A pontifical puzzle: Don't miss our Bumper Papal Crossword - Page 39

#### tholic ne Ir THE PAPAL PRIDE: **GUESS WHO'S** LEO XIV: THE **EVERY LEO WHO** CONCLAVE **COMING TO SAT IN PETER'S**

John L. Allen Jr. Page 13



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## **'Our brother Bob' – Overjoyed Irish Augustinians welcome Pope Leo XIV**

#### **Renata Steffens**

"I regard this man [Pope Leo XIV] as a friend, and I know him to be someone who is at home in any company, even though I am pretty sure he prefers the company of the poor," said Augustinian Fr Noel Hession, PP Ballyboden Parish.

Fr Hession said the Irish Augustinians know the Pope as 'Bob', and it might take some time to get used to calling him 'Leo'. "I suspect Augustinians all over the world, suddenly felt an immediacy, a closeness and a sense of joy that we could never have imagined. This man, known to all of us personally, our brother, is now our Pope. I know that I found myself experiencing a whole pile of emotions at the same time.

"Joy, excitement, hope, and even fear. Joy, excitement, and hope, because I know this man, and I believe that in choosing him, the assembled cardinals in the conclave have given a great gift to the Church. Fear, because I know this man, and like you, I am aware of the great task that lies before him."

Pope Leo was in Ireland at least twice, Fr Hession said. "He's a very ordinary man with an extraordinary sense of people. He is a gentle man, but never afraid to deal with problems. He's a wise and highly intelligent man who displays great humility and simplicity. And very importantly, he has a great sense of humour, which he's going to need."

The priest said that many were wondering if the Pope would move into the papal apartments or live in Casa Santa Marta. For Fr Hession, "It doesn't really matter where the Pope sleeps. It's much more important what he does when he's awake."

"He's a man who's not interested in running the Church. He's a man who wants to be Church with us. And that means that we must be Church with him," Fr Hession said.

» Continued on Page 2

#### **Caught in a Trappist**



Boys and girls will be welcomed as day boarders in the Cistercian College Roscrea starting in September 2026. It is one of Ireland's leading boarding schools, supported by the community of Our Lady of Silence. The photo shows the religious members of the Our Lady of Silence community and the soon-tobe students of the Cistercian College. Photo: Don Moloney

#### Former student of the Pontifical Irish College named as Pope's personal secretary

#### Garry O'Sullivan

Fr Edgard Rimaycuna, a 36-year-old priest from Chiclayo, Peru, has been appointed as the personal secretary to Pope Leo XIV. A for-mer student of the Pontifical Irish College in Rome, Fr Rimaycuna studied there in 2017 as part of the priestly community of ongoing formation. During his time in Rome, he specialised in Scripture Studies at the Pontifical Biblical Institute.

Fr Rimaycuna's connection to the College is part of a broader relationship between the Pontifical Irish College and Cardinal Robert Prevost - now Pope Leo XIV - who served as Bishop of the same Diocese of Chiclayo, Peru. Speaking to Virgin Media *TV* following the Papal conclave last week, Eoin McCormack, lay coordinator at the Irish College, noted that the College has a long-standing relationship with Cardinal Prevost, having sent four students as members of the ongoing formation community of priests - Fr Rimaycuna amongst them.

Since 2023, Fr Rimaycuna has served as secretary to Cardinal Prevost at the Dicastery for Bishops. In his new role, he becomes one of the Pope's closest collaborators, responsible for managing the Holy Father's schedule and assisting with daily duties at the heart of the Vatican.

Fr Rimaycuna began his journey toward priesthood at the Mayor Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo Seminary in Peru before his studies in Rome. His appointment as personal sec-retary marks the beginning of a new chapter in the close relationship between the Irish College and the new Pope.

POPE LEO XIV AND A NEW WAY OF **BEING CHURCH** 

Dr Kieran J. O'Mahony OSA

PAGE 5





#### **MY HOPES FOR POPE LEO XIV Bishop Donal Roche** PAGE 2



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#### 'Our brother Bob' – Irish Augustinians overjoyed with Leo XIV

**» Continued from Page 1** Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the priest said, as Augustinians "we're very proud of him and we're very pleased. Personally, I think he's a very good choice... He's a very capable man. He's a very strong pastoral sense... I would regard him as very people-centred."

Fr Kieran O'Mahony, also an Augustinian, had lunch with the then cardinal last November, and echoing Fr Hession's words said that his experience "Cardinal Bob was the same as always, in spite of his new responsibilities both as cardinal and head of the office for choosing bishops."

Fr O'Mahony said "the new Pope is modest and super calm, with a great smile. And when he smiles, you know it is from the inside, because the eyes light up."

"I was in the St Peter's Square when the new Holy Father was announced and named," Fr O'Mahony said. "Straightaway, I knew it was our brother, Robert Prevost and I'm not ashamed to say I felt a surge of emotion, which took me by surprise.

"The new Holy Father seemed to me at ease, even smiling gently, with his new calling, a little nervous but actually happy. This is as it should be: a 'yes' to God's call should also be a happy, quietly joy-filled experience, in spite of all the real challenges."

The Augustinians were not the only ones rejoicing with the new pope. Redemptoristine Nun responsible for communication in the Monastery in Drumcondra, Sr Angela said they "welcome with great joy our new Pope... I am deeply struck by something his brother shared in a video interview," the nun said, "he [the Pope] never wanted to be bishop or cardinal but to remain a missionary. I hope he will carry that spirit into his papacy." The Redemptoristine Prioress, Sr Gabrielle said her "hope is that Pope Leo will remind all people of our call to deep personal union with God. Reminding us like St Augustine that 'God is closer to us than we are to our very selves."

Sr Mary Brigeen, communications liason for the Carmelite Monastery of St Joseph in Kilmacud said they were "united in giving thanks for our new Pope Leo."

Bishop Michael Duignan welcomed "with great joy" the election of Pope Leo. As the Pontifex "may he be a source of unity and harmony not just for people of faith but for all people of good will."

Trócaire CEO, Caoimhe de Barra said, "We pray that Pope Leo continues the extraordinary work of Pope Francis in calling out the injustices perpetrated against the most vulnerable and in highlighting the need for the protection of the environment for the common good of all. This work is more important now more than ever with conflict affecting so many regions and climate change driving millions of people further into poverty."

Around the world, people are also celebrating. The Prior General of the Augustinians worldwide, Alejandro Moral Anton, sees the papal election of Robert Francis Prevost as a "gift for the Church". He told *Vatican News* that "he is a balanced, spiritual person who is close to everyone."

The Prior emphasised that Leo XIV "loves everyone, both the poor and the rich". In his first speech, the new Pope immediately addressed topics such as justice and peace, the need for bridges between all and synodality in the Church.

Fr O'Mahony said that in his mention of synodality, Pope Leo "brings to that new way of being Church his own experience as a religious, an Augustinian friar, as well as his time as a missionary and bishop in Peru."

# **My hopes for Pope Leo XIV**

#### **Bishop Donal Roche**

What's in a name? The name chosen by a new Pope is always eagerly anticipated and, when announced, it is analysed and speculated upon. What does it say about the new Pope? What can we expect to be his priorities? I've often wondered if an Irishman was chosen to be Pope what would he be called? Maybe Pope Patrick? Or maybe he would pick the name of one of the great Irish saints like Columba or Malachy? Names say a lot about us, and the name of a Pope carries huge significance. It is almost a mission statement in itself.

After the great outpouring of joy and celebration in St Peter's Square last Thursday as Cardinal Robert Prevost was announced as our new Holy Father, there was plenty of comment on his choice of name, Leo XIV. "An inspired choice", was how one friend of mine described it. It is both a continuation of the missionary, outward-looking synodal approach of Pope Francis as well as a declaration of intent to hold on to traditional values, as his namesake Pope Leo XIII did, despite being known as a reformer, due to his groundbreaking social teaching in Rerum Novarum. This encyclical, issued in 1891, defending the rights of workers and their right to form trade unions, is considered a foundational text of Catholic social teaching. At the time, great numbers were living in misery and squalor, oppressed by employers and factory owners.

I've never liked the idea that the Pope is either 'liberal or conservative' but there is no doubt that, while most people had a great respect and love for Pope Francis, there were some who thought he was not 'strong enough' on upholding traditional Catholic teachings. Just as Jesus was criticised by the Pharisees for eating and drinking with sinners, Francis was criticised by modern day Pharisees because he extended a hand of welcome to some who might have been seen as outsiders or 'less worthy' of love.

I expect that Pope Leo will continue to preach the Gospel and teach the Catholic faith as Francis did, not by changing doctrines as some might wish, but by being welcoming and inclusive and using language that is accessible and invitational. He certainly comes across so far as a good communicator and a man of great warmth and compassion.

I hope he will be a builder of bridges, healing some of the divisions that are painfully present between different factions in the Church. I hope that he will prioritise Safeguarding and Synodality in the Church: by ensuring that robust policies are in place and enforced in every diocese and parish to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults, and by continuing to promote Synodality and co-responsibility as the way forward for the Church.

And my hopes for Pope Leo regarding his relationship with the wider world is that he will be a powerful voice for peace and a champion of the rights of the poor, the migrant and the refugee. There is no doubt that his voice carries considerable weight and that he is a highly respected world leader. The warm welcome he has already received gives him a momentum that should ensure he will be listened to and heeded.

Most of all, I hope that he will be centred on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that, through his example and teaching, great numbers of the faithful and great numbers of young people who are searching for meaning in life will come to discover for themselves the riches of the Gospel and the love of God made visible in Christ.

Our new Pope has a difficult task ahead of him. May God give him the faith and courage, the wisdom and strength he will need for the years ahead.

#### Hope does not disappoint



Large crowd of young adults gathered in Cork for CONNECT 6 at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne. The event coincided with Vocations Sunday and Bishop Fintan Gavin in his homily encouraged young people to think about the call to priesthood and religious life. Sr Mary Grace SV travelled from the USA to speak about how Christian Hope does not disappoint and encouraging the young adults to trust that God is so much more invested in our own happiness than we are.

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Annual Subscription Rates: Ireland €199. Airmail €320. Six months €105. ISSN 1393 - 6832 - Published by The Irish Catholic, Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277. Printed by Webprint, Dublin.

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# Hope and excitement among youth in Ireland following election of Pope Leo XIV

#### **Renata Milán Morales**

The election of Pope Leo XIV has been received with optimism among young Irish Catholics. *The Irish Catholic* reached out to young people across the country to gather their thoughts and aspirations for the new pontificate.

"I'm really excited about our new Pope. It has given me great hope over this past week, and I think the whole Church seems to have this sense of hope, too. Here we are in the middle of this Jubilee of Hope, and the whole Church has had this beautiful common experience," said Katie Fillion, Youth 2000 organiser.

Several young people think Pope Leo XIV can connect with their generation. "I feel that this new pope will relate to the younger generation and bring people together. He doesn't seem to make himself feel that he's anyway different than anyone else," said Sophie, based in Dublin.

Others see his papacy as part of a spiritual revival. "There's been a huge shift in younger people in recent years. Young people are reembracing Christianity and conservatism in response to secular wokism. We want a purpose and mission in life that atheism can't provide," said Adam.

Gregory, a volunteer with ISFCC based in Drogheda, hopes the new pontificate will guide those seeking meaning and truth. "May the missionary zeal of His Holiness reach all who are converting to the Faith, and especially the youth who are searching for what St Augustine called that beauty, 'ever ancient, ever new'."

James Tourish from Belfast mentioned the importance on balancing tradition and compassion. "I think the conclave that led to the election of Pope Leo XIV has led to a renewed focus on the Catholic Church and its impact on the world, so many people were captivated by the spectacle of the election process, the constant media coverage and of course, the tradition of the white smoke at the Sistine Chapel. I hope that with this new enthusiasm, the new Pontiff may further carry on the legacy of Francis in connecting to the marginalised of the world, but may also deeply value the traditions of the Church

that I have seen so many young people in particular find solace and comfort in."

Ines praised the Pope's energy and global perspective: "He is going to be a good example for the Church. I think that he is

#### Angels descend on Doon

what we need currently. He has a great desire to work and a lot of joy..."

"He is young, has a great sense of humour, speaks multiple languages which I think will reach a lot of people," said Alyson Holland. "The various public appearances he has made since his appointment have been very warm... I hope that he will strengthen and confirm our faith and beliefs publicly in the media. I hope he visits Ireland someday."

News 3



Girls from the Mercy Convent NS and boys from the CBS Primary School recently received their First Holy Communion at St Patrick's Parish Church, Doon, Co. Limerick. Pictured with the children are Ann Hogan, teacher, Convent NS, Deacon Tom Richardson, Fr Jimmy Donnelly, PP and Elizabeth Doherty, teacher, CBS Doon. Photo: James Dormer.

# Parish pastoral councils take centre stage in Galway and Clonfert

#### Pedro Esteva

Over 200 members of parish pastoral councils (PPC) from the Diocese of Clonfert and the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora, gathered in Loughrea for the Le Chéile formation day on May 10. The event focused on supporting lay leadership and deepening co-responsibility in parish life, as discussed by speakers, was led by Patricia Carroll, Fr Billy Swan, and Paul Keogh. Opening the day, Bishop Michael Duig-

Opening the day, Bishop Michael Duignan expressed his hope that this would be "the first of many such gatherings" to walk in the synodal journey of the Church. Our councils are the most vivid local expression of a synodal Church where priest and laity work and walk together," he said. "This gathering is in a very real sense an expression of practical hope for our local and diocesan faith communities."

The formation day was also a watershed moment for the dual diocese, building upon a broader renewal process already underway. More than 40 PPCs and Finance Committees were recently commissioned to serve from 2024–2028, with ongoing training provided by the An Ghailíl Centre of Formation for Mission and Ministry.

"We've taken an important step forward," said Fr Gerard McCarthy, organiser of the event and Diocesan Pastoral Outreach Coordinator. "There's a long road ahead, but we're here to support these councils as they grow into their role."

# Multiple ordinations take place on the island of Ireland

#### **Renata Steffens**

The Irish Church celebrated three separate ordinations in the island of Ireland last weekend. Rev. Anthony Moffett was ordained deacon in Newry on May 11. On the same day, now Fr Tim Collins was ordained to the priesthood in Limerick, and the day before now Fr Antony Kurian was ordained to the priesthood in Dublin.

Fr Collins was ordained

by Bishop Brendan Leahy in a very special occasion, as this was the first ordination in Limerick Diocese since 2014. The ceremony took place in a "packed" St John's Cathedral. Fr Collins' first Mass was in Croagh Church on May 12, and he will minister in Raheen Parish.

Fr Kurian, an Indian-born Capuchin joined the order in Ireland "hoping to join in a renewal of the Faith in Europe," he told *The Irish Catholic* in 2021 when he made his Solemn Profession. He was ordained by Bishop Donal Roche in St Mary of the Angels, Church Street on May 10.

The third ordination taking place last weekend was of Deacon Moffett, ordained by Archbishop Eamon Martin in Newry Cathedral. Newry Parish said "Anthony will be a familiar face to those who attend Mass in the cathedral," and that "he will be ordained to the priesthood in the not too distant future. Vhi Women's Mini Marathon St. Francis Hospice needs your support!





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# **AI-expert priest welcomes Pope's** stance, warns of ethical risks

voice on AI ethics and the

chair of Humanity 2.0, wel-

#### Pedro Esteva

In his inaugural homily to the College of Cardinals, Pope Leo XIV said that he had chosen his name partly because of the previous Leo who "addressed social questions in the context of the first great industrial revolution.'

The Church today, he says, must offer her social teaching as a response to "another industrial revolution and to developments made in the fields of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defence of human dignity, iustice. and labour."

Fr Phillip Larrey, longtime his own time."

# Hopes high for a third Ireland papal visit

#### **Chai Brady**

There are hopes spreading that the newly elected Pope Leo XIV will visit Ireland, particularly to the North as a proposed visit from Pope Francis was shelved in 2018 when he came for the World Meeting of Families.

Writing in this week's paper acclaimed journalist and columnist with The Irish Catholic Martina Purdy said there is "speculation of a Papal visit to the north of Ireland".

Ms Purdy quoted Belfast's youngest parish priest Fr Conor McGrath, who was in St Peter's Square when Pope Leo XIV was elected, who said "it would be a tremendous lift for us".

She said: "Pope St John Paul never made it beyond Drogheda due to security concerns and though there were advanced plans for Pope Francis to visit key sites in the north it never happened. It's a pity. Pope Francis got a hard time in 2018; many of the politicians and media, who lined up to praise him in death, were not quite so kind in 2018.

"Perhaps Pope Leo XIV will be the one to visit Armagh for what some of us call, unfinished business. The Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin seems quite confident that it will happen." *i* See page 6

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#### comed the Pope's remarks. update to Rerum Novarum, he In a statement to The Irish was encouraged by the Pope's Catholic, he said "I do think intention to seriously engage that Pope Leo is aware of the with the ethical dimensions current situation just as Pope of the digital revolution. "I'm not sure if we will see Leo XIII was aware of the a Rerum Novarum Duo comtransformative situation of ing, because that document

was an outline of the social doctrine of the Church, which remains the same now as when it was written," he said. "But I do foresee an increasing interest in the implications of the new digital revolution that is upon us now, and will become more and more impactful in the immediate future.'

While Fr Larrey was hesi-

tant to endorse the idea of an

general. In the absence of a

universal declaration on ethi-

cal and moral guidelines of

AI and new technology, the voice of the Pontiff will ring

At the same time, Fr Larrey

has previously warned of the

dangers posed by unchecked

AI – particularly technologies

that simulate emotional inti-

macy or replace human rela-

tionships. In earlier remarks.

he cautioned that "machines

don't have access to wis-dom... to the heart," and that

over-reliance on AI could

risk eroding our capacity for

empathy, conscience, and

communion - "the wisdom

of the heart," as Pope Francis

Read more of Fr Larrey's

on the many vulnerable peo-

ple that are at a significant

disadvantage in the current

cross-party goal, introduces

two specific criminal offences

around 'sex for rent' - offering

accommodation in exchange

for sex and the advertising of

accommodation in exchange

pass both rental agreements

between landlords and ten-

ants, and 'rent-a-room'

situations. It is the offer or

advertisement that is being

criminalised – there is no

requirement to prove that

sexual activity occurred. The

proposed penalty for these

offences is a Class A fine of up

The provisions encom-

The legislation, which is a

housing crisis"

for sex.

to €5,000.

reflection on AI next week.

loud and clear."

"It is great to see that the Pope himself is taking the lead on what AI means for humanity and society in

#### Charity welcomes targeting of 'sex for rent'

put it.

#### Chai Brady

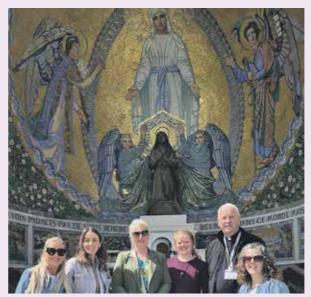
Legislation aimed at tackling the "appalling practice" of seeking sex in lieu of rent has been welcomed by an Irish charity who support women impacted by sexual exploitation.

Ruhama told The Irish Catholic that the legislation being drafted was "long awaited", and the issue has been exacerbated by the housing crisis.

"These appalling practices impact many vulnerable women and bring fear and coercion into a place where they should feel safest - their home," a spokeswomen said. She added that it "will

have an immediate impact

#### Singing praises in Lourdes



Members of the SonLight Choir with Auxiliary Bishop Michael Router during the Armagh Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

#### **NEWS IN BRIEF**

#### Irish teenager. cause of possible Pope Leo XIV visit to Ireland

During his time as the provincial of the Augustinians, Pope Leo made a Kerry teenager an honorary Augustinian two days before he died from bone cancer. The teenager, Donal Walsh, during his battle wrote a letter against teenage suicide that moved the Irish public. This brought his uncle, an Augustinian, to contact his provincial, Fr Prevost, the now-pope. After becoming a Cardinal two years ago, Pope Leo XIV agreed to come to Ireland for Donal's Mass, explained Elma, Don-al's mother. "Things got in the way and I suppose he wasn't able to come in 2024. He did say he would do it at some stage," said Elma to RTÉ Radio 1.

#### **Tributes paid to** Redemptorist priest following his death

Tributes were paid to priest who died after a long illness. Fr Michael Dempsey was diagnosed with an aggressive form of multiple sclerosis in August 2016 and remained in hospital care until his death. He died at the Thompson House Hospital on May 7 and buried on May 10 at Milltown Cemetery.

The Dublin Province of the Irish Redemptorists said in a statement, Fr Dempsey was "a beloved Redemptorist, faithful servant, and a man filled with joy."

The statement mentioned how throughout his ministry, the priest "radiated the joy of the Gospel," and how he touched and influenced many people with his "steadfast faith. Even in times of suffering, his spirit remained anchored in Christ, offering a powerful witness of perseverance, humility, and trust in God's will."

Fr Dempsey's community, Clonard Monastery, said in a statement, "Fr Michael was a priest who loved deeply, gave generously, and lived faithfully."

Friends and parishioners also shared their condolences. "Beautiful farewell to the man with the brightest smile and the biggest heart, will miss you forever my friend", one parishioner commented on Clonard Monastery's Facebook page.

# **Religious missionary Pope Leo XIV brings** his experience to new way of being Church



Dr Kieran J. O'Mahony OSA

obert 'Bob' Prevost OSA, now Pope Leo XIV, is a member of the Order of St Augustine, the first to be elected as bishop of Rome. The Order is an old one, going back to 1256, taking its inspiration from the great St Augustine of Hippo. Of course people wonder what kind of person our new Pope is. Here I offer a few keys to unlock the choice of those gathered for the conclave.

I was in Rome last November and went to lunch in our general Curia (HQ) near the Vatican. The then cardinal Prevost was also present at the lunch. At the end of the meal, we got to greet each other. Because Bob had been our Prior General. we knew each other from before, both in Rome and Ireland. It was his habit to drop into our general Curia, where he had been our Prior General, from time to time. In my experience, Cardinal Bob was the same as always, in spite of his new responsibilities both as cardinal and head of the office for choosing bishops. Friendly, at ease, with no sign of losing the run of himself, as we say. The new Pope is modest and super calm, with a great smile. And when he smiles, you know it is from the inside, because the eyes light up.

#### **Democratic**

Outside of Church structures, most people don't quite realise how surprisingly democratic the religious orders can be. As Augustinians, we elect our leaders, both national and international. for limited terms of office. Not only that, we also decide policy together for the next four years (nationally) or the next six years (internationally). Because our leaders go and out of office, we treat our leaders fraternally and, in a way, informally. This experience of consultative leadership, common to religious orders, forms as an important background for the style and substance of the new Pope.

There is more. Although from Chicago, the new pope's background, as both priest and bishop, lies in South America. As a Peruvian citizen, he spoke affectionately of Peru as mi segunda patria (my second homeland). The South American Catholic Church took the Second Vatican Council very much to heart, embracing what they came to term "a preferential option for the poor". Under the direction of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM), the Catholic Church moved from its traditional alignment with the rich and powerful to a new commitment to work with and listen to the poor. It is no accident that such a radical shift, now embedded over decades, formed part of the back to the ministry of Pope Francis and will certainly inform the ministry of Pope Leo. The new vision of the Synodal Way, initiated by Pope Francis, springs from the same source and will be continued under his successor, as already indicated in his first short address after

being elected. **Such** emphasis on peace, bridgebuilding and pastoral presence goes some way to explain the choice of name: Leo XIV"

In that short address, three words beginning with the letter 'p' stood out. First of all, pace, peace in Italian. The new Holy Father, repeated the word no few than seven times in his first address. This means the new Holy Father lives in the real world, suddenly so full of war and the threat of war. He also used the word ponte, meaning bridge, a little play on words with his traditional title of pontifex maximus (chief bridge builder). The way forward, not just for Church but for all humankind, has to be the way of dialogue and encounter. Finally, he used the word presenza ('presence'), pointing to a Church present to all in need, especially those on the margins. Such emphasis on peace, bridge-building and pastoral presence goes some way to explain the choice of name: Leo XIV. This is certainly an evocation of Leo XIII, who began a new era of the social teaching in the Catholic Church with his encyclical Rerum Novarum, underlining the rights of workers and the responsibilities of employers. The most recent iteration of this rich tradition was that of Pope Francis with his great teaching on climate change. It helps that the new Pope's first degree was in science, a good omen, I think. Science and religion, both from God, both searching for truth, do not finally contradict each other.

