop joins Archbishop Martin on the path of St Columbanus

Staff reporter

Young people from Armagh have joined Archbishop Eamon Martin, Anglican Archbishop John McDowell, and other pilgrims in the Walk for Peace, Healing, and Wellbeing as part of the Armagh leg of the Columbanus Walk. This pilgrimage, which started at Mount Leinster in Co. Carlow, will conclude in Bangor, Co. Down, on September 21, 2024, marking the World Day of Peace.

The walk, based on the path of St

Columbanus and inspired on the Camino de Santiago, focuses on themes of peace, health, and reconciliation. Archbishop Martin described St Columbanus as a "figure of unity and hope" and highlighted the fragility of peace.

Throughout the journey, pilgrims discussed well-being, peace, and the importance of kindness and hospitality. Among those walking were students from St Patrick's Grammar School and St Catherine's College, who accompanied the archbishops and members of the 'Friends of St

Columbanus'.

Archbishop Martin reflected on the significance of St Columbanus, noting the wealth of historical evidence about his life and works.

Gerard Devine, a teacher at St Patrick's Grammar School, praised the experience, especially the opportunity for students to connect with the ecumenical visit to St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral. He also commended the students for their dedication in joining the walk, despite the early start.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indian Community celebrates Our Lady's birthday in Co. Cork

Earlier this month, Carrigtwohill Parish in Co. Cork has celebrated Mass for the Indian community in St Mary's Church to commemorate the birthday of Our Lady. After the Mass a procession took place to Our Lady's Grotto.

The celebration of 'Monthi Fest' which is the Feast of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

gathered the Munster Konkans, a community of families originated from Mangalore in South West India, who are currently living in and around the Munster region.

This feast, it is also celebrated as a harvest festival, where the community offer God fruits, vegetables and grains in sign of gratitude for His blessings. The Monthi Fest is the biggest family feast in the Konkans culture.

During the traditional Mass, wheat grains are blessed and distributed to each family, who will place it on their home altars as a symbol of hope, for a prosperous rest of the year. The Diocese of Cloyne said "They were delighted to share a part of their culture with our Parish community."

Irish Bishops to celebrate Holy Year Masses nationwide

Bishops in each Irish diocese will celebrate Mass as the solemn opening of the Holy Year. The Masses happening on December 29 will be the starting point, but many other events will be organised locally to mark the Jubilee 2025.

Specific projects for the Holy Year will be proposed by Bishops Conference at the Autumn General Meeting in early October.

The Jubilee 2025, the second of Pope Francis, will start on December 24, 2024 and end on January 6, 2026. The theme for this Holy Year is 'Pilgrims of hope'. The event's logo

displays four figures representing the four corners of Earth embracing each other to indicate solidarity and fraternity, uniting all people.

The four figures representing humanity are holding a cross with the bottom part elongated and turning into an anchor. The anchor represents a symbol of hope of stability during storms or hard times.

Several Catholic events happening on Culture night

The culture night will bring to Ireland a piece of the Catholic heritage with 8 events focused on Faith and Catholic history taking place on September 20.

At Maynooth College Chapel, a tour showcasing its design, with stalls arranged to facilitate the chanting of the Divine Office, a sign to its role in preparing over 10,000 priests since its establishment in 1795. In Drogheda, a free concert at the Augustinian Church celebrated 800 years of the Dominican Order, with Michael Holohan premiering a piece titled Sounds from a Cloister.

The Carmelites at Whitefriars St. welcomed the public with a concert by the Garda Male Voice Choir, while St. Columba's College, Dublin, offers a glimpse into its architectural history, featuring 1880 chapel. In Cork, the 'Voices of St Mary's' experience brought 800 years of social history to life, celebrating the community that has worshipped there.

The Rotunda Chapel's history was explored through a series of lectures. In Tipperary, a special blessing held to honour 22 loved ones lost during the 2020 pandemic, part of the 'In ár gcoirthe go deo Legacy Cross' project.

Finally in Galway we find 'Lumina', a series of artistic outdoor projections on The Cathedral Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Tuam Cathedral.

Drogheda to celebrate Dominicans on Culture Night

A free concert during Culture Night will celebrate 800 years of the Dominicans in Drogheda. With theme 'Poems, Bells and Synths' the concert will take place in the Augustinian Church in Shop Street at 8pm, this Friday, September 20.

Many musicians and Poets will get together to provide this show, one of them is composer Michael Holohan, who will premiere a new work called Sounds from a Cloister using the church's bell tree which contains 40 chimes.

The new composition will celebrate the Dominican Order and their contribution to Drogheda's history. The piece will also acknowledge the Augustinian and Franciscan Order's influence in the area.

The night's performers are Breifne Holohan, John McCrea, Grace Dillon, Trudy Maguire, Martin Shields, Joanne Kieran, Juliet Barrow, Barry Leahy and Michael Holohan, director.

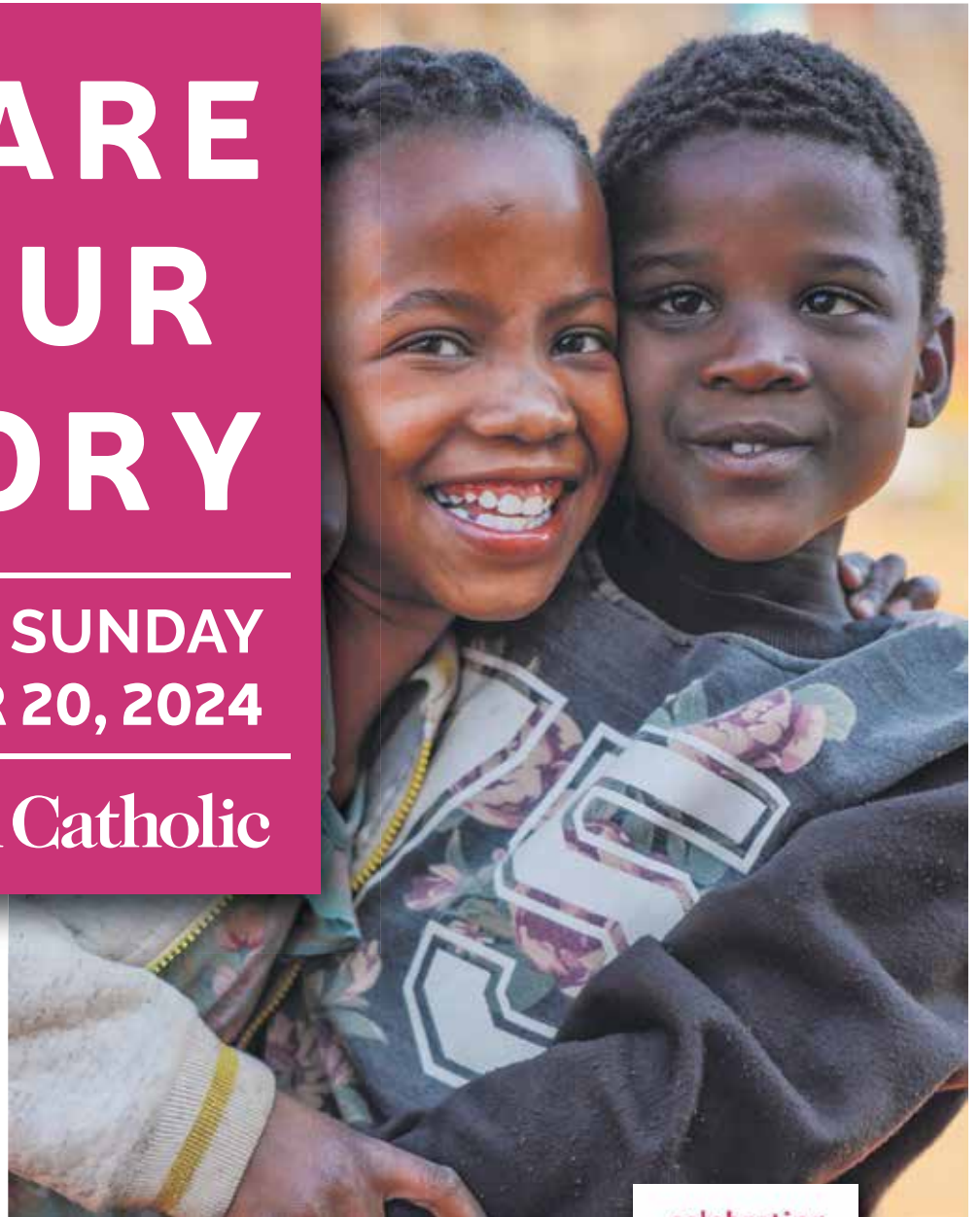
Singer songwriter SJ McArdle, will perform songs from his CD and song cycle Port.



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The dilemma facing Catholics in the American presidential election



David Quinn

These days, Catholics are reduced to voting for the lesser of two evils in elections. It is the case in Ireland, for the most part, and certainly in the United States.

Here in Ireland, there are small parties and individual candidates you can vote for with a clear conscience, but is there any plausible government that Catholics could support whole-heartedly? Would a Sinn Féin-led government have a vision of politics that meshes well with the Catholic vision of the common good, or would another government like the one now be in power? Certainly, neither of the alternatives is remotely pro-life.

We could well have an election on November 15, according to various political pundits, so the choice could be upon us soon.

If the election does take place on the date, the Americans will have held their own 10 days before on November 5. It is not only a new president that will be picked, but also a third of Senators and the whole of the House of Representatives, plus numerous Governors and countless numbers of local representatives. When America votes, it votes big.

But the vote that is obviously grabbing most attention here is the presidential election which sees a face-off between Donald Trump for the Republicans and Vice-President Kamala Harris for the Democrats.

Trump's running mate is Senator JD Vance, and Harris's is Tim Walz, the Governor of Minnesota. Of the four, only Vance is a Catholic and he is a recent convert.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis himself has weighed in on the election. He has not said which candidate he would vote for given the chance (nor should he), but he said both Trump and Harris are "against life" and American Catholics would have to choose "the lesser evil".

His reasoning for saying they are both "against



Trump supporters gather around Mar-A-Lago after Republican presidential nominee and former US President Donald Trump returned from Trump International Golf Club, which was the site of a shooting, to his residence at Mar-A-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, September 15, 2024. Photo: OSV News/Giorgio Viera, Reuters

life" was a little strange. He said it is "against life" to support abortion, and it is also "against life" to oppose immigration. But the two issues can't be directly equated. Abortion obviously leads to the end of a human life, and that is its direct intention and effect.

“Is Trump actually pro-life in the sense of being anti-abortion? I think his attitude to the issue is mainly pragmatic and always has an eye on vote”

Closing borders to immigration altogether, especially to genuine refugees, would be cruel, but almost no-one is in favour of open borders because of the destabilising effects that can have on the receiv-

ing country. And crucially, no-one is directly killed by slowing down immigration, that is, the policy itself doesn't kill people in the same way abortion does.

But is Trump actually pro-life in the sense of being anti-abortion? I think his attitude to the issue is mainly pragmatic and always has an eye on vote. He was the president who delivered a majority vote on the Supreme Court in favour of repealing Roe vs Wade, the 1973 ruling that legalised abortion-on-demand until very late in a pregnancy in all 50 American states.

Effect

The effect of repeal was to hand the power back to individual states to decide what their abortion law should be. Some now have extremely liberal laws and others much more restrictive ones.

But there is no question that the Democrats have won votes because of the repeal of

Roe vs Wade. Democrats, the pro-abortion lobby, and their allies in the media, managed to frighten voters that women were going to die as a result of 'backstreet abortions', and many people have now come to regard abortion as an indispensable right.

The pro-life lobby was not ready for the immense campaign that was launched at vast expense against pro-life laws and Trump will have seen this.

“America's enormously powerful pro-abortion lobby absolutely do not want Trump and Vance elected to the White House and that says something”

As far as he is concerned, he delivered for the pro-life movement, and they did

not deliver for him where it counts most to him; votes.

Therefore, as this presidential election campaign has worn on, he has come out against some of the more restrictive abortion laws at state level and has also said that he would favour free IVF, even though IVF creates many 'spare' embryos that are eventually destroyed in most cases.

His running mate, JD Vance, is definitely more pro-life in principle than Trump, but when he was asked whether a second Trump presidency would ban the abortion pill nationwide, he said it would not, and that it would be up to individual states whether or not to do that.

Powerful

But the fact remains that America's enormously powerful pro-abortion lobby absolutely do not want Trump and Vance elected to the White House and that says something. They absolutely want Harris and Walz elected because they favour almost no restrictions on abortion. In fact, as governor of Minnesota, Walz signed a bill that revoked a previous law requiring doctors to try and save babies born alive after an abortion. That is about as extreme as it gets. This is the team the pro-abortion lobby wants

in the White House. That should give Catholics pause.

Vance himself, as a recent convert to the Church, is broadly speaking part of a new Catholic intellectual movement which stresses the need for society to become "post-liberal", that is, to move beyond the hyper-individualism of liberal societies both on social issues (the family, abortion etc) and to a lesser extent, economic issues because liberal societies tend to favour free trade and high immigration levels.

“Harris was easily able to goad Trump over the number of people coming to his rallies and totally distract him from the substantive issues on which she is weak”

These Catholics are critical of both capitalism and social liberalism and believe in a Catholic vision of the common good which is more pro-worker than employer, and stresses the family and the right-to-life. This particular group of Catholics also favours stronger border controls because they believe very high immigration harms the livelihoods of poor Americans. But they are not against immigration per se.

The biggest problem with Donald Trump is Trump himself. He is crude, buffoonish, sexist, lacking in personal discipline, sexually immoral, egotistical, vain but also touchy and insecure. Hence in their recent debate, Harris was easily able to goad Trump over the number of people coming to his rallies and totally distract him from the substantive issues on which she is weak, for example, the cost of living.

In short, he is personally highly unsuitable for the office of the president.

But Kamala Harris and Tim Walz, while better people personally, are very far removed from Catholic social teaching on key issues like the traditional family, the right-to-life and human sexuality.

This is why Catholics who are serious about their faith face such a big dilemma on November 5. As Pope Francis said, it is about who is the "lesser evil". Some might simply abstain.

“The biggest problem with Donald Trump is Trump himself. He is crude, buffoonish, sexist, lacking in personal discipline, sexually immoral, egotistical, vain but also touchy and insecure”

The cries of heresy after Pope's comments



Martina Purdy

“Has the Pope ever read the Bible?”

This was a serious question from a serious person on social media this week. It follows yet another controversy about remarks made by Pope Francis, this time during a visit to Indonesia, when he spoke about faith to an inter-religious meeting of young people in Singapore.

To critics, Christ's vicar on earth is just not Catholic enough, not Christian enough.

Instead of telling this audience – which would have included Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus – that Catholicism was the one true faith, the Holy Father said all religions are a path to God.

“They are – to make a comparison – like different languages, different dialects, to get there. But God is God for everyone.”

Doubt

Pope Francis also spoke of the different ways to God – and cautioned against aggressive arguments over religion. “If you start to fight, saying ‘my religion is more important than yours, mine is true and yours isn’t, where will this lead us?’

Well, the Pope's remarks led to a lot of unkind criticism on social media. “Heresy!” was a common enough cry.

Now, I have to admit my own blood pressure goes up, from time to time, when I read Pope Francis' comments. It's not always what he says that bothers me. It is what he doesn't say. Pope Francis, when he speaks about abortion, is wonderfully clear, very black and white. “It's like hiring a hitman to resolve a problem.”

“The Catholic faith holds the fullness of truth but there is some truth in other faiths, and all are children of God”

But sometimes the Pope's remarks are more nuanced, open to interpretation and can be distorted or misunderstood in the age of the soundbite. Often, his remarks require thought and contemplation.

I was pondering the Pope's remarks in Singapore when a priest friend telephoned me. The call seemed providential. “Father,” says I, “Pope Francis has just made some controversial remarks about the Catholic faith not being the true faith.”

“I doubt he said that!” said the priest. “I know,” I sighed, “But that is the impression being formed!”

We went through the text in light of Catholic teaching and what we truly believe: that God is love, that the Cath-

olic faith holds the fullness of truth but there is some truth in other faiths, and all are children of God, made in his own image and likeness.

But doesn't Christian baptism make you a special member of God's family, children and heirs – otherwise what is the point? After all, didn't Christ in his final words before his ascension give us a great commission, telling us at the end of Matthew's Gospel to go and baptise and make disciples of all nations?

“Baptism doesn't just make us children of God,” said my friend, “It makes us disciples of God, and in that, we make conscious choices to follow Jesus.”

Clarity

My priest friend pointed out that Pope Francis stated clearly that there is one God. “When Pope Francis speaks like this, he is trying to reach a particular group of people, and, if he causes ructions in his own camp, that can be for the good.” “We can withstand that as a Church. The Church is bigger because God is bigger.”

But how will they know to follow Christ if we don't tell them? “They will know him through us and be attracted to us by the way we live and by the way we are with each other,” said the priest. “The Pope is trying to meet people where they are at. You will only encourage them to come to where we are by engaging with them, by not being dismissive, or condescending or laying down the law. Christ's attractiveness in us will lead people to baptism

through the Holy Spirit. We have to trust the Holy Spirit to work through people.

“It is only when we accept where we are all at that we can engage in the hard questions: just who is God, who is the Eucharist? What is the truth of the situation? By listening, engaging, respecting and accepting each other's position in sincerity – irrespective of our specific beliefs – we are moving towards God. So his approach is the right one,” he said.

The priest also cited the passage in Luke's Gospel – when the apostles wanted to reign down thunder on those people who were not with them because they were – “not one of us” – but driving out demons “in your name”. Jesus states clearly: those who are not against us are with us.

“Perhaps I would have preferred that Pope Francis spoke differently. But I do know that when Pope Francis is speaking to priests, and committed Catholics, he does speak differently”

“In other words,” said my friend, “They are in their own way sincerely seeking the truth. Jesus didn't condemn them as the apostles wanted them condemned.”

And I suppose there are

plenty of texts that we could debate regarding the wisdom around the Pope's remarks. Perhaps I would have preferred that Pope Francis spoke differently. But I do know that when Pope Francis is speaking to priests, and committed Catholics, he does speak differently, encouraging them to give more time to Jesus in adoration, for example.

Open

In the debate about the Singapore remarks, it is easy to forget the point Pope Francis was making: that closed, and aggressive evangelisation is counter-productive.

I myself was once condemned as a heretic on the Boulevard San Michel, near the Convent of Adoration on the Rue Guy Lussac, where I was headed in full religious habit.

An eccentric Orthodox Christian approached me. “Here-tique!” he shouted. I was insulted. Was this an attractive way to spread his faith?

On a Saturday in Paris, I would sometimes pass Orthodox Jewish men in black – and greet them with, “Bon Sabbat!” But they would studiously ignore me. These men had zero interest in converting me, so their approach was effective!

In my mostly secular French class, I made friends with those disillusioned with faith – as well as two beautiful Muslim doctors. “You know,” said Rauda, who, like me in those days, always kept her head veiled. “Sometimes it is very hard to live with God. But it is impossible to live without him.”

What Catholic could argue with that?



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Pope Francis waves to young people gathered for a meeting on interreligious dialogue at the Catholic Junior College in Singapore, September 13. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

Catholic doctors worried about ‘slippery slope’ euthanasia



Brandon Scott

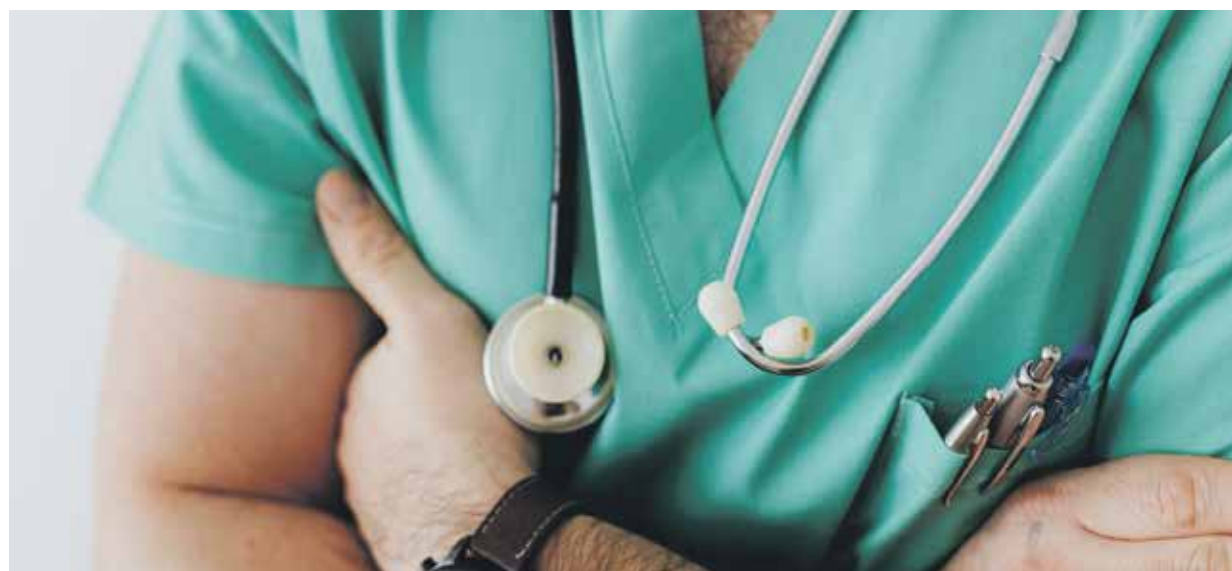
Reflecting on the last decade in this country as a Catholic presents itself as somewhat of a painful task. Our country, now liberated from the oppressive and cruel past inflicted by the Church according to many given prominence in both media and politics, is now in a transitional period away from these austere times, rejoicing daily at the newfound compassion in society and inconsistently upholding a creed predicated on virtues such as ‘tolerance, inclusiveness and autonomy’.

In principle, these values would not be considered disagreeable by anyone’s standards if pinned to the wall in workplaces across the country, particularly autonomy, who doesn’t want autonomy? But it’s only when you delve into the subtleties and the conditional nature of Ireland’s 21st century interpretation of autonomy that you begin to realise that the problems underlying it are stark and deeply concerning.

Unity

Chief among the issues involving our modern understanding of the word ‘autonomy’ is the very sensitive issue of abortion. Most of us are fortunate as although we might react to the latest current affairs and news highlighting the further liberalisation of abortion laws in this country with dismay, many of us aren’t actually forced to confront the actualities of the increasing slide into the unknown, and instead we live vicariously through those who continue to stand up for their fundamental rights in a sea of secularist approaches.

Dr Keith Holmes, President of the *Catholic Medical Association of Ireland*, knows all too acutely about the difficulties facing Catholic doctors in this rapidly changing sociocultural



environment. The organisation is set to hold its first in-person conference in 5 years this Saturday in Mount Argus titled ‘Building Blocks for an Ethics of Healthcare’ and he spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about the anticipation around the event and the greatest challenges Catholic doctors presently face in the country.

“Being a Catholic doctor abroad was a minority position but a respected minority position and safeguards were enshrined to ensure that conscientious objection was respected”

Dr Holmes outlined that the organisation underwent a name change since its first conference almost 10 years ago, a name change that those involved felt better harmonised the group with other international Catholic doctor’s bodies, but the ethos of the group remains the same and enables other Catholic doctors to discuss the “live issues” of the day in a non-adversarial atmosphere.

