

INTERCOM

A Catholic Pastoral and Liturgical Resource • June 2020



Living with a Rare Disease – Caring and Advocating: An Interview with Les Martin



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Mary McCaughey



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Fr Paul O'Boyle



A Wedding to Remember
Fr Bernie Moloney

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Cover photograph: Les and Lynda Martin, with their son, Cathal (6). See interview, pp. 16-18. Photo: Editor.

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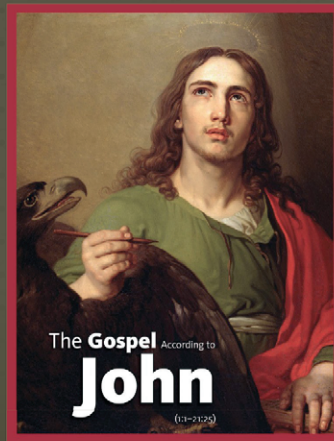
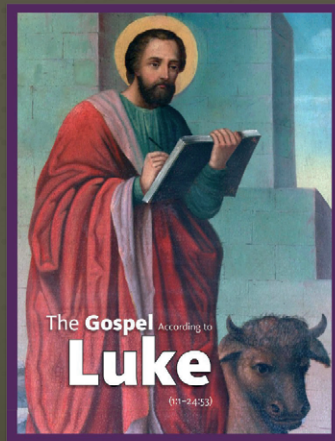
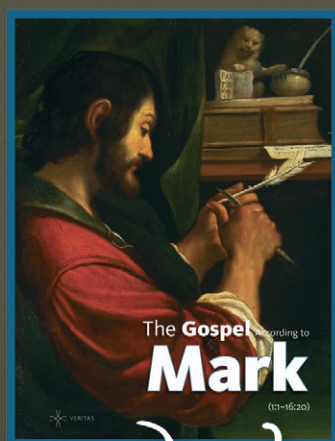
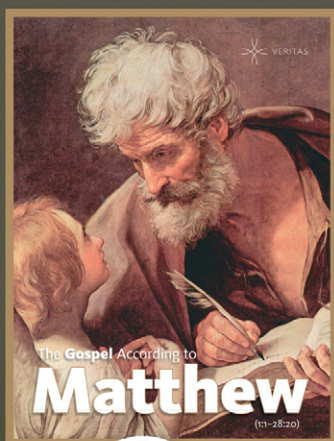


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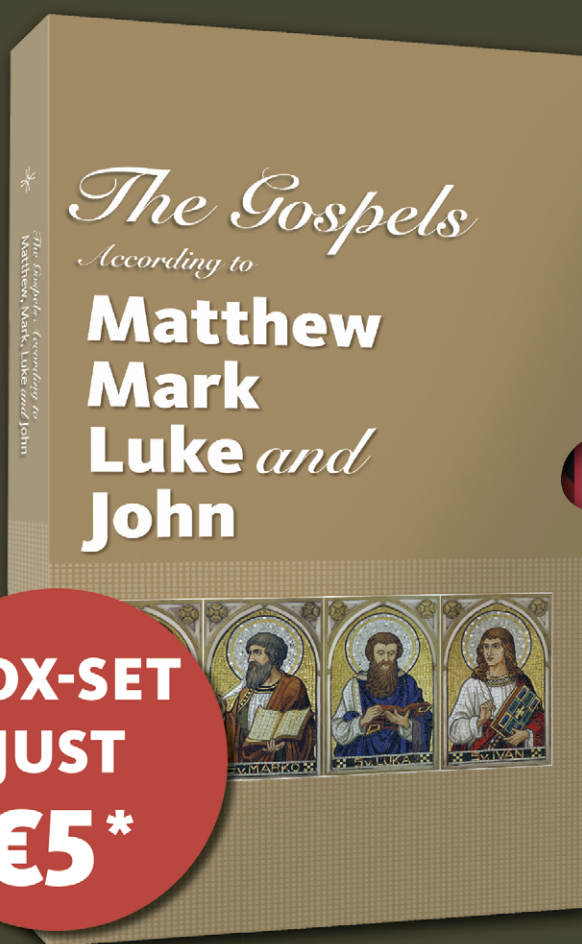
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Editorial

The Coronavirus: Stimulus to Public Theology

Fr Chris Hayden
Editor



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To 'reflect theologically' on events means to consider them in the light of faith. Conversely, it means to consider our faith in the light of events. What is sometimes referred to as 'public theology' takes theological reflection beyond the immediate confines of Church, and enters into a broader, societal conversation. Public theology operates on the assumption that our faith has a contribution to make to society.