Pope Leo also referenced in his first, very brief address, the way of synodality. He brings to that new way of being Church his own experience as a religious, an Augustinian friar, as well as his time as a missionary and bishop in Peru. Under Pope Francis, a strong beginning was achieved. There is much to be done to embed synodality as reality at all levels in the Church – at parochial, diocesan, national and international level. The key here is not the focus on Church as such but the focus on the Gospel and on Jesus Christ. Only then can we ask ourselves how we can 'be' as Church so as best to offer a word of life to the people and world of our day, so as best to service the Gospel of love and mercy.

#### Leadership

When we look at leadership in the Church, we are really looking for four things (at least!). First of all, we want a person of deep faith and prayer. This is obvious and indispensable. We also need leaders, men and women. who genuinely love the people in their care. In terms of vision and teaching, good spiritual leaders should be able to 'read' the times in which we live and name the issues of the day and how we are to respond to them. Finally, at a more practical level, a good leader will be able to manage the inevitable administrative side of leadership. In Pope Francis, we had a leader who excelled - exceptionally - in all four dimensions.

By chance, I was in the St Peter's Square when the new Holy Father was announced and named. Straightaway, I knew it was our brother. Robert Prevost and I'm not ashamed to say I felt a surge of emotion, which took me by surprise. The new Holy Father seemed to me expectedly at ease, even smiling gently, with his new calling, a little nervous but actually happy. This is as it should be: a "yes" to God's call should also be a happy, quietly joyfilled experience, in spite of all the real challenges. Let us pray for Leo XIV OSA, who takes up the mantel with lively faith and real joy, that he may lead, his flock, ever more richly on the great pilgrimage of life and faith.



RTÉ News Reporter Cian McCormack interviews Fr Kieran O'Mahony OSA for a radio broadcast from St Peter's Square in Rome.

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**Comment** | 5

# 'Unfinished business': High hopes **Pope Leo XIV will visit the North**



#### Martina Purdy

elfast's youngest parish priest could not resist the road to Rome on May 8. Fr Conor McGrath had just marked his 38th birthday.

There are only a handful of priests his age in Down and Connor where he also serves as vocations director.

In the years to come, would he get another chance to see a pope elected? He headed for the plane.

It meant getting up at 3.30am, taking the red-eye from Dublin, and taking the 11pm return flight, with no guarantee of seeing white smoke.

"I was thinking there was no way this is going to be the day – the College of Cardinals is so diverse and divided. But I thought 'I will go anyway!'."

Fr McGrath arrived in Rome around noon, in time for the black smoke, marking the failure of the second ballot. Over lunch with another Belfast priest Fr Dominic McGrattan, chaplain at Queen's University, the most personable, interthey indulged in speculation about who Peter's successor might be. They met a priest friend, who worked at the Vatican. He was tipping Cardinal Parolin.

In St Peter's Square, Fr McGrath was delighted to watch and pray with pilgrims from all around the world. "There was a great sense of solidarity," he said. "I was aware, perhaps more than before, of a real sense of the Church praying that the right man would come forward and the Holy Spirit would give us the man we need."

At 5.08pm Irish time, Fr McGrath's pilgrimage of hope paid off. "I saw the white smoke and was running back. Aah, it was amazing! Jubilation! I was so happy. I can't quite describe it!"

He is still on a high days later, recalling the surprise that St Peter's successor was an American. Some students standing in front of Fr McGrath were immediately clued in when the French Cardinal announced the name in Latin, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost. One of these young students had been assigned to look after the Augustinian Cardinal at an annual college dinner. Fr McGrath recalled that he had only good things to say. "He said he was just

It definitely tops a kiss from Tony Curtis...

ested, down-to-earth guy." So what were Fr McGrath's first impressions of Pope Leo XIV? "His sanctity, and his holiness, the depth of his spirituality seems to come across!"

"He appeared in the mozzetta and the stole that Pope Francis for his own reasons decided not to wear. Externals do matter. I think he was saying, 'I am my own man, my own Pope'.'

"I was also really impressed by his short homily last Friday. He was putting Jesus very much front and centre of his papacy." Already there is specula-

tion of a Papal visit to the north of Ireland. "I think it would be a tremendous lift for us," said Fr McGrath.

Pope St John Paul never made it beyond Drogheda due to security concerns and though there were advanced plans for Pope Francis to visit key sites in the north it never happened. It's a pity. Pope Francis got a hard time in 2018; many of the politicians and media, who lined up to praise him in death, were not quite so kind in 2018.

Perhaps Pope Leo XIV will be the one to visit Armagh for what some of us call, unfinished business. The Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin seems guite confident that it will happen.

Fr Conor McGrath, Belfast's youngest parish priest, stands in St Peter's Square in the Vatican, awaiting the election of Pope Leo XIV.

#### Belfast Marathon: Much more than a race

ay is the month for the Belfast Marathon, which frankly, can be a little disruptive of Sunday Mass. The runners come past my street so I left the car behind and walked to St Michael's, where the visiting priest reminded us all that life is a marathon. We must, like St Paul, finish the race. I was pondering this on the walk home, when someone brushed passed me saying: "He's not breathing!" A male runner was lying on the road, bleeding from a big gash on his chin, where he had fallen. Did he need a priest? "I'm not sure what his faith is," said a bystander. Actually, I was carrying the Eucharist to a neighbour, and conscious of the Lord's divine presence, I prayed for him, knowing that "Jesus had passed by on his way ... " I heard later that before the emergency

services arrived, a young man had given the fallen runner, CPR, which can be physically exhausting. The heart massage had gone on for a while with no result. "Let him go!" one or two in the crowd had advised. But this young hero would not give up until the med-ics arrived. His life was spared. Before departing in an ambulance, he was alert and able to move.

I heard that another parish on the route, St John's, had moved the morning Mass time to accommodate the marathon. And the parish priest had posted an image of two runners at prayer. The sacristan, Catherine Largey, had taken the picture of Brendan and Nuala with their permission. "I think they were cousins," she said, "They had stopped to pray because it was their granny's anniversary and the family were running a relay in pairs in

her memory.

"They had come into the church for a bit of quiet to calm their nerves, and also to remember their granny.'

She also encountered some men in their sixties calling themselves 'The Last of the Summer Wine'. They were raising money for the Air Ambulance. She spoke also of a little child, Sean Casey, recovering from brain cancer, who came along to watch his mother run and help raise £10,000 for children's cancer services. The parish had prayed for recovery over many months. "I know for some it is a race or a sporting event," said Ms Largey, "but it is so much more than that. They all come with their own stories as to why they are running. It is an attempt to do some good and give something back." Why would we close

our doors and ignore the world as it came to us?



Martina Purdy's brother Grant shaking hands with the then Fr Robert Prevost at the Villanova College in Canada, when the future pope was a young Augustinian priest.

hen my brother Grant, a Belfastborn Canadian, quit his teaching job to help found an independent Catholic school near Toronto, he had no idea it would lead to an encounter with a future Pope. "I know him! I know him!" was my brother's response when Cardinal Prevost emerged on the balcony as Pope Leo the XIV.

It turns out that he twice welcomed him to Villa Nova College when the Pope was a young priest, dressed in the black tunic of an Augustinian monk. Villa Nova College was newly opened, around 2000, when Fr Prevost visited as provincial prior of the Midwest Augustinian region. He returned ten years later as prior general.

I don't suppose you have a picture of Fr Prevost, I inquired? He soon produced an image of the pair shaking hands. In family folklore, that definitely tops Tony Curtis, star of Some Like it Hot, kissing my hand in Belfast's Ulster Hall!



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1 Corinthians 1:17

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#### 8 Comment

# The legacy of British mother and baby homes is largely ignored

ast weekend. in the small, picturesque seaside town of St Agnes in Cornwall, a plaque was unveiled to the hundreds of thousands of unmarried mothers in England and Wales who had been subjected, in the past, to forced adoptions.

The plaque is situated at Rosemundy, which was once a mother and baby home in the West of England location (and is now a hotel).

Campaigners from organisations such as The Movement for



Adoption Apology said that the event was hugely significant. Diana Defries, of the MAA, called the plaque the beginning of a "long-overdue national movement". There were hundreds of mother and baby homes in Britain which have been accused of cruelty, neglect and lifelong trauma arising from coercive adoptions, which occurred from the 1940s onwards.

## **Mary Kenny**

#### BBC radio reported this event in Cornwall; I subsequently scoured the British newspapers to learn more about the campaign to extract an apology from the state for the estimated 450,000 cases of forced adoption.

#### **Press**

But in the majority of the press, there were no reports at all. No angry

**66** In the majority of the press, there were no reports at all. No angry headlines about the trauma of these mothers. No calls for a national discussion, further investigation and redress"

A universal human response



eightWatchers, the American-inspired global organisation which has helped countless fatties to lose weight over the decades, has filed for bankruptcy. Its success in supporting struggling dieters has been overtaken by new weight-reducing drugs such as Wegovy and Juniper.

Like so many people who, in Terry Wogan's words, seek to "fight the flab", I attended WeightWatchers for a time. And ves. I did shed the pounds quite

successfully. But it could be a mortifying experience - because the psychology of weight-watching meetings is based on shame. You are publicly weighed in front of monitors, and if you haven't lost some weight, made to feel shame - and guilt, too. You also paid a fee - a fiver, I recallfor this procedure.

It wasn't the actual diet - which was basically sensible eating, curbing sugars and carbs - which took off the avoirdupois. It was the fear of shame at the next public weigh-in. (And if you grew bored

of attending, the weight piled on again.) Shame is a universal human response: some cultures, such as Japan, base all their codes of behaviour on the fear of shame. (Though I still read of people blaming Irish Catholic traditions for shame responses.)

WeightWatchers certainly built an international empire on our endeavours to reach a healthier body weight. But all empires pass, and now a drug has replaced that effective, if shaming, experience of being weighed in public.



The plaque in Cornwall in England is on an external wall of Rosemundy House, now a hotel, but formerly a home for unmarried mothers.

headlines about the trauma of these mothers. No calls for a national discussion, further investigation and redress. The Guardian, exceptionally, ran an article about the event, and the

movement behind it. In Ireland, reports about mother and baby homes, and the policy of coercive adoption, make huge headlines, and are the subject of films, documentaries and novels. Claire Keegan's slim novella, Small Things like *These,* about a young girl being consigned (by her family) to a mother and baby home, remains at the top of the Irish weekly best-seller list.

**Teenage** mothers like Lyn were put under continuous pressure to yield their baby because it was regarded as a constructive, remedial policy"

Lyn Rodden, from Camborne in Cornwall, who felt treated like a

think it's great that Pope Leo has two older siblings, John and Louis, who are still ready to tease and josh about their "kid brother". (Louis told *CNN* "I better behave now – my broth-er's the Pope!") They're pleased, of course, but not at all sanctimonious about their "baby brother" Rob.

Siblings can be a great support in life, but they also have a healthy way of keeping you down-toearth. However exalted your office, you're still

"slave", said that people were wrong to imagine these institutions only happened in Ireland - it was "damn well" the same in England. Yet, in Britain, it is never treated as a major issue, and the subject has almost no national profile.

Adoption was one of those policies which people in welfare agencies genuinely and sincerely believed was for the best, at the time: teenage mothers like Lyn were put under continuous pressure to yield their baby because it was regarded as a constructive, remedial policy.

These homes were run by the Christian churches, the Salvation Army, and local authorities. All have apologised – although no formal apology has been issued by the state.

A memorial garden is to be opened on May 23 in Kendal, Cumbria, for mothers and adoptees. It's a compassionate gesture, but I doubt it will make headlines in the national British media.

little brother - who big brothers have known all their lives.

Incidentally, Louis recalled that Pope Leo used to "play at being a priest" as a young lad, and added he didn't know of any other boy who did that. I do. My elder brother Carlos also used to play "priest" when we were kids, with makeshift altar and soutane, giving us his "blessing" and sprinkling "holy water". He was far from having a priestly vocation, but he liked playing at the role!

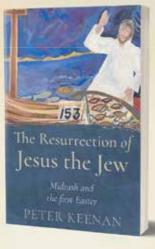
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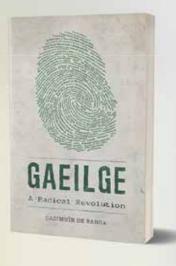
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# Habemus Papam: A familiar face to the Irish College



Eoin McCormack

v wife and I had the great fortune of being in St Peter's Square as the sun was beginning to set behind the magnificent St Peter's Basilica last Thursday evening. Having arrived for the evening ballot at 5pm and standing in anticipation with thousands of others, hope began to fade by 6pm for any sign of white smoke. About 10 minutes later – as phones were raised to film the now-famous duo of seagulls who were being joined by a baby chick - roars of jubilation and excitement rang out when it became clear that there was smoke coming from the chimney of the Sisteen Chapel.

#### For the Irish College community, it rang with recognition. This was no stranger. This was a friend"

The atmosphere in the square was joyous but tinged with emotion. By any standards the whole experience was truly a demonstration of Church's universality in every sense. All around us, people both young and old were waving flags from every corner of the globe, pilgrim groups prayed the rosary meditatively, seminarians and priests in full cassocks were reciting their evening prayer, reporters were speaking into cameras

and phones in a chorus of different languages while families with children, were eating their afternoon snack under the shade of umbrellas. Despite the variety of scenes, everyone was united by faith and obvious anticipation for a new leader in the chair of Peter.

It was certainly an historic moment to say the least, but we could have never anticipated that the man who would walk out on the balcony as our new Pope would be known to us as a close collaborator. When the name 'Cardinal Robert Prevost' was announced in Latin by the Cardinal Proto-Deacon from the balcony, there was at first a brief murmur of confusion in the square. In between the shouts of jubilation could be heard an exclamation raised in surprise: 'Americano?' Yet for the Irish College community, it rang with recog-

nition. This was no stranger. This was a friend.

#### A familiar face

Now Pope Leo XIV, Cardinal Prevost is no distant figure to the Irish community of Rome. Over the past number of years, Cardinal Prevost visited the college on numerous occasions, not only in an official capacity but as a friend and supporter. From his former diocese of Chiclayo in Peru, he has sent four priests to continue their formation and studies at the Irish College.

During his most recent visit in November 2024, he presented to all three college communities – seminarians, clergy, and laity – about his role in the Dicastery for Bishops. His presentation, delivered with his calm pastoral charisma, was followed by an open discussion and Q&A from the students. This was a man of authentic synodal dialogue – open to listening but committed to seeking the truth.

This is a man with international governance skills and a missionary pastoral heart who has the ability to speak easily across cultures all the while being theologically trained"

Later that evening, he shared a meal with students and staff alike moving easily between conversations on sports and Church governance. What stood out was his accessibility. Here was a man as comfortable discussing cannon law as he was the American Baseball league. His election may have surprised many, particularly having been born in the already global super-power of the US, but in hindsight, the choice seems remarkably suitable. This is a man with international governance skills and a missionary pastoral heart who has the ability to speak easily across cultures all the while being theologically trained in cannon law.

It's fair to say that the three communities of clergy, seminarians and lay of the Irish College send their prayers to Pope Leo XIV and have shared in the great joy and excitement that has filled these days in the sure hope of welcoming him once again not just as a friend, but as the Holy Father.

**i** Eoin McCormack is a Lay Programme Coordinator at the Pontifical Irish College, Rome.



The view from the crowd in St Peter's Square in the Vatican.





Eoin McCormack with St Peter's Basilica in the background.

With unever gratitude to The Irish Patified College for the years of outstanding formation officed to several pushs of the Drowne of Chicleyo, and today enjoying the hospitality that d've enjoyed on many are preserves, I wanto like to express wany but wishes to The whole community relying on the press of date or we all walk yeptress in the very important moment on The life of the Church.

Robert Francis Cond. Premot, as 4.

Defolier 3, 2023

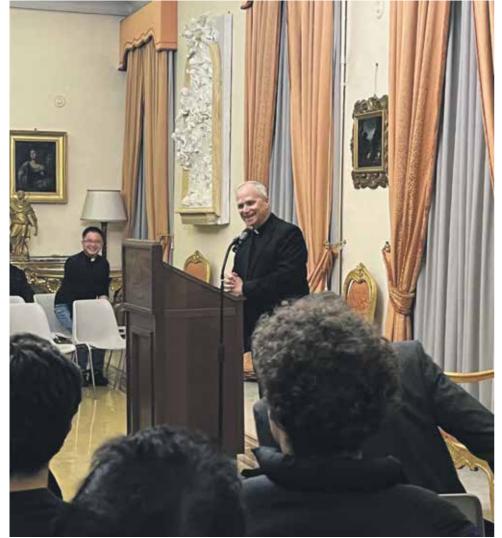
Cardinal Prevost's signature and message in the Irish College Visitor Book from a 2023 visit.



Cardinal Prevost at the Irish College in Rome.



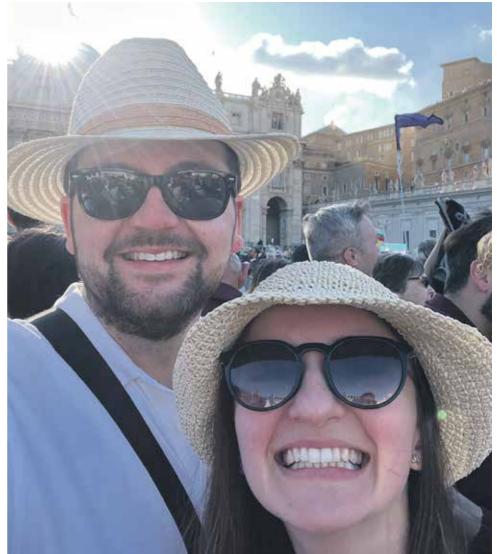
Eoin Speaking with BBC Radio during Pope Leo's first public apperance at the Sunday Angelus.



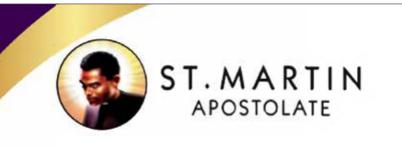
Cardinal Prevost speaking to the Irish College community in Rome.



Irish College formation staff with the now Pope Leo XIV (then Carindal Prevost) in November 2024.



Eoin and his wife Roxana at St Peter's square when the white smoke came from the Sistine Chapel.



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# A New Pope, A Shared Mission

#### A note from the editor in chief

With the election of Pope Leo XIV, I found myself reflecting on the long arc of the Church's history—and how each moment of change brings both continuity and renewal.

I thought of St. Bonaventure, often called the "second founder" of the Franciscan Order. Though he came some years after St. Francis of Assisi, his role was crucial. Where Francis brought a radiant charisma and prophetic fire, Bonaventure quietly secured that vision with governance, wisdom, and structure. He did not seek to rival Francis—he sought to root his legacy deeply and wisely for the future.

#### Pope Leo XIV may well play a similar role in our time.

He is not Pope Francis. But it would be mistaken—and perhaps dangerously naïve—to imagine that his papacy will be a turning back. A missionary cardinal with roots in Peru and the global South, Pope Leo has lived and breathed the Church's call to the margins. He will not merely maintain the reforms of the synodal process; he is likely to deepen them.

He is not, perhaps, an innovator—but he is a wise governor, a learned pastor, and a man who understands the urgency of mission, the cries of the poor, and the need for a Church that listens.

One of the areas most often raised in the synodal journey was the need for reform in Canon Law—not as an abstract exercise, but as a way to better serve the People of God in a fast-changing world. Under Pope Leo XIV, this work will continue—and likely accelerate.

#### We find ourselves in a critical moment. And your support matters.

Our mission in The Irish Catholic/The Synodal Times newspaper is to foster dialogue, highlight the voice of the poor and point out injustice, support formation, and communicate the work of renewal. We depend on people like you who believe in the vision of a Church that is both faithful and forward-looking.

As the bells of St Peter's rang and the congregation applauded warmly after the first homily of Pope Leo, a new chapter began not one of rupture, but of rooted renewal.

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**Garry O'Sullivan** *Editor in Chief* 

# **Guess who's coming to** dinner? The future pope!



John L. Allen Jr.

aturally enough, journalists covering the Vatican tend to seek out figures in the system from their own countries or language groups. French speakers seek out the French, Spanish speakers the Spaniards and Latin Americans, the Italians gravitate to their *paesani*, and, by the same logic, Americans are drawn to fellow Americans.

Thus it was that when Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was appointed the new head of the powerful Dicastery for Bishops in January 2023, my wife Elise and I made an appointment to drop by for a courtesy call in his Vatican office. I reminded him we'd met years before when he was the Prior General for the Augustinians, he told me that when he'd become the Bishop of Chiclayo in Peru he'd discovered a copy of my book on Opus Dei on a shelf in his new office, and we had a pleasant conversation.

Before we left, I made a vague offer to have Prevost over for dinner at our Roman apartment at some point. In the same non-specific way, he said he'd be delighted. Then, frankly, we all went our separate ways and forgot about it.

#### October 2024

Flash forward to October 2024, during the concluding edition of the long-running Synod of Bishops on Synodality, when it occurred to Elise and I that we'd never followed up on our offer of a meal. We fired off an invi-

tation, which Prevost kindly accepted, and so it was that one fall evening the future Pope came to dinner.

We'd had cardinals over before ... this is Rome, after all, where cardinals may not be a dime a dozen, but they're not exactly an endangered species either. In retrospect, that evening obviously looms infinitely larger now that this particular cardinal has become Pope Leo XIV.

Î'll admit it: My initial instinct was to rush home and figure out which chair at our dining table he had used, which plate and silverware we had set out, and preserve it all as part of a permanent 'pontifical dinner setting' with which we could dazzle future guests. It was gently suggested, however, that might smack just slightly of hucksterism.

**He seemed** for all the world like a neighbour dropping by for a visit, not a potentate granting an audience"

To be clear, no deep dark secrets were shared that night - this was basically an amiable conversation among American expats. Still, on the Italian theory that you can learn more about a person over a meal than in virtually any other setting, here are three basic impressions I can pass along.

First, Prevost is a downto-earth and unassuming personality. He arrived without any retinue and not in a Vatican sedan, but under his own power, and at no point did he ever give the impression he had somewhere more important to be. He seemed for all the world like a neigh-

ago-born Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, greets a bishop in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican after Pope Francis made him a cardinal September 30, 2023. Photo: CNS /Lola Gomez.

bour dropping by for a visit, not a potentate granting an audience. Second, he's a kindly per-

sonality, sensitive to how his conduct and choices make others feel.

#### Menu

Case in point: I'd prepared a rather elaborate menu, which began with a shrimp cocktail featuring homemade sauce I'd whipped up with horseradish obtained from a Ukrainian store in town, then the classic Roman pasta dish cacio e pepe, followed by chicken al Marsala and gelato. He kept shovelling it down, and at a certain point I feared it might be a bit much and assured him he was under no obligation to eat everything.

He smiled and indicated that the way he was brought up, you eat everything your host puts in front of you, because to fail to clean your plate is disrespectful. To this day, I honestly can't tell you if

He's almost a human vacuum cleaner, sucking in everything you say

insights"

anyway

#### and then reflecting it back with keen questions and

he liked the food or was just

being polite, but the cook in

me appreciated the gesture

importantly, the new pope is a great listener.

Third, and probably most

"Papa Prevost," as the Italians are already calling him, has that remarkable capacity all gifted communicators possess of making you feel like the most important person in the world while you're talking to him. He's almost a human vacuum cleaner, sucking in everything you say and then reflecting it back with keen questions and insights.

He's also skilled at not necessarily betraying what he thinks, preferring to draw others out rather than immediately revealing what's in his own mind. That doesn't come off as concealment, however, but a laudable (and increasingly rare) desire to think before he speaks.

One night, obviously, doesn't make us experts. But for what it's worth, the future pope who came to dinner struck us as smart, considerate, and a terrific conversationalist ... and those qualities, at least, seem a reasonable basis for hope.



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#### Prevost is a down-to-earth and unassuming personality. He arrived without any retinue and not in a Vatican sedan, but under his own power, and at no point did he ever give the impression he had somewhere more important to be"

# Why he chose the name 'Leo XIV'



David Quinn

t is extremely early, impossible in fact, to make any real predictions about the direction in which our new pope, Leo XIV, will lead the Church, but we are all allowed to say what our first impressions are, and mine are that he seems like a calm, gentle, intelligent and deeply prayerful man. This last characteristic should, of course, be a given for any pope and has been for all the ones I can remember.

His election was a surprise to many, including some Vatican watchers. Yes, his name was being mentioned, but it was thought he had only an outside chance of being elected, partly because he is an American. Could Americans be allowed to hold the most important political office in the world (the US presidency) and the most important religious office in the world, that of the pope, at the same time? Most people thought not.