“The change in name to Catholic Medical Association

was to both align ourselves with other similar groups internationally, but also to reflect the growing interest in the area from nursing and other allied health professional staff,” Dr Holmes said. “We sought permission from the Irish Episcopal Conference to change the name and they graciously agreed.

“Our first conference was back in 2015. We’d been going for a couple of years before then. We’re a group of doctors, all of whom have trained abroad and realised that being a Catholic doctor abroad was a minority position but a respected minority position and safeguards were enshrined to ensure that conscientious objection was respected. This contrasts very starkly to the situation as it stands here in Ireland in respect of abortion.

“At that stage we were keen to try and come together as a group to act as a sounding board to each other and share ideas, particularly at a time when standards seemed to be becoming increasingly inimical to being a Catholic.

“Since then things have continued and gathered pace with respect to things like abortion and end of life issues such as euthanasia, etc. These are all very live issues at the moment and being discussed and considered.”

Mix

Similar to the experiences of many organisations during the outbreak of the pandemic, Covid “really blew a hole in everything” for the group according to Dr Holmes and this resulted in a cessation of in-person activity for five years. But the group is now once again gathering momentum and affording doctors with a Catholic conscience the opportunity to interact with one another and remind them that they’re not isolated from others who hold the same beliefs.

“Dignity cannot be expunged by appeals towards ‘compassion’, because it is simply not our right as humans to intentionally take the life of another, even more so for healthcare professionals, who are tasked with protecting and upholding human life”

“It’s important for us to have a group who can support each other and in some way hold ideas together,” Dr Holmes said. “We come from very different areas, medically, but some of these issues impact us all.

“We’ve always had a mixture of doctors and members of the religious and some others. While it is our seventh conference, they were annual until Covid came and then really blew a hole in everything and we lost a lot of ground. Our last conference was in 2021 and that wasn’t in-person so this is our first in-person conference since 2019. So we’re trying to regain momentum that had been lost during Covid.”

“We have two speakers who are priests, one of whom, Fr Luke MacNamara is also a doctor although non-practising. Then we have two doctors, one of whom is also a sister”

The schedule of the event is a curious one by modern norms and standards. There’s a healthy mixture of religious and medical, areas that would never be regarded compatible

by today’s political establishment, all speaking on a vast array of essential and compelling topics. Underpinning this conference are the principles of the Church’s new document on human dignity, *Dignitas Infinita*.

“We have two speakers who are priests, one of whom, Fr Luke MacNamara is also a doctor although non-practising. Then we have two doctors, one of whom is also a sister – so we have a lot of cross-fertilisation.

“The title of the conference is ‘Building Blocks for an Ethics of Healthcare’. The cornerstone of it is really the new papal document *Dignitas Infinita* which outlines that dignity cannot be expunged by appeals towards ‘compassion’, because it is simply not our right as humans to intentionally take the life of another, even more so for healthcare professionals, who are tasked with protecting and upholding human life. So Fr Luke MacNamara will speak about that and the other speakers will be touching on areas which are relevant to that.”

Ethics

The dramatic sociocultural trends that have emerged in this country over the past decade have arguably impacted no other sector greater than the healthcare sector and Dr Holmes admits that issues like the government repeatedly dishonouring its promises on important ethical issues

and the recent moves to see assisted suicide and euthanasia legalised in the country “worry” doctors and are both an “affront” to the principle of conscientious objection.

“The whole issue of end-of-life issues, including suicide and euthanasia, has really called into question the role of the doctor; whether a doctor is to uphold and support life,” Dr Holmes said. “We find the concept of medical personnel being involved in the deliberate taking of life to be anathema to the Hippocratic Oath.

“Most doctors of my acquaintance are very worried about these developments but the biggest worry is that it gets a foothold at all. Once these things get a foothold and once the exception is established as being acceptable then what you find is that the whole argument becomes distorted, the language becomes distorted, the word compassion becomes weaponised and suddenly the slippery slope starts again.

“People are allowed to conscientiously object as long as they organise for the procedure to be carried out elsewhere”

“Even when the repeal of the 8th Amendment happened, abortion was meant to be something that was in exceptional circumstances and now with the recent review of it, the criticism of it is that it’s not more widely available more quickly. So clearly what may start as a founding premise very quickly becomes pushed aside and the floodgates open.

“I think with regard to abortion, the issue of conscientious objection, it’s very clear the direction things are going. People are allowed to conscientiously object as long as they organise for the procedure to be carried out elsewhere, which of course absolutely flies in the face of what proper conscientious objection is.

“Our fear is that the same line of undermining will continue – particularly with euthanasia and assisted suicide if it becomes law and that’s just a shocking affront to conscientious objection.”

“Dr Holmes said. “We find the concept of medical personnel being involved in the deliberate taking of life to be anathema to the Hippocratic Oath”

📌 The 7th Annual Conference will take place September 21 at the St Charles Centre, Mount Argus, Harolds Cross, Dublin 6W. Register online: www.icdln.ie. All welcome.

‘Great sign of hope’ as numbers entering seminary rise again

Chai Brady,
Brandon Scott,
Renata Milan Morales,
Renata Steffens

The number of men entering formal seminary studies for dioceses around the country has reached 16 this year, according to figures compiled by *The Irish Catholic*.

The number of priests entering seminary hit an all-time low in 2021 with just six men putting themselves forward but since then the numbers have continued to increase. Nine students entered seminary studies for Ireland's 26 dioceses in 2022, and this number grew to 15 by 2023.

A further 18 men will begin a preparatory programme this year – known as a propaedeutic year – with the hope of entering seminary proper next year. Last year there were 12 men beginning a propaedeutic year.

The National Diocesan Vocations Coordinator Fr Willie Purcell said the figures are “wonderful” and that they reflect the success of the ‘Year for Vocations to Diocesan Priesthood’ which began in April 2023.

Fr Purcell said: “It shows that really the year was successful in promoting guys thinking about priesthood and discerning about priesthood. For me, it's definitely a sign of hope, and it's a sign that the year certainly was successful in creating an awareness of diocesan priesthood and vocations.

“I think there is great hope for the future, if the numbers are increasing, then it's a great sign of hope for the Catholic Church in Ireland and certainly for the diocesan priesthood. It also shows the great work being done by our diocesan vocation directors and I think they have to be acknowledged as well. In every diocese there's a diocesan vocations director, and while he has many other jobs, working in a parish, or in a school, chaplain to a hospital, in the midst of all that there is great work being done. We have to give them credit,” he added.

Fr Conor McGrath, Director of Vocations in the Diocese of Down and Connor, which has currently 5 men discerning their vocation at the propaedeutic year stage, said that accompaniment is vital in the creation of priestly vocations.

“The important thing I believe in, and I've tried to create for those who are dis-

cerning, is a sense of accompaniment with each other. I know that from my own experience of filling out that application form with the diocese how valuable wonderful support from the director of vocations is.

“We're talking professional people as well who have made a courageous choice to give up a very lucrative and comfortable life in order to follow the Lord.”

Director of Vocations for the Diocese of Derry, Fr Pat O'Hagan said that he is encountering consistent inquiries about vocations and this is separate to the men who are currently in seminary or taking their propaedeutic year.

“We have 11 others who are discerning a priestly vocation, accompanied by a priest of the diocese who will offer them spiritual direction and guidance. They've all already been in touch with me.

“There are also six other men who have recently expressed interest in exploring their call to priesthood. I am planning to meet them

before the end of September.”

Bishop Phonsie Cullinan of the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore, who is Chairman of the Council for Vocations of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference said that by far the most important action of the Year for Vocations to Diocesan Priesthood “was prayer – Masses offered, many hours of Adoration and the fervent prayers of anonymous people up and down the country”.

Bishop Cullinan said: “I have been hugely encouraged by the willingness of people to pray for priestly vocations and by the obvious love which the vast majority have for their priests. We are all aware of the dreadful failings of some priests in the past but this does not blind us from the good that priests do on a daily basis. God is still calling men, young and not so young, to this particular way of following Jesus Christ. We cannot give up hope and put all our energies into the provision of ministry by laity as if priesthood is a purely functional service industry – a kind of



Photo: OSV News /courtesy Archdiocese of Los Angeles

spiritual Caredoc.

“We all know the challenges and problems. We have rehearsed them time and again. The Lord is still calling men to follow Him in priesthood and to live for others.”

He added: “Though the Year of Vocation to Diocesan

Priesthood has ended the promotion of vocations to the priesthood must be on-going. We will always need priests. We need priests to Baptise, to offer Mass, to absolve sins, to anoint the sick, to preach the beauty and love of God's Word, to encourage, to bless and to lift up the human spirit and to lead people in God's ways.”

Diocese	Propaedeutic Year	Entering Seminary	Currently studying for priesthood
Archdiocese of Armagh	2	4	14
Diocese of Down and Connor	5	1	3
Diocese of Dromore	1	0	2
Diocese of Achonry	0	0	2
Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois	1	1	0
Diocese of Clogher	1	0	0
Diocese of Clonfert	0	0	0
Diocese of Cloyne	1	0	2
Diocese of Derry	4	0	5
Diocese of Cork and Ross	0	0	1
Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly	0	0	1
Archdiocese of Tuam	1	0	1
Diocese of Elphin	0	0	0
Diocese of Ferns	0	0	1
Diocese of Galway and Kilmacudagh	1	0	0
Diocese of Kerry	0	0	0
Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin	1	0	0
Archdiocese of Dublin	0	2	0
Diocese of Killala	0	0	0
Diocese of Killaloe	0	3	0
Diocese of Kilmore	0	0	0
Diocese of Limerick	0	0	0
Diocese of Meath	0	0	4
Diocese of Ossory	0	1	0
Diocese of Raphoe	0	2	3
Diocese of Waterford and Lismore	0	2	3
Total	18	16	44

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St Bernadette relics visit Killaloe and Limerick Dioceses

Renata Milán Morales

The pilgrimage of the relics of St Bernadette continues to attract significant numbers across Ireland, with a recent stop providing parishioners in the dioceses

of Limerick and Killaloe the opportunity to venerate the relics.

Many traveled from across the country, drawn by the chance to engage in prayer, reflection, and personal devotion to the saint.

The relics, which have been journeying throughout the country, represent an important

spiritual connection to St Bernadette of Lourdes, whose visions of the Virgin Mary in 1858 have long held special reverence within the Catholic Church.

The relics' visit is part of a larger international tour, offering the faithful an opportunity to deepen their connection with

St Bernadette. For many, the pilgrimage is a profoundly emotional and spiritual experience, providing comfort and inspiration.

Priests and local parish officials have organised special Masses and prayer services, allowing attendees to engage in communal worship

while in the presence of the relics. The faithful are encouraged to reflect on St Bernadette's humility, strength, and devotion during their time of prayer.

The relics' tour is set to continue throughout Ireland in the coming weeks, with further stops planned in various dioceses.



The Ennis Poor Clares welcome the St Bernadette relics to Co. Clare.



A line forms to venerate St Bernadette's relics at the Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul, Ennis in the Diocese of Killaloe.



The relics of St Bernadette arrive in Ennis in Killaloe diocese.



St Bernadette's relics visit Limerick diocese.



Mass is celebrated at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Childers Road, Limerick.



Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick is pictured during Mass during the visit of St Bernadette's relics to Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Childers Road in the Diocese of Limerick.



Crowds gather for the visit of St Bernadette's relics to Limerick.

Grains of truth in bushels of chaff



Breda O'Brien

Vanity Fair recently published an article by Kathryn Joyce with a headline designed to stir controversy: 'Behind the Catholic Right's Celebrity Conversion Industrial Complex.'

A bit like Kamala Harris, the article is all about the vibes and is short on details. Or rather, it is drowning in details but it does not add up to a coherent picture. During the pandemic, people started using the term 'chronically online' to describe people who spent so much time on the internet that their sense of reality and even their ability to communicate had become skewed.

Division

There is a whiff of the chronically online about the article. The author assumes that everyone knows who, for example, Candace Owens, Matt Fradd and Nick Fuentes are and that all are Catholics or Catholic converts. (For the not so chronically online, Candace Owens is an African-American conservative commentator recently banned from YouTube, Matt Fradd is a Catholic apologist and host of the podcast, 'Pints with Aquinas' and Nick Fuentes is an anti-semitic, white supremacist livestreamer.)

The article seems to equate the most strident, far-right voices in the Church with Bishop Robert Barron's Word on Fire, because both the far-right Catholics and

Bishop Barron are influencers. The writer quotes theologian Steven P. Millies: "Catholic parishes and schools are closing nationwide for lack of funds while influential Catholic outlets, like *Eternal World Television Network (EWTN)* or Bishop Robert Barron's hugely popular media ministry Word on Fire, draw more donations every year."

Millies believes that the really influential people in the Church are celebrities endorsing something alien to Catholicism - a brand.

“The world is in turmoil and insatiable algorithms generate divisions because divisions generate clicks”

The article also looks unfavourably at those who wear mantillas and attend Latin Mass. If this were an essay by a Leaving Cert student, I would ask things like - what is your thesis? What is your point?

I think the author's main point is that US Catholicism is out of control, in thrall to the alt-right, anti-Semitism, and resurgent patriarchy and still is regrettably anti-

abortion.

Joyce believes that the divisions in the Church map neatly onto political divisions and that influential people in the Catholic Church have gone full-MAGA.

Undoubtedly, the world is in turmoil and insatiable algorithms generate divisions because divisions generate clicks.

There is a grain of truth buried somewhere amongst bushels of chaff. Some US Catholics and indeed, some Irish Catholics, confuse conservatism with Catholicism, just as some Catholics have confused bog-standard left-liberalism with Catholicism.

But standard political divisions (even ones like left-right, which have begun to break down in the face of identity politics) do not even begin to tell the story of what Catholicism is about.

Core

Catholicism is about adherence to the teachings of Jesus, true man and true God, and his radical message of forgiveness of sin. There is a strong ethical code in Catholicism based both on the intrinsic value of every human being and the importance of community. There is an emphasis on care for the poor and all creation. It is a rich, nuanced belief system and it is lived out in messy

imperfection in the daily lives of millions.

We need to take particular care of the young men in our lives and be willing to discuss why Catholicism is far richer than any kind of political caricature. We should encourage them to serve the poor and introduce them to more positive online influences.

“The majority of young people I know who are involved in their faith are orthodox but not in thrall to dubious right-wing influencers”

Even in Ireland, I have been disquieted by small numbers of mostly young male converts or reverts (people who have grown up in lapsed households) who seem to think that becoming a staunch Catholic is the next logical step if you are economically right-wing and suspicious of feminism.

These converts or reverts

“The author's main point is that US Catholicism is out of control, in thrall to the alt-right, anti-Semitism, and resurgent patriarchy and still is regrettably anti-abortion”

often lack a deep theological grounding and are more inclined to like Jordan Peterson than Pope Francis.

But they are a tiny minority, even in a dwindling population of Catholics in Ireland. The majority of young people I know who are involved in their faith are orthodox but not in thrall to dubious right-wing influencers.

Welcome

There is other good news. Dioceses in London saw more than 850 converts this March while the number of those getting baptised as adults in France continues to rise. For example, last Easter, 7,135 adults received the sacrament of baptism in France,

an increase of almost a third on 2023 when 5,463 adults were baptised.

Of course, large numbers are also leaving the Church but it is still heartening to see people consciously choosing to enter instead. These are ordinary people, including families, who find the clarity and consistency of the Catholic message attractive and life-giving.

What can we do about the high-profile converts who are promoting hateful messages? Very little, except to pray for them and when the opportunity arises, to communicate to their potential followers that they are in no way representative of Catholics in general.

“Some US Catholics and indeed, some Irish Catholics, confuse conservatism with Catholicism, just as some Catholics have confused bog-standard Left-Liberalism with Catholicism”



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Exploring the vibrant Indian Catholic community in Ireland



The Syro-Malabar community are a bedrock of Irish society and the Church here could learn much from them, **Chai Brady** writes

Looking at the figures from the 2022 Central Statistics Office (CSO), the Indian community in Ireland grew exponentially in the year before the census, and this has continued to increase.

In 2022 there were 45,449 Indians – who were not Irish citizens – living in Ireland. While almost half of these Indian citizens were Hindu, interestingly almost a quarter were Catholic.

While Hinduism is one of the fastest growing religions in Ireland – with the number of adherents almost trebling from 2016 to 2022 – there were 10,624 (23%) Indians who are Catholic according to the latest census. They mostly belong to the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara communities which are two rites within the Catholic Church. This number has continued to grow, with more than 17,000 Syro-Malabars registered on the island of Ireland by 2024.

Given that just 1.5% of India's population is Catholic, they are significantly over-represented among the Indian migrant population here. Already their colourful presence is noticeable at Irish holy sites, and also during celebrations for feast days.

The Eastern Catholic Churches are different from the Western Catholic Church by their liturgy, spirituality, discipline and theology. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is one among 23 Eastern Churches and follow the East Syrian tradition. It is in full communion with the Holy See and worldwide Catholic Church.

The National Coordinator of the Syro-Malabars in Ireland is Fr Joseph Mathew Oliakkattil who puts the reason for the growing Syro-Malabar community in Ireland down to job opportunities and liv-



Syro-Malabar Catholics are pictured during their pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, Co. Mayo, earlier this year. Photo: Leo Thomas

“During the Covid-19 pandemic, the committed services of the Syro-Malabar nurses were well appreciated. Nowadays there are many people of our community who work in the IT field also”

ing standards.

Fr Joseph told *The Irish Catholic*: “The student visa for higher education studies is available, and the finance for the studies is available from the financial institutions of India to a large extent. The work visa for various professions is promoted by the Government of Ireland. Now in Ireland, including Northern Ireland, we have about 17,000 registered Syro-Malabar faithful. The actual numbers are more than this.”

Asked about the occupations of the Syro-Malabar faithful, Fr Joseph said that the majority work in the healthcare sector, both in hospitals and care homes, adding: “During the Covid-19 pandemic, the committed services of the Syro-Malabar nurses were well appreciated. Nowadays there are many people of our community who work in the IT field also.”

Ministry

Fr Joseph said the community has numerous ministries, movements and associations. The ministries include: Liturgy, Catechism, Bible Apostolate and Evangelisation, Family Apostolate, Family Units (Basic Catholic Communities), Youth Ministry, Children Ministry, Communication and Media.

He explained: “We promote Sunday liturgy because it is the day of our Lord Jesus. The identity and uniqueness

of our Syro-Malabar liturgy is promoted in every Mass centre. Catechism for the children up to senior cert is regular in all the Mass centres. There are 4,570 students and 577 teachers. All the teachers render their service voluntarily for the benefit of the children and the community. Altar servers are promoted in our community who serve the Eucharistic celebration. There are more than 600 altar servers in Ireland.

“The marriage preparation course is conducted three times a year for three days with a given syllabus and the average participation in a group is 50. The Knock annual pilgrimage on the second Saturday of May is a remarkable celebration of the Syro-Malabar community at national level. Youth ministry is a very challenging one and they are known as the ‘Syro-Malabar Youth Movement’ (SMYM) under the guidance of animators. It helps to develop leadership and engage the wider community.”

Xenophobia and racism

An *Irish Times/Ipsos* poll in May of 1,500 people, representative of about four million adults aged 18 and upwards, found that 36% identified immigration control as a source of concern – a massive increase from only 7% in 2022. At the time, 79% wanted the Government to do

more to manage the issue of immigration.

When it came to asylum seekers, 73% of people wanted the Government to do more regarding the deportation of people whose asylum application failed. Also, according to the poll, there was a call for a more closed policy regarding the number of asylum seekers coming to Ireland with 63% favouring tighter restrictions.

“The Irish community is alienated from their own land. The scarcity in housing facilities, the inflation and the socio-political situations make life more expensive”

Looking at the changing attitude towards migration and the possible negative feeling towards migrants themselves, Fr Joseph said that the Syro-Malabar community has not experienced targeted xenophobia to date, but he is concerned that the Irish Government's policy around immigration and asylum seekers may “accelerate such an attitude” in Irish

society.

Regarding the Syro-Malabar community, he said: “In Ireland there were no issues regarding immigration in earlier times. But the Government is accommodating a large number of refugees from other countries and provide them all kinds of facilities and security, this in one way or another affects migrant communities.

“While the Government, including the opposition parties, cater to the needs of refugees, the Irish community is alienated from their own land: The scarcity in housing facilities, the inflation and the socio-political situations make life more expensive.

“The appeasing of one community by promoting Halal food in schools is the latest example of how that affects other communities. There are a few people that think this situation is due to all migrants, as they may identify it with the refugees. This makes some sort of issues for the migrant communities, including Syro-Malabar. We don't have any specific instances of xenophobia, but the above situation will accelerate such attitudes.”

Secularism

The number of people who reported having no religion increased to 736,210, over 14%

of the population by 2022. This was an increase of 63% since the 2016 census, and of 187% since the 2011 census. There were a further 3,823 people who reported that they were Agnostic or Atheist.

Asked about the growing secularisation in Irish society, Fr Joseph said: “Secularism has affected Irish Faith life to a large extent. That is reflected in all the spiritual life of people here. The Government policies and new ideologies are a reason for that. The family bond and community aspects have decreased. Irish missionaries were the pioneers of the missionary work even in India. While the universal Church is flourishing there is a decrease in faith life today in Ireland.

“The secularism and the anti-religious attitude of the people [in Ireland] has decreased the Faith life. Even though we have institutions, good leadership: there are a lot of obstacles”

“Regarding the Syro-Malabar communities, catechism, family values, prayer life etc., they are strong and well promoted. The youth and children face the situation of secularism at present, and this will continue into the future – the signs of which are seen here and there,” he added.

Looking to the future of the Church in Ireland, and how the Syro-Malabars may be an evangelising presence by their witness, Fr Joseph said: “The Syro-Malabar community is a migrant community and as an Eastern Catholic Church we acknowledge our missionary responsibility to revive the Faith in this country. The strong family relationships, real Faith life, commitment to the Catholic life, new vocations to priesthood etc., would foster the

“Church-centred spirituality is to be developed and the definition of family as in the Constitution is to be regained through regular catechism, family visits, counselling, resolving the issues related to faith, making use of facilities and occasions for the revival of the Faith life”

History of the Syro-Malabars in Ireland

2000

The first Syro-Malabar migrants to Ireland arrived almost 25 years ago, according to Fr Joseph, and were a team of seven nurses who started work in the National Maternity Hospital in Dublin on August 31, 2000.

Priests of the Society of St Paul facilitated Mass for them in their own language (Malayalam, a language in India mainly spoken in the southern state of Kerala) in a house in Blackrock in Dublin. Later this shifted to Tallaght, where they availed of a church for regular celebration of Mass.

2004

By 2004, when there were about 300 Syro-Malabar families in Ireland, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, Cardinal Varkey Vithayathil sent Bishop Gregory Karotembrayil – chairman of the Migrant Commission of Syro-Malabar Church – to Ireland. By 2005, there were a considerable number of Syro-Malabar faithful in Tallaght, Lucan, Blanchardstown, Phibsborough, Swords, Bray and in Belfast.

