

# The Irish Catholic

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## New Government must listen to people of Faith

**Exclusive**

Chai Brady

Politicians must listen to the “voice of Faith” in Ireland and create a functioning dialogue between Church and State, the Primate of All Ireland has said to the *Irish Catholic*.

As a new Government is set to be formed in the coming weeks Archbishop Eamon Martin [pictured left] said that the current model of Church-State dialogue is “tired” and “unused”.

In a message before the elections, the bishops put out a statement saying dialogue pathways with the State are “not functioning for the greater good of society and are in need of review”.

The bishops asked people to tackle politicians on the question: “Similar to Governments in other European



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**A saint's grand arrival in Kerry**



The relic of Carlo Acutis, soon to be declared a saint, visited St Vincent's Church in Ballyferriter - a Gaeltacht Parish. Accompanied by Msgr Anthony Figueiredo of Assisi, the relic was brought to the church in a horse-drawn carriage. From left to right: Anna, Dónal, Diarmuid Mac An tSithigh, Chris Courtney, James Curran, Gearóid Mac an tSithigh, Msgr Anthony Figueiredo holding the relic of Carlo Acutis, and Kerry the horse. See page 8

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# New Government must listen to people of Faith

## Iconic Veritas Abbey St store to close and building sold

» Continued from Page 1

countries and at EU level, should a specific Government minister with responsibility for dialogue with Churches and other faith communities be appointed as part of the next administration?"

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Archbishop Martin expanded on the statement saying that "I think the particular model that is used in Ireland for Church-State dialogue is tired, I think it's unused".

"I think it hugely impoverishes the Church if we are not able to engage in that dialogue, and equally I think it hugely impoverishes democ-

racy if the voice of faith is not heard," the archbishop said.

"So, you will see that when we made this statement for the election this time around, we added that paragraph at the end – that we are here to help, not to threaten the State, but indeed the opposite, to support our politicians because they have accepted a very noble vocation to serve the people. "But that means to listen to the voice of faith and there are many people in Ireland who have faith and who are willing to write that in the census, and say 'I am a person of Faith'," he added.

See page 16

### Staff Reporter

Known for its extensive collection of religious books and gifts, the historic Veritas store on Abbey St will close its doors in the first week of January 2025, following the sale of the building, according to sources close to Veritas. Despite repeated attempts from *The Irish Catholic* to contact management for clarification on the closure, no replies were made.

On their social media platforms, Veritas has recently announced that "It is with regret that we inform you of the permanent closure of our Veritas stores in Derry, effective Friday, November 29, 2024, and Letterkenny, Friday,

December 13, 2024."

In Letterkenny, branch who was moved to a better location at the beginning of the year, there were reports of interested parties attempting to prevent the closure and there was also a petition organised by customers to keep the store open.

Customers have used social media to express their thoughts. In the comments on the Veritas Facebook page, there are many statements of disappointment, "Shocking decision to close the stores. The Letterkenny store is a beautiful store and the only shop of its kind locally. Sheila and her assistants are so helpful and kind always. It will be a big loss to the northwest," and "Very sad news indeed to lose our holy shops," are among some of the comments.



## Outgoing Columban Regional Director left 'sad' and 'grateful' after term

### Brandon Scott

The outgoing Regional Director of the Columbans in Ireland, Fr Raymond Husband, has said that he is grateful after six years of numerous achievements in the role but that the pain of losing 62 Columbans mostly during the Covid pandemic has left "a sadness".

Fr Husband, who was succeeded in the post by Fr David Kenneally last Saturday, said to columbans, ie that he saw his "number one priority" as "care of the elderly priests" in St Columban's and particularly the elderly missionaries in the nursing home in Dalgan.

"Because we are such an elderly group of men, the role of

director is to support them and care for them," he said. "I would have seen that as a priority.

"The nursing home was under threat and we as a region worked hard to ensure the continuation of the nursing home. There have been challenges and even the possibility of closing it down. We had to work through that.

"I think as Columbans we are blessed that we have such a good and loyal staff in the nursing home, in the offices and in the house. I have always been happy with the staff and working alongside the staff – I am very grateful to them."

He acknowledged that "one of the sadnesses in my

six years was that 62 Columbans went to the Lord. There is a sadness. These are men that I would have known and worked with in various stages. It is part of our history" but that the Columbans "achieved a lot in the six years. One of the things that stands out for me is that when I came into the office the sale of Dowdstown House was an issue, its transition from Columban property to sale. Another headache at the time was the farm. We were going through a series of managers. So the Regional Council decided to lease the farm and that was a very positive thing. I am very proud and happy with that."

### A welcoming church



Pictured at the launch of the new migrant appeal in Clane, Co. Kildare last Friday were from left-to-right: Khalil Al Sheblak, Irene Lawlor Irish Red Cross and Fr Paul O'Boyle Parish Priest Clane & Rathcoffey Photo: Lorraine O'Sullivan.

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## Voldemort gets a red hat



Ralph Fiennes as Cardinal Lawrence and Stanley Tucci star in a scene from the movie *Conclave*. Actor Fiennes spent a period of his schooling in St Kieran's College, a Catholic school in Co. Kilkenny. Photo: OSV News/Focus Features

# Future teen saint is 'exploding' among Irish youth

## Brandon Scott

Two members of a group dedicated to the promotion of the cause of Blessed Carlo Acutis, an Italian teen renowned for his deep faith who died after a terminal cancer diagnosis in 2006, say they're "happy out" after last week's Vatican announcement to canonise the "Millennial Saint" this April and that they've witnessed an "explosion" of Blessed Carlo interest among Irish youth due to recent exposure to the soon-to-be saint.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, siblings Mary-Aoife and Seamus Ong of the group Carlo Acutis Youth Ireland said Blessed Carlo's "quick" pathway to sainthood has been "incredible".

"The process has been quite quick," Seamus said. "In 2020 he was beatified and then in early April of this year it was decided that he would be canonised. Then everything was put on pause and we were all waiting to hear what would happen."

"The last couple of months I was wondering maybe this was going to be something that will happen later down the road and that maybe the Pope was taking his time with it but it's been great to hear that straight out there it's been decided for this Jubilee for Teenagers in April.

"The next time we go over to Assisi, it'll be very real, that Carlo is a saint now – that's incredible."

Young people are natu-

rally attracted to the very accessible and normal look and message of Blessed Carlo, according to Mary-Aoife, and this ordinary appeal is capturing the minds of schoolchildren all around the country.

"We're all happy out over here, we really are," she said. "We've really seen just an explosion of Blessed Carlo, particularly among the youth. We started doing workshops in schools, schools just reached out to us and asked us if we would be interested in doing some workshops. It's incredible going down to talk to schoolchildren who have seen him and are all very open and interested in him, particularly around the idea of a saint. It's incredible to see their faces look-

ing in wonder at this young person who they never would've perceived could be a saint.

“It’s been such a joy to go out and meet young people, talk to them and give them a real example of a young saint today. I think Carlo is beginning to explode around the world. Although this process of canonisation has happened so quickly, in one way we’re not surprised because of the amount of people, through the relic visits and talking to other people, who have told us of incredible intercession stories and experiences they’ve had through Blessed Carlo Acutis’ intercession.

"He's a really fast worker and these two approved miracles are just two of many that are happening."

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# Fears Mass in Mountjoy prison impossible after chapel remodel

Chai Brady

Changes to the chapel in Mountjoy prison in Dublin will lead to prisoners having to watch Mass in their cells rather than receive the Eucharist in person, *The Irish Catholic* understands.

The bishop who liaises with the Irish Prison Service is currently in discussion with Mountjoy prison

management regarding the ongoing remodelling of the chapel.

Sources close to the situation have warned that the 'repurposing' of the chapel will make it impossible for prisoners to attend Mass in person, instead they will be given the option to watch it on the TV in their cell.

It is believed that the remodelling includes the removal of

pews to facilitate video booths for prisoners which can be used to contact solicitors, family members etc.

While there is no priest chaplain based there, they are brought in on an *ad hoc* basis to celebrate Mass. Work to redesign the chapel began on Monday, and it was initially believed that only a small space at the back of the chapel would be used, however it is believed more space will be taken.

Bishop Martin Hayes, Bishop of Kilmore and the Liaison Bishop to the Irish Prison Service, "is currently in communications with chaplains, and with prison management, on the latter's proposal to repurpose part of the chapel in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin", accord-

ing to the Catholic Communication Office (CCO).

Both the CCO and the Irish Prison Service were asked: "Will prisoners be able to attend the chapel in person to receive the Eucharist after the works on the chapel are complete? Will the same access be given to priests who offer Mass in the chapel, or will there be changes to their access to celebrate Mass?"

Numerous requests to the CCO asking for more information regarding discussions were ignored and subsequently rejected.

The Irish Prison Service's press office was contacted multiple times through their official media channels, but failed to respond.

## Nigerian governor hails Irish missionaries' contribution to Nigeria



Governor Soludo received the new Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria and Ambassador of the Vatican City, Most Rev. Michael Francis Crotty, at the Governor's Lodge in Amawbia. Photo: Anambra State New Media.

Brandon Scott

Governor of Anambra State, Professor Chukwuma Soludo, has commended Irish priests and missionaries for their dedicated efforts and sacrifices in bringing the gospel to Nigeria.

Governor Soludo recently received the Papal Nuncio to Nigeria, Archbishop Michael Crotty, on a courtesy visit to the Governor's Lodge in Amawbia, Awka, the capital of Anambra State. The governor expressed deep gratitude to the early Christian missionaries for their enduring and profound impact on the region.

Governor Soludo emphasised the missionaries' vital

role in establishing and shaping key sectors such as education, healthcare, and social welfare throughout the country.

Highlighting the strong foundation established by Irish priests many years ago, Governor Soludo noted that the growth of Catholic schools today is a testament to their enduring legacy.

He commended the priests for their dedication in spreading the gospel and enduring harsh conditions for the betterment of their congregants.

Archbishop Crotty personally expressed admiration for the strong bond between Irish missionaries and the Nigerian people, noting their great affinity with the country.

## Encounter: Waterford youth 'battling fear with prayer'

Renata Steffens

Young adults from the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore gathered for a night of faith and friendship on November 22 in St John's Church, Waterford. The event called 'Encounter' had around 15 people aged 18-35 for a night of sharing, prayer, and a talk by Fr John Harris ADM, Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity Waterford on battling fears with prayer.

Nodlaig Lillis, Youth and Adult Ministry Office in the diocese, told *The Irish Catholic* this is part of the diocese's plan for youth and young adult ministry, launched in 2023. "Encounter was happening

before that, but it is part of that plan. It's part of a bigger strategy that we have", she said.

These meetings have been happening for the past two and a half years, from October to May. Last week's gathering was the first one of this term and it is an evangelisation tool, as regular participants are encouraged to bring friends who are not very active in the Church.

This event is an opportunity to "pray together, hear a good inspirational input from somebody with a different speaker each time, and then have a time of fellowship together. Just get to know other young adults who are practising Catholics."

## West Cork youth discerns



Young Catholics from the Diocese of Cork and Ross pictured with Bishop Fintan Gavin at one of the information meetings with priests and parish leadership teams in west Cork. Over 170 people heard Bishop Gavin outline the context for a time of prayer, listening and discerning. Photo: Diocese of Cork and Ross.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Cork and Ross's Polish Chaplaincy gets a new home

The Polish Chaplaincy in the Diocese of Cork and Ross will move to a new home from February 1. The chaplaincy, which is currently located in St Augustine's Church, Washington Street will move to the Holy Cross Church, Mahon, in the Family of Parishes of Ballinlough, Blackrock, Blackrock Road and Mahon.

For years, the chaplaincy in Washington Street served the Polish community in their pastoral needs. In the recent years, the community changed, as many went back to their country and others became more involved in their own parishes.

"In transferring to Holy Cross Church Mahon and while continuing as a Diocesan Chaplaincy, the Polish Community will become an integral part of parish life in Mahon Parish," the diocese said in a statement.

"It is envisaged that the Polish Community will gather for one weekend Mass to be celebrated every Sunday afternoon in Holy Cross Church and will continue to grow and develop the participation of young people and families in various ministries including Domestic Church Families, the Galilee Group and The School of the New Evangelisation."

### NI Executive Office comments on violence against women

The Northern Irish Executive Office has issued a statement reiterating their commitment to ending violence against women and girls, to mark the International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls and the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence period.

"Following the events of recent weeks, we reaffirm our commitment to working together across the Executive to do everything we can to achieve our vision of 'a changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm'", the statement said.

"We have to break the cycle of violence and abuse against women and girls. It is preventable and there is something everyone can do. Our Strategic Framework takes a whole of government and society approach, with a clear focus on prevention and stopping the violence before it starts", said First Minister Michelle O'Neill.

Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly also commented: "Ending all forms of violence, abuse, and harm against women and girls is one of the most pressing challenges facing our society today. We are united in our commitment to tackle this important issue."



# The political figure who has been erased?

**I**s Éamon de Valera now a forgotten figure? There is no statue or monument to the political leader who had the longest and perhaps most influential impact on 20th century Ireland. Certainly, the party he founded seldom has recourse to invoking his name at election time (or any other time). And "De Valera's Ireland" seems often to be used pejoratively - part of that culture war on the past which is now common currency.

## Examination

Yet, Mary McAleese - in many ways a progressive and a modernist - spoke almost tenderly about him last week when she launched a new book about Dev, *Dangerous Ambition*, by Colum Kenny. There was a soft spot for Dev the politician in her Belfast home, but it was Éamon, the child born in poverty, reared as a child labourer on his uncle's farm in Co Limerick, that her heart went out to. His young life was lonely and motherless, and yet from such unpromising beginnings there emerged a well educated and clever mathematician, a leader whose



Mary Kenny

stable stewardship made modern Ireland possible, a loving husband and a man of faith.

**“He was, as Mary McAleese said, heartlessly ‘othered’ because of being the child of a single mother, and the son of an absent, untraceable father”**

Colum Kenny's new examination of Dev's early life does indeed highlight De Valera's deprived childhood, emotionally and materially. (By the way, Colum is a cousin of mine

but hopefully that does not disqualify me from describing his book.) There was real poverty in the rural Ireland to which Dev was despatched, from his American place of birth. He had to work on the farm as a young child. He was originally called George by his mother, and subsequently Eddie. He must have suffered from maternal deprivation syndrome when his mother, as a single parent (apparently deserted by Dev's father) sent him back to Ireland because she had to go out to work. Small wonder, Colum says, that Dev's 1937 Constitution specified that mothers should not be forced into outside employment "by economic necessity".

His parents' marriage has never been verified, and poign-

ant are Dev's own searches for traces of his father, the elusive Vivion de Valera. Dev endured cruel barbs because of the uncertainty around his family roots. He was, as Mary McAleese said, heartlessly "othered" because of being the child of a single mother, and the son of an absent, untraceable father. On one occasion a political opponent referred to Dev as "a half-breed Jew". Ernest Blythe, founder of the Abbey Theatre, called him "some class of a mulatto".

## Calling

Dev might have become a priest - his mother wanted him to be ordained - and he was always

seriously religious. But after 1916 a political life beckoned.

His mother Kate married again, and her second son, Dev's half-brother, Thomas Wheelwright, did indeed become a priest in America.

"The child is father of the

man," wrote Wordsworth: in our childhood, our later lives are formed. What a tough and lonely childhood Éamon de Valera overcame! Yet he forged a nation. Surely he deserves a national monument.

**O**n other political matters, Mary McAleese was stringently critical of two recent British Prime Ministers who she named only as "Boris and Liz" (viz., Johnson and Truss). "I think I'll give Rishi a pass, but I won't give the other two a pass." Rishi (Sunak), she said,

was basically decent.

The President of Ireland is not supposed to be political, but the ex-President of Ireland is free to express any political opinions she pleases. Mrs McAleese has a wealth of experience in overseeing politics - maybe she should now get actively involved?

**N**ikita Hand's mother, Debbie, said about her daughter's ordeal: "I think she will be scarred for life. It will always be there, it will always be with her." This, sadly, is true. The young woman will never be able to forget - and will never be allowed to forget - the events which formed part of her civil case against Conor McGregor.

She was certainly courageous to put her private

life into the public realm to secure a conviction, by a jury, of rape. But all the depressing, distressing and sometimes squalid details of what is now called "partying" were reported unsparingly, and I think many of us would blush at such full disclosure, even in the pursuit of truth and justice. And if Nikita has won a just victory in the civil court, harsher judgements of the "partying" situation have been posted on social media.

I hope she can re-make her life, and I hope Conor McGregor learns the lessons he clearly needs to learn. The feminists who say that the maltreatment of women as though they were "a piece of meat" is a result of the "pornification" of society are not wrong. Christian campaigners like Lord Longford and Mary Whitehouse predicted, exactly, how porn would degrade women - and uglify sexuality. Job done.

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# Women's conference offers 'a wave of grace for the local Church in Ireland'

**Renata Milán Morales**

Almost 500 women gathered in Donegal for the 'Abide in His love' conference. The event aimed to celebrate the "beauty and dignity of women in the Church and in the world today," with guest speakers the Nashville Dominican Sisters, Fr Barry Braum (London), Kathleen

Nichols and Celine Kelly (Magdala, Israel), Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin, Catherine DiNuzzo (Kansas), among others.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic* after taking part in the event, Fr Todd Arsenault LC, shared that he was "overjoyed at the tangible action of the Holy Spirit in women of all ages that attended and pray

that this is only the beginning of a new evangelisation among the women of Ireland."

"This weekend of joy, of tears, of friendship and of spiritual renewal, released a wave of God's grace for the benefit of the local Church in Ireland and in the families of each of these women," said Fr Todd noting the fruits of this event.

Michelle Kelly (24), one of the attendants, saw this event as a sign of hope to the Church in Ireland, "It was so encouraging to see almost 500 women of all ages attend, and to know that hope is on the rise for Catholics in Ire-

land. If almost 500 women will travel all the way up to Donegal for a weekend event, imagine how many more of us there are across the country!"

According to Fr Todd priests spent most of their time listening to confessions and renewing "dignity as the Father's beloved daughters to each." With excitement the priest added, "The Holy Spirit was working in the lives of the women present! From the amazing and dynamic conferences that encouraged, motivated, shaped and inspired the women to ongoing conversion, holiness of life and hope."

## International Columbanus Day launched in Carlow

**Renata Steffens**

The International Columbanus Day will be hosted for the first time in the Republic of Ireland in July 2025. On November 22, The Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin officially launched the event with a lecture by Dr Damien Bracken, UCC.

The XXVI Columbanus Day will be taking place on July 11-13, 2025 in Co. Carlow, where St Columbanus was born in 543AD. Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin Denis Nulty said at the launch that the fact the saint was born in Myshall, "gives us in Carlow our rightful claim on him and the reason we have been invited to host the International Columbanus Weekend next July."

"When Carlow was chosen to host the XXVI Columbanus Celebrations, there was one man elated at the choice of Carlow and the opportunities it offered, opportunities to reintroduce St

Columbanus to Carlow and Ireland," Bishop Nulty said.

"I speak of the late Archbishop Noel Treanor who died on August 11 last, barely seven weeks after our Piacenza gathering. There he stressed to me how we in Carlow must make the most of this once in a lifetime opportunity, tonight has been a super start, thanks to the wonderful lecture from Damien, and so with great joy I launch our programme for the weekend of July 11-13 next year.

"A programme that will welcome Columbanus communities from all over Europe and all over the island to the place of his birth, where his life-journey began and which has left an indelible mark on the history of Europe today. Our three-day festival comes in the middle of Pope Francis's Jubilee Year of Hope and that hope filled theme permeates all aspects of the programme," the bishop concluded.

## Trócaire condemns final agreement at COP29

**Staff reporter**

The COP29 conference has concluded on November 22, and the final agreement commits \$300bn per year from richer countries to the Global South to develop climate plans.

"When inflation is taken into account this is a minimal increase from the commitment of 100bn made in 2009," Trócaire said in a statement. Which falls short on the necessary amount, according to the charity. "The current text acknowledges the trillions of dollars needed."

At COP29 in Baku, Trócaire Climate Justice Policy and Advocacy Advisor, Sinéad Loughran said: "It is shocking that a climate finance COP has delivered so little ambition on climate finance and not

surprising that climate vulnerable countries reject this.

"Once again richer countries are dragging their heels when it comes to paying the debt we owe for the climate damage we have caused. It is the poorest in the world who will continue to suffer the worst consequences of the climate crisis with no safety net."

"The COP decision failed to commit to the public finance that's needed and instead focuses on ill-defined investment and private finance to fill existing funding gaps," Ms Loughran added.

"It is an insult, and reflects a step backwards in ambition, and a complete disregard for the impacts being felt by those who have done nothing to cause this crisis. It flies in the face of climate justice and the responsibilities of rich countries."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Parish priest speaks of his shock at tragic Donegal crash

A local priest has spoken of his "shock" after attending the scene of last Friday's night's tragic crash in Liscooley in which three people lost their lives.

Local Parish Priest at Crossroads, Killygordon, Fr Patsy Arkinson, attended the scene of the crash late Friday night and also said a rosary for those involved in the collision.

Speaking to *Donegal Daily*, he described the scene as "shocking", and that locals were "shocked and hurt" following the tragic incident.

He also offered his thoughts and prayers to the deceased and injured in the collision.

A third person died following Friday's crash on Tuesday morning.

### Bishop Monahan launches digital Advent calendar

Bishop of Killaloe Fintan Monahan, also the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference delegate for Jubilee Year 2025, will launch a digital Advent calendar on December 1 to mark the first day of Advent.

With theme of 'Hope', the digital Advent calendar "offers a distinctive and spiritually enriching way to journey through this holy season," the Bishops' Conference said in a statement. "The 2024 calendar offers prayers and resources designed to guide individuals, families and faith communities to reflect on the hope that Christ brings to the world, while also preparing for the upcoming Holy Jubilee Year in 2025."

### Council invites bishop to negotiate with it over derelict school

Laois County Council has been asked to approach the local bishop Denis Nulty over the proposed transformation of a derelict school as the building is church-owned property.

Independent Cllr Aisling Moran asked that in a motion: "That Laois County Council together with the Ballylinan Community group, liaise with Bishop Denis McNulty of the Kildare & Leighlin Diocese, with the view to purchasing the old Primary School which is now derelict for use as a community space".

"That building was an old school and the Church have ownership of it but it has gone derelict," said Cllr Moran.

### President Higgins comments on Louise Asmal's death

The human rights advocate, Louise Asmal died on November 23. President Higgins has extended his condolences to Ms Asmal's family. Louise Asmal and her late husband, Prof. Kader Asmal were "at the very heart of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, which they co-founded in 1964," the president said in a statement.

