

The Irish Catholic

MEET THE 133 CARDINAL ELECTORS

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THE COLOUR AT THE POPE'S FUNERAL SHOWED A WORLD CHURCH

Maria Steen
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New Pope should enact 'zero tolerance' of abuse worldwide

EXCLUSIVE

Chai Brady and Garry O'Sullivan

Leading child protection campaigner and abuse survivor Marie Collins has said that "I want the next Pope to be a man with the courage to bring in the 2019 promise of 'zero tolerance' (removal from the clerical state of any cleric guilty of abuse) and make reporting to civil authorities by bishops mandatory worldwide - not a guidance as it is today".

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the former member of the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors who resigned in 2017 citing resistance to the commission's recommendations added: "Personally, because of my experience of the Vatican, [the new pope] needs to have the courage to stand up to the 'old guard' there and continue the reforms begun by Francis."

Ms Collins said she hoped that the new pope will be a man "who can get things done, someone who has worked in parishes and not spent his time at a distance from the people", and "a man who can heal the rift that has been developing between 'liberal' and 'conservative' Catholics would be welcome. A new pope falling into either extreme would be a problem for the Church going forward".

Dr John Murray, a lecturer in theology at Dublin City University, also said the next Pope should play a role in addressing divisions, particularly around liturgy, moral teaching, and Church governance. He also highlighted the need for continued reform regarding Vatican administration, finances, and the handling of abuse cases.

Dr Murray said that while continuity exists, some of it was lost during Francis's pontificate, contributing

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'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith' (2 Timothy 4:7)

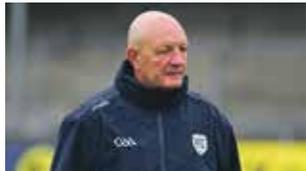


Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell, prayed at the coffin of Pope Francis in St Peter's Basilica. Archbishop Farrell and Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin concelebrated the Funeral Mass of Pope Francis in St Peter's Square on April 26.

GAA LEGEND TERENCE 'SAMBO' MCNAUGHTON

Eanna Mackey

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VOCATIONS SUPPLEMENT

Giving all to God

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A TRIBUTE TO POPE FRANCIS' SYNODAL VISION

Fr Barry White

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New Pope should enact 'zero tolerance' of abuse worldwide

» **Continued from Page 1**
to a "very polarised" Church. "The Church is very polarised... and the synodality process hasn't resolved that. In some ways, it's made it more obvious," he said.

Prof. Fáinche Ryan, Professor of Theology at the Loyola Institute in Trinity College Dublin and Vice-President of the European Society of Catholic Theology, noted Pope Francis had a "compassion and concern for the world we are in today, which is a very, very troubled world", and that these qualities remain essential in Church leadership.

"With women, in terms of the synodal process, you see all the work that Francis has done in advancing women and taking them seriously. I think our next leader again needs courage. Lots of courage," Prof. Ryan said.

She continued saying the next pope must guide the Church through the next phase of the synodal process, which she believes must include deeper faith formation and theological education, particularly for adults.

"If we expect the people of God to be involved in decision making in the synodal process, then we need certainly equality of education," she said.

Alan Whelan, President of the Catholic Secondary School Parents Association, said he would like to see the cardinals choose "another deeply spiritual pope, a pope who continues to teach us how to pray and a pope who continues to inspire our young people".

He added: "I would hope for a pope who would frequently remind our bishops of their immediate responsibility for teaching and witnessing to the Good News, especially in all Catholic schools under their watch."

Director of Public Affairs

for Aid to the Church in Need Michael Kelly also wants a pope who can speak to youth. "I hope the next Pope can connect with young people and speak their language understanding the many complex challenges in their worlds, while calling them out of the isolation so often part of social media to the community of the Church.

"Younger people have an intuition for authenticity, and they don't want a soppy 'I'm okay, you're okay' watered-down version of the Gospel, they want to be presented with the robust challenge of faith – in a world of fake news, disinformation and misinformation the Church should stand up and say: truth matters".

Paula McKeown, a parishioner in Ardkeen and former Director of the Living Church initiative in the Diocese of Down and Connor, said: "My deepest desire for our next pope is that he would have a Christ-like heart. The teaching and witness that will radiate from a pope modelled entirely on the heart of Jesus should empower people to embrace the mission of the Church and it would also be attractive to those who are curious about faith and seeking to belong."

Fr Peter McVerry SJ, social justice campaigner and founder of the Peter McVerry Trust, said he hopes to see a pontiff who continues the legacy of Pope Francis, particularly his work with marginalised communities.

"I'd like to see a continuation of what he began," he said, "with an emphasis on those who are poor, who are migrants, who are prisoners, those who are excluded and forgotten in society... bringing the Church back to its roots in the Gospel."

📌 **The Conclave of Cardinals will convene on Wednesday May 7**

Aontú says crisis in Tusla care system is a national scandal

Pedro Esteva

Aontú Leader Peadar Tóibín TD has long been an outspoken critic of Tusla, consistently advocating for transparency and reform. Recently, the party secured documents under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, specifically an email exchange between the Minister for Children and Tusla's CEO as well as briefing notes from a call between the two on February 21, 2025.

As innocuous as that may sound, the documents revealed some troubling issues within Ireland's child welfare system including disturbing statis-

tics on missing children, child sexual abuse, and even deaths in state care. Deputy Tóibín described these findings as "extremely alarming," calling the situation a "national scandal" that must be debated in the Dáil. He emphasised the urgent need to end Tusla's unregulated 'Special Emergency Arrangements,' stating, "The system is crumbling. We need an urgent debate on the welfare of children in care."

The key revelations from the FOI documents include:

- 37 children missing from Tusla's care, 32 of whom are refugees or seeking international protection.

- 161 referrals made since 2021 for children suspected of being victims of child sexual exploitation, with 115 of those children in care.

- 235 deaths among children in state care or known to Tusla since 2014, including 10 murders and 51 suicides or drug overdoses.

- 66 children accommodated in hotels over the last 6 months.

Deputy Tóibín's criticism, however, extends beyond these figures, focusing on Tusla's failure to protect children from trafficking and exploitation and its disregard for legal obligations, including failing to inform the court when 250 children

were left without social workers. He also noted the immense pressure that Tusla is under, with 94,000 children referred to the agency last year, despite overspending its budget by €80 million.

In the documents, Tusla state since 2002, it has significantly reduced the number of young people placed in emergency hotel accommodations, ensuring staff supervision 24/7. The agency also emphasised its ongoing concern about child sexual exploitation, acknowledging that children in care are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, especially through social media.

Brazil celebrates 525th anniversary of its first Catholic Mass

Renata Steffens

Brazil celebrated 525 years of the first Catholic Mass in the country on April 26. Fr Severino Pinheiro da Silva Neto OFM-Cap, Chaplain for the Brazilian Community in Dublin said it is important to remember the day as it "reminds us of our iden-

tity, shows us who we are as it points at our origins."

The priest said "it is of great importance that the starting point for the new country was Mass on an Easter Sunday. Fr Neto said that remembering and acknowledging the date is crucial for the immigrants far away from home, as when "liv-

ing in a multi-cultural context, we question our own identity.

"It is illuminating to remember Brazil started around a cross, during Mass. Around that cross, that altar where Portuguese and Brazilian indigenous celebrated together, our identity was built. Our vocation as nation: to be the people of the

land of *Santa Cruz*." The Land of the Holy Cross (in Portuguese, *Terra de Santa Cruz*) was the first name given to the country.

The Catholic Mass happened only four days after Pedro Álvares Cabral landed in Brazil on April 22, 1500, and was led by Fr Henrique de Coimbra, who, as Fr Neto, is a Franciscan friar.

Where presidents do Rome



Following the funeral of Pope Francis, President Michael D. Higgins and Sabina Higgins visited the Pontifical Irish College in Rome. Pictured are the President, Sabina Higgins with Archbishop Dermot Farrell, Archbishop Eamon Martin among with other clergy members and staff. On the right is pictured Fr McCloskey from Co. Down during the Pope's funeral.

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'Pope Francis was like Jesus, he was a revolutionary'

Renata Steffens

A Brazilian artist painted a portrait of Pope Francis on Grafton Street on April 22, the day after the Holy Father died. João 'Brutto' Adnet is a painter from Rio based in Dublin and painted the Pope before. "I am not even Catholic, but Pope Francis was like Jesus. He was a revolutionary," the artist said.

Mr Adnet's art is temporary, as he uses cling film as the base for his paintings and takes it down when he leaves the site. He told *The Irish Catholic* his admiration for Pope Francis was a result of the Pope's work with minorities.

"The fact that he wanted to do more for the people, challenging rules and norms. For example," the artist said, "he advocated for Palestine, for the LGBTQI+ Community... For the position he held, I didn't see him as a person exclusively for the Church but as someone who did a lot for those in need [despite their faith]. And the devotion so many people have in the Catholic Church can influence others."

"I've always found him an interesting figure because of that [the Pope's work with minorities]. I've always avoided painting religious themes in general, but I never saw him as just a religious figure, he was

much more humanitarian than religious."

The artist said that many stopped, "especially elderly," to talk to him while he was painting Pope Francis. "People usually stop, and regardless of what I'm painting, some people will always have complaints. There were people who stopped and gave me the finger, who didn't like the painting."

When Mr Adnet "painted Pope Francis in 2016/2017, there were paedophilia scandals in the news and many people were against the Pope, but this time people were more positive, more receptive" to his art. "Possibly due to his passing," the artist concluded.



João 'Brutto' Adnet while he was painting Pope Francis on Grafton Street on April 22. Photo Eamonn Coyle.

Young people learn Catholic apologetics at conference

Matthew Roche

Evangelium Ireland, the annual Catholic apologetics conference took place on Easter Saturday April 26 in Maynooth College for the second year in a row and was attended by approximately 165 people.

Fr Chris Hayden (Ferns Diocese), the spiritual director of St Patrick's National Seminary gave a talk entitled "What are you looking for? Discipleship in the Gospel of St John".

Three workshops then took place. 'Speed Apologetics: Proclaim the Faith with Confidence' was given by Eoin McCormack, a Parish Catechist and Pastoral Worker in Dublin. He is also the Lay Programme Development Coordinator at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome. He defined apologetics as reasoned arguments or writings in justification of a theory or religious doctrine. The workshop consisted of attendees being put in pairs and rotated to practice in giving answers to common questions from secular atheist friends.

The final talk, 'Understanding the Contemporary Mind' was given by Fr Simon Nolan,

Prior Provincial of the Carmelite Order and former Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth. Fr Simon explained the influences that led to the relativism, individualism and materialism which mark today's culture. Attendees spoke highly of the talks given and the social aspect. Evan Cawley, a secondary school teacher from Sligo, said he goes every year meeting old and new friends and finds the talks very insightful. Cathal Barry from Galway said that Evangelium is great for meeting others strong in their faith; Katie Duffy and Theresa Traynor (both from Mayo) both agreed that it was uplifting to see so many young people being nourished by thought-provoking and inspirational talks and that there is a lot of hope and joy in store for the future of the Church. Paddy Davern from Galway said that he thoroughly enjoyed Eoin McCormack's workshop and described the day as "edifying and cordial".

Fr Benedict McGlinchey OP was the chief celebrant for the Mass in Maynooth College Chapel.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Irish 'Red Nuns' gather for funeral of Pope Francis

A group of 'Red Nuns' gathered to solemnly watch the funeral of Pope Francis in Dublin City.

The late pontiff's funeral was broadcast worldwide on Saturday, reaching homes and places of worship across Ireland, including St Alphonsus' Monastery in Drumcondra.

The Redemptoristine Nuns, known as 'Red Nuns,' gathered in a small, understated room of the monastery. They watched a livestream of the funeral Mass and procession.

Thirteen of the order's 16 nuns were present, gathered on chairs around a projector and a small set of speakers.

The nuns of this contemplative order describe their life as "enclosed," demonstrating that they stay strictly within the monastery's grounds, while nurturing a profound connection with the external world through their spiritual practices.

New Catholic documentary available on streaming

A new documentary telling the story of a woman who transformed the Catholic Church in Mexico is now available in Ireland and UK on Amazon Prime.

The new animated documentary *Concepción* tells the story of Conchita Cabrera de Armida, a Mexican lay woman "whose profound faith and apostolic mission transformed the Catholic Church and continued to inspire hearts across the globe," said Juan Pablo Fajer Navarro producer and co-writer.

Mr Navarro said that "amid persecution, personal loss, and societal challenges, Conchita embraced a divine calling that led her to found several apostolic movements—transformative works that still impact the Catholic Church today."

"In a world that often feels uncertain, Conchita Cabrera's life speaks powerfully to the human spirit, reminding us of the enduring relevance of hope and sacrifice," Mr Navarro said.

The 126-minute-long film, available in Spanish with subtitles, was produced by Martha G Navarro and Mr Navarro and directed by Alejandro Frances. The production company, Cross Entertainment, focus its work in faith-centred films seeking "to bring messages of hope, love, and spiritual reflection to the forefront of the cinematic landscape."



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‘Deeply insulting’ teacher union motion shot down

Chai Brady

Irish teachers have rejected a series of proposals including some described as “deeply insulting” which sought to reduce the role of religion in Catholic primary education.

Alan Hynes, Chief Executive of the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP), said the outcome of the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO) congress highlighted a disconnect between the union’s public messaging and the views of teachers on the ground.

Mr Hynes was particu-

larly critical of part (c) of the motion, which questioned the effectiveness of wellbeing and inclusion policies in a school system dominated by religious patrons. It read: “c. notes the Department of Education’s emphases on inclusivity and wellbeing but asserts these are ineffective while 95% of primary schools remain under religious control”. Though it was ruled out of order, he described its intent as a direct affront to teachers.

“I’m stunned to see that any group of teachers in any branch of the INTO would put

forward something as insulting towards the professionalism of their fellow teachers and principals as to place a motion before their own trade union stating what section (c) stated,” he said.

“It seemed to me to call into question the professionalism of teachers in Catholic schools... I find it utterly disgraceful that anybody would call their commitment to the wellbeing of the pupils in their care into question in the way that the particular group of teachers that put forward that motion did so.”

Mr Hynes also pointed to

the Department of Education’s reconfiguration pilot, which sought to identify schools willing to transfer from Catholic to other forms of patronage. The results, he said, were revealing.

“Over 60 areas were engaged... and out of all of those areas, only three schools were identified as wishing to divest patronage to a non-Catholic patron,” he said. “An overwhelming majority of parents and staff opted to stay within the Catholic system.”

He said that ultimately the question of school ethos

is about parental rights, not teacher preferences.

“Our schools exist to provide an education to children on behalf of those children’s parents... primarily what this is about is parental rights to choose the type of education for their children,” Mr Hynes said.

He added: “I find it interesting that the minority teachers would believe that they have the right to dictate the form of education that children will receive, in a way that doesn’t respect the freedom and constitutional rights of parents.”

Ireland’s marriage rates on the decline, new stats show

Pedro Esteva

A recent release from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) shows that the number of marriages post-Covid have been on the decline.

In 2024, Ireland saw 20,348 marriages registered, including 668 same-sex unions, marking a 3.8% drop from 2023 and a 7.7% decline since 2014. Overall the marriage rate was 3.8 per 1000

people, down from 4.8 a decade ago, reflecting a broader trend in delayed marriages and changing societal attitudes.

The average age of brides and grooms has risen, with brides now averaging 35.9 years and grooms 37.7 years. This shift reflects the growing trend of later marriages, often due to career priorities, the rising cost of living, and the housing crisis.

Though the Church continues to play a significant role in wedding ceremonies, the proportion of Catholic weddings has dropped significantly over the past decade. In 2024, 32.6% of opposite-sex marriage were Catholic ceremonies, with civil services nearly on par.

The study also revealed some intriguing trends about wedding dates. Friday and Saturday emerged as

the top days for weddings, while Sunday was the least popular. When it comes to months, August stands out as the favourite for summer weddings, with January being the least chosen month for tying the knot.

One thing is clear, marriage in Ireland is evolving with new trends emerging every year.

See page 8 for more information.

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Thousands gather in Knock for Pope’s Requiem Mass

Renata Steffens

Over 2,000 people gathered for a Requiem Mass for Pope Francis in Knock Basilica on April 23. The Mass was led by Fr Richard Gibbons PP and Rector at Knock Shrine and had people from Knock Parish and surrounding areas attending.

According to Fr Gibbons, the Pope “is fondly remembered in Knock,” resulting from his visit to the Shrine in 2018 and the parish pilgrimage to the Vatican in 2020. “The silence that descended on the large congregation when the Pope prayed in the Apparition Chapel was a special moment for all who were present on the day... We are honoured that he raised the status of the Shrine to an International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine.”

Nóirín Mulhern, Marketing and Communications for Knock Shrine said “all aspects of Knock Shrine were represented at the Mass, with members of Cairde Mhuire (Knock Shrine Society) and Knock Order of Malta in attendance, while parishioners participated in the

liturgy. Archbishop Emeritus of Tuam, Archbishop Michael Neary was also in attendance. The Mass was an emotional occasion and a fitting memorial to the life and legacy of Pope Francis.”

Throughout last week, hundreds of pilgrims visited Knock to sign the condolences book in the Apparition Chapel, Ms Mulhern said.



A life of service...



The work of Sr Geraldine Ryan, an Irish Columban Missionary Sister who has made disability services in South Korea her life’s work was celebrated on the day of the Jubilee of People with Disabilities in the Irish Embassy of the Holy See. Pictured are Michelle Winthrop, Ambassador of Ireland to Republic of Korea with Sr Geraldine Ryan.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bishop Comiskey died aged 89

Sadness among friends and family of former Bishop of Ferns Brendan Comiskey following his death at the age of 89 on April 28. Colm O’Gorman, who exposed the mismanagement and coverup of child sexual abuse by priests in the diocese in the BBC documentary *Suing the Pope* (2002) said in his X (Twitter) that “every death is a profound loss for those who loved the deceased person... and I want to send them my heartfelt and sincere condolences.”

Mr O’Gorman said “I think it is vital that he not be scapegoated... Brendan Comiskey did no ‘fail’ to address child sexual abuse by priests in the diocese. He managed it as required by Church law and Vatican policy. His enforcement of the cover up was not unique to the Diocese of Ferns or to Ireland.”

Publisher Garry O’Sullivan said he was “saddened to hear of the death of Bishop Comiskey, who did so much good in his life and was an exceptional retreat giver, a charismatic man with a deep faith and a great sense of fun.”

AMRI hosts gathering for returned missionaries

AMRI hosted a gathering for returned missionaries at the Avila Retreat and Conference Centre in Dublin. The event was primarily social, providing an opportunity for attendees to connect, share stories, and engage with others, whether they had recently returned or had been back for some time.

The idea for the event stemmed from last year’s release of Retired Missionaries and Faith in a Changing Society by Dr Carmel Gallagher (TUD), which offers a sociological study of the Irish missionary diaspora. The book shares insights from interviews with both male and female Catholic missionaries who have worked globally and returned to share their experiences in Ireland.

The survey argues that returned missionaries possess invaluable skills and perspectives gained from their work across different cultures and social contexts. It also explores the holistic approach to missionary work in relation to ethics, religion, and justice in today’s world. The wisdom and experience of these missionaries are vital resources for those striving for a synodal approach to Church life.

A sad morality tale of our time

If there is a morality tale of our time, it may plausibly be woven around the sad story of Virginia Giuffre, Jeffrey Epstein, Prince Andrew and Ghislaine Maxwell. In the tumult of what was known as 'the permissive society' – more accurately, a licentious society – two lives have ended in suicide, one in irrecoverable public disgrace and one in a very long incarceration in an unyielding prison.

The recent tragic death of Virginia Giuffre, formerly Roberts, by her own hand, has once more highlighted the drama, which starts with a young girl sexually abused and exploited by a family friend; this led to her parents separating, and young Virginia living on the streets for a time.

She admitted to the reporter who first wrote about her story, Sharon Churcher, that she was dazzled, even comforted, by the glamour and wealth of Jeffrey Epstein – as many others, from far more favourable backgrounds, had been. She was excited, aged 17, when Ghislaine Maxwell told her she would be introduced to a prince. What young girl wouldn't be?

Neglected and abused individuals often look for love, approval and comfort. And so, Virginia got drawn



Mary Kenny

into that decadent milieu which Epstein and Maxwell choreographed. She thought they would protect her.

When an encounter or a relationship is disputed between two people, who is speaking the truth? Virginia said she was "trafficked" to Prince Andrew by the Epstein duo and made to have sexual relations with him on three occasions, aged just 17.

“The individual personalities of these companions meant little or nothing to him, so one encounter blends into the next in his memory”

Andrew denies this, and does not recall ever meeting Virginia, even though, under pressure from Queen Elizabeth, he paid a substantial sum of money (reported to be £12 millions) in an out-of-court settlement, which did not admit liability.

What I imagine really happened is this: Andrew had

been a spoilt young man who became accustomed to girl-fans shouting "We Want Andy!" As a divorcé, he also became accustomed to approaching any young female he liked, and many young females who were compliant to be in his company, and please him. But the individual personalities of these companions meant little or nothing to him, so one encounter blends into the next in his memory. In that sense, he may be telling 'his' truth in saying he doesn't remember Virginia.

But just as Virginia's life was ruined by what she had been through, so Andrew's life, in another way, has also been shattered by his actions and choices: stripped of all public duties, shamed and stigmatised as a sexual abuser and held at a distance by his brothers, nephews, and sister (only his ex-wife and daughters remaining loyal to him.)

In death Virginia Giuffre has been heralded as a heroine who had the courage to challenge rich and powerful men like Epstein – and brought them to account. That is a historic victory, perhaps. But the saga is still a terrifying morality tale about the wages of sin.



Prince Andrew, The Duke of York and The Duchess of York at an airport, 1988

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Honour thy Father and thy Mother

I knew Michael Gove very slightly as a journalist; then he became a politician (and British Education Minister); and now he's a journalist once again as editor of *The Spectator* magazine in London. He has recently been ennobled with a title, and has taken the name of Lord Gove of Torry in tribute to his late father.

Michael was adopted at the age of four months by an Aberdeen fishmonger, Ernest, and his wife Christine. Torry was the working-class community from where his dad hailed. Govey says that his dad "meant everything

to me. He was a wonderful man. I'd love for my dad to be remembered...someone who always cared about other people, someone who always tried to give a start to people others didn't see the potential in."

I am aware that some adopted people are critical about the adoption process, and see it as a traumatic break with the birth parents. But I'm also touched by Michael Gove's strong devotion to his adoptive mother and father, whose "love and kindness" opened a path to a brilliant career which now includes taking ermine in the House of Lords.

The art exhibition of 'Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone: The Art of Friendship' is well worth seeing, at Dublin's National Gallery. (Entry after 5pm is at a reduced price for oldsters, too.) Both were amazing, even pioneering, Irish artists, and both were reli-

gious. Mainie Jellett, who remained an Anglican was, I think, the better painter, and a pioneer of Cubist art in earlier 20th century Ireland. She brilliantly interwove Marian and Biblical themes into her highly innovative Cubism.

But Evie Hone was a dazzling artist of the

stained-glass window. She became a Catholic, after many deliberations, (and time spent in an Anglican convent). She was received into the Catholic church at Blackrock College, where she had completed a stained-glass window.

Their friendship endured to the end of their lives.

The Resurrection and the conspiracy theory



Martina Purdy

As the world is caught up in the death of Pope Francis, it is also being drawn into a great mystery: the life of the Church - and our faith in the Lord's resurrection. Almost from the moment Christ rose and departed the tomb, the lies began. Indeed, the first conspiracy theory was concocted in Jerusalem.

Matthew's Gospel recounts how religious leaders invented a story that the followers of Jesus had stolen his body - and even bribed Roman guards into keeping their mouths shut.

Little has changed in our own society when it comes to the truth versus conspiracy theory. Social media is rife these days with all kinds of debates on issues from Climate Change to Covid vaccines.

Trust

One reason may be that the mainstream media has been losing credibility. Indeed, a Gallup poll regarding trust in the US media has shown a dramatic decline since the 1970s when opinions were first tracked. In 2025, it is being reported that trust in the mass media in America is at its lowest ebb in five decades. Some of its surge can be traced to Donald Trump's 'fake news!' mantra but not all of it.

The media itself has been at times guilty of corrupt, selective or biased practices and the public scepticism, and the trust in the media is down in Ireland too.

“He realised that it would require more faith for him to maintain his atheism than to put his trust in Jesus. It was a moment of truth. And transformation”

Christians, particularly in Belfast, are divided by many things. But a reminder that we are united in the cross came in the simple

And yet we not only long for the truth, we need it, and thankfully there are still journalists who are committed to the highest ideals.

“Just the facts,” was the mantra of Lee Strobel, who wrote for *The Chicago Tribune* in the 1970s. His own search for the truth is remarkable - not least because he began to search for the Truth about Christ and the Resurrection when, to his absolute horror, his wife became a Christian.

Strobel was an avowed atheist. Indeed, the notion of a loving father figure was alien to him as he had a difficult and resentful relationship with his own father.

“As Strobel went deeper into his research, he went deeper into crisis. The evidence pointed overwhelmingly to the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection”

Challenged by his wife's conversion, he committed to researching the truth of Christ's death and resurrection. He was open to wherever the evidence led him and he spent two years on the project. His story has been retold in a book, and indeed a documentary and feature film called *The Case for Christ*.