2006

Fr Mathew Arakaparambil, and Fr Thankachan Njaliyath were officially appointed as the priests in charge of the Syro-Malabar community in Dublin. By the next year Fr Johnson Chaliserry was appointed in Cork. Chaplains began to be appointed in several dioceses across Ireland.

2014

On January 17, 2014, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference appointed Msgr Antony Perumayan as the National Coordinator who was in charge of the faithful in Belfast. There were about 13 priests who worked for the Syro-Malabar community across Ireland serving as curates in various dioceses, both in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

2016

On July 28 during the Jubilee year of Mercy, Pope Francis nominated Stephen Chirappanath, Titular Bishop of Slebte and Apostolic Visitor for the Syro-Malabar Faithful in Europe.

2024

Currently there are 128 Mass centres in Europe of which 37 are in Ireland, which now boasts 22 Syro-Malabar priests. There are 66 priests working in 14 countries in Europe – excluding Britain. From 2020-2022 Fr Clement Padathiparambil served as the National Coordinator of the community in Ireland until Fr Joseph took the reins in 2023.

revitalisation of Catholic faith. For instance, one of our children has started his journey to priesthood and is in the seminary now."

Fr Joseph, responding to a question about his hopes for the future, said: "The Catholic Church grew up through struggles and suffering. The secularism and the anti-religious attitude of the people [in Ireland] has decreased the Faith life. Even though we have institutions, good leadership: there are a lot of obstacles. Church-centred spirituality is to be developed and the definition of family as in the Constitution is to be regained through regular catechism, family visits, counselling, resolving the issues

related to faith, making use of facilities and occasions for the revival of the Faith life."

Administration

Looking at how they keep all their work going, Fr Joseph explained that the National Pastoral Council is the apex body of the Syro-Malabar administrative system. It is the consultative council constituted according to the teaching of the Church and adapted to the nature of the national coordination of the Syro-Malabar Church in Ireland. It comprises all the Syro-Malabar chaplains and the selected representatives from the Mass centres around Ireland to help the National Coordinator.

Regarding Syro-Malabar administration there are four regions consisting of 37 'Mass centres'. The Mass centres are formed mainly of a number of families and faithful and provide the facilities to deliver Mass and other spiritual assistance. The facilities for Catechism for children are also an important aspect.

Dublin has 14 Mass centres, Cork has 5, Galway, 11, and Belfast with 7. The centres span 19 dioceses, catered for by 22 priests working for the Syro-Malabar faithful in Ireland.

In each Mass centre there are basic Christian communities (BCC), consisting of 30 to 40 families and prayers and gatherings are conducted

almost every month. Representatives of the BCCs are part of Mass centre committees, which include representatives from various pious associations – men and women and children. The trustees are the elected members of the Mass centres and they manage finance with the assistance of the chaplain.

The Syro-Malabars are a

relatively young community, while there are not exact figures on Catholic Indians, it's known – through CSO 2022 statistics – that the Indian population pyramid in Ireland shows that there were two main age cohorts: almost 75% were aged from 23 to 43 years and the other main cohort was children of primary school age.

It's clear that the Syro-Malabars are, and will continue, making an important contribution to the Faith life of the Irish Church, and should be celebrated for their dedication and fervour in bringing Christ's message – through their words and deeds – in an environment where Catholicism is in decline.

“It's clear that the Syro-Malabars are, and will continue, making an important contribution to the Faith life of the Irish Church, and should be celebrated for their dedication and fervour in bringing Christ's message”



Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church poses with children and parents during the Syro-Malabar pilgrimage to Knock in May

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Young and old embrace 'the Millennial Saint'

Brandon Scott

The relic of the 'Millennial Saint', Blessed Carlo Acutis concluded its four-parish tour of Ireland on Tuesday, with hundreds of people, a considerable portion of them youth, flocking to churches in the Leinster region to catch a glimpse of the eternal teenager whose profound faith in the face of a terminal illness is inspiring young people to deepen their

own relationship with Christ and emulate Blessed Carlo's saintly nature.

The Relic first stopped in Dublin at St Patrick's Church in Corduff, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin which included an all-night vigil. From there, the Relic visited St Peter and Paul's Church in Portlaoise, Co. Laois followed by St Mary's Church in Navan, Co. Meath and concluded with a trip down the River Liffey to arrive at City Quay Parish in Dublin city.

Fr John Regan, Curate of St

Patrick's Corduff said the visit of the relic was inspired by a parishioner who was suffering from leukaemia – the same form of cancer Carlo died from at the age of fifteen in 2006.

"We had heard about Blessed Carlo, and we initiated bringing this Relic over," he said. "We were initially inspired to bring the Relic over from Assisi in part because we were looking for a way to inspire young people, and to get young people connected with their faith."

"Carlo suffered from a similar form of leukaemia to this parishioner in our parish. That evening, when we left the hospital room, we thought, 'Wouldn't it be lovely to get the Relic for him?' And so, I started getting in touch with the parish in Assisi, and with those responsible for the Relic. That was what put the initial idea in our hearts, and what made us put it into action."

Monsignor John Byrne of Portlaoise Parish was thrilled to host the relics, describing

the story of Blessed Carlo as an "apt and necessary image of a saint for the 21st century".

"He was a very impressive young man and I'm sure his canonisation will create a lot of excitement," he said. "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."

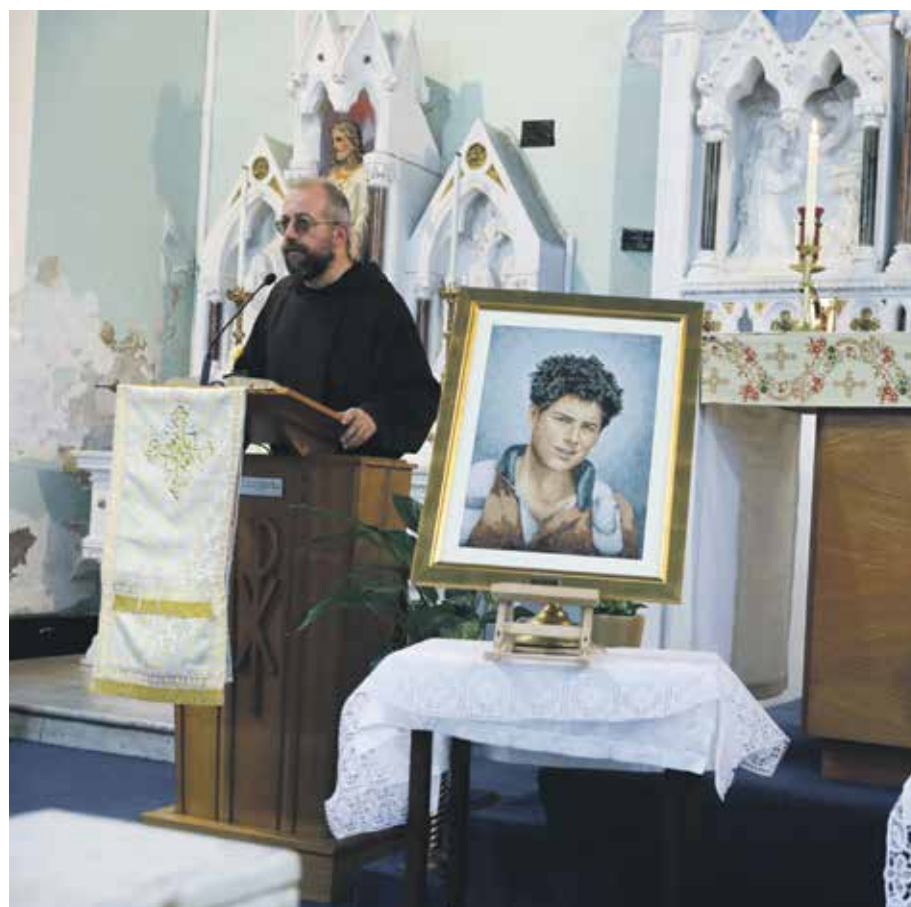
The relic then travelled to St Mary's Parish Navan before finally concluding

with a visit to City Quay Church Parish, Dublin city centre, on Tuesday.

The relic took a rather adventurous route to City Quay Parish, arriving by speedboat after travelling down the River Liffey. There was a procession with the Knights of Columbanus and Fr Marco OFM Cap., custodian of Blessed Carlo Acutis' relics in Assisi. From there, devotees took part in a rosary before the day concluded with Mass and a blessing with the relic.



The relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis travels across the River Liffey before its arrival at City Quay Church. Photo: John McElroy.



Fr Marco OFM Cap. at City Quay Parish.



Paul Uzo and Gerard Lawlor of the Knights of St Columbanus with Fr Marco and the relic of Blessed Carlo over the River Liffey



Devotees venerate the relic of Blessed Carlo



A parishioner venerates the relic at City Quay Parish.



A parishioner venerates the relic at City Quay Parish.



Bishop Denis Nulty speaking at the Mass.



Fr John O'Connor, PP of St Patrick's Church in Corduff with the relic. Photo: Eileen Kumar.



Schoolchildren gather for Mass at St Patrick's Church, Corduff. Photo: Niamh Deane.



Fr Marco speaks to a packed St Patrick's Church in Corduff.



Priests of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin celebrating Mass in Portlaoise Parish with Bishop Denis Nulty. Photo: Portlaoise Parish.

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Out&About

Bringing together a band of brothers



LIMERICK: Gerry Buckley (secretary), Larry Power, Padraig Slattery and Declan Breen (President) were pictured at a recent investiture of the Knights of St Columbanus at Glenstal Abbey.



LIMERICK: New pupils at Doon CBS pictured with Ms Elizabeth Doherty (left), class teacher and Ms Joanne O'Connell, school principal.



MAYO: Maria and Paul Tant, Carole Duffy, Bríd Duffy, Sr Rosario Waldron, Fr Jerald David, Adm, Aghamore, Fr Joe Feeley, Paudrig Burke at the re-inauguration ceremony at St Joseph's Church, Aghamore on September 1.

IN SHORT

Culmullen celebrates housekeeper retirement and priest birthday

Recently, Dunshaughlin and Culmullen parish in Culmullen, Co. Meath celebrated a Mass to mark the retirement of Imelda Kelly, the parochial housekeeper and the 80th birthday of Fr Joseph (Joe) Clavin AP.

Ms Kelly had been working for the parish since 2002, same year Fr Clavin became PP of that parish.

Fr Clavin and parish priest Fr Sean Henry paid tribute to Ms Kelly in the Church of Ss Patrick and Sechnall, when Fr Henry mentioned she was the contact point between the community and the parish, on top of her normal duties. She would be responsible to dealing with queries in the evenings and on the weekends when the parochial house was closed.

Fr Henry presented Ms Kelly and Fr Clavin

with photographs of the two local parish houses. After the Mass, family, friends and community gathered in the pastoral centre to celebrate the former housekeeper and the priest.

Cork and Ross appoints new Youth Ministry Coordinator

Cork and Ross Bishop Fintan Gavin has appointed a new Youth Ministry Coordinator. Sheila Kelleher is based at the diocese offices in Redemption Road and will also start on the role of digital communications.

Ms Kelleher comes from Clontead Parish and has worked with the chaplaincy at UCC for the last few years.

In a statement on the diocese's website, they said "Youth Ministry is about supporting the outreach of families of parishes, colleges,

and schools and 'wherever two or three' young people gather, to bring the message of Christ to them in new ways."

The diocese explained Ms Kelleher will not only work with the group who is already involved in programmes for young people, but also help those interested in taking the first steps in the youth ministry mission.

For her communications role, Ms Kelleher will "concentrate on helping the faith communities across the diocese to tell the Good News, especially using online means of communication."

Beloved priest dies in Co. Wexford

The Diocese of Ferns priest, Fr James (Jim) Furlong has died peacefully on Monday, September 9 at Cherry Grove nursing home in Campile, Co. Wexford. The priest was a native of Adamstown, he spent much of his minis-

try in London, but also served the Duncannon parish priest.

Removal to St Abban's Parish Church, Adamstown for liturgical reception followed by reposal in St Abban's Church happened on September 12, the funeral Mass on September 1, was live streamed through Adamstown Parish Church Facebook page, and his body was buried in the adjoining cemetery afterwards.

"Pre-deceased by his sister Kathleen, brother-in-law Seamus and sister-in-law Mary. He will be sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving brother Ned, sister Peggy and her husband Martin, his nieces and nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews, extended family," the diocese said on a Facebook post.

The diocese also said Bishop Ger Nash and fellow clergy and religious brothers and sisters and parishioners will miss the beloved priest.

Edited by Renata Steffens
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



TYRONE: The Lourdes Grotto once on the grounds of Loreto Convent at Brook Street has found its new home in St Mary's Church, Drumragh. The grotto blessing service happened on September 8.



TYRONE: The service of blessing of the Lourdes Grotto in St Mary's Church, Drumragh happened on September 8.



SLIGO: Members of the Jesus Caritas Fraternity of priests with Cardinal Sean Brady at their annual retreat in Star of the Sea, Mullaghmore.



Westmeath: Fr William Coleman, Fr Liam Carey and parishioners marking the Anniversary of Eucharistic Adoration in Rochfortbridge Parish recently.



LIMERICK: New pupils at Scoil Iosagain CBS Sexton St, with teachers Ms Aisling Ryan and Maeve Moroney.



LIMERICK: New pupils at Scoil Iosagain CBS Sexton St, with teachers Ms Deirdre O'Rourke and Siobhan Neill.

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

Carrigaline Parish, Prayer Circle for vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life in the Diocese or Cork and Ross. First Sunday of each month 5pm - 6pm in the Church of Our Lady and St John Carrigaline. All welcome.

DERRY

The Lady of Montigeon Prayer Group meets every Wednesday at 10am in the Kildare Room, adjacent to St Brigid's Parochial House, Carnhill, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The Group also meets monthly in, Termonbaca, for the intercession of priests: 7.30pm on October 14, November 11 and December 9.

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

'Life in the Spirit Seminars' is a partnership initiative of the Donnybrook, Booterstown, Milltown and Merrion Road parishes. The first will take place on September 25 from 7.30pm to 9pm at the parish pastoral centre of Booterstown. The last seminar will be on November 20. For more information email centre@booterstownparish.ie.

Pub Food and Faith - The Lotts Café Bar D01 N727 - Two Groups: In Vino Veritas (25-35 years, begins 25th September 7:15, contact 087 4523431) and Decanting Dominic (18-25 years, begins 2nd October 7:15, contact 083 4829782)

GALWAY

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@poor-clares.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

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.

MAYO

The next Latin Mass will take place on Sunday October 13 in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel Knock at 6pm.

MONAGHAN

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

TYRONE

Omagh Charismatic Prayer Group meetings take place in The Pastoral Centre on Thursday evenings with Rosary at 7.30pm and prayer meeting at 8pm. All welcome to come and pray.

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

Eucharistic procession reminds us of Ireland's Catholic identity



Renata Milán Morales

Nearly 1,000 people filled the streets of Dublin on September 14 2024, following the Blessed Sacrament. The event, a highlight of the 'Walk The Cross' pilgrimage, saw pilgrims journey over 100 kilometres from Clonmacnoise to the capital, culminating in a procession that held powerful witness to Irish Catholicism.

The pilgrimage commenced at the historic monastic site of Clonmacnoise, where the faithful gathered for Mass. Central to the journey was the cross, a unifying symbol for the pilgrims as they travelled through towns and villages, offering prayers and hymns for Ireland's spiritual renewal.

"It's all for God's glory. And it's for our country. It's for our children. It's for the Church. It's for the unborn. It's in reparation for sins. It's for blasphemies against the Sacred Hearts. Jesus has a big plan for Ireland," declared Anto Crossey, the man behind 'Walk The Cross,' in an interview with this paper.

Impact

As the procession made its way through rural Ireland, its numbers grew with pilgrims joining at each stop. By the time they reached Dublin, anticipation had built to a peak. Escorted by the Gardaí, the group made its way through the city. For the first time since the pilgrimage started on September 11, the Blessed Sacrament led the way. Beginning at St Peter's Church in Phibsboro, the procession moved through the bustling O'Connell St. and along Henry St. before arriving at St Mary of the Angels Church. Bystanders, struck

by the sight, responded with deep reverence - many knelt in prayer or made the sign of the cross, visibly moved by Christ's presence in the heart of the city.

"It was to show that Irish faith is still alive," said Karen, one of the event organisers. "The procession was vibrant, full of joy, and it gave people so much hope, joy, and peace in this troubled world."

Karen emphasised that the event was more than just a procession. It was a public declaration of enduring faith in a nation where Catholicism has faced significant challenges in recent years. "We wanted to be a witness, to say: the faith is still there. It's not an exclusive club. People can have their faith back. It's there if they want it."

“It was a true witness through the streets of Dublin. You could see the joy in their hearts, people really proud of their Catholic faith”

The pilgrimage's emotional crescendo came with the closing Mass at St Mary of the Angels, celebrated by Fr Brendan Kiely. The church overflowed with faithful, with many of them standing outside to be part of the moment. The melodies of the Uilleann pipes filled the air, blending Ireland's rich cultural heritage with the spiritual significance of the occasion.

Karen was deeply moved by the public's response to the procession. "The reaction was incredible. People on their knees, blessing themselves as we passed. It was a true witness through the streets of Dublin. You could see the joy in their hearts, people really proud of their Catholic faith."

The inspiration for the Eucharistic Procession through Dublin as part of 'Walk The Cross' had its roots in Medjugorje, where Karen's husband, Brian, felt a divine calling during adoration to walk from Clonmacnoise to Dublin and conclude with a Eucharistic Procession. He reached out to Anto Crossey, asking if this could be the route for 'Walk The Cross' 2024.

Anto took time to pray over it. Later, a woman from Northern Ireland confirmed the idea while Anto was at Knock, saying she too had felt a similar spiritual calling. "It was the confirmation we needed," Karen explained.

As the pilgrimage took shape, so too did their resolve to bring the Eucharistic procession to Dublin. "People are hungry for it, asking us to do it annually, some even wanting it four times a year," Karen said.

This year's event built on a similar pilgrimage in 2023, where participants walked from each of Ireland's four provinces to Clonmacnoise for Mass. "Last year, we walked 33 miles from each province into Clonmacnoise, representing Leinster, Connaught, Ulster, and Munster. This year, even more people joined. We had worshippers standing outside the church, unable to get in," Karen noted.

Reflection

Reflecting on the procession, Fr Brendan, during the post-procession Mass, said, "It's enlightening and encouraging for me as a priest to witness your faith... Heaven accompanied us all yesterday, especially as we carried Jesus through the troubled streets of Dublin. It was spiritually uplifting, and everyone felt the graces emanating from the Blessed Eucharist."

Now that the procession has ended, those involved are seeking guidance on what comes next. "This is all part of the Lord's plan. We don't move ahead of Him. We're praying now about where to go next. This year, we were called to Dublin, and it was a true witness of faith," Karen said.

The Eucharistic procession left a permanent mark on both participants and the city itself. What began as a pilgrimage to revive the Catholic spirit among the Irish became a powerful public witness of faith in Dublin, proving that despite decades of secularisation, Catholicism remains deeply intertwined with Ireland's identity.



A group of pilgrims at the Mass.



Some of the pilgrims at the Mass in the Church of St Mary of the Angels, Church St.



Knights of the Most Holy Blessed Sacrament from Derry at the Mass in the church of St Mary of the Angels, Church St.

“As the pilgrimage took shape, so too did their resolve to bring the Eucharistic procession to Dublin. “People are hungry for it, asking us to do it annually, some even wanting it four times a year”



Fr Brendan Kealy carrying the monstrance through the streets of Dublin on the final day of Walk The Cross and Eucharistic Procession, September 14. Photos: John McElroy.



A musical moment as people arrive at St Mary of the Angels Church for Mass on the final day of Walk The Cross and Eucharistic Procession.



Caroline and David O' Connor with Grace (5) at the Mass in the church of St Mary of the Angels, Church St



Fr Brendan Kealy carrying the monstrance through the streets of Dublin



Fr Brendan Kealy carrying the monstrance through the streets of Dublin.



Mass in St Mary of the Angels Church



Michael Walls (Tyrone), Aileen Quirke (Cavan), Geraldine Halton (Meath), Eileen Boden (Down), Anne Quinn (Armagh), Mark Quinn (Armagh) and Tommy Higgins (Galway)



Fr Brendan Kealy carrying the monstrance through the streets of Dublin as the procession stops at the spire for a short prayer.



Ann Dwyer (Kilkenny), Cliona Liddy (Dublin), Fr Timothy Moran (Dublin), Kathleen Rowe Collins (Kilkenny), Patrick Owens (Kilkenny) and Josephine Kirwan-Malone (Kilkenny)

The gift of indulgences

Staff reporter

The acclaimed Irish spiritual writer of the twentieth century, Blessed Columba Marmion, once wrote in a letter to a missionary nun in the tropics: "All that God does for us proceeds from His mercy. God builds an eternal monument to His mercy in Heaven. The stones of this monument are the miserable who draw down mercy by their misery. For mercy is goodness in the face of misery". The misery which attracts God's mercy and of which Bl. Columba speaks encompasses all the crosses, toils, and disappointments of life; it even encompasses our chief form of misery – sin. By acknowledging before God, the depth of our misery, we call upon and attract the depth of Divine Mercy: "Deep calls on deep" (Ps. 42:7) sang King David. This introduction provides the proper context for the following discussion on sin and punishment. Remember then, as you continue reading, that "we know that to them that love God, all things worth together unto good" (Rom 8:28) – even our sins, as Saint Augustine aptly remarked.

Remedy

In order to understand the gift of indulgences, we need to first understand the problem that they are a remedy for. Sin causes a two-fold problem in us: the stain of guilt and the debt of punishment. Although the debt of punishment for serious or mortal sin is an eternal debt, all sin of whatever kind or degree of seriousness also incurs a non-eternal (temporal) debt of punishment. The following example from Sacred Scripture illustrates this. Infamously, King David committed the sins of adultery and murder – sins for which he incurred both the stain of guilt and also an eternal debt of punishment. However, after he sincerely repented, God in His mercy proclaimed through the Prophet Nathan: "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Sam. 12:13). This verse indicates that David was forgiven of both the stain of guilt and the eternal debt of punishment. However, there was still a temporal debt of punishment remaining: "Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die" (2 Sam 12:14).



Official logo for the Holy Year 2025 is seen on display at the International Religious Products and Services Exhibition in Bologna, Italy, February 2024. Photo: CNS/Justin McLellan

ishment remaining: "Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die" (2 Sam 12:14).

“The moment we hear the words of absolution from the priest, all stain of the guilt of our sins and any debt of eternal punishment due to them is utterly and completely forgiven”

Even if we have not heard these kind of terms before, we all have first-hand experience of the truths they represent whenever we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In that Sacrament we receive both absolution: "...I absolve you of your sins..."; and a penance, for example 'For your penance please pray one Our Father and one Hail Mary'. The moment we hear the words of absolution from the priest, all stain of the guilt of our sins and any debt of eternal punishment due to them is utterly and completely forgiven. However, we still receive a penance. This assigned penance is aimed at addressing and diminishing any debt of temporal punishment which remains for our

sins now forgiven. However, even after we complete our assigned penance, it is likely that we still have some debt of temporal punishment which we owe to God. Quite naturally, this raises the following question: "If God has forgiven us of the stain of guilt and the debt of eternal punishment due to our sins through Christ's passion, death, and resurrection, why does He not also forgive us of the debt of temporal punishment?" Pope Saint Paul VI offers the following reply:

Justice

It is a divinely revealed truth that sins bring punishments inflicted by God's sanctity and justice. These must be expiated either on this Earth through the sorrows, miseries and calamities of this life and above all through death, or else in the life beyond through fire and torments or 'purifying' punishments [purgatory]. ...These punishments are imposed by the just and merciful judgment of God for the purification of souls, the defence of the sanctity of the moral order and the restoration of the glory of God to its full majesty (Indulgentiarum Doctrina, §2, emphasis added).