But it turns out they were wrong, although as quite a few have said of the new pope, he is the least American of Americans. The stereotype people often have in their head of Americans is of someone loud and brash. Donald Trump fits the stereotype to the last inch. But Leo XIV (or Robert ('Bob') Prevost as he was known until the day of his election) is the opposite of that. Maybe one reason is that he has lived so much of his life outside America, especially in Peru, although he seems like a gentle person anyway.

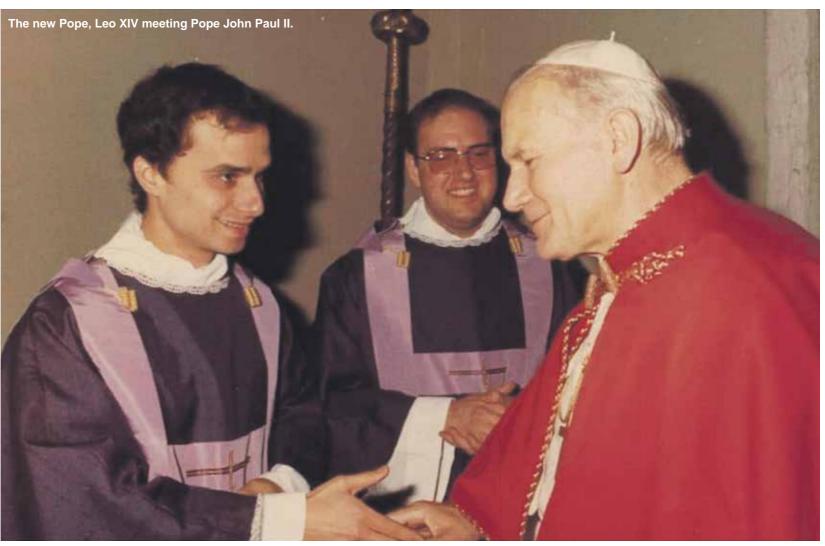
#### Impressions

What have I liked about him so far? Well, I like his choice of name for a start: Leo XIV. This is obviously a key to understanding what he intends to do, and I will come back to this.

I like his calm manner. He seems to exude peace, and in his very first remarks as pope, he spoke about peace. It helps when someone who talks about peace seems peaceful themselves. I used to think peace meant only an absence of conflict, but it also means peace of mind, which can be a very hard thing to achieve.

When John Paul II first appeared he exuded vigour, and that is a good thing too. But everyone has their own basic personality.

I like the fact that he appeared in the traditional



garb popes have always previously appeared in because, well, I like tradition. Tradition offers signposts. It gives you an idea of where you are going.

As usual, everyone, in our part of the world anyway, seems to be trying to fit Pope Leo into either the 'liberal' or the 'conservative' box. The case in favour of placing him in the 'liberal' box' is that he will continue in the mould of Pope Francis by remaining close to poor, by speaking out in favour of the environment, and in favour of immigrants.

#### What they want is a pope who adheres to the Magisterium of the Church, as he is bound to do"

Francis liked him because during Pope Leo's time in Peru, Fr Prevost, as he was known until quite recently, worked a lot among the poor. In other words, he had 'the smell of the sheep' on him.

Pope Benedict never had that, but then he had been a teacher, so his ministry was different. John Paul II had been a parish priest, but was also basically a teacher.

Pope Francis was very much a pastor, and liked pastors, and Fr Prevost was a pastor. An awful lot of the cardinals chosen by Pope Francis are also pastors and that's fine, although there is also a place for those who are mainly teachers, or even canon lawyers. And actually, Pope Leo is a canon lawyer as well as a pastor.

Pope Leo is also a member of a religious order, like Francis was, in Leo's case the Augustinians, whereas in the case of Francis it was the Jesuits.

But is being in favour of the poor, the environment and of fair treatment of migrants 'liberal', or simply Catholic?

Catholic 'conservatives' have no objection to any of this. What they want is a pope who adheres to the Magisterium of the Church, as he is bound to do. This is why conservatives are often drawn to clear teachers.

#### Reference

But what has caught my attention most about the new pope so far is his choice of name. In his first address, as pope, to the cardinals, he made direct reference to *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII's most famous encyclical which came out in 1891 into a world, a Europe at least, riven by class war. It dealt specifically with social class and labour.

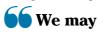
The industrialisation of the 19th century was changing the face of society. For the first time, a 'working class' was emerging that was often ruthlessly exploited by the 'capitalist class'.

Socialism was seen by

In our own day, the Church offers to everyone the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defence of human dignity, justice and labour"

many as the answer. It would lead to a society in which private property was all but abolished and class distinctions were eliminated. Socialism was often extremely anti religion

anti-religion. So along came *Rerum Novarum* (meaning 'Of New Things'). It defended the rights of workers, including their right to establish trades unions, while also affirming the right to own property.



#### even merge with technology and become what some philosophers call 'transhumans'"

It tried to walk a third way between capitalism and socialism and from it eventually emerged Christian Democracy as the social teachings of the Church developed.

Pope Leo has now given a strong indication of what he would like those teachings to now pay attention to, namely how technology, including Artificial Intelligence, will radically change our lives. We may even merge with technology and become what some philosophers call 'transhumans'.

As he told the cardinals on May 10: "There are different reasons for this [choosing the name of Leo XIV], but mainly because Pope Leo XIII in his historic Encyclical Rerum Novarum addressed the social question in the context of the first great industrial revolution. In our own day, the Church offers to everyone the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defence of human dignity, justice and labour.'

#### **Fundamentals**

And I would add to that, what it means to be human. As Professor Richard Rex of Cambridge University has said, the early Church had to confront the question, 'What is God?', hence the huge debates about the Trinity.

Centuries later, during the Reformation, it had to deal with the question, 'What is the Church?' Now it finds itself facing a new question even more basic, namely 'What is Man?', or what is it to be human, or even more fundamentally, what is a human? For example, do we have a created human nature, given by God, or can we become anything at all, even, as I say, 'transhuman'?

#### Pope Leo XIII showed the Church how to position itself in the industrial age"

Pope Leo seems to be aware of these questions and of the need for the Church to think very deeply about them and offer convincing answers. The Church is now finding itself in the position of having to defend human nature itself, to explain what human nature is. Pope Leo XIII showed the Church how to position itself in the industrial age. Pope Leo XIV may show how it should position itself in the emerging and ultra-revolutionary new age of Artificial Intelligence and even transhumanism.

# We can have confidence in the leadership of Pope Leo



Fr Eamonn Conway

ope Leo intends, albeit in his own way and according to his own style, to press forward with the same priorities that Pope Francis held. Pope Leo has called for a renewal of everyone's commitment to Vatican II and in his first homily to the cardinals who elected him has described as "masterful" the path Pope Francis set out to be followed in The Joy of the Gospel (2013), the charter document for Francis' pontificate. According to Gerard O'Connell in an interview with Cardinal Cupich, the cardinals sought "somebody who was going to continue the work of Pope Francis. There was no interest at all in diverting attention away from that or moving in a different direction.'

# The Church's centre of gravity has shifted

The decision not to elect European cardinal, even a frontrunner like Cardinal Parolin with proven experience as a diplomat, is evidence that the Church's centre of gravity no longer lies in Europe. By 2050, just twenty-five years from now. it is estimated that three-quarters of the world's Catholics will live outside the west. Within a generation, Africa is set to become the numeric centre of the Catholic Church and it has been suggested that by then Christianity will no longer be thought of primarily as a western religion.

In the future, the majority of Catholics will be living and witnessing to their faith in countries where they are in a minority. Being in the global south, they are likely to be living in poverty. They are also likely to be living in danger on account of their Christian faith, given that Christians are already the world's most persecuted religious group.

This is just one aspect of the rapidly changing sociocultural and geopolitical context that confronts global Catholicism. There are others: a world effectively at war, and if circumstances continue to



Pope Leo XIV speaks with the College of Cardinals in the New Synod Hall at the Vatican, May 10, 2025, during his first formal address to the college since his election May 8. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media.

deteriorate may require a wartime pope; technology, especially AI, as the dominant force shaping our lives; the increasing impact of climate change upon both planet and people; the shocking reality that despite all the technological advances, actual and possible, global poverty reduction has slowed to a near standstill, and migration as a consequence of all of the above.

#### Concern about cultural shifts

According to the Chilean Cardinal Chomalí, the new pontiff is concerned about the "cultural shifts" we are living through and wants to facilitate a new dialogue between church and world much like Leo XIII tried to do. Leo XIII was pope from 1878 – 1903, as technological advances were deepening divisions between rich and poor and damaging the common good.

#### Jesus finds acceptance as 'a kind of charismatic leader or superman' while they continue to live their lives 'in a state of practical atheism'''

Of concern too, of course, is the loss of the Church's credibility because of abuses, and the reality that there are still regions where violations of human dignity within the Church have not yet been sufficiently acknowledged and confronted.

Western countries face particular challenges. In his first homily as Pope, Leo spoke of the lack of meaning in life that stems from a lack of faith. For many baptised Christians, the Pope says, Jesus finds acceptance as "a kind of charismatic leader or superman" while they continue to live their lives "in a state of practical atheism."

In searching for a successor to Peter the cardinals also had to consider the precarious state of the Vatican's finances explained to them during the pre-conclave meetings.

#### The synod experience was pivotal

It should be no surprise, therefore, that the cardinals elected someone with handson experience of global realities, a passion for social justice who will speak truth to power and proven administrative experience. As former Prior General of the Augustinians, a world-wide religious order who subsequently served as a bishop in Peru and more recently as head of a key Roman dicastery, Cardinal Prevost is well equipped to lead the Catholic Church as it seeks to proclaim the Gospel in such rapidly changing circumstances.

Pundits had predicted a protracted conclave in the event that one of the leading contenders didn't get enough votes. This was based on the misapprehension that Pope Francis' pontificate had sown division, which wasn't the case. The fact that 61 of the cardinals, of whom 53 had a vote, had spent at least two months together in the synod hall during the past two years and that several more were in Rome during the Synod's General Assemblies played a pivotal part in building unity. The Synod was a masterclass not only in "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties" of God's people but also in how these needed to be tackled and in the kind of Supreme Pastor needed to do so.

The Continental Stage of the Synod, which consisted of synodal gatherings in seven regions around the world, had as its theme, "Enlarge the space of your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly. lengthen your ropes and make firm your pegs" (Is 54:2). Whereas enlarging the tent was Pope Francis' forte, we can envisage that, as a trained mathematician and canonist, Pope Leo's particular strength will lie in making firm the pegs and in ensuring the tentpoles are strong enough to support the fabric. Ten working groups, established by Pope Francis to deepen and clarify key dimensions of a synodal Church are due to conclude and present their work soon. The new Pope was a member of two of them. Their work will be key in increasing confidence in the synodal process and ensuring its longevity.

#### **Building confidence**

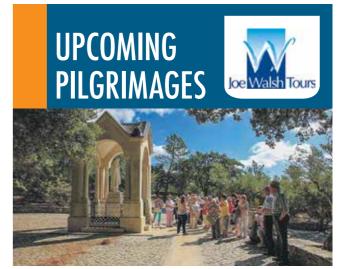
Two issues in particular require resolving in order to build confidence. The first is the relationship between collegiality and synodality. Collegiality refers to how the bishops co-operate with one another and with the pope in the governance of the Church. How collegiality interfaces with synods, which foresee voting rights for non-bishops, is a work in progress. The second issue is the basis upon which lav people exercise authority in the Church. In an effort particularly to empower women, Pope Francis introduced legislation permitting the appointment of lay people to senior positions in the Roman Curia. This separation of church governance from ordination was criticised, however, during the pre-conclave meetings.

The complexity of the challenges facing both the Church and the world, however, selfevidently need the mobilisation of all the gifts of the People of God and synodality provides the means of doing so"

Some Catholics, among them perhaps today even the majority of younger priests and seminarians, resist synodality arguing that it is introspective, preoccupied with committees and structures and distracts from mission and evangelisation. They argue for a return to a strict delineation between the roles and realms of clergy and laity, the realm of the clergy being the Church and that of the laity being the 'world'. These arguments, can, of course, mask underlying concerns about power and authority. The complexity of the challenges facing both the Church and the world, however, self-evidently need the mobilisation of all the gifts of the People of God and synodality provides the means of doing so. The 'conversion' of the Church's structures is precisely so that the gifts of all the baptised can be placed at the service of the Church's mission.

Finally, the extraordinary level of engagement of the public's imagination, way beyond that of practising Catholics, in the death of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo needs consideration. Amid rising global uncer-tainty and instability, loss of confidence in institutions, the coarsening of public discourse, the void of meaning and increasing mental health challenges, people are evidently searching for a sense of belonging and solidarity and a renewed moral compass. Despite its many failings and betravals of confidence in the past, people, many young people among them, are turning to the Church. It is our task to ensure that we enable them to encounter the resurrected Christ, which we will do most effectively by the sincerity of our own faith and witness. In this, we can have confidence in the leadership of Pope Leo XIV.

Fr Eamonn Conway is a Professor of Integral Human Development at the University of Notre Dame Australia



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#### 16 Feature

# **'I will never forget these days as long as I live'**



50 Irish pilgrims' Faith did not go unrewarded as they witnessed white smoke in St Peter's Square, writes **Michael Kelly** 

hen we first organised our Aid to the Church in Need, Ireland Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome almost a year ago, we could never have imagined we would be there for the election of a new Pope.

Of course, a key part of our pilgrimage programme had been a meeting with Pope Francis, so there was obvious sadness that this would not go ahead – but this was mixed with nervous excitement about what might lie ahead.

Rome can be difficult with a group at the best of times, add to that the fact that it is a jubilee year for which an extra 30 million visitors are expected, and tens of thousands of people there for the conclave – it was going to be a challenge!

As our pilgrim group arrived in Rome on Wednesday May 7, the members of the College of Cardinals were celebrating the 'Mass for the election of the Roman Pontiff' in St Peter's Basilica before entering conclave that afternoon.

Many of our pilgrims went to St Peter's Square that first evening to see what was inevitably black smoke following the first vote.

The following morning produced a similar result, and some of our pilgrims began to wonder if we would in fact be in Rome for the election of a new Pope. This was my third conclave, and I reassured them that since they were going home on Monday, it was almost



#### **66** It was unmistakable – we had a new Pope, and as we arrived on the edge of St Peter's Square, people were chanting and cheering *Habemus papam*"

unthinkable that they would not be in the Eternal City to greet the new Bishop of Rome. I even hazarded a guess that we should make our way again back to the square that same evening to keep vigil by the world's most famous chimney.

#### By any stretch of the imagination, erecting a chimney on top of a 15th Century chapel and locking a group of men inside until they elect a new Pontiff is archaic"

Our faith did not go unrewarded. As our group of pilgrims made their way to the square, the warmth of the stove startled the pigeon sitting near the chimney and the smoke began. For the first few seconds, it was tentative - but then there was no mistaking the distinctive white that has become a hallmark of recent papal elections, thanks to the addition of chemicals rather than relying on dampening the ballot papers to produce black smoke, o burning them dry in the hope of white.

It was unmistakable – we had a new Pope, and as we arrived on the edge of St Peter's Square, people were chanting and cheering Habemus papam.

By any stretch of the imagination, erecting a chimney on top of a 15th Century chapel and locking a group of men inside until they elect a new Pontiff is archaic. But it is also great theatre, and no-one does theatre quite like the Catholic Church. And by the time the white smoke appeared, Rome's press corps had swelled to 6,000 journalists with hacks from every corner of the globe in town to watch the chimney.

#### **Spiritual**

But the election of a new Pope is above all a spiritual process. The votes happen in a liturgical setting, and each man goes before the awesome fresco of The Last Judgement and acknowledges that God will judge them based on whether they have voted for the man they believe to be most suitable or not.

Catholics in the square

get that the process is above all spiritual. And the emotions of those gathered in the square show a beautiful spontaneous trust in the process. The moment the smoke started, not only did people start changing Habemus papam, but this was also quickly followed by cheers of viva il Papa – long live the Pope. No-one outside knew at this stage who the Pope was, and they were already praying that he would have a long life and a fruitful ministry as the Successor of St Peter.

From the moment of his election, his authority within the Church is absolute, universal and immediate"

As we patiently awaited news of the man who had entered as a cardinal but was leaving as Pope, every twitch on the curtains on the loggia of blessings above St Peter's Basilica drew cheers at the prospect of the announcement.

Inside Cardinal Bob

Prevost was carefully setting aside his red robes, and dressing in the papal white. From the moment of his election, his authority within the Church is absolute, universal and immediate.

On the balcony, meanwhile, Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, was announcing the news that we were to have our first American Pope. It is fair to say the announcement was greeted by a chorus of puzzled glances as people looked at one another wondering if they'd understood the Latin properly. The 69-year-old Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops had been chosen. and he had chosen the name Leo XIV in deference to Leo XIII - the saintly man who is regarded as the father of modern day catholic social teaching.

Leo XIV cut a fine figure when he appeared on the balcony a few minutes later. He had decided to wear the papal mozetta – the red cape that Francis had set aside causing so much commentary – and adopted the more traditional style associated with solemn moments like this within the Church.

#### Journey

At the same time Leo XIV made it clear that the decisive journey of the Church following the Second Vatican Council, culminating in synodality, was a path he would continue. He paid tribute to Francis, insisting that the Church would continue to lead humbly in the world.

In his early days and pronouncements, Pope Leo XVI has clearly taken to the papal office with gusto. He almost looks as if he has been Pope for decades and has shown a comfort and tranquillity amid high office that is bodes well for the future.

#### **I** will never forget these days as long as I live"

As our group of 50 Irish pilgrims made their way to the restaurants and pizzerias around St Peter's Basilica after receiving the Pope's first blessing, they were all in agreement that it was an unforgettable experience.

"I will never forget these days as long as I live," one Irishwoman told me. The following morning, our pilgrims walked in solemn procession to St Peter's Basilica, through the Holy Door, carrying the jubilee cross – 'long live Pope Leo XIV' was our constant prayer.

 Michael Kelly is Director of Public Affairs for the papal charity Aid to the Church in Need, Ireland and author of the forthcoming book In Christ we are One: Pope Leo XIV and the future of humanity which will soon be published by ACN Church Resources DAC and is available for pre-order now by emailing sales@acnchurchresources.ie

# Which Leo will be the inspiration for the pontificate of our new Pope?



**Dualta Roughneen** 

he election of Robert Cardinal Provost as Pope has been met with a certain amount of warmth outside of the Church itself, which is surprising considering the profile of the man. In a time that sees the Church as an anachronism in the 'developed' world, an American ought to have felt like a step back after Pope Francis' election. Pope Francis was the first non-European Pope, and a Pope from a country not quite considered to be from the wealthy hemisphere. Right now, being American is possibly the worst thing a person can identify as when taking on a global leadership role, let alone a leadership role in a Church that has its majority faithful in the global south.

**Robert Francis Prevost** was born on September 14, 1955, in Chicago. His father was a United States Navy veteran of World War II. In school, he was on the honour roll, he was yearbook editor-in-chief, secretary of the student council, and a member of the National Honor Society. He participated in speech and debate. All things to be suspicious of! He also has a Doctorate in Canon Law.

No doubt these things will come back to haunt him in due course when the sheen has worn off and the honeymoon period is over. What seems to have won over the literati for now is the assumption, affirmed by the Vatican, that his choice of name is an acknowledgment of the legacy of Leo XIII who was Pope from February 1878 until his death in July 1903, the fourth-longest reign of any pope.

#### Legacy

Leo XIII is - these days most well-known for his encyclical Rerum Novarum (Of Revolutionary Change), or Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor, which captured (rather than created from nothing) the essence of Catholic Social Teaching, at a time when the world was as divided as it is now, - if not more so – torn between the avarices of capitalism with its inhumane working conditions, and the utopian promises with the dystopian reality of communism. Leo XIII sought to navigate a narrow path at a time when the world needed an alternative to ideologies that sought each other's destruction

The appeal of Leo XIV is the hope (if not the promise) that he will build on the legacy of his 19th century predecessor, a champion of moderation and pragmatism and the quiet word in the swell of a world that has turned into a neverending shouting match and impossible argumentation. Many are drawn to the possibility that he will continue the legacy of Pope Francis, focusing on social justice, climate change, and environmentalism.

**The Church** right now is in search of a restoration of some prestige after being brought low once again"

Leo XIV was a missionary himself. He joined the mission in Peru in 1985 and was there until 1998. He returned again in 2014 as apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Chiclayo and titular Bishop of Sufar. As much of his career has been spent on mission as in his home country of the United States. There is an expectation that taking up Leo XIII's work on social justice through Rerum Novarum and with his connection to Latin America. that he will follow the path taken by Pope Francis through Laudato Si' and his emphasis on a poor Church.

If Leo XIII is the inspiration for the new Pope's pontificate, there may be more to it than social justice and *Rerum Novarum*. Catholics were attacked under Bis-

**6** Although the promise of synodality was to bring everyone together along an enlightened path of harmony, the reality is that it has sown more confusion and division"

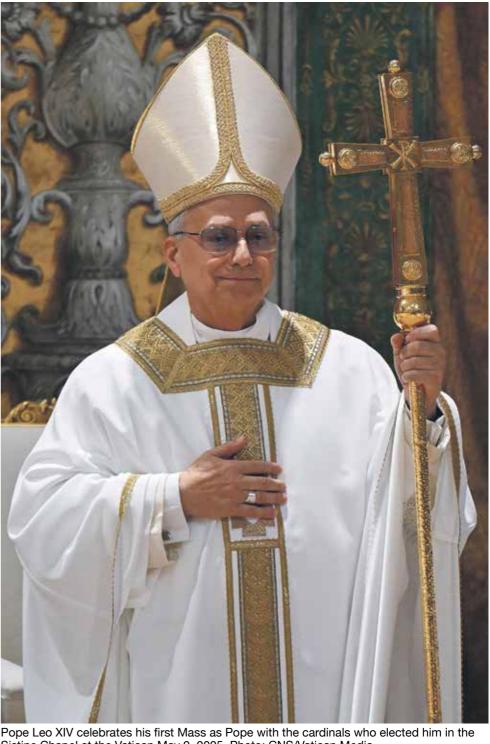
marck's Kulturkampf during the pontificate of Leo XIII in a manner that is reflective of what is happening in the Western World, albeit possibly with more subtlety now. Leo XIII was head of a Church brought to its knees at a time of drastic change with the loss of the Papal States. The Church right now is in search of a restoration of some prestige after being brought low once again.

#### Task

But what if Leo XIII is not the only Leo who inspired Cardinal Provost's choice of name? Leo the First, the Great, was Pope from 440 to 461. He was the inspiration for Pope Leo XIII's choice of name, so even if indirectly (and we do not know this for sure) his legacy could also be instructive for the new Pope.

Leo XIV will struggle to avoid dealing with similar divisions within the Church in the modern era. Although the promise of synodality was to bring everyone together along an enlightened path of harmony, the reality is that it has sown more confusion and division. The Church Leo XIV is tasked with leading is in an equally precarious position and it will take another great Pope to draw a line under the many issues that have dogged the synodal process, most clearly underlined by the schismatic positions being taken by the Church in Germany.

Leo the Great, like Leo XIII who spoke out for the dignity of the family and the human person in the face of capitalistic and communistic hegemonies, was equally passionate about defending the human person, qua person as the image of God. He said "Christian, acknowledge your dignity, and become a partner in the Divine nature. Refuse to return to old baseness through degenerate conduct. Remember the Head and Body of which you are a member. Recollect that vou were rescued from the power of darkness and



Sistine Chapel at the Vatican May 9, 2025. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media.

brought into God's light and kingdom.'

At a time when abortion, euthanasia, and the many other challenges to human dignity outlined in Dignitas Humanae are prowling at the metaphysical gates of the Church, Leo XIV may have to stand down the challenge of adversaries that are as much a threat as Attila the Hun was to Rome at the time of Leo I. We don't know what the future may bring, but given the unpredictability of the world we now live in, there may be a very real modern-day equivalent of Attila the Hun standing outside St Peters. Maybe it will be Ursula von der Leyen, or Donald Trump, or even Vladimir Putin. We know not what the future holds for the Church. The

19th and 20th centuries may feel like the distant past but the kidnapping of Pius VI and the incarceration of Pius VII are not that long ago.

**I** am excited to have a Pope with a missionary spirit and a defender of the dignity of the human person"

As CEO of Christian Blind Mission Ireland, an international development NGO fighting to end the cycle

of poverty and disability, I am excited by the election of Pope Leo XIV and the potential that he will further the promotion of Catholic Social Teaching inspired by Leo XIII. I am excited to have a Pope with a missionary spirit and a defender of the dignity of the human person. As a Catholic, I am excited by the prospect of a Canon lawyer, in the spirit of Pope Leo the Great, bringing clarity and precision to the many issues that are causing confusion amongst the faithful.