"Following the fall of apartheid, Louise and Kader were instrumental figures in the cultural, academic, and political landscapes of Cape Town," the president added.

## A warm Monaghan welcome for Filipino community



The community of Bawn/Latton (Aughnamullen West), Co. Monaghan welcomed members of the Filipino community in St Patrick's Church, Bawn. The main celebrant, Fr Roner M Anildes OSA, was joined by Dr Tom Quigley PE and Fr Gary Carville, a candidate for Permanent Deacon, and the Irish and Filipino community for Sunday Mass. The Filipino Choir sang at the celebration.

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# Blessed Carlo connects with young and old in Kerry



**Brandon Scott**

**T**he relics of the soon-to-be saint Carlo Acutis have recently visited Tralee, Co. Kerry.

Large crowds descended to the Holy Cross Dominican Church and St Vincent's Church, Ballyferrier - Gael-tacht Parish - in Tralee over the weekend to venerate the relics of the first Millennial Blessed Carlo Acutis (1991-2006) which are visiting from Assisi in Italy in the companion of Monsignor Figueiredo

from Assisi.

Despite the weather conditions, thousands travelled to Kerry to catch a glimpse of the relics and familiarise themselves with the inspiring legacy of the 'Millennial Saint' who, amid toil and strife after a terminal cancer diagnosis, never wavered in his faith and in particular his devotion to the Eucharist.

The event had a certain degree of significance as it was held three days after Pope Francis announced that Blessed Carlo would be canonised during the Jubilee of Youth on April 27 next year and was arguably one of the first occasions marking the life of Blessed Carlo since the major announcement.

The relics continued on their journey, stopping in Newcastle West and St John's Cathedral in Limerick last Monday and Tuesday.



Monsignor Anthony Figueiredo from Assisi with the relics of Blessed Carlo Acutis with students from Mercy Mounthawk, L/R Sean Cantwell, Naoise O'Carroll, Msgr. Anthony Figueiredo, Katie Teahan and Owon Murphy. Photo: John Cleary.



Matthew Abou-Khalil, Ballyheigue and on right Kieran Roberts, Ballyfinnane, pictured with the image of Blessed Carlo Acutis, at Holy Cross Dominican Church Tralee. Photo: John Cleary.



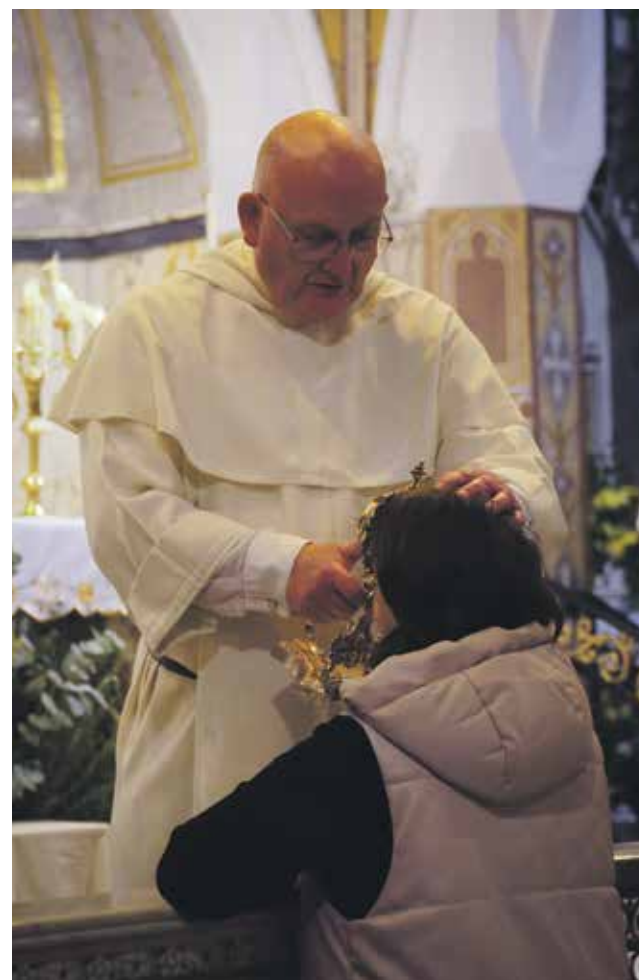
Fr Philip Mulryne OP blesses with a relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis in Tralee. Photo: Caoimhin Lacken



Arriving for high Mass for the Relics of Blessed Carlo Acutis at Holy Cross Dominican Church Tralee on Saturday, L/R Jason Ó Murché, Tralee, Ellen and Martina O'Driscoll, Tralee. Photo: John Cleary.



Faithful at the Holy Cross Dominican Church during the visit of Carlo Acutis relics. Photo: Caoimhin Lacken.



Fr John Harris OP blesses with a relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis in Tralee. Photo: Caoimhin Lacken



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**The Irish Catholic**



# The Mother of Christ gets a new movie



Martina Purdy

**H**ollywood can't resist a good love story, but how do you make a movie about divine love and the most famous woman in the world?

With great difficulty.

Netflix has just spent US\$70 million, making a film, simply entitled *Mary*.

The film recounts the events around the birth of Jesus, through the eyes of Mary, his mother. Hollywood movies tend to exaggerate the subject though in this case there is no need, as the truth of her story is truly out of this world.

The epic is about to be released on December 6 and the trailer is slick, compelling and skillfully shot. Even those who are not religious would find it compelling, though the only big name star is Oscar winning actor, Anthony Hopkins, who plays Herod.

The trailer for *Mary* is certainly full of beauty and goodness - but what about the truth?

"This film shines a light on Mary's journey," says director Daniel J Caruso, "blending sacred scripture to create a story that feels both sacred and modern."

The filmmakers, who consulted with an array of theologians and scholars, claim biblical authenticity.

Caruso has described how the film reintroduces Mary and Joseph as 'young, relatable figures'. "They're cool yet grounded in their humanity and faith."

The director, Caruso, is a Catholic father of five but the film is not exclusively a Catholic production. Pastor Joel Osteen, an evangelical Baptist from Texas is an Executive producer.

## Corrections

And, already, there are a few murmurings from some lay Catholics on social media, anxious about errors, most seriously around the denial of Mary's perpetual virginity.

So far as I write, the only reference to blasphemy in the press, relates to a minor controversy that Mary is portrayed by an Israeli Jew, actress Noa Cohen, rather than a Palestinian.

The producer Mary Aloe, also a person of faith, calls the film a "labour of love".

"This story is needed now more than ever in our world. This is a story of faith, hope,



An image of the Immaculate Conception depicting a crowned Mary is seen in the Chapel of the Choir in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican May 30, 2023. Photo: CNS photo/Lola Gomez.

and pure love."

I do hope this is an authentic faith film, but whatever its contents, we can perhaps view it as an opportunity to focus attention on faith and correct errors through healthy debate. St Paul assures us after all that the Lord turns all things to good for those who love him.

Mary is the most honoured woman in the world and perhaps the least understood also.

**“Mary’s heart was breaking as she shared in her son’s humiliating and torturous death on a cross”**

Yet this woman of the word, this new Eve, draws us ever closer to Christ if we let her.

Her mission as the virgin mother of God, and the

spouse of the Holy Spirit is to be our mother.

As the first disciple, Mary - whose name means bitter - had to endure much suffering.

Indeed, the sweetest moments of her life were tempered with bitterness: giving birth in poverty in a stable, having to flee persecution, encountering dire prophecies of a sword through her heart as she carried her child joyfully into the Temple at Jerusalem.

Even as her soul rejoiced in the Lord, her saviour, Mary's heart was breaking as she shared in her son's humiliating and torturous death on a cross.

## Mother

The trailer for the film, *Mary* speaks of her courage and her witness, a young girl who heard the words of an angel: for God all things are possible.

The film is to be released two days before the great solemnity of the Immaculate Conception - which even Catholics mistake for a reference to Christ's birth, rather than Mary's.

As Catholics we believe that Mary was formed without sin so that she was a worthy vessel to carry the Divine son of God, who had saved her before she was born.

I recall one theologian who was plagued by questions about this by a Protestant, demanding biblical proof. Exasperated with endless debates, he finally shot back: "Look if you could create your own mother wouldn't you make her without sin?"

**“Mary was a longed for child, and that her parents Joaquim and Anne, consecrated her to God before she was born”**

The American theologian Scott Hahn, is an interesting convert. He was raised a Lutheran who hated the Catholic Church, and even broke

**“As Catholics we believe that Mary was formed without sin so that she was a worthy vessel to carry the Divine son of God”**

his Catholic grandmother's rosary beads after she died. But after he became a Catholic, he turned to the subject of Mary and wrote, *Hail, Holy Queen*.

This new film *Mary* seems to hold to the tradition that Mary was a longed for child, and that her parents Joaquim and Anne, consecrated her to God before she was born.

If this film leads to soul searching among believers and non-believers, that is to be welcome.

I had a few discussions when I entered the convent in Belfast where I was often visited by evangelical Christians who wanted to 'save me'.

## Debate

One particularly affable gentleman, George, was delighted to be invited into the parlour.

Almost immediately he started in on Mary. "Now George, please don't come into the Lord's house insulting his mother. How would you like it if I insulted your mother...?"

I got the usual false views about Catholics and Mary.

"Catholics worship Mary," said George. "No, we worship God, but we honour Mary."

"Mary is dead," said George. "No," I insisted. "We worship a God of the living

and she is very much alive, just as Moses and Elijah were at the Transfiguration of Christ."

"Mary," George shot back, "was not a perpetual virgin. Mark's gospel refers to the brothers of Jesus."

"No," I replied, "this is not to be taken as brothers as in this culture, cousins could be referred to as brothers."

And so it went on.

**“There is one beautiful line in this film, delivered by Mary, that really stands out”**

Frankly, anyone - particularly any woman - who really ponders Mary's life and her destiny as the virgin mother of Jesus, could only come to one conclusion: having experienced God's amazing love, Mary remained a virgin because she belonged entirely to God alone.

There is one beautiful line in this film, delivered by Mary, that really stands out. It is message we desperately need to hear today: "Love will save the world".



# New initiative supports lay Catholics in faith and career

Brian McShane

In many traditionally Catholic countries, the faith that once united and inspired generations is facing a modern-day challenge: disconnection. This isn't solely due to societal secularisation but also because Catholics often fail to actively support and grow bonds with one another in the practical aspects of life. While the Church has long been a spiritual refuge, lay Catholics often struggle to integrate their faith into their professional lives.

And in tandem with this issue is the work done by those of other worldviews which has overshadowed Catholic values in secular society significantly. Other interest groups and subcultures have been very successful in networking their way into positions of influence. As a result, Catholics have become somewhat disenfranchised in terms of the important societal conversations that shape the countries we live in.

Saints and Catholic leaders, from St John Paul II to St Thomas More, have consistently emphasised the vital role of lay Catholics in shaping the Church and the wider world. St John Paul II championed the laity as co-responsible for the Church's mission, urging them to engage with the challenges of modern society. Yet, many Catholics remain isolated in workplaces that are often indifferent to faith. The need for Catholics to 'have each other's backs' in these environments has never been greater.

## Need

The Catholic Career Summit, held last October in Dublin, was a step toward addressing this need. The event aimed to equip Catholics with the tools and networks necessary to live out their faith in the workplace while progressing in their careers. It brought

together a diverse group of speakers, including Senator Rónán Mullen shared insights on being a Catholic in the public sphere, while Neil and Maria Steen addressed the role of faith in family dynamics and Fr Alan O'Sullivan OP inspired attendees with a reflection on the Catholic view of human rights.

**“This initiative aims to connect Catholics with experienced professionals who can provide guidance, job opportunities, and moral support in navigating their careers”**

Attendees left the Summit feeling invigorated and equipped with new strategies for living their faith at work. Many commented on the event's practical benefits, from networking opportunities to actionable career advice.

One of the key upcoming projects is the creation of a mentorship and career network. This initiative aims to connect Catholics with experienced professionals who can provide guidance, job opportunities, and moral support in navigating their careers.

Additionally, the team is developing a podcast series and workshops and partnerships with universities and colleges are also on the horizon, designed to help young Catholics integrate their faith into their studies and future careers. The Summit will soon host a debate on the critical issues facing lay Catholics today.

We are in the process of announcing similar events in the UK, Europe, and the US in 2025.

In an era when many Catholics feel isolated in their professional lives, initiatives like this might just remind some people out there that we are not alone, and that we can shape society.

**❗ CCS is seeking Catholics to get involved in our project and take a leadership role in some of our activities. If you would like to share insight in your career, network with other Catholics, help mentor more junior members of the faith and more please send us a mail at catholiccareersummit@gmail.com. Suggestions also welcome, or even just reach out for a chat! To stay connected and informed about upcoming events and resources. Instagram at @CatholicCareerSummit.**



Employment Law expert Dominic Wilkinson talking at Catholic Career Summit, October 2024, Dublin.



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# Time to say something in support of boys and men



David Quinn

**B**oys are more boisterous than girls. Are we still allowed to say that, or has it fallen into the category of forbidden thoughts and utterances?

A new study is being undertaken in the French city of Strasbourg which believes that yes, boys are more boisterous, and this is a bad thing, and boys must be curbed.

The study, authorised by a local council, will see tracking devices attached to boys and girls at playtime to see who dominates playgrounds.

A report in the *London Times* says: "Proponents of the scheme say it will provide data on pupils' movements that will enable officials to make playtime more inclusive, in the hope that boys will grow up to become more tolerant and respectful adults."

We can assume the study will find that boys run around a lot more than girls and therefore boys must be taught to play in more confined areas and be aware of how their play might affect girls.

The *London Times* report adds: "Critics, however, denounced it as left-wing social engineering that borders on totalitarianism — and bemoaned the use of taxpayers' money on acquiring the 125 digital [tracking] devices."

## Dominated

The council behind the plan is dominated by the Greens. Children can refuse to have the devices attached to them (will they really know what they are for?), but parents will not be told what is happening at all. That should set off an immediate, and very loud alarm.

What we can see is that

**“Traditionally male behaviour is often to be applauded, not derided. This is not said often enough”**



the natural energy and boisterousness of boys is seen as problematic. Most parents of young children will tell you that boys are more energetic than girls and are happy to see their boys run around so that they burn off some of it and become more manageable.

**“‘Boys’ play is characterised by higher levels of competition and aggression, while girls play is seen to foster creativity and nurturance”**

An article by Dr Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett for the website *Huggies*, which is aimed at parents of young children, says: "Gender researchers suggest that boys and girls do in fact play quite differently and show clear preferences for different toys from an

early age."

She goes on: "Boys are seen to be more active in their play while girls' play is more sedentary and focused on verbal interaction", and that, "boys' play is characterised by higher levels of competition and aggression, while girls play is seen to foster creativity and nurturance. Boys show preference for outdoor play activities, and enjoy playing with large toy vehicles, construction sets and climbing equipment; girls prefer puzzles, art materials or playing with dolls."

None of this should be surprising. But clearly the council in Strasbourg believes this is all a bad thing and must be changed.

## Traditionalist

Last week, Women's Aid, a charity which does the extremely important work of helping victims of domestic abuse, published the results of a new survey which purports to show that a lot of men hold worryingly 'traditionalist' views.

Respondents were presented with a series of statements and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

**“‘Men should use violence to get respect if necessary’. Just under 20% of men agreed with this, and 12% of women”**

One statement read: "Men should be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women." 39% of men agreed with that, and interestingly so did 28% of women.

Another statement said: "Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside." Nearly half of men agreed with that, and a quarter of women.

A further statement read: "Men should use violence to get respect if necessary". Just under 20% of men agreed with this, and 12% of women.

Agreeing with that last one is very worrying. Agreeing with the other two merely makes you old-fashioned.

But on the question about who should earn the most money, perhaps action speaks louder than words. In theory, most people have no problem

with a woman earning more than a man, but in practice, women rarely marry men who earn less than them, and one reason a growing number of women don't marry at all, is difficulty in finding a man who will earn the same or more than they do. We might say this is because both men and women suffer from the societal expectation that a man should earn the same as, or more than, his wife, but the fact remains that women still rarely marry 'down'.

## Man Box

The researchers behind the survey discuss something called the 'Man Box'. The 'Man Box' consists of "rigid masculine ideals", such as "toughness, self-reliance, and dominance" which the researchers say, "are frequently reinforced by social expectations".

The argument is that "rigid masculine ideals" can lead to bad outcomes such as a reluctance by men to seek help for health problems, or at the extremes, to domestic violence.

This is all linked to the concept of "toxic masculinity", which we have heard so much about in recent years, and obviously there are "toxic" men.

But is it fair to see traditional masculine behaviour as a problem in itself and therefore to be weeded out,

starting with how boys play in playgrounds? I don't think so.

**“There are plenty of women with lots of energy, drive and competitiveness, but why are these things only considered suspicious when found in men?”**

For example, is there anything wrong with self-reliance per se, that is, withstanding on your own two feet and doing your best to get by without help? Yes, we all need help sometimes, but there is nothing wrong in itself with being as self-reliant as possible.

Obviously, women can be self-reliant, but the point is that no-one believes there is anything amiss about that. In fact, women today are always being told to be independent, that is, self-reliant, so why is that only suspicious when it comes to men?

And what is wrong per se with male energy, physical strength, drive and competitiveness? These things are only bad if put to bad uses, but they can also be the things that help to keep the world turning. Again, there are plenty of women with lots of energy, drive and competitiveness, but why are these things only considered suspicious when found in men?

Men are definitely more likely to engage in physically risky behaviour than women, and we see this in how small boys play as well. Why should this be discouraged? Obviously, there is such a thing as overly risky behaviour, but if everyone played it safe, and never took a risk, then where would we be?

The fact is that men are far more likely than women to do physically risky jobs like oil-rigging, construction work, firefighting, commercial fishing, mining and so on. Men are also more likely to do literally dirty work, like garbage collection.

Someone has to do these things, and if men are more drawn to risky or dirty jobs that is hardly a bad thing, is it?

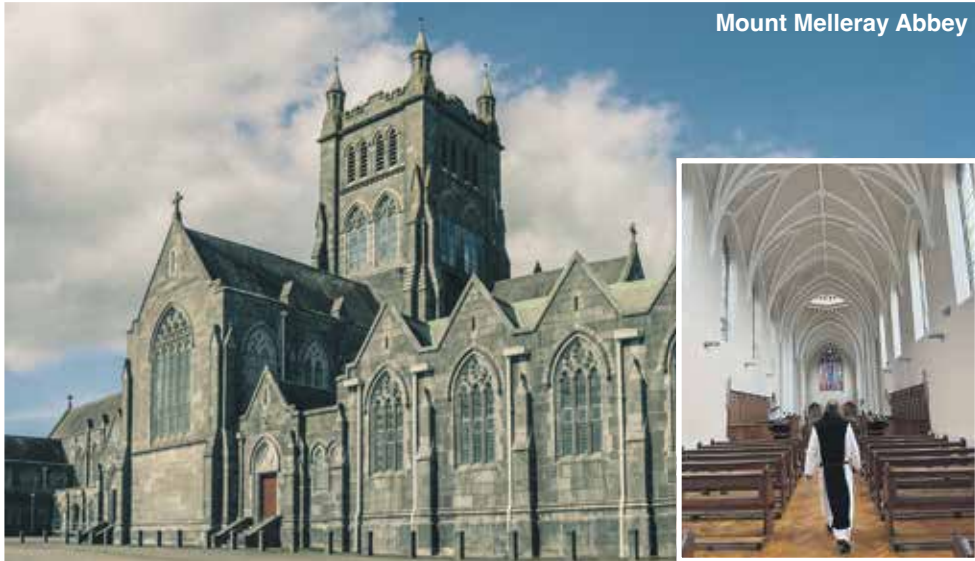
Therefore, traditionally male behaviour is often to be applauded, not derided. This is not said often enough. Men should not be under a pall of suspicion simply for being men, and nor should boys for being boys and for doing typically boyish things.



# End of an era for Ireland's Cistercians

John G. O'Dwyer

Magnetically attractive, abbeys are islands of serenity in a chaotic world. And so it is that for almost two centuries, the dreamy spires of Mount Melleray Abbey, County Waterford, have acted as a beacon for travellers crossing the famous Vee Gap of the Knockmealdown Mountains. Yet, it was by chance that this renowned abbey came about. An anti-clerical government decreed in 1830 that all foreign religious be exiled from France. Irish and English Cistercian monks at Melleray Abbey in Brittany then headed for Ireland, attracted by the religious toleration following Catholic Emancipation. Traditionally, Cistercians earned their income from agriculture and did not minister outside their community, so farmland was



urgently required. Patrons happy to endow tracks of land were, however, thin on the ground, since most of Ireland was then owned by Protestant landlords. Eventually, the monks came upon 600 acres at Scrahan, Co. Waterford that formed part of a mountainside

and was covered with heather, furze and rushes. The landowner, Sir Richard Keane was well-disposed, believing the industrious Cistercians would attract business, so a price was agreed. Thousands of men from West Waterford then arrived to donate their

labour and the unforgiving mountainside soon became productive.

### Frenetic

Work went ahead at a frenetic pace; 1838 saw the dedication of the monastic church, the first in Ireland since the Reformation. Soon afterwards, the Abbey proved its worth by feeding the starving during the Famine, with no hungry person ever turned away. A golden era followed as Melleray grew with the rising tide of Catholicism in 19th-century Ireland.

At its peak, there were almost 200 monks and lay brothers along with a boarding school, seminary and prosperous farm. One of the lesser-known roles of the monastic community was, however, providing comfort to many troubled souls coming to seek consolation when counselling and therapy were still unknown. Towards the end of the 20th century, the Abbey hit headwinds. Declining numbers of students led to the closure of the boarding school, while an increasingly secular society meant vocations to monastic life fell sharply.

A community of strict observance coming together to pray seven times a day, including at 4 am, was increasingly regarded as an anachronistic way of living. Such rituals were seen as past their sell-by date with no place in the modern world. This is in one sense true but in another, Cistercian life still has lessons for all. Melleray has shown us that another way of living is possible: neither materialistic nor self-serving. Cistercianism postulates that true fulfilment comes not from wealth and status, but with spiritual mindfulness and the act of serving. The real-

ity is, of course, that few could measure up to the exacting standards of obedience, poverty and hard work required of Cistercians and so vocations have fallen. Their ideas are, nevertheless, important for they force us to question the values we take for granted in the 21st century: the primacy of the individual, the unending quest for gratification and the frenzy towards conspicuous consumption.