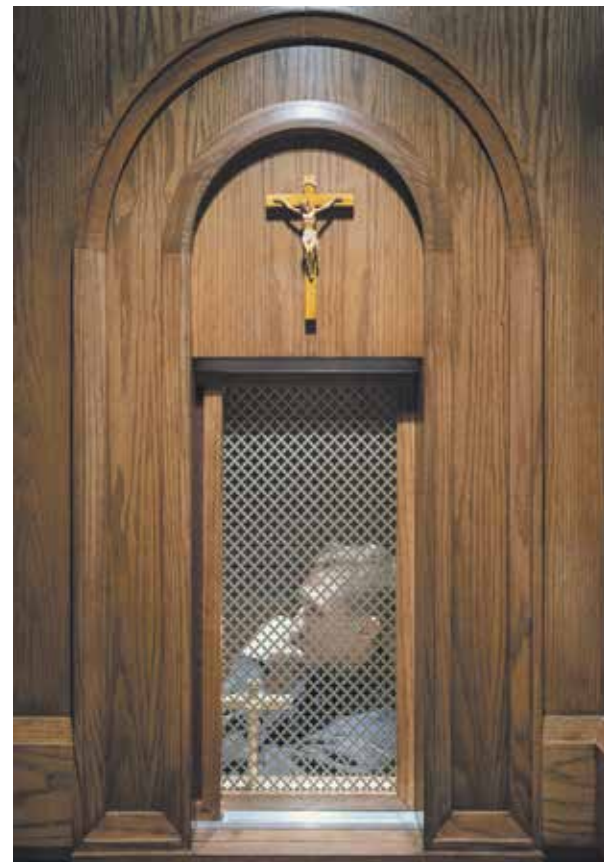
For an earthly analogy, a mother may still inflict some form of punishment upon her child who committed some fault against her even after she has forgiven it. She may do this in order to correct or purify her child's idea that their action was acceptable, to defend the sanctity of the moral order damaged by the fault and restore the dignity of her motherly authority (which is always at the service of her child's good). Thus, like an earthly parent, "the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights" (Prov. 3:12).

Where do indulgences come into all of this? Similar to other remedies for the debt of temporal punishment such as prayers, masses, almsgiving, and works of penance (cf. CCC §1032), indulgences derive all of their good effects from Christ's redemption and effect within us the redemption that Christ merited for us.

“If you gain a plenary indulgence on behalf of a soul in purgatory, they will immediately enter into the glory of Heaven”

An indulgence is the remission or removal by God of the debt of temporal punishment for sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. There are two kinds of indulgences. A partial indulgence remits or removes only part of the debt of temporal punishment. A plenary indulgence, however, remits or removes all of the debt of temporal punishment. In both cases this is only for sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. This means that if you gain a plenary indulgence on behalf of a soul in purgatory, they will immediately enter into the glory of Heaven.

Examples of prescribed works for plenary indulgences include: a visit to the Blessed Sacrament for at least half an hour; the reading of Sacred Scripture for at least half an hour; the recitation of five-decades of the Rosary in a Church or public Oratory. Further options may be found in the following document available online: *Enchiridion of Indulgences*.



In order to gain an indulgence, certain conditions must be met, and certain prescribed works must be completed. Before listing these, note that indulgences cannot be gained on behalf of other living persons on Earth. They can only be applied either to oneself or to the holy souls in purgatory. To gain a plenary indulgence, which can be gained only once per day, the faithful must:

Confessed

- Have sacramentally confessed their sins twenty days before or after the prescribed work to be performed.

- Have received the Holy Eucharist twenty days before or after the prescribed work to be performed.

- Have prayed for the intentions of the Holy Father twenty days before or after the prescribed work to be performed. One 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary' are suggested.

- Have performed a prescribed work with at least the general intention of acquiring the indulgence (cf. Code of Canon Law 996 §2). This work must have been performed – at least at the time of its completion – while in the state of grace.

- Have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin. Note that whilst this condition does not mean one never sins, it is undoubtedly a high bar. Do not let that discourage you however, if you do not meet that bar you still gain a partial indulgence which is of immense benefit.

Examples of prescribed works for plenary indulgences include:

ences include: a visit to the Blessed Sacrament for at least half an hour; the reading of Sacred Scripture for at least half an hour; the recitation of five-decades of the Rosary in a Church or public Oratory. Further options may be found in the following document available online: *Enchiridion of Indulgences*.

“A separate reception of Holy Communion and a separate prayer for the Holy Father's intentions are required for each individual plenary indulgence”

It is important to note that whilst one sacramental confession suffices for the gaining of several plenary indulgences (that is, any gained both twenty days before or after the confession), this is not the case for the second and third points. In other words, a separate reception of Holy Communion and a separate prayer for the Holy Father's intentions are required for each individual plenary indulgence. All these specifications may be found in The Gift of the Indulgence promulgated by the Apostolic Penitentiary on January 29, 2000.

Keep an eye out during the celebrations of the Jubilee Year 2025 for additional special options for prescribed works!

“If God has forgiven us of the stain of guilt and the debt of eternal punishment due to our sins through Christ's passion, death, and resurrection, why does He not also forgive us of the debt of temporal punishment?”

Pope in multi-faith Singapore says 'all religions are a path to God'



Elise Ann Allen

In a line that may once again stir reaction in more traditional Catholic quarters, Pope Francis on Friday wrapped up a three-day visit to Singapore, a country with large pockets of at least five different faiths, that "all religions are a path to God".

"They are like different languages in order to arrive at God, but God is God for all," the Pope said, who had set aside his prepared text and spoke largely off the cuff. "Since God is God for all, then we are all children of God."

The Pontiff made his remarks during a interreligious meeting with young people held at a Catholic junior college, just prior to departing Singapore for his return flight to Rome.

Such rhetoric has stirred controversy in the path among more conservative Catholics who fear that it calls into question Catholic doctrine on Christ as the lone saviour of the world and also undercuts missionary efforts to bring people to the faith.

Warned

When the Pope used similar language at an interfaith meeting during a 2022 trip to Kazakhstan, Auxiliary Bishop Athanasius Schneider of the national capital of Astana, a frequent papal critic, warned that it risked creating a "supermarket of religions".

Judging by his remarks Friday, however, the Pontiff has not been deterred by such blowback.

"If you start to fight, 'my religion is more important than yours, mine is true and yours isn't', where will that lead us?" he asked aloud. "There's only one God, and each of us has a language to arrive at God. Some are Sheik, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and they are different paths [to God]."

Catholics in Singapore make up about 3.5% of the population of just under 6 million. Overall, Christians of all types represent about 19% of the population, Buddhists 31% and Muslims 15%, with significant Hindu and Sikh minorities as well.

The Pontiff exhorted



Pope Francis rides around Singapore's National Stadium before celebrating Mass September 12, 2024. Photo: CNS photo/Vatican Media

young people to engage in interfaith dialogue.

"For interreligious dialogue among young people, it takes courage, because youth is the time of courage in our lives," he said. "You can also have this courage and use it for things that don't help you, or you can use it to move forward and engage in dialogue. One thing that helps a lot is to respect dialogue."

"If you dialogue as young people, you will dialogue more as adults, as citizens, as politicians"

"I want to tell you something historical: every dictatorship in history, the first thing they do is take away dialogue," Pope Francis told the gathering of roughly 600 young people from 50 schools and religious organi-

sations in Singapore.

The Pope invited the youth "to do everything possible to maintain a courageous attitude and promote an environment in which young people can enter into dialogue, because interreligious dialogue is something that creates a path".

"If you dialogue as young people, you will dialogue more as adults, as citizens, as politicians," he said.

"Interreligious dialogue is built on respect for others. This is very important," he said.

On other fronts, Pope Francis touched on two other familiar themes in his sessions with youth: The proper use of technology, and the dangers of bullying, especially with regard to young people with disabilities.

Technology

"Technology is something that we have to use, but we have to be attentive to the

risks that come with it," noting that was actually the theme of his prepared speech.

On the one hand, the Pope said young people need to be adept in a multimedia world.

"A young person who is scattered, lost. All young people must use media, but use media because they help us to go forward, but not become slaves of it"

"A young person who doesn't follow the media, what are they like? Closed, closed in on themselves," he said.

On the other, he also warned that youth should not become "enslaved" to technology.

"A person who lives totally enslaved to media,

how are they?" he asked. "A young person who is scattered, lost. All young people must use media, but use media because they help us to go forward, but not become slaves of it."

With regard to bullying, the pope called it "something terrible."

The pontiff noted that bullying often is directed at youth perceived as weaker, such as someone who is disabled. He pointed to the fact that during the interreligious meeting, there had been a dance performed by four young people with Down syndrome.

"Everyone has some disability, even the Pope," he said. "Just as we have our own disabilities, we have to respect the disabilities of others."

Pope Francis included a characteristic appeal to youth to take chances.

Courage

"Young people must have the courage to build, to go forward, to leave their comfort zones," he said. "A young person who chooses to be comfortable in their lives gets fat. But the stomach doesn't get fat, the mind does!"

"This is why I say take

risks, go out!" he told the youth. "Don't be afraid. Fear is a dictatorial attitude, and it paralyses you."

"The traits he believes are important for pastors, saying they must be 'in the midst of the people, united with God, brothers among you and united with the bishop'"

Prior to his departure Friday morning, Pope Francis also held a private meeting with the bishops, priests and religious of Singapore, which was attended by the president of the Episcopal Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

In his brief address, the Pope spoke of the traits he believes are important for pastors, saying they must be "in the midst of the people, united with God, brothers among you and united with the bishop."

He also reminded nuns to not forget "to express the motherhood of the Church," and urged everyone to keep smiling.

World Report

IN BRIEF

Nigerian military issues apology over assault on priest

● In a significant move towards reconciliation, the Nigerian military has issued an apology for the August 5 assault on Fr Bernard Unum and his stewards at All Saints Ikyaior Catholic Church in the northeast of Nigeria.

The attack, which resulted in one steward losing his eye, has been acknowledged by Brigadier General Kingsley Uwa, who is the commander of the Jalingo area in Taraba State. The parish was in the nearby village of Wukari.

Bishop Mark Maigida Nzukwein of the Catholic Diocese of Wukari confirmed the military's efforts to make amends, highlighting the importance of this gesture in healing the community.

The bishop said General Uwa "has taken full responsibility" for the military's attack on the priest.

Recently ordained US priest accused of sexual assault

● A recently ordained priest in Chicago is denying accusations from Illinois state officials that he molested a child during a recent penance service that allegedly took place at a youth retreat.

A letter from Chicago archbishop Cardinal Blase Cupich to St Josaphat Parish, posted this month to the Archdiocese of Chicago's website, said the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

"has opened an investigation into allegations they termed child exploitation and child molestation" allegedly committed by Fr Martin Nyberg.

The incident allegedly occurred during a "public penance service", according to the archbishop. Fr Nyberg has served as an associate pastor at St Josaphat in the city's Sheffield neighbourhood since July of this year, the prelate said.

US bishops advocate against Marijuana legalisation

● A little less than two months before polls open, North Dakota's Catholic bishops are urging the faithful to vote no on a state ballot proposal that would legalise marijuana for recreational use, citing how "individuals, families, and communities will be significantly harmed".

Measure 5 will be on North Dakota ballots November 5, which, if approved, would allow adults 21 and over to grow, sell, possess and use Marijuana in the state for recreational purposes. North Dakota voters rejected similar ballot proposals in 2018 and 2022.

Bishop David Kagan of Bismarck and Bishop John Folda of Fargo took a stance against Measure 5 in a September 10 statement to parishioners. They anchored their opposition with the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which teaches that "the use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offence".

'Catholic bloc' in Brazil's Senate an effort to counter Evangelicals

● A new and largely unprecedented "Catholic bloc" in the Senate in Brazil, the largest Catholic country on earth, has been presented by its founders as a way to defend Catholic "moral and ethical values", but denounced by critics as unrepresentative of the wider Church.

Officially launched on September 4, the bloc is seen by many observers as an attempt by Catholic legislators to replicate the success of Brazil's 'Evangelical Caucus' in parliament and among government officials, which, were it a formal political party, would be the third largest in the country.

Notably, although some Brazilian bishops attended the September 4 launch event, including Cardinal Paulo Cezar Costa of the national capital Brasilia, the country's bishops conference has said it was not consulted about the initiative and has no ties to it.

The Catholic bloc was founded by Senator Marcos Pontes, a military officer who in 2006 visited the International Space Station and became the first – and, until now, the only – Brazilian astronaut.

Priest urges Nigerian Church to address youth 'returning to paganism'

While many Catholic leaders in Nigeria are concerned about the influence of Pentecostalism, Catholics in the southeastern parts of the country are concerned about another trend.

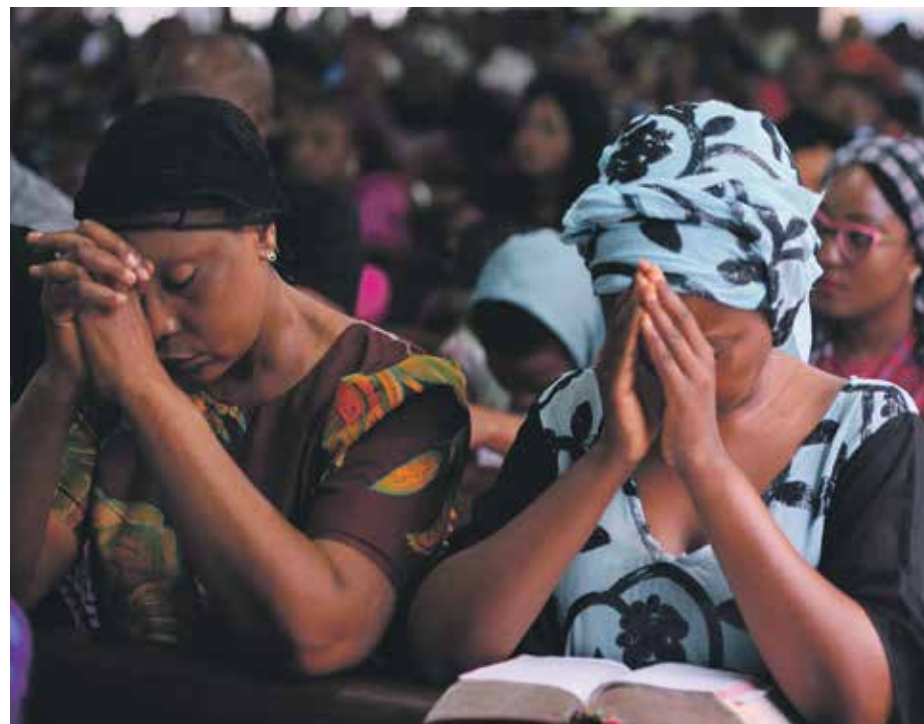
In rural parts of the West African country, the number of young people participating in Sunday Mass has plummeted and continues to fall as many of them turn to paganism.

Fr Vitalis Anaehobi serves in the region and said that most of the young people he has spoken to are gripped by "difficulties in life" such as poverty, unemployment, and "the failure by the Church to protect them" as attacks against Christians continue in the country where religious-based persecution is one of the highest in the world.

In an interview with *ACI Africa*, CNA's news partner in Africa, regarding concerns about the growth of private ministries linking themselves to the Catholic Church in Nigeria, Fr Anaehobi said: "We are not upset by the influence of these ministries. The greatest fear we have, especially in southeast Nigeria where I am based, is the fact that young people are going back to traditional religion".

He said that the youth in rural villages in Nigeria are not going to Pentecostal churches but to religions that their forefathers abandoned when they embraced Christianity.

"Our youths are going



Women are pictured in a file photo praying during Mass at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Abuja, Nigeria. Photo: OSV News/Afolabi Sotunde, Reuters

back to paganism," Fr Anaehobi told *ACI Africa*. "This emerging trend is nowhere on social media but for us here, this is our greatest worry. Very young boys and girls are going back to these practices."

Fr Anaehobi, who is the secretary-general of the Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa (RECOWA), said that at the heart of the worrying trend is the increasing insecurity in the region.

"There is the false belief that in the face of the current insecurity in the region,

Christianity cannot protect anyone. [The youth] believe that with traditional religion, they can obtain some way to protect themselves," he said.

"According to our young people, Christianity is not as practical as traditional religion. When you go to the churches in our villages, you will not find young people there. They are out there practicing traditional religion."

The priest said that because of poverty and lack of employment, young people there, especially in the

rural parts of the country, are avoiding the Church where they are told "to go ahead and give the little they have to get blessings".

They say that with traditional religion, no one is allowed to give much, Fr Anaehobi shared with *ACI Africa*, adding that young people embracing African religious practices instead "meet, slaughter animals, perform rituals, dance, and go home with full stomachs".

At the moment, this trend can only be observed in rural villages.

Self-professed archbishop, primate denounced by Fatima and Rome as a fake

A self-professed Catholic bishop and primate, who was ordained to the priesthood by the excommunicated Zambian Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo in 2009, and who's built a following in part on the basis of performing exorcisms, has been denounced by both the dioceses of Fatima and Rome as a fraud.

Self-professed Bishop

Salvatore Micalef, born in a small town in southern Italy in 1974, presents himself as a bishop and primate of an international Catholic prelature called 'Sts Peter and Paul'. Under that guise, he's organised liturgies which include healings and exorcisms in various parts of the world, including both the famed Marian sanctuary of Fatima in Portugal and in the

city of Rome itself.

In fact, there is currently only one personal prelature in the Catholic Church recognised by the Vatican, which is Opus Dei.

Last year, the Diocese of Leiria-Fátima in Portugal distanced itself from so-called "Healing and Liberation" retreats held in hotels near the shrine, with the participation of Micalef.

A statement signed by Fr Jorge Guarda, vicar general of the diocese, stated that Micalef "was ordained priest and bishop without a mandate from the Holy Father" and therefore "is not in communion with the Holy See".

The statement, issued in June 2023, indicated that the case had also been referred to the Vatican.

French bishops release files on Abbé Pierre amid sex abuse claims

The bishops of France have decided to release archive files related to the famous priest Abbé Pierre nearly six decades ahead of schedule amid multiple claims of sexual abuse involving the late cleric.

Famed for his resistance work in World War II and later his founding of

the poverty ministry Emmaus, Abbé Pierre died in 2007. In recent months, numerous allegations have surfaced regarding alleged sexual misconduct by the priest.

A July 17 report released by the Emmaus Movement detailed claims from several alleged victims largely

consisting of Emmaus employees and volunteers as well as young women in Pierre's social circle. Multiple new allegations were revealed this month.

The French bishops, meanwhile, are making available documents related to the priest that would otherwise not have been released until the 2080s.



Edited by Brandon Scott
brandon@irishcatholic.ie

When cultures connect



Pope Francis gestures when greeting a man in traditional dress during a meeting with young people at a convention centre in Dili, Timor-Leste, September 11, 2024. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

Pope Francis creates new archdiocese in Wales, appoints its first bishop

Pope Francis has united two Welsh dioceses to create the new Metropolitan Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia, the Vatican announced September 12, the feast of the Holy Name of Mary.

Archbishop Mark O'Toole, who will lead the newly formed archdiocese, emphasised the significance of this date in a pastoral letter on the unification.

"We are immensely grateful to Pope Francis for making this decision and for his inspiring leadership in encouraging us to 'go outwards' in mission," Archbishop O'Toole wrote.

Invoking the example of Mary, the archbishop called on the faithful to "continue to walk together the path of the Gospel, in open dialogue and

faith", emphasising the need to deepen their relationship with Jesus and "bear witness to him through our good works".

The Bishops' Conference of England Wales welcomed the move on Thursday as a "new chapter for the Catholic community in South Wales and Herefordshire".

The new Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia covers an area of 4,894 square miles (12,675 square kilometres), serving a Catholic population of 181,115 out of a total population of 2,564,615. According to statistics released by the Vatican, it comprises 112 parishes and is served by 110 priests and 20 permanent deacons.

The creation of the new archdiocese marks the com-

plete merger of previously separate entities under Archbishop O'Toole's leadership. Since June 2022, the 61-year-old British prelate had been serving as both the archbishop of Cardiff and the bishop of Menevia "in *persona episcopi*" — 'in the person of the bishop'.

Archbishop O'Toole, born in Lambeth, London, on June 22, 1963, was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Westminster in 1990. He served as the bishop of Plymouth in southwest England from 2013 to 2022.

In preparation for this unification, the prelate conducted consultations across both dioceses in the first five months of 2024. He attended 42 meetings involving 605 people, both clergy and laity,

according to a statement from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Archbishop O'Toole noted the swift decision from Rome: "We received this decision more quickly than anticipated, which I believe reflects the confidence the Holy See has in the process we have undertaken".

The archbishop also connected the unification to the upcoming Jubilee Year in his pastoral letter, to be read across the archdiocese on the weekend of September 14–15.

"Providentially, too, this decision on the creation of our new Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia, comes as the whole Church prepares for the Jubilee Year, the theme of which is 'Pilgrims of Hope'."

Pew poll shows slim majority of US Catholics voting for Trump

A new poll by Pew Research Centre shows a slim majority of US Catholics intending to cast their ballot for former president Donald Trump in November, with Trump and Democratic candidate Vice President Kamala Harris in a dead heat among the entire electorate as the election contest enters its final weeks.

The poll, released last week, found that "US religious groups that traditionally have leaned Republican are backing

former president Donald Trump by wide margins", while groups that have historically backed Democrats "are mostly supporting Vice President Kamala Harris".

Among Catholics, 52% said they were backing Trump in the race, compared with 47% who said they favoured Harris.

Trump's support rose to 61% among white Catholics, while Harris commanded a sizable 65% share of Hispanic Catholics.

An earlier Pew survey from February found that 42% of Catholics held a favourable view of Trump, compared with 57% with an unfavourable view.

In contrast to Pew's findings last week, an EWTN News/RealClear Opinion Research survey released last week found Harris leading Trump among Catholic voters overall, with 50% of respondents backing Harris and 42% backing Trump.

Vatican roundup

Pope to Singapore's Catholics: Follow St Francis Xavier

● At Mass with approximately 50,000 Catholics in Singapore last week, Pope Francis recalled the example of the great missionary to Asia, St Francis Xavier, who responded with enthusiasm to the call to spread God's love.

The Pontiff celebrated Mass in the Singapore National Stadium, a national landmark, on the last full day of his trip to four countries in Southeast Asia and Oceania September 2–13.

The enthusiastic crowd ranged from young babies to the elderly. Among the mostly Singaporean attendees there were also migrant workers from Malaysia, Vietnamese Catholics, and a delegation from Hong Kong led by Cardinal Stephen Chow.