Here in Ireland, there is no great tradition of public theology, the most obvious reason being that for much of the formative part of our history, the civic realm was regarded (even if only tacitly) as a theological space, in which the Church could expect to leave its impression without any need for conversation or debate. It was all a bit too easy, and now that the public space is avowedly secular, we have some catching up to do, in terms of our capacity to bring the insights of our faith to bear on matters of civic life.

The Covid-19 crisis is a clear invitation to engage in theological reflection and public theology. We have an extensive theological patrimony, some of which has been quite explicitly adopted by secular authorities. The principal of subsidiarity, for example, is a Catholic social principle which has found its way into the European political lexicon.

The Coronavirus has a certain 'Pauline' quality: it doesn't simply pose a threat to health – it also 'takes thoughts captive' (cf. 2 Cor 10:6). For starters, it has relentlessly attacked the ideology of radical individualism, to the point where it is now virtually impossible to insist on individual rights without immediate qualification.

But what is to replace the narrative of radical individualism? Radical collectivism? Having long been taught to see ourselves as atoms, are we now to understand ourselves as creatures of the hive, in lock-step with one other and heeding the edicts of secular authority with religious fervour?

Collectivism would be a poor substitute for individualism. Happily, it is not a necessary substitute. Moreover, our Catholic Tradition has rich resources for the formulation of more adequate understandings and approaches. Offering these resources is not a matter of the Church seeking to claw back some of its former direct influence. It is, rather, a matter of sharing our treasure. If our faith enlightens our understanding of the person and of society, we can share that light.

In the context of the Covid-19 restrictions, and their aftermath, and what kind of changes we may be facing, and how change might best be formulated and effected, the four great principles of the Church's social doctrine have a great deal to offer. They can, for example, help us to see that we need not choose between radical individualism and radical collectivism. In fact, the most valuable contribution our social doctrine can make to an ongoing conversation is that it does not come to rest on the side of either individualism or collectivism, but holds person and society in creative tension.

The principle of the dignity of the human person (the 'personalist principle') upholds the dignity of each human being, as created in the image and likeness of God. But that principle must cohabit with the principle of the common good, which refers to the fact that 'The human person cannot find fulfilment in himself, that is, apart from the fact that he exists "with" others and "for" others'. The common good 'requires the constant ability and effort to seek the good of others as though it were one's own good.'

The good and the freedom of the individual must be held in tension with the good and the freedom of society. This is not a zero-sum game: one consideration is tempered and refined by another. The relationship between the individual and society is reflected in the relationship between the other two social principles: subsidiarity and solidarity. Society can function (and how the Coronavirus has reminded us of this!) only when there is solidarity. But at the level of administration and the function of the State, the principle of solidarity does not licence a monolithic, totally centralised approach; it is tempered by the principle of subsidiarity, which insists that local exercise of authority must not be unnecessarily swallowed up by centralised power.

This mere scratching of the surface indicates how much our tradition has to offer. May we have the intelligence, the courage and the goodwill to make the offering.

NOTE

¹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, ## 165, 167.

Chris Hayden

Prayers and Reflections for June

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for Evangelisation

We pray that all those who suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus.



Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, 7 June

'The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of truths of the faith." The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men "and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin".'

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 234



Q. How do you know there are three Persons in God?

A. Because Christ tells us so, when He commands the Apostles to baptise: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Mat. xxviii.)

Q. Are the Three Divine Persons equal in all things?

A. The Three Divine Persons are equal in all things.

Q. Can you tell me anything that is like the Blessed Trinity?

A. My soul is like the Blessed Trinity.

Q. How is your soul like the Blessed Trinity?

A. My soul is like the Blessed Trinity because as there is but one God, though in him there are Three Persons; so in my one soul there are three powers – memory, understanding, and will.

Catechism of the Christian Doctrine for use in the Diocese of Ferns. Wexford (1937)



'The presentation of the innermost being of God, revealed by Jesus, the mystery of being one in essence and three in Person, has vital implications for the lives of human beings. To confess belief in one God means, that "man should not submit his personal freedom in an absolute manner to any earthly power". It also implies that humanity, made in the image and likeness of God who is a "communion of persons", is called to be a fraternal society, comprised of sons and daughters of the same Father, and equal in personal dignity. The human and social implications of the Christian concept of God are immense.'