The task ahead, in a world of growing inequality, a world ever more divided and divisive, in a Church that is ever more divided and divisive, is a great one for Pope Leo XIV. He will need the heart of a lion.

#### **18 Feature**

Leo VII

Papacy: 936–939

Leo VII sought to renew the

Church through monas-tic reform, supporting St

Odo of Cluny, one of the great leaders of the Cluniac

movement. While his reign

was short, it helped lay the

groundwork for a revival of

spiritual discipline in West-

Not canonised

ern Europe.

Leo VIII

# The papal pride: Every Leo who sat in St Peter's Chair

#### Pedro Esteva

#### St Leo I (Leo the Great)

Papacy: 440–461 Canonised Saint | Doctor of the Church

The first pope to bear the title 'the Great', Leo I was a theological giant and a steady leader in times of crisis. He fiercely defended

orthodox Christology during the Council of Chalcedon, helped define the doctrine of Christ's two natures, and is credited with strengthening the primacy of the Roman See. In 452, he famously persuaded Attila the Hun to spare Rome, a defining moment of moral and political authority. His writings, especially his sermons and letters, shaped Church doctrine for centuries.

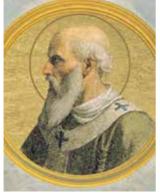


Saint Leo the Great (Pope Leo I), painting by Francisco de Herrera el Mozo, Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain. Photo: Public domain via Museo del Prado

#### St Leo II

Papacy: 682–683 Canonised Saint

Though his reign lasted under a year, Leo II left a lasting mark. He confirmed the acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, which condemned Monothelitism, preserving the Church's teaching on Christ's full humanity and divinity. A gifted musician, he promoted Gregorian chant and composed hymns for the Divine Office. Remembered for his humility and charity, Leo II was a quiet but steady shepherd.



Portrait of Pope Leo II, unknown artist. Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, Rome. Photo: Public domain.



LEO. III . PAPA . ROMANVS

Portrait of a Pope Leo III, engraving by Giovanni Battista Cavalieri, from Pontificum Romanorum effigies, 1580, Rome. Photo: Public domain.



Portrait of Pope Leo IV, chromolithograph from Ritratti e biografie dei romani pontefici by L. Tripepi, 1879, Rome. Photo: Public domain



FAPA + ARDEATINVS

Portrait of a Pope Leo V, engraving by Giovanni Battista Cavalieri, from Pontificum Romanorum effigies, 1580, Rome. Photo: Public domain.

Leo VI

Papacy: 928–929

Not canonised

turbulent era.



Portrait of a Pope Leo VI, engraving by Giovanni Battista Cavalieri, from Pontificum Romanorum effigies, 1580, Rome. Photo: Public domain.

#### St Leo III Papacy: 795-816

Canonised Saint Leo III forever changed European history when he crowned Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day, 800 AD, reviving the Western imperial tradition. This act deepened the Church's alliance with the Frankish Empire and strengthened papal authority over secular rulers. Despite personal attacks and attempts to

remove him, Leo survived

In the face of Saracen raids,

Leo IV responded not only

by restoring Rome's sacred

sites but also by fortify-

ing the city itself, building the Leonine Wall around

Vatican Hill. He organised

a Christian fleet that won

the Battle of Ostia in 849,

safeguarding Rome's har-

bour. His leadership in crisis

Leo V's papacy was cut short

after just a few weeks when

he was deposed and impris-

oned by antipope Christo-

pher. Little is known of his pontificate, which unfolded during one of the most cha-

otic periods in papal his-

tory. A fleeting reign, lost

in the shadows of intrigue.

With a reign lasting just over a year, Leo VI's time as pope left few records. His

pontificate occurred during

the Saeculum obscurum, a

dark age of corruption and

secular interference in the

papacy. A quiet figure in a

blended piety with action.

Leo V

Papacy: 903

Not canonised

and became a symbol.

St Leo IV

Papacy: 847-855

Canonised Saint



Portrait of Pope Leo VII. Photo: Public domain.



Portrait of Pope Leo VIII, Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, 1493.



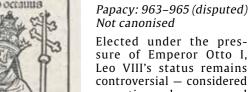
Saint Leo IX, 19th-century painting, Église Saint-Kilian, Dingsheim, Alsace, France. Photo: Public domain.



#### Leo X Papacy: 1513-1521 Not canonised

A Medici prince-turnedpope, Leo X presided over the Church during the dawn of the Protestant Reformation. He excommunicated Martin Luther, but is also remembered for lavish spending, the commissioning of art, and expanding St Peter's Basilica. His papacy was both culturally rich and spiritually unprepared for the storm to come.

Portrait of Pope Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi, Raphael, Uffizi Gallery, Florence. Photo: Public domain via Uffizi Gallery.



an antipope by some, and legitimate by others. His reign was marked by fierce debate over imperial influence in papal elections.

Photo: Public domain.

#### St Leo IX

Papacy: 1049-1054 Canonised Saint

A reform-minded pope, Leo IX tackled simony, enforced clerical celibacy, and sought to purify the Church's leadership. His legates' mutual excommunications with Constantinople in 1054 marked the beginning of the Great Schism. Revered for his holiness and courage, he helped set the stage for deeper reform. A holy reformer in a time of coming division.

#### Leo XI

Papacy: April 1605 (27 days) Not canonised

Nicknamed the "Lightning Pope", Leo XI reigned for just 27 days before dying of illness. Though brief, his election showed the enduring political influence of the Medici family, to which he belonged.

#### Leo XII

Papacy: 1823–1829 Not canonised

A deeply conservative pope who reigned after the Napoleonic Wars, Leo XII sought to restore moral rigor and traditional authority. He cracked down on liberal movements, emphasised papal control over the Papal States, and was admired for his austere personal holiness.



Papacy: 1878–1903 Not canonised

The longest-reigning pope of the 19th century, Leo XIII is best remembered for his 1891 encyclical Rerum Novarum, which laid the foundation for modern Catholic social teaching. He opened the Vatican Archives, promoted Thomistic philosophy, issued 11 Marian encyclicals, and battled both socialism and unbridled capitalism. His vision of faith engaged deeply with modernity. A pope for workers, scholars, and the modern world.



Portrait of Pope Leo XI (Alessandro Ottaviano de' Medici), engraving by Jacob Matham. Photo: Public domain.



Portrait of Pope Leo XII, Charles Picqué, Grootséminarie, Mechelen, Belgium. Photo: Public domain.



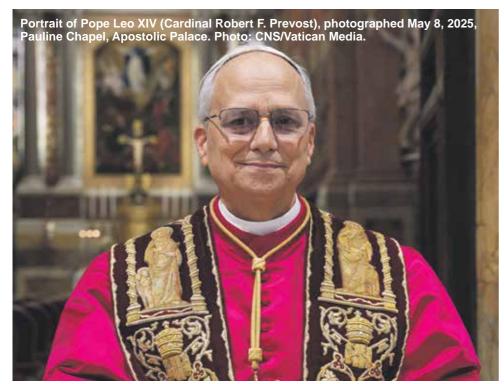
Official portrait of Pope Leo XIII, remembered for Rerum Novarum (1891). Photo: OSV News/Library of Congress.

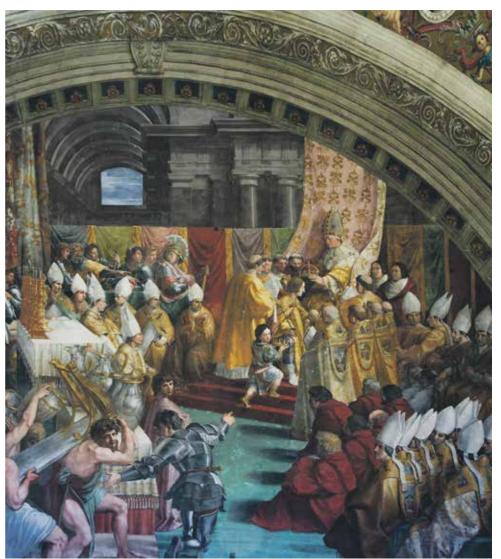
#### Pope Leo XIV

Papacy: 2025-present Not canonised (current pontiff)

Elected in 2025, Pope Leo XIV is the first pope from the United States and also holds Peruvian citizenship. Formerly Cardinal Robert Prevost, an Augustinian, he brings decades of experience as a missionary,

bishop, canon lawyer, and prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops. Fluent in multiple languages — including English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Quechua, and Latin — Leo XIV is seen as a bridge-builder, known for pastoral humility and administrative skill. By choosing the name Leo, he invokes a lineage of strength, clarity, and social teaching — from Leo the Great to Leo XIII.





Coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III, detail from Raphael, Vatican Museums. Photo: Public domain via Vatican Museums.

POPE FRANCIS IN IRELAND COMMEMORATIVE SOUVENIR

<text>

*The Irish Catholic* and Columba Books are proud to present a collaborative souvenir coffee-table book of Pope Francis' visit to Ireland and the events of World Meeting of Families. This once-in-a-lifetime photographic record features WMOF events from around the country and reports from the award-winning journalists of *The Irish Catholic*.

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#### 20 | Feature

# All hands to the plough in Ardfinnan and sister parishes



Ann Marie Foley

rdfinnan has seen nothing but change in recent years. Yet in the rural parish somehow everything continues - sacraments from birth to death, celebrations of birthdays, weddings, and prayer most recently in front of the Carlos Acutis shrine.

The combined parishes of Ardfinnan, Ballybacon, Grange, Newcastle, Fourmilewater, Touraneena and The Nire, or seven churches in four parishes, has three priests with one in his 90s. When Fr Michael Toomey was appointed in 2020 to these parishes on the borders of counties Tipperary and Waterford, it was unclear how it would all work.

"I had to adjust Sunday Mass times slightly so each church has a Mass. We have two vigils and three Sunday Masses. That was always my intention, to keep that going," Fr Toomey told *The Irish Catholic*. So when he is on his own he can celebrate all Masses.

Normally the three priests cover the Sunday Masses. Fr Jim Denmead looks after St Mary's Touraneena and St Helena's The Nire, and Fr Toomey and Fr Bernard Frawley look after the other churches. When no priest is available weekday Masses can be cancelled.

Fr Toomey is administrator to all the parishes and depends on volunteers to be hands-on with everything from caring for churches to collections.

"I say to people: 'it's your parish. If you want your parish to stay open you have to be involved. I could be moved tomorrow'," he said.

#### **Identities**

The parishes have retained their own identities with voluntary pastoral councils, and finance safeguarding personnel and an employed parish secretary.

"I am blessed I have people here to cover and keep an eye on things. My main focus is the parish councils. I rely on them. We might meet two or three times a year - the chairpersons in particular - if I need to make a decision we have to agree on it."



From Ardfinan, Newcastle and Fourmilewater parishes, Kathleen Moloney, Eileen Condon, Joan O'Dwyer, Nuala O'Mahony, Anne O'Leary, Kitty Burke

#### **66** I say to people: 'it's your parish. If you want your parish to stay open you have to be involved. I could be moved tomorrow"

first Penance practice, Peggy

O'Gorman described her role

in safeguarding as going to

mass every week when chil-

dren are present. All adults

and children sign in and out

on the log book in the sac-

risty / office area. Having

been Garda vetted, Peggy O

Gorman goes regularly to

laig Lillis, Youth and Young

Adult Ministry Officer in the

diocese, spoke at Masses

across the churches seeking

Faith Reps for young people,

and for the wider Diocesan

Team. She also works on John

Paul II Awards, and has taken

over some of that from Fr

Parishioners also attended an

evening of reflection in Clon-

mel on proclaiming the Word

of God as readers/Ministers of

resented at a gathering in

Clonmel with volunteers

from across the Diocese

of Waterford and Lismore

The parishes were rep-

During the past year Nod-

diocesan courses.

Toomev.

the Word.

Reflection

They also back him up by taking responsibility for unpopular decisions.

There are four parish schools for confirmations, penance and first communions, and one week is set aside for each sacrament. "Each school has their own but I look after them all in one week. If I had to do it every other week it would be too demanding, it's good time management," said Fr Toomey. While he offers pastoral care in the schools he has neither the time nor energy to be on any boards of management.

#### People are not as willing to do things now as before Covid – that is across the board"

Parishes depend more and more on volunteers but since Covid a notice in the newsletter is not as effective as asking each individual for help.

"People are not as willing to do things now as before Covid – that is across the board," said Fr Toomey.

There are more than 50 altar servers in the parish, facilitated by parish safeguarding and parents who sometimes get involved in parish life with their children. A member of the safeguarding team is always present when altar servers and school children are in the church. When *The Irish Catholic* visited Ardfinnan at

lee Year, starting with a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi. In August they celebrate the 60th anniversary of the opening of Ardfinnan Parish church. One of the pastoral council remembers 'selling lines' to fundraise for that revealing she has served the parish for as long as the church has been standing.

He's inquisitive now and he sees Carlos Acutis is young, same as him. He doesn't go to the other saint's statues in the church"

A statue and a shrine to Carlos Acutis in the Holy Family Church Ardfinnan sees visitors from all over Ireland. Young people visit the shrine of someone who is depicted holding a mobile phone and with a football at his feet.

Noreen Sullivan, sacristan Grange, spoke of a teen, aged



Fr Michael Toomey

14. "Getting him to Mass on a Saturday evening is a push. But with Carlos Acutis he is actually asking questions, and comes into the church and stands at the shrine. And he is asking how young was he? And how did he die? He's inquisitive now and he sees Carlos Acutis is young, same as him. He doesn't go to the other saint's statues in the church."

#### **Online outreach**

As well as online, Mass from Ardfinnan church, goes out once a week on *RTÉ News* channel. This began during Covid but Fr Toomey says there is still a place for online and TV Mass for those who are physically unable to attend in person.

"I've had letters from people in prisons, nursing homes, hospitals and so on. There was a lot of criticism after Covid that that should have all stopped," said Fr Toomey "People should be at Mass when they physically can. This is really for people who can't."

Ardfinnan National School is next door to the church. Brid Quinlivan, principal, was present with teacher Damien Canning for practice for First Penance when *The Irish Catholic* visited.

"Our sacrament classes, 2nd and 6th come to Mass at 9.30 every Friday morning. It sets up and etiquette – they are familiar with coming to Mass. They find it a very peaceful and calm time," she said. Practices increase ahead of Confirmations, First Penance and First Communion. There are also Masses during term for occasions like Christmas, staff retirements, and pupil graduations. "A lot of our celebrations start in the church," said Brid Quinlivan. There are just under 250 pupils in the school with 25-30 per class.

Ardfinnan sacristan is Kathleen Moloney who said: "If I'm needed I'll be here. I love it, I'm retired and I've met a lot of people here."

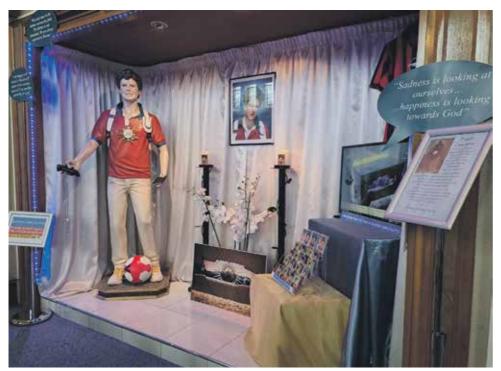
Anne O'Leary is chairperson of the pastoral council and board of management of the school. She is one of 12 pastoral council members from Ardfinnan, Ballybacon and Grange. She finds it helpful to meet with the council and with other pastoral councils.

"We hear what they are doing and get ideas as well. It's Jubilee year, so we are hoping to add an event to that, and add to the diocesan events," she said.



#### community hall really is the hub, it is great to be able to help people especially for funerals"

Nuala O'Mahony is on the Ardfinnan pastoral council and is the weekend key holder for the church. "I help out whenever I can," she said. She and Kitty Burke are very busy in the community hall which caters for everything from funerals



Shrine of Carlos Acutis in Ardfinnan Church



Fr Michael Toomey speaks to schoolchildren.

to birthday parties, singing to Taekwondo groups and toddler and other morning events. On weekends St Declan's Way walkers can pass through or the Honda 50 ride to raise funds for the local Clogheen Hospital.

"The community hall really is the hub, it is great to be able to help people especially for funerals," they said.

Kitty Burke also looks after the church since the very capable previous incumbent Paddy Noone passed away and said "I told Paddy I'd look after his job." They all miss him and were pleased that his name was put on a chalice. Eileen Condon is chair of

Eileen Condon is chair of pastoral council at Our Lady of the Assumption Newcastle, and Our Lady and St Laurence Fourmilewater, and eight members meet every couple of months or when the need arises. They also meet with other groups in other parishes as they did with Bishop Cullinan recently and brainstormed about what to do for the Jubilee Year.

"We are conscious that Fr Michael is officiating over four parishes. He is very efficient and capable but with events we tried to think of what is going on already, what we do, what can we add to that for the Year of Hope? rather than have whole load of new events that might be overwhelming," she said. For example after the annual blessing of the graves they might add hospitality.

Joan O'Dwyer is joint treasurer of Newcastle pastoral council as well as chairperson. She is a reader and in the parish office/ shop dealing with queries and mass cards.

#### They all agree that they still see the same people in the same seats in their churches every Sunday, but they are ageing"

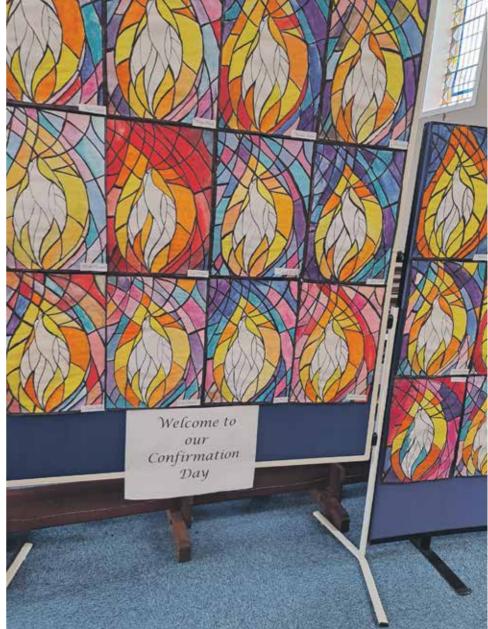
Grange and Ballybacon: In Ballybacon Jim O Leary and Geoffrey Burke take care of collections and the development fund for upkeep of churches. They also help out in St Mary's Ballybacon church and work with the sacristan, Tony Palm, who is there with 25 years.

Noreen Sullivan is the sacristan in St Nicholas Church Grange and she said: "You always have someone popping in and out and lighting a candle. It is open all day."

Despite all the changes with one priest over several parishes they all agree that they still see the same people in the same seats in their churches every Sunday, but they are ageing.

"If a parish stalwart dies they are not replaced," said Jim O Leary. "If you look at the profile in Ballybacon each Sunday there are not many under 50-60 years of age." He and the others can remember a time when there were three priests, each with their own house in Ardfinnan, and at one time there was a priests' house in Grange.

When Covid struck Grange held its own confirmations with children from the school next door. That has continued with 25 children confirmed this year. Last Christmas the school nativity play was in the church.



Artwork from the Confirmation Class



From Ballybacon and Grange, Jim O'Leary, Noreen Sullivan, Geoffrey Burke



# **Parliament is not the pub – let's** show a little more seriousness

was thinking about how I'd start this article when my mind turned to the Camogie 'skorts vs shorts' debate. I have been marvelling mentally at the capacity of so many politicians to get worked up about such a trivial matter. And then a text to my phone from Gena Heraty in Haiti. Gena. from Westport, has spent most of her adult life in Kenscoff, about 10 km outside the capital, Port au Prince. She works with NPH (Our Little Brothers and Sisters) caring for orphaned children. She received the Oireachtas Human Dignity Award in 2016 and we have kept in touch a bit over the years. Haiti is a tragic, chaotic place - caught in the crosshairs of natural disasters, failing governance and brutal gang warfare and violence. Up to now, I had understood that some suburbs like Kenscoff were relatively safe. But now this from Gena:

"Death, violence and terror - the daily reality in Kenscoff. So many of our employees no longer sleep in their homes at night. Once it begins to get dark they go down deeper into the valley, in an attempt to avoid the raiding gangs. Last Friday, an employee rang me sometime before 4 am: 'Gena, stay alert, there is a lot of shooting over the hill.' We talked about another employee that lives in the area where the gangs were shooting. I hung up and called that employee: 'We are hiding in the fields. We ran because there was shooting

A man and child take cover from gunf the National Pali Port-au-Prince, I Photo: OSV New Tedy Erol, Reute re near ce in aiti. Ralph

everywhere.' She told me later that 12 of them crammed into a garden shack and when they couldn't all sleep there, some slept outside.

#### **Employees**

One of our night employees was frantically trying to reach her family. They live right beside the police station. And that police station was under attack. Her neighbour was killed and other family members were injured. Another employee told me she and her kids literally slid and rolled down the hills as they ran for their lives. 'We just ran. They shot people in front of me. They pulled and dragged my neighbour. It was awful. They kidnapped people. They made them carry the dead bodies of gang members that had been shot.'

Automatic gunfire keeps everyone awake at night and fear grows and swells throughout the valleys. The nights seem endless when you are afraid. Schools are closed and countless families have left their homes. These are dark days.'

#### Voice

raise my voice about what is happening there. In the Seanad I spoke of the crisis of gang violence, rape and mur-

n my last article, I mentioned my question to the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, about the case of Livia Bolt, the British woman who was convicted of a criminal offence for standing in the vicinity of an abortion clinic with a sign saying 'Here to talk, if you want'.

I asked how this treatment was 'proportionate and permissible' under Article 10 of the European Convention which protects freedom of expression and the right to receive information.

Commission-The er's reply reinforced my view that so much of der, noted the derisory size of the international police mission there (They have 1.000 personnel instead of the 2,500 originally planned for). I called for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Harris, to attend a debate in the Seanad and state what the Irish Government could do in an effort to help the situation.

I wish I could do more. Politicians, in or out of

what passes for 'Human Rights' discourse nowa-days is hypocritical blather coming from the mouths of academics who are slaves to a prevailing consensus. The Commissioner noted that the European Court of Human Rights has found on several occasions that states «are under the positive obligation to make abortion rights they recognise in law readily and fairly available in practice» and that this "positive obligation may involve the adoption of measures designed to secure respect for private life even in the sphere of relations between individuals". He notes that in "situations where campaigners' right

Government, have a special responsibility to take an interest, to speak up when we can, even if there is only a slight possibility of making an improvement in people's lives. It's an embarrassment that so many allow themselves to be distracted by cultural issues like whether women should wear skorts or shorts when playing sport. That's for the pub, not the parliament.

to freedom of expression may come into conflict with the rights of private and family life of those who seek access to abortion, states should strike a balance between conflicting rights." He says that individual States have flexibility (a 'margin of appreciation') in these situations but should ensure that "restrictions pursue a legitimate aim, are proportionate and necessary in a democratic society."

He could have put it more simply: "When it comes to those who regard abortion as an injustice, don't expect me or anyone in the Human Rights hierarchy to defend their freedom of expression in any significant way."

• We just ran. They shot people in front of me. They pulled and dragged my neighbour. It was awful. They kidnapped people. They made them carry the dead bodies of gang members that had been shot"

ope Leo has arrived. And what a surprising moment it is. The most intriguing American in the world is no longer You Know Who. Thank God for that. More relevant than his American nationality is that he is a native English speaker. The Anglosphere may not be where the Church is most vibrant but the task of evangelising people and culture is for everywhere, and progress in the English-speaking world matters hugely.

One American whom I met in Leinster House on Friday, a card-carrying Democrat, was not too happy. Because, as he told me, the Pontiff formerly known as Robert Prevost was a registered Republican at one point and voted in several Republican primaries.

If I were to guess, and it would only be a guess, the new Pope's past political preferences may reflect a concern about the Democratic Party's deathly embrace of abortion and other attacks on human dignity and perhaps also the effective silencing of dissenting voices within that Party's ranks. But as Pope he will be outside of party politics and will have things to say, hopefully, that will alert us all to the demands of the Gospel.