The Pope quoted from a letter the saint wrote to St Ignatius of Loyola and his first companions, saying he wanted to go to all the universities in order to cry out "like a madman ... [to] those with more learning than charity" so that they might feel compelled to become missionaries for the love of their brothers and sisters, and to "cry out with all their heart: 'Lord, I am here! What do you want me to do?'"

Pope's message to global literacy event: Multilingual education promotes dialogue

● In a letter to the director-general of UNESCO on last week on the occasion of International Literacy Day 2024, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, conveyed a message from the Holy Father to all those involved in the event.

"The Holy See gladly renews its appreciation of the contribution made by UNESCO in promoting linguistic and cultural diversity, and indeed

multilingualism," Cardinal Parolin said in his letter.

International Literacy Day 2024 is being celebrated in Yaoundé, Cameroon, September 9–10. The global event is sponsored by UNESCO in cooperation with the government of Cameroon and has been celebrated yearly since 1967 to help combat illiteracy and encourage all those who promote literacy and education.

Archbishop Paglia writes new book about old age

● Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, 79, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, has written a new book titled *'Destinati alla Vita'* which translates to 'Destiny for Life'. The book is a reflection on old age and highlights how this time of life can serve as a time for inner growth.

In an excerpt published by L'Osservatore Romano, Archbishop Paglia praises Pope Francis' work throughout his papacy to honour the elderly and their importance in our lives, especially in the establishment of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly.

"Pope Francis has taken up the spiritual challenge of old age ... As a Pope he developed his teaching even more, to the point of establishing a special liturgical feast to celebrate his grandparents," Archbishop Paglia wrote. "But it is through the specific catechesis on the subject that he proposed a more articulated and comprehensive help to the elderly — in particular the believers, but not only — so that they face this last age of life as a time of grace, an appropriate time, a time of growth even if the body becomes fragile."

Pope extols becoming 'small before God' in East Timor

● Pope Francis celebrated Mass for East Timor's overwhelming Catholic majority last, applauding the country for its high percentage of youth and stressing the importance of becoming small and humble in order for God to work miracles.

Speaking to Catholics during his September 10 Mass at the Esplanade of Taci Tolu in Dili, the Pope said, "Let us not be afraid to make ourselves small before God, and before each other, to lose our lives, to give up our time, to revise our schedules, giving up something to help a brother or sister become better and happier".

Letter from Rome

Cardinal Schönborn: 'We must accept the decline of Europe'



Jonah McKeown

Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, OP, archbishop of Vienna, said in a recent interview with a French Catholic magazine that in the face of rising secularisation and the growth of Islam in many historically Christian nations, Catholics should “trust in the work of grace” and remember that the Church is “an expert in humanity”.

“The Church is alive and will always be, albeit under different circumstances. We must accept the decline of Europe. We tend to gaze at our ecclesiastical navel, but it is an undeniable continental movement,” Cardinal Schönborn said, speaking to *Famille Chrétienne*.

“In 20 years, the European population will not be the same as it is today, and it is already not the same as it was 50 years ago. This is inevitable, above all due to the decline in the birth rate in Europe but also due to immigration and the increasing presence of Islam. This poses new challenges for us Christians. We must also not forget that the Lord is at work in his Church! Just think of the 12,000 baptisms of adults and young people in France this year.”

Influence

The Austrian cardinal, who helped to produce the Catechism of the Catholic Church, said that despite the decline of the Church's influence in Europe, he is convinced

that the Church “has not yet breathed its last”.

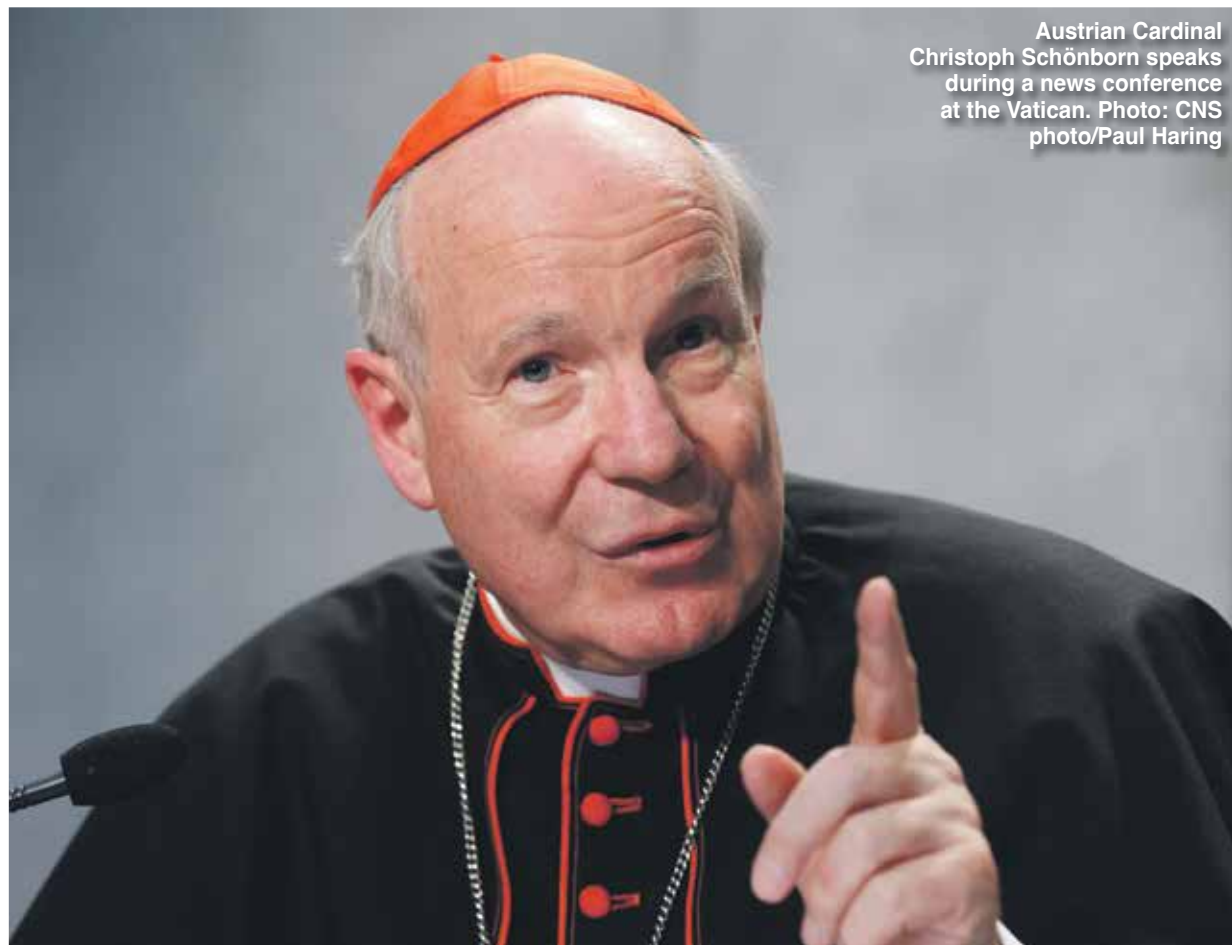
“Despite secularisation, the great questions of men and women remain the same as before: birth, growth, education, illness, economic worries. And then there is the family, marriage, and death,” Cardinal Schönborn noted. “There is a lot of talk about change, but too little attention is paid to the constants of society. The Church must remember that it is an expert in humanity, as Paul VI said.”

The cardinal called the idea that France and Europe are “no longer Christian” because of Islam’s influence “absurd”, but he firmly stressed that “Catholics should return to the Church”.

“The Christians’ way of acting is not that of the Koran but the following of Christ in all dimensions of our lives”

“If Catholics have left the Church, we should not be surprised that they are in the minority,” he continued, calling for a “fraternal rapprochement” with Islam, echoing the words of Pope Francis, noting that Christians “do not take up arms but trust in the work of grace”.

“Both our religions have an absolute appeal. For Muslims, God has demanded that the whole world be subjected to him and the Koran. As for Christ, he has entrusted us with a universal mission: ‘Make disciples of all nations.’ Neither of them can therefore renounce their mission. But the Christians’ way of acting is not that of the Koran but the following of Christ in all



Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schönborn speaks during a news conference at the Vatican. Photo: CNS photo/Paul Haring

dimensions of our lives,” he said.

Addressing the ongoing Synod on Synodality – the final session of which will take place in October in Rome and is expected to produce a final report for the Pope’s approval – Schönborn said “synodality is central to Francis’ pontificate, but there is continuity with previous synods, which have been about communion, participation, and mission”.

Disappointed

“You may be disappointed that the specific topics are a little up in the air, but this is first and foremost a synod about the ‘modus operandi’ within the Church,” Cardinal Schönborn said.

“In my diocese, I have experienced this synodality with the priests in small groups and tried to live it through spiritual conversation. Everyone agreed that the exchange had never been so deep.”

“If friends say to me: ‘Our son has just announced to us that he is homosexual and that he has found a partner’, I then ask them: ‘Is he still your son?’”

Asked about *Fiducia Supplicans*, a document published by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in December 2023 that authorised nonliturgical blessings for same-sex couples and others in “irregular situations”, Cardinal Schönborn said he believes the document shows “confusion” on the part of the Church. The cardinal had previously, in 2021, criticised the Vatican’s rejection of blessings for same-sex

couples, saying the document was marked by a “clear communication error”.

“I experienced it as I experience things – concretely,” the cardinal said. “If friends say to me: ‘Our son has just announced to us that he is homosexual and that he has found a partner’, I then ask them: ‘Is he still your son?’ Most often, the answer comes naturally. I believe that with the two successive documents from Rome [the 2021 *Responsum ad Dubium* and *Fiducia Supplicans*], the Church has shown its own dismay in the face of this question. These texts, in my eyes, are shaky. We are faced with a question for which there can be no right answer.”

Discernment

“The path that Pope Francis proposes to us is that of discernment, trying to see what the Lord is showing us,” he continued. “Incidentally, the misfortune of the German [Synodal Way] is that they want sharp, unambiguous answers. And unambiguity does not work in concrete life.”

Asked about Pope Fran-

cis’ restrictions on the Traditional Latin Mass by way of the 2021 document *Traditionis Custodes*, Cardinal Schönborn expressed the hope that the “new generation” might “easily” move from the TLM to modern movements and “prayer groups” such as the Emmanuel Community.

The Austrian prelate added: “Let us accept that Francis has his reasons for closing the doors again, at least partially, just as we have accepted that Benedict XVI had his reasons for opening them. Let us trust that the Lord is leading the Church.”

Schönborn was finally asked what “profile” the next Pope after Francis, who turns 88 in December, should have.

“On that day, the Holy Spirit will lead the Church. We should not worry. If it is an African, it will be an African. Maybe it will be an Asian or a man from old Europe. But the most important thing is that he believes that he is a servant of Christ and that he loves the Church. This is how the Church will move forward,” Cardinal Schönborn said.

“Let us accept that Francis has his reasons for closing the doors again, at least partially, just as we have accepted that Benedict XVI had his reasons for opening them. Let us trust that the Lord is leading the Church”

Letters

Post to: Letters to the Editor, The Irish Catholic,
Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford,
Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

Letter of the week

Holding RTÉ accountable for lack of fairness

Dear Editor, The article highlighting the anti-Catholic bias at RTÉ brings to the forefront an issue that has been ignored for too long [The Irish Catholic – September 5, 2024]. The broadcaster's recent programme, 'Farmed Out', presents yet another example of how Catholic institutions are unfairly portrayed. The documentary focused solely on children fostered from Catholic-run institutions, neglecting to mention that fostering was a practice common across religious denominations in

Ireland, including the Church of Ireland.

This kind of selective reporting skews the historical record and fosters a misleading narrative. The negative portrayal of Catholic-run institutions without acknowledging the broader context paints a one-sided picture, fuelling anti-Catholic sentiment. The programme failed to clarify that State rules required that children be fostered by families of the same denomination, regardless of religious affiliation.

RTÉ's role as Ireland's public service broadcaster should come with a responsibility to ensure fair and balanced reporting, particularly when it comes to matters of faith and history. Catholics, who make up a significant portion of Ireland's population, deserve respectful and accurate representation. The continued pattern of unfairly singling out the Catholic Church in negative contexts, while ignoring similar practices in other denominations, is unjust. This bias not only distorts

the public perception of the Church but also undermines the trust that Irish citizens—many of whom pay their licence fee—place in their national broadcaster. Greater accountability is needed within RTÉ to ensure that its platforms are not used to perpetuate anti-Catholic narratives. A more balanced and truthful approach is necessary if RTÉ is to fulfil its public service role responsibly.

*Yours etc.,
Brian O'Sullivan
Swords, Dublin*

Parental involvement in SPHE Curriculum

Dear Editor, I wholeheartedly welcome your highlighting of the dangers posed by the Government's SPHE curriculum, particularly its extreme ideological stance on gender [The Irish Catholic – September 12, 2024]. As parents, we must be vigilant and involved in our children's education, especially when such important issues as gender identity are being taught in ways that contradict biology. The SPHE curriculum also includes teachings that do not put enough/any emphasis on the importance of love, marriage, and commitment.

Ms Carol Nolan's comments underscore the deep concern many of us feel regarding the deliberate distortion of biological and sexual realities in schools. Children deserve an education rooted in truth, not one where they are encouraged to embrace an ideology that promotes confusion about basic realities such as male and female. Compassion for those struggling with gender dysphoria is essential, but it must be balanced with protecting the mental and emotional well-being of all children.

David Quinn's observations about the hyper-individualism promoted in the new curriculum are also profoundly troubling. By teaching children that gender is fluid and relationships transient, the curriculum undermines the very foundations of stable, loving relationships that are vital for personal fulfilment and societal well-being.

Parents cannot stand idly by



Defending Catholic schools in the face of unfair criticism

Dear Editor, As Senator Rónán Mullen and TD Michael Healy-Rae have pointed out, proposals from radical political parties to 'remove the Church from schools' are examples of bigotry and opportunism, using the tragic experiences of abuse victims as a political tool to push personal agendas.

while this dangerous ideology takes root in our schools. We must demand that the Government and educational authorities return to a curriculum that reflects the values of family, commitment, and the inherent complementarity of male and female.

*Our children deserve better.
Yours etc.,
Mary Flaherty
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath*

This is not only disrespectful to the survivors but also distracts from the real progress that has been made in child protection within faith-based schools.

What many seem to forget is that Catholic schools in Ireland remain among the top-performing educational institutions in the country. These schools are not only academically excellent, but they also offer a values-driven education that nurtures the whole person—spiritually, intellectually, and morally. This is precisely why so many parents, whether of strong or weak faith, continue to choose Catholic education for their children.

It's essential to acknowledge the serious wrongs of the past, but it is equally important to recognise the incredible good that religious orders have done

in shaping Ireland's education system. To attempt to erase this contribution because of the actions of a few is shortsighted and unjust.

The effort to remove religious orders from schools appears less about protecting children and more about advancing a secular agenda that seeks to remove faith from public life entirely. This is something we must resist. Catholic schools continue to play an invaluable role in Irish society, offering an education that is holistic and deeply rooted in community values.

We should support these schools, not diminish their contribution.

*Yours etc.,
Tom Murphy
Portlaoise, Co. Laois*

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.

Don't let the State off the hook

The Scoping Inquiry into Historical Sexual Abuse in Schools run by Religious Orders has rightly generated a response of revulsion at the horrific acts perpetrated across the country. The inquiry reveals abuse on a large scale. No amount of context can mask the fact that 2,395 allegations of abuse have been made across 308 schools run by religious orders and that 884 distinct individuals are alleged to have committed abuse. The majority of these are identified as belonging to the religious orders although 17% are alleged lay abusers – whether teachers or otherwise.

The inquiry covers a very long period – over 80 years – but highlights, in parallel with other inquiries, that the peak of abuse came in the 1970s. The report also highlights that the majority of those reporting abuse were male. Neither of these two areas have been sufficiently interrogated to date, as the main focus has been on holding the Church and religious orders to account above all else.

Taoiseach Simon Harris, speaking at a Fine Gael think-in, spoke of the "collective sense of national shame" at the abuse but quickly turned focus onto the religious orders with the threat of using government 'levers' to ensure the 'Church' is not left off the hook.

This narrative has been accompanied by a renewed focus on the 'hundreds of millions' held in assets by the religious orders creating the impression that the various orders are cash-rich and sitting on unimaginable levels of cash. This is not the case as much of these assets are in fact buildings, in active use, often providing social services to the Irish public.

Rhetoric in recent years has been that the government should use its 'levers' to seize Church properties in order to extract redress payments. Such heavy handed action by the State should be carefully assessed.

The Scoping Inquiry noted a 2022 Central Statistics Officer Sexual

Violence Survey that suggested that over 40,000 people over the age of 35 in Ireland are estimated to have experienced sexual abuse as a child in school.

The figures in the Scoping Inquiry are less than 10% of that total, although considering the number of schools assessed under the Scoping Inquiry, they point towards equivalence with the CSO survey estimates.

There are 3,300 primary schools and over nearly one thousand post-primary schools in Ireland. The Scoping Inquiry covers only a small portion of those.

Before the State considers using its power to extract – and possibly bankrupt – the various religious orders it is incumbent that the wider societal issues of sexual abuse in schools be further investigated. Indications are that this has not just been a problem specifically related to schools run by religious orders.

As An Taoiseach noted, there ought to be a collective national shame. Pitching the 'Tax Payer' against the religious orders in terms of footing the bill is a disingenuous dichotomy. The State, through the 'Tax Payer' has an almost unlimited well of resources to draw on in order to provide any redress that is deemed suitable.

No scheme is going to bankrupt 'the State'. The State and the Taxpayer will feel limited – if any – pain at having to pay redress. Just as the State can expend countless millions on fighting court cases to avoid admitting liability in a wide range of areas, it can afford to take a once off hit through redress schemes.

This is why ex-poste admissions of 'collective national shame' are almost meaningless when used as a means to place the focus – and the blame – firmly elsewhere. Yes, the various religious orders have questions to answer, but a full inquiry that looks beyond religious run schools is needed, otherwise a society – and a State – that allowed the abuse to happen, will be off the hook without exposing the full truths of the history of sexual abuse in Ireland.

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

‘Religious Conversations’: Is religion debunked by science?



Eoin McCormack

Have you ever found yourself in the often-awkward position in work or in another other social setting where you are somehow elected the spokesperson for all things Catholic?

Last week we took a look at a question so often asked with bemusement: “Why do you go to Mass. To read more on how we can respond to these questions as Catholics, be sure to check out previous articles from this series on www.irishcatholic.com.

This week I consider an issue which I encounter almost every week in parish ministry: Does science debunk religion?

Rising numbers of Western Catholics are not just abandoning the Church over various institutional problems, but rather they are abandoning any religious belief in favour of a secular relativism. For the first time in history, this is now a growing phenomenon in Ireland, as the second largest ‘religion’ on the census is the ‘no-religion’ category. On one level we shouldn’t be too surprised by this statistic as it corresponds with all the research and surveys as to why people are leaving the Church: Faith is increasingly understood as irrational and therefore it is irrelevant.

Regularly, I am confronted either by a non-believer who asks how anyone can take religion seriously anymore with the success of the sciences, or else by a faithful Catholic who is seeking advice on how to respond to similar comments from friends or colleagues. But what is the relationship between faith and science and how do we

respond to the charge that scientific discoveries make religion obsolete?

Faith?

As Catholics, the first and most important thing to consider when discussing this topic is that Christian faith and science are not contradictory. Rather, they are mutually complementary. The catechism in fact goes as far to explicitly state that scientific truth “can never conflict with faith” (CCC 159). Then, why does the culture perceive such a division?

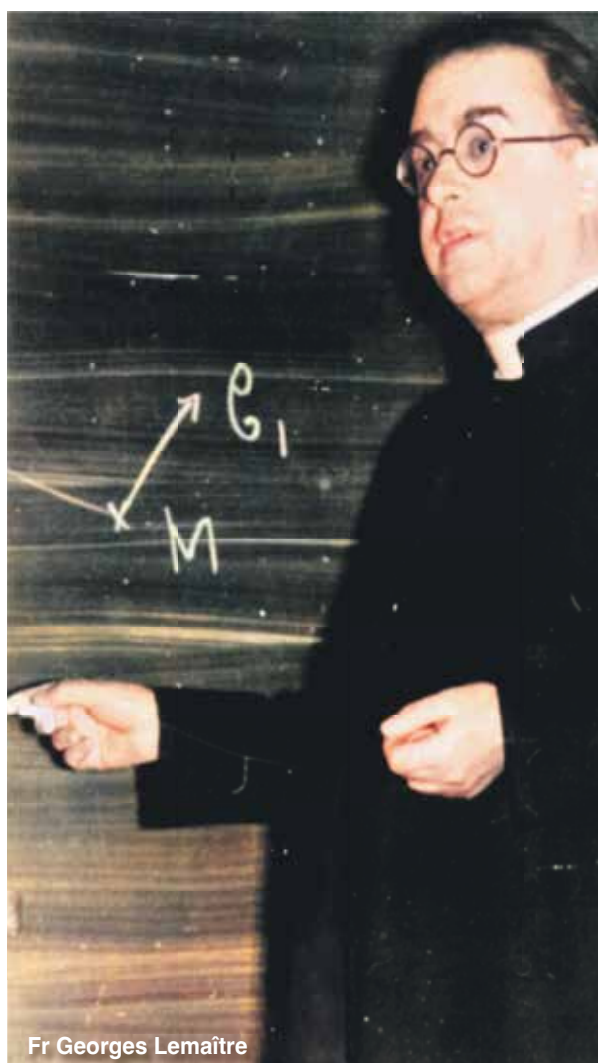
Underlying this misjudgement appears to carry confusion around the word ‘Faith’. For the Catholic who understands their faith in the light of truth and reason, faith and science merely explain different types of truth; the same way psychology and biology might explain different types of truth about the human person. They are both, as stated by Pope St John Paul II, “partners in the common quest for an ever more perfect understanding of the universe.”

The person who considers faith as an irrational ‘leap in the dark’ sees material science as the only reliable source of truth. But what’s wrong with this worldview and how do we reason with people that our faith is not a blind ‘leap in the dark’?

“Faith, in any real sense, is the reasonable belief in something to which we have evidence for but goes beyond our capacity to fully understand it”

Perhaps the best way to begin responding to these issues is by asking them what exactly do they mean by the word faith? They may reveal a common answer along the lines of the following: “Faith is believing in something when there is no evidence.”

Faith, in any real sense, is the reasonable belief in something to which we have evidence for but goes beyond our capacity to fully understand



Fr Georges Lemaître

it. If your proponent insists that this is simply the same thing as ‘blind-faith’, you then have the perfect opportunity to demonstrate that they too make acts of faith in the same vein every day. There was one question that stumped even hardened atheist Richard Dawkins when asked by the Christian-scientist John Lennox at a public debate: “Do you have faith in your spouse?”

This opens a new way of seeing and understanding the purpose and importance of faith. Faith is not a once off ‘leap into the dark’, rather faith is an evidence-based way of seeing beyond our capacity to fully ‘prove’. In the case of the spouse for example, the person will say ‘of course’ they have faith in their spouse. But why? There is no scientific material evidence that your spouse is being faithful. Yet love and

trust require an act of faith on behalf of the individual that goes beyond their capacity to fully ‘prove’. This love and trust in a relationship are by no means an ‘unevidenced’ based approach, people have faith in their spouses because they have a multitude of reasons to believe that their partner is morally upright and faithful to them. To live out this trust, however, requires an act of faith.