### Vacate

Now the sad news has come that the monks of Melleray – along with those of Mellifont Abbey – will vacate on January 26 with the community members transferring to Mount St Joseph's Abbey, Roscrea. This means that for the present, at least, the Cistercians will stay in Ireland and we should welcome this. Even for those who are not particularly devout, monastic life provides a valuable touchstone to a simpler way of living against which we sometimes need to measure ourselves if we wish to stay fully grounded.

John G O'Dwyer's latest book titled, Great Irish Pilgrim Journeys is out from Currach Books next February.

“Even for those who are not particularly devout, monastic life provides a valuable touchstone to a simpler way of living”

December 19, 2024

A photograph of a family of five walking along a wet beach. A dog is also walking with them. The scene is peaceful and captures a moment of family time in nature.

The Irish Catholic

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# Out&About

## A discerning weekend in the seminary



**KILDARE:** Fr Tomás Surlis, Fr Shane O'Neill and Fr Sean Corkery, seminary formation staff, Bishop Cullinan, Chair of the Vocations Council, Fr Willie Purcell, National Vocations Coordinator and Deacon Eric Cooney, Administrator of the National Vocations Office joined seminarians and discerning attendees to the 'Come and See – Vocations Discernment' weekend in the National Seminary in Maynooth on November 15-17. Photo: Fr Chris Hayden.



**MEATH:** On November 9, Bishop of Meath Tom Deenihan presented JP2 Awards to students from schools in Mullingar, Trim and Kells. In total 29 gold medals were awarded and 6 highest awards to the youth of the diocese for their involvement in their parishes and communities. The picture shows Bishop Deenihan with students and Br John Murphy, Supreme Knight of the Knights of St Columbanus.



**DOWN:** The St Joseph's Choir from the Glenavy and Killead Parish enjoyed the Down and Connor folk group away day 2024 in Dromantine.

### IN SHORT

#### Vocations weekend takes place in Maynooth

A Vocations Discernment weekend took place in St Patrick's National Seminary Maynooth between November 15 to 17. The event arranged by the National Vocations Office of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in collaborations with the Seminary formation staff was called 'Come and See – Vocations Weekend'.

The weekend gathered existing seminarians, seminary formation staff, Vocations Council and 16 men from various dioceses across the country who are discerning a vocation to the Diocesan Priesthood.

The purpose of the weekend was to provide those men an opportunity to experience seminary life, meet seminarians and formations staff and engage in liturgical and prayer life in the seminary.

#### Naval Chaplain dies in Cork

The Irish Naval Service Chaplain, Fr Desmond (Des) Campion has died on November 16 at The Bon Secours Hospital Cork. Fr Campion provided spiritual support to the Naval Base at

Haulbowline since 1988.

"Fr Des was a guiding light and source of comfort to all who served. His unwavering faith, compassion, support and belief in us enriched our lives and strengthened our families and our community. He will be deeply missed by the previous and current generation of the Naval family", the Irish Naval Service said in a statement.

Bishop of Cork and Ross Fintan Gavin extended his sympathy and prayerful support to Fr Campion's family, Naval colleagues and friends.

Fr Campion was born in Drimnagh, Dublin and ordained in 1973. After ordination, he served in a number of roles in Dublin and Limerick. In 1985 he was appointed as Chaplain to Sarsfield Army Barracks in Henry Street, Limerick and in 1988 to the Naval Service, where he served until his death.

#### Woman who provided life-saving care in terrorist attack receives Cross of Merit

Recently, a member of the Order of Malta Ambulance Corps was presented with the Cross of Merit *pro merito*

*melitensi*. Joanne Saunbury was awarded in recognition of her courage and skill in the face of the 2017 terrorist attack on Westminster Bridge, London, where she provided life-saving care to an injured member of the public.

The award ceremony was led by Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin at the Order's Annual Requiem Mass. The Cross of Merit *pro merito melitensi* is an award approved by the Grand Master and the Sovereign Council of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, based in Rome.

Ms Saunbury received her first aid and basic life support training with the Order of Malta Ireland Wexford Unit of the Ambulance Corps.

In 2017, Ms Saunbury was working a tour bus across Westminster Bridge when the attack that killed five people began.

The Order said in an online statement that "Despite the attack on Parliament continuing at the end of the bridge and sounds of gunfire all around, Ms Saunbury with no regard for her personal safety responded to the call for first aiders... Due to her quick thinking and bravery, she managed to resuscitate the casualty."

"This incredible story of bravery in the face of danger shows that learning First Aid can be the difference between life and death", the Order said.



Edited by Renata Steffens  
Renata@irishcatholic.ie



Events deadline is a week in advance of publication



**DUBLIN:** Fr Tom O'Keeffe during his 90th birthday celebration. St Brigid's Parish, Cabinteely celebrated Mass on Saturday, November 9 to commemorate his birthday. Photo: John Hickey.



**DUBLIN:** Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin presented Joanne Saunsbury with the Cross of Merit *pro merito militensi*, recognising her courage and skill in the face of the 2017 terrorist attack on London Bridge, where she provided a member of the public with life-saving care. Ms Saunsbury was previously trained in first aid by the Wexford Unit of Order of Malta Ireland and was awarded at the Order's Annual Requiem Mass. Photo: Maxwells Dublin.



**CORK:** 5th Year Student at Coláiste Chríost Rí, Prayag Ratheeshbabu won gold in the Irish Olympiad of Experimental Science (IREOES) 2024-2025 hosted in DCU on November 9. (L/R) Prayag Ratheeshbabu and Pádraig Mac An Rí, Principal. Photo: Coláiste Chríost Rí.



**WEXFORD:** Fr Robert Cojoc celebrated his birthday in the Franciscan Friary Wexford with his parents Anton, Eugenia and sister Mariana.



**CAVAN:** Three generations of the Rooney family, Olive, Pete and Georgina, unveiled a plaque in honour of Fr Peter O'Reilly, who helped erect the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Kingscourt, to mark Fr O'Reilly's anniversary of death and resting place.

## ANTRIM

'Caring to the End: Why Euthanasia Is Not an Answer to Suffering' seminar takes place in St Malachy's Parish Hall, 24 Alfred St, Belfast on November 29 at 7pm. Speakers are Dr Dominic Whitehouse, a palliative care consultant and Jack Valero, communications expert and founder of Catholic Voices. More info contact 07481940689.

## CLARE

West Clare FRC is running a Knitting and Crochet Group at 11.30am every Monday in Kilrush Community Centre. All experience levels are welcome.

## CORK

The Irish Dominicans Friars' Vocations Weekend takes place on December 13-15. For more information contact Fr Benedict McGlinchey OP at 087 185 2759 or benedict.mcglinchey@dominicans.ie.

## DOWN

Induction of the new Parish Priest of the Magheralin Parish, Fr Maciej Zacharek, will happen on December 7 in Ss Patrick's and Ronan's Church, Magheralin at 6pm. The celebration will be presided over by Archbishop Eamon Martin and it will be refreshments after Mass. All welcome.

## DUBLIN

Healing prayers and blessings for Advent happens every Monday night in Our Lady of Victories Church, Salynoggin at 8pm starting on December 2. All welcome for a moment of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and individual blessings for healing.

## GALWAY

'Awake Galway' Catholic Charismatic Conference takes place on November 29-30 at Good Shepherd Catholic Church. On Friday from 4pm to 8pm and on Saturday from 10am to 5pm. Event led by Bro. Sebatin Sales, AFCM UK and Terry Quinn. Come for rosary, praise, worship, healing and more. More info contact Tom on 087 620 9090.

## KILKENNY

Involvement Centre Kilkenny hosts an art workshop for peer support for mental health and addiction chal-

lenges on Tuesdays from 12 noon to 1pm on Colliers Lane, R95XHR0. The workshop is led by Cathy Dineen. For more info contact 086 174 6330.

## LOUTH

The Holy Family Charismatic prayer group will host an afternoon of renewal on November 30 in the Holy Family Church, Drogheda from 1.45pm to 6pm. The guest speaker will be Fr Luke Ohememni. All welcome for testimony, praise, worship and Mass.

## MAYO

'Whisper of God' two-day silent retreat will take place at the new youth village at Knock Shrine on December 14-15. This prayerful experience will include guided prayer, spiritual direction and personal quiet time.

## TIPPERARY

Birdhill Folk Group free concert takes place on Thursday, December 12 at Birdhill Church at 8pm. There is a collection on the night for Newport Day Centre.

## WEXFORD

Candlelight procession through Wexford in honour of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception on Monday, December 9. The procession starts at 6.30pm at Rowe Street following the 5.45pm Mass.

## WICKLOW

Rathdrum Cancer Support Group are holding a 'Men's Open Evening' on December 3 at 'The Old Library' 11 Gilbert's Row, Rathdrum from 7.30pm to 9pm. Come to find out more about the group's services and have some refreshments. More info contact Imelda 087 759 5956.

## WATERFORD

A Healing service and Benediction will take place in the Holy Family Church, Luke Wadding Street on November 30 at 11am. All are welcome to attend for present and past healing of individual, family and community needs.

Eucharistic adoration continues in the Holy Family Church each Monday after 11am Mass until 4pm. An invitation to respond to the invitation of the Lord Jesus to come and spend some quiet time with him.



# Church-State dialogue is not functioning: 'impoverishing' Ireland's voices of Faith



The Government had an almost belligerent attitude to faith during Covid, Chai Brady hears

It has been six years since the former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar spoke about a new "covenant" between Church and State during Pope Francis' visit to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families in 2018.

Almost a year later, not much had happened to further Church-State dialogue, prompting the then Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin to say in a March 2019 speech: "So far no progress has been made by the Government in developing the Taoiseach's idea of a covenant."

Two months later in May, after been asked about Church-State dialogue in the Dáil, Mr Varadkar reiterated his message saying that "it is now time for us to build a new relationship between Church and State in Ireland" and that he was open to suggestions as to how it might work. In a more concrete gesture, he announced a plenary meeting for July.

It took place in Dublin Castle and included 28 representatives of Churches, faith communities and non-confessional organisations. However, the closed talks were somewhat overshadowed by Mr Varadkar likening Micheál Martin to a "secretly sinning priest" in the Dáil just the week before. He subsequently apologised and withdrew the remarks.

## Downfall

Then it all seemed to fall apart. A notable example of the State's failure when it comes to relations with the Church was its reaction to the announcement of UCD founder St John Henry Newman's canonisation in October of the same year, which saw a notable lack of diplomatic reaction – with the

**Irish bishops took the opportunity to highlight the weak channels of communication between the Church's hierarchy and the Government, something that it has not publicly broached since before the pandemic"**

Irish Government belatedly saying it was sending the then Minister for Education to Rome.

Covid-19 hit Ireland the beginning of the following year, a period in which many felt acutely the lack of robust Church-State relations.

Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin highlighted the difference in approach to the Church by the Executive in the North of Ireland compared to the Government in the south during the pandemic.

**"At the very end of that I had to say very strong words to the Taoiseach and to the government that our religious freedom is important for us," he said"**

Archbishop Martin said: "The Executive Office for the assembly at the time were keen to listen to the voice of the Churches and gave a lot of agency to the Churches themselves. They trusted the Churches. Whereas in the South, there was an almost belligerent attitude to faith and to the Churches and to practice of the faith: 'We don't trust, shut your doors.'"

"At the very end of that I had to say very strong words to the Taoiseach and to the government that our religious freedom is important for us," he said. "We're doing a reflection at the moment on the Covid experience and that is something perhaps we could look at: how did the Churches contribute to the discussion? Was the door closed? Were we simply subservient to what the State told us? Or was there an attitude of trust? That's certainly an open question," the archbishop added.

Before the election the Irish bishops took the opportunity to highlight the weak channels of communication between the Church's hierarchy and the Government, something that it has not publicly broached since before the pandemic.



Archbishop Eamon Martin.

**"I'm not saying that the Catholic Church has a monopoly on the soul of Ireland, but I do feel that people of Faith are increasingly finding their voice again after a period of time where they felt beleaguered and in some ways shut out from the public domain and from public discussion"**

On November 20 the bishops put out a statement entitled 'To be a people of hope! Bishops' statement for Election 2024 and questions for candidates'. As the statement suggest, it hones in on a particular issue, and then offers a question to ask. It highlights challenges related to the cost of living, homelessness, housing, immigration, sanctity of life, climate change, Gaza, and also Church-State dialogue – while all are extremely important, the last is the odd one out.

## Function

The statement was quite diplomatic, saying that dialogue is "not functioning".

The bishops said in "a fracturing society, real and meaningful social dialogue is needed so that people actually feel their voice is being heard and that they have a contribution to make. Government must engage purposefully with all sectors of society, including the community and voluntary sector."

"Churches and faith communities have an important contribution to bring to this national and local conversation by helping – with others – build and sustain an Ireland that protects and values the potential of every person."

The bishops continued: "The current structures for Church-State dialogue are not functioning for the greater good of society and are in need of review. Any such structures must be made work so that the voice of Churches and

other faith communities can be heard and contribute to a national reawakening based on the reality of people's lives, and not ideology or special interests. As a Church, we are open to engaging with Government and with other Churches and faiths on this question." Following this they suggested several questions for the public to ask politicians on the issue, including if they would support 'structured dialogue' that "includes all voices and sectors in Ireland's diverse society including Churches and faith communities".

**Archbishop Martin said that in recent times whenever leaders of the Church in Ireland make statements, they receive hostile responses on social media and in writing"**

While not calling for it themselves in the statement, the bishops also asked people to tackle politicians on the question: "Similar to Governments in other European countries and at EU level, should a specific Government minister

with responsibility for dialogue with Churches and other faith communities be appointed as part of the next administration?"

Asked about the publicly renewed call for Church-State dialogue, Archbishop Martin said that in recent times whenever leaders of the Church in Ireland make statements, they receive hostile responses on social media and in writing. He said: "That is so contrary to the actual mood in politics and religion throughout the world where in many democratic countries the voice of people of faith, and indeed leaders of faith, is deemed to be a very significant and important voice in all policy making."

## Voice

"And if you take, for example, Article 17 of the Lisbon treaty which is about the foundation of the European Union, it makes it very clear that politicians and indeed the European Union should listen to the voice of faith, as in Church leaders, but also to the voice of philosophers and others who have something to contribute." Looking back on the Pope's visit in 2018 and the former Taoiseach's pledge on Church-State dialogue, the archbishop said: "I too, remarked at the time those words of former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, whenever Pope Francis was in Dublin, where he spoke about the need to develop a new relationship, or a new covenant I think was the word that the former Taoiseach used, and at that stage

I was quite excited by that and the idea that perhaps this would herald some opportunity for dialogue, for discussion. And yet, I think the particular model that is used in Ireland for Church-State dialogue is tired, I think it's unused. It is very seldom being called.

**"I think it's hugely impoverishes the Church if we are not able to engage in that dialogue, and equally I think it hugely impoverishes democracy if the voice of faith is not heard"**

"I think during Covid we sought on behalf of the Catholic Church a bilateral dialogue with the Taoiseach and it was difficult to get," he said. "If you think where this whole idea of Church-State dialogue in the European Union emerged, I think it might have been Jacques Delors [eighth president of the European Commission] who spoke about the need for Europe to have a soul, and I think that is true also of Ireland, and it would be sad if Ireland loses its soul. And I'm not saying that the Catholic Church has a monopoly on the soul of Ireland, but I do feel that people of Faith are increasingly finding their voice again after a period of time where they felt beleaguered and in some ways shut out from the public domain and from public discussion."

"I think it's hugely impoverishes the Church if we are not able to engage in that dialogue, and equally I think it hugely impoverishes democracy if the voice of faith is not heard. So, you'll see that when we made this statement for the election this time around, we added that paragraph at the end – that we are here to help, not necessarily to threaten the state, but indeed the opposite, to support our politicians because they have accepted a very noble vocation to serve the people. "But that means to listen to the voice of faith and there are many people in Ireland who have faith and who are willing to write that in the census, and say 'I am a person of Faith'. So I think it's really important not to monopolise the issues but to contribute something particularly unique to the discussion."



# The courageous holy Irish

Chai Brady

A newly published book which presents the lives of many Irish people who are on the path to canonisation offers an example of courage and faith despite all the odds.

Launched in Ely House in Dublin by Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin, the book *The Rock From Which You Were Hewn: The Lives and Legacies of Holy Irish Men and Women* focuses on 25 different canonisation causes opened for Irish people.

The chapters have been written by postulators and vice-postulators, promoters of causes and authors of full-length biographies. Some chapters were written by people who knew the individuals personally.

The editors are Fr John Hogan OCDS, a priest of the Diocese of Meath and Diocesan Postulator for the Cause of Fr Willie Doyle and Dr Patrick Kenny, President of the Father Willie Doyle Association.

**i** The Rock From Which You Were Hewn is published by Cenacle Press ([www.cenacle.ie](http://www.cenacle.ie))



Fiorella De Maria, who wrote the chapter on Msgr Hugh O'Flaherty in *The Rock From Which You Were Hewn: The Lives and Legacies of Holy Irish Men and Women*, pictured with Fr Conor McDonough OP at the book launch. Photos: Chai Brady



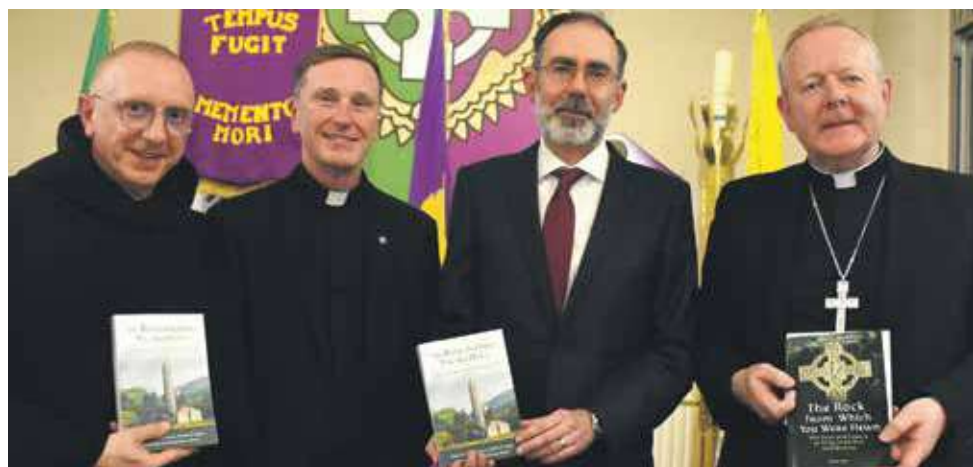
The family of Mary Ann O'Driscoll, who died in 2015 in Liberia and features in Chapter 44 of the book.



The crowd at the launch of *The Rock From Which You Were Hewn: The Lives and Legacies of Holy Irish Men and Women* at Ely House in Dublin City Centre.



Children cheer at the launch of *The Rock From Which You Were Hewn: The Lives and Legacies of Holy Irish Men and Women* at Ely House in Dublin.



Fr Basil McCabe OSB, Fr John Hogan OCDS, Dr Pat Kenny, and the Primate of All Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin at the launch of *The Rock From Which You Were Hewn: The Lives and Legacies of Holy Irish Men and Women*.



Dr Pat Kenny and Fr John Hogan OCDS pictured during a book signing.



Dr Pat Kenny



Sr Elena, Sr Mary, Sr Rachel Maria (far right) of the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother from the Diocese of Derry – the same order as soon-to-be Servant of God Sr Clare Crockett – and Fr Basil McCabe OSB.



Fr John Hogan OCDS



## HEAD SACRISTAN AT KNOCK SHRINE

Knock Shrine, Ireland's International Eucharistic and Marian Shrine, is inviting applications for the role of Head Sacristan. This full-time post presents an exciting opportunity for someone with a keen interest in the liturgy and ritual of the Catholic Church, to work in this special place of welcome, sanctuary and sacredness for over 1 million pilgrims each year.

The Head Sacristan will lead, manage and develop the team of Sacristans at Knock Shrine. Integrity, honesty and a good rapport with clergy, lay staff, volunteers, parishioners as well as pilgrims and visitors are of great importance. It is essential to have an understanding of, and an enthusiasm for, Knock Shrine's ethos and overall mission. The Head Sacristan will be responsible for the smooth and efficient operation of designated Church facilities at the Shrine.

The role is a permanent position, and candidates will be required to work a minimum of 35 hours per week. Additionally, candidates must be willing to work flexible hours including evenings, weekends, bank holidays and major Church holidays including Easter and Christmas. Due to safeguarding requirements, the successful candidate will be Garda Vetted for the role before commencement of employment.

To view the full job specification, please visit Knock Shrine's website [www.knockshrine.ie](http://www.knockshrine.ie)

To apply please email your Cover Letter and C.V. to [hrdepartment@knockshrine.ie](mailto:hrdepartment@knockshrine.ie).

The closing date for receipt of applications for this position is close of business on Friday 13th December 2024.



# Who leads on disability rights?



Dualta Roughneen

It is not very long ago that people with disabilities were treated in an often callous and inhumane manner in Ireland and across the world. Often, we look at the past through the lens of 'presentism' where we judge the actions of the past through our current values, systems, resources and knowledge.

It is easy to condemn and criticise those that have gone before us without really being able to put ourselves in the context of the times we thumb our noses at. Often, it is very unfair and easy to do because the past rarely fights back. At the same time, change comes passing slow, and social and cultural change can be held back by inertia, and it is not easy to cleave from how things have 'always been done'.

Much of the changes in attitudes, systems, laws and practices are only changed by the drive and activism of people who go against the grain and are willing to put themselves out there, often to be criticised, mocked and reviled. On disability rights, it has been people with disabilities in Ireland who have been at the forefront of bringing about changes in how disability is perceived and how it is actioned in society – not just in Ireland, but globally also.

There has been a lot of progress and there is much to be done. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters spent two years listening to people with disabilities in the preparation of its critical report launched in January of this year: *Towards harmonisation of national legislation with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The report was like a school report to be signed off at the bottom: must do better, can do better.

## Agency

December 3 is International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the theme this year is 'Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future'. For a long time, the idea of people with disabilities participating in decision making bodies was viewed with, to say the least, a certain amount of scepticism.

While there was sometimes cruelty in how dis-



ability was dealt with, often it was a well-meaning paternalism that enabled the idea that people with disabilities needed to be looked after, and that it was not for them to determine what was in their best interest. Sometimes this is disparagingly called 'the charity model' of disability. I don't particularly like the term because it conflates the idea that the 'model' being bad, means that 'charity' is bad.