Last week, Gena asked me to

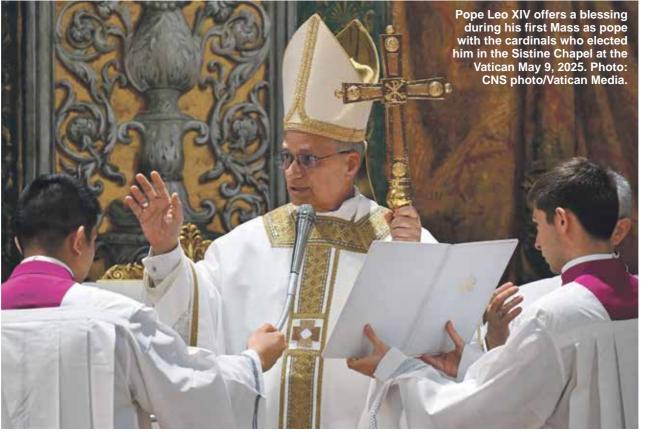


# **Pope Leo XIV urges Church to renew mission with faith and humility in inaugural homily**

n his inaugural homily as Bishop of Rome and universal pastor of the Catholic Church, Pope Leo XIV called on the faithful to recommit to the mission of the Gospel with courage, humility, and trust in God's grace. Preaching in St Peter's Basilica before an international congregation of cardinals, clergy, and laity, the newly elected Pope reflected on the Church's enduring identity and the challenges of modern discipleship.

"I will sing a new song to the Lord because he has done marvels," Pope Leo began in English, quoting the responsorial psalm before continuing his homily in Italian. The moment marked a deliberate gesture of welcome to a global Church and set the tone for a reflection rooted both in Scripture and contemporary realities.

Drawing on the Gospel scene from Matthew 16, where Peter confesses Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," the pope emphasized the dual responsibility of the Church: to guard the revealed truth and to live it out in a world that often misunderstands or rejects it.



Pope Leo compared his own succession to that of St Peter and described his new role as a "faithful administrator" of the Gospel, chosen not through merit but by divine grace and the trust of the College of Cardinals.

"God has called me by your election to succeed the Prince of the Apostles," he said, "so that the Church may be ever more fully a city set on a hill... not through the grandeur of her buildings, but through the holiness of her members." He warned against two attitudes that persist in today's society: one that considers Jesus irrelevant or bothersome, and another that admires Him only as a moral leader while denying His divinity. These views, he said, reduce faith to sentiment or social ethics and fail to grasp the full promise of salvation. "Even today, there are

many settings in which the Christian faith is considered absurd, meant for the weak and unintelligent," he said. "Yet these are the very places where our missionary outreach is desperately needed."

In continuity with the vision of Pope Francis, Pope Leo underscored the importance of evangelisation "from the margins," the call to synodality, and a Church that listens and walks together. While his tone was more reserved and scholarly, he reaffirmed the Church's commitment to proclaiming Christ in a secularised and wounded world.

Quoting the early Church Father St Ignatius of Antioch, the Pope called for leadership rooted in humility and selfeffacement: "To move aside so that Christ may remain, to make oneself small so that he may be known and glorified."

The homily concluded with an appeal for prayer and grace, invoking Mary, Mother of the Church, as the Pope begins a pontificate many believe will focus on governance, doctrinal clarity, and continuing the work of ecclesial reform - particularly in areas such as Canon Law, highlighted during the global synodal process.

As the bells of St Peter's rang and the congregation applauded warmly, a new chapter began - not one of rupture, but of rooted renewal.

## We give thanks for the election of Pope Leo XIV

#### Bishop Martin Hayes

t is indeed surprising that a North American has been chosen to be our spiritual leader and yet it's inspiring as Pope Leo XIV served as a missionary priest in South America. We give thanks for the continuity with and his stated appreciation of Pope Francis who called each of us to be 'missionary disciples' (*Evangelii Gaudium*).

The choice of Pope Leo XIV by the Holy Spirit challenges all of us to continue to seek justice for those suffering the effects of the gap between rich and poor in our world, the impact of climate change and the consequences of violence and war. We pray with Pope Leo XIV as he takes up the challenge to bring social justice to the fore in our world. No doubt he will be inspired by his chosen namesake Pope Leo XIII, the father of the social teaching of the Catholic Church. It too is a point of continuity with Pope Francis who gave expression to our social teaching in Laudato Si' on Care for our Common Home and Fratelli Tutti on the value of fraternity in ensuring justice and peace.

It is inspiring and a source of joy that Pope Leo XIV has affirmed

the ongoing synodal process in the Church, our journeying together in conversations of faith. It ensures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a continuing greater role for all the People of God in the pastoral outreach and in the governance of the Church.

It is inspiring that Pope Leo XIV is of the Augustinian Congregation which was founded in the spirit of St Augustine who though struggled with sin converted to Christianity aided by the prayers of his mother, St Monica. In a world searching for meaning, we pray that Pope Leo XIV may continue to be inspired by the words of St Augustine in his Confession, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You"

It is inspiring that the first words of Pope Leo XIV to the world recall the Easter greeting of Jesus to his disciples, "Peace be with you!" In our world beset with over 130armed conflicts, Pope Leo XIV declared, "I, too, would like this greeting of peace to enter your hearts, to reach your families and all people, wherever they are; and all the peoples, and all the earth that we would have peace from the heart". The demeanour of Pope Leo XIV, as he was revealed to the world on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, exuded an inner peace and offers hope.

Therefore, we give thanks for a mathematician, a canon lawyer, a religious missionary priest, a bishop of the global south, and a cardinal familiar with the workings of the Church in Rome who will now lead the Catholic Church throughout the world. We offer our prayers for his pastoral leadership, spiritual guidance in engaging with the world and in building bridges with all the peoples of the world.

Thanks be to God, the Holy Spirit continues to surprise, challenge and inspire us to live the Gospel of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

# Leo XIV: the conclave opens and relaunches in America



Dr Massimo Faggioli

he 2025 conclave, which was quickly resolved on the second day, elected an American Augustinian to the papacy, Robert Francis Prevost, who chose Leo XIV as his name. In the days preceding the conclave, two other Americans had been seen in the Vatican, with different relationships with the Church, but both interested in including it in a nationalist political-religious plan. On April 20, the day before he died, there had been an audience between Pope Francis and Vice President JD Vance, a neo-Catholic and aspiring heir to the Trumpian movement. Then, on the day of Pope Francis' funeral, the presence of President Donald Trump, always with his studied rudeness, but this time silenced by the architecture of the Vatican Basilica in the iconic moment of the one-onone meeting with the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The conclave indirectly responded to the two Americans in command of the United States, who took on the task of converting America to the God of 'Make America Great Again', by electing a Pan-American pope, born in Chicago, graduated from Villanova University in Philadelphia (where I have taught since 2016), and then a missionary in Peru for twenty years before arriving in the Vatican as prefect of the dicastery that has the task of helping the pope choose bishops for Catholic churches around the world. The conclave thought about much more, not just Trump and Vance. But the message launched by the cardinals resonates particularly in the United States, which is at the centre of the identity crisis of the 'West' with which the Church no longer identifies but from which it cannot detach itself. By electing Prevost, the conclave also sent a message to Europe in this moment of political soul-

searching. Leo XIV is a Pope of the Americas, in the plural. He is a global Catholic, born in a



Pope Leo XIV visits the chapel in the papal apartment in the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican May 11, 2025. The Vatican has not said whether the new pope intends to live there. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

key city for multiculturalism in the USA like Chicago, a missionary in Latin America - he also has Peruvian citizenship. He worked in the Vatican helping Francis in the choice of new bishops, a crucial role. Most importantly, he is the first pope from the United States: a taboo has been broken. Few imagined it. It was difficult to imagine a pope from a world superpower, and it never happened in modern Church history. But, paradoxically, Trumpism has upset the global order and helped break this taboo.

#### American progressives will have to understand that their positions on gender and sexual morality do not exactly match those of the papacy and of many global Catholics"

Prevost is an Augustinian. Compared to the Jesuits, they are more disenchanted with modernity, the secular world and politics. It will be interesting to see how Leo XIV will frame various issues (one of the most sensitive today in reference to Augustine: just war doctrine). But clearly his thinking on Augustine is very different from that of JD Vance and many American illiberal or anti-liberal Catholics.

It is difficult to predict his path on divisive issues within the Church. Appointing women to leadership roles, as Francis has done, is the easiest thing. The difficult thing is to address the issue of the role of women in ministry and the diaconate in particular. Francis was opposed to this. We'll see if Prevost continues to appoint women to leadership positions, or if he goes in a different direction. This is one area where there may be differences between popes-we may be surprised one way or another. On the issue of gender, LGBTQ, and sexuality, Prevost spoke undiplomatically years before he was elected Pope. But there is a difference between the way a prelate speaks and the way a Pope speaks. However, American progressives will have to understand that their positions on gender and sexual morality do not exactly match those of the papacy and of many global Catholics.

#### Challenges

Prevost embodies an idea of anti-nationalist Catholicism. This is something on which Catholicism has remained consistent for the last two centuries: there is a global Church that is allergic to nationalist projects, for theological and political reasons. Pope Francis had a natural inclination towards Asia. As a voung lesuit, he wanted to be a missionary in Japan. Francis's most interesting trips have been to Asia and the Middle East. We'll see what kind of world map Prevost will work on. Leo XIV will need strong support from the Curia. Pope Francis's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, will probably continue to be the head of Vatican diplomacy. We don't know what it means to have a pope from the US who deals with Russia, Israel, the Arab world – or China, which is now the number one problem for the Americans.

#### He knows them well; they cannot accuse him of not knowing America or of being anti-American"

It's also a new framework for his relations with the US. This will be a challenge for right-wing Trumpian Catholics in the US, but also, in a different way, for progres-

•• It's also a new framework for his relations with the US. This will be a challenge for right-wing Trumpian Catholics in the US, but also, in a different way, for progressive Catholics who thought Francis agreed with them on everything" sive Catholics who thought Francis agreed with them on everything. As an American, he can talk to American politicians and government in ways that were not possible for an Argentine Jesuit or the European popes who preceded Francis. He knows them well; they cannot accuse him of not knowing America or of being anti-American. It is more complicated to dismiss him as a 'Marxist' pope who doesn't like America. The attempt, from characters like Steve Bannon, has already begun. But Trump and Vance have already understood that this election changes the scenario.

The most symbolically effective measure for 'Make America Great Again' in these first months has come from the Vatican and not from the White House. It is a very different idea of greatness. At the same time, with Leo XIV in the Vatican, US Catholicism will be subject to the temptation of a new ultramontanism - as they said in the nineteenth century, "no hope without the pope" - of commercialisation and trivialisation in favour of a misunderstood national pride that is never in short supply in the US.

# **'The new Pope has Africa in his heart'**



The Augustinian mission in Nigeria brought widespread education that was essential for human development, **Luca Attanasio** hears

ope Leo XIV, besides a deep rootedness with South America, has a special bond with Africa developed through his many visits to the Augustinian missions on the continent both as Prior General of the Order (2001-2013) and as Cardinal Prefect of the Dicastery of Bishops.

"The new Pope has Africa in his heart," says confi-dently Fr Edward Daleng, Assistant and Procurator General of the Order of St Augustine (OSA), and General Councillor for Africa. "he has visited all our African missions, some of which he has been to many times. In Nigeria, where I was born, he came on at least a dozen occasions, including the one, in 2016, when we celebrated the Intermediate General Chapter in Nigeria for the first time". Augustinians are present in about ten African states and, as in other continents and areas of the world, they also have in Africa an international emanation of the order that brings together all the Augustinian religious institutes that practice Augustinian spirituality on the continent: the Augustinian Federation of Africa (AFA). The AFA comprises not only the Augustinian Circumscriptions of the Order of St Augustine, but also other institutes of consecrated life that share and observe Augustinian spirituality and live the Rule of St Augustine in their religious communities. The AFA was founded with the mission of spreading and deepening the spirituality of St Augustine throughout the African continent and its members are male and female religious



Crowds cheer in St Peter's Square as the newly elected Pope Leo XIV waves after his election, May 8, 2025. Photo: CNS/Pablo Esparza.

groups from the Augustinian circumscriptions in Africa and other Institutes of Consecrated Life throughout the continent. It has branches in Algeria, Benin, Kenya, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Togo and various other states on the continent.

#### There was a time when the government requisitioned all our educational centres and for years we had many problems"

"The first Augustinian missionaries to arrive in Nigeria were Irish"v says Fr Edward, and they set foot in my country in 1938. Nigeria became a province when Robert Francis Prevost was elected Prior General in 2001. From the beginning, the Augustinian mission in Nigeria has been characterised by a widespread work of education, with various schools and training, essential for human development. Unfortunately, there was a time when the government requisitioned all our educational centres and for years we had many problems. In 2006, thanks to His Holiness Leo XIV, our Prior General at the time, who cared so much about projects in the country, we were able to inaugurate a new boarding school for many boys and girls. To understand how much he cared for my country, it is enough to mention that he became Prior General on his 46th birthday, September 14, 2001, and by November he was already with us in Nigeria. He never missed a chapter, he was always present. He had planned a visit to the Nigerian province for next July, but I think he will have to postpone it ...?

#### Continuity

The attention of the newly elected Pope for Africa suggests a line of continuity with that shown by Francis in whose pontificate the Church and the African continent have experienced From the beginning, the Augustinian mission in Nigeria has been characterised by a widespread work of education, with various schools and training, essential for human development"

a new season characterised by greater centrality and new protagonism.

He is a great listener, always smiling, he always knows how to find a solution, and all this, for Africa, but for the whole Church, is a special gift"

"I believe that there will be continuity with Pope Francis," Fr Edward resumes, "and I am sure that Africa will be central in the pontificate of Leo XIV. He always showed special attention to our continent, as I said he loved to visit it and meet, understand and listen. I can say with certainty that among his best aptitudes are his ability to listen, to always remain humble, to put himself at service. I know him well, it was he who wanted me in Rome and sent me to serve in the papal sacristy during the papacy of Benedict XVI: he is a great listener, always smiling, he always knows how to find a solution, and all this, for Africa, but for the whole Church. is a special gift. If over the years so many African confreres have come to Rome for training, it is thanks to him. We who live here in Rome had the good fortune to meet him in our house every day, he came

here for Mass every morning, he always arrived early because he wanted to retire in prayer before Mass, a man of great spirituality".

•••• 'He has always cared about the mission in Kenya in a special way,' explains Fr Edward, 'since its inception in the early 1990s'"

His last visit to Africa was to Kenya at the end of 2024. There he presided over the dedication of the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Counsel at St Augustine's Convent in Karen, Nairobi Province, on December 10, 2024.

'He has always cared about the mission in Kenya in a special way,' explains Fr Edward, 'since its inception in the early 1990s. We have several centres there, some of which he himself wanted. Among these is a centre for AIDS patients that was opened in 2004'.

#### 26 Comment

# Wexford star laments Ireland's fractured Faith



Éanna Mackey

iarmuid Lyng has always been more than a hurler. The former Wexford captain known for his pace and skill in the yellow and gold, has long traded the pitch for the sacred landscape of Ireland's hills and heritage.

These days, he's more likely to be found deep in the wilds, guiding young people through Irish language retreats or foraging along our sandy Atlantic beaches. But beneath it all is a sense of grief—a feeling that somewhere along the way the Ireland of old has lost something irreplaceable.

À primary school teacher by trade, Lyng discovered his true calling to be one of preservation. Today he runs an Irish cultural centre with the aim of growing the language and the traditional crafts passed down for generations.

"I grew up in the '80s, and there was definitely a familial feeling growing up in the estate," Lyng recalls. "As I got older and as things started to go well here, it seemed like the more money that people made, the more individualistic their dreams became—and I don't think it has borne the fruit we thought it would."

For Lyng, that journey toward radical individualism, so bound up with the rejection of the Catholic Church in modern Ireland, has come at a serious cost.

#### Challenged

While he acknowledges that the Church's once-absolute authority in Ireland needed to be challenged, he cautions against what he sees as a national overcorrection - a tendency to discard the deeper wisdom and sense of fulfilment offered by faith.

"The element of control that the Church once had here needed to be broken up a little bit, but that's not to say that our faith needed to be put aside as well. We've thrown the baby out with the bathwater, whereas I believe that the element of faith—of something greater than ourselves— that is what brought us together."



Diarmuid Lyng of Wexford at the Allianz National Hurling League, Division 1A, Round 1, Wexford vs Waterford, Wexford Park, Wexford on February 18, 2007. Photo: Matt Browne/Sportsfile

#### Our role within globalism is not just to receive but to give. Our language, our music, even spirituality – they have all been uniquely shaped by our land, our weather, and our beliefs for millennia. That's our gift, and there is enormous value in that"

He talks about faith not as a set of strict rules but as a kind of steady rhythm that used to shape Irish life going to Mass, having a pint with friends, Sunday matches, neighbours coming together in good times and bad.

#### If you don't have it, or you simply can't afford something, it feels like there's something wrong with you"

That rhythm gave people something to hold onto, a sense of trust through both hope and hardship. Without it, Lyng feels we've drifted into a culture where people are more isolated and constantly comparing themselves, with consumerism filling the space once held by shared belief and community.

"It used to be that if you

didn't have a few quid for a pint on Friday night, someone else would cover it, and there was no shame in that," he says. "Now, if you don't have it, or you simply can't afford something, it feels like there's something wrong with you."

This breakdown of interdependence—of the social contract—has reverberated through Irish society. The housing crisis, the cost-ofliving spiral, and the disintegration of community spirit and life: all, in Lyng's view, are symptoms of a spiritual vacuum.

#### Roots

And this isn't just a local story. For Lyng, the roots of Ireland's cultural erosion lie also in how we've positioned ourselves within the modern globalised world.

"I think we've chased this American dream of individuality," he says. "We looked outside ourselves and championed a culture that's 300 years old instead of the one that's 3000. Instead of standing tall in our own culture and sharing it with the world, we got the message that what we had here was somehow shameful."

Yet Ireland's contribution to the global conversation, he argues, has always been one of giving—of enriching the world with our depth, richness and soul.

#### We've got international firms buying up vast swathes of housing and renting it back to us at prices we can't afford. That makes no sense"

"We've always had a role beyond this island," he says. "Our role within globalism is not just to receive but to give. Our language, our music, even spirituality – they have all been uniquely shaped by our land, our weather, and our beliefs for millennia. That's our gift, and there is enormous value in that."

It's a powerful counternarrative to the idea that modernisation must mean homogenisation. But globalisation, in Lyng's view, has come with darker costs too: the housing crisis, the hollowing out of native industry, and a political elite increasingly beholden to selfish interests and international capital rather than community welfare.

"People in Ireland, wherever they're from, can't afford to live here anymore," he says bluntly. "We've got international firms buying up vast swathes of housing and renting it back to us at prices we can't afford. That makes no sense."

#### **Values**

This, for Lyng, is where the old communal values—mutual care, spiritual grounding, cultural pride—should return to the centre of the national conversation. And while he insists that céad míle fáilte must always be at the heart of Irish identity, he argues that policy around immigration needs more honesty and clarity from the government.

"There's a point where we have to say we can't go further unless the infrastructure is there. But there's very little clarity from the government. Policy seems to reflect corporate interests more than it does the needs of the Irish people."

While the issue of immigration is dominating Irish public discourse, it has only intensified the conversation around the longstanding housing crisis – a crisis largely rooted in the disastrous policies of successive governments.

Diarmuid and his wife Siobhán are no exception to this reality. As they work to establish a retreat centre that blends Irish culture with a renewed sense of faith, they too face the challenges of an increasingly inaccessible housing market. In the face of these difficulties, Lyng has turned to the public for support to help bring their vision to life.

#### There's a rejuvenation happening-people are realising that these are gifts that have been handed down to us"

Yet for all the fragmentation and confusion to be seen in modern Ireland, Lyng is not without hope. In fact, he senses a stirring beneath the surface, especially in his own line of work — a quiet return to the traditions of faith, craft, and language. He sees it in the growing appetite for Irish-language immersion, in the revival of native skills, and in circles where Gaeilge is spoken as a living, breathing language of the soul.

"There's a rejuvenation happening—people are realising that these are gifts that have been handed down to us. The Irish language carries within it an acknowledgement of the unseen world, that there's something beyond ourselves, and that in itself provides great hope and certainty."

Lyng believes it's this spiritual inheritance that could help heal a frayed national spirit—one weighed down by rising anxiety, depression, and the everyday pressures of modern life, all made harder by years of policy decisions that have left many struggling.

"When you surrender to something greater, it takes the pressure off you. That's what faith gives you. You don't have to carry everything alone."

Post to: Letters to the Editor. The Irish Catholic.

Unit 3b, Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road, Sandyford, Dublin 18, D18 K277 or email: letters@irishcatholic.ie

# Letters

#### Letter of the week

#### **Religious symbols and a conversation with tradesmen**

Dear Editor, Over the past few months we have had a few very interesting experiences in our home. Because we have Catholic religious symbols and pictures in our house and on our walls, a couple of young tradesmen have opened up to us about the Faith and their positive views on the Church. One tradesman, whose work is installing alarm systems, began a conversation about his brother who is a Professor of Ethics in a college in Rome and a locksmith spoke to us about the tide starting to turn for the Church. In his words: "People are beginning to realise that there are forces in

society that seem to want to destroy the Church and they've had enough of the constant attacks." He then went on to tell us that his own brother is seriously thinking about a vocation to the priesthood.

Without the visual evidence that we would be sympathetic to what

they had to say, these men would probably have come, done their work and gone.

It was a joy for us to engage in these conversations and obviate what Breda O'Brien once called: 'the conspiracy of silence."

Yours etc., Judith Leonard Raheny, Dublin

#### Working out our salvation with 'fear and trembling'

Dear Editor, Mary O'Mahony's letter reports a very upbeat assessment of the big picture from a parish reconciliation service. The assessment is well represented by the letter's title 'Believing we are all on the road to salvation'.

I believe that this view is optimistic if not naive. The enduring presence of temptation and evil in our lives is made clear in the 'Our Father': "Lead us not into temptation [trial] but deliver us from evil." This is also the subject



of a sobering teaching from St Paul in Ephesians 6:10-18, about the great cosmic battle between good and evil that overshadows all our lives: "For we are not contending against flesh and blood but against the principalities,

against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (v12). All of this is echoed in the well-known 'St Michael Prayer'.

Far from advocating a lax/ presumptuous approach, St Paul speaks about working out our salvation with "fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). Yours etc..

> A.P. Breen Bronx, New York, USA

#### A new Pope in a world of 'alternative realities'

Dear Editor, The election of a relatively unknown cardinal, Robert F. Prevost, to the papacy has catapulted another Augustinian to world fame. History will judge if his pontificate is to be as influential as the actions of two other Augustinian friars: Martin Luther, much influenced by St Augustine, who spearheaded the Reformation, and Gregor Mendel, who in his monastic garden experimenting on peas - laid the foundation for the science of genetics.

It may also be noteworthy that Leo

XIII (d. 1903) lived into his 94th year, successor to Pius IX (d. 1878), who reigned for 32 years, the record to date. Of further interest is that this Leo, in 1892, appointed the first Apostolic Delegate to the USA, followed in 1899, however, by his censuring of 'Americanism', which sought to adapt Catholicism to contemporary ideas and practices. When, on May 8, Cardinal Prevost accepted his nomination as pope, he was doubtless aware of these considerations, in addition to having probably anticipated the somewhat exaggerated plaudits now directed at his predecessor's most famous encyclical (he devoted eleven to the Virgin Mary), Rerum Novarum. Leo XIII also supported the study of the natural sciences and said that Catholic historians should write objectively about topics. These initiatives continue to be relevant in a world plagued by 'alternative realities', as the new Pope will surely appreciate.

# 'he Church and women priests...

Dear Editor, The recent passing of Pope Francis has occasioned the usual comment from the usual quarters about the Catholic Church needing to ordain women priests; views coming from lapsed Catholics or avowed secularists. That being the case, they can be forgiven for being unfamiliar with the reasons why women are not ordained. It is not merely a question of

tradition, though 'tradition' comes into it, begun by the founder of the Church, one Jesus Christ. Jesus - as he himself explained, and St Paul and others confirmed - came to earth to be 'the New Adam' who would undo the disobedience of Genesis Adam, by "obedience to God, even unto death on the Cross" (Philippians 2:8). The Catholic Church believes the priesthood is a continuation of this role, when the Catholic priest celebrates Mass, he does not merely perform a series of ceremonial actions or words, but becomes 'in persona Christi' saying "this is my Body, my Blood". The Catholic Church is not free to alter this fact unless God does so - see the Catholic Catechism para.1577. A woman aiming to enter the Catholic priesthood is putting

herself forward to take on the role of Jesus, the New Adam and High Priest, in contradiction of the plan of salvation as devised by God. She would therefore be embarking on a career path with a 'No' to the very God she would claim to be serving, hardly an auspicious start to any career.