“The early scientists of the scientific revolution were by-in-large all Christians or theists in some form or another. Why is this significant?”

Similarly, when it comes to our religious faith, we too have a whole array of reasons to believe in what has been revealed to us. What evidence do we have for the claims of Jesus? Thousands of years of evidence through witness, study and spiritual encounters with the divine that give us reasonable explanations

to believe that our faith is not simply a ‘leap into the dark’.

Scientism

What’s more is that ‘faith’ is a necessary requirement to even do science in the first place. The early scientists of the scientific revolution were by-in-large all Christians or theists in some form or another. Why is this significant? Because the sciences didn’t emerge in a vacuum. It was the Christian-cultural context from which the sciences emerged and for one simple reason: scientists like Galileo and Newton expected observable truth in the universe because they understood there is a ‘truth giver’, a rational ‘logos’ (logic) or ‘mind’ behind creation.

How is it that mathematical formulas which exist in the mind as abstract theories are transferable to the tangible universe? Because, as Galileo himself said: “Mathematics is the alphabet with which God wrote the world.”

If your proponent insists that scientific methods are the only source for truth, simply ask them to ‘scientifically prove it’. A statement like that cannot be scientifically proven because it is not a scientific statement. It is a philosophical statement – one that requires an act of faith.

Limitations of Science

Science is a wonderful discipline. Yet, reports tell us time and again that we are experiencing a mental health epidemic. High rates of suicide and depression are continually reported by the media as society moves away from religious belief and yet develops in the areas of science.

Nobel prize winning British Biologist Sir Peter Medawar put it very simply: “The existence of a limit to science is made clear by its inability to answer child-like elementary questions... What are we all here for? What is the point of living?”

As rightly pointed out by Medawar, these are much deeper questions than ‘science questions’. The most fundamental questions to our existence are by definition ‘religious questions’. It is here you can say to your friend and colleague the simple but true adage: “Science answers the ‘how’ questions, but religion answers the ‘why’ questions.”

The Big Bang

Even if the secular minded person is willing to agree to the value of religion in providing meaning to someone’s life, a question I hear so often is “what about the Big Bang Theory? Doesn’t that disprove the biblical accounts?” The Catholic answer, which so often surprises people, is that the Big Bang Theory is far from going against the biblical understanding of creation, it lends its support to the biblical idea of a creator. How so?

“The Big Bang Theory, which is so often invoked by people in contemporary culture to disprove religious beliefs, was first formulated by Fr Georges Lemaître”

For millennia, Judeo-Christian teaching has maintained based on revelation that there even was a ‘beginning’. We may think of this as a given, but the reality is that many philosophers and scientists have long disputed this reality as unprovable and offered interpretations of a universe that did not ‘begin’ but has ‘always’ existed. The Big Bang Theory, however, forms the scientific basis for something that Christians have long believed, that there was indeed a beginning.

What’s more, the Big Bang Theory was first formulated by a Catholic priest. You read that correct! The Big Bang Theory, which is so often invoked by people in contemporary culture to disprove religious beliefs, was first formulated by Fr Georges Lemaître, theoretical physicist, mathematician, astronomer and Belgian Catholic priest.

Are faith and science opposed to one another? To the contrary. As written by the psalmist over 3,000 years ago: “The Heavens declare the glory of God.” The wonders of the heavens and nature point to something greater. Science discovers the how of the universe, uncovering the workings behind creation, while faith uncovers the why, offering us the deeper meaning and purpose to life.

“Judeo-Christian teaching has maintained based on revelation that there even was a ‘beginning’. We may think of this as a given, but the reality is that many philosophers and scientists have long disputed this reality as unprovable and offered interpretations of a universe that did not ‘begin’ but has ‘always’ existed”

Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, September 19, 2024

The energy
we leave
behind

Fr Rolheiser

Page 33



We cannot follow Jesus and sidestep the cross



Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth was a historical event occurring in a particular time and place. But the cross casts a long shadow, one that stretches across all of history. As Christians, we believe that the narrative of human destiny is the story of redemption in the cross of Christ. It stands at the centre of time. Everything before the cross leads to it, and everything that comes afterward flows from it. Marking the intersection of time and eternity, the cross is both the point of inflection and the point of convergence. All things - and all people - meet at Calvary.

Before his election to the papacy, Pope Benedict XVI contemplated an even more mystical notion. In his book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ratzinger taught that the shape of creation itself is cruciform, "The sign of the cross is inscribed upon the whole cosmos" (p. 123). Reflecting on the work of St Justin Martyr, the Church's first philosopher, Ratzinger takes this even further. He says, "The Cross of Golgotha is foreshadowed in the structure of the universe itself. The instrument of torment on which the Lord died is written into the structure of the universe. The cosmos speaks to us of the Cross, and the Cross solves for us the enigma of the cosmos" (*Spirit of the Liturgy*, p. 124).

Cross

For Ratzinger, however, the cross of Jesus Christ is not merely a static reality, or even the key to understanding the universe. The way of the cross leads us into authentic worship. The cross itself is the way, the road we travel to our final destination in God.

This rings true when we consider the common patterns of growth in the spiritual life. Before we follow Christ, most of us do everything in our power to avoid the cross in all its forms. We run from suffering and keep a safe distance from those who suffer. But that changes when we begin to pursue our faith. It cannot be otherwise, for the Lord's invitation is clear, "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me'" (Mt 16:24).

We cannot follow Jesus and sidestep the cross. At first, we learn to surrender whatever we suffer to him. We see that the incarnation is not simply a great theological mystery. It opens up for us the possibility of sharing our lives with Jesus, because he came to share his life with us. So, we begin to accept our daily burdens and ask the Lord to carry them with us. Christ becomes part of our life.

As we embrace discipleship more fully, things change again.

We learn to offer our crosses up, to unite all that we suffer with the sufferings of Christ. We follow St Paul in "completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Col 1:24) by adding ours to his. Through this, our lives become his.

"The sign of the cross is a summary of the Gospel. It is God's signature on creation. The road of discipleship is the way of the cross. Embracing it is the secret path to holiness"

But as we grow deeper in faith, we see that the suffering we experience comes with a hidden gift. Our crosses give us an opportunity to bear a splinter of the cross of Christ. This doesn't mean we are (or should be) masochists. It does mean that we learn to follow Jesus, not despite the way of the cross, but because of it. It means that we are capable of seeing all

things - even what we suffer - as God's gifts.

Mature disciples understand that offering our suffering to Jesus leads us to something much deeper: the grace to bear some of his. For the saints, this spiritual disposition can take a mystical form as it did for St Teresa of Avila when her heart was pierced by the Word of God in prayer. It can also take a physical form, in martyrdom. Or, as it did 800 years ago, when a seraph gave St Francis of Assisi the stigmata, the wounds of the crucifixion in his own body.

There is no salvation apart from the cross of Christ. The sign of the cross is a summary of the Gospel. It is God's signature on creation. The road of discipleship is the way of the cross. Embracing it is the secret path to holiness - and there is no other.

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

St Brendan and the gift of Faith



Renata Milán Morales

When I was an undergraduate, during a Renaissance module, my professor suddenly asked a question that took the class by surprise, “Imagine waking up to the news that a new continent has just been discovered. How would you react? Would you believe it?” It felt absurd, given the world we live in, where satellites map the globe in real time. But the question produced something in me. A reminder that there was a time when people believed there was still so much left to find.

This memory came back to me recently during a visit home to the Canary Islands. I was watching a local history programme about *San Borondón* island, where they were explaining that, St Brendan the Navigator, an Irish monk from the 6th century, set sail across the Atlantic in search of the ‘Isle of the Blessed’ – a paradise said to be located beyond the edges of the known world. Growing up, the story of *San Borondón* fascinated us as children. It was an island that appeared and disappeared off the coast of the Canary Islands, always just beyond reach. Local fishermen claimed to have seen it covered in mist, only for it to vanish before they could get close.

Photographed

‘The wandering island of *San Borondón* has been photographed for the first time’. Said the Spanish newspaper – *ABC* – headline from August 1958. The image was taken by Manuel Rodríguez Quin-

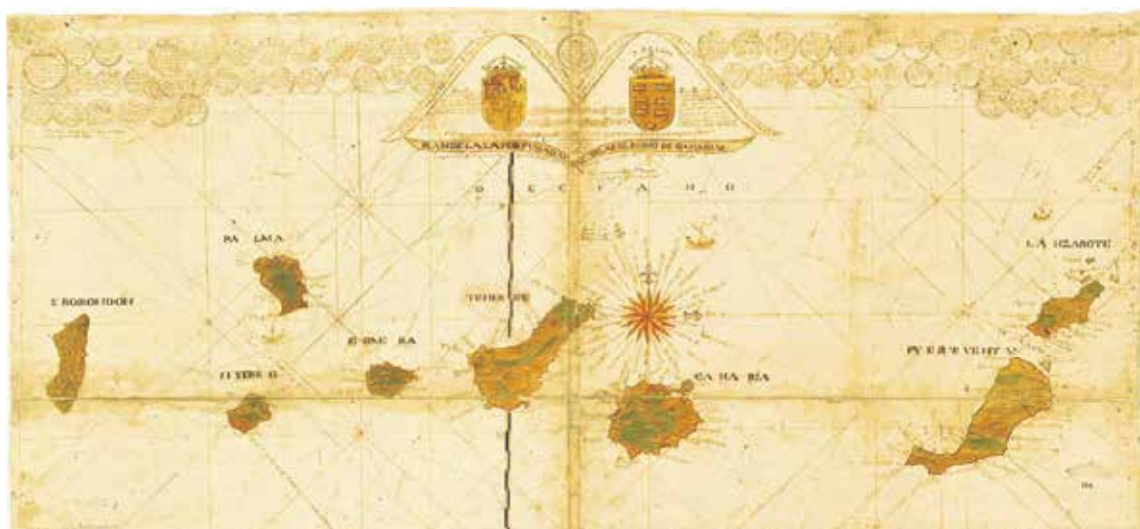
tero at sunset on that summer day from the island of La Palma. The photograph was given to the archaeologist, Luis Diego Cuscoy, who wrote the article published by *ABC*.

“*San Borondón* has been photographed. In front of a small village in the west of La Palma, has emerged a silhouette very similar to the one that was traced in the 16th century... St Brendan left with the same eagerness to find Paradise.”

“The association between St Brendan’s Island and the Canaries persisted for centuries, with explorers and sailors claiming to have witnessed the island just beyond the archipelago”

St Brendan’s voyage is one of the great early adventures of Irish monasticism. The *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, the medieval text that recounts his journey, is full of tales about his encounters with strange creatures and islands during his sail across the Atlantic. Some have even suggested that St Brendan might have reached North America centuries before Columbus. But unlike Columbus’ expedition, in medieval Europe, St Brendan’s journey was a spiritual quest – a search for the Promised Land of the Saints, a paradise reserved for the faithful.

By the late Middle Ages, St Brendan’s Island was placed on maps of the Atlantic, often near the Canary Islands. The association between St Brendan’s Island and the Canaries persisted for



A plan was drawn up for the ‘Fortunate Islands’ of the Canary Islands, which included San Borondón, 1760. Credit: Department of Defence, Spain.

centuries, with explorers and sailors claiming to have witnessed the island just beyond the archipelago. However, no one could ever reach it.

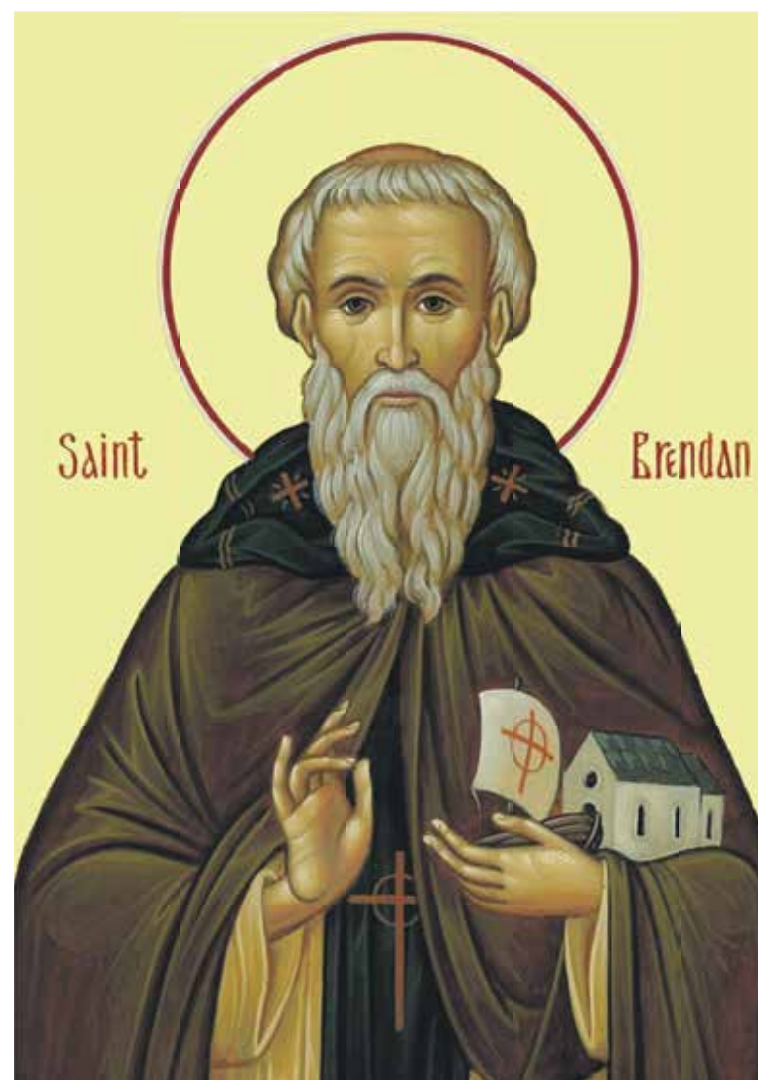
San Borondón, the name given to the island in Canarian folklore, became part of the local tradition. Stories of fishermen seeing the island off in the distance only for it to disappear again have been passed down for generations.

Today, the world feels much smaller. Satellites orbit the Earth, and with tools like Google Earth, we can explore nearly every corner of the globe. The oceans, once the greatest mystery, have been mapped. Despite all our technological advances, we are still drawn to the timeless idea of the unknown. *San Borondón* – St Brendan – remains an important part of Canarian folklore.

Stories like St Brendan’s voyage remind us that there’s always something more. Something beyond what we can see or understand. These myths reflect our need to believe that not everything has been discovered. St Brendan set out not knowing what he would find, driven by Faith and a sense of purpose. In that way, his journey still resonates today. Even though we have technology that can take us anywhere, the human spirit still yearns for what lies beyond what we can witness.

Longing

My professor’s question and the legend of *San Borondón* speaks to us of the same longing: the search for something beyond the horizon. For St Brendan, that search was for paradise – a glimpse of Heaven on Earth. Today, while we may no longer set sail hop-



“For St Brendan, that search was for paradise – a glimpse of Heaven on Earth. Today, while we may no longer set sail hoping to discover an island of saints, our desire to discover has not changed. Whether it’s the pursuit of knowledge, adventure or a deeper understanding, that impulse is given to us in the gift of faith”

ing to discover an island of saints, our desire to discover has not changed. Whether it’s the pursuit of knowledge, adventure or a deeper understanding, that impulse is given to us in the gift of Faith. The legend of *San*

Borondón continues to captivate, not because we still expect to find a vanishing island, but because we still believe that there is always the possibility of something more.

What is faith, after all, if not the conviction that there is something more?

Reflecting with St Edith Stein on the nature of women



Laurretta Brown

Any discussion of the differences between men and women and their roles in society seem to be particularly charged these days. As the role of wife and mother continues to be embraced and celebrated by the Church, it is often downplayed in an increasingly secularised culture. At the same time, Catholics today grapple with the role of women in the workforce as well as the role of the woman who is single by choice or circumstance.

In the month of August, as part of my year of reading one spiritual classic a month, I took up *Essays on Woman* by Edith Stein, also known as St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. This collection of her writings contained many striking elements and show how little seems to have changed in the debates over women's place in the Church and society between now and when she gave these lectures in the 1920s and '30s.

Stein held a doctorate in philosophy - no small feat for a woman at the time - and was a student and assistant to the renowned phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. Coming from a Jewish background and upbringing, she converted to Catholicism in 1922 after reading the *Autobiography of St Teresa of Avila*. She became a Discalced Carmelite nun in 1933 after teaching for a period of time at the Dominican nuns' school in Speyer, Germany.

Philosopher

Prior to her entry into the convent, Stein wrote these essays not simply out of her academic expertise as a noted philosopher, but with the warmth and empathy of a woman who has thought deeply about her relation to God and her fellow man.

Stein challenged both the feminists of her time and those who would relegate a woman only to the role of wife and mother.

"Are we able to speak of vocations which are specifically feminine? In the beginning of the feminist movement, the radical leaders denied this, claiming that all professions were suitable for woman," she wrote. "Their opponents were unwilling to admit to this concept, recognising only one feminine vocation, woman's natural vocation."

"Only the person blinded by the passion of controversy could deny that woman in soul and body is formed for a particular purpose," she reflected, writing that according to her natural vocation, "woman is destined to be wife and mother."

"Woman naturally seeks to

embrace that which is living, personal, and whole," she wrote, "to cherish, guard, protect, nourish, and advance growth is her natural, maternal yearning. Lifeless matter, the fact, can hold primary interest for her only insofar as it serves the living and the personal, not ordinarily for its own sake."

However, she added that "only subjective delusion could deny that women are capable of practicing vocations other than that of spouse and mother." Citing the experience of many different times in history, she noted that "in case of need, every normal and healthy woman is able to hold a position. And there is no profession which cannot be practiced by a woman."

In a wide range of professions, she contended, "basically the same spiritual attitude which the wife and mother need is needed here also, except that it is extended to a wider working circle."

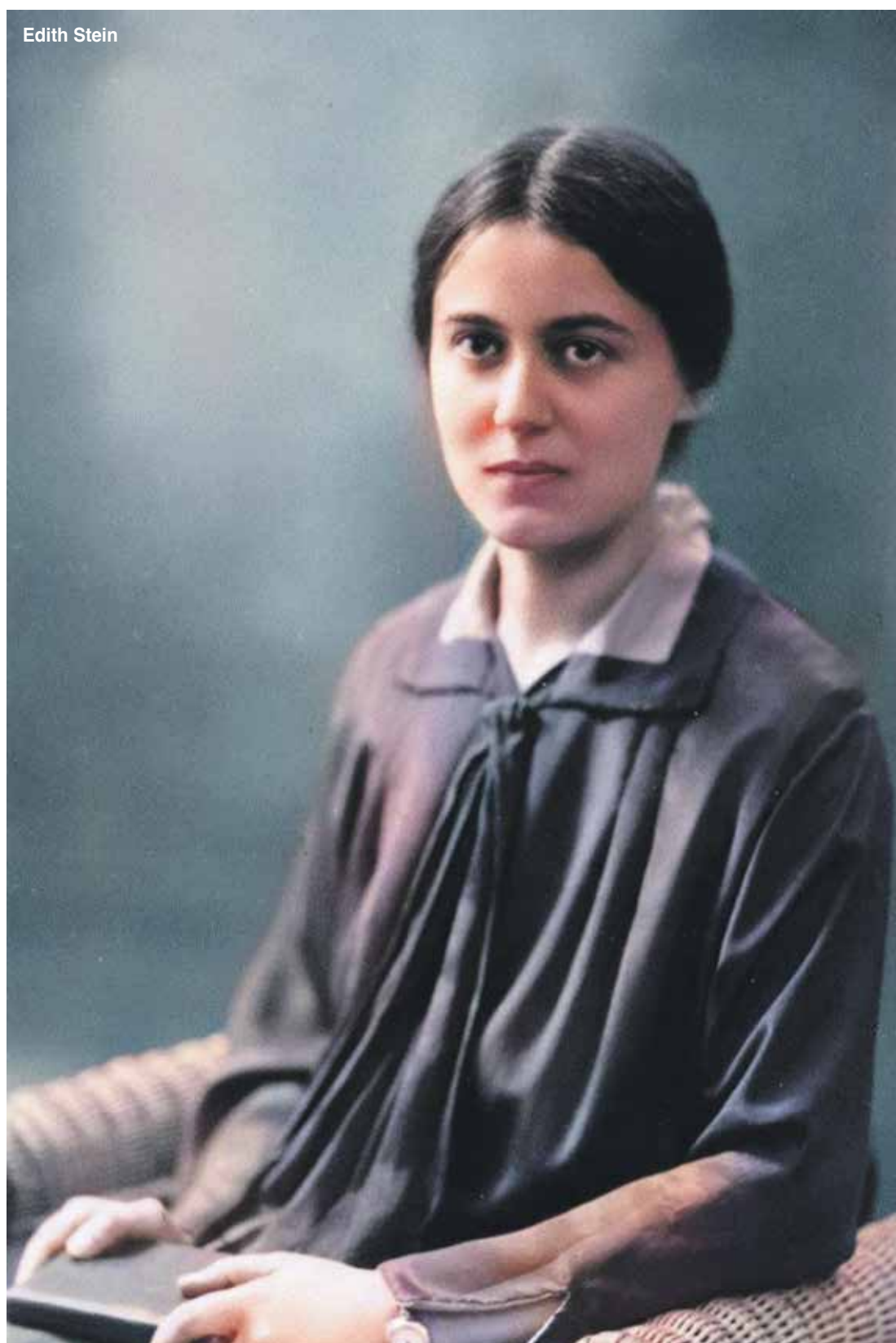
Pointing toward the example of the Virgin Mary at the wedding feast in Cana, Stein wrote that women in the workplace can imitate her in being "conscious of where there is want and where help is needed, intervening and regulating as far as it is possible in her power in a discreet way. Then will she like a good spirit spread blessing everywhere."

“Womanhood, she said, “finds its most perfect image in the purest Virgin who is the bride of God and mother of all mankind. Next to her stand the consecrated virgins who bear the honorary title Sponsa Christi and are called to participate in His redemptive work”

Ideally, she wrote, a woman's soul is "fashioned to be a shelter in which other souls may unfold. Both spiritual companionship and motherliness are not limited to the physical spouse and mother relationships, but they extend to all people with whom woman comes into contact."

With her expansive understanding of the many ways women could bring their femininity to bear on their particular situations in life, she upheld the Virgin Mary as the ideal.

Womanhood, she said, "finds its most perfect image in the purest Virgin who is the bride of God and mother of all mankind. Next to her stand the consecrated virgins who bear the honorary title *Sponsa Christi* and are called to participate in His redemptive work. But her image is also perpetuated by the woman standing beside a man who is Christ's image and helping to build up His body the Church



Edith Stein

through a physical and spiritual maternity."

Assessing the situation of many women in her time, Stein wrote that "many of the best women are overwhelmed by the double duties of family and professional life" and there are also women who entered into a profession they loved, but found their expectations of happiness in it unfulfilled as they "have neither searched for nor found the means to make their feminine nature fruitful in professional life." She also noted the situation of the "religious unsure of the full meaning of their vows or unable to maintain the total sacrifice required of their vocation after their first

youthful ardour has declined."