In the film, based on his emotional and intellectual journey, a Christian colleague at *The Chicago Tribune* wisely encouraged him to begin with the resurrection. Why? Because it is on this pivotal event that the Christian faith hangs. As St Paul said in the first letter to the Corinthians: “If Christ

has not been raised, then your faith is futile.”

As Strobel went deeper into his research, he went deeper into crisis. The evidence pointed overwhelmingly to the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection. And he began to recoil from it. Strobel was no different from many people in the ancient and the modern world: nobody ever rises from the grave!

But after looking at the facts, Strobel found himself losing faith in his atheism.

He had looked at some of the conspiracies: Could Jesus have simply shaped his life to fulfil the ancient prophecies (The mathematical odds of Jesus fulfilling so many of them is so astronomical that it would be impossible)? Did Jesus really die on the cross (The Romans were expert killers and the description in John's Gospel of blood and water flowing from Jesus' side when he is pierced with a lance is consistent with someone whose heart has ruptured)? Did his followers spirit his body away (He finds overwhelming evidence of the resurrection, among the pointers were Paul's own conversion, the martyrdom of the apostles, the witnesses - 500 according to Paul's account - and the fact that no one in those days, wanting to be believed, would choose a woman with a shady reputation as the first witness, the rapid growth of the early Church, etc)

Truth

In the end, Strobel found himself alone with “an avalanche of evidence” from experts and scholarly sources that Jesus was in fact the son of God, who was crucified and rose again. Strobel put his pen down.

He realised that it would require more faith for him to maintain his atheism than to put his trust in Jesus. It was a moment of truth. And transformation.

Set free by the Truth, Strobel ultimately left reporting and became a Christian pastor.

Easter sign outside Malone Presbyterian Church, which read: ‘We have hope!’ We do indeed, and it is a hope that is rich in immortality.



Lee Strobel

“The media itself has been at times guilty of corrupt, selective or biased practices and the public scepticism, and the trust in the media is down in Ireland too”

A Cherry Tree, planted in my garden last Autumn, is springing into life this Easter, with exquisite pink buds. It is still just a sapling and I just realised that it will be another five to seven years before it matures and by 2032, I too will be well-matured in years!

I mentioned this to a friend who recounted the story of an elderly James Mason, the Hollywood film actor who was shooting a film in Dublin some years ago. One evening he took a

walk window-shopping in Grafton Street. He was approached by a middle-aged woman who said: “Excuse me, Sir, but would you be the actor James Mason in a later life?”

A wonderful Irish way with words.

My friend's father, Michael Donnelly, a devout Catholic, also had a wonderful way with words. He passed away a few months ago at age 99 and would scoff at anyone below the age of 90: “Aach sure you are only a pup!”

How fine a thing it is to move from festival to festival. Words penned in an Easter letter in the fourth century by the theologian and Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, a man we now know as St Athanasius. His observation is still appropriate at Easter 2025 as we journey in hope and joy towards Pentecost. Notably his own feast day is on Friday May 2, which certainly beats what is on offer in the secular world calendar. It features some

rather bizarre festivals: National No Pants Day (in which one opts for skirts, dresses and kilts), International Harry Potter Day, National Brothers and Sisters Day, and National Sauvignon Day (which doesn't sound so bad but I've learned it is a far better thing to be intoxicated the new wine of Christ. There's no hangover!).

Perhaps it says something about our human nature - and our need to feast and celebrate. We have souls which yearn to

feast and rejoice. Yet how often do we settle for the mundane. Regularly, I turn on social media to be met with ‘Happy Monday!’

What does that even mean?

Frankly I would rather celebrate St Athanasius Day, a remarkable saint, whose wisdom rings down the ages. He declared that the “grace” of Easter is not restricted to one day, as it guides us through the trials of this world. “Its rays of glory never set.”

Rosary, renewal, and resistance



Young people attending an Irish Society for Christian Civilisation youth camp.



ISCC volunteers travel across Ireland upholding the right to life.



The Irish Society for Christian Civilisation is dedicated to defending the moral and spiritual foundations of society, Chai Brady hears

At a time when the voice of Faith in Irish public life can often seem faint, the Irish Society for Christian Civilisation (ISCC) is determined to make it heard. Rooted in devotion to the Rosary and fidelity to the teachings of the Church, this lay-led organisation is confronting what it calls a “moral crisis shaking the remnants of Christendom”.

At its helm is Rory O’Hanlon, who told *The Irish Catholic*: “Irish Society for Christian Civilisation is an organisation of lay Catholic Irishmen and Irishwomen concerned with the moral crisis shaking the remnants of Christendom. We strive to peacefully defend hierarchy and the values of tradition, family and property; and to highlight the mission of the Church as the teacher of virtue, the fountain of grace and the irreconcilable enemy of error and sin.”

A key part of this mission is the promotion of the Rosary, which is at the heart of Catholic devotion. “The

Rosary is a great means of salvation and sanctification,” Mr O’Hanlon states. “One of the great promises associated with the Rosary is that: ‘You shall obtain everything you ask through the recitation of the Rosary’. What better benefit could we ask than the good of the Church and the preservation and restoration of Christian civilisation?”

“Our Lady warned of the spreading of the errors of Russia, and of wars, and the annihilation of nations. And in each of the six apparitions in Fatima, she told us to pray the Rosary every day”

Mr O’Hanlon stresses that the Rosary has a dual significance, both spiritual and societal, saying that the message of Fatima “concerns itself mainly with the salvation of souls, but also focuses on the problems of temporal society”.

“For example, Our Lady warned of the spreading of the errors of Russia, and of wars, and the annihilation of nations. And in each of the six apparitions in Fatima, she told us to pray the Rosary every day,” he says, adding that the Rosary will contribute to both the salvation of souls and the restoration of Christian civilisation.

For Mr O’Hanlon, the Rosary has played a personal role in his own life. “I was brought up with the Rosary frequently recited in my family, and thanks to the influence of many good friends and mentors I was encouraged to pray it every day. Later a friend advised me to pray



15 decades per day instead of just five. I thought it would be impossible, but after trying it for a while, it somehow was no more difficult than praying only five decades.”

His involvement in the ISCC began when he was a university student when a friend lent him the book *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, by Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, which highlighted the importance of the mission of the Church. “The love that the author expressed for the Church really inspired me,” he recalls.

Brazil

That inspiration led him to Brazil, where he met Prof. Corrêa de Oliveira. “He encouraged me to dedicate myself to defending the Church and Christian civilisation. And he was a man who led by example, both in his life of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, to Our Lady and to the Papacy, and in his actions in defence of the Faith,” Mr O’Hanlon says.

The challenges faced by the ISCC in modern Ireland are significant, particularly given the growing secularisation of society. “As some of your readers have surely seen on our YouTube channel, it is challenging for sure. We are often confronted with hostility towards Church teaching and towards Catholics,

sparked media controversy. The idea of fostering Catholic manliness among boys was met with resistance from some quarters. “Yes, even some government ministers have denounced the supposed toxic masculinity of Irish men,” Mr O’Hanlon says, “Catholic men are called to practice the manly virtues like courage, to stand up to the enemies of the Church, and even to risk our lives for the Church and for the good of souls. And I think that the enemies of the Church fear those virtues, and don’t want them to be taught to the youth.”

“It was specifically because we were teaching about the virtue of purity and Catholic manliness that uproar about our Call to Chivalry Summer Camp was triggered. I think it is a badge of honour to be feared for teaching this.”

“We were teaching about the virtue of purity and Catholic manliness that uproar about our Call to Chivalry Summer Camp was triggered. I think it is a badge of honour to be feared for teaching this”

One of the ISCC’s most publicised initiatives has been its ‘Call to Chivalry’ summer camps, which

sparked media controversy. The idea of fostering Catholic manliness among boys was met with resistance from some quarters. “Yes, even some government ministers have denounced the supposed toxic masculinity of Irish men,” Mr O’Hanlon says, “Catholic men are called to practice the manly virtues like courage, to stand up to the enemies of the Church, and even to risk our lives for the Church and for the good of souls. And I think that the enemies of the Church fear those virtues, and don’t want them to be taught to the youth.”

“It was specifically because we were teaching about the virtue of purity and Catholic manliness that uproar about our Call to Chivalry Summer Camp was triggered. I think it is a badge of honour to be feared for teaching this.”

Battle

For O’Hanlon, the controversy is part of a larger cultural battle, saying: “Behind that uproar about our camp is a cultural war. It is a war in which everyone must choose to be with Christ or against him. The commandments and the teachings of the Church require us to live in a way that can be difficult. We are asked to go against our inclinations – to live chastely, to always tell the truth, to forgive our enemies, and the like. And if people find any of that too hard to practice, they might resent the Church. And to make matters worse, some of our adversaries know how to exploit that resentment, and to make it boil over.”

The ISCC also promotes good male role models, particularly in response to the contemporary crisis of masculinity. Mr O’Hanlon gives the example of one,

the 14-year-old Mexican boy, St Jose Sanchez del Rio, who defended the Faith in the Cristero war. “He died a torturous death, while his cynical Godfather tried to get him to abandon the Faith. He died crying ‘Long live Christ the King’”, he says.

“It brings the Faith directly into the public street, like re-conquering the public spaces for God and Our Lady”

Another role model O’Hanlon highlights is St Thomas More who “stood by the truth, defended the Faith and specifically marriage, renouncing the highest office in the land, and ultimately his life”. And then, of course, there is St Peter.

Looking ahead, O’Hanlon is eagerly anticipating the upcoming Rosary Rally Crusade in May, saying: “I especially look forward to hearing the reactions from the public from all over the island. Some groups are small, with just two people in a small village, or more than 250 people in several rallies. It is a great opportunity to see that the Faith is not dead in Ireland – far from it, in fact. It brings the Faith directly into the public street, like re-conquering the public spaces for God and Our Lady. I believe that we are close to reaching our goal of organising 575 public Rosary rallies for May 10.”

The ISCC remains committed to its mission, despite the many obstacles in its path. Mr O’Hanlon and his colleagues are determined to stand firm in their Faith, and to help inspire a new generation of Catholics.

'New Age' weddings hit record high while marriages hit record low



David Quinn

Catholic marriages and civil marriages are now almost neck and neck, according to the latest figures from the CSO. Soon enough, there will be more civil wedding ceremonies than Catholic ones. In addition, Ireland's marriage rate has now dropped to the lowest level ever recorded,

outside of the Covid years when we were locked down a lot of the time.

What's going on? Well, we are obviously becoming a lot more secular, but it is not quite as simple as that. Many people opting for non-church ceremonies are not turning their back on the Church per se, rather it is often the case that it is simply convenient for them to have both the wedding ceremony and the reception in the same nice hotel in the same beautiful setting. Maybe if the Church was willing to let its priests preside at wedding ceremonies in hotels, the number of Catholic weddings would rise again, somewhat anyway. I'll come back to this.

But first let's take a look at the sheer amount of change that has happened to how we marry in the last few decades. For example, in 1994, Catholic weddings still accounted for 91.4% of the total. Last year, according to the new CSO report, this had fallen by almost two-thirds to 32.6%. That is an incredible transformation. Any priest will tell you they do far fewer weddings than once upon a time.

Notice, however, that a third of weddings are neither civil in nature, nor Catholic. In fact, if you add up all the weddings that took place last year which were neither civil nor Catholic, it comes to 35.2% of the total, bigger than the other two cat-



egories. That total includes same-sex weddings.

Humanist

Let's dig a bit further into the weddings that make up that 35.2%. Of these, 7.4% were conducted by the Humanist Association. That is, they were secular in character. The Human Association is basically an atheist organisation. The number of 'humanist' ceremonies has fallen a bit.

A tiny 0.9% were conducted by the Church of Ireland, which is also down two-thirds compared with 1994, so they were not resisting the trends overtaking Catholic weddings.

A total of 7.1% were conducted by something called the 'Spiritualist Union of Ireland', which you have probably never heard of.

But a category of weddings called 'other religious' came to just under 20% of the total at 19.8%.

Now, you may think this must be made up mainly of other Christian ceremonies, plus some Muslim and Hindus ones. But this is incorrect.

In fact, they are almost entirely conducted by what might be loosely called 'New Age' organisations, as shown by an Iona Institute paper published last year called 'The rapid rise of New Age weddings in Ireland: How should the Churches respond?'.

It found that in 2023, 623 weddings were conducted by an organisation called 'Entheos', and 532 by one called the 'One Spirit Interfaith Foundation'. There are many other such organisations in the wedding business.

'Entheos' was founded by someone who calls herself the 'Bald Priestess'. She was a campaigner for the repeal of the 8th amendment. On its website, Entheos says it was founded "to serve people who have been ostracised, marginalised or otherwise left behind by traditional faith paths on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, nationality, parental / family status or any other reason."

It allows people to pick and

choose the type of ceremony they want, and they can add elements from any religious or spiritual tradition. It is a deliberately ultra-individualistic approach to spirituality that deliberately eschews the given way of doing things that the Churches offer. No set formula is followed, no tradition.

Does the rise in popularity in 'New Age' weddings mean the Irish themselves have become 'New Age' in outlook? The answer is yes and no"

All the other organisations offering 'New Age' type ceremonies have a similar outlook.

Does the rise in popularity in 'New Age' weddings mean the Irish themselves have become 'New Age' in outlook? The answer is yes and no. They are not suddenly attending Entheos ceremonies regularly, and in any case, the likes of Entheos deliberately reject anything so organised. This would make it too much like a denomination, and it doesn't want to become that.

In addition, most people who have had an Entheos celebrant at their wedding probably never heard of the organisation before they began to plan their wedding or the hotel suggested them. An awful lot of the growth in the popularity of these ceremonies has to do with the fact that wedding ceremonies can now take place in hotels. This was fantastic for hotels from a business point of view, and also for these 'New Age' organisations that seem to have set up in some cases to take advantage of being able to do weddings in hotels. Do not underestimate the commercial aspect to all this.

So, I don't think Irish couples are going out of their way to find a 'New Age' wedding celebrant or would consider themselves to be 'New Age'.

But on the other hand, they probably do consider themselves to be 'spiritual' rather than 'religious' and their spiritual beliefs are individualistic and mix-and-match and have no real connection to a wider religious community which is at the heart of so-called 'organised' religion, meaning you belong to a religious community with shared beliefs and practices that is bigger than you.

The rise in 'New Age' and civil ceremonies is, in my opinion, closely connected to the fall in marriage rates generally, and not just here in Ireland. Only 3.8 marriages per thousand adults took place in Ireland last year. This is down from 7 per thousand at one point in the 1970s and 4 per thousand in 2023. A further fall is perfectly possible.

In addition, the age of which people marry keeps rising, if they marry at all.

Birth rates

In turn, this is connected to the big fall in birth/fertility rates, which are now well below replacement level, and falling further.

A society that becomes more individualistic in its goals, not only sees a turning away from organised religion, it also sees a turning away from other big commitments like marriage and even, as it is becoming ever more apparent, having children. As the population ages, expect ever fewer marriages per thousand adults and fewer children.

What the Churches need to do is consider whether there is anything to be gained from offering to conduct wedding ceremonies inside hotels as a form of 'light' evangelisation. It would be interesting to see the take-up rate.

But above all, they need to remain confident in their basic vision of marriage and the family because it offers a much more positive vision of society than the highly individualistic and materialist one that is resulting in fewer marriage and fewer children and an ageing society. The Churches offer something much better than that.

“Only 3.8 marriages per thousand adults took place in Ireland last year. This is down from 7 per thousand at one point in the 1970s and 4 per thousand in 2023. A further fall is perfectly possible”

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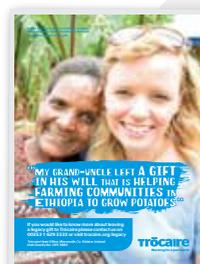
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The fashion at Pope Francis's funeral



Maria Steen

It may seem like a funny thing to say, but Pope Francis's funeral last week got me thinking about fashion. Following the televising of the funeral and publication of photos of the various dignitaries in attendance, social media was alight with comments about who was wearing what, or rather criticisms about how inappropriately some (notably, US President Trump and Ukraine President Zelenskyy) were dressed.

On the one hand, President Trump was wearing a blue – rather than traditional black – suit, while Zelenskyy was wearing black – but not a suit. Critics of each followed fairly predictable lines, with each one's supporters defending their man's choice of attire – or excusing it by pointing to the other and using it as a basis on which to demolish their opponent's criticism. Former President Biden, who was also in attendance, donned a blue suit too, as did Prince William and our own Taoiseach, Micheal Martin, although criticism of them was decidedly more muted. Both US wives, the First Lady, Melania Trump, and former First Lady, Jill Biden, were – in fairness – most suitably and beautifully attired for a Papal funeral, wearing black skirt suits and black mantillas.

Etiquette

Any etiquette guide will warn that at a funeral it is not appropriate to seek the limelight for oneself and that funeral attire should reflect that intention, being conservative, sombre and modest. One should also pay attention to the wishes of the family – or in this case the Church – as regards dress. It should be – above all – a sign of respect for the dead and those who mourn rather than an opportunity to make a fashion statement about oneself. Our personal presentation, in other words, becomes a symbol of love for the other. Any keen fashion

“Gazing out over a sea of red silk, I was reminded of the universality of the Church, of the size and breadth of her mission on Earth, of the priests, bishops and cardinals being part of something bigger than themselves in the service of God's people”



Cardinals pictured at the funeral of Pope Francis
Inset: A Swiss guard

magazine reader will tell you about the importance and symbolism of one's fashion choices. Uniforms in this context (whether a dress code of a black suit and tie, or appropriate clerical garb) are – or should be – about not drawing attention to oneself, but rather taking one's part and place in something bigger.

“He even changed tradition as regards his burial place and manner, opting to be buried in Santa Maria Maggiore rather than St Peter's”

That being said, perhaps Pope Francis himself would have some sympathy for those who bent the dress code rules. After all, he was very much his own man when it came to fashion, dispensing with the traditional papal garments for a simpler style. He

did away with the papal red shoes, replaced the gold pectoral cross with an iron one and a solid gold piscatory (or fisherman's) ring with a gold-plated silver one. His crozier was plain, his throne a simple wooden chair, not the gilded one used by previous popes. He even changed tradition as regards his burial place and manner, opting to be buried in Santa Maria Maggiore rather than St Peter's, and in a single wooden coffin lined with zinc, rather than the usual three nesting coffins of cypress, lead, and oak.

Rules

However, rules – even fashion rules – are there for a reason. This is what struck me as I looked at those seated in the front sections of the funeral: fashion provided an important visual cue for the role of the clergy and others present. Red chasubles marked out the cardinals and bishops, wearing white mitres on their heads with zucchetto underneath – red for the cardinals

and violet for the bishops. Priests and other clergy wore choir dress: a white surplice and red stole over a black soutane. The Swiss Guard (whose duty it is to guard the College of Cardinals during the *Sede Vacante* period between popes) were present as always: the halberdiers on duty wore their ceremonial uniform of red, blue, and yellow stripes, a silver helmet with a red plume, white collar and gloves, all the while brandishing their halberds.

“Instead of picking out personalities, the image (despite all the divisions and disagreements within the Church) was one of a collegiate priestly brotherhood”

Critics of the Church might have tut-tutted at the pomp and ceremony, the apparently lavish dress of the clergy, but I had a different impression. Gazing out over a sea of red silk, I was reminded of the universality of the Church, of the size and breadth of her mission on Earth, of the priests, bishops and cardinals being part of something bigger than themselves in the service of God's

people. Instead of picking out personalities, the image (despite all the divisions and disagreements within the Church) was one of a collegiate priestly brotherhood. In this individualistic era, there remains something to be said for uniforms: clothing in which individual preference and the desire to be noticed are subordinated to something more important. Apart from it being an impressive spectacle in itself, it was also a reminder to us here in Ireland – with merging parishes and fewer available Masses – that the priesthood is not dead, but rather is thriving in many parts of the world.

Commissioning

When judging the Church's commissioning of art or beautiful architecture or even clerical garb, we would do well to remember Christ's admonition of Judas who questioned Mary's anointing of Him in Bethany with a pound of costly nard from an alabaster jar. He reminded those present that the poor would always be with them, and that they – and we – can always do good for them, but that it was right that Mary spared no expense in anointing His body. There is a time and a place for everything, and anything that gives glory to God is never wasted. We should also spare a thought for the artists and craftsmen who earn a living from their

trade to support themselves and their families, and bring beauty – a divine attribute – to the world.

“Pope Francis, though taking a more streamlined approach, always wore the white uniform that visually identified his papal authority”

Pope Francis's successor may have a different style – even in fashion terms – however, as leader of the Church, he should be marked out as different from the other bishops of the world. Pope Francis, though taking a more streamlined approach, always wore the white uniform that visually identified his papal authority. Should his successor adopt a more traditional or lavish approach in his dress, let us give him the benefit of the doubt: perhaps he is giving an opportunity to the artists and craftsmen to express their talent in service of the Church; perhaps he wants to have the beauty and glory of the most holy liturgies reflected in the beauty of his garb; perhaps he just wants to wear a uniform and subordinate his personal wishes to his office. Whatever his decision may be, we all should pray for him.

Inside the 2025 Papal Conclave: meet the Cardinal Electors

Pedro Esteva

The papal conclave of 2025 will begin following the passing of Pope Francis, whose 12-year papacy profoundly shaped the Catholic Church. The conclave, expected to take place in early May, faces the difficult task of selecting a successor—one who must navigate a diverse Church and lead it through a complex global landscape marked by various crises and social debates.

The election process, though shrouded in secrecy, is well-documented and carefully structured by centuries-old rules, with a few modern updates. Of the 252 active

cardinals, only 135 are eligible to vote for the next pope.

While any Catholic male who has “reached the age of reason” could theoretically be chosen, no one outside of the College of Cardinals has been elected to the papacy since the late 1300s. It makes sense—who better to lead the Church than someone familiar with the complexities of the papacy?

Secrecy and privacy are the chief cornerstones of the conclave. Cardinals are enclosed in the Sistine Chapel and adjacent areas, all sealed off to prevent external influence. Communication with the outside world is strictly forbidden. The Vatican employs signal jammers to block transmissions, and thorough secu-

rity sweeps are conducted to ensure no surveillance devices are present.

Ballots are counted and burned each day to maintain secrecy. If no pope is elected, black smoke rises from the Sistine Chapel chimney. White smoke signals the successful election of a new pope. A two-thirds majority is required for election, as reinstated by Pope Benedict XVI in *Normas Nonnullas*. Once a candidate achieves the required majority, he is asked if he accepts the election. Upon acceptance, he becomes pope and selects a papal name before being publicly announced.

The 2025 conclave is not just about electing a new leader, it will shape the future direction

of the Church. Will the next pope continue Pope Francis's legacy or go another direction?

Prof. Kurt Martens, expert in canon law, noted, “History shows a trend of cardinals electing a candidate ‘to correct’ some aspect of the last pope’s pontificate. After a short pope, we have a tall pope. After a thin pope, we have a fat pope. After an intellectual, we have more of a pastoral person.” But he added, “There are no hard and fast rules.”

However, concerns have been raised that the Church risks a schism if an ‘orthodox’ leader is not chosen. As Cardinal Gerhard Müller warned, “The new pope must be orthodox—not a liberal nor a conservative.” He emphasised,

“The question is not between conservatives and liberals but between orthodoxy and heresy,” stressing the responsibility the cardinals bear. “I hope cardinals are not so influenced by what they are reading in the headlines.”

Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David offers a different perspective, cautioning against viewing the conclave as a political election. “There are no candidates in a conclave... No one will give dole-outs. No one will mount a campaign,” he said. “The conclave is a retreat where we must pray and discern not whom we want to elect, but whom the Lord wants to succeed Pope Francis.”

The media frenzy, fuelled by both faithful Catholics and

secular onlookers, has turned the election into a spectacle of speculation. But Cardinal Müller cautioned, the conclave is not a “power game” played by “stupid people looking to manipulate,” as depicted in films like *Conclave* (2024). Prof. Martens echoed this, emphasising, “The cardinals have done their homework. They know their duty starts the moment they receive their red hats.”

Regardless of the speculations, we can only pray that the Holy Spirit guides the cardinals in their momentous task.

With this in mind, we now turn our attention to the cardinal electors, whose choices will shape the future of the Church.