**“There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love”**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – CRPD – that Ireland has signed up to is framed on the idea of a social – or rights-based model – that people with disabilities have the same agency as anyone else, but that it is for the State and

society to adapt to remove barriers to allow equal participation. This challenges many of the internal biases that people – and institutions of the State – held towards people with disabilities. But there is a danger of over-correction and the diminution of the work of carers who provide service to people with disabilities as part of removal of those barriers.

Pope Benedict rightly noted: “There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love [caritas/charity]. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help... There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbour is indispensable. The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person – every person

**“Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help... There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbour is indispensable”**

**“The consultation carried out by the Joint Oireachtas Committee over two years was deep and comprehensive – whether it will make any great difference in the face of the Irish political system, it is hard to tell”**

– needs: namely, loving personal concern.”

However, we should not fall into the reductive trap of thinking that disability means suffering. It means that people with disabilities have the same need for loving personal concern as everyone else, and that the State cannot replace that. Yet, the State has a role to play.

The modern State has a near monopoly on resources and has arrogated to itself the responsibility for framing society through the welfare state and to facilitate a social model that provides for equal access and participation of people with disabilities at all levels of society.

## Representation

This has to do more than involving people with disabilities in discussions around the proper ordering of society, as mere consultants to be listened to if it suits. People with disabilities need to be in leadership positions when policy for a sustainable future is being designed.

There is much talk of representative democracy – gender quotas, recognising the diversity of modern Ireland's population in politics – yet

you don't hear much about representation for people with disabilities. Discussions on future climate adaptation and mitigation policies are likely to impact people with disabilities in places like Kenya or Bangladesh more so than anyone else. If there is going to be a need for mass-displacement of populations from low-lying urban coastal areas, then how this happens, will hugely impact people with disabilities.

**“When the majority of people struggle to make ends meet and put food on the table, OPDs in Kenya or Zimbabwe cannot depend on funding locally”**

At Christian Blind Mission (CBM) Ireland, we work with representative organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) in the 'Global South'. Just as there are groups such

as 'Independent Living Movement Ireland' here, there are similar groups in Zimbabwe, Madagascar and every other country. But they don't have the resources or the access to genuinely influence policy or to get a seat at the table. While they wait for resources from their governments to fund them, it is necessary that organisations like CBM, with the help of 'charitable donations' from people in Ireland, support OPDs to hold their government and society to account.

I often argue that civil society groups should justify their existence through financial support from the society's they exist within, but when the majority of people struggle to make ends meet and put food on the table, OPDs in Kenya or Zimbabwe cannot depend on funding locally in the current economic climate. As the tax-base for their governments can be equally constrained and other social services are under-resourced, often OPDs are at the end of the queue. Changing comes passing slow.

The consultation carried out by the Joint Oireachtas Committee over two years was deep and comprehensive – whether it will make any great difference in the face of the Irish political system, it is hard to tell. There is a long way to go here, but further to go in the countries CBM Ireland is working in. Getting OPDs into the corridors of power is important to bring about change at a national level.

## Change

Like Ireland, forty, fifty or eighty years ago, the resources available here are much, much more than available in Burkina Faso or Laos. We – society and the Government – can afford to do much more.

Many of the missteps taken in Ireland can be avoided if OPDs are brought to the table now, to plan. Even when it comes to global issues, such as COP where the global response to climate change is being discussed, people with disabilities have no official voice there. We are fighting for that to change as well. Pardon the pun, but hugely important decisions for the future cannot be disability blind.

**i** Dualta Roughneen is the CEO of CBM Ireland, an international disability rights organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and those at risk of disability, in low-income regions of the world.





# Christmas

GIFT GUIDE

— 2024 —

The Irish Catholic

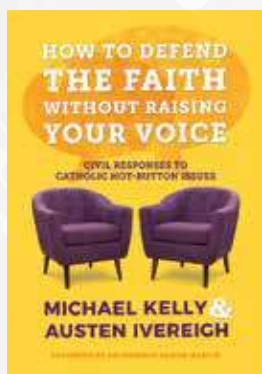


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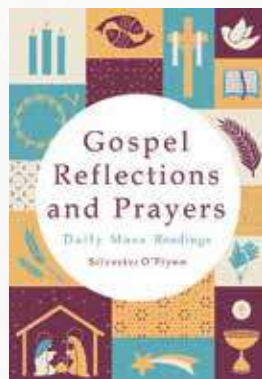
## How to Defend the Faith Without Raising Your Voice *Michael Kelly & Austen Ivereigh*



Answering some of the most common criticisms of the church, this book aims to help people understand why the Church teaches what it does and defend it in a calm and rational way.

**€14.99 €7.49**

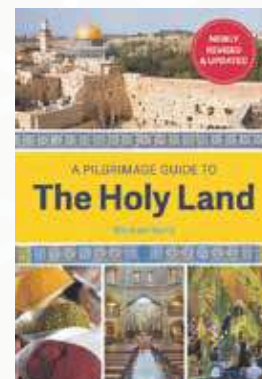
## Gospel Reflections and Prayers *Silvester O' Flynn*



This book offers two short reflections on the daily gospels. These simple and clear reflections would take two minutes at most and a preacher might use either one or both.

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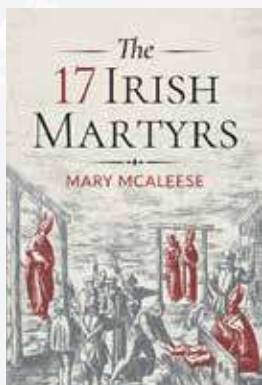
## A Pilgrimage Guide to the Holy Land *Michael Kelly*



In this unique guidebook, Michael Kelly takes readers to the sites associated with the earthly life of Christ from Bethlehem to Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee to Jerusalem.

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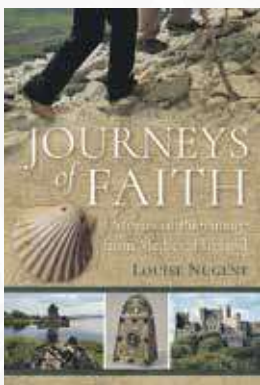
## The 17 Irish Martyrs *Mary McAleese*



An historical account detailing the inspiring stories of the 17 Irish martyrs beatified by Pope John Paul II and what made their causes for martyrdom stand apart from others.

**€16.99 €8.49**

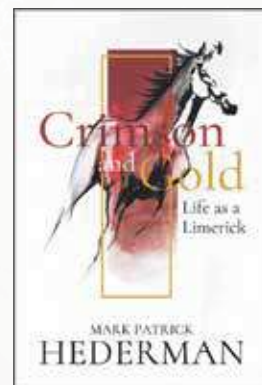
## Journeys of Faith *Louise Nugent*



A complete guide to the world of pilgrimage in medieval Ireland, this book brings the reader on a tour of how Christianity was celebrated in medieval times.

**€26.99 €13.49**

## Crimson & Gold *Mark Patrick Hederman*



A Benedictine Monk of Glenstal Abbey, Fr Hederman continues to explore how we as Irish Roman Catholics can hone in on the most precious aspects of our faith and cancel the surrounding noise.

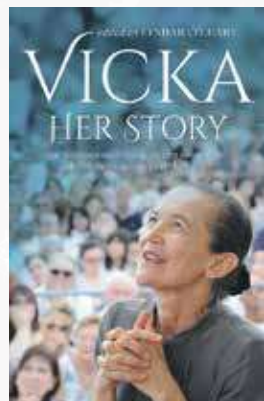
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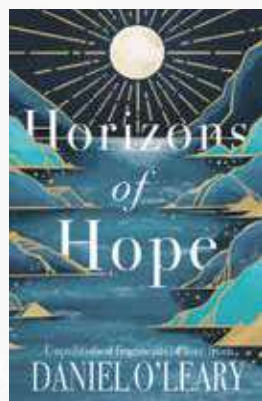
**Vicka Her Story**  
Finbar O'Leary



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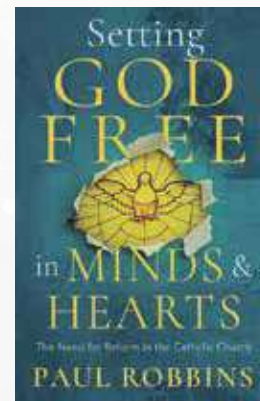
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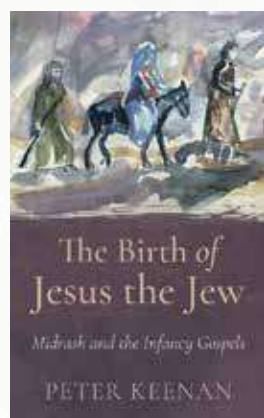
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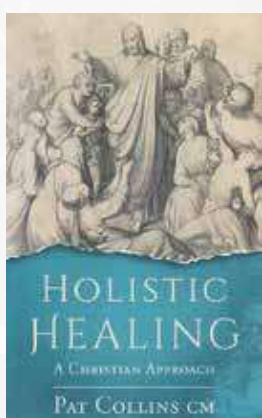
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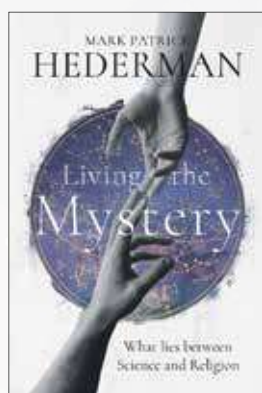
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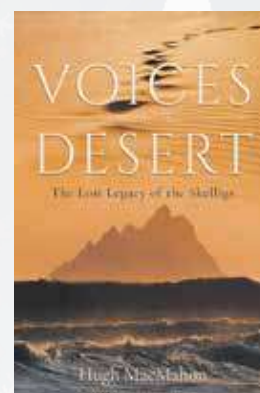
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# THE SYNODAL TIMES

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

## Final synod document is magisterial, must be accepted, Pope says



Justin McLellan (CNS)

**D**oubling down on the centrality of synodality in the Catholic Church, Pope Francis said that it is now up to local churches to accept and implement proposals from the final document approved the Synod of Bishops on synodality.

Approved by the Pope, the synod's final document “participates in the ordinary magisterium of the successor of Peter, and as such, I ask that it be accepted,” the Pope wrote in a note published by the Vatican November 25.

“Local churches and groupings of churches are now called upon to implement, in different contexts, the authoritative indications contained in the document, through the processes of discernment and decision-making provided by law and by the document itself,” he wrote nearly a month after the synod's close.

### Priorities

The final document outlined key priorities for the Church, including increased participation of laity through new ministries and adjusted governing structures, greater transparency and accountability among Church leadership and creating space for previously marginalised groups.

After synod members voted to approve the final document, Pope Francis announced that he would



Pope Francis speaks to members of the Synod of Bishops on synodality after they approved their final document October 26, 2024, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. Photo: CNS/Vatican Media

not write the customary apostolic exhortation after the synod but would instead offer the document to the entire Church for implementation.

With the exceptions of the first synods convoked by St Paul VI in 1967 and 1971, all ordinary assemblies of the Synod of Bishops have been followed by an exhortation on the synod's themes and discussions by the pope.

In his note, Pope Francis clarified that while the docu-

ment is “not strictly normative” and must be adapted to contexts where it is applied, it still obligates “local churches to make choices consistent with what was indicated” in the document.

### Underscored

He also underscored the need for time to address broader churchwide issues, such as those assigned to the 10 study groups he set up in the spring to explore issues raised during the

synod, including women's ministry, seminary education, relationships between bishops and religious communities, and the role of nuncios. More groups may be created, the Pope said.

**“Not all doctrinal, moral or pastoral discussions must be resolved by interventions of the magisterium”**

The conclusion of the general assembly of the Synod of Bishops “does not end the synodal process,” he wrote.

Quoting his 2016 exhortation, “Amoris Laetitia” on marriage and family life, the Pope wrote that “not all doc-

trinal, moral or pastoral discussions must be resolved by interventions of the magisterium,” rather the bishops of each country or region can seek “more encultured solutions” to issues involving local traditions and challenges.

### Implemented

He added that the final synod document contains recommendations which “can already now be implemented in the local churches and groupings of churches, taking into account different contexts, what has already been done and what remains to be done in order to learn and develop ever better the style proper to the missionary synodal Church.”

“In many cases it is a matter of effectively implementing what is already

provided for in existing law, Latin and Eastern,” while in other contexts local churches can proceed with the creation of “new forms of ministry and missionary action” through a process of synodal discernment and experimentation.

Pope Francis also specified that during bishops’ “ad limina” visits to Rome, each bishop will be asked to discuss what choices have been made in his local church regarding what has been indicated in the final synod document, reflecting on the challenges and the fruits.

Meanwhile, he said, the General Secretariat of the Synod and the various dicasteries of the Roman Curia will be tasked with overseeing the synodal journey’s “implementation phase.”

**“In many cases it is a matter of effectively implementing what is already provided for in existing law, Latin and Eastern”**

NEXT WEEK: RELENTLESS MINISTRY AND SYNODALITY





# World Report

## IN BRIEF

### Theologian Zulehner: reorganisation of the Church inevitable

● According to theologian Paul Zulehner, the time of a comfortable service Church is coming to an end in the face of a “reeling world”. He wants to see more “pastoral truffle pigs” in the Church.

Theologian Paul Zulehner is in favour of tackling what he sees as the inevitable restructuring of the Church with courage. In an interview with the newspaper “Sonntag”, the Viennese expert spoke of a Church “that will no longer be clerical, but synodal, that will no longer be modelled on ordination, but on baptism”.

Professor Zulehner said: “Experienced people from faithful communities of the Gospel can be proposed to a bishop to be ordained priests so that the main source of the Church, the celebration of the Eucharist, does not fall by the wayside.”

### An aging society like Japan's will not be able to survive, Archbishop of Tokyo says

● Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo, who will be installed as a cardinal on December 7, spoke to the Vatican new agency Fides about the present and future state of the country.

The archbishop said that “an aging society like Japan's will not be able to survive,” pointing to the

dangers of the country's demographic winter.

Faced with this reality, he noted that the government “is hesitant to fully accept migrants” for fear of entering into territory never previously explored in Japan, a nation little accustomed to receiving migrants.

### Data show abortions dropped by nearly 40% in US state after six-week ban

● Abortions dropped sharply in Iowa immediately after a strict abortion ban went into effect there, according to data from a major pro-abortion group.

Data from the Guttmacher Institute, released last Thursday, show an average of 400 clinician-provided abortions per month in Iowa over the first six months of 2024.

After the state's six-week ban went into effect on July 29, “the number of abortions dropped to an estimated 250 in August, a decrease of 38% from the average over the first six months of the year,” Guttmacher said.

### St Francis Xavier's relics draw 12,000 in India

● St Francis Xavier lived the life of a missionary, baptising tens of thousands in India and Japan. In death, he continues to give himself to Christ's Church, as his relics offer pilgrims spiritual consolation in Italy and India.

At least 12,000 people gathered in the western state of Goa, India, last Thursday for the opening of a decennial exposition of the saint's partially incorrupt remains. Last Thursday marked the beginning of a 45-day event where St Francis Xavier's relics — normally kept in a casket in the Basilica of Bom Jesus — are displayed at the nearby Se Cathedral for veneration.

### US diocese abruptly halts St Jude relic tour

● A bishop in Illinois has halted in his diocese a travelling tour of a relic of St Jude following an “incident” that allegedly took place between a visiting priest and several students.

A statement from Fr Michael Lane and Fr Gregory Alberts at Queen of the Apostles Catholic Church in Joliet, Illinois, said that on Thursday of this week the parish hosted the arm of St Jude as part of the relic's ongoing tour throughout the United States.

During the visit, “an incident with the priest and some students was reported to have happened in our church,” it continued.

“We immediately contacted the police,” the priests said. “A police investigation is still ongoing.”

## Nearly half of 2,500 anti-Christian hate crimes in Europe were in France, report says

A recently released report from a European watchdog group has found nearly 2,500 documented instances of hate crimes against Christians living in Europe. Approximately 1,000 of these attacks took place in France.

According to the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians in Europe (OIDAC) report, which drew on both police and civil society data, 2,444 anti-Christian hate crimes and acts of discrimination and intolerance occurred across 35 European countries from 2023 to 2024.

Of these, 232 constituted personal attacks of harassment, threats, and physical assaults against Christians.

Nearly 1,000 of the anti-Christian hate crimes reported in Europe in 2023 took place in France, with 90% of the attacks waged against churches or cemeteries. The report also found there were about 84 personal attacks against individuals.

Apart from physical assaults, the report cited data from the French Religious Heritage Observatory, which recorded eight confirmed cases of arson against churches in France in 2023 and 14 attacks in the first 10 months of 2024. Several reported cases were on account of “Molotov cocktails,” a makeshift handheld firebomb.

Religious communities

also reported incidents of harassment. Two nuns cited in the report, for example, announced in 2023 that they would be leaving the north-western city of Nantes on account of “constant hostility and insecurity.” The nuns reportedly experienced “beatings, spitting, and insults”.

The United Kingdom followed close behind France, according to the report, with 702 reported anti-Christian hate crimes, a 15% increase since 2023.

The report stated that in Germany, the third most affected country, official government statistics reported 277 “politically motivated hate crimes” against Christians in 2023, a 105% increase from the previous year when there were 103 reported attacks.

OIDAC Europe independently estimated that “at least 2,000 cases of property damage to Christian places of worship in 2023” took place.

OIDAC Europe found that of the 69 documented cases where the motives and background of perpetrators could be accurately accounted for, 21 of them were provoked by a radical Islamist agenda, 14 were of a generally anti-religious nature, 13 were tied to far-left political motives, and 12 were “linked to the war in Ukraine.”

The report also noted that numbers in this respect remained unchanged compared with 2022, “except for



A man holds a rosary outside Notre Dame Cathedral. Photo: OSV News/Yves Herman, Reuters.

cases with an Islamist background, which increased from 11 to 21.”

In addition to overt attacks, the OIDAC report highlighted an increased phenomenon of discrimination in the workplace and public life, leading to a rise in self-censorship among those who practice their faith.

According to a UK-based study from June cited in the report, 56% of 1,562 respondents stated they “had experi-

enced hostility and ridicule when discussing their religious beliefs,” an overall 61% rise among those under 35. In addition, 18% of those who participated in the study reported experiencing discrimination, particularly among those in younger age groups.

More than 280 participants in the same survey stated “they felt that they had been disadvantaged because of their religion”.

## Bishops worry there is no chance for peace in conflict-riddled Sudan

Catholic bishops in Sudan and South Sudan say they are worried at the continued fighting in Sudan with no chance for peace due to lack of dialogue between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

In a statement shared with *Crux*, members of the Sudan and South Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SSS-CBC) said they were deeply worried at the worsening social and political situation

in the country.

The SAF led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the very powerful paramilitary group RSF, led by General Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo, went into conflict with each other over power and the control of state resources.

The conflict has left a trail of death and destruction, with a study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's Sudan Research Group

estimating that more than 60,000 people have died in the Khartoum region alone during the first 14 months of the war.

“The humanitarian consequence on the civilians has gone beyond toleration and must be condemned in the strongest terms possible,” the Catholic bishops said in their November 21 statement.

They urged the Sudanese people to “learn how to survive together, reject violence,

and work for peace.”

With no peace in sight, the bishops say ordinary people deserve humanitarian assistance, and urged the warring factions and their supporters “to respect humanitarian law and desist from blocking humanitarian corridors for lifesaving assistance”.

The economic situation remains dire, with high inflation and civil servants have gone ten months without salaries.

## Padre Pio's hospital faces mounting debts, labour difficulties

While a massive hospital founded by Padre Pio strongly denied last Saturday that it's for sale, despite recent rumours to the contrary, how to resolve chronic debts and mounting labour difficulties at the Vatican-owned Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza, or

“House of Relief of Suffering”, remains an open question.

Over the last week, a series of reports in the Italian press suggested the hospital's administration has been in negotiations with several potential buyers, mostly large private sector holding compa-

nies.

A November 23 statement posted on the hospital's web site denied those reports, calling them “completely unfounded” and insisting that no such negotiations are underway, either with private healthcare groups or any

other potential purchasers.

The hospital “remains the property of the Holy See, which, in the fall of 2022, nominated a new administrative council empowered to handle [the hospital's] economic and financial difficulties,” the statement said.





Edited by Brandon Scott  
brandon@irishcatholic.ie

## It's official...



A Polish sister watches as workers lift the Vatican Christmas tree into its stand in St Peter's Square early November 22, 2024. Photo: CNS/Pablo Esparza

## Priest accused of being involved in alleged plot to assassinate president of Brazil

On November 21, Brazil's Federal Police charged Fr José Eduardo de Oliveira e Silva of the Diocese of Osasco in São Paulo state as part of a group of 37 people that includes former President Jair Bolsonaro on suspicion of plotting the violent abolition of the democratic rule of law, plotting a coup d'état, and belonging to a criminal organisation.

According to authorities, the publication of the list of defendants in the final report of the investigation into the alleged coup d'état was authorised by the country's Supreme Federal Court.

The charges stem from the investigation by the Federal Police into an alleged plot to

assassinate then-President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, his vice president, Geraldo Alckmin, and Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. Military personnel and military police have already been detained in connection with the investigation.

Despite the announcement by the police, the public prosecutor's office is not obliged to go forward with prosecuting the persons implicated or the alleged crimes being charged.

The priest's defence attorney, Miguel Vidigal, told *ACI Digital*, *CNA's* Portuguese-language news partner, that "the press release by the Federal Police with the list of

defendants is one more abuse by those responsible for the investigation, and publishing it on the police department's official website contaminates the entire institution".

"Who authorised the Federal Police to break the secrecy of the investigations? As far as we know, [Supreme Court] Justice Alexandre de Moraes decreed absolute secrecy," the attorney said.

"So far there is no decision by [him] that voids such determination," he added.

"Less than seven days after giving testimony to the Federal Police," Fr José Eduardo "sees his name in print [on the list] by the Federal Police as one of those indicted by

investigators". The same investigators didn't shy away from breaking the law and international treaties by combing through the priest's conversations and spiritual direction that are guaranteed to be confidential, Mr Vidigal denounced.

In February, the priest was the subject of a raid and seizure operation by the Federal Police that was authorised by Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. The priest was accused of being part of the "legal core" of the alleged coup d'état, for which former president Bolsonaro, advisers, allies, military personnel, and former ministers of his government were also investigated.

## Shanghai Catholics: Chinese bishop focused on adapting faith to Communist Party ideals

A Chinese bishop with a history of support for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) emphasised in a recent diocesan seminar the socialist state's influence over the Church more than the Vatican's, according to Catholics who attended the bishop's talks.