Her remedy for this sad state of affairs? "A woman's life must be a Eucharistic life," she argued, if it is to bear fruit. She was certain that "each woman who lives in the light of eternity can fulfil her vocation."

Witness

She emphasised that "only in daily, confidential relationship with the Lord in the tabernacle can one forget self, become free of all one's own wishes and pretensions, and have a heart open to all the needs and wants of others."

At the end of her own life, Stein was an example of this total surrender to God and radical openness

to self-giving.

In August 1942, despite her convent's attempts to protect her, she was deported to Auschwitz where she was soon killed.

Pope Benedict XVI said of her that "witnesses who managed to escape the terrible massacre recounted that while Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, dressed in the Carmelite habit, was making her way, consciously, toward death, she distinguished herself by her conduct full of peace, her serene attitude and her calm behaviour, attentive to the needs of all."

i Laurretta Brown is culture editor for OSV News.

The beginning of the school year: Making all things new



Bishop Robert Reed

It's that time of year, again, when the waking air has a chill crispness to it, and the hallways are lined with bookbags full of fresh spiral notebooks, binders still blank of the doodles of midwinter boredom and the good old marble-covered notebooks, as yet unsullied. Pencils have been sharpened, erasers are not yet lost, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and snacks are tucked into their reliable spots. The kids are going back to school in their sweaters. They crunch the newly dropped leaves under their feet as they walk.

If Christmas is heralded as the 'most wonderful time of the year', these first days of a new school year might be called the most 'bracing' - the weather begins to cool, the leaves turn, the school buses lumber by, and it all brings with it feelings of such hope and possibility, tempered with just a little fear: What new challenges are before us, and how we will meet them?

Focus

As someone who benefited from a Catholic education, I want to focus here on the work of our parochial, diocesan and private schools. There are so many success stories and hard-working principals, faculties, parent groups and pastors who believe in the Good News of Catholic education and struggle to find fresh, creative ways to keep schools alive and flourishing!

Certainly not every young person can or does enjoy their Catholic

education - every generation has its malcontents (and they are usually, and reliably, unhappy about all schools, in general). Yet despite tales of 'ugly uniforms' and 'strict teachers' and 'prayers before everything!' America's Catholic schools have been and continue to be valuable; in many places they offer sound, mostly affordable alternatives to families whose children are trapped in failing, or even dangerous, public schools.

It is absolutely true that the Church relies on her schools for great Faith formation and youth ministry programs - from preschool through university, it is a dynamic tool of evangelisation within the Church itself.

“The mission of a Catholic school is the same as that of the Church: to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and to help us to live out the Gospels in our families and our communities”

But for a growing number of non-Catholic students, our schools are becoming an invaluable source of public formation, training up a thoughtful, able citizenry capable of thinking critically and within broad perspectives.

My memories of elementary school are still vivid and warm. Part of that memory is attending daily Mass during Lent, May processions, what seemed never-ending recitations of the rosary during May and a tight and warm community.

Whenever I would forget my lunch bag (which was sometimes on purpose), the nuns would send

me over to Sr Benjamin, who would make me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in the convent kitchen. As I say, vivid and warm memories - and tasty ones, too!

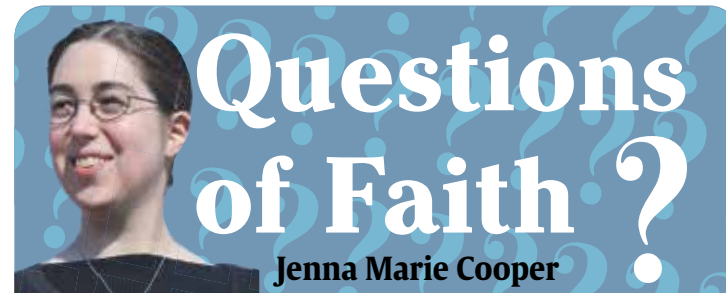
The leaves are still crunching underfoot, but many things have changed since those days. Still, the mission of a Catholic school is the same as that of the Church: to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and to help us to live out the Gospels in our families and our communities.

Reflect

Any school will reflect something of the society in which we are all part - a society that is often restless, hurt, living without hope. We live in a world that believes if we increase our income or have lots of toys, the truth of who we are will be made clear. And yet, we Catholics know that is not true - that the man-made material things do not matter. And our Catholic schools understand that the God-hewn human mind, when taught to wonder (even amid scholastic disciplines), can transcend our worldly concerns and assist the Lord in healing and helping to make 'all things new'.

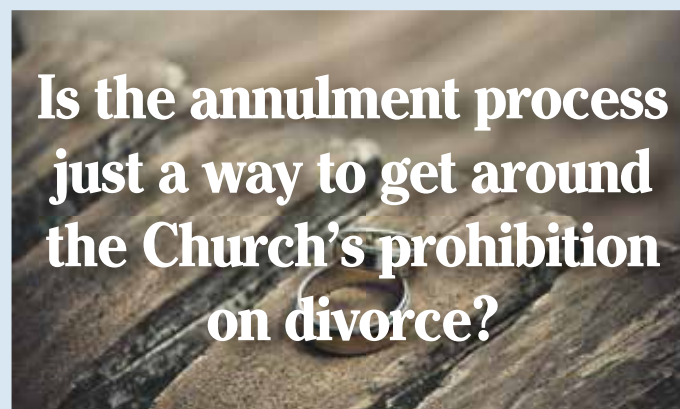
Please pray for all those educators and parents and pastors who dedicate themselves to preserving and adapting Catholic schools for our time and for the future. Pray for new schools to be built by the generosity of those who know their lifelong impact. And as the new school year begins, may God bless and keep us all.

✚ Bishop Robert P. Reed is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, pastor of St Patrick and Sacred Heart parishes in Watertown, Massachusetts, and president of the CatholicTV Network. He is chairman of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Communications.



Questions of Faith?

Jenna Marie Cooper



Is the annulment process just a way to get around the Church's prohibition on divorce?

Q: I was married in a non-Catholic wedding ceremony, then divorced years later civilly. Once I became Catholic and wanted to marry again, I got an annulment of the first marriage. My non-Catholic friends and relatives said this was a Catholic cop out to get around Jesus' prohibition against divorce, by saying that the first marriage 'never happened'. Could you comment?

A: I certainly wouldn't call the Church's marriage nullity process a "cop out," but I could see where non-Catholics might have this misunderstanding.

First, it's good to keep in mind that the Church's teaching on marriage, divorce and the possibility of a marriage being declared null is actually rooted in Scripture. In particular, in Chapter 19 of Matthew's Gospel we read that:

"Some Pharisees approached [Jesus], and tested him, saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?' He said in reply, 'Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.' They said to him, 'Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss her?' He said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery'" (Mt 19:3-9).

This passage provides the foundation for the Catholic teaching on the absolute permanence of marriage and the theological impossibility of a true divorce. However, in this Gospel passage Jesus also notes that divorce and remarriage is possible "if the marriage is unlawful." Here, Jesus is referencing the fact that not every couple seeking to marry has the legitimate freedom to do so, and not every apparent marriage has all the factors necessary for a true bond to have formed.

In some ways this is basic com-

mon sense. To give one illustration, very few people would consider a literal 'shotgun wedding', where a couple was forced to say 'I do' under threat of violence, to result in a valid marriage bond. Likewise, almost nobody would say that immediate family members could marry each other.

Granted, these are extreme examples! But there are many other less dramatic things that could render an attempted marriage invalid. For instance, grave psychological disturbances could leave one or both parties incapable of consent, or one of the parties might have been seriously dishonest with respect to their intentions going into the union.

In order to ensure that declarations of nullity are not simply 'rubber stamped' or "cop outs," the Church has a specific process, carried out through the ministry of diocesan marriage tribunals, for investigating whether or not a marriage was invalid.

As a very broad overview, after identifying a specific reason why the marriage in question may have been invalid, the tribunal invites both parties to submit evidence - such as witness testimony, or certain kinds of documents - that could potentially prove or disprove this claim. When all the evidence is gathered, both parties can submit written statements arguing their case. Then a tribunal official called the Defender of the Bond 'plays devil's advocate' and points out all the potential reasons why the marriage bond should be upheld in a given case. Finally, a panel of three canon lawyer judges read over the assembled evidence and arguments, privately share their opinions with each other, and come to a conclusion about whether a declaration of nullity should be issued.

Incidentally, this is why the popular term "annulment" is technically incorrect. The Church does not actively annul marriages. Rather, an already-null marriage is simply declared to be so.

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



Our real legacy – The energy we leave behind

Several years ago, at a time when the national news was much fixated on a high-profile case of sexual harassment, I asked three women colleagues: “what constitutes sexual harassment? What’s the line here that may not be crossed? What’s innocent behavior and what’s harassment?” They answered to this effect. It’s not so much a question of a clear line, a certain remark or behaviour that goes too far. Rather, we know what is innocent and what is not. We can read the energy beneath the behaviour. We know when it’s harassment and when it’s not.

I have no doubt that in most instances this is true. All of us have very perceptive inner radar screens. We naturally feel and read the energy in a room – tension, ease, jealousy, affirmation, innocence, aggression. You see this already in very young children, even babies, who can sense ease or tension in a room.

Discernment

It is interesting that the great Carmelite mystic John of the Cross, draws on this notion when he writes on discernment in spiritual direction. How, he asks, do you discern if a person is in a genuine dark night of the soul (a healthy thing) or whether he is sad and down because of an emotional depression or because of bad moral behavior? John elaborates a number of



Fr Rolheiser

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criteria for discerning this, but ultimately they all come down to reading “the energy that the person is radiating.” Are they bringing oxygen into the room or are they sucking the oxygen out of the room? Are they depressing you as you listen to them? If yes, then their issue is not spiritual nor healthy. People who are in an authentic dark night of the soul, irrespective of their personal interior struggle, bring positive energy into a room and leave you inspired rather than depressed.

My purpose in sharing is not for us to become more critical

and start judging others by trying to consciously read the energy they are radiating. (We are already unconsciously doing that.) What I want to highlight rather, as a challenge, is for each of us to more consciously examine ourselves vis-à-vis what energy we are bringing into a room and leaving behind.

Courageously

Each of us needs to courageously ask: what energy do I bring into a room? What energy do I bring to the family table? To a community gathering? To those with whom I discuss politics and

religion? To my colleagues and fellow workers? To the social circles within which I move? And more deeply, as a parent or as an elder, what energy am I habitually bringing to my children and to the young? As someone teaching or doing ministry, what energy am I radiating as I try to lead others?

That’s a critical question. What energy am I habitually bringing into a room and leaving behind? Frustration? Anger? Chaos? Jealousy? Paranoia? Bitterness? Depression? Instability? Or am I bringing and leaving behind some stability, some sanity, some joy of heart, some energy that blesses rather than curses others? Ultimately, what am I leaving behind?

“What may seem strange at first glance is that his followers could only fully inhale his energy after he had gone away and left them his spirit. That is also true for each of us”

When Jesus is giving his farewell speech in John’s Gospel, he tells us that it is better for us that he is going away because otherwise we will not be able to receive his spirit; and that his spirit, his final gift to us, is the gift of peace. Two things should be noted here: first, that the disciples couldn’t fully receive

what Jesus was giving them until he had gone away; and second, that ultimately his real gift to them, his real legacy, was the peace he left behind with them.

Energy

What may seem strange at first glance is that his followers could only fully inhale his energy after he had gone away and left them his spirit. That is also true for each of us. It is only after we leave a room that the energy we left behind is most clear. Thus, it is after we die that the energy we have left behind will constitute our real legacy. If we live in anger and bitterness, in jealousy and unwillingness to affirm others, and if our lives sow chaos and instability, that will be what we ultimately leave behind and will always be part of our legacy. Conversely, if we are trustworthy and live unselfishly, morally, at peace with others, bringing sanity and affirmation into a room, then, like Jesus, we will leave behind a gift of peace. That will be our legacy, the oxygen we leave on the planet after we are gone.

And this is not a question of who can best light up a room with humor and banter, good as these can be. It is rather a question of who has enough personal integrity so as to bring trust and stability into a room?

Given all this, it’s good to ask oneself: when I enter a room am I bringing some oxygen into that room or am I sucking some oxygen out of that room?

“If we are trustworthy and live unselfishly, morally, at peace with others, bringing sanity and affirmation into a room, then, like Jesus, we will leave behind a gift of peace. That will be our legacy, the oxygen we leave on the planet after we are gone”

To serve and not to be served

Wis 2:12, 17-20
Ps 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8
Jas 3:16-4:3
Mk 9:30-37

The Sunday Gospel

Jem Sullivan



The lives of the saints reveal the many trials and persecutions that the holiest men and women encounter from within or from outside the Church. We learn that some saints who founded religious orders were even rejected by the communities they founded. In engaging difficult members of their communities, they endured jealousy, false accusations and isolation from those they had gathered to serve.

Take for instance St Benedict, founder of Western monasticism, who founded communities of monks dedicated to prayer and manual work. Over centuries, Benedictine monasteries would serve as the foundation of Western civilisation by preserving Christian learning and witnessing to the way of discipleship in Jesus Christ. As St Benedict sought to lead one of the monasteries he founded, some rebellious monks conspired to kill him by offering him a poisoned drink. The saint raised his hand to bless the cup that shattered in front of the wayward monks.

Community

We know that St John of the Cross also faced rejection by members of his own religious community as he sought to found and direct Discalced Carmelite communities. As he attempted to reform the observances of the friars, he was met with captivity and physical punishments. During this challenging time, the saintly friar wrote his most profound spiritual writings that continue to inspire generations of the faithful.

Jesus predicts his betrayal, passion and death at the beginning of today's Gospel reading. The disciples must have been surprised when Jesus said to them, "the Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise."

St Mark tells us that the disciples did not understand Jesus' predictions.

The full extent of Jesus' identity and mission as the Son of God incarnate was still beyond their understanding. They had not yet encountered the divine love that Jesus came to bring to the world. And so, they missed the meaning of Jesus' words completely!

Then Jesus asked his disciples "What were you arguing about on the way?" And the disciples fell silent since they had been discussing among themselves on the way to Capernaum who was the greatest. Instead of focusing on the meaning of Jesus' words for their lives, they were absorbed with selfish ambition and desire for power and fame.

“Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me”

Jesus goes on to speak of his way of servant discipleship. He has come to serve and not to be served. And he will show the meaning of his words in his loving self-gift on the cross.

Since the disciples remain occupied with power, prestige and earthly fame, Jesus goes on to explain to his disciples, and us, the true meaning of Christian discipleship. "If anyone wishes to be first," he said, "he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." And then as a good teacher, Jesus illustrated the meaning of his words by placing a child in their midst, telling them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives

Christ Showing a little child as the emblem of Heaven, Benjamin West (1790)



me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

Jesus draws attention to the child in their midst as a reminder of the humil-

ity and simplicity that his disciples are to grow in. Children must depend on parents, family, teachers and generous adults for care and security. And children have a natural sense of awe and wonder at the gift of the world around them. Only total dependence on God and a heart of gratitude leads to humility before God as well as conversion of mind and heart

that leads to humble service of others.

Recommit

God's word invites us to recommit ourselves to growing into humble disciples of Jesus and to following in his way of suffering, servant love that brings healing and peace to a world in need. The word of God gives strength and courage to ask God for the grace of

true humility as we pray in faith, "speak to me, Lord." Question: How is Jesus' example of servant leadership a model for your faith?

Jem Sullivan holds a doctorate in religious education and is an associate professor of catechetics in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

“God's word invites us to recommit ourselves to growing into humble disciples of Jesus and to following in his way of suffering, servant love that brings healing and peace to a world in need”

TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan

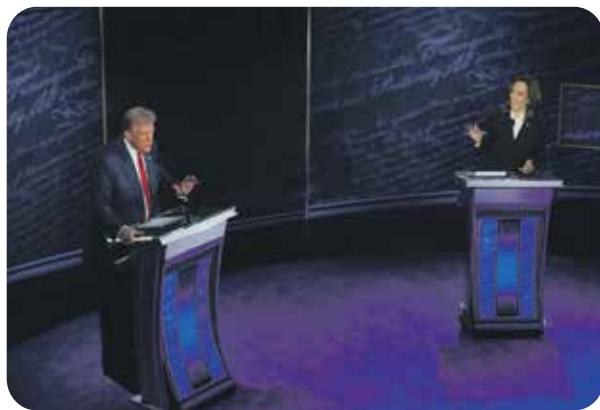


Can we still be neutral?

In the modern media landscape that is so fragmented it is rare to find a programme that draws huge numbers, but we got one last week.

Yes, it was the much-anticipated **Harris v Trump the US Debate** (Sky News, Wednesday) – too early in the morning. It was a sign of its significance that it was shown on so many stations or platforms – including *RTE News*, *Channel 4*, *BBC*, *Sky News*, *Disney+* etc. I subjected myself to the whole thing as sometimes just seeing clips selected by others (sometimes others with agendas) can give a false impression. It wasn't particularly enjoyable but the 90 minutes or so did hold my attention. As the *Sky News* anchor said, it wasn't 'edifying'.

I wasn't impressed by either Trump or Harris. I didn't think there were any knock-out or game-changing blows – more of the 'same old same old'. Trump was inclined to be repetitious to an extreme degree, like he had a few talking points that he was going to drive home over and over. I thought he was demeaning towards immigrants, with the usual talk of millions coming from jails and insane asylums. He did moderate it somewhat



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris take part in the presidential debate on September 10. Photo: OSV News /Brian Snyder, Reuters

by saying that 'some' are like this. Heading into bizarre territory he then started taking about migrants eating pets – the pets of US citizens! And of course, the media latched on to this and it became one of the most quoted lines from the debate – own goal!

Harris was more articulate for sure but was rather vague and disinclined to answer direct questions if she didn't want to, right from the start. If Trump went on and on about immigrants she went on and on about 'reproductive rights' and women's bodies, conveniently ignoring the little bodies of babies killed in abortions. She effectively dodged any

attempt by Trump or the *ABC News* moderators to pin her down as to what, if any, limits she'd put on abortion.

For the most part I thought the moderators were reasonably efficient, but there were a few occasions when they corrected or fact checked Trump, in a kind-of slap-down way, which I don't remember them doing to Harris. At one stage Trump said some ex-Governor had argued for terminating babies' lives after birth, and one of the moderators pointed out that this practice wasn't legal in any of the US states, but Trump had never said it was.

I'm glad I watched the

immediate post-debate coverage on *Sky News*, set in the 'Spin Room' – I was struck by the hostility towards the Trump side from some reporters. Republican Vivek Ramaswamy was hugely critical of the moderators but the *Sky News* reporter in particular was haranguing him. Another reporter was correcting him, teacher-like, when he claimed it was like a three-to-one debate (a rather extreme take, with a grain of truth). This was followed by the *Sky News* reporter speaking to four Democrat supporters in a row, including one pro-abortion activist.

Later that day *RTE News* programmes spoke to some American tourists in the West of Ireland – there were people on both sides, but I felt for the guy who said he leaned conservative, wasn't happy about the idea of voting for Trump but couldn't vote extreme left either – he was 'stuck in the middle'.

I'd say a lot of people are stuck in the middle on the Middle East conflict. On *The Pat Kenny Show* (Newstalk, Wednesday), there was an important interview with Caoimhe de Barra, CEO of Trócaire, about that organisation's attitude to Israel. I believe that the actions of the

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY MORNING LIVE

BBC One Sunday September 22, 10.30am

Return of the topical magazine show that gets to the heart and soul of issues of the day, with Sean Fletcher and Holly Hamilton.

SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday September 22, 1.15pm

Claire McCollum is on the Cornish coast to visit the remarkable 'church of storms', a place of prayer built on the beach where Christians have worshipped for over a thousand years.

THE VITAE MONOLOGUES

EWTN Sunday September 22, 9pm

Jeremy Stanbary of Epiphany Studio Productions presents a powerful and inspiring Catholic pro-life play, which shines the spotlight on the consequences of abortion in the lives of multiple characters.

Israeli Defence Forces in Gaza are grossly disproportionate and cruel, as are the cynical and vicious actions of Hamas, but Anton Savage asked pertinent questions about whether Trócaire's 'overtly political' stance on Israel would make their humanitarian work more difficult. She said they had to have a 'principled stand' based on humanitarian law. Fair enough, but in interviews like I think it would be wise also to highlight the war crimes of Hamas.

Also, on *The Pat Kenny*

Show (Newstalk, Thursday) stand-in presenter Anton Savage had a really positive interview with Loreto Sister Orla Treacey about her missionary work in South Sudan. Their focus was on educating young girls and saving them from forced marriages based on cow trading! One of the past pupils, now a lawyer, was with her and was very thankful to the Loreto sisters for her education.

Now, there's a welcome positivity.



Aubrey Malone

Film

Chicanery and double lives in 1930s London

The lengths a ruthless man is willing to go to in order to protect his job is explored with searing authenticity in Anand Tucker's *The Critic* (15), a gothic tale of blackmail, bribery and clandestine assignments set in post-Oscar Wilde, post-Jazz Age London.

Jimmy Erskine (Ian McKellan) is a theatre reviewer. His secret lifestyle (he's a closet homosexual living with his male secretary) and altercations with police are proving to be a problem for David Brooke (Mark Strong), his editor at *The Daily Chronicle*. Brooke has just taken over the running of the newspaper following the death of his father. The waspish nature of Erskine's reviews is a further head-

ache for him.

After being put under protective notice, Erskine secures the help of a mediocre but ambitious actress, Nina Land (Gemma Arterton), to hang on to his position.

He's been 'dipping his nib in nectar' for years to lionise Nina's performances but when he discovers that Brooke is besotted with her – he's been sending her roses as a 'secret admirer' for years – he sees an opportunity for a bargaining chip to save his job. If she agrees to sleep with him, Erskine proposes, he'll review her poor performances favourably from now on.

The quid pro quo will, he thinks, extend his tenure at the *Chronicle*. That's the theory anyway. But the best-



laid plans of mice and men (and desperate reviewers) gang aft a-gley.

Brooke is married to a woman who, we're told, is "barking" (i.e. mad). The

situation is further complicated by the fact that another married man, Stephen Wyley (Ben Barnes) has been 'carrying on' with Nina. Can she continue her louche

lifestyle? Will the wheels come off when all the dissonant threads threaten to unravel?

This is an amazing film both in manner and matter. The plot twists and turns like a sinewy snake. The sumptuous sets brilliantly capture the heady excitement of the time.

Great care is essayed with the composition of every frame. I was particularly taken with a repeated shot of a flag-draped coffin at a country mansion after a second death occurs there. By now it's almost a motif. And by Tucker's incredible close-ups. They leap out of the screen at us.

The cast is gold. McKellan wears his evil almost comically. Arterton mixes ordinariness and eroticism

sublimely. Romola Garai is perfectly blasé as Wyley's betrayed wife. The dignified but ultimately tragic character of Brooke is perfectly caught by Strong in a delicately nuanced performance.

Patrick Marber's script, co-written with Anthony Quinn from Quinn's novel *Curtain Call*, is wonderfully succinct: "I'm being used!" "Then use him back!"