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Fernando Filoni - Italy - 79



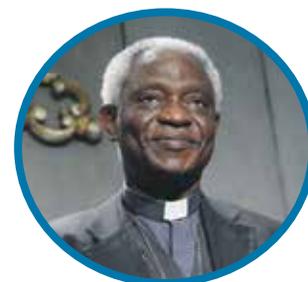
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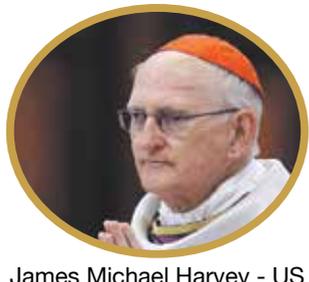
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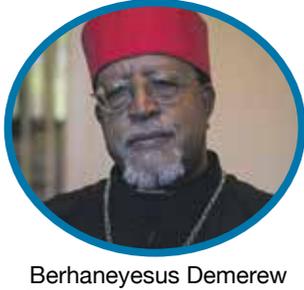
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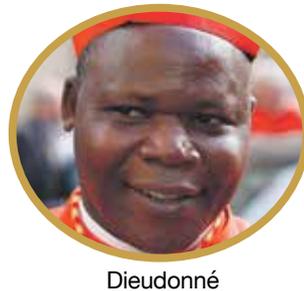
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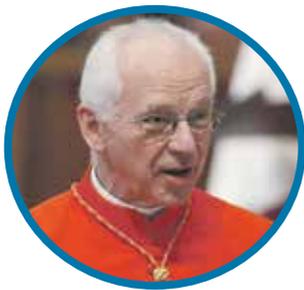
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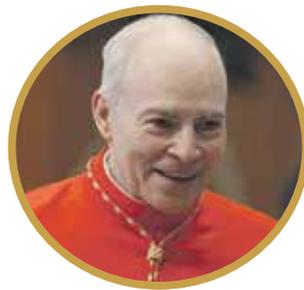
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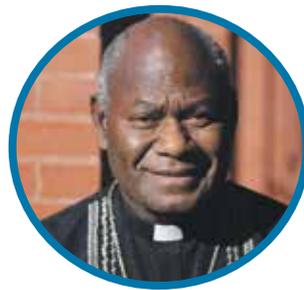
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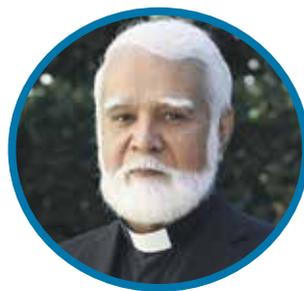
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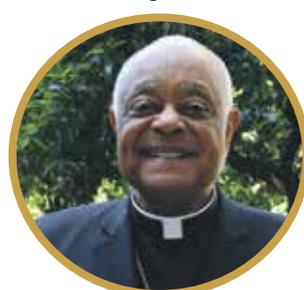
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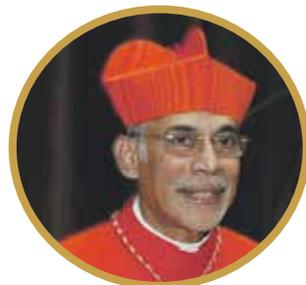
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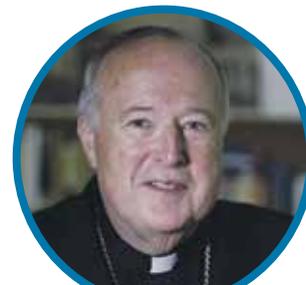
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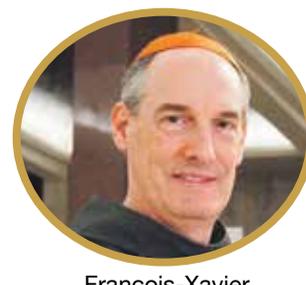
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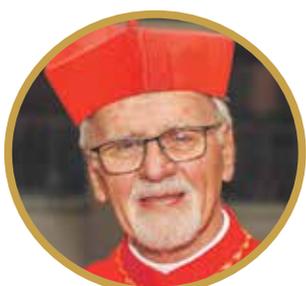
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March for Life organisers looking for big turnout to send a message to the government



Eilís Mulroy

Many news reports and discussions in recent days have commented and paid tribute to the influence and legacy of Pope Francis. He was a steadfast defender of the right-to-life of the unborn child, though more often than not, in death as in life, his remarks referencing the pro-life issue didn't receive the media attention that they deserved. Pope Francis wrote in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*: "How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties?"

The shocking numbers of abortions for Irish women show a catastrophic failure to protect human lives before birth. From 2,879 abortions in 2018, the figures have multiplied to an astonishing 10,033

abortions in 2023.

Is this inevitable? Not at all! There are positive alternatives to abortion even in the challenging situations women face during pregnancy. On paper, in theory, the government and HSE recognises those alternatives. But in practice, abortion is far too often treated like a simple and obvious solution, and women are pushed towards abortion while being left in the dark about the supports available and the harm that abortion does to both mother and baby.

“We need to build on this momentum and use the new opportunities to call for meaningful reform”

It doesn't have to continue to be this way. For example, picture the positive and practical impact if women thinking about abortion were given, as a matter of course, clear information about options other than abortion, and about a full range of easily accessible supports available before and after birth? This is not happening currently but it undoubtedly could happen, if even a fraction of the resources that have been invested in expanding abortion were allocated to focused efforts to reduce



the spiralling abortion numbers.

At this time, with signs in the Irish political landscape of potential for change, we need to build on this momentum and use the new opportunities to call for meaningful reform on abortion. The general election in November 2024 saw increased numbers of pro-life TDs elected, including Sean Canney and Michael Healy-Rae who topped the poll in their respective constituencies and have been appointed as junior ministers. Local and Seanad elections also brought gains for pro-life candidates.

Consequences

Senator Sarah O'Reilly of Aontú, who was elected to the Seanad in January this year, will be among the guest speakers at the upcoming annual

March for Life on Monday May 5, in Dublin. Thousands of pro-life supporters from around Ireland are expected to attend the event. Senator O'Reilly recently gave a short but powerful speech after Cavan General Hospital began carrying out abortions, the last of Ireland's 19 maternity hospitals to start doing so.

She told the Seanad that "in the past weeks, many staff have privately signalled their distress at this development, which involves the HSE bringing in new staff to carry out abortions." In addition, Senator O'Reilly told the Seanad, "there have been misdiagnosis errors, potential life-threatening complications, coerced abortion, women living with post-abortion regret and psychological burdens for hospital staff." We need to hear more from public representatives like Senator O'Reilly who are prepared to point out the consequences of abortion that often go unreported.

“The March for Life is our chance to unite with our pro-life Oireachtas members”

The March for Life will hear as well from other guest speakers such as Ruth O'Sullivan. Ruth, a nurse from

West Cork, has taken the courageous decision to speak out about the devastating impact abortion has had on her life and how no one warned her beforehand that she might regret her decision. Her hope is that by sharing her story it helps "to break the silence" about the "reality of the horrors that can unfold after making the life-altering and permanent decision" to abort a baby.

The March for Life takes place in Dublin on Bank Holiday Monday May 5, starting at 2pm from the Newman Church side of St Stephen's Green before making its way to the Dáil where the guest speakers will address the gathering.

The March for Life is our chance to unite with our pro-life Oireachtas members and send a very clear message to the Government that we expect to see urgent action taken to address Ireland's skyrocketing abortion numbers. The appalling situation at present of women being kept in the dark about positive alternatives prior to an abortion has to end. Things will improve if enough pressure mounts. So we're counting on pro-life supporters to turn out for this year's march on May 5. Change happens when people show up!

i Eilís Mulroy is CEO of the Pro Life Campaign



WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS!

LET'S KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

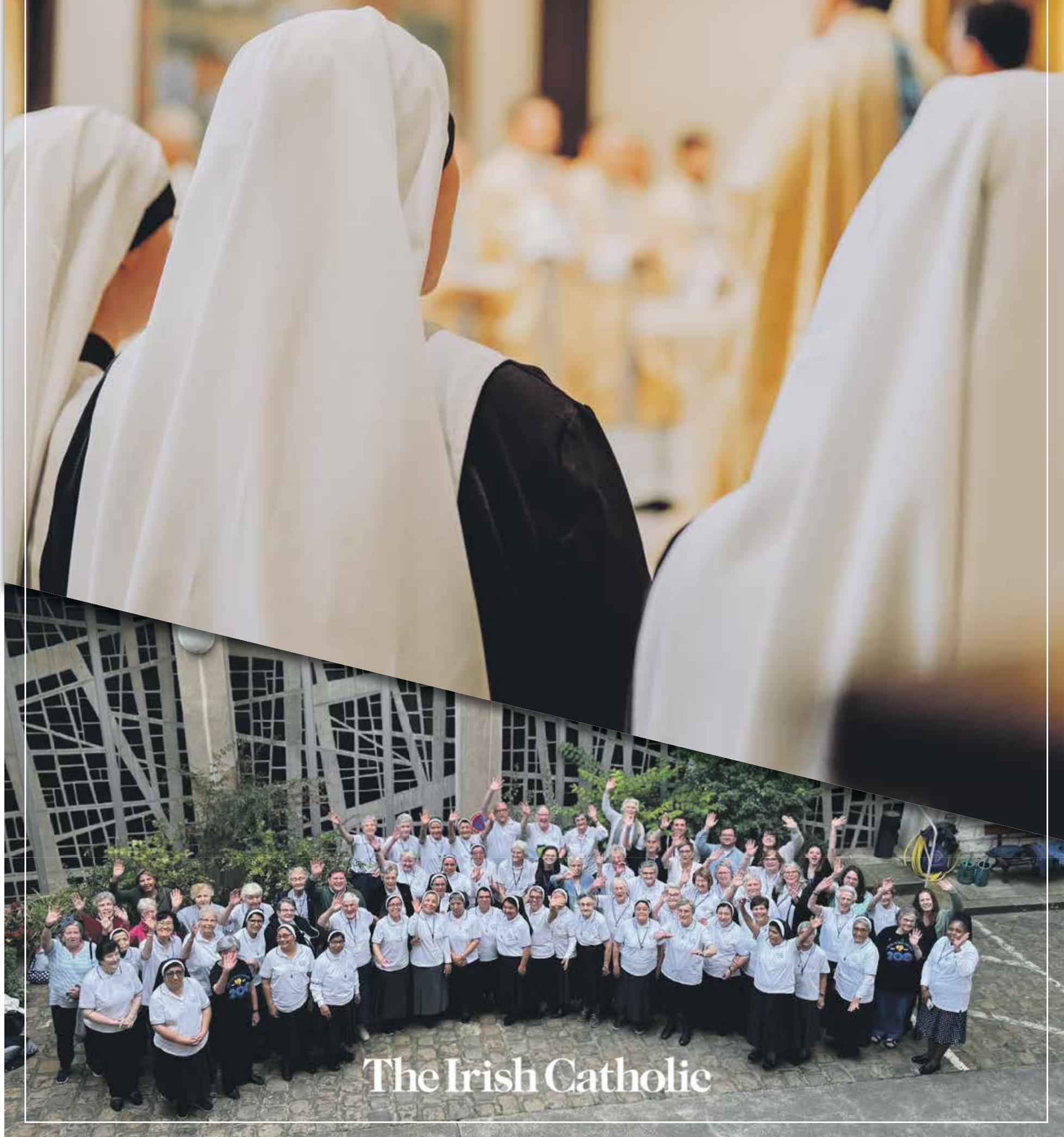
The striking increase in the number of pro-life candidates elected to the new Dáil and Seanad is a really promising development. The March for Life 2025 is your chance to stand in solidarity with these elected representatives and send a clear message to the Government to address Ireland's skyrocketing abortion numbers.

**MARCH FOR LIFE 2025:
DUBLIN, MONDAY 5TH MAY @ 2.00PM**

Join us and march from Newman University Church side of St Stephen's Green to the Dáil.

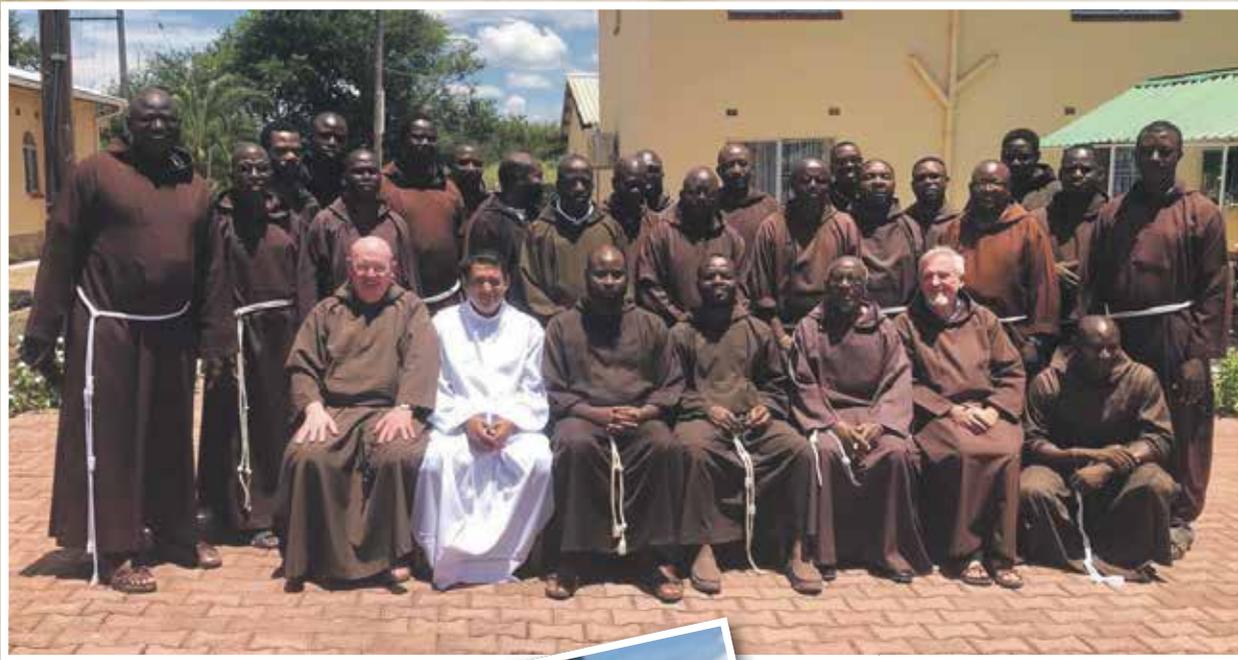
Giving All To God

VOCATIONS SUPPLEMENT 2025



The Irish Catholic

The Capuchin Way of Life



800 years ago, St Francis had a dream to live life centred on the Gospel of Jesus. In doing this he began to see everyone, all living creatures, and all created things, as brothers and sisters. This kind of connectivity linked St Francis and his followers to Christ in a way that leads us, even today, to desire to follow this transformative path of peace and reconciliation. As we celebrate the Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life we pray in thanksgiving for our call to be followers of Francis and followers of Christ.

What path has the Lord prepared for you?

**To find out more about life as a Capuchin Franciscan Friar,
contact our Vocation Director by emailing: vocations@capuchins.ie**



The Sisters of Bon Secours are an International Religious Congregation of Catholic women based in seven countries who bring to the world **“Good help to those in need”**.

The Congregation was founded by a group of 12 women, led by Josephine Potel, who came together in Paris in 1824 to nurse the sick and the dying in their own homes, demonstrating the healing presence of Christ through their compassionate care.

Although the Congregation’s work has broadened since the early days, the core intention stays the same; to bring the healing hand of Christ to all those in need.

Today Sisters, Associates, Young Adults and Volunteers minister in many ways including healthcare, social services, evangelisation, pastoral and community based ministries.

Their ministry includes more than just the physical; it is a holistic approach which includes peoples’ spiritual, psychological and emotional needs.

We are all called to serve. It is just a matter of finding the way that best suits your interests and talents.

See our website and social media for opportunities to come and spend some time with us in prayer and get to know the Sisters. We regularly host retreat days and prayer events.

Contact us: www.bonsecours.ie [sistersofbonsecours](https://www.instagram.com/sistersofbonsecours) [Sisters of Bon Secours Ireland](https://www.facebook.com/SistersofBonSecoursIreland)



Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles En Route Towards 2026 – 150 Years of Mission

WWW.OLAIRELAND.IE



A Life Lived in Response

As we approach our 150th Jubilee year, the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles are reflecting on the years that have passed, and on the call that continues to whisper, quietly and insistently, at the heart of our way of life. Vocation, as we have come to understand it, is not a singular moment of decision. It is a lifelong unfolding of response, shaped by listening, relationship, and trust. A movement toward God, and toward others, in love.

The language of vocation can sometimes feel distant or unfamiliar, in a culture that too often prioritises individualism, speed, and certainty. Yet vocation remains profoundly relevant. For us, it is rooted in the ordinary. It invites a different kind of listening: a listening that takes time, that trusts silence, that makes space for uncertainty. It calls us to pay attention to the inner stirrings of our hearts and the deep questions that persist over time.

Vocation is grounded in relationship: with God, with one another, and with the world. It often begins in a quiet restlessness, a sense that something more is being asked of us. It grows through encounter—through people who show us what love

looks like in action, through communities that welcome our searching, and through prayer that teaches us to listen for the voice beneath the noise.

Vocation is about being—being open, being available, being willing to be shaped by something greater than ourselves. It is the courage to trust what we cannot yet see, and the humility to follow where the Spirit leads.

Each of our Sisters can point to moments, sometimes small and easily overlooked, when the path became clearer, or the courage to continue was renewed.

Our congregation was founded in 1876 with a clear sense of purpose: to make the love of God visible in the world, particularly among those who are forgotten or overlooked. To do so with humility, and with deep reverence for the wisdom and traditions of the communities in which we serve. That spirit remains central to our life today. The context may have changed, but the call remains: to be present where life is vulnerable, to stand with those whose voices are often unheard, and to walk gently in a world longing for justice and compassion. Each vocation is unique, yet all are held within the same invitation—to live in communion, to serve with

compassion, and to witness to hope, even in small and hidden ways.

In today’s world, vocation can seem countercultural. But perhaps that is part of its gift. It offers a different rhythm. A way of life rooted not in achievement, but in presence. Not in having all the answers, but in the willingness to ask deeper questions and to be shaped by what we encounter.

As we enter this Jubilee year, we carry the witness of those who have gone before us: women who chose this path with courage, and who remained faithful through seasons of joy, challenge, and change. Their

stories continue to sustain us, revealing the quiet strength of those who trust in God’s guidance.

To consider a vocation today is to take seriously the possibility that your life might be a response to the needs of others. It is to believe that love can be lived in community, and that the world is still in need of those who are willing to serve, to listen, and to walk with others in faith.

Vocation is not about arrival. It is about accompaniment. It’s about showing up, staying open, and trusting that grace will meet us along the way.

Vocation is not about perfection. It is about fidelity—a returning, again and again, to the source of life. For those discerning a path today, we simply say: listen. The call comes in many ways, and never all at once. Trust what moves you. And know that this path, though not always easy, is filled with meaning, companionship, and joy. Above all, it is filled with God’s love. What matters is the openness to begin, and the willingness to be led.

Visit our website to learn more about our way of life and the paths through which we continue to serve. In our preparations to celebrate 150 years of witness and mission, we remain committed to walking alongside others. We remain committed to bearing witness to a God who still calls, still sends, and still walks among us.



www.olaireland.ie



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Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20004576
Charity Name: Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA)

LIVING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

We Irish Franciscans are a Fraternity in Mission, inspired by the life of St. Francis to bring the Gospel of Joy and Grace to the world. We devote our lives to the search for God in a fraternal life of prayer, simplicity of life and service to others.

May the LORD Give You Peace!

At the heart of Francis' Gospel vision is delight in the Lord and his overflowing goodness. We strive to continue our Order's 800-year-old mission as we serve the Church and the world as brothers and priests in a wide variety of ministries. The Irish friars are part of the world-wide Franciscan Order present in 120 countries with some 12,000 friars. We have friaries throughout Ireland where the friars live among the people loving and serving in the spirit of St. Francis.

Francis was a man on fire with the desire to tell others of the love of God that Jesus had made known to us. Irish Franciscans are present today in Central America and South Africa. We are still inspired by the words of St. Francis: "God has sent us into the whole world so that by word and deed we may bear witness to him."

All God's Creatures

Francis found his true meaning and identity in being a child of God living in union with creation, reflecting God's generosity and love. Gradually Francis realised that he was truly a brother to the sun, moon, stars, fire and water, and to the whole cosmos for he along with them was being given existence at every moment by God. Through a life of prayer and relationship, Francis came to see God's goodness at the heart of all he has created.

As God's children we are called to praise and thank God daily for the gift of creation, a world that mirrors God's beauty and goodness. Francis shows us how to live with a spirit of gratitude for the gift of creation and how to joyfully embrace our responsibility to care for that same creation.

Peace and Good

Pope Francis, who chose St. Francis as his patron and model when he became Pope, said, "Francis of Assisi - for me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation. He is the man who gives us the spirit of peace, who tells us we should work to build peace, within our hearts and among ourselves."

"Pace e Bene!" (Peace and Good!) is a greeting used on all continents by Franciscan men and women since the time of Francis. In the joyful and prophetic spirit of St. Francis, the Irish Franciscan friars are dedicated to sharing the Gospel of Christ by serving the poor and promoting justice, peace, and the care of creation.



Fraternity in mission: Friars Antony and Philip called to witness to Christ.



Sharing God's goodness: Friars Ian and Damian in a joyful spirit.

We look forward to hearing from you and having a conversation. God will do the rest! Check out: www.franciscans.ie

"Come and See" Franciscans



If you would like to know more about following Jesus as a Franciscan Friar contact:

Friar Liam Kelly OFM
Phone 087 396 0262
Email irishfranciscansofm@gmail.com
Postal address Franciscan Friary, Ennis, Co Clare.

Do you have a vocation to become a Conventual Franciscan friar?



The Conventual Franciscans were founded by St. Francis of Assisi, the poor man of God, who continues to inspire men and women of goodwill to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

'The Lord gave me brothers', wrote Francis in his Testament. The community of brothers - called '*fratres*' - who gathered around Francis in order to spread the Gospel in his dynamic and compassionate way, formed several congregations. The Conventual Franciscans inherit the charism of those brothers who chose to serve the poor in the cities and towns. Our friars still maintain custody of the tomb of Saint Francis in Assisi, the basilica and Shrine of the great 'wonder-worker' and patron saint of lost things, St. Anthony of Padua, and hear confessions in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

In 1917, a Polish friar, St. Maximilian Kolbe, founded the *Militia Immaculata*, a worldwide apostolate dedicated to spreading devotion to Mary Immaculate. After missionary labours in Rome, Japan, India, and his native Poland, St. Maximilian Kolbe gave his life to save a fellow inmate at Auschwitz concentration camp in 1941.

The Conventual Franciscans in Britain and Ireland serve the needs of the Church in parishes and shrines in various different apostolates. Our fraternal lives serve as a witness of our commitment to spreading the Gospel as heralds of God's peace. Since St. Francis prayed to Our Lady as *Spouse of the Holy Spirit*, our order has an unbroken history of preaching Our Lady's role as the Immaculate Conception, and in imitation of Duns Scotus and St. Maximilian we wish to bring all souls under the motherly care of the Immaculate Mother of God.

God has a plan for you. Is His plan for you to become a friar?

vocation@thegreyfriars.org



THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

DISCOVER A LIFE OF PRAYER, COMMUNITY, SERVICE
AND EVANGELISATION

PRESENTATION BROTHERS - WITNESSES TO HOPE

We are a Catholic congregation of Religious Brothers working in several countries around the world. We were founded in Ireland by Blessed Edmund Rice in 1802. Today we bring the message of Christ to the young people of our time. We live in communities and take three vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. These remind us of the priority of God and free us to serve other people. Prayer, community and service are at the heart of our vocation.

'Here I am Lord. I have come to do your will.' - Psalm 40

We also run a Discernment & Formation Experience for young Catholic men who seek to live in community for 9 months (in Mardyke House, Cork) whilst intentionally discerning their vocation and growing in knowledge and fervour of faith. Applications are now open for September 2025.



Presentation
Brothers

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN HEARING MORE ABOUT THE LIFE AND VOCATION OF THE PRESENTATION BROTHERS, PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

Br. Martin Kenneally
martinkenneally@presentationbrothers.org

Br. Simon Fernandes
simonfpm@presentationbrothers.org

*Presentation Brothers, Mardyke House,
Mardyke Walk, Cork, T12W8RP.
www.presentationbrothers.org*



The Supreme Court in the UK aligns faith and reason when it comes to gender identity

Dualta Roughneen

'Man and woman he created them', the Bible tells us. And now it seems that the UK Supreme Court agrees.

Last Wednesday, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the terms 'women' and 'sex' in the UK Equality Act refer to biological – and not legal – sex in the landmark case *For Women Scotland* brought against Scottish ministers. The ruling by the UK's top court means that the protected characteristic of sex in the 2010 Equality Act is deemed to refer to biological sex – after longstanding disputes on the matter. This was not the first court case on the issue – and indeed it took a number of appeals to get to the Supreme Court before the position was settled.

While there has been much celebration of the ruling, it is unlikely that the underlying issues have been settled for all time. The culture wars will continue but no doubt the ruling will be a relief to many who have been vilified for taking a

'gender critical' stance on the issue of gender identity.

In 2024, the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (the much diluted descendant of the Holy Office) released *Dignitas Infinita* (Infinite Dignity) which outlined, albeit briefly and deep within the document, the Church's re-affirmation that sex is immutable, under the heading of 'gender theory'.

Heart

At its heart, gender theory assumes that biological sex and gender identity need not align, and that ones inner sense of gender identity, irrespective of biological sex, ought to trump, and erase, the biological sex of an individual.

Dignitas Infinita states a 'prominent aspect of gender theory is that it intends to deny the greatest possible difference that exists between living beings: sexual difference', and that this 'ideology "envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family"'

The Church was rightly concerned that 'ideologies of this sort ... man-

age to assert themselves as absolute and unquestionable, even dictating how children should be raised.' In the UK, the assertion, for a long time, and in a similar manner in Ireland, has been unquestioned and unquestionable. The Supreme Court ruling has, somewhat, exposed the emperors lack of clothing, highlighting incoherences in gender theory that are conveniently ignored.