CAN has reported that Bishop Joseph Shen Bin of Shanghai, who was

illicitly installed as bishop by Chinese authorities in 2023 and brought into communion with the Church by Pope Francis a year later under the Vatican-China deal, was featured as a speaker at a Vatican conference in May, where he promoted a "Chinese-style modernisation" of the Church in line with socialist ideals.

Bishop Shen recently gave a diocesan seminar November 4-6 about "Sinicisation of Religion in Shanghai". According to a report from *Bitter Winter*, Shanghai Catholics who attended the bishop's seminar said he "did not discuss at all the Vatican Synod [on Synodality] nor Pope Francis and his recent documents".

## Vatican roundup

### Pope Francis announces 2025 canonisation for Carlo Acutis and Giorgio Frassati

● Pope Francis announced last Wednesday that Blessed Carlo Acutis and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, two young Catholics beloved for their vibrant faith and witness to holiness, will be canonised during two major jubilee celebrations dedicated to young people.

The surprise announcement came at the conclusion of the Pope's weekly general audience in St Peter's Square as Francis celebrated World Children's Day.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni later confirmed that Acutis' canonisation will occur during the Church's Jubilee of Teenagers taking place April 25-27, 2025, and Blessed Frassati's canonisation will take place during the Jubilee of Youth from July 28-August 3, 2025.

### Vatican Christmas tree wreathed in controversy

● The Vatican was not rocking around the Christmas tree on Thursday after a 95-foot Norway spruce from northern Italy became wreathed in controversy this fall.

An online petition posted to change.org in mid-October garnered over 53,000 signatures in protest of the evergreen

being chopped down, arguing it contradicts Pope Francis' promotion of protection for the environment.

Despite the opposition to its removal, the tree arrived as scheduled in St Peter's Square at 7am on November 21 but was left to lie mysteriously on the truck bed well past sunset.

### Holocaust survivor rebukes Pope over calling Gaza a 'genocide'

● A 93-year-old Holocaust survivor who once received Pope Francis in her Rome apartment, and who later wrote a book about the experience to which the pontiff contributed the foreword, has publicly criticised Francis for calling for investigations to determine if the conflict in Gaza meets the technical standards for a "genocide".

"Genocide is something else. When a million children are burned to death, then you can talk about genocide," Edith Bruck said in a November 18 interview with Italian media.

Ms Bruck, a Hungarian-born Jew and survivor of Auschwitz, Dachau and Bergen-Belsen, and who lost both parents and an older brother in the camps, said the bloodshed in Gaza is a "tragedy that concerns everyone", but insisted that Israel is not attempting to wipe out the entire Palestinian population.

### Pope assigns US cardinal to carry out 'urgent' overhaul of Vatican pension fund

● Pope Francis has appointed US Cardinal Kevin Farrell to oversee "new and unavoidable" reform to the Vatican's pension system as it faces a "serious prospective imbalance" that means changes can no longer be postponed.

In a November 21 letter to cardinals, dicastery prefects, and managers in the Roman Curia, the Pope underlined the gravity of the unsustainability of the Vatican's pension fund and noted the solution will require difficult decisions, "special sensitivity, generosity, and willingness to sacrifice on the part of everyone".

To address the challenges, the pontiff said he had taken an "essential step" by naming Farrell "sole administrator" of the fund.

### Pope to visit Corsica this December

● The Holy See last Saturday confirmed the rumours that Pope Francis will undertake a one-day apostolic journey to Corsica next month — marking the first-ever papal visit to the island most famous for being Napoleon Bonaparte's birthplace.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni confirmed that the Pope had accepted an invitation from French civil and Church authorities to visit Ajaccio, the island's capital, on December 15.

The visit will be Pope Francis' 47th apostolic journey abroad and his third visit to French territory, following trips to Strasbourg in 2014 and Marseille in 2023.





# Letter from Asia

## Myanmar Church can be helped with Synodality, Japanese cardinal-elect says

Nirmala Carvalho

According to Japanese Cardinal-elect Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo, the political situation in Myanmar “is still not stable,” when marking Myanmar Day on November 17.

Bishop Celso Ba Shwe of Loikaw was present at the event. He had to abandon his cathedral in Kayah State due to the fighting between the army and the local People's Defence Forces.

The military in the Asian country overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, and violence – including in the country's many ethnic minority regions – has increased significantly.

### Peace

According to the United Nations, at least 3 million people are displaced in Myanmar and over 18.6 million need humanitarian assistance.

The Catholic Church in Myanmar has been a long-time “Sister or Partner Church” for the Diocese of Tokyo in Japan, and the partnership dates to the time when the Diocese of Tokyo was supported by the German Diocese of Cologne established after World War II.

“The reality is that the Church, which calls for peace, is exposed to violence,” Bishop Kikuchi said.

“I think we could confidently say that Synodality, of which the Church now pursue, already existed between Cologne, Tokyo, and Myanmar when Cologne began to support Tokyo in 1954, and when both dioceses began to support Myanmar in 1979,” he continued.

“We have already been supporting each other for many years. We have already tried for many years to be Synodal Church, walking together, supporting each other. Today, as the importance of Church being Synodal is emphasised, we, as its pioneers, must take the initiative in deepening the Synodality of the Church and continue to be witnesses of Synodality,” Kikuchi said.

The Japanese archbishop will be appointed a cardinal on December 8 and was



Cardinal-designate Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo speaks at a press briefing for the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican October 8, 2024. Photo: CNS/Lola Gomez.

attending the Synod on Synodality when his appointment was announced last month.

**“The Archdiocese of Tokyo designated the third Sunday of every November as ‘Myanmar Day’ to call for prayers and donations for the Church in Myanmar”**

Bishop Kikuchi remembered the words of the former Archbishop of Tokyo, the late Archbishop Peter Okada, in 2004 marking the 50th anniversary of the partnership between the Diocese of Tokyo and the

Diocese of Cologne.

“In 1979, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the friendship between the two dioceses, then Archbishop Seiichi Shirayanagi called upon the faithful of the diocese of Toyo to study the ‘Cologne Spirit’ and pray for the vocation of the Cologne diocese.

### Partnership

Cardinal Heffner, then Archbishop of the Cologne, and Archbishop Shirayanagi together decided to further develop the ‘Cologne Spirit’ and agreed to work together to support the Church in Myanmar. Thus, the Archdiocese of Tokyo designated the third Sunday of every November as ‘Myanmar Day’ to call for prayers and donations for the Church in Myanmar,” Archbishop Okada said 20 years ago.

**“Time to time, when there was such crisis, people started to think that the end is near. In such situation, the Gospel teaches us the importance of reading the ‘signs of the times,’ rather than just worried about what is happening around us”**

**“The Church, which exists as a prophet in today’s chaotic society, would like to continue to be a presence that identifies the ‘signs of the times’ together and reveals the Gospel in concrete ways”**

Bishop Kikuchi said the Tokyo archdiocese has been following the “Cologne Spirit” in its support for Myanmar since 1979.

“I think we could confidently say that Synodality, of which the Church now pursue, already existed between Cologne, Tokyo, and Myanmar when Cologne began to support Tokyo in 1954, and when both dioceses began to support Myanmar

in 1979. We have already been supporting each other for many years. We have already tried for many years to be Synodal Church, walking together, supporting each other. Today, as the importance of Church being Synodal is emphasised, we, as its pioneers, must take the initiative in deepening the Synodality of the Church and continue to be witnesses of Synodality,” the cardinal-elect said.

Last month, the UN special envoy for Myanmar warned that the nation is in crisis.

“Any pathway to reconciliation requires an end to violence, accountability and unfettered access for the U.N. and its partners to address vulnerabilities among the marginalised, including Rohingya, ethnic communities and particu-

larly women and youth,” Julie Bishop told the UN General Assembly’s human rights committee at the end of October.

“There can be little progress on addressing the needs of the people while armed conflict continues across the country,” she said.

In his address, Bishop Kikuchi said the instability in Myanmar – along with the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza, the violence against life, the political and economic turmoil, and the confusion in international relations – suggests that contemporary society “is indeed facing an end-of-the-time situation.”

**“We cannot bring hope from somewhere else. Hope comes from the heart. We want the Church to be a community that generates hope”**

“However, such a sense of crisis, as if the end of the time is coming soon, has often occurred throughout history. Time to time, when there was such crisis, people started to think that the end is near. In such situation, the Gospel teaches us the importance of reading the ‘signs of the times,’ rather than just worried about what is happening around us,” the Japanese cardinal-elect said.

“We must not only dream of peace but must do our utmost to achieve it,” he said.

“We cannot bring hope from somewhere else. Hope comes from the heart. We want the Church to be a community that generates hope. For this purpose, we want to be a Church that supports each other, listens to each other, and walks together,” he continued.

“The longstanding partnership between Cologne, Myanmar, and Tokyo has been an example of the Synodal Church, generating hope in the hearts of many. The Church, which exists as a prophet in today’s chaotic society, would like to continue to be a presence that identifies the “signs of the times” together and reveals the Gospel in concrete ways,” Bishop Kikuchi said.



# Letters

## Letter of the week

### We need a campaign to encourage support for family life

**Dear Editor,** While politicians campaign on issues such as climate change, Trump-economics, migrant pressures, etc., they ignore the writing on the wall; our birth-rate is in free-fall.

In many parts of Europe, their birth rate has plunged to less than half that needed

for replacement.

Our collective unwillingness to make a healthy family life possible leaves us powering towards unsustainability, social collapse and ultimately national extinction.

Instead of a Dáil focused on exclusion-zones, pub-

licly funded termination-of-life policies, and so on, all shrouded in deceptively evasive language, we urgently need a campaign to empower, normalise and encourage support for family life.

This challenge to our very existence will not go away by itself. It needs to be

acknowledged in this election. We need to work for a future receptive to life; to those that would come after us, otherwise we are merely rearranging the deckchairs on a rapidly sinking Titanic!

*Yours etc.,  
Gearoid Duffy  
Lee Road, Co. Cork*

## The wealthy benefactor who saved Matt Talbot's story

**Dear Editor,** In 'Matt Talbot and friends' [*The Irish Catholic* – November 7, 2024] Fr. Hugh O'Donnell SDB refers to a Ralph [also known as Raphael Mary] O'Callaghan who paid the cost of Matt's funeral expenses". In fact, that wealthy benefactor (who at the time resided at 15 Windsor Road, Beechwood Parish, Ranelagh) not only saved Matt's body from being interred in an unmarked

pauper's grave. He also initiated the printing of the pamphlet (of which I alone, maybe, have a copy of the first printing) but for which Matt's story would have been 'buried' likewise. Raphael's own body was in an unmarked grave (on which people walked daily) for 89 years until a plaque was placed on it in 2023.

*Yours etc.,  
Joseph F Foyle  
Ranelagh, Dublin 6*



## Priests need to tell people to make euthanasia and assisted suicide an election issue

**Dear Editor,** The Archbishop of Armagh has given a welcome lead recently by telling people they should lobby their politicians to oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide. There might be a desire by some people to end their own lives but there is no such right from God. Now, with an election coming up, this is a good time for priests everywhere to take up his call and tell their people to make this an election issue when candidates come to the door canvassing.

This is surely more important than the rate of VAT! It is literally a life and death

issue for everyone because when euthanasia or assisted suicide is legalised at all, even in the most restricted measure at first, it will soon become widespread and no one will be safe who becomes incapacitated or grows old, which is all of us at some time.

There is by now an abundance of evidence from other countries of vulnerable people being bullied and manipulated into signing their own death warrants or having it signed unknown to them by fake friends who claim to be "acting in

their best interest". Suicide, which we all regarded as a tragedy up to this, will also increase and the efforts of those who campaign against it will be in vain. Furthermore, hospice care, so good at present, will also change for the worse.

Priests who stay silent now out of a pathetic fear of offending someone will not be spared either. They have just two Sundays to get the message across.

*Yours etc.,  
Prof. Richard O Connor,  
Rome, Italy*



## Facebook community

Each week we publish a selection of comments from *The Irish Catholic* Facebook page

### Ask politicians where they stand on assisted suicide, Bishop Crean urges

"Problem is the vast majority of political candidates don't align with core Catholic beliefs, be they Mass goers or not! Abortion or assisted suicide can never be accepted by believers no

matter how much the establishment woke machine pushes it." - **J O'Brien**

"The Sacred sense of life is deeply embedded in the Catholic tradition. It needs to be upheld by all the disciples who know how God is directing them." - **Eileen Quinn Knight, Ph.D.**

### Priests are heroic community leaders

"While on first viewing, this is shocking and worrying, the deeper discernment is to ask what God is asking of us in the face of this change of era for the Church. All will be well." - **Jim Deeds**

What do you think? Join in the conversation on *The Irish Catholic* Facebook page

## 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.

## Vote wisely as serious issues ignored

Ireland's voting system, PR-STV (Proportional Representation- Single Transferrable Vote) is often misunderstood because of its complexity. It offers the individual voter a lot of power compared to the UK's first-past-the-post approach. Your vote can end up being used multiple times if used carefully and wisely.

At the same time, PR-STV prevents parties from winning a substantial – and untouchable – majority of seats with a relatively low proportion of the actual vote as happened in the UK this year. It also means that there is almost no scenario now where Ireland will ever have a single party government any time in the near future.

Some voters fear a 'wasted vote' by not voting for a party/candidate that is likely to be elected. This fear is completely unfounded and actually the opposite of the effect intended. With PR-STV voting for a smaller party or outlying candidate is likely to give your vote greater mileage and use.

Rather than contributing to the shoo-in candidate where the vote makes little difference to whether he/she is elected, voting for a candidate that most aligns with your views, and ensuring to vote down the ballot paper means that your vote can get counted multiple times.

First, your vote gives a marginal candidate a greater competitive chance, and if he/she is elected/eliminated, your vote gets passed to your next favourite option – and so on down the line.

Some voters of conscience feel that there are many candidates on their ballot paper that they just cannot vote for as they stand against the deeply held beliefs of the voter. In a first-past-the-post system it would make sense not to vote for any of these and only vote for your favourite candidates, but in PR-STV when considering candidates you do not like, voting should be viewed as a 'vote against' rather than a 'vote for'.

You should always put your 'least worst' option ahead of the worse option so that, if after multiple counts, it comes down to a race between those two (and no one else is in the race) then your vote can eliminate the worse of the two options.

This can be very significant in tight races and when on the 9th, 10th or whatever

count. Many recognisable names depend on getting vote transfers in order to be elected and getting your order of preference right can mean that your 10th preference might come into play at the last hour.

The original premise of wanting to make your vote count should consider how important your vote is to a particular party or candidate. If your vote is one of many, the party/candidate can play the odds, trying to maximise its vote by responding to what focus groups tell them it needs to hear. You are a statistic to be calculated.

Parties with lower support are likely to know who their supporters are and want to keep them on side. They have more to lose by losing you if they fail to keep their promises. This is why the large parties stay relatively large and only decline gradually over time, while small parties ebb and flow drastically when they promise and then fail to keep those promises.

This year's election – despite being the first in nearly five years – has been devoid of any real controversy and contention. With no serious rifts in policy or position between the main parties, whether social, economic or cultural, the contest has approached the perception of an auction yet again.

There has been little debate on issues of substance that the average voter is concerned about and where the country is divided. The immigration debate has been superficial and dominated by slogans and rhetoric and platitudes, abortion has been pushed off the table as almost everyone adopts an omertà on the subject and the contentious issues of identity, transgenderism, sex education, are just not discussed when the major media networks engage the candidates because they do not want to open those cans of worms.

Your vote this year is a chance to tell the establishment parties that it is not okay to ignore the serious issues at election time and then impose an establishment perspective in the intervening period until the next election is called.

Once the vote is done, the agenda will be set by whoever controls the levers of power until the vote comes round again.



# Your Faith

The Irish Catholic, November 28, 2024

## The tower of Babel

Fr Rolheiser

Page 32



*The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb, attributed to brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck*



## For the eternal Kingdom

As most girls growing up in the early 90s, my media consumption was dominated by stories of good-looking damsels in distress who were rescued by white-horse princes and lived happily ever after in highly elaborated gothic castles. God's vision for my life seemed to be a melding of these fairy tales and a loose understanding of the other stories I read in a Children's Bible.

The confounded notion was not helpful for my faith in my teenhood when I was entrusted with a bit more freedom to make decisions in life. I fell into the snare of hedonism, thinking that I deserved a princess life for simply being a seemly girl. What used to be exclusive for the royals are now accessible to peasants like me, so it was easy to grab this pleasure and self-indulgence myself without realising that a true princess lives a life of luxury but also has nation-wide responsibilities. The luxe I gratified to myself was



**It was proper for God to crush my dreamy life and move me to Ireland because I was building my own castle instead of joining His, says Angela Suryadana**

not proportional to my responsibility. The only duty I accomplished was finishing every assignment in architecture school and the only misery I suffered was waiting for my prince who never seemed to come.

### France

In my twenties, God allowed me to live for several years in the most fairytale-like region in Eastern France. Without entering any so-called confining royal life, I built my life there, brick by brick, without much of God in mind. It was like a dream come true. Everything happened as

I had always desired. Unfortunately, it was not the happy ending, and my understanding of God was still as superficial as the illustrated Children's Bible I used to read.

**“As I knelt in front of the Blessed Sacrament, I burst into tears, overwhelmed by the majesty of our Saviour and the revelation given to me”**

It was proper for God to crush my dreamy life and move me to Ireland because I was building my own worldly castle instead of joining His Eternal One. It was a three-year painful process, but I am grateful for it. I managed to stay obedient because our gracious Heavenly Father had started to change my heart. He showed me how much less other things were

compared to Him and my relationship with Him began to grow.

Twelve months ago, God consoled me through the Beloved Weekend Retreat for women, organised by the Céilí Catholic Community in Kilbeggan. My old castle had been levelled to the ground at that time, so I came with an open heart and no expectation. On the last evening, the chapel of the community was distinctively decorated for a personal adoration time. As I knelt in front of the Blessed Sacrament, I burst into tears, overwhelmed by the majesty of our Saviour and the revelation given to me. Without words, without vision, Jesus made it clear that I was already His spouse, and it was what His heart longs for. I was and am and will always be His since the moment I was sealed by the Holy Spirit in my baptism, even as an infant. This calling to be a spouse of Christ is not reserved only for the nuns but is addressed to all of us. We are called to recognise our identity as adopted children of God and to love God with all our hearts, minds, soul and strength.

### Understanding

The next morning, this new knowledge was brought to an even higher understanding when we celebrated the Solemnity of Christ the King. All these years, I was waiting for a mortal prince

while Jesus Himself was the White-Horse Prince promised to us in the Book of Revelation. Instead of a kingdom that takes away my freedom, He called me to a kingdom that gives me true liberty, especially from lies and my distorted desires. Instead of a princess who is served, He called me to be a princess who serves because it is those who have, who can give and serve, not those who lack. I have because I receive abundantly from The True Creator, Owner and Ruler of The Universe.

This new understanding changed among others the way I give my life to God and to others, the way I use my time, the way I live my singlehood, the way I manage my resources, the way I live the Eucharist and the way I love the man whom God has called to be my spouse in the future (for in God's timelessness, this man is already my spouse). The union in Spirit and in flesh with my Heavenly Spouse becomes the thing that I long for every day more than anything else. I am certain that, no matter what happens, the ending will be eternally happy.

*Angela Suryadana is currently involved in the core teams of Young Adults Rathmines and Evangelium Ireland.*

**“The way I live the Eucharist and the way I love the man whom God has called to be my spouse in the future (for in God's timelessness, this man is already my spouse). The union in Spirit and in flesh with my Heavenly Spouse becomes the thing that I long for every day more than anything else”**



# A prayer finally answered



**Illiana Ochoa Bravo**

**A** priest's prayer was answered after a baptismal font was "beautifully" restored and given to St Crona's Church. Fr Johnny Moore from the Diocese of Raphoe told *The Irish Catholic*, "the baptismal font is a representation of bringing the old into the new."

When Fr Moore became the parish priest of the church of St Crona, he made a prayer to "get the baptismal back to be a connection for the old and new." His prayer was answered on November 6 when the font was brought to the church. "I just thought if we can find the original font, and I prayed about it, that it would be a beautiful way of bringing something that was, for a lot of people who are still living, a baptismal font they were baptised in," said



Fr Johnny Moore pictured with Baptismal font located in St Crona's Church, Diocese of Raphoe.

Fr Moore.

The connection between the baptismal font and Fr Johnny Moore goes back 62 years. The day the font was brought into the church is the same day Fr Johnny Moore was born and baptised. "I was born at two, and I think baptised by three or half three. It was three o'clock when [the sculptor] arrived to put the

font in place," said Fr Moore.

The baptismal font was originally located in the old, decommissioned church of St Peter, Dungloe. Forty-five years after the construction of St Crona's Church, the font was restored and brought to the church, where it is now displayed at the entrance porch.

Fr Johnny Moore said

the official records state the church was consecrated in 1856. However, they have found smaller records that suggest there was another church, which would have been wooden with a graveyard around it, standing on that site 40 years ago. Since baptismal fonts are "very important," it was suspected that it was older than the year the church was consecrated.

**"Father, I was baptised in that, my grandfather was baptised in that' created a real connection to our past and our history"**

Installing the font in the entrance porch is a way of "tying this new building with its predecessor" and is a reminder "of all those previous generations who sacramentally entered into the Church at this font."

"I've noticed that since it was placed in the church, in the entrance as you come in,

**"I was completely blown away. I saw it as kind of miraculous. It was an answer to a prayer"**

the amount of people who've come up all excited to say, 'Father, I was baptised in that, my grandfather was baptised in that' created a real connection to our past and our history," said Fr Moore.

## Reconstruction

The font was reconstructed by Redmond Herrity. The process of the reconstruction took an average of two months.

"[Reconstructing the font] was very enjoyable because I get to copy the people who made this 200 years ago," said Mr Herrity. "To me, it is an honour to do this type of work."

Mr Herrity said the restorations on the font "really called out the gorgeous colours of the marble." The brass cross given to him by the church, the adorned red crucifixes in the marble and the gold inscriptions saying, 'New and Old 1856' in three different languages (Gaelic, Latin and English) were "beautiful."

"In my line of work, it is beautiful because my work

represents people from two-hundred years ago. Imagine how many people were baptised and imagine who they became," said Mr Herrity. "That's the thing about restoration work, there is always a story from someone."

The baptismal font was meant to be installed around four months ago, but delays kept happening. Yet, on November 6, although the font was not meant to be installed, Herrity called Fr Moore to make the installation happen that day. "I was completely blown away. I saw it as kind of miraculous. It was an answer to a prayer," said Fr Moore.