General Directory for Catechesis, 100



Feast of Corpus Christi, 14 June



'The Sunday liturgy is the celebration of the faith-life and charity of the parish community and for this reason the Catholic Church has always placed a high premium on participating in Sunday worship. In the mind of the Church, the liturgy acts as a kind of barometer of faith and holiness. Traditionally the sacraments were often used as a gauge of faith. Today the parish liturgy provides a coherent sign of its spiritual well-being.'

The Diocese of Ossory: A Parish Pastoral Directory, 170-171



'The path itself is long and strewn with obstacles greater than our human resources alone can overcome, yet we have the Eucharist, and in its presence we can hear in the depths of our hearts, as if they were addressed to us, the same words heard by the Prophet Elijah: 'Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you' (1 Kg 19:7).

'In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, and he enables us to become, for everyone, witnesses of hope. If, in the presence of this mystery, reason experiences its limits, the heart, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, clearly sees the response that is demanded, and bows low in adoration and unbounded love.'

Pope St John Paul II, Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 61, 62



Get Connected

Using Facebook Live Streaming: Ten Tips for Parishes

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I touched on the issue of Facebook live streaming in my last column, but since then I have been inundated with requests for the full list of tips. So, here they are:

- 1** Always do a trial run with your live stream. It does mean people following your page will see it, but explain that it is a trial live stream and delete the video afterwards, rather than posting it on your page.
- 2** Be aware of the background behind you. If you are in a church, then you don't have to worry, but do check the placement of your camera so that you don't appear to have flowers coming out of the top of your head! If you are broadcasting live from an oratory or some other room, check what's in the background. Do not broadcast against a window with full sun coming through, or you will black yourself out by default.
- 3** Do not hit the filters button on Facebook live, or you will end up with assortments of special effects during the video; you may go viral for the wrong reasons!
- 4** Before going live, always enter a description in the box - you will be prompted to do so. This will help people to find it, and for posting afterwards, it will make it clear to people what it is.
- 5** Press the 'go live' button no more than a minute before you wish to broadcast. There is no need for people to watch you setting up.
- 6** If possible, invest in a lapel microphone (€30) that you can attach to your phone and a small tripod to keep the phone or iPad in place and the image steady and fixed for those viewing it.
- 7** Look directly at the camera as often as you can, and speak slowly. You have invited people to view your broadcast so look at them and speak to them. Side-on camera set ups are not ideal, nor is a set-up that is too far from



the activity you are streaming. There is also a tendency for people to speak too quickly when they are on camera. This is a normal reaction and is a result of nerves. Write the words 'speak slowly' on a post-it note and place it in front of you but out of sight of those viewing. This does work as you are reminded to slow down each time you speak.

8 If broadcasting Mass or prayers, you cannot respond to comments or interactions during the broadcast. However, if queries arise in the comments, please do respond to them afterwards in your timeline.

9 If you begin your broadcast in landscape, then stay in landscape mode. Likewise, if you begin your broadcast in portrait mode, then stay in that mode. Do not change mid-broadcast.

10 Turn the camera off immediately after the broadcast and while it is still in its fixed or tripod position. Then hit 'post' for the video to be saved onto your Facebook Timeline and into your News Feed.

There are lots of 'how to' videos available online for the technical bit. You will make mistakes and maybe have the camera sideways but your parishioners and viewers will bear with you, and within a few uses you will become a dab hand at it. Don't forget to check in with your parishioners from time to time about what you are providing for them online.

Finally, please be wary of those offering to charge you to provide this service. Facebook Live is free!

LIVE STREAMING OF FUNERALS ON FACEBOOK

Funerals can be a delicate time, both for those who grieve and for the wider Christian community. The need for sensitivity is all the greater when a funeral Mass or service is being streamed live. It may be in order to ask anyone who intends to speak at the funeral to let the celebrant have a copy of their full script beforehand, so that if any advice or alteration is indicated, this may be done in a manner that respects people's sensitivities. *Editor*



Marriage and the Irish: The Story of Sean and Kitty

Photo: iStockphoto.com

When I first set about gathering together a collection of articles on the history of marriage among the Irish from the earliest times to the present day, I had little idea that it would result in a volume of 80 articles written by 75 contributors. Those who

wrote for the book were drawn from a wide variety of academic and professional backgrounds, each bringing his or her own expertise to the topic: among them were historians, sociologists, theologians, Celtic Studies scholars, linguists, librarians, archivists, folklorists, musicians, people in various forms of religious ministry, and so on.