“No matter how the issue was manipulated through obscure and impenetrable language, as the Church states 'biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated”

Interesting in the judgment of the Court, a key deciding point (among many) was that it reflected the Catholic position that there are biological ele-

ments in people that are 'impossible to ignore'. Citing the reality that only biological females can become pregnant created incoherence in the law and the attempted to (as *Dignitas Infinita* states) 'obscure reference to the ineliminable sexual difference between man and woman.

This is where the attempt to redefine the term woman in the law to include 'a person who has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment' provided that person was 'living as a woman' and intended to undergo 'a process... of becoming female' fell down. No matter how the issue was manipulated through obscure and impenetrable language, as the Church states 'biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated.'

Emphatic

While the Church is emphatic on the issue, that 'we cannot separate the masculine and the feminine from God's work of creation, which is prior to all our decisions and experiences, and where biological elements exist which

are impossible to ignore', and the UK Supreme Court appears to agree, in Ireland there are many knots yet to be untied.

It is approaching ten years since Ireland, surreptitiously and with little or no public debate, introduced its own 'Gender Recognition Act', which allows for any biological male (or female) to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate at government offices, which renders him/her legally a woman/man in this jurisdiction and does not require that the man have undergone any gender reassignment treatments.

The issues raised in the UK – whether it is the vindictive and unapologetic cancel culture that is carried forward by (for want of a better term) 'trans activists' against gender critical feminists (or, to a lesser extent – because they are not considered fallen heretics - religious conservatives), the dangerous reality of placing men in women's prisons, facilitating access to men in women's sports and female changing/washing places, have been to date essentially unexamined, unexplored, and buried,

here in Ireland.

Critics of Enoch Burke may claim that he has not been targeted because of his gender critical position but rather because he didn't behave – and has continued not to – in a manner befitting polite society when he refused to accept instruction to deny or ignore the biological reality of his pupils. He has accepted the consequences of his stance – loss of his job, imprisonment for nearly two years and the stripping of his assets by the Attorney General) because this issue has gone, for too long, unanswered in Ireland.

The idea that a person of one biological sex, can declare, to be a gender of the opposite sex, by signing a piece of paper, has created a situation in Ireland that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Maybe it will only be when political party gender quotas are challenged when a biological male/female receives preferential access to the ballot box appearing as the opposite gender and another political aspirant is refused the Party ticket, that some political interest will be aroused.

Sambo's prayer: Faith, skill and survival



The mother of GAA legend Terence 'Sambo' McNaughton used to sow St Joseph's prayers into his shorts, **Éanna Mackey** writes

The Glens of Antrim are renowned for a few things. Its breathtaking volcanic emerald scenery, the world-famous Giant's Causeway and, above all else, one of the finest hurling strongholds in Ireland.

Yet, few are as celebrated or revered as the towering figure of Terence 'Sambo' McNaughton. A legendary name of the game that has become synonymous with the steely toughness and grit associated with hurling in the Saffron County. He was also a key part of the iconic Antrim team that was defeated by Tipperary in the 1989 All-Ireland final.

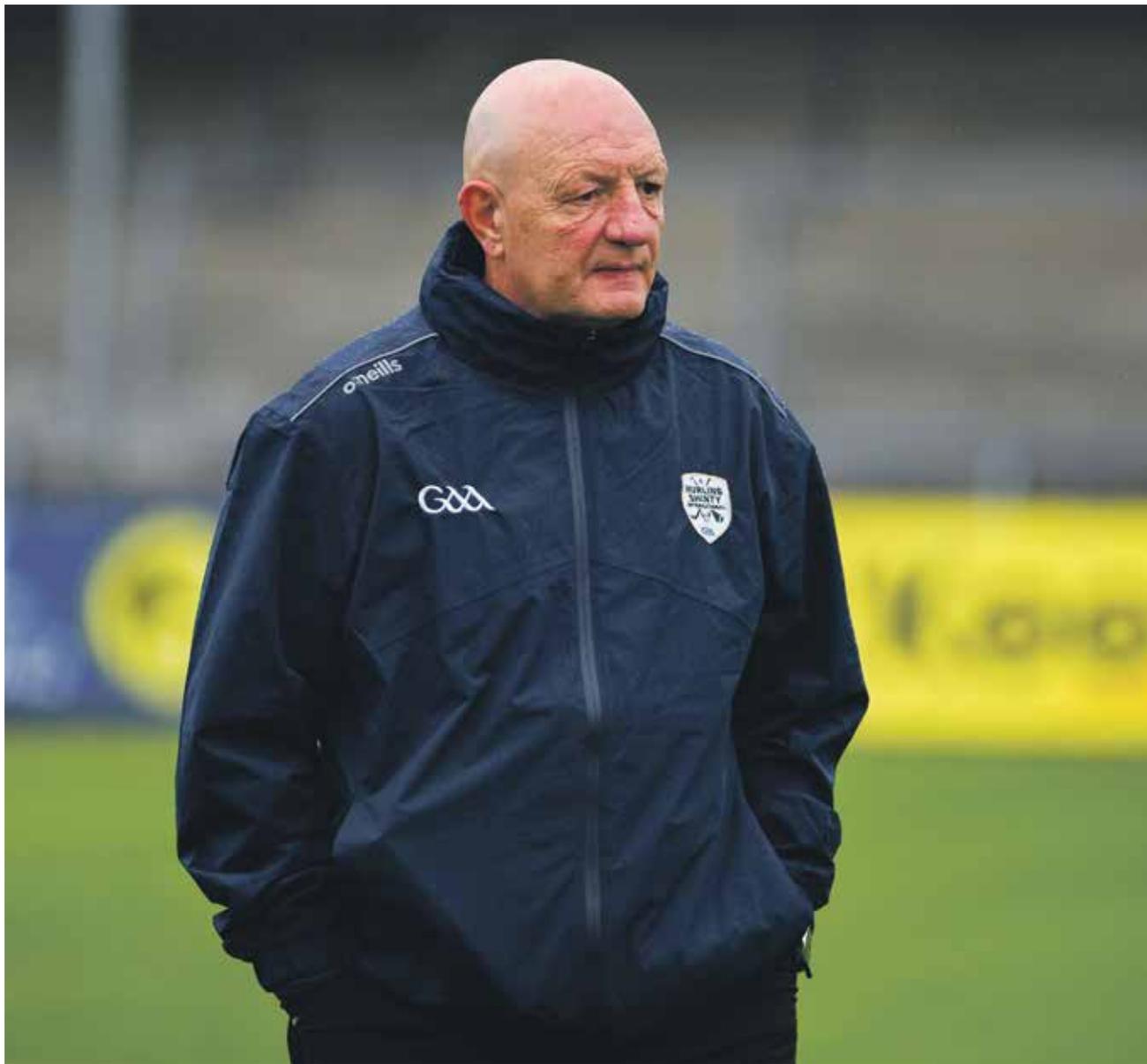
Born and raised in Cushendall, McNaughton grew up in the picturesque serenity of the Glens of Antrim in what seemed like a world apart from the conflict tearing through the rest of the Northern six counties.

"The Troubles never really affected Cushendall that much. To us they were in Belfast and Derry; they might as well have been in Melbourne or New York," he recalled. "It was only when I began playing for the county that you realised what was going on."

Sentiments

McNaughton's rise as a star of Antrim hurling was at a time when being associated with the GAA in the North came with significant risk. It became an identifier of faith, ethnicity and politics. Much of the rhetoric coming from hard-line unionists at the time equated the GAA with being the sporting wing of the IRA.

"I've always believed that the GAA meant more to us up here than it did in the South. The way I'd put it is that when you walk down the street in Thurles, you're a hurler. When you do that in Ballymena, you're a Catholic, you vote Sinn Féin, and you support the Provos in



Terence 'Sambo' McNaughton of Ireland before the Shinty International match between Ireland and Scotland at Cusack Park in Ennis, Clare. Photo: Ray McManus/Sportsfile

“My name was at the top of a UDA hit list, and I got out and went to America for a year. It was only years later that I learnt it was my apprentice who tried to set me up”

the minds of some people around here.”

“Even for us to go to the supermarket, we weren't allowed to wear our club gear because it would give away your Irishness. Whereas today you go down to Ballymena, and you can play spot the county; thank god everything has changed utterly.”

“The UDR were the worst. They'd torture you. If they saw your bags and saw your hurleys, they would hold you up purely out of badness”

That blanket belief had massive repercussions in the daily life of Catholics in the North. With the hurling heartlands of the Glens

largely spared from the conflict, it was only on the way to and from training and matches that many of Antrim's Gaels felt it, particularly at the hands of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR).

“The UDR were the worst. They'd torture you. If they saw your bags and saw your hurleys, they would hold you up purely out of badness. Even matches weren't advertised back then because if they saw it in the paper, they'd put a checkpoint up down the road from the pitch.”

Targets

“I was coming home from an Ulster GAA banquet after winning the All-Star. I got held up for four hours between Omagh and Cookstown. It was one of the scariest experiences of my life. It was an SAS checkpoint or something. They

took my licence and disappeared. Cars go by, and they don't stop them. My mind started racing—if I drive on, will they shoot me? I'd be holding my head below my steering wheel in case a shot went off.”

“We became 'legitimate targets' in the eyes of the loyalist paramilitaries”

That was tame compared to the even more personal and sinister danger that McNaughton faced in his pursuit of representing his county and, by extension, his faith and his heritage. As a well-known member of the county panel, he was deemed a legitimate target, as were many of his teammates, for no reason other than being a hurler.

“After the Good Friday Agreement, times have changed in the North of Ireland. Catholic and GAA players can now freely express themselves on the pitch and in their faith beyond it”

shorts and his gear bag – a quiet act of protection and devotion. To this day he is never without it.

“My mother would have been praying for me a lot during that time. She used to sow St Joseph's prayers into my shorts. Even to this day I never leave the house without it. I have one in my back pocket always because there's a line in it that says, 'Anyone who carries this prayer will not suffer a sudden death'.”

“I pray to St Joseph all the time. Ever since back then I've never been without one, and I have a rosary ring on every one of my keyrings. I have one in my pocket as well. My mother would have always had something in my shorts or my bags to keep me safe.”

“God rest my mother; she must have had many a sleepless night worrying about me when I'd be out playing with the county.”

“Anybody can play the harp or Irish music, but the GAA is this unique thing that we have, and in my view, it's the best thing within Irish society”

Thirty years after the Good Friday Agreement, times have changed in the North of Ireland. Catholic and GAA players can now freely express themselves on the pitch and in their faith beyond it. The prayers once tucked away to protect Terence during the Troubles are no longer a shield against daily danger—but their significance remains.

Today McNaughton runs the famous Lurig Inn in the village of Cushendall, a central pillar and focal point of the village and a must-visit for any hurling fan. But more than just a pub owner or a hurling icon, Sambo himself is the embodiment of the powerful strength of identity, resilience and faith.

“There's nothing more Irish than playing a game of hurling. Anybody can play the harp or Irish music, but the GAA is this unique thing that we have, and in my view, it's the best thing within Irish society.”

“You cannot measure the good that it does; just think how many kids like myself were spared from going down a dark path or were given a purpose in life thanks to the GAA? You simply couldn't put a number on it.”

“We became 'legitimate targets' in the eyes of the loyalist paramilitaries. I actually got warned that my name was at the top of a UDA hit list, and I got out and went to America for a year. It was only years later that I learnt it was my apprentice who tried to set me up.”

“I remember the day after the Shankhill bombing there was word going around that the loyalists were going to hit an Antrim team, so we weren't allowed to say where we were training, and then we'd have vigilantes with guns watching over us like bodyguards.”

Faith

But through it all, McNaughton never wavered in his faith. When he first rose to prominence on the Antrim juvenile teams, his mother would put St Joseph's prayers into his

THE SYNODAL TIMES



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

A tribute to Pope Francis’ Synodal vision



Pope Francis demonstrated that canon law is not a static set of rules but a living expression of the Church’s mission, writes Fr Barry White

As a former student of canon law at the Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven), I find myself reflecting on the remarkable legal and pastoral legacy of Pope Francis following his death, especially as the university prepares to celebrate its 600th anniversary in 2025. Founded in 1425, KU Leuven has long stood as a centre of ecclesiastical learning and canonical scholarship. It was within this rich academic tradition that I first encountered the legislative mind—*mens legislatoris*—of Pope Francis. His pontificate ushered in some of the most significant canonical reforms since the 1983 promulgation of the *Codex Iuris Canonici* (CIC), shaping the life of the Church in profound and enduring ways.

While previous popes made adjustments to the Code, Pope Francis intro-



Pope Francis shares a laugh with Sister Chantal Desmarais, a member of the Sisters of Charity of St Mary. Photo: CNS photo/Lola Gomez.

duced sweeping changes that reflect his deeply pastoral vision. Pope John Paul II, who promulgated the *Codex Iuris Canonici* in 1983—the final legislative fruit of the Second Vatican Council—made relatively few changes during his long pontificate. His 1998 *motu proprio*, *Ad tuendam fidem*, added doctrinal clarity to certain canons, and Pope Benedict XVI’s 2009 *Omnium in mentem* offered targeted clarifications in areas like matrimonial law and the role of deacons. Yet it is under Francis that the Code has experienced its most substantial overhaul, with a clear emphasis on mercy, justice, and ecclesial decentralisation.

A prime example of this is the reform of the marriage nullity process. In 2015, with the *motu proprio Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus*, Pope Francis revised canons 1671 to 1691 to make the annulment process faster, more accessible,

and more pastorally sensitive. He eliminated the need for an automatic appeal in uncontested cases, introduced a briefer process for clear-cut cases of nullity, and reaffirmed the bishop’s role as a judge within his own diocese. These changes emphasised subsidiarity and the pastoral care of those in difficult marital situations.

“In 2021, Pope Francis enacted one of his most far-reaching reforms with the apostolic constitution *Pascite Gregem Dei*”

Following the 2016 apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis did not formally amend canons

915 or 916 (which concern admission to the Eucharist), but he encouraged a deeper pastoral discernment for divorced and civilly remarried Catholics. Rather than relying solely on juridical solutions, he emphasised the role of the internal forum and episcopal conferences in providing context-sensitive pastoral guidance. This approach reflected his wider vision of synodality and local discernment, favouring accompaniment over blanket norms.

Reforms

In 2021, Pope Francis enacted one of his most far-reaching reforms with the apostolic constitution *Pascite Gregem Dei*, which revised Book VI of the Code of Canon Law (canons 1311–1399), the section dealing with penal law. This reform strengthened the Church’s legal response to sexual abuse, financial misconduct, and sacramental violations. Notably, the revised canon 1395 now provides for the mandatory dismissal from the clerical state in cases of clerical abuse, a move that reduces discretion and aims to ensure justice for victims. The reform also underscored the obligation of

Church authorities to enforce canonical penalties, shifting away from a previously more permissive and discretionary culture.

“His 2021 *motu proprio*, *Spiritus Domini*, amended canon 230 §1 to allow women to be formally instituted as lectors and acolytes”

The 2019 *motu proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, later updated in 2023, complemented these penal reforms by addressing the accountability of bishops and religious superiors in cases of abuse and negligence. It required every diocese to implement confidential reporting systems, and expanded definitions of abuse to include the abuse of authority and power. This built upon earlier legislation such as *Come una madre amorevole* (2016), which clarified the procedures for removing bishops who failed in their responsibilities.

Another area of transformation under Pope Francis has been the role of the laity in Church governance. His 2021 *motu proprio*, *Spiritus Domini*, amended canon 230 §1 to allow women to be formally instituted as lectors and acolytes. The 2022 apostolic constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, which restructured the Roman Curia, made it possible for laypersons to lead Vatican departments (dicasteries), emphasising that authority in the Church comes from canonical mission, not ordination alone. Canon 129, which traditionally limited the power of governance to clerics, has also seen developments that reflect a more inclusive approach, while amendments to canons 588 and 596 have expanded possibilities for lay leadership within religious communities.

In a particularly striking move in 2022, Pope Francis granted authority to the Con-

gregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to permit non-clerical members to serve as major superiors in clerical religious institutes of pontifical right. This derogation from canon 588 §2 signalled a further willingness to entrust laypeople with substantial leadership responsibilities, marking a significant evolution in the understanding of ecclesial governance.

In light of synodality, Pope Francis’ apostolic constitution *Episcopalis Communio* (2018) brought new canonical weight to synodal processes, revising canons 342–346 to give greater authority and voice to episcopal conferences and synods, embedding synodality more deeply into the Church’s legal and pastoral structures.

Expression

In all of this, Pope Francis demonstrated that canon law is not a static set of rules but a living expression of the Church’s mission. His reforms embody a Church that is more accountable, participatory, and mission-oriented—where law serves not merely as a means of discipline, but as an instrument of evangelisation and pastoral care.

Now, in the wake of his passing, Pope Francis’ reforms will continue to be the subject of study, implementation, and reflection. For students of canon law and canon lawyers alike, his legislative contributions will remain a lasting part of both the curriculum and the lived reality of the Church. It is clear that his vision—marked by synodality, mercy, and reform—will continue to shape the Church’s future. The question that now faces the People of God is not only how these reforms will be implemented, but how they will be deepened and built upon in a spirit of communion, discernment and mission.

“His reforms embody a Church that is more accountable, participatory, and mission-oriented—where law serves not merely as a means of discipline, but as an instrument of evangelisation and pastoral care”



World Report

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IN BRIEF

St Faustina: Divine Mercy prophet 25 years into her canonisation

● April 30 marks 25 years since St John Paul II canonised St Faustina Kowalska, the Polish nun whose visions of Jesus as Divine Mercy changed the spiritual landscape of the modern Church. Canonised on Divine Mercy Sunday in 2000 -- just as Faustina had foreseen decades earlier -- she became the Catholic Church's "secretary of Divine Mercy."

Historian Ewa Czaczkowska, author of *Faustina: The Mystic and Her Message*, told *OSV News* the global devotion sparked by her canonisation is "a religious phenomenon."

St Faustina's message -- "Jesus, I trust in You" -- emerged in the shadow of World War II, the most deadly global conflict in humanity's history. It continues to resonate worldwide, including in the U.S., where Divine Mercy has become a way of life for many. St Faustina's simple, powerful witness, reminds believers that peace begins with trust in Jesus Christ.

German bishops: Blessings of same-sex couples should be done with 'appreciation'

● The German Catholic bishops have issued guidance for pastors on blessings for couples in "irregular" situations, such as same-sex relationships. The handout, titled 'Blessings for Couples Who Love Each Other,' was distributed by the German Bishops' Conference (DBK) and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK).

It cites the Vatican's 2023 document *Fiducia Supplicans*, which allows blessings for homosexual and other non-marital couples. The bishops argue that such blessings express appreciation

for individuals seeking recognition from the Church and reflect a desire to shape their love through faith.

The handout emphasises that blessings should be an expression of the Church's pastoral closeness, not moral approval. The blessings are to be given spontaneously, not in formal liturgies. While the guidance has been controversial, with some bishops opposing it, Pope Francis defended the practice, stating that blessings do not require "moral perfection" but show the Church's support for those on a faith journey.

Opus Dei postpones adoption of new statutes

● Opus Dei has postponed revising its statutes due to the death of Pope Francis, which occurred two days before its two-week general congress began. The congress was originally intended to update Opus Dei's statutes in accordance with the Pope's *motu proprio Ad Charisma Tuendum*, which placed the prelature under the Dicastery for the Clergy and ended the practice of elevating the prelate to the role of bishop.

Msrgr Fernando Ocariz, the prelate of Opus Dei, announced that statute revisions will be delayed, and the congress will focus solely on administrative tasks, such as renewing positions in the general council. He emphasised that the remaining issues will be addressed later.

Msrgr Ocariz expressed solidarity with the Church during this time of mourning, praying for the soul of Pope Francis and reflecting on his message of God's mercy. Plans to further Opus Dei's apostolic work will also be postponed.

Record numbers of pilgrims flock to see the Holy Tunic of Christ near Paris

● A rare exhibit of the Holy Tunic of Christ, believed to be the garment worn by Jesus during His passion, is drawing record crowds to the Basilica of Saint-Denis in Argenteuil, near Paris. Open from April 18 to May 11, the exhibit is expected to attract over 400,000 pilgrims, more than double the 2016 attendance.

To manage the influx, the Diocese of Pontoise has organised extended hours and a team of volunteers to guide visitors. The exhibit opened on Good Friday, with a Mass and Stations of the Cross procession. The Holy Tunic, displayed publicly only twice in the 20th century, is a treasured relic, linked to St Helena and Charlemagne.

The event includes daily Masses, catechesis sessions, and special days for children, offering an opportunity for reflection on Christ's passion. The exhibit coincides with the ongoing restoration of the Basilica of Saint-Denis, further strengthening the region's Christian heritage.

Conclave has most cardinals, widest geographical mix in history

The conclave beginning May 7 is expected to be the largest in history, with 135 cardinals under 80 eligible to vote. By comparison, 115 cardinals participated in the 2005 and 2013 conclaves. The cardinals represent 72 countries, reflecting a wide geographical mix. For example, three Italians are serving outside Italy: Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem; Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; and Cardinal Mario Zenari, apostolic nuncio to Syria.

The average age of the cardinals as of April 28 is 70 years and 5 months, slightly younger than the average age of electors in the 2013 conclave (71.8). Cardinals who turn 80 before the Apostolic See becomes vacant are ineligible to vote. The oldest voting cardinal is Cardinal Carlos Osoro Sierra, who turns 80 on May 16, while the youngest is 45-year-old Ukrainian-born Cardinal Mykola Bychok of Melbourne, Australia.

Among the voting cardinals, 27 participated in the conclave that elected Pope Francis, with five also voting in the 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict. For 108 electors, this will be their first conclave experience.

Europe remains the largest block, with 52 electors (37%), but Asia has the highest representation ever, with 24 electors (18%). Latin America follows with



Cardinals lined up in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel March 12, 2013, to take their oaths at the beginning of the conclave elected Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who took the name Francis. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media.

23 cardinals (17%), while Africa has 18 and North America has 14. Oceania has four voting-age cardinals, or 2.9% of the total.

Italy has 16 voting-age cardinals, followed by the U.S. with 10, Brazil with seven, and Spain and France with five each. Other countries with significant rep-

resentation include Poland, Portugal, India, Argentina, and Canada with four each. A total of 59 countries are represented by one or two cardinals.

The Vatican itself is well represented, with 27 members of the Roman Curia voting, comprising 19.7% of the total. A two-thirds major-

ity of the 135 cardinals is required to elect a new pope, meaning at least 90 votes are needed for a candidate to emerge as the winner.

Among the electors, 33 are members of religious orders, including five Salesians, four Jesuits, four Franciscans, and three Conventual Franciscans.

Philippines first nation to consecrate itself to divine mercy

On April 27, Divine Mercy Sunday, the Philippines became the first nation to consecrate itself entirely to Jesus through divine mercy. Similar to the 2016 Pan-African Congress in Rwanda, where bishops consecrated the African continent.

The initiative began with Fr James Cervantes of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception, who sent a heartfelt letter to

bishops calling for a nationwide consecration. The idea quickly gained support, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines officially approved it. Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David called the consecration a profound expression of trust in divine mercy, particularly in light of global challenges.

The consecration took place during all Masses on Divine Mercy Sunday, with the

Prayer of Consecration replacing the general intercessions.

The Philippines has long been a hub for the divine mercy movement, hosting the largest Divine Mercy celebration in the world. As the nation prepares for this historic moment, it does so with unwavering faith that God's mercy offers hope for the world's challenges

World Council of Churches condemns deadly drone strike in Ethiopia

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has expressed deep sorrow and concern over the tragic loss of civilian lives in a recent drone strike in Gedeb, Amhara region, Ethiopia, on April 23, 2025. More than 100 civilians, including women and children, were killed while attending a community gathering at a primary school. This attack adds to a growing number of similar incidents,

including another deadly strike in 2024.

Rev. Prof Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the WCC, strongly condemned these attacks on civilian areas and expressed alarm over the increasing use of autonomous or semi-autonomous armed drones in conflict zones. Emphasising the need for strict adherence to international humanitarian law to

protect non-combatants and called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

Rev Pillay also referred to the ongoing "devastating genocidal war" in Ethiopia, as decried by Tigrayan Bishop Tesfaselassie Medhin, urging national and international stakeholders to pursue inclusive dialogue and peaceful resolution as the only path to lasting peace. He called on

churches and religious communities in Ethiopia to act as voices for justice, reconciliation, and unity.

The WCC stands in solidarity with the victims and their families, offering heartfelt condolences to those grieving. Pillay concluded by calling for divine comfort and guidance in efforts to end violence and protect life in Ethiopia and the surrounding region.

Letter from Cairo

Easter with Egypt's Catholic community



Justin Robinson OSB

There's a very catchy jingle that was repeated over and over again on radio commercials and ringtones during the recent Islamic holy month: "*Ramadan fi masr haga tanya*," meaning something like "Ramadan in Egypt is something else." It was certainly true, and the same might be said for the celebration of Easter which is about to get underway.

Easter can be a feast for the liturgical senses in this part of the world, as one has the chance to encounter the rites of various Eastern Christian communities, particularly those who are fellow members of the Catholic Church. It's often forgotten or unknown that alongside the Roman Catholic Church there are 23 other *sui iuris* (Of one's own right) Catholic Churches in full communion with Rome. In the Middle East region they include Maronites, Melkites, Syriacs, Chaldeans and, here in Egypt, Coptic Catholics.