The church of St Crona will have a blessing ceremony for the baptismal font in upcoming weeks. Fr Johnny Moore will mark its restoration and say a prayer for those who have been baptised in the font.

**i** Illiana Ochoa Bravo studies Journalism at Boston University and has a strong interest in photography and writing.

## The inspiring witness of Pier Giorgio Frassati



**Jason Conroy**

**I**n 2011, university student Kevin Baker fell two stories and severely fractured his skull. His brain damage was so extensive that the doctors gave him little chance. Even if he survived, he would never be the same again.

A few years ago, I saw Kevin give his testimony at the FOCUS student conference in the US. He stood there perfectly healthy and agile, both physically and mentally, with not a hint of his life-changing injuries - a miracle recovery.

### Frassati

To explain what happened to Kevin, we need to go 100 years back in time, to Turin in Italy at the beginning of the last century. This was the time when all the old monarchies of Europe were

falling or fallen. The ideals of the time were secular, liberal, and nationalistic.

Alfredo Frassati was a man of this new era: an atheist, and the owner of Italy's first national newspaper *La Stampa*, the husband of artist Adelaide Ametis. Their marriage had turned sour and was fraught with constant strife. Into this family was born, April 6 1901, Pier Giorgio Michelangelo Frassati. He and his younger sister Luciana were mostly either neglected or harshly treated by their demanding parents, who were more interested in their fashionable professional lives than in their children.

**"His parents were shocked to see crowds flock to his funeral in Turin. They hadn't known a thing about his hidden, holy life"**

At school, Pier Giorgio found the Faith: because of this faith, Pier Giorgio's short life burned so brightly that he continues to touch other's lives to this day.

While Pier Giorgio was still a schoolboy, his outraged

**"During his coma, he dreamt he was in his apartment and was visited by an unfamiliar young man who called himself 'George'"**

father demanded his Jesuit teachers to prevent him from reading the Bible so much. His mother was highly upset when she heard he wanted to go to daily Mass at school, and once, on finding him asleep with rosary beads in his hands, brought in a priest to tell the young man to stop praying so much!

Pier Giorgio persevered. He prayed in secret in his room. He seemed incapable of keeping his possessions for himself, and constantly gave his money and clothes to the poor; he joined many Catholic clubs and societies and became a member of the Third Order of St Dominic as an ordinary layman. He admired Dominic's preaching, Aquinas's philosophy, and Catherine of Siena's closeness to Jesus. He climbed mountains, laughed loudly, failed exams, got into trouble, and often had to use his fists defending his friends from groups of communists or fascists. He was such a friend of the poor and the sick, and so

often frequented their slums, that he caught polio, and died at only 24 years of age, July 4 1925. His parents were shocked to see crowds flock to his funeral in Turin. They hadn't known a thing about his hidden, holy life.

Pier Giorgio was beatified in 1990 by John Paul II. The Polish Pope, who loved to ski in the mountains as much as Pier Giorgio had, said, "In my youth I felt the beneficial influence of his example and as a student I was impressed by the force of his Christian testimony."

### Baker

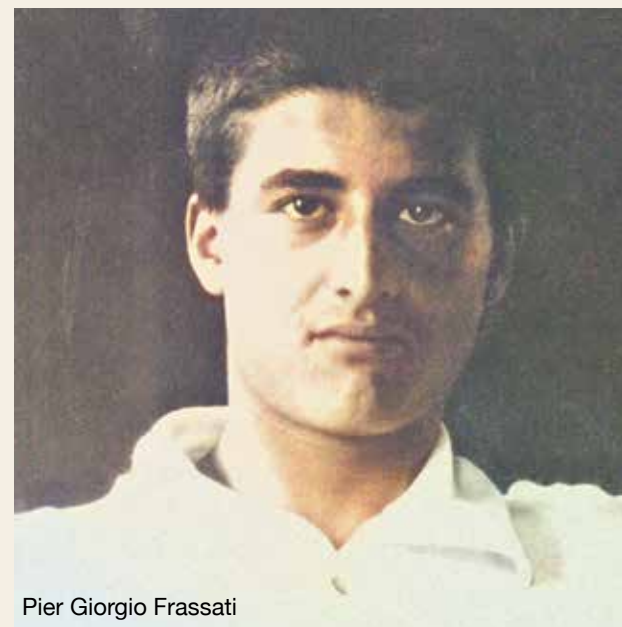
In 2011, while Kevin Baker lay unresponsive in hospital, some family members began to say a novena to Pier Giorgio for Kevin's recovery. A photo of Pier Giorgio was placed by Kevin's bed. The next day, after nine days in a coma, Kevin opened his eyes. What he reported afterwards is remarkable. During his coma, he dreamt he was in his apartment and was visited by an

unfamiliar young man who called himself 'George'. The two boys tidied the apartment, played FIFA, and killed time until Kevin woke up - in the hospital. But Kevin, who had known nothing of him beforehand, recognised the picture of Pier Giorgio as the young man 'George' he had seen during his coma.

Thanks to this astonishing miracle, Pier Giorgio Frassati will be canonised at the Jubilee for Youth this summer in Rome. His motto was 'Verso

*l'alto!* - 'To the heights!' This should be our motto too. Pier Giorgio always strove for the heights, both on mountainsides and in the love of God, even when his family and society thought that he was wasting his life - he gave his all and held nothing back. Neither should we.

**i** Jason Conroy is a philosophy student from Co. Kildare, currently studying at KU Leuven, Belgium.



Pier Giorgio Frassati



# Are smartphones a helpful tool or a new form of distraction?



Rohith Kinattukara

Smartwatches have been in the market for quite some time. Some would argue that, the first so called smart watches were introduced to the public during the 80s with the Seiko Data 2000, or even the famous Casio calculator smartwatches that were extremely popular for its unique looks and functionality. However, the modern smartwatch market shifted during 2012, when a small start-up called Pebble introduced their first product with the help of crowdfunding. However their success was short lived with Apple and Samsung coming up with their own iterations of the technology.

I personally have been using smartwatches for 4 years, and it has been a great tool for me in terms of fitness and keeping a healthy lifestyle. Apple watches have really important health features such as an ECG monitor, a blood oxygen monitor, sleep tracking, period tracking, and heart rate notifications to just name a few. Beside the

health features, the watch has a beautiful display, with seamless connection your iPhone. Fitness tracking is widely used by many, the watch allows you to read how many calories have been burned, and this is something I do use every day, along with the step counter. The teaching of the Church constantly reminds us of treating our body as a temple, and we should take care of it.

**“I can get so caught up on what is happening on the virtual level that I have to constantly remind myself to ‘Think of what is above, not of what is on Earth’”**

My apple watch is always connected to my iPhone and has been a great tool to minimise my phone usage whenever there are notifications from social media apps or messaging apps. Or that's what I thought.

Yes, a smartwatch gives you notifications that could be important and would be impossible to read from your phone if you are in a meeting, especially many having the habit of putting their device down so the

screen wouldn't distract them. Then there is the debate of putting the phone on silent (which would still buzz) or putting in on do not disturb, which eliminates the whole idea of reading important messages. Having a smartwatch could eliminate that, right? Well, no. The constant checking of your watch, is not only disrespectful, but also another form of distraction, similar to checking your phone for absolutely no reason. I am constantly looking for that buzz on my wrist. Even if there isn't a buzz, I would just check my watch, craving for that one buzz. I can get so caught up on what is happening on the virtual level that I have to constantly remind myself to “Think of what is above, not of what is on Earth” (Col 3:2).

## Adapt

An incident that I will never forget happened to me last year with my aunt and cousins. I was having dinner at her place, and mid conversation, I started getting the usual app notifications, such as app promotions and the “stop being lazy, time to stand up” notification. I was subtly checking my watch just to be sure, and ignored it. Five minutes later I was greeted with messages from different people all at once. I kept checking my watch, not to see what it was, but just to stop it. My aunt looked at me with a firm stare and told me “If you really want to leave, you can leave.” I



had to explain to her the whole process, and only after that she calmed down.

The idea of a smartwatch is brilliant, to keep track of your fitness and health goals, and time to time, reduce your phone usage. A great alternative would be to adopt fitness bands, does all the functionalities as a smart watch, except with notifications and big display with different app con-

nectivity.

Catholics should always remember that God created our bodies to stay healthy and be fit. Like the bible verse from the 1 Corinthians 6:19 says “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own”. Being fit is an important aspect of everyday life, and technology like these

smartwatches should be balanced.

**“When purchasing one there should be a great sense of responsibility when using the device”**

Fitness devices can also help in mindfulness, which is also an important aspect of being a Catholic. Being present and taking some time off is very important for having a peaceful life. Within the watch, there are apps that allow this, which gives you a distraction-free time of your own.

There are watches that only allow for location tracking, and certain contacts to be stored, and this is great for parents who do not want to give their children smartphones. However, one must remember, when purchasing one there should be a great sense of responsibility when using the device. The only reason why there might be lots of notifications traces back to the main source; our smartphones and our app usage, because all the notifications come from the phone and not the watch itself.

**i** Rohith Kinattukara is a Catholic student from Griffith College Dublin studying MSc in Procurement and Supply Chain Management who loves to write and breathes tech.

## AI ethics at the Vatican

Justin McLellan

The Catholic Church has a valuable role to play in providing “clear moral leadership” to protect humanity from the negative impact of new technology, a leading AI researcher said under the vaulted ceiling of the Pontifical Academy for Sciences headquarters in the Vatican Gardens.

Speaking at a forum on artificial intelligence development last October, Max Tegmark, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and president of the Future of Life Institute, said that today, in the AI age, the Church must advocate for pausing further developments in artificial general intelligence - a form of AI which surpasses human cognitive

capabilities across many tasks - and computer superintelligence “at least until maybe one day someone will figure out how it can be controlled or aligned.”

Leaders in the tech industry, Church officials, ethicists and entrepreneurs gathered at the Vatican for a conference on ethical AI development October 24-25, hosted at the Pontifical Academy for Sciences.

At the conference, Taylor Black, director of AI and venture ecosystems at Microsoft, noted how few people in the technology industry “think of persons in a holistic sort of way because we think that a whole bunch of things about what makes a person a person are outside of the purview of tech, whether that's correct or incorrect.”

That is why the advent of artificial intelligence is a “fan-

tastic opportunity” for the Church, he said, since “tech has to come to the only place where the person is really understood and where we have paths to further understand the human person.”

One way in which unchecked AI development could harm the dignity of the human person is by replacing large swaths of the workforce without providing any kind of fallback for people put out of work, said Anthony J. Granado, associate general secretary of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Artificial intelligence, he said “should supplement what humans do, it should not replace humans,” he said, noting how the US bishops’ conference is currently looking at ways to “minimise the impact” of artificial intelligence on job losses.

A 2023 Goldman Sachs

report estimated that artificial intelligence could replace the equivalent of 300 million full-time jobs while increasing the total annual value of goods and services produced globally by 7%.

Yet he noted that AI also holds potential benefits for the Church, such as being a “great tool for helping to promote catechesis.”

“The Church throughout all of human history has to look at and read the signs of the times and use those opportunities to promote the Gospel in different ways, so AI will be one of those frontiers where the Gospel will need to be preached,” Granado said.

Addressing the Church's dual role in embracing but also ethically guiding the development of AI, Dominican priest Eric Solobir, chairman of the Human Technology Foundation's executive com-

mittee, said the Church must work with the tech industry to “align the planets” between its profitability and ethics.

“We need to try to create a paradigm shift to change the ethical software” of the tech industry, he said, which tends to be consequentialist and prioritise long-term gains to the point of ignoring immediate harm caused by certain decisions.

Fr Solobir recalled engaging with tech leaders on matters of ethics, explaining that people in the tech industry would typically gauge the permissiveness of an action on its legality and not in terms of promoting human flourishing.

The Church, he said, “can put some drops of this virtue ethics in their process of reflection, and that completely changes how one deals with the ethics of technology.”



# A Eucharistic Word: Waiting

Michael R. Heinlein

**L**earning to wait is an important skill to acquire. I am reminded of its importance almost daily as I help my young children come to understand it - and, of course, in that process come to understand it more and more in my own life, too. "Patience is a virtue" I heard so much from my mom as a child, echoed now in regular reminders I offer the kids.

I was thinking about waiting and patience a good deal recently at a canonisation Mass while on pilgrimage with my family in Rome. And the more I thought about that setting, the more I thought it was a great place to do so.

The Eucharist, as the source and summit of Christian life, has much to teach us about waiting. Especially true in the case of a canonisation Mass, where I went hours early to hold seats for my family. The Mass itself is one prolonged wait, in some ways, as we anticipate our future end and the coming of Christ. What we pray at Mass following the Our Father sums up this reality rather well: "May we be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope of the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ." The grace of the Eucharist is what helps accomplish this in our lives.

One of the figures who was canonised that morning in Rome was Marie-Léonie Paradis, a Canadian religious and foundress. As is so often the case with the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, waiting was very much part of her story. Paradis relied on the



St Marie-Leonie Paradis

grace of the Eucharist as she experienced a unique and acute need for patience while waiting for God to act in her life. She relied on Eucharistic grace to uphold, transform and strengthen her. Religious life was a tenuous, at times rocky, experience for Paradis until she understood that God was calling her to begin a new community.

Paradis came to realise that she needed to be patient as God made it possible by attending to the various circumstances and personalities that had previously prevented it from coming to fruition. Eventually, her congregation for women religious would be established, according to God's will, dedicated to the service and support of priests and bishops. Through her struggles and disappointments, Paradis came to realise, as she later said: "Have confidence in God as a good Father. Don't you ever believe that God will lose you, if you put your confidence in him. Stay in peace, whatever

happens!"

Eventually, my family arrived, the canonisations took place and Mass was celebrated. But as we prepare for Advent, I keep coming back to the lessons in waiting I learned last month. They will stay with me for some time. And I am grateful for them. Because, ultimately, if we embrace Christ's life and let the Eucharistic mystery live in us, then we have to become masters in patience. We have to learn what it means to wait and be at peace with it. We have to embrace waiting as a time in which God acts.

Newly canonised St Marie-Leonie Paradis' life teaches us to persevere in answering God's call, come what may. She reminds me how we must remain steadfast yet patient amid obstacles and divisions. She models how to elevate charity and service at the heart of our mission. She lived what St Katharine Drexel once noted - that "the patient endurance of the Cross - whatever nature it may be - is the highest work we have to do."

And such is the case for each of us. This is what the saints do, as should we all. May we increasingly rely on the Eucharist to nourish and guide this in our lives "as we await the blessed hope of the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ."

**i** Michael R. Heinlein is author of *Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I. and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators.*

## A view from the Quays



Fr Alan Hilliard

**I** was speaking to a friend of mine a few weeks ago. She's been having a difficult time. To put her son through college and to pay off debts she was working two jobs. Eventually she gave up one of the jobs as she had made financial headway. She is a musician too and she was invited to play at a funeral. She was quite nervous as she was so busy working that she was out of practise. Once she started playing, she realised how much she missed her music. When she explained this to me, I said, "if you don't use your gifts, it can aid depression." She got back to me and thanked me for my words.

### Distractions

She thought long and hard about how much she loved her music and how she had neglected it. While she blamed a lot of her anxiety and listlessness on working two jobs, she realised that this was part of the problem but not the whole story. In neglecting her music, she

was neglecting one of her greatest gifts that in normal circumstances bring her great joy and solace. She is back playing now and it's helping her to feel alive.

The spiritual exercises of St Ignatius tell us that we must be where our gifts are being used or where they can be used. The spiritual journey is one where we must find how we use the gifts and talents that God gives us not because God wants us to under obedience but because it is there that we are happiest and in being happy we give glory to God.

Interestingly enough some of the greatest reforms in religious life were not about making things stricter - it was quite the opposite really. The reform of St Benedict came about because he realised, he was too hard on the monks in his charge, and he created a rule that allowed the whole person to flourish. In a similar vein St Teresa of Avila, when reforming the Carmelite's, while insisting on deepening their spirituality, she also made sure that they had some down time too creating room of leisurely recreation - all work and no play makes whoever a dull person. St Catherine of Siena said, "Be who God wants you to be and you'll set the world on fire."

### Talents

Use your talents and live happily. Here is a tip that'll help you move

in the right direction.

Firstly, identify the various areas of your life: There is the physical part of life - are we exercising enough, am I unnecessarily stiff and sore.

Then there is the mental part of my life - am I reading enough, doing crosswords, am I spending time on the phone or computer flicking rather than dwelling on good engaging material. Am I playing my music or am I dancing or using my head in a way that is upbuilding.

Then the emotional self: where do I love and where am I loved.

Then, of course there is the spiritual self, how do we connect with God? How much time do we spend allowing God to catch up with us. What helps me live a meaningful life? Who is Jesus for me?

### Fruits

This exercise makes me see what bits of me are stuck in the rut - the part of us that we need to breathe into to give it life. The feeling of being stuck in a rut doesn't mean all of us are in a rut - that's why this exercise is so good. Teresa of Avila also said, "Untilled ground, however rich, will bring forth thistles and thorns; so also, the mind of a person." So, take time to examine the fields of our life and identify what ones need attention.

## Questions of Faith

Jenna Marie Cooper

### What is the Church's teaching on transgender issues?

**Q: These days we hear so much about trans people. I really have never heard anything 'official' about the Church's position. What does our Church say about it? Thank you.**

**A:** It is true that, with transgender issues being a relatively new phenomenon in modern society, the Church does not yet have an extensive teaching on this specific topic. But all the Church's teachings on morality and on the nature of the human person are interconnected and build on each other, so we can still discern the mind of the Church with respect to transgender issues. And it is worth noting that "gender theory" and "sex change" were briefly addressed in the March 2024 document *Dignitas Infinita* on the subject of human dignity in general.

It would not be accurate to say that the Church is against "trans people" as people, because the Church believes that they have the same fundamental dignity as any and every human person. Consequently, the Church strongly condemns any kind of hatred or violence towards people who identify as transgender.

Pope Francis in his 2016 apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* states that: "The Church makes her own the attitude of the Lord Jesus, who offers his boundless love to each person without exception... We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation" - and thus, by extension, gender identity - "ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while 'every sign of unjust discrimination' is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence" (no. 250).

And we as Christians are called to be sensitive to all those who are suffering in any way, which would include those who are experiencing emotional pain due to discomfort with their body.

That being said, the Church is against any "gender ideology" that would separate the concept of psychological gender from biological sex; or which would propose that one's sex could be changed through medical or surgical

means; or which would hold that one's bodily sex could be somehow wrong or mistaken in light of one's self-perception of one's gender. And in practical terms, the Church is also against any medical intervention that would damage healthy organs in the absence of any true medical need.

As we read in *Dignitas Infinita*: "Teaching about the need to respect the natural order of the human person, Pope Francis affirmed that 'creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.' It follows that any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception."

The Church's teaching on these issues is based in part on our theology. For instance, in Scripture we read that: "God created mankind in his image; in the image of God, He created them; male and female he created them" (Gn 1:27). That is, we as Catholics believe an important part of God's plan for humanity involved creating two equal, but distinct and complementary, sexes.

But another component of the Church's teaching is based in the natural, biological sciences. The physical differences between men and women were obvious even to ancient observers and are even clearer to us now thanks to modern medical science. For example, we know now that our maleness or femaleness is part of our DNA, meaning that every cell in our body is identifiable as male or female.

Although the proper scope of the Church's teaching authority is specifically faith and morals, the Church's goal is always to embrace the truth, regardless of whether that truth is known by faith, by logical reasoning or by modern scientific evidence.

**i** Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to [CatholicQA@osv.com](mailto:CatholicQA@osv.com).





## Fr Rolheiser

[www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

**T**he opening pages of the Bible offer us a series of stories set at the beginning of history which are meant to explain why the world today is as it is. The Adam and Eve story about original sin is one of those stories. There are others. These stories, because they use imagery that might make them sound like fairy tales, can seem total fantasy to us, but they are stories that are truer than true. They happened. They happened to the first man and woman on this planet, and they continue to happen today in a way that affects every man and woman throughout history. They are stories of the heart, not meant to be taken literally, but carrying lessons for the heart.

One of these “in the beginning”, foundational, archetypal, stories is the story of the Tower of Babel. In street

language, it goes like this: In the beginning (before time was like it is now) there was a town called Babel which decided it would make a name for itself by building a tower so impressive that all the other towns would have to admire it. They began building the tower, but something strange happened. As they were building it, they suddenly all began to speak different languages, were no longer able to understand each other, and scattered around the world, each now speaking in a language incomprehensible to everyone else.

### Lesson

What's the lesson? Is this meant to explain the origin of the different languages of the world? No, rather it is meant to explain the deep, seemingly irreconcilable misunderstandings among us. Why

do we forever misunderstand each other? What's the origin of this?

**“We might still be speaking the same language, social media and cable news echo chambers have supplied us with different sets of facts, values, and visions”**

There are multiple ways this story can be used to shed light on the divisions in our world today. Here's one: Writing in *The Atlantic* last year, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt suggested that there is perhaps no better metaphor to explain the divisions among us today than the Tower of Babel. His argument runs this way: Social media, the very thing that was meant to connect us not only to our friends and families but to people from around the globe, has in fact led to a radical fragmentation of our society and to the shat-

tering of all that had seemed solid, the scattering of people who had been a community. Take America, for example; while we might still be speaking the same language, social media and cable news echo chambers have supplied us with different sets of facts, values, and visions that make actual conversation increasingly impossible.

### Tensions

As the recent tensions around the US Presidential elections made evident, as a society we no longer speak the same language in that we can no longer understand each other on virtually every key issue – global warming, immigration, poverty, gender, health, abortion, the place of religion in the public sphere, whose side truth is on, and, most important of all, what truth is. We no longer share any common truths. Rather, we all have our own truth, our own individual language. As the popular saying goes, “I have done my own research! I don't trust science. I don't trust any mainstream truths.

I have my own sources.”

And those sources are many, too many to count! Hundreds of television channels, countless podcasts and millions of persons feeding us their idiosyncratic version of things on social media so that now there is scepticism about any fact or truth. This is dividing us at every level: family, neighborhood, church, country, and world. We are all now speaking different languages and, like the original inhabitants of Babel, are being scattered around the world.

In the light of this, it is noteworthy how the original Pentecost is described in scripture. The Acts of the Apostles describes Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, as an event which reverses what happened at the Tower of Babel. At the Tower of Babel, the languages (the “tongues”) of the Earth divided and scattered. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends on each person as a “tongue of fire” so that, to everyone's great surprise, everyone now understands everyone one else in his or

her own language.