But there was a problem: in the midst of all my editorial work, I couldn't decide what I might write about for my own contribution. Nothing appeared fitting; nothing seemed right. Until, that is, the book was finally published. It was then that it came to me (far too late for the volume, unfortunately): I would write about the dynamics of a marriage that I witnessed at close hand as a child, one that later shaped me in significant ways.

I first met Kitty and Sean when I was twelve years old, and they were in their early and late sixties respectively. I was with my parents on a pilgrimage from Thurles to the Portuguese shrine of Fátima, and we met over Sean's inordinate fondness for chocolate mousse, which I would spirit away to him from the hotel tables of the less enthusiastic.

It was to be the beginning of a very close friendship which gave me an insight into what it might have been like to have a pair of loving – and very loveable –

grandparents (I had never known my own). But it was even more than that; as our friendship developed, I was afforded privileged access to the living out of a marriage other than that of my parents, and this had a profound impact on me.

In many respects, what I found in Kitty and Sean was a bond forged in complementarity. Gatekeepers at the railway crossing at Bishopswood, Dundrum, County Tipperary, both lived their lives out of a deep well of Christian faith, but in very distinctive ways. Kitty, for her part, adopted an evangelical approach, eagerly (but gently) sharing with anyone with an openness to listen, what her faith meant to her and how it had transformed her life. This urge to speak openly and universally about such matters, even in chance encounters on trains or buses (neither Kitty or Sean ever learned to drive) often ended in the most compelling tales: she once told of meeting a young IRA activist on a train to Belfast and leaving him in tears (and with the gift of a rosary beads) upon reaching their destination.

Sean's faith was of the quieter, less showy, though equally, if not more profound, variety. Whenever the pair would return from a visit to some shrine or other in Europe, Kitty would invariably be eager to share the wonderful spiritual experiences that they had enjoyed during their stay. By contrast, when anyone would ask Sean about his recent pilgrimage, he would lean back and, in a beautifully ponderous Tipperary accent, begin: 'I'll tell you now ... it was a really lovely place; there's no knowin' the amount of lovely fresh bread rolls that

was there in the mornin', and the sweet jams, and I'd say now they had the loveliest of desserts, and ice cream ...' 'Seanie!' – Kitty would pipe up, 'people don't want to hear about the food; tell them about the lovely shrine and the churches ...' at which point Sean's face would crease in all-too-well-knowing laughter.

Kitty was clearly the speaker in the house, and Sean the more silent, yet deeply thoughtful soul; yin to Kitty's yang. And yet, in many ways, it was Sean who often made the instant impression on people with his unassuming yet irresistibly friendly and helpful nature. I once saw him surrounded by a flock of Vietnamese nuns, very few of whom had English, nodding his head enthusiastically, smiling and participating in a friendly exchange lasting several minutes. 'I never knew you had Vietnamese, Seanie' – I quipped to him afterwards, and he just smiled, saying, 'I'll tell you, they were lovely people.' Because Kitty was clearly the dominant talker in the relationship, Sean often came into his own when he was left to his own conversational devices, and he touched the hearts of many whom Kitty might never have otherwise met; including ourselves.

But, as in all relationships, there were also some small clashes: Kitty didn't always appreciate Sean's insistence that he cut her rose bushes right back, until she saw them blossom ever more spectacularly the following year. Sometimes she also had to caution Sean against his searing honesty with people on the phone (he once took a call for Kitty



Kitty and Sean

while she was engaged in some light grooming in the bathroom, and explained to the caller: 'Kitty can't come to the phone right now; she's inside in the bathroom shaving,' without realising why this revelation might not have been considered either necessary or appropriate).

And then there were Sean's frequent but hopeless efforts to get a word in edgeways, when Kitty was in full conversational flight. In one memorable incident in a hotel lobby at the end of long day of touring, Sean wanted to retire to his room, but couldn't break free from the web of chatter. In desperation, he collapsed to the ground, his sizeable frame creating a large and ominous 'thud!' 'Seanie!' – Kitty exclaimed, fearing he had taken a sudden heart attack. Having returned to their room, Sean explained that he had staged the whole thing, as there seemed to him to be no other way in which he might manage to bring the protracted conversation to a close. Kitty's anger at having gotten such a fright was tempered only by her huge relief that Sean was healthy and well.