Yours etc. Nick Folley Carrigaline, Co. Cork

#### Essential women be offered alternatives

\_\_\_\_\_

**Dear Editor.** Thousands of people marched through the streets of Dublin on the Bank Holiday Monday protesting against the current abortion regime in Ireland. These people are not crazy. They know the genie is out of the bottle and that it will be a long time before a true culture of life is restored in Ireland. They are demanding, however, that the government now take steps to address the soaring abortion numbers since the 2018 legislation was introduced.

The main bone of contention is that at present all roads lead to abortion for anyone expressing doubts about a pregnancy. It is reasonable and indeed essential that women be offered information on available alternatives to enable them to make informed decisions about an irreversible procedure that can lead to heartbreak.

The reality of abortion regret was movingly demonstrated through the personal story offered by Guest speaker Ruth O'Sullivan, a nurse from Cork, who told the crowd in Molesworth Street: "People who campaign for abortion often describe it as 'compassionate'... I did at the time... but I assure you there's nothing compassionate or dignified about She indicated a huge shortfall of support- emotion, it...' practical and physical-for women who find themselves in the position she was in and described the overall experience as traumatic.

Another speaker, recently elected Aontú Senator Sarah O'Reilly, expressed her heartbreak that Cavan General Hospital has recently been added to the State abortion-provision centres. Challenging the hollow slogan "Trust women", she insisted that women experiencing crisis pregnancies be given the full truth, full support and a real chance to choose life.

The refusal of the government to engage with anyone other than the most radical elements of the pro-abortion movement has to be challenged, as argued by Pro Life Campaign spokesperson Eilis Mulroy. Surely a place at the decision-making table must be found for individuals and organisations offering life-affirming alternatives to termination?

> Yours etc.. Sinéad Boland Kilmacanogue, Co. Wicklow.

# Phasing out of fossil fuels

Dear Editor. Trócaire respectfully calls on the Irish Government to use its influence at the UN and EU to advocate for the Global Fossil Fuel Non Proliferation Treaty. This treaty can provide a road map towards a fair and positive phasing out of fossil fuels. It has been widely endorsed by legislators and NGOs throughout the world, including the WHO. The Irish government has already taken several positive measures to address the pervasive threat of climate change. We hope they will continue to build on this good work by pressing for the establishment of this treaty.

Yours etc., Tadhg Mulvey Trim, Co. Meath

#### Letters to the Editor

All letters should include the writer's full name, postal address and telephone numbers (day and evening). Letter writers may receive a subsequent telephone call from The Irish Catholic as part of our authentication process which does not amount to a commitment to publish.

We regret that we cannot give prior notice of a letter's publication date, acknowledge unpublished letters or discuss the merits of letters. We do not publish pseudonyms or other formulae to conceal the writer's identity, such as "name and address with editor". We do not print letters addressed to someone else, open letters, or verse. Letters to the Editor should only be sent to The Irish Catholic. and not other publications. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be shortened for space requirements

Yours etc, Peter Keenan Kinsale, Co. Cork .....

# **Out&About**

#### The future of the Church



LIMERICK: Pupils from Doon C.B.S. Primary School in St Patrick's Church after Mass to celebrate the Feast Day of Blessed Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian Brothers and Presentation Brothers. Also pictured are, Joanne O'Connell, School Principal, Elizabeth Doherty, Deputy School Principal, Donal O'Connell, teacher and Bro. James Dormer, School Board of Management.



**DUBLIN:** The Redemptoristine nuns in Drumcondra, Dublin 9 celebrated the Silver Jubilee of their Monastery on May 3. Pictures are Sr Lucy, Redemptoristine and Sr Gabrielle, Poor Clare from Ennis.



**CLARE:** Bishop Fintan Monahan and teacher Myriam Black pictured with pupils from St Flannan's College, Ennis who recently received JP2 Awards (four Gold Awards and four Papal Cross).



**DUBLIN:** Redemptorists and Redemptoristines: Fr Ryan, Sr Maire Brid, Bro. Kevin and Sr Angela during the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the Redemptoristine Monastery in Drumcondra on May 3.

#### 

# Young adults enjoy prayer and music on Lough Derg one-day retreat

A group of 24 young adults from across Ireland, aged 18-35yrs gathered on Lough Derg for an event called 'Sing for Joy!', a day for prayer and music. The gathering, organised by the Knights of St Columbanus and led by Msgr Joe McGuinness and Pauline Devaney, was the second organised on the island by the Order.

The first part of the day was focused on prayerful and reflective songs, and Msgr McGuinness encouraged the present to take to heart the words they were singing and appreciate music as a form of heartfelt prayer. Mrs Devaney spoke about how music can allow the Holy Spirit to move our minds and hearts, and how singing can calm one's mind and bring them into a prayerful place.

The participants went on a tour around Station Island after the first half of the day. In the afternoon, they prepared music for Mass celebrated by Msgr La Flynn, Prior of Lough Derg. In his concluding remarks to the participants, Msgr McGuin-

In his concluding remarks to the participants, Msgr McGuinness said that he hoped the day's experience had helped the young people to appreciate more deeply the gift and power of music as a profound means of prayer and worship.

#### Over €5,000 donated to cancer research in Cork

Tipperary woman donated €5,500 to the Mercy Hospital Foundation in Cork to support research into myelofibrosis, a rare and aggressive type of blood cancer. Máire Wixted raised the money in memory of her late husband who died

#### from the disease in 2004.

The money was raised last summer, when Ms Wixted opened her two-acre Garville Gardens in Upperchurch, Co. Tipperary to visitors who donated to the cause. These donations will be used to support the MOSAICC Cancer Trials, an initiative led by Dr Clodagh Keohane at Mercy University Hospital.

Speaking at the cheque presentation, Ms Wixted said "The fundraising efforts would not be possible without the support of our generous raffle sponsors. Thanks must also go to Thurles and District Flower and Garden Club, and Nenagh Flower Club for their continuous support."

The Garville Gardens will open again this Summer, on June 22, for those wishing to visit the garden and support the cause. The entry is by donation and all proceeds will again benefit research into myelofibrosis.

#### Events 29

Edited by Renata Steffens Renata@irishcatholic.ie



**DUBLIN:** Sr Gabrielle, Redemptoristine, Sr Patrice, Tallow Carmel and Nora, Sister of sister Gabrielle, during the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the Redemptoristine Monastery in Drumcondra on May 3.



....

**DONEGAL:** A group of 24 young adults from across Ireland gathered in Lough Derg on April 26 for the 'Sing for Joy!', a day of prayer and song. The event, led by Msgr Joe McGuinness and Pauline Devaney, was organised by the Knights of St Columbanus.



ITALY: Pictured during the Australia-Ireland Colloquium on Wellbeing in Catholic Schools in Rome with Irish Ambassador to the Holy See, Frances Collins are (L/R): Fr Eamonn Conway, University of Notre Dame Australia, Richard Casey, and wife Dr Lydia Mannion, Lecturer, Mary Immaculate College (with baby Lucia), Paul Bradley, Principal, Rosemount Primary School, Derry, Dr Edel Greene, Principal, St Mary's Baldoyle, John McHugh, Principal, Ard Scoil Rís, Dublin, Josephine Donohue, Principal, Mercy Secondary School, Ballymahon, Dr Tom Carroll, Lecturer, Mary Immaculate College, and Dr Judith King, Dublin.



**LIMERICK:** A group of parishioners from the Holy Rosary Parish, Ennis Road is gathering at the Grotto of Our Lady, Fernbank, to say the rosary during the month of May.



**KILKENNY:** Bishop Niall Coll led the Jubilee Year of Hope Pilgrimage Mass in Blessed Edmund Rice Centre, Westcourt on May 6.



**MONAGHAN:** The National Bikers Memorial was held in Sacred Heart Church, Clones on May 2. The Annual event attracted over two hundred bikers and families of those who had lost loved ones in bike accidents.



**DUBLIN:** Sr Monica Lawless and the Sisters in the Carmelite Monastery of St Joseph, Kilmacud, celebrated her birthday on May 4.



CLARE

Ború Singers mid-May concert takes place in St Flannan's Church, Killaloe on May 17 at 8pm. Entry is free and donations will be accepted on the night in aid of Milford Care Centre.

#### CORK

'Life in the Spirit Seminars' facilitated by Mir Ministries take place from May 16 to June 27 in St Mary's Church, Waterloo, Blarney on Fridays night at 8pm. For more information contact Blarney Parish Office on 021 438 5105 or email: blarneyparish@ gmail.com.

#### DERRY

Maghera Parish Mission with the Dominican Fathers will commence on May 19 at 6.30pm in St Mary's Church and end with 9.30am Mass on May 17 in St Patrick's Church. The Dominican priests are Fr Columba Mary Toman and Fr Patrick Desmond.

#### DONEGAL

The 10th annual Muff Vintage Show takes place on May 18 from 12 noon to 5pm in the Muff Community Park. All welcome.

#### DUBLIN

Altar servers and animators gathering led by Missionaries of Apostolic Grace takes place on May 17 from 11.30am to 5pm at Church of the Guardian Angel, Blackrock, A94 WF89. This gathering will be a meaningful occasion for the young boys and girls who actively serve at the altar across 14 Mass centres of Syro Malabar Catholic Church in the region.

#### **KILDARE**

Kildare and Leighlin Diocese is organising a Jubilee of Hope one-day retreat to Lough Derg led by Bishop Denis Nulty on May 17. To book or for more information contact 087 130 2587 (from Carlow) or 087 246 7594 (from Kildare).

#### LONGFORD

St Columba's National School presents 'Roscommon Solstice Choir' with the children from St Columba's NS in concert on the June 6 in St Columba's Church,

If you have any stories, photos, or events you wish to be considered for publication, email a week in advance of publication

> Mullinalaghta at 7.30pm. Tickets are €20 and available on the door or at 043 668 3020. Proceeds are in aid of St Columba's NS.

#### MAYO

Breakthrough Cancer Research Croagh Patrick climb takes place on May 17 to raise funds for people affected by cancer. For more information and to sign up email edel@ breakcancer.ie.

#### MEATH

Young adult retreat (18-40yrs) in Dalgan Park takes place on May 24 from 10am to 5pm. Talks, walks, confessions, Mass and more. Suggested donation of €20 with lunch and tea included. For more information or to sign in contact youthretreats@gmail. com or 090 648 1666.

#### **MONAGHAN**

To celebrate the Jubilee Year, there will be 'A Light a candle day' on July 6 in St Patrick's Church, Bawn. With Mass at 11.30am and homily by Fr Michael Ruddy. Individual blessings with relics of St Damien directly after Mass, Adoration until 7pm and Rosary at 3pm. All welcome

#### TIPPERARY

Healing Mass in honour of St Padre Pio and St Faustina with first relics of both saints will take place on May 21 at 7.30pm in St Joseph's Parish Toomevara. For more information contact toomevaraparish@gmail. com

#### WATERFORD

The Big Sing Waterford' takes place in Sacred Heart Church, The Folly at 8pm on May 16 in aid of Assisi House. Guest MC and soloist is Glenn Murphy with combined choirs of Waterford. Entry is free and there will collection on the day.

#### WEXFORD

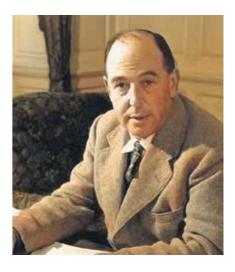
Fundraiser night at Codd's Pub Kilrush for Relay for Life Wexford takes place on May 16 at 9pm. The music will be with Luke Whitty and there will be candle bags available, Shannon-bridge pottery with Wexford Relay for Life logo for sale. All welcome.



Beyond the head and the heart

Fr Rolheiser

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# What is inclusiveness?

elcoming, openness, acceptance; inclusiveness, inclusion, inclusivity... these ideas have become part of the air we breathe. Their goodness is as taken-for-granted as that of fresh air, wholesome food, mothers' love. It seems poor form to question or qualify such concepts; subjecting the notion of inclusiveness to scrutiny is a rather low-status endeavour. But that shouldn't stop us! After all, sound ideas can easily endure unsound criticism, whereas sound criticism can refine our ideas.

#### Inclusiveness

What, then, of inclusiveness? Where might scrutiny begins? Perhaps simply by asking, 'What is inclusiveness?' It won't do to answer using the terms of the question itself: 'Inclusiveness means everyone is included.' That would be a clear instance of question-begging. To move the matter on a little, we might ask, 'Inclusion in what?'

When we speak of an inclusive Church, we need to attend to the noun and not just to the adjective: what is this Church which we want to be inclusive? It seems to me that we've been focusing



on the adjective, 'inclusive,' to the neglect of the noun, 'Church.' But whenever we hear about the need for a more inclusive Church, we should call to mind what it means to be Church in the first place.

We have a wonderfully rich heritage of faith, passed on to us by generations of saints and martyrs"

On its own, inclusiveness tends to be a political question, but when it's linked to Church, then straight away, it becomes an ecclesial question: 'What is the Church, and what does it mean to be a member?' If we're not addressing that, then we can easily find our-

This is just what Christian inclusiveness is about: all are invited; not to 'more of the same,' but to something new, radical, and wonderful, writes Fr Chris Hayden

to the selves talking in circles.

We need to go deeper than simple notions of membership and belonging. We all belong to a range of groups and associations: family, neighbourhood, citizenship, sports club, union, professional body. If belonging to the Church is to be presented as something desirable, then it must entail something more than, and different to, our range of pre-existing memberships. If it's merely another instance of belonging, then why bother?

#### Scripture

The question now becomes 'inclusion in what, for what?' What is the Church, and how do its members live? In such matters, happily, we don't have to start from scratch. We have a wonderfully rich heritage of faith, passed on to us by generations of saints and martyrs, most of whom are unknown but included in that anonymous army of holiness referred to by the late Pope Francis as 'the saints next door.'

#### We need to realise that the word 'repent' is not a threat but an invitation"

The wellspring of our heritage of faith is, of course, Scripture, to which we can look for a clear understanding of inclusiveness. At the very beginning of the Church's existence, when the earliest disciples were trying to hammer out issues of membership and inclusion, many felt that the pagans, those who had no formal acquaintance with the God of Israel, did not qualify for membership. This very limited vision was, however, broadened out by the Holy Spirit, who was so evidently at work in the lives of pagans that the earliest Christians couldn't help but see that God was including the pagans. When this became clear. the earliest Christians 'glorified God, saying, "Then to the pagans also, God has granted repentance leading to life".' (Acts of the Apostles 11:18)

And there, we have a sound, biblical definition of Christian inclusiveness: All, without exception, are included in the call to repentance that leads to new life. That's what inclusiveness entails; that is its content, its purpose: that is what it offers that is new. different to pre-existing memberships. This definition includes the Church, because the Church is the community of those called to repentance. It is the community founded on the words of Jesus, who began his public ministry with the invitation, 'repent, and believe in the Gospel' (Mark 1:15).

In order to understand and appreciate this biblical, contentrich understanding of inclusiveness, we need to realise that the word 'repent' is not a threat but an invitation: the invitation to 'walk in newness of life' (Romans 6:4). Does this invitation make demands of us? For sure! Newness always makes demands. The radical newness of life which Christ offers makes radical demands. And this is just what Christian inclusiveness is about: all are invited; not to 'more of the same,' but to something new, radical, and wonderful.

# Who was Pope Leo XIII, the father of social doctrine?

Pope Leo XIII



**Russell Shaw** 

ardinal Robert Prevost has selected the name Pope Leo XIV, an apparent nod to Pope Leo XIII, who deserves to be called the founding father of Catholic social doctrine in modern times, with his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* as its foundational document.

The Catholic Church has taught social morality for many centuries. This body of teaching includes moral principles like the dignity and inviolability of the human person, the right to private property, the conditions for a just war and much else.

Commonly known by the title 'On the Condition of the Working Classes', the lengthy *Rerum Novarum* sets out a body of papal teaching in response to the state of industrial society in the late 19th century. In doing so, says Catholic writer Robert Royal, Pope Leo's 1891 encyclical "has shaped Catholic social teaching ever since."

The future pope, Gioacchino Pecci, was born March 2, 1810, in Carpineto, a town in the hill country south of Rome. He began his career as an administrator in the Papal States - first, as governor of Benevento and then of Perugia. In 1843, Pope Gregory XVI named him nuncio to Belgium. He was named a cardinal in 1853. He was elected on February 20, 1878. No doubt to the electors' surprise, Pope Leo went on to serve as pope for 25 years, making his pontificate the third longest in history, after only those of Pius IX and Pope St John Paul II.

#### **Political**

On the political side, he achieved limited but real success, especially in Ger-

many, where estrangement between the government and the Church was largely healed. Elsewhere there was little or no improvement. But beyond the sphere of politics, the years of his pontificate saw significant growth for the Church in many places, along with a continued expansion of missionary efforts.

He brought to the papacy a comparatively gentle manner of expressing himself, together with a genuine desire for reconciliation between the Church and the secular culture taking shape in the late 19th century.

On the intellectual level, one of his most significant actions was to promote a revival of the thought of St Thomas Aquinas, the great 13th-century philosopher and theologian. He called on the bishops to join him in promoting Thomistic studies and established an academy for this purpose in Rome.

He positioned himself on the side of the working class, affirming such things as the right of workers to decent working conditions, a just wage, labour unions and the right to strike"

But two other documents of Pope Leo stand out. One is *Rerum Novarum*, dated May 15, 1891.

Responding to what he calls "socialism" - understood broadly to include any social movement or school of thought advocating the abolition of private property - Pope Leo vigorously defended the right of private ownership as a natural right and necessary basis for the exercise of other rights. But in doing so, he positioned himself on the side of the working class, affirming such things as the

The great novelty of *Rerum Novarum* does not lie in championing these things but in the fact that they are here championed by a pope, which historian Eamon Duffy calls 'truly revolutionary'" right of workers to decent working conditions, a just wage, labour unions and the right to strike.

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The introduction of *Rerum Novarum*, setting the encyclical in the context of the social tensions of its time, is noteworthy in this regard. Writing of the "spirit of revolutionary change" then abroad in the world, Pope Leo said:

#### Elements

"The elements of the conflict now raging are unmistakable, in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvellous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals and the utter poverty of the masses; the increased selfreliance and closer mutual combination of the working classes; as also in the prevailing moral degeneracy... There is no question which has taken deeper hold on the public mind."

As pope, Leo XIII reigned with a decidedly monarchical style. But he was also, in the words of a papal chronicler, "a man of deep, conservative piety." He died July 20, 1903, at age 93 - the oldest man to occupy the papal office up to now and, thanks to *Rerum Novarum*, also among the most influential.

Russell Shaw, a veteran journalist and writer, is the author of more than 20 books, including three novels.

# the first are pope. With the first are scheme to the first are scheme to the first are scheme to the first are scheme to the first are to the first are scheme to the first are to the first are

#### First, care about the interests of the soul

#### Pope Leo XIII

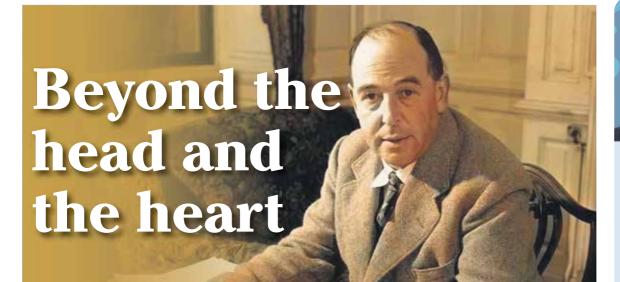
5. If Christian precepts prevail, the respective classes will not only be united in the bonds of friendship, but also in those of brotherly love. For they will understand and feel that all men are children of the same common Father, who is God; that all have alike the same last end, which is God Himself, who alone can make either men or angels absolutely and perfectly happy; that each and all are redeemed and made sons of God, by Jesus Christ, that the blessings of nature and the gifts of grace belong to the whole human race in common, and that from none except the unworthy is withheld the inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven. [...]

28. Neither must it be supposed that the solicitude of the Church is so preoccupied with the spiritual concerns of her children as to neglect their temporal and earthly interests. Her desire is that the poor, for example, should rise above poverty and wretchedness, and better their condition in life; and for this she makes a strong endeavour. By the fact that she calls men to virtue and forms them to its practice she promotes this in no slight degree. Christian morality, when adequately and completely practiced, leads of itself to temporal prosperity. [...]

40. The working man, too, has interests in which he should be protected by the State; and first, there are the interests of his soul. Life on Earth, however good and desirable, is not the final purpose for which man is created; it is only the way and the means to that attainment of truth and that love of goodness in which the full life of the soul consists. It is the soul which is made after the image and likeness of God; it is in the soul that the sovereignty resides in virtue whereof man is commanded to rule the creatures below him and to use all the earth and the ocean for his profit and advantage. "Fill the Earth and subdue it; and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the Earth."(29) In this respect all men are equal; there is here no difference between rich and poor, master and servant, ruler and ruled, "for the same is Lord over all"... It is not man's own rights which are here in question, but the rights of God, the most sacred and inviolable of rights.

Fragment from the late pope Leo XIII encyclical Rerum Novarum.

#### 32 | YourFaith





Are 'little white lies'

okay to tell?

# Fr Rolheiser

#### www.ronrolheiser.

John where Peter, like CS Lewis, is

also a reluctant convert. This is the

S Lewis, one of the great Christian apologists, didn't become a Christian without resistance and struggle. He grew into adulthood nursing a certain scepticism and agnosticism. He wasn't drawn naturally to faith or to Christ. But he was always radically honest in trying to listen to the deepest voices inside and at a certain point he came to the realisation that Christ and his teaching were compelling in such a way that left him unfree. In conscience he had to become a Christian.

Many of us are familiar with the words he wrote on the night when he first knelt down and gave himself over to faith in Christ. Having just come back from a long walk and a religious discussion with JRR Tolkien (who was his colleague at Oxford) he describes how he knelt down and committed himself to faith in Christ. But, by his own admission, this wasn't an easy genuflection: "I knelt down as the most reluctant convert in the history of Christendom." Wow! Not exactly what we take for first fervor.

#### Convert

But he goes on to describe why, despite all his natural reluctance, he became a convert: "Because I had come to realise that the harshness of God is kinder than the softness of man, and God's compulsion is our liberation." What is God's compulsion?

Here's an example. There's a famous incident in the Gospel of

stian story. and Jesus had just identified himself hood with the Bread of Life and ended and that teaching by saying that unless nat- we eat his body and drink his blood ut he we cannot have life in us. Under-

we cannot have life in us. Understandably this was both confusing and perplexing to his audience, so perplexing in fact that the Gospels tell us that the crowds all walked away, saying this is an intolerable teaching. Then, when the crowds had gone, Jesus turned to his disciples and asked them: "Do you want to walk away too?" Peter was not exactly enthusiastic and affirmative in his answer. He responded by saying, "We have no other place to go." However (and this is one of Peter's shining moments in the Gospels) he then adds: "We know that you have the words of everlasting life."

Underneath both his head and his heart there is another part of Peter that knows that, irrespective of resistance of his head and his heart, this teaching will bring him life"

When you parse out Peter's response, here's its substance. Peter has just heard a teaching that he doesn't understand and what he understands he doesn't like. At that moment, Jesus looks like the oppo-

Anyone who has ever been in a commitment over a long period of time knows that there will be times and seasons when your head isn't in it, your heart isn't in it, but you're in it because you know that the path to life for you lies in staying inside that commitment" site of truth and life. Peter's head is resistant and so is his heart. But underneath both his head and his heart there is another part of Peter that knows that, irrespective of resistance of his head and his heart, this teaching will bring him life.

At that moment, like CS Lewis, Peter is a most reluctant Apostle. However, he still gives his life over to Christ, despite the resistance in his head and in his heart. Why? Because like CS Lewis, he had come to understand that "God's compulsion is our liberation."

I remember once seeing an interview with Daniel Berrigan. The host asked him, "Father, where does your faith lie? Is it in your head or in your heart?" Berrigan's response was both colorful and insightful: "Faith is rarely where your head is at, and faith even less rarely where your heart is at. Faith is where your ass is at." By way of commentary, he added: "Anyone who has ever been in a commitment over a long period of time knows that there will be times and seasons when your head isn't in it, your heart isn't in it, but you're in it because you know that the path to life for you lies in staying inside that commitment."

#### Trust

What ultimately do we trust enough to give our lives over to? I believe we need to answer that question not with heads nor with our hearts. It's not that our heads and our hearts are untrustworthy in themselves, it's just as we know from experience, they don't always speak for what's deepest inside us. God's compulsion sits below our thinking and our feeling. Our heads tell us what we think is wise to do. Our hearts tell us what we would like to do. But a deeper voice in us tells us what we have to do.