Minority

"We have to remember that as Coptic Catholics we're a minority within a minority," says Fr Mina Athanase Abdelmesih OP, a thirty-something year old Cairene who was recently ordained a priest of the Dominican Order. We're sitting together in the precincts of Our Lady of Zeitoun church, a pilgrimage site in a northern suburb of Cairo, taking shade from the oppressive sun.

"When I was at school, for example, I was always the only Catholic in the class. The other students were Orthodox Christians or – as Islam is the largest religion in the country – Muslims. It was the same at university," he adds.

"It gives my spirituality a greater richness and shows me that the Church has a big heart, involving many different rites, yet all celebrating the same mysteries together"

Egypt's population stands at a staggering 120 million. Of these, around 10 million are Christians, with Coptic Catholics making up only about 190,000 faithful. The majority-Muslim country now lies at the heart of the Arab and Islamic world, though it once hosted the Holy Family during their flight to Egypt and the country traces its Christian history back to the time of the first apostles.

"There have always been Coptic Catholics in Egypt"

Christian sites abound, and we've just walked around the shrine church in Cairo's Zeitoun neighbourhood, an economically depressed district in the north of the city. It was here that the Blessed Virgin Mary was said to have appeared numerous times between 1968 and 1971, with her apparitions witnessed by Christian and Muslim onlookers alike. Even President Gamal Abdel Nasser, the towering figure of Arab nationalism, reportedly came to witness the miraculous occurrences. Both church and government authorities accepted the apparitions were genuine and the site has since become an important place of pilgrimage, albeit little-known to foreigners.

"There have always been Coptic Catholics in Egypt," Fr Mina reminds me as we watch pilgrims milling around the Byzantine-style church. "Those who remained with Rome, despite the separation caused at the Council of Chalcedon." During his time of theological studies in France and language training in Ireland, Fr Mina found his identity often perplexed those whom he met. "When I said I'm a Copt people just assumed it meant I was an Orthodox Christian, because to be Catholic surely means you're a Roman Catholic. To



Scene from a Coptic liturgy. Photo: OVS/ Dana Smillie.

be Coptic and Catholic at the same time just didn't seem to add up!" he jokes.

Universal

"The Catholic Church is a universal church, rich with many rites that are valued and respected. So, my rite is Coptic because this is our Egyptian heritage but I am also a member of the Catholic Church. Indeed, when I became a Dominican friar I was told: "never forget you're a Copt, and you remain a Copt, but you are also a Catholic open to the other rites." Happily, I now celebrate two rites: both Coptic and Latin," he explains.

One hour to the north of Cairo, a recently-established Benedictine monastery near Ismailia seeks to accommodate both of these traditions under one roof.

The monks of St Benedict of the Copts monastery live together on a forty-five acre farm abundant with olive and date trees. One monk hails from Kenya, another from Uganda, and two come from Egypt, all praying together in Arabic and celebrating the liturgy in both the Coptic and Roman Catholic rites.

"As a Coptic Catholic, it's very enriching to have both a Western and an Eastern Christian perspective"

Soon after the community's formation, a courtesy visit to the leader of the Coptic Orthodox community, Tawadros II, provided encouragement to the fledgling group of monks. Tawadros said that St Benedict's monasticism in Europe had its roots with St Anthony in Egypt, so he was happy that his brothers were coming home. The Benedictines were reintro-

ducing something the Egyptian Church had lost, while also receiving something that had been preserved in Egypt.

Among the monks at the Benedictine foundation is Bro. Arsanus Jawargy OSB, believed to be the first Egyptian to become a Benedictine monk. Originally from Upper Egypt, he recently returned to the community after completing theological studies in Rome.

Enriching

"As a Coptic Catholic, it's very enriching to have both a Western and an Eastern Christian perspective," explains Bro. Arsanus. "It gives my spirituality a greater richness and shows me that the Church has a big heart, involving many different rites, yet all celebrating the same mysteries together."

"I take care to read what Pope Francis and Rome is saying on a particular subject, and at the same time what our Patriarch and the leaders of the other Eastern Catholic communities are saying when preparing homilies, retreats, and so on," he adds.

This year's Easter will

be a national holiday for all Egyptians as Catholic and Orthodox believers celebrate together on the same day, a rare coincidence of the different calendars and calculation methods used by the two traditions.

"This will be my first Easter back home in Egypt, and we have some very beautiful but tiring days ahead," Br Arsanus tells me. "Our liturgies last for many hours but they're very enjoyable, especially for those who appreciate the liturgical significance."

"It will be good that families with both Catholic and Orthodox members will be able to celebrate together on the same day this year, even if we usually enjoy taking advantage of two holidays in the same month!" he laughs.

Easter really is something else in Egypt, and I'm blessed and all the better for this chance to experience it with our Coptic Catholic brethren here in the "*umm ad-dunya*," or "mother of the world."

i Justin Robinson OSB is a monk of Glenstal Abbey in County Limerick currently residing in Cairo.

Rathfarnham church celebrates 150th anniversary

Renata Steffens

The Parish of the Annunciation, Rathfarnham celebrated this week 150 years since the foundation of the Church of Annunciation. To mark the important milestone, a Jubilee Mass celebrated by Auxil-

iary Bishop of Dublin Paul Dempsey took place on April 27.

Celebrating the Mass alongside Bishop Dempsey were Fr Martin Cosgrove PP and Fr Michael Coady Co-PP and visiting priests from neighbouring parishes. This was the first of a series of celebrations which will take place throughout the year.

“This Jubilee is not just about looking back; it’s about celebrating who we are today and the faith that continues to guide us. We honour the generations who built and nurtured our parish, and we welcome everyone to be part of its future,” said Bishop Dempsey.

Fr Cosgrove said “This Jubilee is a celebration of who we are – a

community rooted in hope, growing in faith, and looking to the future with love. We give thanks for the generations before us and embrace the call to carry their light forward.”

The laying of the church’s foundation stone happened on Easter Monday, April 29, 1875, by Cardinal Paul Cullen. The parish said

in a statement that “the Church of the Annunciation has stood as a beacon of hope, welcoming generations into a life of shared faith and service. This year, we celebrate not just the physical foundation of our beloved church, but the spirit of unity, love, and resilience that continues to inspire our parish today.”



Kate and Laura Chwala arriving for the Mass on Sunday. Photos: John McElroy.



Tanya Smyth, Trish Evenden and Rhona Curran arriving for the Mass.



Nicola Keogh with Tara, Orla, Cormac and Caoimhe arriving for the Mass.



James Casey and Olivia O' Connor giving out Mass programmes.



Philomena Mc Kenna, Jim Mc Guirk and Patricia Kennedy arriving for the Mass.



Veena Paul, Sean Paul and Shevaun Paul arriving for the Mass.



Bishop Paul Dempsey with Frs Noel Hession, Liam Tracey, Cyril Ma Ming, Martin Cosgrove and Michael Coady processing into the church.



Fr Martin Cosgrove being presented with an Easter egg by Kiera Corrigan, Lucy Haworth and Eva Gordan after Mass.



Bishop Paul Dempsey greeting people after Mass.



Designed silver trowel that was presented to Cardinal Cullen in 1875 by Rev. Robert Meyler during the laying of the foundation stone.

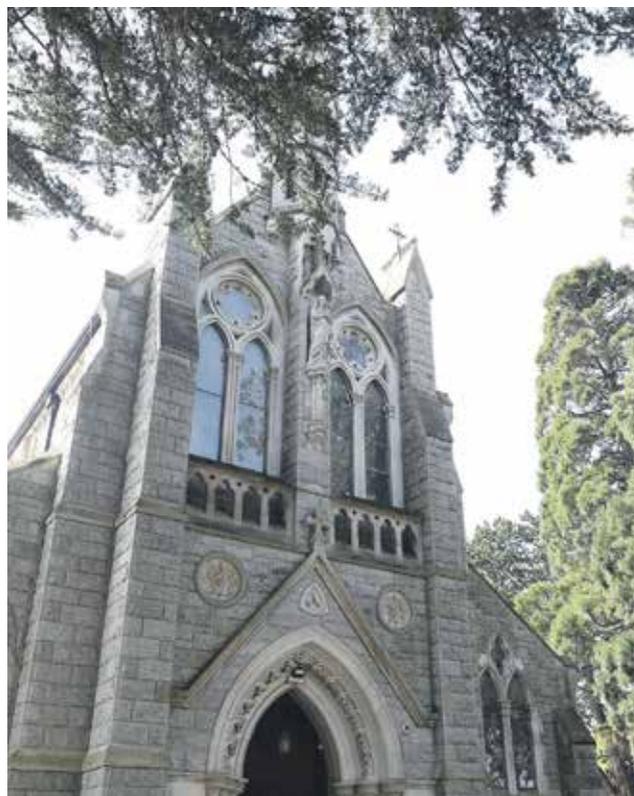


Photo shows The Church of the Annunciation Rathfarnham.



Some of the congregation at the Mass.



Photo shows a large congregation on Sunday.

How a rare first edition of St Thérèse's book ended up in Navan



In some way, Thérèse wanted me to have her book, because I would be aware of its significance, **Renata Steffens** hears

St Thérèse is one of the 37 Catholic saints recognised as a 'Doctor of the Church.' She is the second Carmelite nun to receive the distinction, after St Teresa of Ávila, and alongside with St Catherine of Siena and St Hildegard of Bingen they are the only four female Doctors of the Church. This title is given to saints recognised as having a significant contribution to theology or doctrines through their research, study or writing.

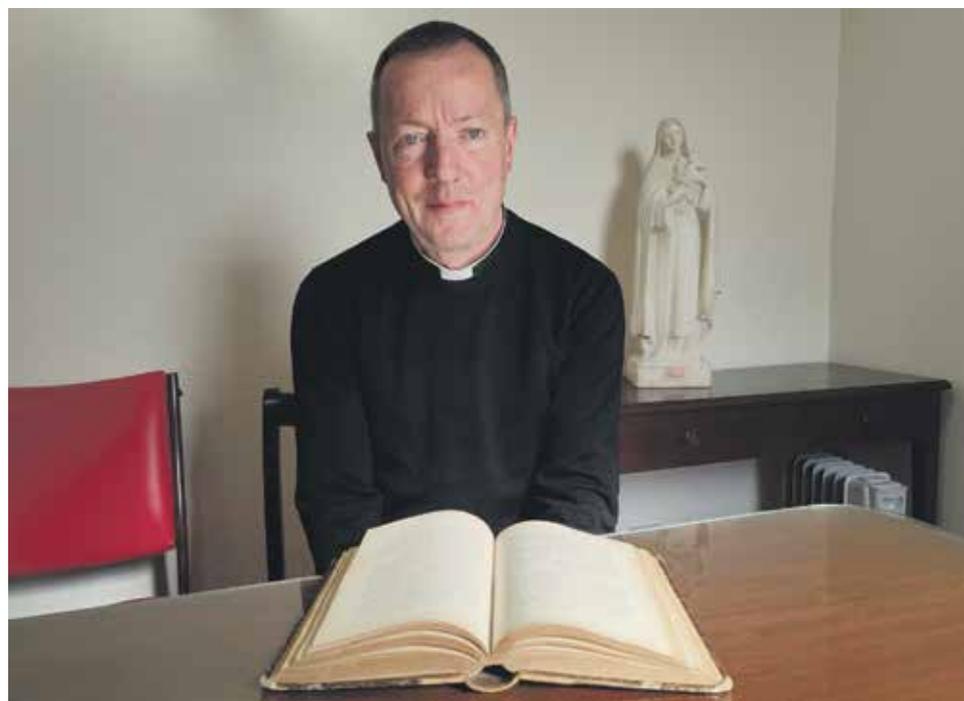
St Thérèse, also known as 'Little Flower', is one of the most popular saints among the faithful. A great devotee to the saint, Fr Declan Hurley, Adm. St Mary's Presbytery, Navan and Chairperson of the National Synodal Team, told *The Irish Catholic*, he did not like the saint at first as he thought she was too "precious."

"I spent three years in Maynooth Seminary, and I remember the spiritual director at the time gave me, St Thérèse's *Story of a Soul* and I did not like it. I thought that she was too upper middle class, too precious... and her heart of spirituality was so feminine and childish." Fr Hurley felt that the saint's spirituality was "too sweet to be true" so he "put St Thérèse aside."

In spite of his first feelings towards the saint, their story was only starting. In 2001, her relics came to Ireland "and it was a huge event." The relics travelled around the country for three months and "the whole country was on the move to see these relics," the priest explained.

Fr Hurley was a curate in Mullingar Parish at the time, and the cathedral was going to receive the relics. For that, a number of preparations took place, including a reading group led by himself to read the saint's writings.

"And thanks to that group, I was bowled over by the spirituality and the doctrine of St Thérèse, I was absolutely



Fr Hurley with the rare book and an image of the saint in the background.

gobsmacked by her depth, by her maturity. I remember, the caravan that came following the relics and all the books I bought, the complete work of St Thérèse."

His next encounter with the saint would happen only two years after the relics visit. In 2003, he was appointed Chaplain to the Irish Community in Paris. "So that gave me the opportunity to visit Lisieux frequently, and in that way, I just got to know Thérèse more and more and more. And I just became very devoted to her. She's powerful by the way she intercedes and does things from heaven for us, but she is [also] powerful in her teaching and in her doctrine."

“Her only desire was that her children would be saints, and not in the sense of canonised saints, but that they would be saints on earth as in heaven”

Fr Hurley said Thérèse wanted to be a saint. "I don't know if she wanted to be a canonised saint, but she definitely wants to be a saint. That was a very strong thing in her life, coming from her mother, who died quite young with breast cancer. Her only desire was that her children would be saints, and not in the sense of canonised saints, but that they would be saints on earth as in heaven, and I think that was very strong in Thérèse's spirituality.

"But I do think at the same time, she did have some kind

of premonition of how her reputation would grow. She warned the Sisters in the Carmelite Convent that after her death many would come... She warned them about that.

"And also, that hope that she had that after her death, she would be a great intercessor. She promised she would send a shower of roses, that she would spend her heaven doing good on earth. These beautiful words I think signify her hope and her confidence that she would be an intercessor from heaven."

"In Thérèse's character, there is a determination that is extraordinary," the priest said. "We can trace it through her childhood, after her mother's death and up to her early teenage years... But then, after what she called her conversion, the Christmas night conversion that she had, when she realized that she wants just to give herself totally for the salvation of souls, that stubbornness and determination became a fire for mission."

Defying

St Thérèse's stubbornness was visible when she persisted, defying anyone who stood in her way to become a Carmelite Sister. Fr Hurley said, "her determination to become a Carmelite Sister before the age, literally defying everybody, going directly to the Pope himself," was a result of the saint's convictions that God wanted her to become a Sister.

She was fourteen when she went to the Carmelite authorities asking permission to join the convent and was refused. Determined to follow her sisters' steps, she went to the bishop, and after

not receiving the answer she wanted, she got an audience with the pope. Thérèse was accepted into the convent at the age of fifteen.

"Ever since I got to know Thérèse and to be fascinated by her doctrine, one of the things that really struck me about her was when she died in 1897, there were 20 people at her funeral. She was totally unknown, just a 24-year-old young woman in an enclosed convent, in an obscure provincial town in France," the priest said.

Within just a few years, by the early 1900s, "she became probably the most known Catholic, the most known member of the Church... The pope who beatified and canonised her called her 'a hurricane of glory'."

“When she was ill and very weak, the Mother Superior in the convent asked her to write her life story. She wrote it in copybooks, school copybooks”

Fr Hurley explained that very early after Thérèse's death, people started to come to her grave. He told this paper that during the WWI, the soldiers also had great devotion to the saint. "Her reputation

“Some cynical people will say that Thérèse is a product of Pauline. That Pauline constructed Thérèse as a saint. I don't think you could say that, because the writings of Thérèse speak for themselves”



Fr Declan Hurley holding the rare book.

began to spread. And it spread because of her writing."

"When she was ill and very weak, the Mother Superior in the convent asked her to write her life story. She wrote it in copybooks, school copybooks," and she wrote three of them. "Then her own sister, her older sister, Pauline, became the Mother Superior and asked her to continue writing."

Thérèse died in 1897, and Pauline "decided that rather than she composing a little biography of her sister to send around to all the other Carmelite convents, that she would actually publish the writings."

"She reached out to her uncle, Isidore Guérin... Isidore was a pharmacist in Lisieux, quite a successful man. Pauline reached out to him and asked him, would he be able to find a publisher, and would he be able to pay for it, more importantly.

"He said he would, so he eventually found a publisher... And they did a contract for 2,000 copies... in late 1898, just one year after she died." Those books "were sent around to all of the common convents and monasteries and given to friends and visitors," the priest said. "I always had this dream that maybe I was to find one of these 2,000 copies."

Maturity

Fr Hurley believes "the maturity of her writings would make you forget that she was 24 years of age when she died, which is extraordinary. And

when you read her writings, you see the depth and maturity of her spirituality."

"This is not some self-centred, distracted young person, this is a very focused person who has achieved a huge degree of maturity and psychological, emotional, spiritual maturity through her faith," the priest said. "Her faith is her path to maturity. She understands entirely who she is. She has a huge sense of her mission. She has a sense of the meaning and purpose of her life, which gives her hope."

"Some cynical people will say that Thérèse is a product of Pauline. That Pauline constructed Thérèse as a saint. I don't think you could say that, because the writings of Thérèse speak for themselves." Fr Hurley understands that "maybe" Pauline and the Carmelite Sisters "managed her image," the pictures and paintings which would be distributed.

“Her doctrine is such that she is considered worthy of the Universal Church”

"But I don't think you can say that they constructed a saint." She is now a Doctor of the Church based on her writing not on the image her sister maybe created, the priest explained. "This is the girl



Fr Hurley in front of the Parochial house in Navan.

“I was in Lisieux for some time there in 2023, and we got a graphologist from the court service in Normandy. And she came to Lisieux with all the equipment, her ultraviolet and her infrared, and the magnifying thing. She certified that it is indeed the handwriting of Isidore Guérin”

who barely went to secondary school and hated it, never went to university, never studied, never got a degree in theology. And yet, her doctrine is such that she is considered worthy of the Universal Church.”

Antique

Fr Hurley has a particular interest in antique books. “One night back in 2022, I stumbled across an auction in Cherbourg in northern France... And here was a picture of an old book and it said in French: *Soeur Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus - Et de la Sainte face - Histoire d'une Ame*, the publisher and 1898... The guide price was €60, so I said ‘no, no way, this is not possible.’”

Because of the asking price being so low, Fr Hurley decided that could not be a first edition and started to reason with himself: “It’s probably one of the early editions, but not the first edition. And thus, somebody in the office of the auctioneer had just googled and then copy/paste it. Just taken the lazy route,” he guessed.

“I tried to put it out of my mind. But somehow, I couldn’t, it was like a worm in my brain just saying: ‘but that could be’. The day of the auction came around, so I registered online for the auction and the bidding

starts to just a couple of bids.”

The Irish priest was bidding against only one other person, “so I said to myself, ‘that’s definitely not the first edition. That would have been much more interested in this if it were.’” In the end, he got the book, which was sent to Navan by post.

When the book arrived, the priest “couldn’t believe my eyes that it is a beautiful, pristine first edition, in really good condition... that I had in my hands a first edition. I was just so delighted about that.”

Flicking through the pages of his new relic, Fr Hurley noticed the book had pencil marks on the table of content, some dates marking specific passages and on one of the last pages, a piece of paper with “page numbers followed by little biographical dates” was glued. And he “noticed among the front blank pages a Latin phrase meaning ‘from the library of I. Guérin’, that’s her uncle”.

With the suspicion that it could be not only an original first edition, but the copy that once belonged to the saint’s uncle, Fr Hurley “emailed the archives of the Carmelite Convent in Lisieux... I just sent a general image and [said] that I come into possession of the first edition, which

I think is significant. [Adding,] ‘is somebody there who might be able to reach out to me and discuss?’. I received a reply from the archivist, Camille Burette.” Ms Burette, having access to Isidore Guérin’s handwriting was able to spot the similarities between his handwriting and the notes on the book.

“I was in Lisieux for some time there in 2023, and we got a graphologist from the court service in Normandy. And she came to Lisieux with all the equipment, her ultraviolet and her infrared, and the magnifying thing. She certified that it is indeed the handwriting of Isidore Guérin.”

Analysis

During the graphology analysis, however, they found out the text saying the book belonged to the “library of I. Guérin” was not his handwriting. Mr Guérin had two daughters, the younger went into the Carmelite Convent and was a novice with St Thérèse.

“And the other girl, Jeanne, married a doctor.” The priest mentioned that to Ms Burette: “I think it’s reasonable that Jeanne would have inherited her father’s library.” Ms Burette had a sample of Jeanne’s handwriting and could confirm the one in the

priest’s book belongs to her.

“I firmly believe that in some way Thérèse wanted me to have this, because I would be aware of its significance. The Sisters in the convent were very kind and said that maybe I should keep this for my lifetime. Or maybe in my will, I could bequeath it to the convent. But I said, ‘look, you never know what can happen when things can go wrong.’”

“Fr Hurley will return the book accompanied by some parishioners from St Mary’s on a pilgrimage taking place from May 25 to 30”

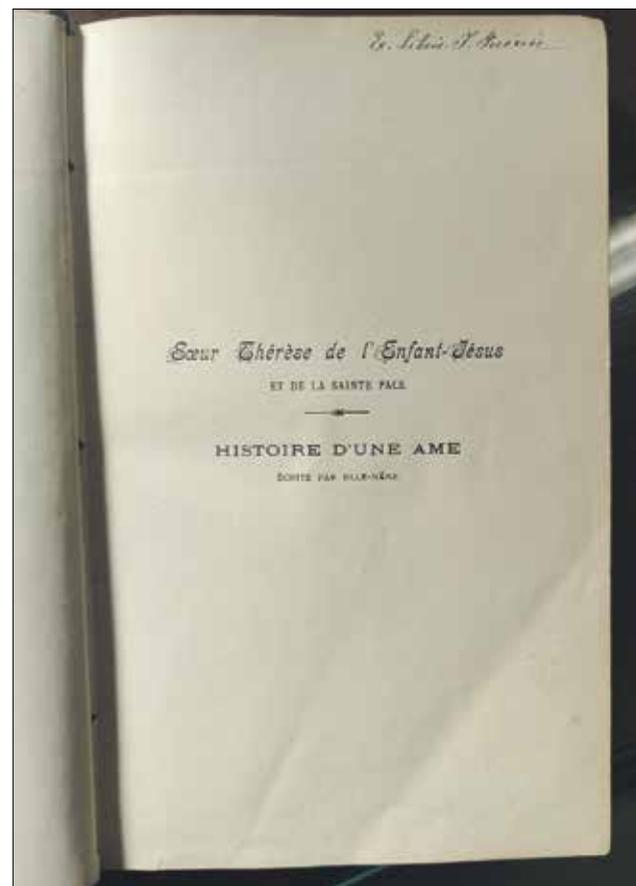
This month, on May 17, it will be celebrated 100 years since Thérèse of Lisieux was canonised saint. Knowing that, Fr Hurley thought, “wouldn’t it be nice to mark the centenary by returning to the convent the book that was the origin of ‘the hurricane of glory’ that led to her canonisation?”

Fr Hurley will return the book accompanied by some parishioners from St Mary’s on a pilgrimage taking place from May 25 to 30. “My youngest niece would be coming with me on the pilgrimage, she’s ten and she would be the one to actually give the book to the sisters, so that at least the memory will live on in the family.”

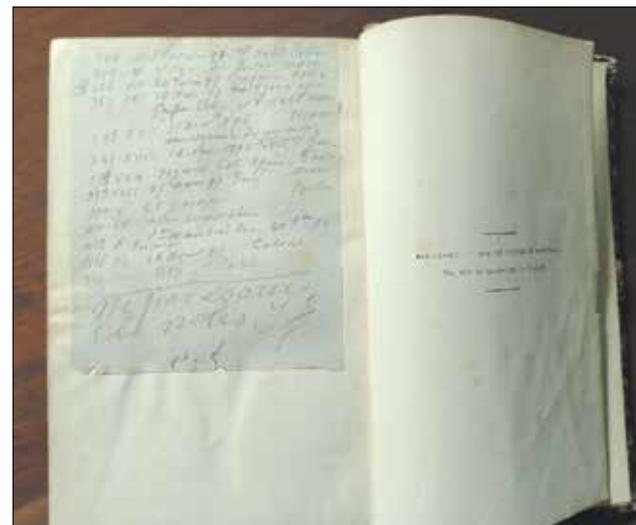
For more information on the pilgrimage/to book a place contact Navan Travel on 046 906 8600.



Picture of St Thérèse in the book..



In Latin ‘from the library of I. Guérin’ at the top right of the page.



Isidore Guérin’s notes on the back pages.

Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo

Archbishop of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

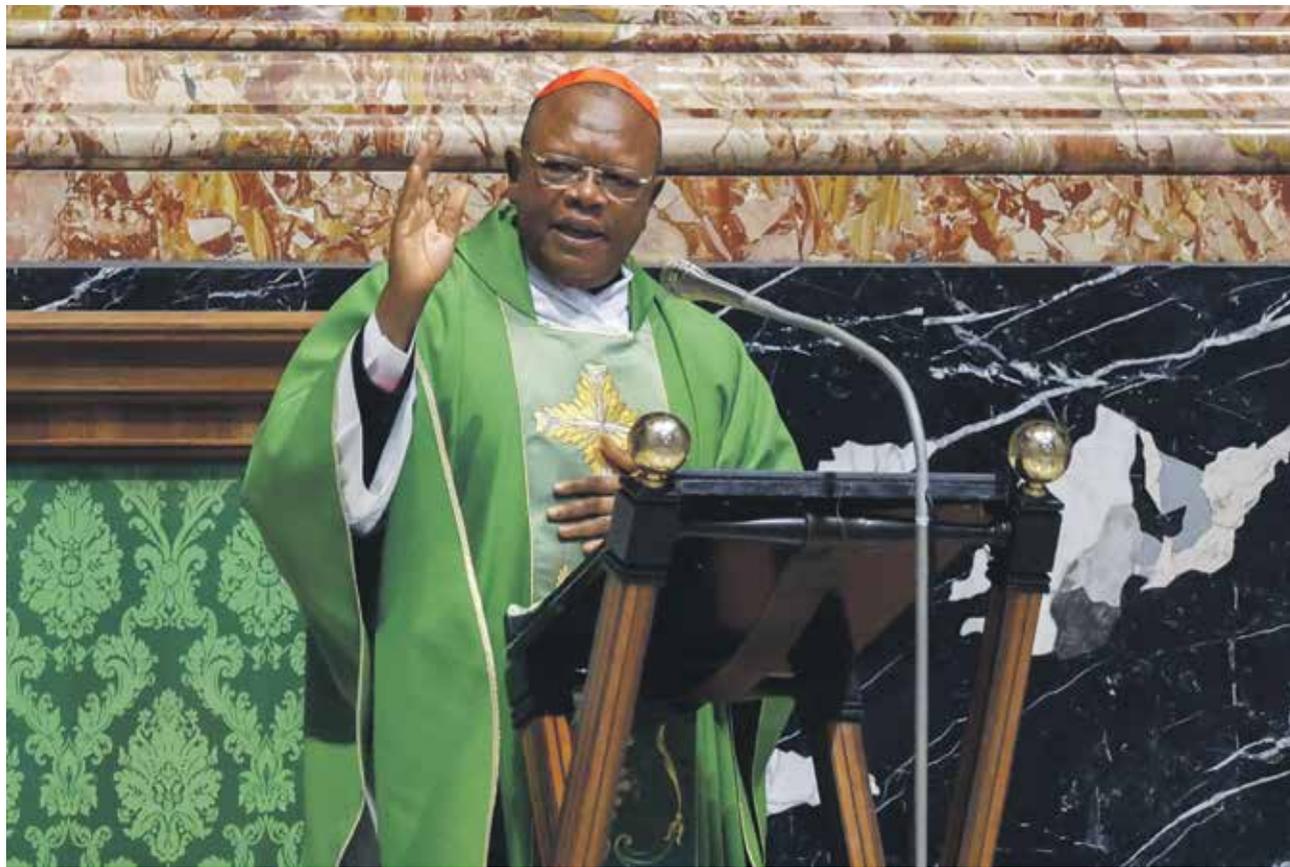
Luca Attanasio

Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo, Archbishop of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding personalities on the African ecclesiastical scene. Since October 2020 a member of the C9 - the Council of Cardinals set up by Pope Francis in September 2013 with the task of helping him in the governance of the universal Church and studying a project to revise the Roman Curia - and reconfirmed in 2023, Ambongo is one of the cardinals most listened to by Pope Francis and among the most authoritative proponents of an idea of the Church that puts Africa and the global South at the centre not only in the sense of evangelisation and pastoral and social care, but also on a political and geopolitical dimension.

Born on January 24, 1960 in Boto, northern Diocese of Molegbe right on the border with the Central African Republic, Fridolin Ambongo Besunga is a Capuchin friar ordained a priest in 1988. In the same year, he graduated in Moral Theology at the Alphonsian Academy in Rome. First a parish priest, then lecturer in moral theology at the Catholic University of Kinshasa, he was made a bishop by Benedict XVI in late 2004 and a cardinal by Pope Francis in March 2016. He has been Archbishop of Kinshasa since November 2018 and President of the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (Secam) since February 2023.

From a very young age and even more so since he began holding episcopal positions, in addition to the pastoral dimension, Ambongo has taken up positions of political prominence both for his country battered since independence from Belgium in 1960, by political instability, conflict, progressive impoverishment and environmental disasters, and for the African continent.

In an interview to France's Catholic *La Croix*, one of his fellow students, Fr Clement Makiobo, told that Ambongo had been "passionate about



justice and law issues" as a young man, while also expressing "direct opposition" to the Mobutu Sese Seko, who ruled from 1965 to 1997. 2016 can be considered the year of Fridolin Ambongo's 'political' consecration. At first, after taking a stand against the warlords, he was called to testify at the International Criminal Court in The Hague about the activities of the many Congolese conflict proponents. Throughout the year, he was the main mediator in the path leading to the New Year's Eve agreement reached by the Church on December 31, 2016 which foresaw the end of Joseph Kabila's presidential term and the calling of elections. Kabila, did not want to grant a date for elections and, in violation of the agreement itself, continued to wield power for months. During 2016 and 2017, the Catholic Church denounced abuses and organised mass demonstrations that were often stifled in blood by Kabila.

Condemnation

Ambongo with the entire Church, not just the Catholic component, sided with the protesters and condemned

the police violence. When he was appointed Archbishop of Kinshasa in November 2018, the weekly *Jeune Afrique* wrote that the appointment of 'a man of the Church who does not mince words' to the 'strategic post (Kinshasa, ed.) could be seen as a message of firmness on the part of the Pope' towards the Congo's rulers. Who in fact did not take the choice very well.

“He repeatedly referred to the modus operandi of influential Western powers towards the Democratic Republic of Congo and other African nations”

But beyond his activities at home, Ambongo stands out as a representative of an entire continent. From his own country to the whole of Africa, he has often raised his voice against the 'greed of the West' and has never been afraid to name and shame Western states or entities at

the root of the perpetrated colonial-printed exploitation of Africa that creates conflicts (as in eastern DRC) and leaves populations in misery. In a Conference on 'Mission and Interreligious dialogue in Africa' at the Pontifical Antonianum University in Rome, March 2024 he repeatedly referred to the modus operandi of influential Western powers towards the Democratic Republic of Congo and other African nations and spoke of a 'colonialist mentality'.

Embodiment

In this sense, Ambongo is undoubtedly the clergyman who best embodies the political thought enunciated by the Pope in Kinshasa on the occasion of his trip to South Sudan and the DRC at the beginning of 2023. In that 'Hands off Africa, Stop suffocating Africa: it is not a mine to be exploited or a soil to be plundered. ... Let the world remember the disasters committed throughout the centuries to the detriment of the local populations' shouted by the Pope on January 31 in Kinshasa, there is the political credo of Ambongo and of an important slice of the African church towards the continent and the whole world. In the conference "Modern martyrs, victims of the exploitation of mineral resources in Africa: Realities and perspectives of the outgoing Church", held in October 2024 in Rome, which he organised, the Cardinal lifted the veil on the numer-

ous and difficult situations experienced by "modern martyrs", especially "people who suffer and die because of the exploitation of mineral resources in Africa". Indeed, "the extraction and transport of these minerals dispossess and displace families from their lands". "The Church cannot remain silent" he concluded.

“In some cases his anti-Western streak even goes so far as to align himself with Vladimir Putin: naming him, the cardinal insists that Africa refuses the 'decadent morals of the West'”

Ambongo, therefore, embodies a certain type of new Pan-Africanism, growing exponentially among the continent's youth but also among the Church, which is becoming increasingly aware of the role Africa can and must play in the Church and the world. His, however, is a Pan-Africanism tinged with conservatism. His idea of Church and society is antithetical to the West, not only because it is the inventor and perpetuator of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism and the main protagonist of the grave situation in which so many

African countries still find themselves, but also because it is the spreader of relativism, moral debauchery, and a departure from Christian ethics. 'As the West does not like children, they [Westerners] want to attack the basic cell of humanity, which is the family,' states Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo, in January 2024 at a gathering of the Famille Chrétienne (Christian Family) movement in Kinshasa. 'Little by little, they will disappear,' he concludes. In some cases his anti-Western streak even goes so far as to align himself with Vladimir Putin: naming him, the cardinal insists that Africa refuses the "decadent morals of the West." "It is a decadent culture, it is the cultural and moral decadence of a society; a society in decline." And as *La Croix International* writes in a January article 2024, while Cardinal Ambongo admits that "many things can be reproached in Africa," "homosexuality is not one of them." Except in some "isolated" cases, he believes, "this practice does not exist with us [in Africa]."

Mediation

He was the mediator between the African episcopates and the Pope in the aftermath of the publication of the statement of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith *Fiducia Supplicans*. When practically all the bishops' conferences staged an uprising against the document and, in some cases, evoked a possible schism, Cardinal Ambongo took the first plane to Rome and met the Pope personally. He was the one who represented the demands of the African Church that entrusted his mediation skills with the mission of convincing the Pope to recede from the blessings to gay couples. But his closeness to the Pope and willingness to mediate certainly did not conceal his clear-cut conservative positions. It is no coincidence that, on that occasion, Ambongo had words of clear rejection and aligned himself with the representative of the African episcopate considered by all to be among the most conservative, Cardinal Robert Sarah. "I followed Cardinal Sarah's speech very carefully," Ambongo said at the meeting in preparation for the October 2024 synod of African delegates, 'and I think what he said is true. *Fiducia Supplicans* is not primarily a cultural issue; it would have been preferable to approach it from the perspective of theology, morality, the Bible and the Magisterium".

“Ambongo stands out as a representative of an entire continent. From his own country to the whole of Africa, he has often raised his voice against the 'greed of the West' and has never been afraid to name and shame Western states or entities at the root of the perpetrated colonial-printed exploitation of Africa”

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo Archbishop of Yangon, Burma

Paolo Affatato

He campaigned for peace in Myanmar, the former Burma, the troubled South-east Asian country that has always been torn by conflict in its 70-year history. All the more so now, as the country - much loved and often cited by Pope Francis - is torn by civil war after the military coup of 2021, and was wounded by the devastating earthquake of March 28. Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, one of Burma's largest cities, is a man committed to reconciliation in Asia and, throughout his episcopal ministry, has promoted the defence of human dignity, human rights, freedom of conscience and religion. He always kept an eye on the welfare of his people and the good of the Asian peoples, even when the positions he took provoked hostility from politicians or criticism from cultural, political and media circles in the West.

The 77-year-old Cardinal was born in 1948 and was baptised in the small village of Monhla, in the centre of the country, a village that is no longer there, razed to the ground by the Burmese army, which bombed entire regions inhabited by civilians to try to break the resistance of the People's Defence Forces, which came into being in the aftermath of the coup. He was attracted by Don Bosco's charisma and approached the Salesian congregation, completing his path of vocational discernment and then professing to be a priest, son of St John Bosco. It is precisely this special concern for the younger generations, typical of the Salesians, that today leads Cardinal Bo to be one of the voices publicly calling - even to the generals of the ruling junta - for an end to the war, using language that is always imaginative: his vision embraces the demands of a people that, especially with its young people, has rebelled against violence and oppression and has begun an unequal struggle against a brutal

“His pastoral approach starts from what the current pontiff has called ‘the minority paradigm’, referring to places, regions or continents such as Asia where small existing Christian communities are considered as ‘alien’ or perceived as detrimental to the religious cohesion of a given nation, therefore persecuted or otherwise treated with discrimination or even hostility”

power and an army that is one of the most powerful in Asia.

Bo's concern for young people reflects a particularly significant demographic fact: Myanmar shares with many Southeast Asian countries a demographic composition in which young people between 17 and 35 years of age make up the majority of the population, a fact that makes Asia - like Africa - the “continent of the future” on the world stage, especially when contrasted with Europe where the demographic decline is eroding societies.

“The Church - the Cardinal recalled several times - is called upon, with its limited possibilities, to be a source of hope and consolation”

In the aftermath of the coup, the Archbishop of Yangon had issued a heartfelt call for non-violence, asking the democracy movement not to choose the path of civil war as a way to justice against the coup and as a reaction to the killings of young protesters. ‘Violence leads to more violence’ he warned, almost foreseeing the current reality: after more than four years of civil war, the country finds itself devastated and annihilated, with with over 50,000 deaths, 3.8 million internally displaced persons and a collapsing education system. The young people ‘do not accept that hope is being stolen from them’, he explained to the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, reiterating the idea of a Myanmar in which ‘every human being is truly a participant in fundamental rights and freedoms’, a country ‘in which ethnic and religious diversity is celebrated and where true peace is enjoyed’, a Myanmar - he reiterated - ‘in which the military lay down their arms, leave power and do what an



army should do: protect, not attack, the people’.

In expressing this vision of the future, the Cardinal has made his own, to bring them to the attention of the Holy See and the universal Church, the demands of an entire continent, the vast and plural Asian continent, especially in the years in which he was called to lead the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, (Fabc), with the post of president that he held for two terms, until 2024. Appointed bishop by Pope John Paul II in 1990 and called to the purple by Pope Francis in 2015, his pastoral approach starts from what the current pontiff has called ‘the minority paradigm’, referring to places, regions or continents such as Asia where small existing Christian communities are considered as ‘alien’ or perceived as detrimental to the religious cohesion of a given nation, therefore persecuted or otherwise treated with discrimination or even hostility. Nationalist movements or authoritarian systems of

government, wars or creeping conflicts make life difficult for many Christians and, in such a context, the Church - the Cardinal recalled several times - is called upon, with its limited possibilities, to be a source of hope and consolation, to offer support to the faithful and to promote with meekness its vision of dialogue, acceptance of neighbour, unconditional charity.

Connections

His vision of fraternitas was clearly expressed during a visit to the Marian shrine in Nyaunglebin, Myanmar: “Drawing inspiration from Mary, we pray that the conflicting parties in Myanmar may come together and this sacred place become a refuge of peace and reconciliation, where enemies embrace each other as brothers and sisters”. With this spirit, in full harmony with what Pope Francis wrote in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (All Brothers), the Cardinal wanted to expose himself and expend his influence also in relations with the power, even the oppressor and persecutor: the meetings with the coup general Min Aung Hlaing have aroused criticism at home and abroad, but in those meetings Bo wanted to read Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Peace, sending a strong and clear message to the rulers.

Similarly, the Archbishop of Yangon has always offered support to Aung San Suu Kuy,

the Nobel Peace Prize woman who led the last democratic season in the former Burma, who is still under house arrest. He also supported her on the long-standing issue of the exodus of the Muslim population of the Rohingya, 700,000 of whom were forced to leave the country by the Burmese army in an ethnic cleansing operation. The leader, and with her the Cardinal, did not want to be complacent about a criminal operation - an accusation that came from the West - but kept the dialogue with the government open and tried to use the weapons of diplomacy to bring justice to that wounded humanity.

“It used to be one of the freest and most open Asian cities. They have turned it into a police state’, a fact that ‘breaks the heart’”

The same approach was seen in the delicate relationship with mainland China. In 2021, Bo celebrated the Day of Prayer for the Church in China, established in 2007 by Benedict XVI, and as president of the FABC wanted to extend the initiative by mak-

ing it a “Week of Prayer” for China. And while the Holy See renewed its two-year agreement with Beijing on the joint appointment of bishops, Bo hoped that “as it continues to grow as a global power, China will become a force for good and a protector of the rights of the world's most vulnerable and marginalised” and will be able to distance itself from practices - denounced by Cardinal Bo himself in previous years - such as oppressing religious freedom, destroying churches, locking up Muslims in forced labour camps, and stifling the freedoms of lawyers, dissidents, and intellectuals. And when in Hong Kong, on May 11, 2022, 80-year-old Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, was among the dissidents arrested, Bo commented laconically: ‘It used to be one of the freest and most open Asian cities. They have turned it into a police state’, a fact that ‘breaks the heart’.

Asia

With his voice, from one of the world's peripheries, the challenges of the vast and plural continent of Asia, ‘a world that encompasses different worlds’, where more than 60% of the world's entire population, some 4.8 billion people, live, come to the Consistory (and will be present in an eventual Conclave). With the Oriental and Protestant Churches, Asian Christians number about 400 million (data from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity) in an area of the world that is the cradle of great civilisations and religious traditions (such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism). However, in many parts of Asia, poverty and natural disasters complicate the lives of the populations, and thus the work and life of the Church is also grappling with challenges such as the exodus from rural areas, migration, family disintegration, uprooting and disorientation of young people. In such a framework, key points for Cardinal Bo and for Christians in Asia are practices such as synodality and inter-religious dialogue, which comes to be an “extended synodality”, that means full collaboration with communities of other religious faiths. The profound ability to enter into empathic relations with the “different from oneself” - honed in a context characterised by pluralism - may represent an added value, a quality that may also be valid in Rome.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin Vatican Secretary of State

Luca Attanasio

Pietro Parolin is a diplomat of great caliber. His star in the diplomatic service of the church and in the development of realpolitik and pragmatic strategies has been shining for many years. Just to give an example, in 2006, *Inside the Vatican* magazine named Parolin one of the 'Top Ten' of the year, citing his work on nuclear disarmament, dialogue with Iran and North Korea, and the fight against human trafficking. His diplomatic 'vocation' blossoms from the very start. After being ordained a priest in 1980 at the age of twenty-five, he was sent to study canon law at the Gregorian University in Rome and simultaneously began his training in the Vatican's diplomatic service, a field in which he started to play an active role as early as the mid-1980s. He was soon sent to Nigeria, then Mexico, and later recalled to Rome where he worked in the Secretariat of State under Cardinal Angelo Sodano.

Diplomacy

From 2002 to 2009, Parolin was Undersecretary of State for Relations with States. In this capacity, he was able to make himself known for the Vatican's efforts to mediate and improve relations between the Holy See and Israel, which, since the signing of the Agreement governing relations between its states in December 1993, has had a tortuous path. His direct relationship with Israel and, initially, good wishes, have since suffered major repercussions. A first friction was glimpsed in June 2019 when, on the occasion of a meeting in Rome with Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni, he raised an appeal for all faiths and cultures to be granted "equal rights and equal opportunities for the construction of a future of peace and harmony", transpiring a fear of discrimination. But the lowest point in relations between Parolin and consequently the Holy

“On the occasion of a meeting in Rome with Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni, he raised an appeal for all faiths and cultures to be granted 'equal rights and equal opportunities for the construction of a future of peace and harmony', transpiring a fear of discrimination”



See and Israel was reached in the aftermath of the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023. In particular at the beginning of 2024 when Cardinal Parolin at the end of the bilateral meeting between Italy and the Vatican State declared: "We are all outraged by what is happening. It is carnage.... Israel's right to defence, which has been invoked to justify this operation, must be proportionate; But certainly with 30 thousand deaths it is not". Immediately, the Israeli ambassador to the Holy See, Raphael Schutz, issued a statement in which he called the statement "deplorable" and "erroneous". From then on, diplomatic relations sank, with clear and evident accusations from Parolin but also

from Cardinal Pizzaballa, Patriarch of Jerusalem of the Latins, the Pope himself and other Catholic figures that led, among other rudness, to Israel's cancellation of all posts of condolences for the death of Pope Francis

“Roles of the highest importance come for Parolin, who seems to share goals and strategies with the new pope”

The 'hot potatoes' that Parolin had to deal with, however, are various. He had to deal with very delicate issues of relations with Vietnam, North Korea, Iran. As undersecretary, he was also entrusted with thorny roles, such as when he was sent in 2009, after being appointed titular arch-

“Francis appointed him his Secretary of State while he was created and proclaimed Cardinal in the Consistory of 22 February 2014. Since its inception, it has been a stable part of the C9, the magic circle of nine cardinals closely close to the pope and his advisors in reform projects”

bishop of Acquapendente by Benedict XVI, a pope whom Parolin seems never to have particularly loved, to be nuncio to Venezuela. But, certainly after relations with Israel, the most complex operation he had to deal with is the Vatican-China agreements. Already a member of the commission for relations with Beijing with Benedict XVI, Parolin had an original approach to Sino-Vatican relations and was the protagonist of the agreement in 2018 on the appointment of bishops, renewed every two years until 2024. While it was celebrated as the beginning of a new era, the treaty has also sparked widespread criticism of yielding to Chinese demands. Among the harshest critics of the agreement is Cardinal

Joseph Zen Ze-kun, bishop emeritus of Hong Kong. With the arrival of Jorge Bergoglio to the papal throne, roles of the highest importance come for Parolin, who seems to share goals and strategies with the new pope. On August 31, 2013, at the age of only 55, Francis appointed him his Secretary of State while he was created and proclaimed Cardinal in the Consistory of February 22, 2014. Since its inception, it has been a stable part of the C9, the magic circle of nine cardinals closely close to the pope and his advisors in reform projects.

Beliefs

Born in Schiavon, in the province of Vicenza, Italy, on January 17, 1955, Cardinal Parolin,

if he became pope, would be a relatively young pontiff. In his potential path to the papal throne, the main obstacle, according to some observers, would be a poor pastoral attitude given the services carried out in the church, all of which are in some way far from the people and from pastoral daily life. His positions of openness – he is considered a possibilist on the celibacy of priests and on communion for the divorced and remarried, he believes in a more democratic reform of the curia and the church, he insists on an environmentalist approach on the furrow created by *Laduate si'* and he has always spent himself in perfect continuity with Francis on the migration issue, taking positions of clear criticism of Europe for a 'merciless' management – but also those of greater conservatism – no concessions on the gay issue and other sexual orientations, no openness on the female diaconate – make him a credible candidate in continuity with Pope Francis but, at the same time, probably less progressive.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

Luca Attanasio

In Gaza 'the situation is shameful, catastrophic, we have to say it... the dignity of those 2.3 million people, is not taken into the slightest consideration. We cannot think that they are all colluding with terrorism and crime'. This sentence, is just the latest in a long series of sharp accusations that the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Card. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, has uttered since the Israeli army operations on Gaza and the West Bank began in the aftermath of October 7, 2023. The Patriarch said it during an interview with *Tv2000*, the television station of the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) last April 11. A few weeks after the dramatic attack by Hamas, on the other hand, Cardinal Pizzaballa, in a letter sent to the faithful of his diocese, condemned the massacres carried out by Hamas and the continuous bombing of Gaza, but also spoke explicitly of 'occupation' as the root of all tension: 'Only by putting an end to decades of occupation, and its tragic consequences, and by giving a clear and secure national perspective to the Palestinian people, will it be possible to start a serious peace process'. In another passage, from Jenin, West Bank in July 2024, in the aftermath of yet another raid against refugee camps, the cardinal speaks explicitly of 'unjustified attacks': "(We) hope for pursuit of peace and dialogue to prevent other future unjustified attacks on the population."

As can be seen from these explicit statements, Cardinal Pizzaballa fully represents the political and geopolitical, as well as pastoral, position of the Holy See regarding the Palestinian population that has become increasingly clear since the post-October 7, 2023 crisis erupted. After having, of course, harshly and repeatedly condemned the attacks carried out by Hamas and the massacres and kidnappings of Israeli citizens, the Vatican has maintained a clear line of denouncing the atrocities committed by Israel and reiterated the political position of

“When logic fails, emotions take over. And you ask yourself: how can you live as a Christian inside such a crisis? Then your people who seek you out, who expect a word from you...bring you back to a plane of reality.... because a Christian lives his life in the fight against evil”



two states and two peoples.

If we look at the international scene, we can safely say that the Holy See, through the mouths of its main exponents - the Pope, Secretary of State Parolin, Cardinal Pizzaballa - has been, if not the only one, among the very few state and geopolitical realities to have raised voices against the military operations perpetrated by Israel for more than a year and a half without either Europe, the United States or the West in general ever taking a clear position and going beyond bland declarations.

Journey

One of the youngest members of the College of Cardinals, Pierluigi Pizzaballa O.F.M., was born in Cologno al Serio (Bergamo, Lombardy) on April 21, 1965. He entered the Order of Friars Minor in Sep-

tember 1984 at the age of 19 and spent his novitiate year in one of the most important sanctuaries in the Franciscan context, that of La Verna (Arezzo-Italy). On September 15, 1990, he was ordained a priest.

“In close contact with the Jewish reality and deeply attached to the spirituality of those holy places, Pizzaballa edited the Roman Missal in Hebrew”

His story as a priest and as a Christian is linked from the beginning to the Holy Land. Not even a month after his ordination, in fact, the young priest moved to Jerusalem, where he completed his studies at the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*. In close contact with the Jewish reality and deeply attached to the spirituality of those holy places, Pizzaballa edited

the Roman Missal in Hebrew. He translated various liturgical texts into Hebrew for the Catholic communities in Israel and joined, later becoming its assistant general, the so-called Catholic Kehilla, the Hebrew-speaking Catholic community that owes its origins to Brother Yohanan Elihai of the Little Brothers of Jesus who, upon arriving in the Holy Land on March 21, 1956, celebrated the first Mass in Hebrew, in the Syrian rite, in Haifa.