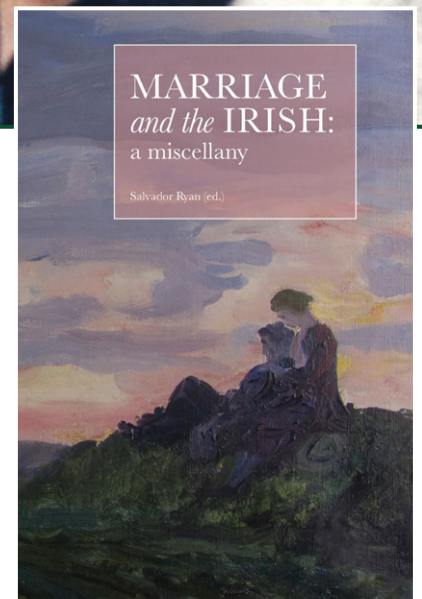
In the close of their years, Kitty and Sean retired from their duties at the railway crossing, and moved into

Bishopswood Nursing Home at the end of the country lane where they had lived all their married years. Inseparable in life, they died within a few months of each other, Sean first, in October 2003, and Kitty in February 2004.

There is a line in the first letter to the Corinthians which goes: 'When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I set aside childish ways.' The years since I first met Kitty and Sean, and experienced something of their relationship with each other, have taught me that marriage is a far more complex phenomenon than I realised back then.

Marriages are complex because people are complex, and even the best and most loving of marriages are threaded through with the stark realities of the human condition. And, having recently edited *Marriage and the Irish: a Miscellany*, a warts-and-all overview of the institution of Irish marriage over the centuries, I am even more convinced of this.

When I think of Sean and Kitty, my mind still wanders back to a scene in our kitchen at home on a summer's evening. Sean (as was his habit), was washing up the dishes after supper, and Kitty drying. The sun was streaming through the



window. Kitty, who had a voice like a linnet, spontaneously struck up, 'Venite all'agile barchetta mia ...' to which Sean immediately chimed in chorus: 'Santa Lucia! Santa Lucia!'

Salvador Ryan is Professor of Ecclesiastical History at St Patrick's College, Maynooth. His *Marriage and the Irish: a Miscellany* is published by Wordwell Press. An earlier version of this article appeared in the *Irish Times* on 13 July 2019 (coincidentally, Kitty's birthday)



A Perspective on Catholic Ethics in a Time of Pandemic

If compassion is not to be among the first casualties, then developing, applying, and preserving an ethical framework during a pandemic must be priorities of the first order. This is in no way to underestimate the enormous and complex challenges that the realisation of these priorities will entail. So much comes down to the fact that while a pandemic is a 'macro' event, it also forces us to engage with the seemingly irreconcilable oppositions that emerge at the 'micro' and personal level, such as how we set about prioritising the treatment or healing of human suffering, while living and operating in an environment of radically limited resources and a desperately diminished capacity for medical intervention.

These ethical and practical difficulties arise and become most acute in hospital triage situations, where clinical decisions are often taken in a chaotic and highly stressful environment. To recognise this is to do no more than acknowledge the truthfulness of the claim that while medicine is indeed a science, in practice it is also a difficult and subtle art.

It goes without saying, of course, that our ongoing and horrific encounter with Covid-19 has brought these matters to the fore with an urgency and a gravity that cannot be overstated. Indeed, in ways that are deeply unsettling, Covid-19, like all previous pandemics and epidemics, has exposed a profoundly neuralgic dimension to ethical decision making.

There are basic insights that the Catholic philosophical and medical tradition has long held, as it has sought to insist on the prioritisation of certain centrally organising, rationally accessible principles, through which action can be shaped and directed in times of public health emergencies. These insights have emerged from, and have been refined within, the Church's historical and originating relationship with medical associations, hospitals, and other centres of care, like hospices and nursing homes.

But since method in Catholic ethics is distinguished not only by a specific philosophy but also by a theological anthropology, our response to how we treat human beings in a pandemic will necessarily be one of resistance to what we might call a utilitarian 'physics of man,' over and against an approach that



highlights the giftedness and sacred nature of human life at all stages. This should become clear from the general overview of the issues presented below, which, it needs to be said, can touch only on some of the most important aspects of the matter.