Again, what is being described here is not about literal human languages – where at Pentecost everyone suddenly understood Greek or Latin. Rather everyone now understood everyone else in his or her own language. All languages became one language.

### Language

What is that common language? It's neither Greek nor Latin nor English nor French nor Spanish nor Yiddish nor Chinese nor Arabic, nor any other of the world's spoken languages. Neither is it the less-than-fully-compassionate language of the conservatives or the liberals. It is, as Jesus and our scriptures make clear, the language of charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, long-suffering, fidelity, gentleness, faith, and chastity.

This is the only language which can bridge the misunderstandings and differences among us – and when we are speaking it, we will not be trying to build a tower to impress anyone.

## Catechism of the Catholic Church



By Renata Milan Morales

# The heritage of Faith

**C**hrist commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel to communicate the gifts of God to all men. This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline. The Gospel was handed on in two ways: orally – preaching – and in writing.

The bishops are the apostles' successors. The apostles gave them their own position of teaching authority. The Father's self-communication made through his Word in the Holy Spirit, remains present and active in the Church.

### The relationship between Tradition and Sacred Scripture

“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the Holy Spirit. Tradition transmits in its

entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it. Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.

The New Testament itself demonstrate the process of living Tradition, which the first generation of Christians did not have. Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium.

### The interpretation of the heritage of Faith

The apostles entrusted the ‘Sacred deposit’ of the faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to the whole of the Church. The task of giv-

ing an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. This Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God but is its servant.

The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it fully holds from Christ when it proposes truths contained in divine Revelation – dogmas – or also when it proposes in a definitive way truths having a necessary connection with them. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith. If our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith. The mutual connections between dogmas, and their coherence, can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the mystery of Christ.

### The supernatural sense of faith

All the faithful share in understanding and handing on revealed truth. They have received the anointing

of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them and guides them into all truth. “The whole body of the faithful... cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of faith.

Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith can grow in the life of the Church: through the contemplation and study of believers, from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which [believers] experience, the reading of sacred Scriptures and from the preaching.

It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others under the action of the Holy Spirit.

**Next week we will be exploring paragraphs 101 to 141, ‘Sacred Scripture’.**



# Your redemption is at hand

Jer 33:14-16  
Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14  
1 Thes 3:12-4:2  
Lk 21:25-28, 34-36

Aside from being one of the fathers of monasticism, St Benedict is also one of the more profound spiritual doctors of Advent. At least I have long considered him thus. I think of him every Advent and I listen carefully to him, like a son listens to his father.

Read the *Rule of St Benedict*, the prologue at least, and you'll see what I mean. Of course, the whole of the Rule is a masterpiece, but the prologue is by itself a rich treatise on the Christian life that has over the years inspired me, sustained me, and even picked me up off the floor a time or two. He was writing for monks obviously, but the genius of St Benedict was that he understood that monasticism isn't anything extraordinary. Monasticism is simply the Christian life lived in radical simplicity. Anyway, my point is that you and I can read St Benedict too. He is a spiritual guide good for us too.

## Conversion

Again, read the prologue. St Benedict teaches that the Christian life, the monastic life, begins between a father and a son, a servant and a master, a monk and his abbot - that is, it begins in relationship. Between the soul and God interiorly, but at the same time in community, God calls each soul to conversion, calls each of us to run to him.

Now as with any real spiritual masterpiece, the meta-

## The Sunday Gospel

Fr Joshua J. Whitfield



phors are mixed. The imagery of dialogue between father and son, monk and abbot, for instance, is woven together with the imagery of the heart. And the heart senses God; the heart hears and sees, St Benedict writes. What he's trying to describe is how the soul responds to God; he's trying to describe conversion, how it happens within us and through us.

**“Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice that every day calls out”**

Which is why I consider him a spiritual master of Advent. Because he describes so powerfully the first virtues of Advent, which are watchfulness, wakefulness, vigilance, responsiveness. In the prologue, St Benedict even cites Romans 13, an ancient text the Church still reads during Advent likening conversion to waking up: “it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep” (Rom 13:11). The picture St Benedict paints is of an early morning, the sun lighting upon closed eyes.

“Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God,

and our ears to the voice that every day calls out,” St Benedict writes. That's what must happen first if we're ever to find God looking for us: we must wake up, open our eyes, listen.

Again, this is the first simple lesson of Advent. That's what this passage from Luke is all about. Jesus is again talking about the end of the world - about frightening cosmic signs, nations “in dismay” (Lk 21:25). Whether he's talking about the literal end of the world or metaphorically about the chaos of the world generally - a chaos which harries each soul seeking the truth - or whether Jesus is speaking about both: whatever are the exact referents of the “signs,” nonetheless, the virtues required of believers are the same.

## Revelation

“Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man” (Lk 21:36). That's what Jesus was telling his disciples to do to prepare for the full revelation of God on the Cross. It's what all believers are to do in preparation for all the advents of Christ - Christ's appearing to the soul, to the Church, to all things in the fullness of time. We are to be people who see the big picture and who are strengthened by it. We are to be people who hope because we have faith in the beginning and the end, because we know.

Which is knowledge that should inspire us to live a moral life. In the prologue, right after St Benedict talks about con-

The head of Christ, Warner Sallman



version, he talks about morals - turning away from evil, doing good. It's interesting that in this passage from Luke, Jesus weaves closely together conversion and the moral life too - keeping free from “carousing and drunkenness” (Lk 21:35). Here we pass from the first virtues of Advent to the first fruits

of Advent - the beginnings of moral living.

And so, what are we to learn this first Sunday of Advent? Both Jesus and St Benedict teach the same thing. When God calls, answer. Stand up straight, look up and live right, for “your redemption is at hand” (Lk 21:28). This is the

simple call of God at Advent. It's just that it's been Advent every day of your life. It's Advent now. So, wake up.

**Fr Joshua J. Whitfield** is pastor of St Rita Catholic Community in Dallas and author of *The Crisis of Bad Preaching* and other books.

**“What are we to learn this first Sunday of Advent? Both Jesus and St Benedict teach the same thing. When God calls, answer. Stand up straight, look up and live right, for ‘your redemption is at hand’”**

## Saint — of the — week

By Renata Milan Morales



St Francis Xavier

## St Francis Xavier: All for the glory of Christ

The missionary Francis Xavier, born in 1506 in Navarre, Spain, was a man whose life took an extraordinary turn through his encounter with Ignatius of Loyola at the University of Paris in the late 1520s. At the time, Francis was ambitious for worldly success. Yet Ignatius, older and already embracing a life of devotion, perceived something remarkable in the younger man. For nearly three years, Ignatius worked to challenge Francis with the question, “What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?” Eventually, Francis' ambitions were transformed, redirected not towards personal glory, but the glory of Christ.

In 1534, alongside Ignatius and five others, Francis took vows at Montmartre, pledging themselves to a life

of service. Six years later, Pope Paul III formally approved their group as the Society of Jesus. Francis' defining mission began in 1541 when King John of Portugal requested a papal legate to minister in the newly established empire in India. On his 35th birthday, Francis sailed from Lisbon, to embark on a decade of missionary work that would take him across the East.

Francis showed an unlimited energy for his calling. Whether aboard ship or in harbours, he preached, heard confessions, taught Christian doctrine, and looked after the sick. His arrival in Goa marked the start of an intense ministry among the poor, the enslaved, and the marginalised. Although language barriers posed a challenge, Francis' determination to teach the faith led him to memorise translations of prayers and command-

ments, which he would then proclaim across towns, gathering crowds with his bell.

By the end of a month in Tranvatore, he had baptised over 10,000 people, often exhausting himself physically and spiritually. Yet his fervour only grew. Moving beyond India, he went to Malacca, the Moluccas, and the Spice Islands, preaching among both Portuguese colonists and indigenous peoples, even those known as head-hunters.

In 1547, Francis heard of Japan, a land yet untouched by the gospel. Despite knowing no Japanese and facing immense hostility, he arrived in 1549. His years there were marked by frustration and success. After two and a half years, he left behind 2,000 converts from a population of 15 million. Yet, this small flock would later

give rise to one of the Church's greatest martyrdom traditions.

Francis' sights turned to China, a land almost impossible to enter. In 1552, he reached the island of San Cian near Canton. After weeks of waiting, his plans failed, and he became gravely ill. On December 2, 1552, Francis died alone on the desolate island, just 46 years old, buried without ceremony.

Francis' life was one of extraordinary sacrifice and service. He endured privation, illness, and hostility, driven solely by a passion for saving souls.

Canonised in 1622 with his friend Ignatius, St Francis Xavier is today the patron of Catholic missions. His legacy exemplifies selfless devotion, his life dedicated not to personal gain but to the salvation of others.



# Visionary politicians, please!



Fr Chris Hayden

An old preacher's story tells of a group of people walking by a rapidly flowing river. They notice a man in the torrent, crying for help. One of them jumps in to save him. Moments later another stricken individual appears, and another member of the group jumps in to help. This happens again, and again, at which point one of the group begins to run on ahead. The others shout after him to inquire where he is going. "I'm heading upstream," he replies, "to find out why so many people are ending up in the river."

I was reminded of this story recently, while listening to a radio programme during which politicians and commentators were speaking about crime and policing. There was much talk about resources, and the need to have more police on our streets. The discussion was reasonable, sensible, pragmatic... and desperately limited. The entire focus was on policing and control. There was nothing about the root causes of crime; no attempt to 'go upstream,' to ponder the kind of societal and cultural influences that engender crime, and the kind of influences that might help to deal with it. Immediate, on-the-ground reaction seemed to be the only consideration.

## Factors

It would be foolish to downplay the importance of policing. For as long as there is crime, it will be necessary to contain it, and to have recourse to legitimate, coercive control of criminals. But at the same time, there are 'upstream' issues which it is foolish not to consider. What cultural factors might we address? What kind of

society are we seeking to create? Are we seeking to create a society at all, or merely to establish a social context in which individuals can exercise maximum personal freedom with minimal personal consequences?

These are important questions, and they are political questions. It would be no bad thing to ask a political canvasser what he or she thinks society is, and what it is for. So, you want my vote? Tell me, then, what kind of a society would I be voting for? What is your vision for society?

**“We might, for instance, ask what we are teaching our young people about freedom, and whether that teaching is accompanied by an equal emphasis on responsibility”**

Policing is about control, management; it is necessary because of individual and societal failure; it is about picking up the pieces. The human condition being what it is, there will always be pieces to be picked up. But when politicians and would-be politicians seem unable to think beyond picking up the pieces, this should signal to voters that they are unlikely to have the vision to pursue or effect real change. They are more likely to continue on with the profoundly defective notion that the State is both the guarantor of maximum individual freedom, and the body tasked with dealing with the consequences of how such freedom is exercised. Thus, the guarantor of freedom without responsibility, freedom without restraint, gradually morphs into the police state, in which citizens typically clamour for ever-expanded freedoms coupled with ever-expanded policing.

What is the alternative? Contrary to populist claims, there are no procedural or



political silver bullets, yet we need to look upstream, to give serious consideration to the source of society's woes. We might, for instance, ask what we are teaching our young people about freedom, and whether that teaching is accompanied by an equal emphasis on responsibility. The eminent psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, once suggested that the Statue of Liberty on America's East Coast be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast. Liberty untethered to responsibility is not liberty – it is licence.

## Vision

There are no quick fixes; the lifetime of a government is too short for radical change. But competent government is not just about the pragmatic allocation of resources, it is also about a vision for society. Indeed, a given government must seek to pick up pieces, but it can and should nudge society towards greater cohesiveness and health. In order to do this, it needs a vision, a sense of what a healthy and cohesive society looks like, and of what ideas, attitudes and resources – including moral and cultural resources – may be brought to the task. May the Lord send us visionary politicians, and not merely political pragmatists.

## Men behaving beastly

Greg Erlandson

**“W**hy do men become beasts?”

The question was asked by South African Archbishop Buti Joseph Tlhagale. He was warning men that they will be held accountable for the treatment of women. “The Son of God will make us pay for all the things we have done, or not done,” the archbishop said.

He was specifically addressing spousal abuse and sexual violence in South Africa, but I believe his warning stands for the men of the West as well.

The newspaper headlines tumble over each other, from Harvey Weinstein and Jeffrey Epstein to the recent allegations against Sean Combs and former Abercrombie CEO Michael Jeffries.

We have seen previously well-regarded leaders of religious movements identified as predators, and our local newspapers routinely report stories of sexual violence and abuse and the shattered lives that follow.

Yet it is not just the headlines. The impact of pornography on male sexual behaviour, the apparent inability of so many men, or man-boys, to make a commitment, for fathers to take responsibility for the children they have sired – it all suggests that too many of us have lost our moral bearings. Too many of our gender are guided only by impulses and appetites.

“Lust is not interested in its partners, but only in the gratification of its own craving, not in the satisfaction of our whole natures, but only in the appeasement of an appetite that we are unable to subdue.”

The author of those words is Henry Fairlie in a 1978 book worth rereading, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today*.

Few take the Church seriously on matters of sex these days, not least because of the hypocrisy and flaws of too many of its leaders and adherents. Yet the Church has for millennia understood what heights man is called to as well as to what depths he is capable of sinking.

In language that seems almost foreign to modern ears, the Church teaches

that “either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy” (CCC 2339).

Given the rampant unhappiness today, it seems as if our passions are running the show. “Self-mastery is a long and exacting work,” the catechism adds. Indeed, living a life of virtue can seem difficult in this age of appetites unleashed, yet the challenge of self-mastery is not foreign to men's nature. In athletics, in physical and intellectual labour, many men strive to meet that challenge. In our age, as in every age, there are strong and faithful husbands and fathers who take seriously their vows and live their commitments.

Perhaps what the Church needs to ask today is not only why men become beasts, but how we as a community can help men to better themselves and their brothers in living lives of virtue and selflessness.

**i** Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist.

**“The discussion was reasonable, sensible, pragmatic... and desperately limited. The entire focus was on policing and control. There was nothing about the root causes of crime; no attempt to 'go upstream,' to ponder the kind of societal and cultural influences that engender crime, and the kind of influences that might help to deal with it”**



# TVRadio

Brendan O'Regan



## Crude language and moral-flaws blindness

Sometimes you expect a lot from a programme and are disappointed, sometimes you expect little and are pleasantly surprised, sometimes you want so badly a programme to be good and it lets you down. I had a variety of these feelings in relation to the three programmes under review this week.

**Our Divine Sparks** (RTE Radio 1, Friday) is a new religious affairs programme presented by Dearbhail McDonald. As it is successor to **Witness**, **Leap of Faith** and **The God Slot**, I was hopeful. The first item looked at the relationship between politics and religion in the USA with Trump claiming that God had spared him in that first assassination attempt. Some evangelical Christians were ignoring his moral flaws and seeing him as a messianic figure. It was uncomfortable listening to Trump supporters singing **How Great Thou Art**. Predictably, the US expert interviewed, Marcy Wheeler, was very much anti-Trump – for the first show they could have got a more balanced commentator. Fr Michael Collins gave an illuminating account of the process of papal election in the light of the new film 'Conclave' – Dearbhail McDonald described the process as "secretive"...



Blindboy: The Land of Slaves and Scholars

could that not just be 'confidential'? There was also a contribution from Dr Sandra Cullen from DCU about the role of ritual in religion. I will listen in again.

In **Blindboy: The Land of Slaves and Scholars** (RTE One, Thursday) we got an atheist with a plastic bag over his face presenting a programme on early Irish Christianity. Give me a historian any day. On the plus side, Blindboy had some literary and spiritual sensibili-

ties, believed that the early Christians were a 'deeply religious people' and had great admiration for the output and influence of the monks in terms of their literature. The filming was excellent, highlighting the beauty of monastic location like Skellig Michael. A few of the experts contributing had some interesting things to say, but there was so much wrong with the programme – the crude language, the plastic bag

with its 'lower prices' tag, the irritating background music, the cringeworthy song at the end with reference to a 'cosmic abortion' by St Brigid, the naïve glorification of our pagan past (would Blindly last a minute back then?). There were frequent digs at the Catholic Church – kick it when it's down in case it gets back up?

Pagan Ireland was associated with respect for Nature, Christian Ireland with 'dominion', 'exploitation', 'abuse', 'slippery dynamics' and cultural strangling! At one stage he seemed to blaming Christianity for the lack of bees! Of course, Catholic Guilt got a mention – does it ever occur to people that guilt may come from people doing wrong and not resolving it because they are in denial? At one stage a subtitle appeared on screen: 'Blindboy may have made this up', which was just weird – flat joke perhaps? Several times I thought this show was taking the proverbial. Towards the end Blindboy said "I want a post-Catholic, post-colonial Ireland." Is it the job of the national broadcaster to facilitate this agenda?

Last up is **Young, British and Anti-Abortion** (BBC One, Wednesday). The advance blurb suggested it might be a pro-choice hatchet job, but this one

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### ADVENT REFLECTIONS

**EWTN Sunday December 1, 8.30pm**

Fr Joseph Gromley, of the church of the Holy Family, Derry, sets the tone for observing the First Week of Advent as he speaks about waiting for the coming of the Saviour Jesus.

#### MORNINGS WITH WENDY

**Spirit Radio, weekdays, 10am**

Morning talk show with Wendy Grace.

#### UNREPORTED WORLD

**Channel 4 Friday December 6, 7.30pm**

Reporter Darshna Soni is in Mexico, where the war on drugs has left close to 90,000 people behind bars without a trial.

fitted in the 'pleasantly surprised' category. Documentary maker and presenter Poppy Jay was certainly pro-choice, regarding anti-abortion views as 'extreme', but at least she was somewhat open-minded and respectful. The pro-life young adults she interviewed were impressive – committed, courteous, rational. Jay really seemed to like them and see some things from their point of view.

Eden McCourt of Abortion Resistance gave a good account of herself, making flapjacks for the presenter as she explained her pro-life case incisively but with good humour. We saw her on the campaign trail focusing on coercive abortion, which I presume all feminists would be concerned about. Another impressive

pro-lifer Madeline Page was heading to speak at a university, but the vilification and harassment she faced from foul-mouthed and masked protestors was so stomach churning, even the presenter was taken aback. I saw no one being arrested for hate speech, even though this was hugely intimidating. Eden and Madeline came at the issue from a human rights perspective, which made the chanting about rosaries and ovaries rather odd.

Later in the programme we heard from those who took a more religious approach. James spoke very eloquently from this perspective, though language like 'abomination', while apt, will hardly win over the middle ground.

# Film

Aubrey Malone



## Absorbing intrigue in Sistine Chapel balloting

A pope has died. The throne of the Holy See is vacant. A successor must be appointed.

Thomas Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes) is Dean of the College of Cardinals. He's chosen to oversee the selection process.

He does so reluctantly as he's struggling with his prayer life. Tensions rise in St Peter's Basilica as various contenders throw their birettas into the ring.

We are in Edward Berger's nail-biting papal thriller, **Conclave** (12A). It poses the question of who will be the next leader of the Church? Will it be the progressive Cardinal Bellini (Stanley Tucci), who believes in contraception, gay rights and women having a stronger say in the Curia? Or the reactionary Cardinal Tedesco (Sergio Castellitto), who favours a return to

the pre-Vatican II Tridentine Mass?

Another candidate is Cardinal Tremblay (John Lithgow). His last meeting with the deceased Pontiff casts a cloud over his chances. There's also Cardinal Adeyami (Lucien Msamati), an early front-runner. He could be the world's first African Pope... until a dropped tray causes a nun to be questioned about her past association with him.

Scandals mount up. The election becomes a question not so much of selecting the best man as the 'least worst' one. Cardinal Bellini's sardonic phrase recalls Pope Francis' remark on Kamala Harris and Donald Trump in the recent American presidential election.



Conclave (2024)

A surprise package is Cardinal Benitez (Carlos Diehz) who arrives from Kabul. There are questions about his eligibility; he was appointed a cardinal *in pectore* (i.e. secretly).

This may be a film centred on ecclesiastical matters but it has all the tension of a Dan Brown book – and more than one similarity to *The Da Vinci Code*.

There's humour (have you ever seen a cardinal vaping before?), a terrorist explosion, a series of twists that reveal more subterfuge than *West Wing*, and a climactic shock that unfortunately reduces everything to the level of pulp fiction.

Never mind. Along the way we have some brilliant performances, a whip-smart script, a pounding music score from Volker Bertelmann – who also worked with Berger on *All Quiet on the Western Front* – and some stunning cinematography.

Isabella Rossellini also impresses as the 'invisible' Sr Agnes. A wise owl, she doesn't say much but sees everything.

Fiennes must be seen as an Oscar contender on the basis

of his performance. With a furrow of his brow he can convey more than most actors who chew carpets. He seems to be carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders as he juggles between the candidates and his conscience, advocating doubt as a mantra.

Berger adopts a slow-burning approach to the incendiary material from Robert Harris' novel before ramping up the tension to high-octane levels. Votes are counted, favourites installed and then deposed as Machiavellian machinations are exposed and the chalice passed.

This isn't so much a contest between gentlemen as a high stakes poker game with a major prize. Who'll win it? And in what circumstances? You'll gasp as you find out.



# BookReviews

## Thanksgiving and the making of American myths



The First Thanksgiving, by Jean Louis Gerome Ferris, 1915

**Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War,** by Nathaniel Philbrick (Penguin, £23.00 / €27.50); also *The First Thanksgiving*, a single chapter extract from the original book, is also available separately from Penguin booklet.

**Peter Costello**

Today is Thanksgiving Day in the US. These books give a popular historical account of the Pilgrim Fathers, which broadens out the story to make the context clear. But in reality the modern popular ideas about the day are part of a foundation myth and often myths have little to do with the realities of history.

For an ultra modern nation the United State of America is steeped in mythology. Thanksgiving is an important aspect of this.

It may derive from the ancient harvest home celebrations across Europe, but it has long meant that Christmas Day, one of the premier feasts of the Christianity, wherever established, is strangely neglected – indeed it is hardly a holiday at all in the US.

### Resolution

Though it may look like an old rural feast, it was not in fact until October 6 1941 that Congress finally passed a joint resolution declaring the last Thursday in November to be the legal Thanksgiving Day, ending an era of confusion over the matter that had begun back in 1863.

It was supposed to celebrate the first season of the Pilgrims in the New World, and idealises the relations of

the intruders with local Wampanoag people.

The national icon of this event is a much reproduced painting by Jean Louis Gerome Ferris, one of seventy eight paintings celebrating American history. This painting, made in 1915, portrays the settlers in a positive light, and legitimises the Pilgrims' behaviour towards the Native Americans.