The deepest voice of God inside us isn't always at ease with our head or our heart. That voice is God's compulsion inside us and it can make us the most reluctant convert in the history of Christianity, it can have us standing before Jesus telling him that he looks the opposite of truth and life, it can have us looking with utter disillusion at the seemingly chronic infidelity of our churches, and still have us say, we have no other place to go. You have the words of everlasting life.

Doubt, disillusionment, and lack of understanding aren't virtues, but they can push us to a place where we have to decide before what ultimately we need to genuflect. Q: Is it always wrong in every case to lie? What about the socalled 'little white lie?' I'm thinking of situations where you tell a person something you know is false to spare their feelings, when they're likely never going to know the truth anyway.

A: Our Catholic faith teaches us that lying is an offense against the eighth commandment and is in principle always wrong. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "By its very nature, lying is to be condemned. It is a profanation of speech, whereas the purpose of speech is to communicate known truth to others. The deliberate intention of leading a neighbour into error by saying things contrary to the truth constitutes a failure in justice and charity" (CCC 2485).

However, as your question suggests, there are some nuances to consider. For one thing, a lie might be mortally or venially sinful depending on the objective importance of the truth being obscured and on the seriousness of the potential harms that might come about because of the lie. A quick fib about eating the last piece of cake is obviously not on the same level as a lie in a business transaction that causes a family to lose their entire savings.

It also might be useful to consider what a lie technically is. As the catechism, referenc-ing St Augustine, puts it: "A lie consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving" (CCC 2482). This means that not every untrue statement is a lie. To give some examples, acting and some jokes involve saying things that aren't true, but untruths uttered by an actor in a play or as part of the setup for a clear punchline aren't intended to deceive and typically aren't misleading in actual fact. Likewise, inaccurate statements that come about from an honest mistake also are not lies, because there was no intention in such statements to distort the truth.

The catechism further speci-

fies that: "To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead into error someone who has the right to know the truth" (CCC 2483). It should be noted that not everyone has the right to know the truth about every situation. In most cases it is not at all sinful to give an intentionally vague answer to a question that isn't the proper business of the one asking. For example, if a nosy coworker asks about a recent doctor's appointment you had, you have no obligation to share the details of your medical condition. "I'm fine, thanks," and a fast change of subject is morally licit.

Similarly, since we live in society and must be sensitive to the feelings of others, we don't always need to be brutally honest and outspoken in all our thoughts and opinions. So, it's fine - and even at times required by charity - to answer certain questions with diplomacy and tact, as long as we're not saying anything radically untrue in doing so.

With 'little white lies', I think a lot depends on the specific context, and whether the 'white lie' involves stating a literal untruth. Refraining from telling a sick person that they look terrible is not a lie, because staying silent in a scenario where you had no need or obligation to comment is not inherently untruthful. Saying a bride is beautiful on her wedding day even if you secretly think she's rather average-looking - is also not really a lie, since beauty is in the eye of the beholder and can encompass elements beyond physical appearance. Personally, I'm against tell-

Personally, I'm against telling white lies that are clear-cut falsehoods, even if they only concern trivial matters. Beyond the question of whether this is a sin, telling even small lies can cause people to lose their trust in us over time.

(1) Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.

# A meditation on Pope's first words...

Acts 14:21-27 Apocalypse 21:1-5 John 13:31-33,34-35

t is becoming increas-ingly evident that religious objects, such as crosses and holy medals, are not only symbols of people's faith but are also often incorporated into jewellery or decorative items. Instead of being signs that communicate one's identity and serve as sources of strength and direction in life, these items often function merely as decorative elements. In fact, as we pass by others in the city and on the streets, we can observe many individuals whose style and attire aim to emphasise their identity and interests, though often it is simply a matter of fashion.

However, what we hear in today's Gospel (John 13) has nothing to do with the external decorations of our more or less fashionable outfits. What we hear is a call for each person to become a sign for others. lesus tells in his tremendous speech to his Disciples: "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35).

#### **Signs**

A cross on our neck, a pin on a blazer, a sticker on the car these are indeed concrete signs that convey something about our faith. However, to transform 'some sign' into a 'concrete sign' of our faith requires one to be involved wholeheartedly. It is not sufficient to use beautiful words and communicate nicely about our faith. What is needed to make our faith wholesome is to grow constantly in our relationship with the Lord through prayer, learning from Him in the Eucharist, and discovering Him by listening to His Word. Only in our earnest opening to Christ can we truly be open to another person, and thus walk the way of love, which is to be a mark of Christ's disciples in the world. Our new Holy Father articulated this beautifully on the first day after his election regarding his mission in the world: "it is to move aside so that Christ may remain, to make oneself small so that he may be known and glorified, to spend oneself to the utmost so that all may have the opportunity to know and love him" (pope Leo XIV, Sistine Chapel, May 9, 2025).

To move aside. ...so that Christ may

remain.' Today's first reading (Acts 14) gives us a broad glimpse of what the ministry of the Apostles looked like. We hear that Paul and Barnabas travelled through multiple towns and



cities, including Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia. In those and many other places, they "put fresh hearts" into people, and they encouraged them to stay close to the faith. They sympathised with the many hardships those Christians had to endure, and they prayed and fasted together with them.

Fr Dominik Domagala

#### Many more questions could be asked, but they should not concern his priority. That is clear: He 'moved everything aside so that Christ may remain'"

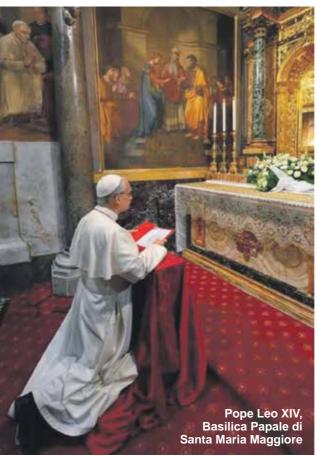
How great the distances were that those followers of Christ crossed to be close to the people they had never even met! St Luke (the author of the Acts of the Apostles) provides us with sufficient details to infer that St Paul himself had to travel approximately 1,500 kilometres. After that, the second journey (years 50-52) covered a distance of 4,900 kilometres. But that's not all; on the final, third mission, Saint Paul covered about 5300 kilometres (between years 52-57). Finally, after being sentenced to die, he had to embark on his final journey to Rome, during which he travelled for about 3800 kilometres. Overall, his missionary iournevs took him approximately 15,500 kilometres.

What about his plans and personal agenda? What about the self-limitations and obligations toward his family? Indeed, many more questions could be asked, but they should not concern his priority. That is clear: He "moved everything aside so that Christ may remain."

If only I could take ten extra steps every day, so that Christ might be glorified in others... 'To make oneself small...

...so that Christ may be known and glorified.'

The second reading provides us with a mysterious vision this Sunday. In fact, the whole Book of Apocalypse (or Revelation) is a book about the hopeful future. Despite the terrible visions presented about the end of times and the persecution of Christ's followers, one message prevails: God guides everything toward a New Creation, where



evil, suffering, and death exist no more.

#### Transformed

In the transformed reality, there will not be space for evil and its terrible consequences. What is the sad reality for the persecuted Christians (to whom St. John writes this Book) will eventually be transformed into Christ Himself, and with Christ, they will become new as well.

How often, however, is the sad reality of injustice and evil prevalent in our Christian way of thinking? It seems, at times, that even Christians see the Church only as a mere human institution, rather than as what God designed Her to be: "the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband" (Apocalypse 21:2).

If only I could see the Church as she truly is-the place where Christ is to be known and glorified. not myself.. "To spend oneself...

...so that all may have the opportunity to know and love Christ."

Finally, the Gospel recalls what happened in the Upper Room at the Last Supper. A small detail at the beginning of Jesus' words is "when Judas had gone" (John 13:31). Just a verse before that, we learn of Judas' attitude towards Jesus, his unwillingness to accept Christ's call to serve and to sacrifice oneself. Judas had no room to make space for others, but rather wished that others

would be at his disposal. That's where the drama of the Apostles, the Church, and the Church members unfolds. Wherever it is not about the glorification of lesus and the revelation of Himself to others, what is it really about?

If only I could see that my cross, through which I am to spend myself, is an opportunity to know and love Christ more"

Jesus Christ, in His freedom and understanding the consequences, walks steadily towards the cross! That is the place where He is elevated. That is where the final proof of His love is exemplified. His crucifixion and resurrection are to become the ultimate signs through which He reveals His identity and the mission entrusted to Him by the Father.

If only I could see that my cross, through which I am to spend myself, is an opportunity to know and love Christ more...

1) Fr Dominik Domagala serves in Inchicore. Dublin. Studied Theology in Poznan (Poland) and currently is working on a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture. Author of the sermon-video-blog The Social Oblate. Send vour questions to thesocialoblate@ icloud.com

# The election of Pope Leo XIV



Pope Leo XIV. Photo: OSV News/Claudia Greco, Reuters.

#### Fr John McCarthy

t is with the astonished joy of the resurrection in the season of Easter that we welcome a new Pope.

We continue to mourn the loss of Pope Francis whose extensive ministry through presence, preaching, teaching and writing can now be absorbed and take on new light.

Just as the words of Christ we read in the Gospel from John chapter 6 in the Easter season take on a deeper depth of meaning after His glorious resurrection that "This is my body" so the words of Pope Francis will sink into our hearts and be reflected on now that he has gone from our sight. No doubt Pope Leo will allude to him often.

There will be inevitable comparisons and contrasts with Pope Francis as Leo XIV will be observed and scrutinised. "Will he/ won't he..? Francis did this, will Leo..?"

Whilst a missionary, a religious and a canonist he is in his own words "a son of St Augustine" who he quoted: "for you I am a Bishop, with you I am a Christian." Surely the longings and yearnings of a young Augustine reflecting on his conversion recalled in the Confessions will be a point of reference if not a template of Pope Leo's ministry. I have no doubt Pope Leo will soon quote St Augustine whose famous words resonate in our neo-pagan society: "You have made us for yourself, Lord and our hearts are restless, and will not rest until they rest in you."

Pope Leo XIV is in the vein of Pope Francis continuing the clarion call to "a Church that is poor and for the poor." Born in the US but an adopted citizen of a poor country too. Elevated by Francis and now, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, receiving the 90-plus votes of his fellow cardinals to elect him.

A polyglot fluent in Spanish as Bishop in Peru, and Italian as Bishop of Rome but of course now- wonderfully and easier to our ears - to hear a Pope speak in his first language of English. The choice of Leo - which recalls the association of 19th

century Pope Leo XIII with ordinary workers, and the original Pope St Leo the Great, defender of Rome and doctrine whose teachings are very accessible.

Leo means 'lion', yet Pope Leo looks like a lamb - there's a gentle, kindly, serene aspect to his countenance and voice. He appeared on the balcony holding back tears and looked out lovingly and kindly on his new diocese - Rome, but with perhaps anxious thoughts of the flock he has left behind in Peru, and who now must turn his care of the Church and the wider world, 'to carry the cross" as he put it himself in his first Mass in the Sistine Chapel. His thoughts must have turned to the Gospel of last Sunday where the first Peter was instructed by Jesus that he would be "led to a place he would rather not go.

His pontificate has begun. Let us recall that as Supreme Pontiff which means 'bridge-builder' there are many bridges to be re-built within and outside the Church.

Perhaps the Holy Father is looking ahead immediately to the Gospel of this Vocations or Good Shepherd Sunday. The Lord has provided us once more with a shepherd to tend to us, let us listen to his voice.

The epistle of the Book of Revelation this Sunday says "I, John, saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language." The images of hopeful, anxious joyful faces in St Peter's Square from so many nationalities in the early part of the week gave way to sights and sounds of rejoicing as well as tears of joy as the white smoke emerged on Thursday evening.

A last thought: our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV was chosen on the feast of Our Lady of Pompeii and in the month of May, Our Mother will surely guard and protect him.

# Images, illusions, and the search for the real



Pedro Esteva

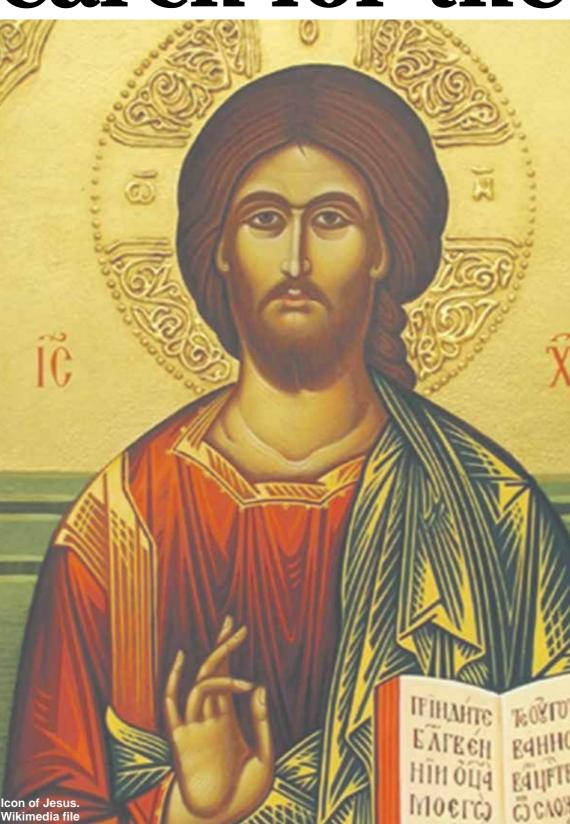
66 WW elso to the desert of the real," Morpheus tells Neo as he awakens from the computer-generated dreamworld into grim reality. The line, borrowed from *Simulacra and Simulation* by Jean Baudrillard, captures a central modern anxiety: what if the world we experience is not real, but an illusion?

In his work, Baudrillard – a French philosopher and sociologist - argues that we no longer interact with reality directly. In a world saturated by advertisements, social media, and Al-generated content, reality is not only mediated but has been replaced. Instead, we consume simulacra copies without an original. Instagram aesthetics, political deepfakes, and endless content loops create a state of 'hyperreality', where the imitation becomes more compelling than the real - or at least more convenient. Why go outside when you can check the weather from your device? Why experience something new when you can read reviews? Why live life if you can't post about it?

#### **Hyperreality**

Social media, like TikTok or Instagram, are prime examples of hyperreality in action. It is not just a tool for sharing life – it creates an alternate version of it. Algenerated filters 'beautify' faces, influencers curate lifestyles that do not exist, and reality is selectively edited until it conforms to the idealised image. It is not deception in the traditional sense, but something more insidious: a world where the image of a thing is more real than the thing itself. Leaving people scrambling to make themselves more like what they see.

For Baudrillard, this is not simply deception but a transformation of meaning itself. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, he traces four stages of the image: first, it reflects reality (as in a photograph). Second, it distorts reality (as in propaganda). Third, it hides the absence of reality (like reality TV). And fourth, it becomes pure simulation, existing only in



reference to itself, detached from any original. In this final stage, the real dissolves entirely, leaving only a self-perpetuating cycle of images. The image no longer represents reality – it dictates it and truth becomes just another aesthetic.

But what if images are not always

**Iconoclasts feared not that images obscured God but that they revealed the terrifying truth-that there was nothing behind them**" a veil over reality? What if they reveal rather than deceive?

#### Barriers

Where Baudrillard sees images as barriers to truth, Catholic thought has long understood them as a means of revelation. The world itself is an image of higher realities, a reflection of divine meaning. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). Man, made in God's image, is meant to see through creation into its source. Sacred art and icons are not distractions from truth but participations in it. Sacred art and icons do not obscure reality but participate in it. St John Damascene, defending the veneration of sacred images, writes: "Every image is a revelation and representation of something hidden. The image was devised to transcend space and time, for greater knowledge, and for the showing of things hidden—to desire what is good and hate what is evil."

Likewise, the Catechism echoes this by saying: "The sacred image, the liturgical icon, principally represents Christ. It cannot represent the invisible and incomprehensible God, but the incarnation of the Son of God has ushered in a new 'economy' of images." (CCC 1159) This "new economy" of images is key. The incarnation transforms the role of representation. Before Christ, depicting the divine risked idolatry – an image could only be a shadow of the unseen God. But in Christ, the invisible becomes visible – "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). God does not merely authorise images; He enters into them. Jesus is the true icon, and all sacred art participates in this mystery. This participation in the divine image is not limited to sacred art—as we, too, bear the *Imago Dei*, the image of God.

Baudrillard's scepticism of images echoes an ancient anxiety, the fear that they do not reveal but deceive. This is the nature of the iconoclastic controversy as he describes: "Iconoclasts feared not that images obscured God but that they revealed the terrifying truth—that there was nothing behind them."

#### Sacred images differ from simulacra in that they do not point to themselves but beyond, drawing the viewer into participation with the greater spiritual reality"

This is the heart of Baudrillard's critique. If images do not point beyond themselves but only refer to other images, they collapse into an endless self-referential loop. Deepfakes, Instagram filters, and Al-generated influencers are not just distortions—they create a world with no reality behind it.

Yet the Catholic tradition offers a way out – not by rejecting images, but by learning to see rightly. Sacred images differ from simulacra in that they do not point to themselves but beyond, drawing the viewer into participation with the greater spiritual reality. Icons demand contemplation, not consumption, and come with their own languages which can be learned.

Unlike the hyperreal aesthetics of Instagram or the echo chambers of X (formerly Twitter) which replace reality, sacred images invite us deeper into it. Liturgy, the Sacraments, and sacred art require an engagement of the will. As St John Damascene puts it: "The beauty of the images moves me to contemplation, as a meadow delights the eyes and subtly infuses the soul with the glory of God."

This is the challenge of out time: to distinguish between illusions and true icons, between hyperreality and sacramental reality. The modern world is flooded with images, but not all are the same. Some deceive. Others reveal. Some close us in on an endless loops of simulation. Others open us to the real.

Baudrillard saw only the desert. Yet perhaps there are still oases out there – if only we knew where to look. The challenge of our time is learning to seek.

# **OTVRadio**Brendan O'Regan What we now know about Pope Leo XIV

could fill the whole paper reviewing how the media covered the Conclave and the election of Pope Leo XIV – it feels weird to write that name, but I suspect we'll get well used to it.

On Times Radio Breakfast (Tuesday), in a discussion on the Conclave, presenter Stig Abel reflected on the process sequestered away in the beauty of the Sistine Chapel with no social media allowed – he said that sounded great! On the Wednesday night I thought RTÉ News showed too much of a political angle, with the usual liberal v conservative angle, each of the then likely candidates being rated on that inadequate spectrum.

I had to agree with the host on Today with Claire Byrne (RTÉ Radio 1, Thursday) when she pointed out how odd it was that, in this digital age, we were all focused on a chimney and waiting for smoke! Bishop Paul Dempsey said that hope, not personal ambition, was what was important. The new Pope needed to be a man of faith, marked by a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, which he would share with the world. Later that evening, in the space of waiting, Drivetime (RTÉ Radio 1) filled some of that space with an odd item - a man who had developed an AI-based 'papal predictor'. Very soon after, he turned out to be wrong.

The eventual white smoke moment was very dramatic. I watched the coverage on RTÉ One and it was comprehensive, well led by a Sharon Tobin and Ailbhe Conneelly. When the officiating cardinal appeared on the balcony of St Peter's I had to draw on my dusty Latin to figure it out – I got the Leo right and the number wrong. The mood was upbeat, even euphoric, among the gathered crowds and among media presenters as well. When the new Pontif appeared, he seemed by turns genial, composed and emotional. I enjoyed the contributions of Fr Martin Browne and of a 'delighted' Fr Paul Finnerty, rector of the Irish College in Rome, which was visited recently by the new Pope. He found the then Cardinal Prevost "humble," "sincere," "approachable" and "jovial." I also like the insightful commentary from Prof. Fainche Ryan of Trinity College who said we needed a leader of "great wisdom and great depth of prayer and spirituality.

The event dominated the



Pope Leo XIV speaks to representatives of the media who covered his election in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican May 12, 2025. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.

news media for the rest of the evening. After President Trump had declared the choice of an American to be an honour. I thought there was too much concentration. especially in the UK media on the Trump element, with speculation that the cardinal had been chosen an America as some sort of foil to Trump. His tweet as Cardinal Prevost, challenging Vice President JD Vance's attitude to a hierarchy of loves, surfaced pretty quickly. Some described him as "the least American of the American cardinals," or "a Pope for the Americas," presumably because of his long missionary service in Peru. A Sky News reporter called Pope Leo 'the most powerful man in the world', as leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics. I suspect he will use his power more responsibly and peacefully that many other powerful men in the world.

#### Positive

On Prime Time (RTE One, Thursday) Bishop Kevin Doran told of a 'warm personal letter' he received from Cardinal Prevost when he took on responsibility for the Diocese of Achonry in addition to Elphin. Journalist Wendy Grace was enthusiastic with hope about the future of young people in the Church. Fr Alan Hilliard saw significance in the election of an American, as America was now at a crossroads moment with implications for the world. In Rome Prof Anthea Turner of the University of Pennsylvania thought he

would be a 'measured' 'savvy' and a 'steady' pope and that he would 'bring things back to the centre'. From Rome Fr Gerry Whelan thought he would be 'stabilising' and 'a good administrator'. Michael Kelly of Aid to the Church in Need thought there would be continuity with the papacy of Pope Francis but that he would be his own man, a centrist who would appeal to some that that Pope Francis had alienated.

#### He found him 'a very accomplished person', 'not condescending', with 'a twinkle in his eye' and having 'a serenity within him'"

At one stage I turned over to CNN and on the Erin Burnett Outfront programme there was great joy at the choice of an American as the programme reported from St Patrick's Cathedral New York. Maria Shriver, first lady of California and member of the famous Kennedy family, thought the new Pope was 'open, humble, honest and trustworthy'. She was born in the same place and around the same time as Robert Prevost. Fr Mark Francis had been a student with the new Pope and found him 'focused', 'serious' and 'thoughtful'. Crux journalist Elise Ann Allen found him 'down to earth', 'kind', 'relaxed', very present to the people he was with and with a sense of humour. He took his job seriously but not himself.

On CNN in the Morning (Friday) a fellow Augustinian Fr Robert Hagan, who knows the new Pope said he found him 'a very accomplished person', 'not condescending', with 'a twinkle in his eye' and having 'a serenity within him'. On Morning Ireland (RTE Radio 1, Friday) reporter Cian McCormack spoke of an 'explosion of delight' and had some enthusiastic people on the vox pops. Also on that show was Bishop Donal Roche, who had met the then Cardinal Prevost on a course for new bishops. He had found him 'very gracious and competent' When asked about the whole liberal/conservative/centrist spectrum he said it was the 'wrong question' - the Pope was primarily a Catholic. He reckoned people would see him more as South-American, and as a voice for immigrants and the poor. By taking the name Leo, he seemed to be aligning himself with Pope Leo XIII who promoted the rights of workers, trades unions and children. Also, his experience as a missionary was significant · Bishop Roche thought the European focused church had been too much 'maintenance' orientated. Prof Linda Hogan of Trinity College thought he would be a moderate, in the tradition of Pope Francis but also his own man and 'a lis-

#### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### SUNDAY

BBC Radio 4 Sunday May 18, 7am Topical religious affairs – no shortage these days.

#### SONGS OF PRAISE

BBC One Sunday May 18, 12 midday

Faith and Friendship: Inspiring hymns and songs, together with uplifting stories of faith from around the UK and beyond.

#### IGNATIUS LOYOLA: THE STORY OF THE PILGRIM EWTN Sunday May 18, 9pm

A docudrama featuring St Ignatius narrating the amazing story of his life.

#### tening Pope'.

On the **Pat Kenny Show** (Newstalk, Friday), in a vox pop from Rome, an American priest was elated – 'my heart jumped' he said. Roving reporter Henry McKean said it was 'moving stuff ... a privilege to be here'. Of course, people scrambled to find an Irish angle. On **Today** with Claire Byrne (RTE Radio

1, Friday) we heard from Jasper McCarthy from Fethard. Apparently, the new Pope, when head of the Augustinian Order, has been in his restaurant several times when he was visiting with the local Augustinian Abbot, and he had met him once and found him 'understated' with 'no trappings of power'.

#### Qualities

Last Sunday Morning Sunday Sequence (BBC Radio Ulster) came live from the Vatican and regular contributor Michael Kelly spoke about the place of young people in the Church and the challenge that poses. One problem that young people hadn't engaged with the synodal process. We learned that he had been at the Basilica of St Mary Major when Pope Leo was a surprise visitor to the tomb of Pope Francis. Another guest was Elise Ann Allen of the *Crux* news website, and she has provided excellent commentary on many channels. She thought that he was elected primarily because of having the 'right qualities' rather than his being American and yet, considering the polarisation currently in the USA, she thought he would be middle ground and would try to bring balance.