The obligation to maintain an approach to human beings that is consistent with their equality in dignity is a principle that Catholic ethicists consistently identify as being critically important during pandemic triage situations. One of the great merits of this approach is that it helps us to avoid adopting a discriminatory default position which automatically excludes people of a certain age, race, or background from accessing medical treatment. Even within the context of Covid-19, which disproportionately attacks the older members of our community, no such default position should be permitted, given how it would contribute to embedding a hierarchy of value antithetical to our identity as *imago Dei*, creatures made in the image and likeness of God.

To be clear: this does not mean that proportionate steps to safeguard vulnerable populations or high-risk groups cannot be taken. What it means is that no one may be excluded from medical treatment in a triage setting merely on the basis that they are old, or young.

This approach also forms part of the document issued by the Department of Health in March of this year, *Ethical Framework for Decision-Making in a Pandemic*:

The dilemma facing public health officials is how to implement public health measures in response to a pandemic in a manner that is equitable, reasonable, proportionate, in compliance with national and international legislation and which does not discriminate against particular groups or individuals.¹

However, while the equal-dignity approach is clearly a feature of alternative ethical frameworks, it ought to be remembered that it is a distinctly Christian concept with a distinctly Christian intellectual lineage. To lose sight of this, even during a pandemic, would be to risk the re-emergence into modern ethical discourse of the classically pagan idea that there is no religious or philosophical basis for the idea of the equality in dignity of all human beings.

It will, of course, be the case that in triage situations a great many challenges to the practical application of this principle will arise. For instance, how does one assess at the clinical level just who should be treated, if a number of people of the same age, race, background, etc. present for emergency intervention?

One of the most common clinical tools employed to overcome a potential clash between the clinical and the ethical is termed the Sequestration of Organ Failure (SOFA) analysis. This involves identifying a series of predictive 'mortality markers' in each patient. In fact, some clinicians have hypothesised that a modified SOFA score could accurately predict mortality and the need for mechanical ventilation, and 'thus could be utilised in triage protocols in resource-constrained critical care environments during a disaster or pandemic.'²

On the face of it, this appears consistent with the principles of fairness, objectivity, and the just allocation of resources – themselves key components of any Catholic ethical response. But in reality, this does not overcome the difficulties clinicians may face, and for one very obvious reason: what if many patients end up with the same SOFA score?

Do we simply employ a first-come-first-served approach? Do we choose the person who has health insurance and who has paid all their life for 'priority' treatment? What if several of the 'equal score' patients have children and one does not? What if one of the patients was an acclaimed virologist known to be on the cusp of developing a vaccine?

My own (tentative) view is that in such a scenario, and only after the application of the SOFA analysis, it would be permissible to prioritise saving the life of the virologist, without accepting the primacy of a utilitarian approach. This is principally because the SOFA analysis is one of the best clinical ways we have of ensuring that no one, at the beginning of the intervention process, is automatically excluded on the basis of status, age, or any other characteristic.

Here, we are returned once again to the unavoidable reality that medicine is not simply a science – it is an art which demands the prudential (i.e. virtuous) employment of intuition, and the utilisation of experience by clinicians and health care professionals. That being said, and as the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*³ so succinctly puts it, the task of medicine is to care even when it cannot cure.

This aspect of the debate has also been highlighted by the National Catholic Bioethics Centre (NCBC) in the US, under the heading of 'Substantive Principles and Considerations' when dealing with triage and rationing.⁴

Of course, while patients often take centre stage in these discussions, there is also an ethical duty of care towards health professionals and staff working in such scenarios. Again, the National Catholic Bioethics Centre provides some



helpful clarifying questions on this aspect, such as: What steps are being taken to make it possible for healthcare professionals to fulfil their vocation to care for patients? Are we providing adequate staffing, safety measures, and rest? What steps are we taking to address the needs of healthcare professionals outside work, including the safety of family members?

The evidence from our own national experience would certainly appear to confirm significant deficits around some of these issues, particularly with regard to the initial management by the state of the crisis in nursing home and non-acute residential settings.

This speaks to the importance of retaining and demanding ethical accountability, especially where foresight was possible in terms of outcomes. Needless to say, however, even accountability mechanisms need to be imbued with charity, patience and understanding, without which we risk compounding the tragedy by transforming our national grief into misdirected and unjust anger.