Significance

Since the end of the last century, Pizzaballa has been at the service of the Custody of the Holy Land and has held fundamental roles in relations with the Jewish world. Since 2008 he has been a Con-

“So many years in contact with one of the world's most troubled lands, a marked sensitivity for the people who live there, as well as the perception on his own skin of the suffering and injustice he has witnessed daily for decades, have made Pizzaballa a man who continually questions himself about evil”

sultor in the Commission for Relations with Judaism of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. In 2004 he was appointed Custos of the Holy Land for the first time to be reconfirmed in 2010 and hold the position until 2016, when Pope Francis appointed him Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem with the dignity of archbishop. On October 24, 2020, however, came Pope Francis' appointment as the new Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

His impressive curriculum and authoritative figure made Pierluigi Pizzaballa the ideal candidate for the cardinalate in the eyes of Pope Francis. The prestigious nomination arrives in fact on September 30, 2023 and Pizzaballa becomes the first Patriarch of Jerusalem to receive it. For many observers, the choice takes on special significance both in the sense of a more solid relationship between Rome and Jerusalem but also in giving more importance to the voice of the Church of Jerusalem in both Rome and the global Church. It also signalled the Vatican's desire to play a more active role in the Middle East.

“It was resounding, in this sense, that he offered his own body in place of hostages taken by Hamas”

The appointment as cardinal, however, as mentioned, came on September 30, 2023. Plans for better relations with the Jewish world and Israel, as well as the project for a more authoritative voice to be assigned to the Church of the Holy Land, were disrupted just days later. The very serious Hamas attack on October 7 and Israel's ruthless response still in place forced the Cardinal to devote a great deal of energy to the conflict. Certainly, the Cardinal immediately wanted to provide the

Church's contribution to the search for a peaceful solution and offer every means available to avoid catastrophe. It was resounding, in this sense, that he offered his own body in place of hostages taken by Hamas. "A journalist," he said on that occasion, "asked me at a press conference if I would be willing - if it were possible - to offer myself in exchange for the hostages. And I replied: certainly yes, a Christian - a bishop moreover - is always called upon to offer his life for others. Nothing extraordinary: it is the following of Jesus... Needless to say, I would have said the same for the Palestinians. But, I repeat, there is nothing extraordinary".

Gravity

So many years in contact with one of the world's most troubled lands, a marked sensitivity for the people who live there, as well as the perception on his own skin of the suffering and injustice he has witnessed daily for decades, have made Pizzaballa a man who continually questions himself about evil, about the meaning of being a Christian, and about the abyss of futility and despair, which is always possible even for those who have faith. "And you who have dedicated your whole life to being the hinge, the facilitator," he confessed in a long interview that appeared in *L'Osservatore Romano* in November 2023, "you can no longer put the pieces together. And you feel useless, because you are unfit for opposition," he once confessed. "When logic fails, emotions take over. And you ask yourself: how can you live as a Christian inside such a crisis? Then your people who seek you out, who expect a word from you...bring you back to a plane of reality.... because a Christian lives his life in the fight against evil".

With his culture, his deep-rootedness in the Middle East that is nourished by the study of the scriptures and the original contexts of the Christian faith as well as his presence in the field, thanks to his ability to have relations with different and often conflicting communities, but also with an authoritative voice condemning inhumanity and seeking peace in a context of war that is among the most serious and long-standing in the world, Cardinal Pizzaballa represents a key and original figure in the Church to come.

Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça

Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education

Paolo Affatato

Beauty will save the world, and the Church too: Portuguese Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, until now (in Bergoglio's pontificate) Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for culture and education, truly believes this. Beauty, says and expresses the 60-year-old cardinal in his vision and pastoral praxis, will save the Church in its relationship with the world, a theme at the heart of the Second Vatican Council document *'Gaudium et spes'*. 'Beauty' is not an abstract or purely philosophical term for him: it is instead the full epiphany of God, it is the very face of Christ. He is a cardinal, Tolentino de Mendonça, who feeds on art, be it poetry, literature, sculpture, painting or music. He feeds on art in its broadest and most complete sense, finding in art a profound spiritual value and meaning that becomes an opportunity and drive for the transcendent. This is what he tells readers every week in the Portuguese magazine *Expresso*, a non-Catholic publication, in a column that, not for nothing, is entitled 'What are clouds?'

Art, the supreme expression of the human soul, is for the Cardinal a master way of evangelisation, that is, a tightrope for the encounter with today's humanity. Art is the path to an intimate dialogue and fruitful interpersonal relationship that can be woven with every man and woman of our time. This approach, which Tolentino already lived in his experience as a bishop, poet and pastor in Portugal, brought him to the Vatican when he was first called to lead the Apostolic Library (in 2018) and then appointed Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture, in 2022. A role in which he took up the legacy of Italian Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, an erudite philologist and man of letters, a cardinal who, through the 'Courtyard of the Gentiles' initiative, had initiated an experience of dialogue with the world of non-believers.

Tolentino de Mendonça, a man of mild and cordial

“This approach, for Tolentino, becomes pastoral, that is, it is not a mere intellectual exercise, but a way to bring people closer to the divine, to what God is, and to travel mysterious paths to touch the human heart”



disposition, with an innate ability to empathise with his interlocutors, was already a rising star in the College of Cardinals and, in just three years, he quickly made his mark on the Vatican department entrusted to him: that of elaborating a cultural proposal of high level and international depth, such as to lead the Holy See to engage in dialogue with the leaders of contemporary art and culture. It is not so much a matter, the cardinal emphasises, of 'begging' for small spaces in the great assemblies of world culture, to ensure that the voice of the Church is at least considered or that Christian values can have 'a place at the table'. Rather, it is a matter of making oneself present, of coming forward in the agora and in the places of contemporary culture, in the academy and in the pub-

lic sphere, elaborating ideas and initiatives that, thanks to their intrinsic moral, spiritual, ideal, civil, intellectual and educational value, are able to speak to today's humanity: they are able to meet its existential questions, to intercept the anxiety of the infinite that dwells within the heart of every man and woman of the third millennium. It is precisely the inexpressible, which artists know how to express not in words but with their art. This approach, for Tolentino, becomes pastoral, that is, it is not a mere intellectual exercise, but a way to bring people closer to the divine, to what God is, and to travel mysterious paths to touch the human heart.

“He became dean of the Faculty of Theology in 2018, distinguishing himself for his research and especially his poetic production”

In his history as a presbyter and pastor Tolentino de

“In just three years, he quickly made his mark on the Vatican department entrusted to him: that of elaborating a cultural proposal of high level and international depth, such as to lead the Holy See to engage in dialogue with the leaders of contemporary art and culture”

Mendonça has always followed this inspiration, which has distant and plural roots. Born on the island of Madeira in 1965, as a boy he spent his early years in Angola, a former Portuguese colony. The experience of a childhood spent in Africa marked him deeply. Returning to Madeira and entering the seminary, he was ordained a priest and pursued his academic and pastoral career as a seminary professor, parish priest and rector of the Pontifical Portuguese College in Rome, then lecturer at the Portuguese Catholic University. As a professor at the Athenaeum, he became dean of the Faculty of Theology in 2018, distinguishing himself for his research and especially his poetic production. In the same year Pope Francis chose him to preach spir-

itual exercises at the Roman Curia, four months later he appointed him archbishop and archivist and librarian, a year later he created him cardinal.

Ministry

Two events represent the synthesis of his ministry and vision, considered in full harmony with Pope Francis: the highly original opening to the public of the Holy See Pavilion at the Venice Biennale international cultural exhibition in 2024. Entitled 'With My Eyes', the Pavilion was set inside the Giudecca women's prison. It was unique and unprecedented: the works were the result of the encounter between the artists and the eighty female inmates, and the visit itself was, in fact, a concrete experience of encounter between

the public and the guests of the prison.

The second event was the recent meeting for the Jubilee of Artists, held in Rome last February, which involved 700 eminent personalities from the world of culture, art, cinema, at an international level, with the idea of 'befriending' contemporary artists, to share the same 'restlessness'. The figure of the meeting is witnessed by one of the guests, Maurizio Cattelan, a sculptor who loves to raise and bring to the public provocative works (in 1999, he represented John Paul II being felled by a meteorite), exposing and recounting radical themes, desecrating and offensive to some. 'Even provocation is useful for religion,' said Tolentino de Mendonça.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle

Archbishop of Manila, Philippines

Paolo Affatato

If Asia is the “continent of the future”, for the Catholic Church it also represents “the future of evangelisation”, in a territory and with a portion of humanity that combines tradition and innovation. All this is fully expressed and defined in the personality and vision of 67-year-old Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, one of the Asian cardinals who has been called to play an increasingly important role in the Roman Curia. While Archbishop of Manila, Pope Bergoglio called him to head Caritas Internationalis and then as Prefect (and later Pro-Prefect) of the Dicastery for Evangelisation. Cardinal Tagle represents and brings to the universal church the demands of a continent where Christianity - with 10% of the world’s Catholics - is developing and growing. It is an area where vocations to the priesthood and religious life are still flourishing, an area where Catholic communities - despite being a small minority in most Asian nations - maintain a lively and steadfast witness to the faith, even under conditions of persecution, and are not afraid to beget and baptise children. This is why Asia is also the “continent of the future” for the Catholic Church, and Tagle perfectly embodies this status and perspective.

Merit

The Filipino cardinal can well be said to constitute, in the perfect Asian identity, a bridge between tradition and innovation: in fact, it is worth remembering that he was chosen and created cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, and is known for his great gifts as a theologian, after solid studies and training in the United States at the Catholic University of America. However, his temperament and pastoral vision have made him close to Pope Bergoglio, whom Tagle welcomed on



his 2017 trip to the Philippines, an event that served to definitively cement the bond between the two and convinced the pontiff to call the Filipino archbishop to Rome. In his service as Archbishop of Manila (from 2011 to 2019) and then increasingly in his service to the Roman Curia (from 2015 to the present), the commonality of views with Bergoglio earned him the nickname “Francis of Asia”. Tagle has shown himself as a charismatic and humble person, a proponent of a Church close to the least and attentive to the needs of the global South. That global South has always remained in his heart and, at times, he has seemed like an ‘alien’ in the Vatican,

more or less openly expressing his desire to return to his beloved Philippines, where his parents are still living in their nineties.

“Tagle - in a choice that reminded one of Bergoglio at St Santa Marta’s - has chosen to reside permanently in the Philippine College in Rome”

Precisely for this reason, in order to breathe a little of the atmosphere of his homeland, Tagle - in a

“The popularity he enjoys has also been built by a strong presence in the mass and social media, which he considers to be an indispensable ground for evangelisation”

choice that reminded one of Bergoglio at St Santa Marta’s - has chosen to reside permanently in the Philippine College in Rome, sharing life with students and priests from his country, leaving the exclusive private residence assigned to the prefect of the Vatican’s dicastery for evangelisation, on the Janiculum Hill, empty.

Character

His open character (he informally calls himself “Cardinal Chito” by everyone, a nickname from his childhood) is appreciated by the faithful, especially in Asia. The popularity he enjoys has also been built by a strong presence in the mass and social media, which he considers to be an indispensable ground for evangelisation. His mission in the digital world has also been constantly pursued by

collaborating with the ‘Jesuit Communications’ organisation in the Philippines on various television and radio productions, such as *The Word Exposed* - which every Sunday continues its live streaming on Facebook from Rome - Prayer over Coffee and Light Talk.

“Tagle particularly cares for migrants, recalling that the Filipino people have the largest number of emigrants abroad”

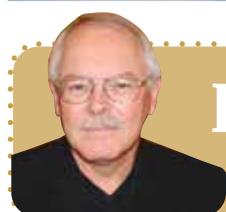
This familiarity with new media represents for Tagle a meeting ground with the new generations. At World

Youth Day in Lisbon in 2023, the Filipino cardinal sought to strengthen this bond, especially inviting young Filipinos to become influencers on social media, with one goal in mind: to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “Spread the influence of Jesus, the influence of truth, justice, care for the earth and love of neighbour,” Tagle said. Thanks to them, he said, “the third millennium will be Asia’s”. Alongside the youth, Tagle particularly cares for migrants, recalling that the Filipino people have the largest number of emigrants abroad, some 10 million. They, who still carry with them the heritage of the Catholic faith, represent “an army of missionaries” who go to re-evangelise countries where secularisation has eroded Christian values.

“Tagle has shown himself as a charismatic and humble person, a proponent of a Church close to the least and attentive to the needs of the global South. That global South has always remained in his heart and, at times, he has seemed like an ‘alien’ in the Vatican”



Everything comes to us as gift



Fr Rolheiser

www.ronrolheiser.com

A Benedictine monk shared this story with me. During his early years in religious life, he had been resentful because he was required to ask permission from his abbot if he wanted anything: "I thought it was silly, me, a grown man, an adult, having to ask a superior if I wanted a new shirt. I felt like a child."

But as he aged his perspective changed: "I'm not sure of all the reasons, though I'm sure they have to do with grace, but one day I came to realise that there was some deep wisdom in having to ask permission for everything. We don't own anything; nothing comes

to us by right. Everything is gift. So ideally everything should be asked for and not taken as if it were ours by right. We need to be grateful to God and the universe for everything that's been given us. Now, when I need something and need to ask permission from the abbot, I no longer feel like a child. Rather, I feel that I'm more properly in tune with the way things should be in a gift-oriented universe within which nobody has a right to ultimately claim anything."

Principle

What this monk came to understand is a principle which undergirds all spirituality, all

morality, and every one of the commandments, namely, that everything comes to us as gift, nothing can be claimed as if owed to us. We should be grateful to God for giving us what we have and careful not to claim, as by right, anything more.

“The voice of Jesus is radically antithetical to these voices. Empathy is the penultimate human virtue, the antithesis of weakness”

But this goes against much in our instinctual selves and within our culture. Within both, there are strong voices which tell us that if you can-

not take what you want then you're a weak person, weak in a double way. First, you're a weak personality, too timid to fully claim life. Second, you've been weakened by religious and moral scruples and are unable to properly seize the day and be fully alive. These voices tell us that we need to grow up because there is much in us that's fearful and infantile, a child held captive by superstitious forces.

We need an important reminder.

Antithetical

The voice of Jesus is radically antithetical to these voices. Empathy is the penultimate human virtue, the antithesis of weakness. Jesus would look on so much that is assertive, aggressive, and accumulative within our society and, notwithstanding the admiration it receives, tell us clearly that this

is not what it means to come to the banquet which lies at the heart of God's kingdom. He would not share our admiration of the rich and famous who too often claim, as by right, their excessive wealth and status. When Jesus states that it is harder for a rich person to go to Heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, he might have qualified this by adding: "Unless, of course, the rich person, childlike, asks permission from the universe, from the community, and from God, for every new shirt!"

“Nothing ultimately belongs to anybody and it's best never to forget that”

When I was a religious novice, our novice master tried to

impress upon us the meaning of religious poverty by making us write inside every book that was given to us the Latin words: *ad usum*. Literally: for your use. The idea was that, although this book was given to you for your personal use, you didn't own it. It was only for your use; real ownership lay elsewhere. We were then told that this was true as well of everything else given to us for our personal use, from our toothbrushes to the shirts on our backs. They were not really ours, merely given to us for our use.

No matter how rich, strong, and grown-up we are, there's something healthy in having to ask permission to buy a new shirt. It keeps us attuned to the fact that the universe belongs to everyone, to God ultimately. Everything comes to us as a gift and so we may never take anything for granted, but only as granted!

God always puts his trust in you

The Sunday Gospel

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41
Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13
Rv 5:11-14
Jn 21:1-19

Fr Dominik Domagala

How often do we return to the familiar places we know so well, the places we have visited many times before, whether to rest or escape from life's overwhelming problems?

Whenever I return to my little town in Poland, I experience the same joy and peace from reminding myself of all the small and big paths that led me to the school, the church, my grandparents, and my friends. Although they are no longer part of my present life, all those paths contribute to who I am now.

Every religious festivity, like Christmas or Easter, is also like that: a return to what was our basic or original experience of faith. Although it has been many times when we have celebrated Easter in

our lives, it is always new, as if it were still our first Easter.

In my Polish tradition, these include painting Easter eggs, blessing our Easter baskets on Saturday morning among other customs.

Nostalgia

The apostles' experience of preparing their boats on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias was quite like what I described before. Indeed, this was something they did with Jesus. They often ate fish and bread, which the Lord provided. There was a longing to perform once again what they had done for so long. Although they recognise all the paths and stones of the shore to which they have now returned, there is also a sense of sadness and nostalgia.

When the disciples returned to Galilee, obedient to Jesus's order, they also seemed quite unsure of what to do next. Peter went to catch fish, and others followed him. Although they laboured all night, they caught nothing. Their night full of labour is not only a way to revisit memories from the past; it also symbolises a deep and dark time experienced by many, who are staying away from Jesus. To make those nets full of fish, simply "going

out for fishing" is not enough! The words of Jesus, "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), are truly happening then.

How many times do people return to the places they came from? Things have changed and so have we - but it doesn't mean for the worse! If only we try to recognise who makes it new and better.

“Perhaps he is still not ready to respond to Jesus on the same level as the Master asks”

After the episode of an unsuccessful all-night fishing, it is Jesus who appears to the exhausted Disciples. This Sunday's Gospel states: "Jesus called out, 'Have you caught anything, friends?' And when they answered, 'No', he said, 'Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something'" (John 21:5-6).

The Lord doesn't call his disciples by 'friends', asking them "Do you have any fish?" (John 21:5), but he called



The miraculous draught of fishes, Raphael

them 'children, boys.' With this word, "children," Jesus highlights how helpless his disciples are without Him.

The purpose of their going out to fish was a nostalgic act, a try to get back to the past, without realising what they had found between their paths and encountering Jesus! They are not alone anymore, but they truly can count on Him in everything, even if they are ashamed of how poorly they followed the Lord so far!

The final part of the Gospel is revolving around Jesus questioning Peter for the first two times if Peter loves him indefinitely, with a complete and undivided love, a love that is able and ready for real sacrifices. That love is called there 'agapao'. What a shock it is when we read that Peter is not answering in the same way! And then,

only at Jesus's third question does it strike all the more! He doesn't ask Peter in the same way as before! The Lord accepts that Peter is not there yet; perhaps he is still not ready to respond to Jesus on the same level as the Master asks. Jesus acknowledges Peter's lower, weaker form of love and decides to work with that.

Dear Readers, at particular moments in life, we all try to return to the safe comfort zone of what we know from the past, reflecting on the stages of our family life or when facing significant challenges.

That return to our past cannot be a static retrieval for us; it must be a movement forward! God accepts our frailties and shortcomings, and yet He trusts you and me! As a result of that generosity from the Lord, we regain our trust and confidence in God and ourselves.

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TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



Are we facing moral blindness or indifference?

Easter is normally a pretty intense time for religious programming. This year however it was wall to wall religion in the media because of the death of Pope Francis.

Last I wrote about my initial shock and sadness and initial reaction in the media. The week following was dominated by coverage of the Holy Father's legacy, his possible successors, and of course his funeral last Saturday. I watched it on RTÉ One and the coverage was excellent. Commentary by Fr Michael Collins and Áine Lawlor was - reflective, insightful and informative. I turned to **Sky News** at the end, and it was the same there. In fact, the coverage by **Sky News** has been particularly outstanding all week.

The ceremony had many standout moments and I can only touch on a few. The homily by the 91-year-old Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re was a fitting tribute to Pope Francis, and touched on many of the themes that were central his pontificate. The music by the Sistine Chapel Choir was uplifting. Seeing a Popemobile carrying the coffin of a Pope for the first time was particularly poignant. Later I saw those pictures of Presidents Trump and Zelenskyy having a quiet meeting - it looked like a Confession scene! As the pre-



The coffin of Pope Francis on the back of a modified popemobile is transferred to the Basilica of St Mary Major in Rome following his funeral Mass in St Peter's Square at the Vatican April 26, 2025. Photo: OSV News/Kevin Coombs, Reuters.

sender herself said on **Ayesha Hazarika** (Times Radio, Saturday) it was his last act of bringing these together - 'some bridges built today'. I hope this peace-making bears fruit.

It was just a matter of time before secular media started on about 'runners and riders' in relation to the election of a successor. I first heard the term on **Sky News** early last week, and presenter Kieran Cuddihy highlighted it again on the **Hard Shoulder** (Newstalk, Wednesday). Commentators kept referencing the movie *Conclave*, though there are more authoritative sources!

Speaking of which, it was good to hear journalist Breda

O'Brien back on the airwaves, e.g. discussing the Pope's legacy with Matt Cooper on **The Last Word** (Today FM, Tuesday). She referenced his emphasis on mercy, accompaniment, the Church being welcoming and his striking gestures, like his iconic appearance in a deserted St Peter's during the pandemic.

On **Drivetime** (RTÉ Radio 1, Wednesday) there were several enjoyable and positive interviews with Irish pilgrims, many of whom were in Rome on holidays or for the canonisation of Blessed Carlo Acutis, now postponed, and there were many more delightful interviews like this last weekend across all channels. Earlier

that day, I heard British PM Sir Keir Starmer describing Pope Francis as 'an extraordinary man' as he united the House of Commons briefly in a mark of respect, before they resumed arguing about the definition of 'woman'.

On the **Nine O'Clock News** (RTÉ One, Tuesday) I heard lots of nice words about the late Holy Father from senior Irish politicians. Fair enough, but when they started on about admiring his love for the marginalised, I was wondering about two specific groups that the Pope mentioned in his last Urbi et Orbi address - the unborn and the elderly. The former were shafted when the

PICK OF THE WEEK

SUNDAY

BBC Radio 4 Sunday May 4, 7:10am

Topical programme on religious and ethical matters.

SUNDAY SEQUENCE

BBC Radio Ulster Sunday May 4, 8:30am

Religious affairs programme with a Northern Ireland flavour.

NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE, OTTAWA, CANADA

EWTN Thursday May 8, 4:30pm

Accompany thousands of Pro-Life advocates as they descend upon Ottawa's Parliament Hill for the National March for Life.

8th Amendment was repealed with the support of those politicians, the latter are facing into calls for legislation to allow for assisted suicide. Is it hypocrisy or just moral blindness or even moral blandness?

At Easter, BBC launched another of their Pilgrimage series. **Pilgrimage: The Road Through the Alps** (BBC Two, Sun-Tues) featured as usual a bunch of celebrities (I hadn't heard of any of them) following an ancient pilgrimage trail through the Alps from Austria to Switzerland. They were all searching for some meaning in life, and came from diverse backgrounds - practising Catholic, lapsed Catholic, Christian, Muslim, part Jewish and more. They were likeable people, no one was irritating (to me at least). They visited various

Catholic monasteries, convents and cathedrals along the way, along with a Catholic refugee centre, where they were met by impressive priests, monks, nuns and laity. There were emotional times, moments of insight, as some pilgrims examined baggage from their past. Their arrival at Einsiedeln Abbey at the end was particularly touching - they were filled with awe and wonder at this place, with its famous Black Madonna. The snowy icing on the cake was the spectacular Alpine landscape.

With media budgets tight (hence all the repeats), it's good to see the BBC investing in substantial religious programming. The series presented religious faith in a positive way, and hopefully that too will bear fruit.

Film

John Mulderig



The illustration of the late Pope Francis on Film

From the moment of his election in early 2013, Pope Francis naturally became one of the world's most newsworthy individuals. But it was especially in the latter half of his pontificate that he proved an intriguing figure for movie-makers. Both documentarians and the creators of feature films were drawn to him over that time.

As the first pontiff from the Americas, the first Jesuit successor of St Peter and as an innovator in other respects, he seems to have struck many in the world of visual media as a breath of fresh air. Add to that his informality and his often-lively turns of phrase and it's understandable that those behind the camera were avid to focus on him.

Celebrated German director Wim Wenders was just one example. In 2018, he mostly allowed the pontiff to speak for himself in the well-received profile *Pope Francis: A Man of His Word*.

As a result of this strategy, audiences were not only treated to Fran-

cis' views on a wide range of subjects - including problems often neglected by other world leaders - but witnessed his interaction with those seeking his guidance and care. Francis' global travels, the significance of his choice of a papal name and his vision for the future of the Church were also highlighted.

Eighteen months after the release of Wenders' more-or-less straightforward documentary came Netflix's tangled drama *The Two Popes*. Exaggerating a tendency that was already discernible, to a lesser extent, in the earlier film, screenwriter Anthony McCarten and director Fernando Meirelles attempted to laud Francis by deprecating his predecessor, Benedict XVI.

Yet it was not all clear sailing for Francis himself. Instead, the movie's creators reenacted what they imagined to be then-Fr Bergoglio's insufficiently courageous interaction with the military regime that ruled his homeland of Argentina from 1976 to 1983. They thereby rashly asserted

a certainty about the nature of the future pontiff's actions that has eluded more serious students of the topic.

Such distortions were only rendered more convincing - and, therefore, pernicious - by the redoubtable acting ability of the movie's two leads, Jonathan Pryce (Francis) and Anthony Hopkins (Benedict). The upmarket production does close on a warm and amusing note. Yet, overall, it remains a highly conjectural and rather jaundiced chronicle requiring caution and careful discernment.

In 2021 came award-winning documentarian Evgeny Afineevsky's film *Francesco*. While providing some biographical background, the movie served primarily as a vehicle for showcasing Pope Francis' stance on a variety of contemporary issues. Along with other questions, it dealt with migration, the environment and the need to break down self-imposed social divisions in favour of human solidarity.

Afineevsky grabbed headlines but

also caused widespread confusion by his treatment of Francis' views on homosexuality. Yet his analysis of the pope's outlook on other subjects - including the role of women in the governance of the church - is generally accurate and therefore helpful to viewers.

As its title suggests, 2023's *In Viaggio: The Travels of Pope Francis* was intended to highlight only a single aspect of the pontificate just passed, albeit a significant one. In surveying the 37 journeys to 53 different countries Francis undertook during the first nine years of his reign, filmmaker Gianfranco Rosi struck a careful balance between challenging material and an even-keeled tone.