Contrary to the Thanksgiving myth, the Pilgrim-Wampanoag encounter was no first-contact meeting. Rather, it followed a string of bloody episodes since 1524 in which European explorers sold captured Wampanoags into slavery, or forced them to labour for the Pilgrims.

But by the date the picture was painted America had become, not the idealised white society of the painting but a multicultural society in which not only English and Dutch culture of the Puritans was mixed with the cultures of Italian and Polish Catholics, Swedish Lutherans and Russian Jews: very much the America we see today; though now with a further mixture of South Asian and Middle Eastern cultures.

But if we take an overview of the whole of the landmass of the United States we find something different. Leaving aside the displaced First Nations, the foundations of American society were not in north European Protestantism, but in south European Catholicism. The oldest city, by date of foundation, in the continental US is St Augustine in Florida, established by the Spanish on September 8, 1565: remember Pilgrim Fathers only reached Cape Cod in November 1620. Catholic culture

was for certain a strong element in the original creation of the US.

The Spanish settlers in Florida, which was ceded to the union in 1819, were then the first Latinos in the US territory. But later there followed the seizure of Texas in 1836.

### Seized

Then in 1848, after the Mexican-American War, the US seized what are now the several states of California, Nevada, New Mexico and Arizona. The Gold Rush of 1849 in California created the basis of the state's wealth, to which oil and minerals were later added. Thus more Latinos were Americanised.

Far from being the alien invaders of President-Elect Trump's imagination, Latinos are among the earliest peoples settled in the USA.

But not all Latinos were "wet-backs" sneaking over the Rio Grande. In 1959, with the flight of Batista from Cuba, more *émigrés*, this time anti-Castroites fled into exile in Florida, creating a wealthy Latino social group that still remains important in the state's politics.

As refugees from a harsh communist regime these people were welcome. But their presence and political position in Florida created another nuance in what «Latino» might mean in the present day US, for they have little in common with the other older Latino groups.

If this sounds like a complicated history, it is. Commentators like to simplify societies, but on the whole individuals are complex, and the societies they create are also complex. The supposed simple life of the Pilgrim Fathers, which Philbrick critically explores, is truly a thing of the past.

**Peter Costello**



## Exploring the nature of our Southern Protestant neighbours

**Southern Irish Protestant - Histories, Lives & Literatures,** by Ian d'Alton (Eastwood / Wordwell, €25.00 / £22.95)

**Robert Marshall**

Ian d'Alton was born in Dublin, moving to Cork at the outset of his teenage years. He graduated from University College Cork. There he read history under Oliver MacDonagh before going up to Peterhouse Cambridge where he wrote a Ph.D. (1972-5). Subsequently, he joined the Irish Civil Service and retired in 2012 as Chief Executive Officer of the Housing Finance Agency.

His interest from undergraduate days was the identity and background of Southern Irish Protestants. They are the focus of this collection from his writings over 40 years: a foil for his own middle class urban professional Protestant identity, formed in the mid-twentieth century.

D'Alton presents twenty-one essays bookended by Felix M Larkin's introduction, and Alan Ford's afterword. Ford sums up the challenge presented to d'Alton: an Irish historian caught in the no man's land between literature and science; subjectivity and objectivity; Catholic and Protestant, and revisionism and anti-revisionism.

### Path

Ever an independent scholar, d'Alton ploughs his own path. He carefully divides his book into six parts each examining a theme. *Protestant Culture and Protestant Lives* precedes *Explaining the Southern Irish Protestant*. This is followed by an examination of *Literary Luminaries*. *War and Rebellion* follows in which the motives of the Irish gentry's involvement in the Great War stand against the Protestant experience of 1916 in Dublin and Cork.

Those essays precede part V giving consideration to *Partition and Regime Change* before the final part

considers *Religious Disputations* between Disestablishment and Irish Anglican reaction to the promulgation of the Doctrine of the Assumption.

D'Alton highlights that the collection attempts to illuminate his fundamental journey to understand identity through the discipline of history. Tellingly, this is stated in his introductory essay *Protestant and Irish* echoing the title of the successful book he co-edited with Dr Ida Milne (2019).

**“Modern Southern Irish Protestants are not landlords with an heir, and younger sons for the army, the law and the church”**

d'Alton explains how the title “Southern Irish Protestants” reflects what he and most of his tribe are not. They are not Northern Protestants. They neither are Irish and neither British (as many of their Northern co-religionists would claim to be) nor English. Finally, he is not a Roman Catholic. In the book it becomes clear that his Protestantism is of the Church of Ireland.

To this list are added other ‘not’s’ indicating what modern Southern Irish Protestants are not. Memorials in many of their churches record the social status of former landlord families within the pre 1922 landed, governing and military elites. Modern Southern Irish Protestants are not landlords with an heir, and younger sons for the army, the law and the church. Class, which within Protestantism climbed from city and agricultural labourers through the gentry to the aristocracy and the Crown, no longer applies in the republic's meritocracy.



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.



Elizabeth Bowen, by  
Patrick Hennessey,  
Crawford Art Gallery Cork

Having stated the 'not's one of D'Alton's methods is to use literature as a source. He returns frequently to Elizabeth Bowen, Iris Murdoch and other Southern Irish Protestant writers. They observe in their writings the forces which shaped lives during the period in which they wrote. They note particularly the insularity of Southern Protestant existence, even its exceptionalism.

### Distinguished

These writings have to be distinguished from the work of a novelist such as Hilary Mantel. Whereas Mantel presents history to the public through novels set in carefully recorded historical contexts, Bowen, Murdoch and Trevor write from their contemporary observations.

These writings are historical sources for d'Alton. Of Dalton's icons, only Elizabeth Bowen receives detailed treatment from Declan Kiberd in *Inventing Ireland* (1995). Their concerns differ: Kiberd's was to present authors who helped shape modern

Ireland: d'Alton to mine perceptively his icons' literature of record and so highlight change.

**“The destination in the author's words is to ‘what a sense of place and attachment means to this little people hood on a small island’”**

D'Alton's volume is the “offcuts of the ethnic and cultural rather than the purely devotional” as it “paints different landscapes of identity and belonging.” Hence, readers should not expect it to describe or assess the present temporal or spiritual strength of Southern Irish Protestant communities, still less the welcome arrival of the new Irish. Nor should readers expect pointers to the future of those communities.

As this review outlines, the volume is about how those minority communities collectively shed baggage as their

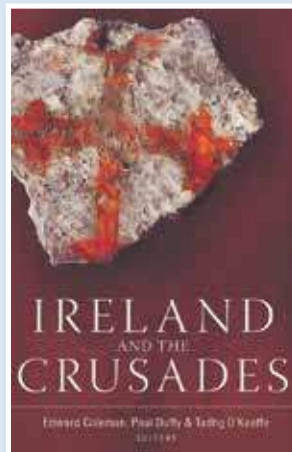
world changed, and travelled to establish confidently their place in modern Ireland. The destination in the author's words is to ‘what a sense of place and attachment means to this little people hood on a small island’. The author offers this sense to his northern co-religionists and Unionists friends who, in the fullness of time, may find it useful.

In launching Southern Irish Protestants, Brian Dobson drew on a statement by Emmanuel Macron that Huguenot blood ran in the veins of France. Dobson demonstrated from this book that Protestant blood runs through the veins of Ireland.

This volume, d'Alton's personal quest, and the example of his career demonstrate that truth. Elegantly written, with pithy and perceptive, often wry, turns of phrase, these essays will well repay the reader's thought and reflection.

**i Robert Marshall, a priest in the Church of Ireland tradition, is Diocesan and Provincial Registrar of Dublin. He writes here in a personal capacity.**

# Irish knights and the liberation of Jerusalem



**Ireland and the Crusades**, edited by Edward Coleman, Paul Duffy & Tadhg O'Keefe (Four Courts Press, €49.50 / £41.50)

**Peter Costello**

I cannot be the only one who has wondered over the years about medieval Crusaders from Ireland. Across Western Europe, from Scotland to Sicily, the adventures and misadventures of these knights of the Red Cross are celebrated.

Yet in Ireland historians left us in the dark. Hence the great interest of this book. While not a definitive history, this series of essays by several hands casts a flood of light which, for me at least, has long been a dark corner of our national story.

These days crusaders have a bad name. Popularly they are thought of as brutal invaders of “Arab lands” that deserve reprobation.

Yet this is surely a mistaken perspective. The countries they wished to liberate from the Muslim rule, had been non-Arab and non-Muslim until the Arabs horde burst out of the deserts of Arabia in 622AD to slew out over Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Asia Minor, and parts of Asia proper.

### Nations

Most of these regions were all originally Christian nations. It was the Arabs who were the brutal interlopers. This is often overlooked. The crusades were mounted to throw back the invaders and their new and alien culture, and to restore Christianity to Palestine.

The battle of Toulouse in 721 saw at last the turn of that tide when the Muslim invasion of France was thrown back; though it was not until 1492, the year of Columbus, that the Moors were finally expelled from

Spain.

But by this time the Arab expansion was not only failing, Arab society had failed to develop its scientific knowledge. Indeed North Africa which had been the “breadbasket of Rome” declined into sterility and desert under Arab and Ottoman rule, as did Mesopotamia. They made strides in chemistry and the use of gunpowder, but the achievements of the Greeks, which they preserved, but which in their hands did lead to industrialisation.

For a larger view of the subject readers will still benefit from Sir Stephen Runciman's three volume classic *A History of the Crusades*. For other tastes there is that classic novel, *Knight with Armour* by Alfred Duggan, much admired by Evelyn Waugh, which still retains its lean and effective power. For younger readers there is Ronald's Welsh's most evocative *Knight Crusader*, which set off my own interest in this era as a schoolboy; it is still available from Slightly Foxed Editions.

**“The crusade zeal was a matter for the Anglo-Norman community. The chieftains of Gaelic Ireland had little interest in freeing Jerusalem from aliens, when they desired to free Ireland from its own invasive aliens”**

The main focus of *Ireland and the Crusades* is not surprisingly on actual crusades, but on the activities of the Military Orders that spring from them, the Templars, and the Knights Hospitallers, and their role in local history in Ireland. These essays break new ground and will be read with interest in many districts of Leinster and Munster.

The crusade zeal was a matter for the Anglo-Norman community. The chieftains of Gaelic Ireland had little interest in freeing Jerusalem from aliens, when they desired to free Ireland from its own invasive aliens. The earlier warfare with the Vikings was recast around the battle of Clontarf as a crusade against dangerous pagans.

But then in turn the

Normans claimed that by invading Ireland they were purifying the deviant Christianity of the Irish (as described so dubiously by Gerald de Barri). Centuries later the Irish chieftains, at the time of the Flight of the Earls, around 1607, failed to arouse Papal interest in a crusade in Ireland against the now Protestant English in Ireland, as Kathryn Hurlock explores in her contribution.

### Crusaders

Not that there were a few real crusaders. The essay by Ciaran McDonnell on Geoffrey de Geneville and his brother Jean de Joinville, “from the Boyne Valley to the Holy Land”, does deal with actual crusading, though some of it was against the Cathars in the Occitane in the 12th century, which was at heart more an effort to extend the domains of the King of France that to deal with heretics. It did not involve Muslims at all.

Tadhg O'Keefe provides a final summary of the state of the matter. Over the last few years interest has strongly revived among historians about crusader matters in Ireland. New research has expanded on the limited explorations of Litton Falkiner in the 19th century, revealing neglected aspects of Irish history that deserve further exploration.

For folklore enthusiasts of Dublin Emer Purcell provides an account of the supposed “Crusader mummy” of St Michan's Church, which along with a supposed “nun”, was for long a sight of Dublin.

However, earlier this year the vault in Church Street was broken into and the coffins vandalised and mummies burned. The vault is now closed, the future of the exhibition uncertain.

An expert from the National Museum, so I have just been informed, is due this week or next to inspect the damage, and perhaps take samples to assess the age of the remains.

It is doubtful that they will ever again be on show. In future rather than Crusader of old visitors will have to make do with the coffins of the patriotic brothers Sheares from 1798, and the supposed grave of Robert Emmet (one of several contenders for that honour) in the little cemetery behind the church.



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Dear Heart of Jesus, In the past I have asked for many favours.

This time I ask for a special one. (mention here)

Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken Heart where your Father sees it.

Then, in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.

Say this prayer for three days.

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## Crossword

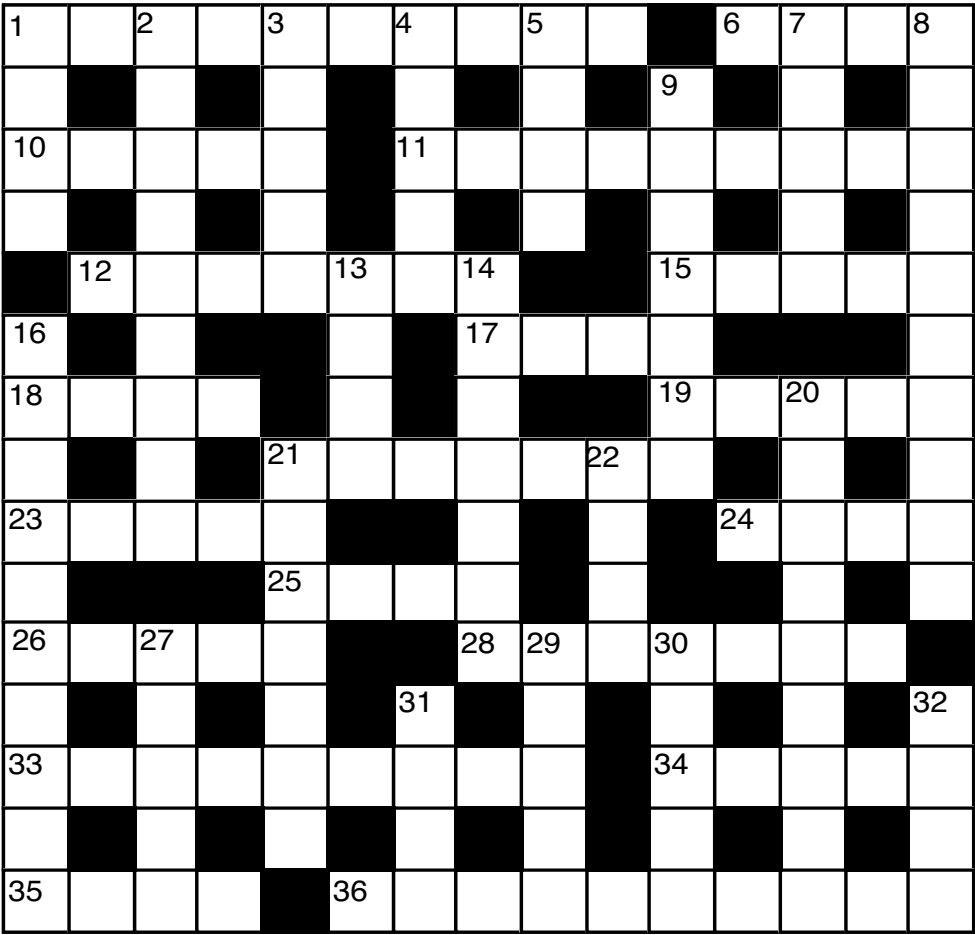
Gordius 691

### Across

- 1 In which to make coffee (10)  
6 Covered a cake (4)  
10 Form of matter that is neither liquid nor gas (5)  
11 Experienced through watching another (9)  
12 Green gemstone (7)  
15 It describes an animal returned to its wild state (5)  
17 The largest continent (4)  
18 What a bookie will quote you (4)  
19 Small dog (5)  
21 Variety of poison (7)  
23 Untrue (5)  
24 Finest point in a career (4)  
25 Gas used in tube lighting (4)  
26 Not yet ignited; in darkness (5)  
28 Relevant (7)  
33 Bearing, mood (9)  
34 American state, capital Augusta (5)  
35 Excise payment or obligation (4)  
36 Delicious salad plant (10)

### Down

- 1 Small bouquet (4)  
2 One who is looked up



- to and imitated (4,5)  
3 Command (5)  
4 Blacksmith's block (5)  
5 Sound of pain (4)  
7 Group of voices singing in a church (5)  
8 Disavowal (10)  
9 Introductory piece in a

- book (7)  
13 Distorted (4)  
14 Repairing with needle and thread (7)  
16 Perplexed (10)  
20 Make amends, or make the figure tally (9)  
21 In or near the middle

- (7)  
22 Portal (4)  
27 Restrict (5)  
29 Eagle's nest (5)  
30 Impersonate (5)  
31 Roman garment (4)  
32 Part of a camera (4)

## SOLUTIONS, NOVEMBER 21

GORDIUS No. 690

### Across

- 1 Fir 3 Boxer shorts 8 Random 9 Enormous 10 Lille 11 Deeds 13 Futon 15 Hassock 16 Spanner 20 Tardy 21 Roots 23 Aloha 24. Sardinia 25 Serene 26. All-star cast 27 Net

### Down

- 1 Firelighter 2 Ringlets 3 Booze 4 Elevate 5 Herod 6 Rioted 7 SOS 12 Secret agent 13 Facet 14 Nappy 17 Napoleon 18 Archaic 19 Corral 22 Swift 23 Adept 24 Spa

## Sudoku Corner

561

### Easy

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

### Hard

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

Last week's Easy 560

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

Last week's Hard 560

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

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## Notebook

Fr Bernard Cotter



# Simple tips on how to not say Mass

If you wanted a book about saying Mass, would you turn to a professor of maths and computer science? My guess is that you wouldn't – but I have come across one who writes well on the subject – and has a catchy title to his topical book to boot.

How Not to Say Mass was Professor Dennis Smolarski's 2006 book. If I wrote a book on Mass, I'd want to borrow that name from Fr Smolarski (yes, he is also a Jesuit). Here's a sneak preview of my unwritten tome: a few ideas about how to keep people engaged in Mass – through participation, speed and silence.

1. Participation: We priests shouldn't say Mass as if we were the only participant!

Once people have the chance to participate in the Mass, it never

feels boring. Children bringing up the bread and wine concentrate vividly as they wait for their moment of glory (as do their parents). Young people reading the bidding prayers have to be attentive so they don't miss their time to come forward and pray. These prayers can be read by up to six young people – why not!

Churches have bigger occasions to celebrate from time to time, especially in rural Ireland – the opening of a new GAA pitch, the anniversary of a local club, the retirement of a sacristan. A procession from the door at the start should involve many people, carrying mementos that imaginatively reflect the occasion.

Songs help too. In this COVID has been our friend. Irish people were told not to sing during

COVID so due to our centuries-old contrariness, we haven't stopped singing since. And often now the whole church sings. Once people have the chance to participate in the Mass, it never feels boring.

2. Speed: it kills the Mass

COVID has made a difference with regard to the duration of Mass too. It's not that people want a long and boring celebration, it's that most who come to Mass now want to be there, so they are not in a rush.

The crowds who used to arrive late and stand at the back have largely vanished. COVID did for them – not that it killed them off literally, it forced a decision, it helped churches shed the lukewarm and the distinctly cold. If people are at Mass now, it is because they want to be there, so they can invest in a substantial celebration, not 30 minutes or fewer, but maybe 40 or 45 minutes. How not to say Mass? Speedily!

3. Silence (It's golden!)

In every Mass I celebrate I find five spots for silence (in Sunday Mass, but at weddings and funerals too): at the Penitential Rite, at the start of the opening prayer,



after the homily, before the end of the Bidding prayers and after Communion. Those 100 seconds give everyone a chance to enter the silence and pray in their hearts.

How not to say Mass? With too many words and not enough silence.

I welcome your tips at frbernard1984@gmail.com

The inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire published its report last September. *The Spectator* carried a commentary piece by Peter Jones on 'The Lessons of Grenfell', which noted that steps were to be taken to ensure that such a disaster would not happen again.

Safety regulation and technology ensure we can do far more about disasters than the Romans ever could, he commented. But his telling point followed: "Passing yet more laws will not prevent more Grenfells: it is not the laws that count but the moral values of the people working under them."

Your thought for the day.

Can I recommend a book? I have read this one three times; I find more cause for reflection each time. *The Gift of Being Yourself* is its name, sub-titled 'The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery', by David G. Benner (InterVarsity press 2015) with a foreword by M. Basil Pennington.

And no, it's not an exercise in psycho-babble by one of those 'cos-I'm-worth-it' peddlers. This book is profoundly faith-full. Penner's thesis is that if I find God I find my true self, and if I find my true self I find God.

It helped me a lot. It could help you too.



The Little Way Association

## A bishop in Mozambique badly needs funds to construct a parish church

Bishop Diamantino Antunes IMC of Tete in Mozambique has written to The Little Way Association to tell us of the situation in the new parish of St Martin de Porres in Mpadue. A parish church will be an immense blessing to this parish where Catholics now pray in the open air, and Bishop Diamantino earnestly hopes The Little Way can help him.

"Located in central Mozambique the population of the diocese is estimated to be 3 million, of whom 700,000 are Catholics," the bishop writes. "Evangelization began here with the arrival of Jesuit Fathers in the sixteenth century. The future parish church of St Martin is located in the surroundings of the city of Tete. The people here suffer from poor housing and much poverty, both material and spiritual. Our Catholics have to pray under trees in the parish grounds and there are many sects here which prey on the faithful, making them false promises of healing and prosperity.

"The new church will improve pastoral care and provide a proper setting for the celebration of the Eucharist, catechesis and formation meetings. The new church, when finished, will make it possible to carry out more effective religious and social work among the children, young people and the poorest, in particular.

"May Saint Therese, whose great desire was always to be childlike in her approach to God, inspire your supporters in that spirit to give generously to our appeal. I assure you that all donations will be much appreciated and will help us greatly with this project."

Please can you help?

Every euro you send will be gratefully received, and will be sent without deduction to Bishop Diamantino in Mozambique, to build the parish church of St Martin de Porres.



"A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul." – St Therese

### REMEMBER THE HOLY SOULS IN NOVEMBER

If you wish to have Masses offered for friends or loved ones who have died, please send us a list of intentions and a minimum stipend of €7 (but more is very welcome) as an offering to the priest who will celebrate each Mass.

By helping poor priests in this way you are aiding the work of the Church in mission lands.

### YOUR MASS IN THE MISSIONS

Our benefactors will be glad to know that in addition to the daily Mass offered for their intentions, Mass is offered each day for all deceased Little Way benefactors and friends.

### CAN YOU HELP PROVIDE A WELL?

The Little Way is constantly receiving requests 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. three hours every day to fetch water, often in scorching heat.

Every euro you send will be sent direct.

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

**THE LITTLEWAY ASSOCIATION**  
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€..... **WELLS AND CLEAN WATER**

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We ask for a minimum of €7 or more for each Mass

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IC/11/28