The Catholic ethical tradition is blessed with an abundance of resources and guidance, both historical and contemporary, on all of the issues that have been only briefly engaged with here, and on many more issues besides.

Increasing our familiarity with the ethical issues and the richness of our Catholic tradition (or engaging with them for the first time) has never been more important, especially now that public health policy at the national and global level is about to undergo intense scrutiny and revision.

If we want to contribute to the ethical shape of healthcare in this state and beyond, we could not do better than become familiar with the vibrant ethical heritage of our faith.

NOTES

- 1 file:///C:/Users/owner/Downloads/72072_989943dddo774e7aa1c01cc9d428b159.pdf
- 2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21149228>.
- 3 <http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/ethical-and-religious-directives/upload/ethical-religious-directives-catholic-health-service-sixth-edition-2016-06.pdf>
- 4 <https://ncbcstore.org/ncbc-resources-for-covid19/triage-in-the-perspective-of-catholic-bioethics>

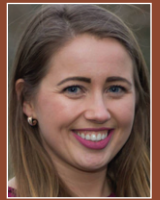
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Evangelisation/Catechesis

Pope St John Paul II and the New Evangelisation

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In the early 1980s, Pope John Paul II promoted what he termed the ‘New Evangelisation.’ What made this evangelisation ‘new’ was the focus on fallen-away Catholics rather than non-Christians. It was the beginning of a concerted effort by the Catholic Church to evangelise the baptised – something that had not previously happened because it hadn’t been regarded as necessary. The term ‘new evangelisation’ or ‘re-evangelisation’ applies in a particular way to countries like Ireland, which have ancient Christian roots but ‘where entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.’¹

Evangelisation is ‘the carrying forth of the Good News to every sector of the human race so that by its strength it may enter into the hearts of men and renew the human race.’² In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope St Paul VI describes evangelisation as central to the life of the Church. It is ‘her deepest identity,’ ‘she exists in order to evangelise that is to say, in order to preach and teach.’³ In order to conduct a fruitful evangelisation, the content of our faith has to be understood and delivered as Good News. The Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ has its own inherent strength, but for renewal and conversion to take place, it has to be delivered, communicated and proclaimed in such a way that it can be received as Good News.

The Gospel message has to be perceptible in the world today through believers’ lives. People must *witness*, which is the simple living of our faith through our good actions and virtuous deeds. We must *share* our faith in an explicit way, typically by describing how God is working in our lives. We *invite* others to experience Christ’s saving love by walking with us in the Catholic Church. In this view, evangelisation is most effective when actions come first and strategies follow. The witness of a faith that is lived gives credibility to the Gospel message. Pope Paul VI further stated: ‘Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is



Photo: istockphoto.com

because they are witnesses.’⁴ He pointed out that it is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelise the world.⁵

Pope John Paul called for new ‘ardour, methods and expression’ of evangelisation, ones that engage present-day culture and modern man. One of the biggest challenges to the new evangelisation is today’s culture. The new culture that has developed in Ireland is hostile towards the Catholic Church and faith. Inculturation means sharing the Gospel message in today’s increasingly secular, pluralist and individualistic society. The challenge is to proclaim the Gospel in such a way that it can be heard and received in today’s culture.

This means taking the content of the faith and making it accessible to a particular audience. It has to be presented in such a way that those without theology degrees, who are not well catechised, can understand it. In our efforts to evangelise and inculturate the Gospel, the *General Directory for Catechesis* is clear: we can never compromise the integrity of the faith. Those serving in Christian community must discern what is and is not compatible with the Gospel message in a particular culture. The *General Directory for Catechesis* identifies five means of

evangelisation: Proclamation, witness, teaching, love of neighbour, the Sacraments.⁶ All of these are the means by which the Gospel is transmitted and they constitute the essential elements of evangelisation.

Although St John Paul II did not develop a full theological scheme for the new evangelisation, his writings reveal central themes, including the implementation of the call of the Second Vatican Council to proclaim the Good News of Christ by engagement with the present culture, and accompanying individuals on their journey from this life to eternal life. For St John Paul II, evangelisation must proclaim the Good News, which leads to conversion. This conversion leads to a life of witness and compels one to respond to the universal call to holiness. One’s vocation to holiness is strengthened through the gifts of the Church, namely the grace of the sacraments, prayer, Scripture, and the Church’s teachings and traditions.