The Critic is a study of desperation. It captures the surface elegance and venal underbelly of both the upper crust and lower orders of the era it so intriguingly evokes. One couldn't ask for a more forensic unpicking of a character, and world, sick at the core of itself.

Allow yourself to become soaked in this film's luscious ambience.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



Restoring Redmond to his rightful place in Irish history



John Redmond the politician speaking to a mass meeting in Dublin in 1912

John Redmond and Irish Parliamentary Traditions, edited by Martin O'Donoghue and Emer Purcell (UCD Press, €30 / £24.90)

Felix M. Larkin

This volume includes seven papers delivered at a symposium to honour John Redmond held in March 2018 as part of the Decade of Centenaries commemorations. To these two further papers have been added for publication.

The aim of the volume is to locate John Redmond within what the editors refer to as "Irish parliamentary traditions". The significance of the plural – "traditions" – in this context is not obvious to this reviewer.

In 1972 RTÉ broadcast a series of Thomas Davis Lectures on *The Irish Parliamentary Tradition* – note the singular – which was edited by Brian Farrell and published in 1977. Those lectures traced the roots of our parliamentary tradition back to Gaelic and medieval Ireland, and considered such manifestations of the parliamentary tradition as the Confederation of Kilkenny and Grattan's Parliament.

Scope

In contrast, the scope of this volume is limited to the period since the 1870s and the emergence of the "modern disciplined parliamentary party" – that is, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) at Westminster and its successors in Dáil Éireann.

The main parties in Dáil Éireann since 1919 can be regarded as successors of the IPP insofar as they have adhered to the parliamentary and democratic norms to which the IPP accustomed the Irish people, and also because of the continued participation of former IPP members and supporters and their families in Irish politics.

This theme is explored in this volume in papers by Martin O'Donoghue and Claire McGing. The latter focuses on the career of Bridget Redmond, widow of Captain William Redmond, who succeeded him as TD for Waterford in 1933 and served in the Dáil thereafter until her death in 1952.

“Redmond resembled Butt in many ways, not least their shared desire to dampen down the Irish separatist passion within political discourse”

McGing's paper highlights the dearth of female representation in the Dáil when Bridget Redmond was a member. There were never more than five women TDs. Her paper complements the paper by Margaret Ward on John Redmond's opposition, and that of the IPP, to women's suffrage.

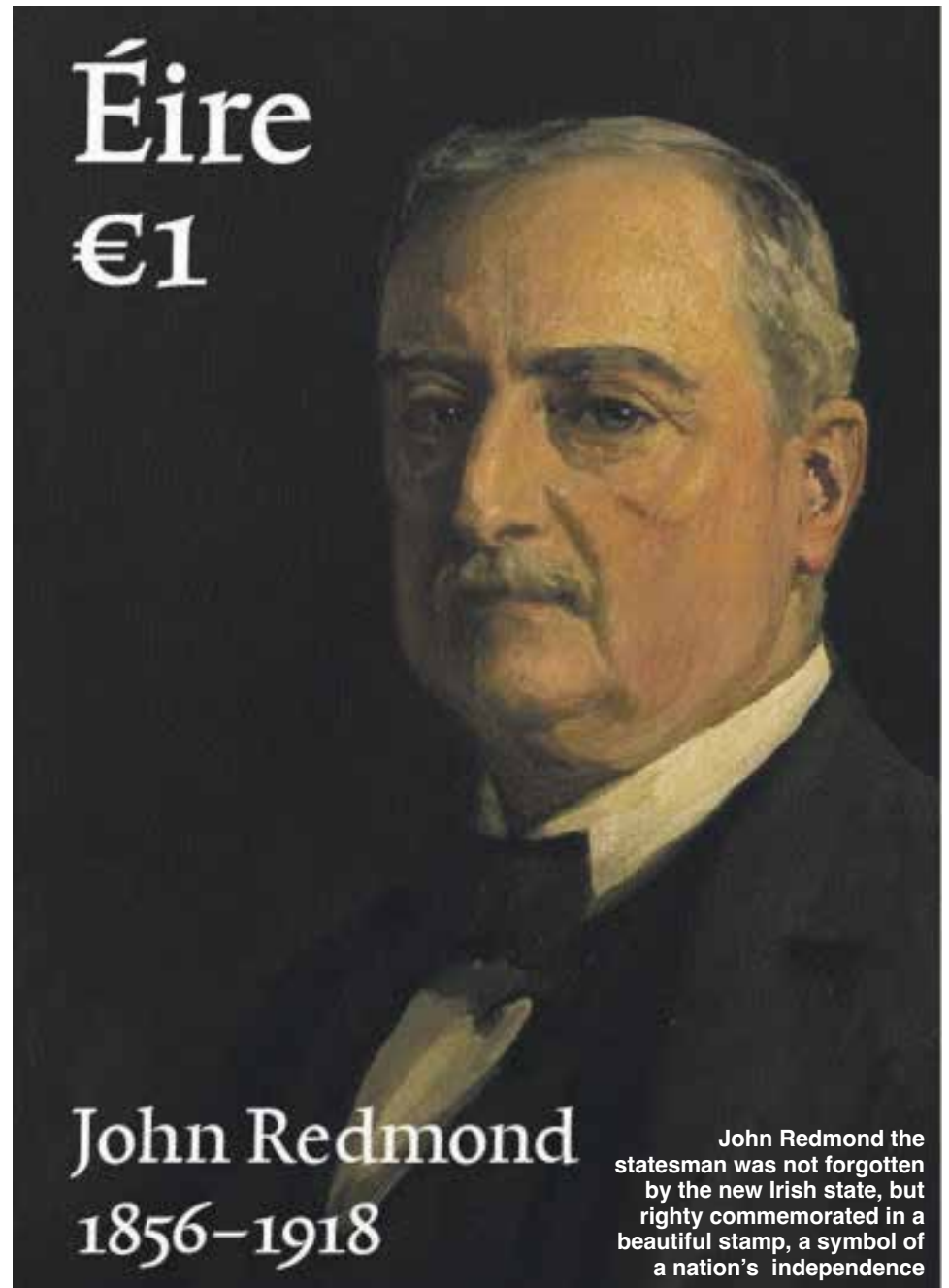
Redmond's opposition is often dismissed as "merely

strategic, an outcome of his determination to win Home Rule", but Ward rejects that utterly. She concludes that "there is no evidence to show that he ever contemplated a time when women in Ireland would possess a vote – either for the Westminster parliament or for a Home Rule legislature".

While Redmond and, before him, Parnell are universally recognised as the great popular leaders of the IPP, its founder was Isaac Butt – a man now almost totally forgotten. Colin Reid's paper in this volume rescues him from obscurity. While noting that Parnell "toppled Butt without remorse or mercy" in furtherance of more aggressive parliamentary tactics, Reid claims him as "the intellectual father of Home Rule" and argues that "Redmond resembled Butt in many ways, not least their shared desire to dampen down the Irish separatist passion within political discourse, preferring to view the 'Irish question' as a constitutional riddle rather than a national dilemma".

Tradition

The constitutional nationalist tradition represented by Butt, Parnell and Redmond – and also by Daniel O'Connell – is usually portrayed in the history books as antithetical to the physical force tradition of Irish nationalism. This volume suggests, however, that the two traditions were inextricably intertwined. Irish nationalism was not strictly binary.



John Redmond the statesman was not forgotten by the new Irish state, but rightly commemorated in a beautiful stamp, a symbol of a nation's independence

As noted in the Introduction to the volume, "many Irish Party MPs has Fenian roots and ... Redmond visited Tom Clarke, one of the architects of the 1916 Rising, eight or nine times in prison in the 1890s".

“There is certainly a case for saying that [Carson] introduced the gun into Redmondite politics”

Indeed, Margaret O'Callaghan emphasises in her contribution to the volume that "Redmond was

romantically attached to the 1798 Rebellion; he celebrated the Fenian tradition"; and Pauric Travers reminds us in his paper that both Parnell and Redmond "commanded the loyalty of the Fenian element" for most of their careers. That loyalty was rooted in the so-called New Departure, a rapprochement between the two nationalist traditions negotiated by Parnell, Michael Davitt and John Devoy in 1878.

The New Departure effectively removed the gun from Irish politics for 35 years until the Ulster Volunteers landed their arms at Larne. Alvin Jackson, in a paper reprising his comparative study of Red-

mond and Carson published by the Royal Irish Academy in 2018, concedes that "there is certainly a case for saying that [Carson] introduced the gun into Redmondite politics – or perhaps that he reintroduced the gun into Irish politics more generally".

We have lived with the gun in Irish politics as a consequence of Carson's actions up to the present day. The horror of this political violence illuminates why it is right to honour Redmond and the Irish parliamentary tradition as this volume does. That tradition offers a better model for the stable democratic state that Ireland is today than does the physical force tradition.

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.

Our word in advance: the Irish forecast that aided the invasion of Europe



The D-Day landings in progress, the losses were large

D-Day: The Oral History, by Garrett M. Graff (Monoray / Octopus Publishing, £25.00 / €30.00)

J. Anthony Gaughan

D-Day was the turning point in World War II. On that day, June 6 1944, 160,000 troops stormed the Normandy beaches.

They set up a battle front of more than sixty miles over five different beaches – their code names forever immortalised in history – Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. As a result of the ensuing fighting in the towns, villages and hedgerows of northern France, some 15,000 members of the invading and defending forces did not live to see the end of that ‘longest day’. It marked the beginning of the liberation of Europe from Hitler’s Third Reich.

Preparing

In preparing this book for publication Garrett M. Graff collected some 5,000 personal stories and oral histories from combatants and participants. He presents interviews with leaders such as Winston Churchill, Dwight Eisenhower, George Marshall, Bernard Montgomery, Omar Bradley and Admiral Bertram Ramsay. But the vast majority of those informative interviews are with rank-and-file members of the

various services.

He also provides similar interviews with members of the German forces defending the ‘Atlantic Wall’. He dismisses four myths that emerged from D-Day: (1) that it almost failed, (2) that the Atlantic Wall (German defences) was impenetrable, (3) that Omaha beach was a killing zone, and (4) that the beaches the British and Canadians stormed were less hazardous than the others.

“The whole north Atlantic Ocean area appeared to be filled with a succession of depressions, any of which could blow into violent storms”

One of the most tantalising dilemmas faced by Eisenhower, who was responsible for initiating the landing in France, was to decide on the suitability of the weather for ‘Operation Overlord’.

In the event on June 4 Captain J. M. Stagg, meteorologist to the Supreme Command reported: ‘The whole north Atlantic Ocean area appeared to be filled with a succession of depressions, any of which could blow into violent storms. Thus the June 5 launch of the invasion force had to be cancelled.’

General Bernard Montgom-

ery subsequently recalled what happened next: ‘And then a young Irishwoman, Maureen Sweeney, a postal clerk who worked with her husband, the keeper of the Blacksod Lighthouse on the north-western coast of Ireland, one of the first places that detect looming Atlantic weather approaching the British Isles, posted data on the night of June 4 that caught the attention of Stagg’s team.’

Maureen Sweeney subsequently wrote of that time: ‘Our reports were first to show any change coming in for good weather or bad weather. There was a query from London at around 11 o’clock. And then there was a second query. A lady with a distinct English accent requested me to ‘Please check. Please check’.

Figures

We began to look at the figures again. We checked and rechecked and the figures were the same both times so we were happy enough.”

These measurements provided by Maureen allowed Eisenhower to order the invasion of France on 6 June.

Apart from her role in this key historical event in the twentieth century, Maureen Flavin was a remarkable person in her own right. Born on June 3 1923 at Knockanure, near Listowel, Co Kerry, she was educated at the local national school and

A holy island on the edge of the World



Iona Abbey in spring time, a place of pilgrimage for all

The Book of Iona: An Anthology, edited by Robert Crawford (Polygon / Birlinn, £12.99)

Peter Costello

The remote island of Iona has a special place in the memories and affections of thousands of people in Scotland and Ireland.

In my own case, I still recall, so very distinctly it is like a dream, my first visit to the island. On the little ferry that takes one from the coast of Mull to the little harbour at Port Rónan on the island, the water over the white sandy sea bed was so brilliant and clear we seemed almost to be floating in air towards the shore of the holy island. It really is a place apart.

This anthology, edited by Robert Crawford, the Professor of Modern Scottish Literature in the School of English at the University of St Andrews, is a quite exceptional piece of work. But then Crawford is also a poet and translator and is steeped in the literature of Scotland over the long entangled past and the combative present. This is demonstrated also in *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Verse*, which he co-edited with Mick Imlah.

The usual way of assembling an anthology is either to lay out the contributors in alphabetical order; or alternatively, in strict chronological order. But in Iona Crawford eschews these in preference to assembling the selected pieces in a manner that allows them to resonate with and comment on each other in an interactive way.

The forty seven pieces taken from Adomnán’s life of St Columba are scattered through the book. But they have also been recast in the form of poetry, which gives them a new vitality, that makes the most familiar hagio-

graphical passages in their time-dulled prose into something new and brilliant, much like that sea passage.

For instance, that notorious passage describing the saint’s encounter with what ancient Irish tradition calls a *beiste*, not in the great loch to the south-west, but in the River Ness close to Inverness, becomes as a poem more credible to the modern reader, more acceptable to the imagination, for now it effectively echoes Gaelic tradition entirely.

Aside from this spine provided by Columba’s first biographer, and the foundation of all real knowledge of him, Crawford has assembled some forty two other writers. These show an amazing and sensitive variety that keeps one’s attention. Boswell and Dr Johnson are there, of course, but so are Sir Walter Scott and Herman Melville, Candia McWilliam and Lionel Johnson. Contrast is all: a passage from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is paired with Crawford’s own poem *Icolmkill*. Robert Louis Stevenson and Queen Victoria also find their place, as do John Keats and Louise Imogen Guiney.

Here every reader will find writers they feel the need to know more about. Though the classics are all here, Crawford commissioned much of the material from the writers involved. This adds a taste of freshness that is appealing.

Unlike other books on Iona, Crawford does not forget that over time other people aside from saints lived on the island, or nearby; piety finds a place, not on its own, but as part of general experience. So here, for once, the sacred island Iona is set into the circle of Highland life and history in a really attractive and moving way.

If you’re thinking of visiting Iona this is one of the books you should read in advance.

the Presentation Convent in Listowel.

“The availability of its detailed measurements proved to be crucial for the success of ‘Operation Overlord’”

Aged 18, she secured an appointment as a clerk in a

Department of Posts and Telegraph’s post office at Blacksod in Co Mayo. She discovered that the post office operated a weather station and one of her duties was to provide daily weather readings to the British Met Office via telegraph.

Outbreak

From the outbreak of World War II, the station had to provide hourly weather reports. As the first to warn of approaching stormy, westerly weather systems, the availability of its

detailed measurements proved to be crucial for the success of ‘Operation Overlord’.

Maureen married Ted Sweeney, the lighthouse keeper, in 1946 and they continued to operate the weather station until it was automated in 1956. She also succeeded as the postmistress at Blacksod retiring in the early 2000s. She was honoured in 2021 by the US Congress for her role in the success of the landing in France. She died aged 100 on December 17 2023.

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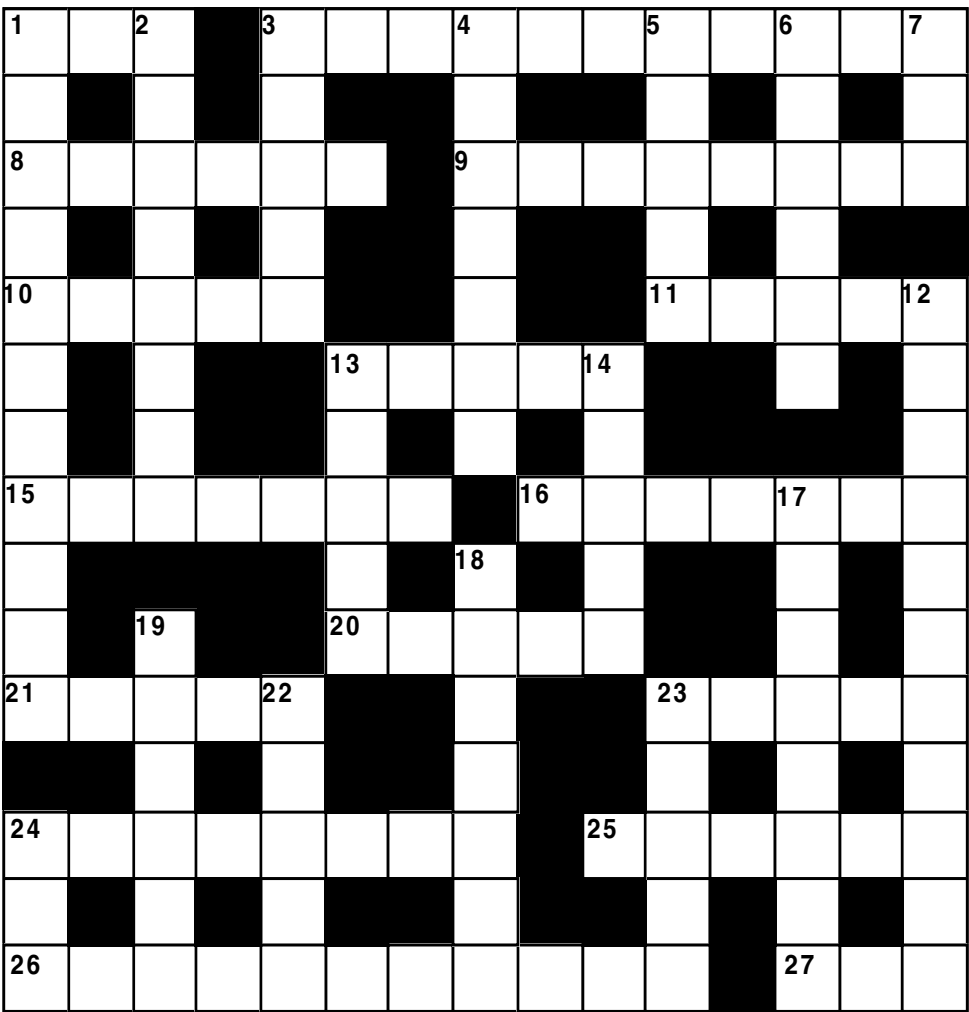
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Crossword

Gordius 681

Across
1 Delve (3)
3 Place which exploits leisure visitors (7,4)
8 In need of immediate attention (6)
9 Roman temple for all the gods (8)
10 Common flower or shade of purple (5)
11 Improve, make corrections (5)
13 Walk in military fashion (5)
15 Ointment (7)
16 Variety of bean (7)
20 Summer dish (5)
21 Gustav, English composer of 'The Planets' suite (5)
23 Paste with a basil flavour (5)
24 Initial response to someone's injury or physical distress (5,3)
25 Giant, woody member of the grass family (6)
26 Variety of cheese or breed of sheep (11)
27 Method or route (3)

Down
1 Nonsensical language (6,5)
2 Tittering (8)
3 Uniform jacket (5)
4 You pull it to open your parachute (7)



5 Name of a book, film etc (5)
6 Smelled of smoke (6)
7 Writing implement (3)
12 Fifth book of the Old Testament (11)

13 Takeaway sign (5)
14 Noticed a sound (5)
17 William Tell's weapon of choice (8)
18 Inundated (7)
19 Historically, a coin

worth two shillings (6)
22 The answer to an addition sum (5)
23 Tranquillity, serenity (5)
24 Not many (3)

SOLUTIONS, SEPTEMBER 12

GORDIUS No. 680

Across

1 Cap 3 Wing forward 8 Averse 9 Ring road 10 Heave 11 Tench 13 Tufts 15 Nervous 16 Non-stop 20 Equip 21 Dwelt 23 Colic 24. Thurible 25 Potato 26 Benedictine 27 Kid

Down

1 Crash-landed 2 Predator 3 Waste 4 Giraffe 5 Right 6 Abound 7 Dud 12 Harpsichord 13 Truce 14 Scoop 17 Tailback 18 Pungent 19 Sequin 22 Third 23 Close 24 Tab

Sudoku Corner 551

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 550

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

Last week's Hard 550

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

Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



What is a Co-PP: Part two

A few weeks ago, I wrote an article here exploring the role of Co-PPs. Some readers questioned its relevance; perhaps they still had a resident priest in their parish but weren't going to question him on his role or title. Or perhaps they found the new arrangement of being served by a team of priests satisfactory, even an improvement, with the choice of celebrant it provided.

For priests it was a different matter: the suffix after our name determines what's expected of us. Any confusion on what a Co-PP is, or what the role entails, disturbs priests.

One priest put it succinctly:

"By chance I saw your column regarding Co-PPs in last week's *The Irish Catholic*. My heart rejoiced that someone could put into print my experience of the co-PP status/non-status and know that I am not alone.

"I'm a diocesan priest, ordained over 30 years, and I've never felt more ignored as a person in the recent years of being a Co-PP. I have felt that others shared the experience but couldn't find the

voice to speak out. I feel your article has given me a way of presenting my feelings and fears of what has developed and for that, thank you."

"A new Church will have to be born, one not centred on the ordained but on the lay faithful"

Sometimes it seems as if synodality is a concern for the bishop and lay people of the diocese, but priests are left out of the equation, as this correspondent certainly felt. We priests can be awkward and questioning, sometimes hard to convince — but we are the ones on the ground, hacking away at the coalface, trying to play our part. Many of us remain unclear on how the Co-PP fits into the general scheme of things, as those who contacted me made clear.

Whatever the role assigned or whatever is expected, we Irish priests are a dying breed. A new Church will have to be born, one not centred on the ordained but on the lay faithful. Surely a Church with a tradition as rich as ours can imaginatively put together a model of parish life where the baptised play a central role, aided by a priest assistant. The new parish will celebrate Mass less often, but lay presiders and catechists can surely keep the life of faith alive with imaginative liturgies and good pastoral leadership, in which the participation of all in the life of faith is constantly encouraged. This will of course require theological and pastoral

formation of these lay leaders; formation should be underway now.

Future

Instead of this, however, much tinkering round the edges seems to be the order of the day, talks of closing churches or merging parishes just because a priest is no longer available for each. The lay faithful who have served locally and paid the bills over the years are surely the ones who must have the last word on which are retained and which lost — and their role in keeping communities alive is surely key to the future of the Church in Ireland, if it is to have one.

A school community gathered in their church for the opening of school year Mass. Everyone participated, but afterwards one of the Ministers of the Eucharist reported a problem. As she gave Communion to one child, her invitation to faith "The Body of Christ" brought the reply: "What am I supposed to do with that?"

The child following in the Communion line whispered "Eat it!". The question had been asked by one who received First Communion last spring but apparently hadn't been to Mass since. It's probably the best way of illustrating that First Communion without parental 'buy-in' makes little sense.

● Priests who minister in dioceses where parishes are served by a team of priests are fortunate. The alternative is worse: each PP is assigned a neighbouring parish when it becomes vacant. A priest's workload is thus doubled, and days off or holidays probably disappear. At least when a team of priests work together, cover for holidays is understood as essential and is arranged. Days off are also ensured for each, with a neighbour available to cover a funeral etc as necessary. What the PPs who end up with two parishes (or more) do, I can only imagine: retire, I presume!



The Little Way Association



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."

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