Thus, his production did not shy away from the grave global difficulties Pope Francis confronted on his varied voyages. Yet, by emphasising the pontiff's encouraging attitude in the face of such problems - as typified by his exhortation, "Do not be afraid to dream" - Rosi's movie came across as a calm narrative of distressing events.



A snap shot from *In Viaggio: The Travels of Pope Francis*

While the treatment of the late pontiff on film varied from the well-grounded to the tendentious, both his outlook and his activities proved unusually compelling to some who might otherwise have ignored the Vatican altogether. How the visual media will depict Pope Francis' legacy going forward, of course, remains an open question.

BookReviews

Peter Costello



What are we when we are at Mass?

The People's Celebration of the Eucharist,
by Fintan Lyons OSB
(Messenger Publications,
€12.95 / £10.95)

Thomas O'Loughlin

“When it comes to the Eucharist, some of the toughest question are the simplest: who celebrates the Eucharist and what are they celebrating?”

Fintan Lyons' little book examines this basic question: just who are we when we celebrate the Eucharist?

In the aftermath – even after 60 years – of Vatican II, this question goes un-noticed. It is the fundamental question in the theological underpinning of our worship, and a basic question for the baptised – especially right now when we are trying slowly and fitfully to discover what it means to be a 'synodal Church.'

Lyons tackles it using a variety of starting points and tries to keep his focus close to ordinary parish experience and the actual questions that people ask when they discuss the liturgy.

It is intended as a simple introduction not just to our thinking about the Eucharist, but also as guide to how we might improve our celebrations.

The first chapter where he sets out a vision of the Church as the priestly People of God who celebrate the Paschal Mystery is the book's most important contribution.

Understanding

Trying to share an ecclesiological understanding is never easy. Not only are the questions inherently difficult for us who have a consumerist view of liturgy and who approach the corporate reality of being a community, a church, from an individualistic starting point, but the

language of Vatican II seems strange and remote from the long-inherited jargon of Catholic discourse.

“He gently advocates examining basics: who we are and what we, in and through the Christ, seek to do as the baptised”

Lyons shows a long familiarity with these issues and what he writes has, one suspects, being tested many times with groups of adult learners. He knows what he wants to communicate and then makes it as simple and direct as he can.

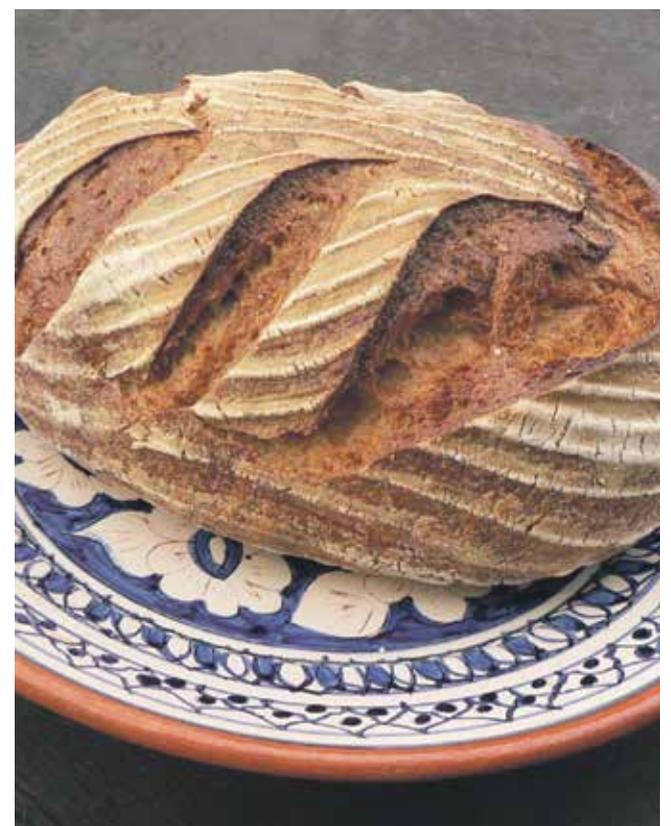
Running through these chapters is a concern that only comes to the fore at the book's end: “I believe it is time to reassess schedules and

programmes insofar as they exist and have the committed faithful engage instead in a programme of discernment through meetings that manifest the qualities of the early Church's love feast” (p. 109).

This is as close as Lyons comes to saying that our current liturgical model is broken, but such a suspicion is just beneath the many of his explorations. However, rather than run for the nostalgia of an imaginary past – a route whose siren-call attracts many – he gently advocates examining basics: who we are and what we, in and through the Christ, seek to do as the baptised.

It is this open-ended perspective of hope that is the book's most important gift to its readers.

i Dublin-born Thomas O'Loughlin MRIA is Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology at The University of Nottingham.



Sharing a loaf of bread is basic to our eucharistic practice.

The disasters of little wars within great wars

H.M.S TARA,
by Richard Burnell, edited by
Gareth Rowlands
(Holyhead Maritime Museum,
£7.95 / €9.50 approx.)

Peter Costello

The RMS Leinster, an Irish ship operating as a mail-boat, was torpedoed by a German U-boat on October 10, 1918, while outward bound for Holyhead. She sank some 4 nautical miles off the Kish Lightship.

The exact number of dead is now thought to have been at least 564, making this the single biggest loss of life ever in the Irish Sea. Her story is well-known and disaster well memorialised on the sea front at Queen's Road, Dún Laoghaire.

Fate

Less known, if at all, is the fate of another ship on the cross-channel service, SS Hibernia. The ship was requisitioned by the British Navy in August 1914 on the outbreak of war and was renamed HMS Tara. After a

year working in the North Sea she was sent out to the Mediterranean as a patrol boat along the coast of Egypt.

“Ninety four survivors of the Tara were landed in the Libyan province of Cyrenaica”

She too was a victim of a prowling U-boat, but in her case off the coast of Libya. On November 5, 1915 she was attacked and sunk, with a crew of 109, some 74 of whom were from Holyhead, who can be said to have Irish connections of one kind or another working where they did.

She was sunk while about to enter the Libyan port of Sollum, near the Egyptian border with Libya. At this date Egypt, though nominally a part of the Turkish Empire, was under British occupation. Libya next door was, since 1912, an Italian

colony. Britain and Italy were both in a state of war with Germany and her ally Turkey.

Ninety four survivors of the Tara were landed in the Libyan province of Cyrenaica. Here the local Senussi tribesmen were in revolt against their Italian overlords, in a sort of 'holy war' spurred on by their Sufi religious beliefs.

The U-boat commander was towing two schooners filled with German war supplies for the Senussi, along with some Turkish officers to liaise with the .

When the survivors of the Tara were landed they were handed over to the Senussi by the Germans, quite contrary to the Red Cross regulations on the treatment of prisoners of war as they were strictly prisoners of the Turks.

Survivors

There now began a harrowing experience for these men, some of whom were in poor state of health after the sinking.

Starved by the captors who stole

much of the food sent in by the Turks for the POWs. There was little that the ship's doctor, George Robinson, a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, could do for them. Eventually they were rescued by Major Hugh Richard Arthur Grosvenor, the Duke of Westminster no less, commanding a set of Rolls Royce armoured cars mounting machine guns, which the duke had personally paid for and which were later to prove their worth elsewhere, as in 1920s Ireland.

“It is an instance of how the Great War, once started, developed within it all kinds of smaller wars”

The prisoners were, according to local intelligence, at a small place called Bir-el-Hakim, though this was not quite certain. The Duke's

column finally reached the survivors of the Tara on, of all days, the Feast of St Patrick 1916.

All in all this is an extraordinary story. This little book is a grim account, well illustrated by a photographs, many from an album of one of those involved, which Richard Burnell has patiently pieced together.

But this affair was a mere side show to the General Staff back in London. It is an instance of how the Great War, once started, developed within it all kinds of smaller wars, which in turn sowed the seeds of future wars.

In World II these Senussi, by an ironic turn of fate, were on the side of the British against the Axis powers. Today many of them ardently believe their exiled leader, Crown Prince Mohammed El Senussi, to be the rightful ruler of Libya.

i All proceeds of the sale of this book go to the Holyhead Maritime Museum, Newry Beach, Holyhead, Anglesey, LL65 1YD. Wales; maritimemuseumhollyhead.

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.

A celebration of the new art of the new Irish State

Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone: The Art of Friendship,

by Niamh MacNally & Brendan Rooney, with texts by Sarah McAuliffe & Joseph McBrinn (National Gallery, €45.00 / £39.00)

Peter Costello

In 1924 the young Irish artists Evie Hone and her friend Mainie Jellett held their one and only joint exhibition in the gallery of the Society of Dublin Painters at 7 St Stephen's Green.

Fresh from Paris where they both had made themselves students of Albert Gleizes, the artist and theorist of the latest art style, Cubism.

The Dublin show effectively brought this new wave of art into the new Irish state with a profound effect drawn

out over the next thirty years or so.

Initially their reception by the art establishment in Dublin was a cool one, but decades later by the late 1940s they had created an appreciative international audience for their work. In a period which is now often derided as narrow and conventional their inventions reveal a creative arc of the first order, and suggests there was more to those years than is often accepted.

Inspiration

Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone both belonged to the settled middle class Protestant background by birth and education.

Both had a serious religious outlook; though it was Evie Hone who entered an Anglican convent in Cornwall in 1926, which she later left without

taking her final vows. She was collected from the convent on leaving by her friend Mainie.

But her quest for faith continued, and brought her to convert to the Catholicism: she was received into the church by Rev. John Charles McQuaid (the future influential Archbishop of Dublin) at a private ceremony in Blackrock College in 1939.

Mainie Jellett died of cancer in 1944, visited on her last day by Evie Hone. Hone herself collapsed and died while on her way into mass in Rathfarnham in 1955.

Central to this present exhibition is a section devoted to "Divine Inspiration" where many aspects of their religious art are shown and explored. Their debt to earlier art is emphasised, especially in such pictures as Jellett's *Study after Fra Angelico* (also known as *Annunciation*, from 1928), and *Hone's Composition* (also from 1928).

Visitors will also wish to pause at Jellett's *I Have Trodden the Winepress Alone* from 1943 - the reference to Isaiah, 63:3, a grimly disturbing allusion, which would have carried greater weight with Protestants than Catholics - *Deposition* (1939) and *The Ninth Hour* (1941), all quite the equal of Hone's more renowned stained glass windows at Eton College and Clongowes Wood College, here in Ireland.

“Some almost remind one of the Swiss watches in their intricacy, showing just how Parisian theories were recast as Irish art”

The book is made up of some eight essays by the authors, detailing step by step with the developing and changing stages of their careers: religion though important was not the only thing in their lives.

The catalogue annotates some 97 works of art. As well there are documentary images drawing on a range of archives public and private. Great care has been taken about the reproduction of these images, which provide a feast for the eye as well as food for the mind. Working plans and schemes from archives



Mainie Jellett, *The Virgin of Éire*, 1940s. Photo: National Gallery of Ireland



Evie Hone, *Snow at Marley*. Geraldine Hone, Kate Hone and the FNCl. Photo: National Gallery of Ireland

reveal the care and exactness that went into the planning and creation of the seeming slapdash "cubist" works. Some almost remind one of the Swiss watches in their intricacy, showing just how Parisian theories were recast as Irish art.

Also the sheer physical labour that had to go into the creation piece by piece of the large stained glass windows should not be overlooked; though Hone's very lovely small work *Avenue*, St Catherine's Leixlip is a delight.

Rarities

Curiously there is only one photograph, coarsely screened image in a clipping from the *Dublin Evening Mail* on November 21, 1930, showing them with a group of artists at an event, again in the St Stephen's Green gallery. This fact emphasises just how private in a way they kept their lives, though their work enjoyed ever increasing exposure, especially the stained glass work created by Evie Hone.

It is a little surprising in this rarefied atmosphere to also encounter a poster by Mainie

Jellett for Winsor & Newton Colours, and commissions from the Government of Ireland for *A Map of Ireland* from 1937 for the Irish Pavilion at the Glasgow Empire Exhibition (1938) and Hone's *My Four Green Fields*, made for the New York World's Fair in 1939 -- now to be seen by visitors in Government Buildings at the head of the main staircase. These indicate a readiness to put their talents at the disposal of the government of the new Irish state.

“The religious themes have a central place, which is strikingly different to what is now so often tacitly assumed in public matters of the arts today”

The late development of Hone as a landscape artist is also interesting, especially the sunny scenes in the south of

France. In a pen and ink with water colour composition (undated) there seems to be an echo of influence of the style of John Piper.

All in all this is an exhibition not to be missed by anyone interested in any way in the development, not just of Irish art after 1924, but also in the development of Ireland itself over the years between the wars. The religious themes have a central place, which is strikingly different to what is now so often tacitly assumed in public matters of the arts today.

The images available for press use provide examples of the various styles of the artists; but these give only a very limited idea of the abundance of image making on show at the exhibition as a whole. *The Cock and the Pot* is a reference to the passages in the gospels recounting the betrayal of Jesus by St Peter as recalled in folklore.

i The exhibition *Mainie Jellett and Evie Hone: The Art of Friendship* runs to August 10, 2025; *Beit Wing* (Rooms 6-10), tickets from €5; booking recommended.



Evie Hone, Stained glass: *The Cock and Pot*, commonly known as *The Betrayal*, c. 1947. Geraldine Hone, Kate Hone and the FNCl. Photo: National Gallery of Ireland

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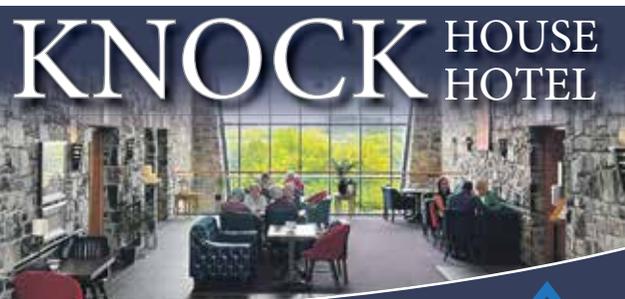
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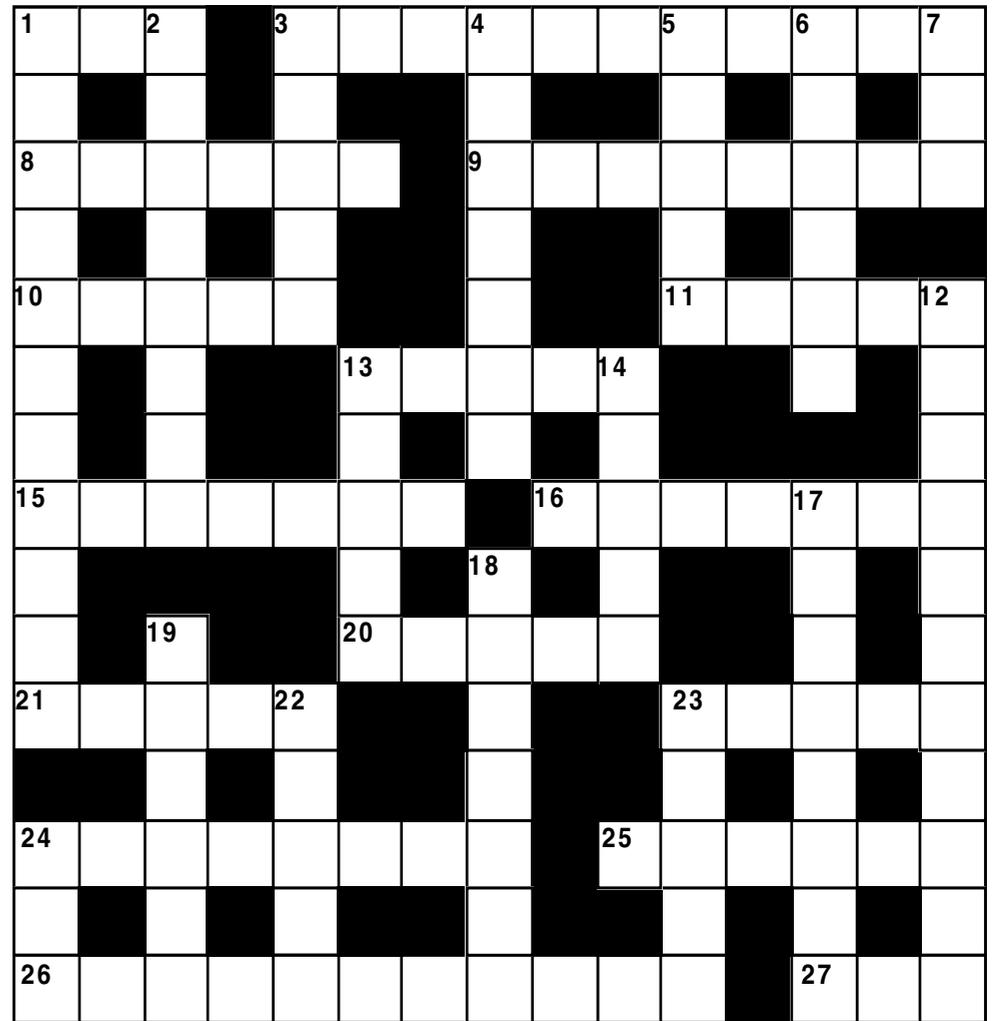
Gordius 713

Across

- 1 Infant's bed (3)
- 3 Impartial judicial process (4,7)
- 8 Pulled (4)
- 9 Temporary drop in temperature outdoors (4,4)
- 10 Grab or apprehend (5)
- 11 Helicopter blade (5)
- 13 Ardent, flaming (5)
- 15 Confusion (7)
- 16 Root vegetable (7)
- 20 Chic (5)
- 21 Mar (5)
- 23 Klaxon (5)
- 24 Salad ingredient one may be as cool as (8)
- 25 Mix with partygoers (6)
- 26 Holy figurehead, such as Patrick in Ireland or Andrew in Scotland (6,5)
- 27 Fruit with a hard shell (3)

Down

- 1 One may teach religion by this method (11)
- 2 In cohesive association (8)
- 3 Meat (5)
- 4 Piece of equipment for tennis, badminton, etc (7)
- 5 Tree of the birch fam-ily (5)



- 6 Set alight (6)
- 7 Interval (3)
- 12 Dazzling to behold (11)
- 13 Travels by air (5)
- 14 Raising agent (5)
- 17 Gas with atomic number seven (8)
- 18 Tropical disease (7)
- 19 Male feline (6)
- 22 Afterlife location (5)
- 23 Chemise (5)
- 24 Trophy (3)

SOLUTIONS, APRIL 24

GORDIUS No. 712

Across

- 1 Bar 3 Tape measure 8 Advent candles 9 Roll call 10 Turns 11 Salsa 3 Sinus 15 Luddite 16 Nest egg 20 Plank 21 Proud 23 Santa 24. Punctual 25 Grotto 26. Abandon ship 27 Die

Down

- 1 Beauty sleep 2 Reverend 3 Tongs 4 Earring 5 Atlas 6 Unable 7 Eel 12 A pig in a poke 13 Set up 14 Steak 17 Emanated 19 Bosnia 22 Dated 23 Scrap 24 Pea

Sudoku Corner 581

Easy

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

Hard

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

Last week's Easy 580

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

Last week's Hard 580

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

Notebook

Fr Vincent Sherlock



The faithful need maintenance and refreshment

There is a very beautiful walk around Lough Talt in Co. Sligo. It is called the 'Loop Walk' and covers just over 8km. The first part of the walk is a steep incline that tests all but the fittest but, once crossed, leads to a wonderfully breathtaking view of Lough Talt. The 'loop' continues along a path that takes the walker through forest, across little streams, offers a few places to sit and relax and has moments of inspiration captured on meaningful images carefully positioned along the way.



A little church, known as The Lake Church (part of Tourlestrane Parish), is there too and its open door invites the walker to be a pilgrim for a few minutes. A welcome pause along a very well-planned way, that deserves much credit. Recently someone reminded me of a phrase that is worthy of remembrance: "When you drink the water, don't forget the hand that dug the well" and, paraphrasing a little, as we walk paths like this, we should not forget those who laid the path.

Interesting

After the church, the loop continues for a short distance along the main road between Tubbercurry and Ball-

ina and then turns to a very interesting part of the walk. The path stops and the grass becomes the way. It winds its way around Lough Talt and past one of my favourite parts of the walk – the ruins of two houses. They look at each other in their fallen state with the way between them. I like them because they make me wonder who lived there? What was the story of those houses and the people who looked out to, and hopefully for, one another each day? When was the last sound of life there? Who pulled the door on the last house? How did they manage? Was immigration their final move or is the last inhabitant buried in one of the parish's cemeteries. Questions.

I am down the street in New York, a stone's throw from the site of the

fallen Twin Towers and looking up a little hill at a ruin of another house from another parish in our diocese. The 'Famine Memorial' in Battery Park echoes the houses passed on the loop. Taken down, stone by stone, in Attymass, Co. Mayo and transported to New York, the ruin was rebuilt in its fallen state to tell the story of immigration. Houses left unoccupied and to fall in on themselves for lack of care – lack of life. A sobering and lasting reminder of a sad history.

Uncertainty

The two houses on the loop remind me of this and remind me of fallen houses in countless parts of our world that live in the uncertainty of war or the devastation of poverty,

drought and hunger. Doors left open because there is nobody to close them, houses empty because there is nobody left to live in them – falling beneath the weight of bombs or the lack of human touch. Attymass revisited.

As the loop moves on from these two houses, sheep and lambs are dotted here and there, along the lake's shore or amongst the whins. On a sunny day, the lake reflects the Heavens above and maybe the sheep do likewise. "I am the good shepherd" ... "feed my lambs" ... and they speak to us of resilience and of making do with what is provided. There is an absence of greed in them, each finding enough for the day.

As Pope Francis pulls the door behind him, he leaves reminders of a building and people he dearly loved and minded – shepherded. We are Church and need to be life-filled, maintained and refreshed for as the song says: "Castles tall, houses small, left alone, all fall down".

Francis,
On March 13, 2013 from the balcony
you said "Good evening"
and, in that moment,
the journey began.
You, the one

called to bless,
asked the gathered
to bless you.
The fisherman's shoes
were on new feet
and wore themselves thin
as you walked in His name.
Sometimes you spoke too soon
and the words tripped you
as they sought to bring us
to a better place.
For you the message,
better delivered than measured,
needed to be heard
that change might be possible.
You gave it
no less than your all
from the March Balcony
to the Easter Monday death bed.
Rest in Peace and,
as you said that first evening:
"Go home and enjoy your tea"
your day's work done.
Easter Monday 2025



Sister Hellen appeals for urgent Little Way help for the hungry and sick in East Pokot, Kenya

We have received an urgent request for help from Sr Hellen Chepkirui, Servants of the Sacred Heart in Tangelbei, Kenya, whom we have helped in the past to provide vital aid for school children and groups of people living in poverty and disease. Sister writes to The Little Way Association: "Without your kindness, we would never have been able to save lives and protect families. The East Pokot region is still facing a severe crisis. Terrible drought combined with extreme poverty make it harder for families to afford food and healthcare. Our dispensary is the only source of affordable healthcare services for the local people. Among the most affected groups we target are the children, HIV-positive mothers, TB, diabetes and cancer patients, and those with chronic illnesses. We also target the neglected vulnerable elderly and those who live with various forms of disabilities.

THE SITUATION IS DIRE AND WE HAVE RUN OUT OF FUNDS

"I have been praying to God to take care of this situation because we have run out of funds. We urgently need medicines in order to help many suffering from water-borne illnesses and also TB and malaria.

PLEASE WILL YOU HELP SR HELLEN?

"Our founder Father Yermo left us with the motto: God Will Provide. We believe that He will inspire you and your kind benefactors to enable us to help the increased numbers of children, women and men relying on us for relief food and healthcare."

If you can, please send a donation to The Little Way Association, in order that we can continue to help Sr Hellen and the many other Sisters in Kenya who turn to us for help.



LENT WITH ST THERESE

In 1893, St Therese of Lisieux wrote to her sister Celine: "Jesus wills that we give alms to him as to one poor and needy. He puts Himself as it were at our mercy; He will take nothing but what we give to Him from our heart, and the very least trifle is precious in His sight."

The three pillars of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. The Catechism says: "Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God."

In Lent, we can serve Christ and help the destitute with our almsgiving

The Little Way Association uses the world's network of missionaries to help those in direst need. Priests, Sisters and Brothers work in some of the world's poorest areas and in political trouble-spots. Our policy is never to deduct anything from donations earmarked for the relief of poverty or for missionary work.

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

THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION
Sacred Heart House, 119 Cedars Rd, Clapham Common, London SW4 0PR
(Registered Charity No. 235703) Tel 0044 20 76 22 0466
www.littlewayassociation.com

I enclose €..... to be allocated to:

- €..... **HUNGRY AND SICK IN KENYA**
- €..... **MISSION CHAPELS**
- €..... **WELLS / CLEAN WATER**
- €..... **MASS OFFERINGS** (please state no.)
We ask for a minimum of €7 or more for each Mass
- €..... **LITTLEWAY ADMIN. EXPENSES**

To donate online go to
www.littlewaysassociation.com

DONATIONS FOR THE MISSIONS ARE SENT WITHOUT DEDUCTION FOR ANY EXPENSES.

Please tick if you would like an acknowledgement

Name (Rev. Mr. Mrs. Miss) (Block letters please)

Address

1C/05/01