Also last Sunday **EWTN News in Depth** featured a good review of that had happened so far, with reaction worldwide, including from a woman in Peru – Fr Prevost had been her parish priest. Anyone that knew him had great things to say about him, which gives hope. The show included more incisive reporting from, among others, our own Colm Flynn, who played clips from a casual vox pop he did on the Thursday night in St Peter's Square. The enthusiasm of young Catholics was inspiring – you can catch this segment on EWTN's social media.

Everything the new Pontif says and does will be under close scrutiny, at least in the initial stages, and so we got his first sermon, his visit to the tomb of Pope Francis and his singing of the Regina Caeli in St Peter's which I saw live on EWTN. In his accompanying address he called for 'never again war' and, echoing John Paul II, urged young people 'Do not be afraid!'

#### Thanks to the media, we have seen a joyful, optimistic, youthful, enthusiastic image of Church"

Finally, last Monday morning I caught the Holy Father's meeting with media representatives, initially on **Sky News** and then on **Shalom World** on YOUTUBE, both channels covering it live. He greeted the journalists warmly, as a group and later as individuals. The feeling was obviously mutual. He expressed solidarity with persecuted journalists, stressing the responsibilities of journalists and recommending an end to wars with words and images.

Through the week, thanks to the media, we have seen a joyful, optimistic, youthful, enthusiastic image of Church. If that is not what we experience in our parishes, we have a job to do.

boregan@hotmail.com

# **OBOOKREVIEWS** Peter Costello The quest for truth in the face of Relativism



Seven Prophets and the Culture War: Undoing the Philosophies of a World in Crisis, by Alexandre Havard (Scepter Publishers, \$17.95;

(Scepter Publishers, \$17.95; available online through Amazon)

#### J. Anthony Gaughan

his is a study which should be in the hands of every thinking person, university graduate and those who influence public opinion. At the outset the author describes the culture war which has raged across the US and Western Europe during the past few decades.

Then he indicates how Descartes, Rousseau and Nietzsche facilitated the woke ideology and flight from objective reality adopted by so many people today. Descartes begins his philosophy with the thought – 'Cogito, ergo sum' – I think therefore I am- and the realm of thought. This led inexorably to subjectivism.

Havard describes the effect of Subjectivism as "Being depends on my thought. Being is subjective. So are truth and the good ... There is no objective existence, no objective truth, no objective good. There is no such thing as a human being, truth or objective good .... There is only my thought.... Since there is only my thought and no objective good, I demand 'tolerance' for all my ideas, my opinions, my whims."

#### **Subjectivism**

Moreover, subjectivism engenders contempt for reason which is replaced by emotions. The void caused by the dismissal of reason is filled by an ideology of sentiment whose new 'inquisitors' subject entire peoples by 'cancelling' those who do not share their convictions and who they consider to be culture of 'tolerance' morphs into the 'cancel culture', a notorious feature of the ubiquitous culture war.

He is devoid of reason. Socially he exists only as part of a whole. He fulfils himself in being politically and culturally correct"

Rousseau is another philosopher who facilitates the 'Woke' culture. For him man is a 'noble savage' who was corrupted by civilization. In his publications the emotions and the feelings are the North Star. The individual has no other rule of life other than his emotions. They are his conscience and his religion. He is devoid of reason. Socially he exists He fulfils himself in being politically and culturally correct. He belongs to the herd. 'Progress' is his religion.

#### **Nietzsche**

Nietzsche's philosophy and convictions also find an airing in the culture war. In his world we must free ourselves once and for all from traditional values, from the vestiges of Christian civilisation. 'Become what you want to be. Be the creator of yourself'. The consequences of the death of God must be manifested in all their fullness.

As an antidote to the subjectivism of Descartes, Rousseau and Nietzsche the author also views the culture war through the lens of the philosophy of Pascal and Kierkegaard. The epistemology they share could be described as that of Direct Realism, namely when we know we are in direct contact with objective reality – we know not the concept referred to as the '*ding an* sinch' – the thing-in-itself.

Each of these philosophies has his own take on life as well as on reality. To live according to Pascal is to find one's heart, to accept it as the centre of one's personality and as the foundation of one's intellect and will, to search constantly for truth and to communicate this truth to people with empathy and elegance.

#### **For Dostoyevsky to**

#### live is to have a measureless passion for man, his dignity, his freedom and his immortal soul"

To live according to Kierkegaard is to live an authentic life. It is to renounce the culturally, religiously to make conscious, free and resolute choices and to affirm the primacy of the individual.

The author also highlights the thoughts and convictions of those two great Russian writers: Dostoyevsky and Soloviev. For Dostoyevsky to live is to have a measureless passion for man, his dignity, his freedom and his immortal soul. Soloviev's thought was more Christocentric.

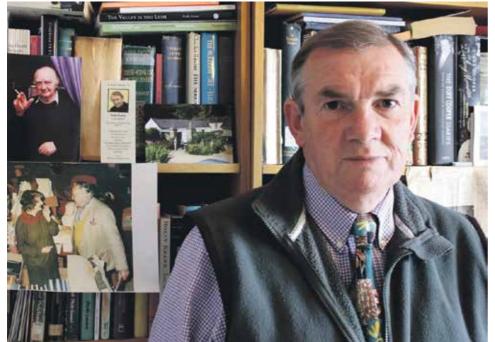
There is much more in this scholarly monograph.The reader will see how some of these are reflected in current conflicts. But this is to set aside much that we are called upon to do in the Gospels, where love rather than conflict is seen as mankind's end.

For him to live was to sanctify the world by filling it with the Christian spirit, to build the Kingdom of God at the very heart of society.

Those who intend to engage in a serious discussion of the culture war will find Alexandre Havard's musings

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.

# **Seeking the** creative spirit's full and plenty



Thomas McCarthy among his books

Plenitude, by Thomas McCarthy (Carcanet Press, £11.99 / €14.99)

#### Seamus Cashman

om McCarthy's new collection *Pleni*tude has that centrality of 'pleasure' and 'vocation' at the heart of poetry's creative energies which Auden once alluded to, as indeed do so many of his recent prose works.

Plenitude completes a trilogy of collections, the previous books are Pandemonium (2016) and Prophecy (2019), all from Carcanet Press. The title indicates completion and buoyancy in tune with our contemporary Irish world.

#### **Enriched**

These poems are enriched at all times by his awareness of history - the precise histories of heritage gardens, of novelists such as Molly Keane and West

Waterford neighbours who went to fight in the Great War -this is a poetry of formal short lyrics and longer poems with historical and social commentary. McCarthy's political and historical interests, and his personal background and social experience, make for texts of immediate relevance for contemporary readers.

Especially for readers who are also gardeners, lovers of the flower world from the simple daisy to the gorgeous Amarillis, or where:

"Between primrose and watercress. Wind tightens

The sly grip of this season by a notch, one fox in the whins Howls for a chase.

McCarthy loves the intensity and lives of his apple trees, admitting in his magnificent nature and personal love poem Lover of Rare Apple Varieties

libraries and among books and art"

For years, sometimes the scent was everywhere after A night of love, fresh linen

scented with the unbidden Feel of apple blossom,

unbidden by me, but recover-Ed by her in the way she twisted as if bedclothes were

An orchard in May. The closing verse of this 24 line poem reads: '... my life has been given over to this lover of varieties, / A keeper of Gibson's Russet, Ballinora Pippin. Such

**Plenitude is** flush with beautiful lines and words, sometimes tough as 'the broken stones of the year' in 'the wet bracken of

#### that: time" Only recently I discovered From our mothers that I was the lover of a lover The poem on the fac-Satire Of rare apple varieties. It ing page, White Album, is was a thing she had kept hidden dedicated 'To Catherine' and

#### **66**McCarthy has always been recognised for his wit and subtle satire, partly shaped by a long life in

worthwhile

May never seem whole

## Daily words of good support



Alan Hilliard broadcating his word in edgeways.

#### Dipping into Hope: An Anchor in Stormy Waters, By Alan Hilliard (Messenger Publications, €14.00 / £12.95)

#### **Peter Costello**

r Alan Hilliard may well be familiar to many readers who are out of bed early enough through his con-

tributions to RTÉ's 'A Word in Edgeways', 3 minute long broadcasts at 6.15am in the mornings from which the pieces in this new book of his derive.

Having got up that early he spends much of his days as the administrator of the parish of City Quay, University Church and Westland Row - churches which historically had much larger congregations than they do today. His career has been spent, he says, in the world of migration, working too with prisoners and as college chaplains. A man then of wide and varied experience, used to exchanges in curious out of the way places. In this book they range from remarks made by a First Nations chief in Canada to attendees at the Willie Clancy Summer School.

Being designed to catch the ear at a certain time of day these pieces are very personal, crisp and focused. They are all the better for

indeed many poems throughout the collection reveal that she too is a committed gardener and remains a significant presence throughout this poetry making.

Plenitude is flush with beautiful lines and words, sometimes tough as 'the broken stones of the year' in 'the wet bracken of time'. There is then a paean to Mothers, his mother, and all mothers, entitled 'Month of the Dead', which offers keen observation and excitement in every line; the poem talks of 'life's accumulations, of ...scutch-grass creating nests of decay'.

But what's unresolved / Is want's truly permanent, as the freshwater and distinct / Mussel assembles its one pink

pearl.' Then the poet adds: 'And ready to crack some joke about priests, to release

the girl I always sense is there. We always want to get a laugh

McCarthy has always been recognised for his wit and subtle satire, partly shaped by a long life in libraries and among books and art. In a short poem, The One Leaf, is this literary gem of a verse as the poet sits under a tree contemplating:

'The self that time makes

it. There is little wandering about seeking a way into a theme that you so often find in sermons these days. These are not sermons indeed, but reflections.

He also provides the photographs that illustrate the pages. Several of these are photos of a Chicago landmark, a polished steel work of art called 'The Bean' - highly suitable for a book of reflections one might think.

It is a difficult thing to catch the particular tone of his voice, but they are all so packed with observation that they will bear a lot of rereading. One piece called simply "Nobility" from the middle of the book is what you might call a parable to an apprentice stone worker in 12th century Paris teamed with his two uncles. One who was gruff and hasty and ruined many pieces of stone with his rushed work.

The boy asked each in turn what they were doing. The hasty one replied, "Are you stupid, don't you see I'm cutting stone." The second, calmer, uncle responded, "I'm building a cathedral". Now there is food for thought.

On a different note he describes his first visit to Dachau concentration camp. It was opened in March 1933, for the enemies of the Reich. He remarks that the first thing that an authoritarian regime does is create enemies, Jews in one case, perhaps emigrants in another.

"Don't let them get away with it -- don't become like them. Whether a Christian or not, be less afraid of the enemies, and more afraid of those who have created them.'

This is a book to buy and read, to ponder not first thing in the morning perhaps but in the quiet of approaching night when their fullness can be appreciated, free of the morning rush.

In the way Samuel Beckett was

With that one single leaf" On the tree of his entire life:

And yes, there is a poem in the car-park of Cork City Library with two professorial poets, Seán Lucy and Seán Ó Tuama, listening and debating words for the ferocious clagernach of the rain, and bells, "Though this rain is belling down in cathedrals of sound".

McCarthy is good on place: he brings alive the personality of Salonica, Ballyferriter, to three **Romanian cities**, Newark, and to Old **New York streets** where nothing is ever as it seems"

In a poem of 33 lines, Lustrous Gold, McCarthy writes of parents and their young: We hoard issues instead of

wealth; urgent issues fill up our coffers With lustrous gold, newly

minted. There is the issue Of our young who cannot

afford a home; there is no nest For them in the places where they might begin to live. This

One issue burns a hole in the pocket of my brain. It creates

An unauthorised balance in the place where my soul

Should be at ease. It is every parent's worry: how will the young

Become if they cannot begin?

McCarthy is good on place: he brings alive the personality of Salonica. Ballyferriter. to three Romanian cities. Newark, and to Old New York streets where nothing is ever as it seems.

There are also poems on memory, on Evan Boland, on little things in life and on great ones. Humour and depth are natural weavers of Tom's unique voice and ways of thinking.

#### Trawlings

In his marvellously subtle language trawlings, he is ploughing the fields and turning over fresh clay, seeking new understandings and offering seeds of thought to sow for harvesting as new poems. Every poem (I do not exaggerate) in this collection earns multiple readings.

Tom McCarthy is a major poet of our time. He recently wrote that: 'The masters teach us that we should write a poetry that has ambition in it, not just to be essential and finished, but also to be uncanny... We should keep our eyes on that uncanny destination.'

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# **Special Papal Crossword**

#### **Bumper Crossword**

#### Across

1 Take time to reconsider (5,5) 6 Inclined to look on the bright side (10) 11 The Holy See (7) 14 Large stringed instrument (5) 15 A cool treat, especially on a hot day (3,5) 17 The new pope's Latin motto, meaning "In the one Christ we are one" (2,4,3,4) (6)19 Gullible (5) 20 Make an impact, personally (7)23 Vegetable found in a pod (3) 24 America's 'Windy City', where the new pope was born (7) 25 Unwell (3) 26 See 113 across 28 Placed carefully before one (4) 30 Tribal leaders (6) (4)33 Items put up for auction (4) 36 Gripping tool or tools (6) 37 Black fur (5) (3)38 String (5) 39 Diocese in 101 across where the new pope was bishop from 2015 to 2023 (8) 40 Mountain reputed to be where Noah's Ark made landfall (6)43 Funeral tribute (6) 45 Pigpen (3) 46 Lets one back in (8) 48 The Latin word for 'mass' (5) 49 City in Bavaria (6) 50 Of high quality (4) 51 Major gatherings of church leaders (6) 54 Six (4,5) 56 The seventh planet from the Sun (6) 57 Situation in matchplay golf where you are guaranteed at least a draw (6) 58 Lily (4) 59 Exactly the same (5) 61 Regret (3) 62 Sum up (in short) (5) 65 Australian actor Gibson, perhaps (3) 66 Strong, alkaline liquid used (7)in cleaning, etc (3) 67 Finger or toe (5) 68 Christian name of Miss Lovelace, genius mathematician and daughter of Lord Byron (3) 70 Sample for flavour (5) 74 Informal conversation (4) 75 Holy, consecrated (6) 77 Irrational fear (6) 78 Newly born chicks (9)

79 Set of clothing (6) 80 Use a spoon (4) 83 Ease off (6) 84 Christian name of the new pope's late father (5) 86 Easy-going (8) 88 Had some food (3) 89 Assuredness (6) 93 Suburban village in 2 down where the new pope grew up 95 Special ritual (8) 97 In which to keep stamps or photos (5) 98 Bitter, pungent (5) 100 Historic Russian scientist famed for his work with dogs (6) 101 The new pope holds citizenship of this South American country (4) 103 Clothing, dress (6) 105 The capital of Timor l'Este 106 Friend (3) 108 The marine environment 110 Painstaking, prudent (7) 111 Painting, sculpture etc (3) 112 Rice-based Italian dish (7) 113 Holy artefact (5) 116 Famous building in Rome where the 14 down took place (7.6)117 People who need to move to another country; in his case, the new pope worked with such Venezuelans in 101 across (8) 118 Pleasant smell (5) 119 Science taught by the new pope in 24 across (7) 120 Explained in another language (10) 121 Generous and philanthropic (10) Down 2 US state where the new pope was born and grew up (8) 3 China clay (6) 4 & 52d The new pope is a fan of this 24 across baseball team (5,3)5 A narrow opening or fissure 7 English form of the opening words of the new pope's first oration (5,2,4,3) 8 Chief or principal (4) 9 Travel on water (4) 10 Nickname for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (6) 11 Italian city famous for its canals (6)

#### 12 The new pope worked for ten years in this city in 101

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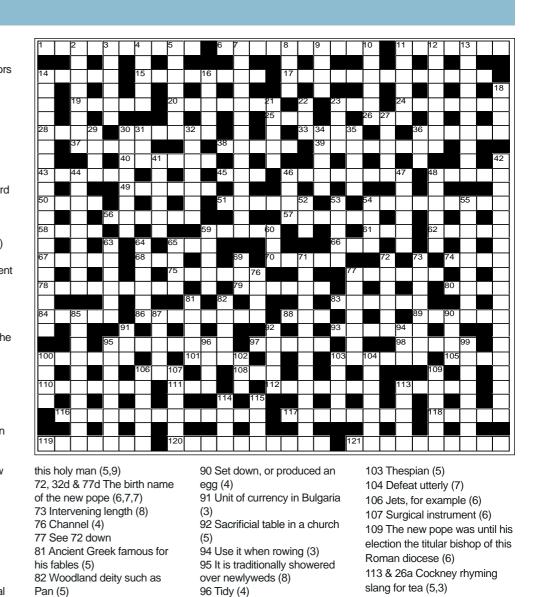
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across (8) 13 Brave, fearless (10) 14 The group of papal electors (8,2,9) 16 Cords (5) 18 Canines (4) 21 Omens (5) 22 Everyone (3) 23 Walkway (4) 27 Gallic brilliance (5) 29 Military alliance (1,1,1,1) 30 Large Scottish broadsword (8) 31 Female pronoun (3) 32 See 72 down 34 Huge marine expanse (5) 35 Eighteenth letter of the Greek alphabet, the equivalent of the English 's' (5) 36 Special container for the eucharistic host (3) 41 Canopy (6) 42 Huge church building in the Vatican city (5,6,8) 44 Tongues (9) 46 Roach-like fish (4) 47 Precious metal (6) 48 Up-to-date (6) 52 See 4 down 53 Show a happy expression (5)54 In this place (4) 55 Skullcap worn by the new (9) goog 59 Vote into office (5) 60 Allow, permit (3) 63 Ring-shaped coral formations (6) 64 Red gemstone (6) 65 The holy sacrifice (4) 69 The new pope is the fourteenth to adopt this papal name (3) 71 The new pope belongs to an order which follows the rules of



87 Tosca, perhaps (5) 102 Avail of (3)
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85 Centre of Third Level

Education (10)

#### GORDIUS No. 714

99 Reveal a secret (8)

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Across

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| - | 9         |   |   |    | 2 | 5 |      |   | 6 |          |   |   |  |
|   |           | 6 | 7 | 3  | 1 |   |      |   | 4 | 6        | 5 |   |  |
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|   |           | 3 |   | 8  |   | 6 |      | 1 |   |          |   |   |  |
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|   | 6         |   |   |    | 8 | 2 | 3    | 4 |   |          |   | 4 |  |
|   | 3         |   |   | 5  | 4 |   |      |   | 9 |          |   | 3 |  |
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| La | st | W | ee | k's | s E | las | y. | 582 |
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| 8  | 5  | 2 | 7  | 6   | 1   | 4   | 9  | 3   |
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| 9  | 1  | 6 | 4  | 3   | 8   | 7   | 2  | 5   |
| 2  | 3  | 9 | 8  | 5   | 6   | 1   | 7  | 4   |
| 7  | 4  | 5 | 1  | 9   | 3   | 6   | 8  | 2   |
| 1  | 6  | 8 | 2  | 4   | 7   | 3   | 5  | 9   |
| 6  | 8  | 3 | 9  | 7   | 5   | 2   | 4  | 1   |
| 5  | 2  | 1 | 6  | 8   | 4   | 9   | 3  | 7   |
| 4  | 9  | 7 | 3  | 1   | 2   | 5   | 6  | 8   |
| La | st | w | ee | k's | s H | laı | rd | 58  |
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114 Unlock (4)

(2,2)

115 The national airline of Israel

#### 40 Comment

#### Notebook

# Notre Dame, Leo and Attila the Hun

Do you remember where you were when the planes hit the Twin Towers in New York? Most people do. You may also remember where you heard the news of Princess Diana's death. I remember both. And Lalso remember hearing the news that Notre Dame cathedral in Paris was on fire.

I was having my tea in the parish house in Newcestown, it was the spring of the year before COVID. A newsflash on Drivetime brought the alarming news of the inferno. I ran to the TV and there on CNN was footage of Notre Dame ablaze. And more amazing still was the sight of a crowd gathered on the opposite bank of the Seine, not just gawking and taking pictures on their phones, but praying together, singing hymns, and weeping. It was a surprising sight, in the centre of a city that often seems not to know God. But then Notre Dame de Paris was not just another church, but the heart of France, its 'Point Zero', an icon of the nation.

Next President Macron appeared, and announced that the great cathedral would not just be rebuilt, but that it would be com-



Fr Cotter in Notre Dame

pleted in 2024, the year of the Paris Olympics, five years hence. Given the enormity of the task, it seemed a foolish promise. But it was achieved.

Last Advent, I watched the rededication of the cathedral, in a moving liturgy where time and speed were not of the essence, but beauty was. I saw the new altar anointed and the brazier lit (safely) upon it, purifying and sanctifying. The font, ambo and tabernacle were also blessed, and ing them to what is to be seen, six candles lit by the altar, a single candle and cross on the altar alerting us to the fact that Paris' bishop was again celebrating Mass at his cathedral's altar.

#### Pilgrimage

During that ceremony, I decided a pilgrimage to Paris was in order and in Lent of this year made the journey, along with multitudes of pilgrims. The church authorities had insisted Notre Dame would demand no payment for entry, and many took up the invitation to see the rebuilt marvel. Tickets are daily sent by email from the cathedral website for timed entry, with up to 10,000 such tickets being posted each day; it certainly seemed like that many people thronged the church the day I visited!. The 'new' Notre Dame is a wonderful experience for the visitor. For one thing, every pilgrim now enters by the main door. The prominent baptismal font, matching the altar, points to the gateway sacrament that baptism is. Pilgrims make their way clockwise around the exterior chapels, with panels alert-

and how it fits in the faith story. Directly behind the sanctuary is the Crown of Thorns reliquary, with volunteer stewards working hard to keep a reverent space around it. And more moving than anything is the brightness of the interior, with centuries of grime and smoke cleaned off. It's worth a look: Notre Dame awaits you!

#### If it works for Rome?

It's such a radical proposal that it seems unlikely to succeed. The diocese gathers its parish priests together and asks them to elect their new bishop. Problems immediately come to mind, the politics, the promises of payback, the jealousies. It could not work, you say: yet that is how Rome elects its bishop. Each cardinal elector is linked to a Roman parish and it is as such that he enters the conclave, to elect a new bishop for Peter's see. And it works for Rome, why not for Raphoe, or Derry, or any other Irish diocese seeking a new leader?

#### Leo and the Hun

Fr Bernard Cotter

Everyone who comments on our new Pope's name speaks of Leo XIII and his letter Rerum Novarum. Less mention is made of the 'original of the species', the first Pope Leo. In his day, Attila the Hun and his army threatened Rome. The image the Church carries in her heart is of the gentle, scholarly Pope Leo, unarmed and alone, walking out to meet the Hun and persuading him to leave Rome alone - and succeeding. People who trust in God can do brave things. St Leo the Great, pray for our Pope, and for us; give us some of his courage!





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#### A parish in the Dominican Republic needs help to complete its new church

Fr Fresnel Alcina CSSp has contacted The Little Way Association from his parish in the diocese of San Juan de la Maguana in the Dominican Republic. The parish, dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, he tells us, "began its religious activities in a hall and has been for many years a fundamental pillar in the spiritual and social life of the community. Its presence has provided a space for prayer, and support to generations of parishioners who have considered it their spiritual home. The structure is now very deteriorated and no longer fit for the use of a large Catholic congregation. We need to build and restore the parish, adapting it to modern safety standards. Fire safeguards have to be put in place and much else done to build a new parish church. We have completed some of the work, with the walls part-built. Please help us to continue with this project. I assure you that all donations will be much appreciated and will help us greatly."

By giving a donation to our chapel fund, you will be assisting the missionary apostolate of dedicated priests, such as Father Alcina. He and his people will be most grateful.



"My life is but an instant, a passing hour. My life is a but a day that escapes and flies away. O my God! You know that to love you on earth I only have today." - St Therese

#### . . . . . . . . . .

WELLS NEEDED

Missionaries constantly appeal to The Little Way for funds to sink wells in order to provide clean water, the lack of which causes much illness and many medical needs. On average, women in Africa and Asia walk approx. 3 hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

#### Can you help?

Every euro you send will be forwarded intact.

#### LITTLE WAY THERESIAN HOUSES

Praying for the missions and offering accommodation to pilgrims: WALSINGHAM (UK) For reservations please contact Maggie on

0044 1328 820 222 KNOCK (Ireland) Tel: (0) 94 93 88406