NOTES

¹ *Redemptoris Missio* 33.

² *General Directory for Catechesis* 46.

³ *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14.

⁴ *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *General Directory for Catechesis* 46.

Solidarity of the Shaken

Jan Patocka (+1977) was a Czech philosopher, regarded as one of the leading philosophers of the 20th century. He studied in Prague, Berlin and Freiburg. He studied under Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. His works deal with our world and the place of the human being in it.

The phrase the 'solidarity of the Shaken' comes from him. It is found in his work 'Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History.' He looks at the traumas of the 20th century. He looks at the First World War nightmare of trench warfare, the barbarities associated with the Second World War, the oppressive menace of the Cold War. He poses the question as to why European civilisation failed to generate a more effective resistance against all these horrors. He looks at the destructive, technological civilisation we live in. He calls this by the name 'Force.' He looks at the propaganda of 'Force,' the way it calls truth falsehood, night day. He looks at the way it deals out death in the name of life and war in the name of peace. He looks at the 'Front-line testing' of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Ernst Junger.

Their experience and the experience of so many others did not form the basis for organised solidarity. The solidarity of the shaken would be an ideal coming together of those who have been 'shaken in their faith in the day,' in 'life' and 'peace.' It would be a solidarity in resistance to 'Force.'

The term 'shaken' means that we have been stirred out of our complacency, our fixed preconceptions, our standard judgements and clichés. Because we are shaken, we often stand alone and pretend everything is all right. It is only when we come together to share our brokenness and hold each other up that we can bring about change.

The possibility of the 'shaken' bringing about change echoes Jesus' statement: 'Do not think I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace but a sword' (Matthew 10:34). Change is always opposed. Those who hate, and who disguise their hate as love, oppose the ways of peace. They are the backbone of the 'Force', in Patocka's term.

Two years after he published 'Heretical Essays,' Patocka joined Vaclav Havel in launching a human rights campaign. The



Prague. Mathematical Hall of the Strahov Convent Library

group they formed was called Charter 77. This was a group of writers, artists, and poets who came together in the 'solidarity of the shaken.' This led to Patocka's death. He was arrested and questioned for ten hours. He fell ill and was taken to hospital. He recovered briefly but he died later on that year.

The 'shaken' in our world take on different forms. There are many who have been broken by life, by abuse and by betrayal. It is a lonely world for many. It is when people come together and are heard that healing begins. The 'solidarity of the shaken' can bring about healing for others. This is the challenge Patocka's words present to us. Many members of the group Charter 77 went on to lead political change in what was Czechoslovakia – now the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

When the 'shaken' gather in Jesus' name, he is present to hear their cry and bring healing: '...where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them' (Matthew 18:20).

NOTE

¹ Jan Patocka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (trans. Erazim Kohák, Chicago and La Salle, 1996) pp. 133-137.

Almighty and eternal God,
our refuge in every danger,
to whom we turn in our distress;
in faith we pray
look with compassion on the
afflicted,
grant eternal rest to the dead,
comfort to mourners,
healing to the sick, peace to the
dying,
strength to healthcare workers,
wisdom to our leaders
and the courage to reach out to all in
love,
so that together we may give glory
to your holy name.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your
Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the
unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect, Mass in Time of Pandemic

John O'Brien OFM
Franciscan Abbey,
Multyfarnham,
Co Westmeath



Clane & Rathcoffey Parish Welcome a Young Syrian Refugee Family

While watching Nationwide on RTÉ Television in March 2019, I was struck by a piece describing how a Syrian refugee family were helped to settle into the community of Dunshaughlin, Co Meath. I thought to myself that if it can be done in Meath, it can be done here in Kildare!

Over the next few days, I phoned a number of people who regularly connect with our faith community here in Clane and Rathcoffey. A group was formed, which included a primary school principal, a local public representative, a member of our local St Vincent de Paul Society, and people with expertise in health care, community development, law and construction. A group of thirteen willing volunteers wholeheartedly committed to forming our Clane & Rathcoffey Community Sponsorship Group.

Community Sponsorship, pioneered in Canada in 1979, is a way of welcoming refugees to Ireland. It is a collaboration between government, the UNHCR and civil society, where local communities and groups come together to provide financial and non-financial support to a resettled family for eighteen months, and to source suitable housing for them for two years. Clane and Rathcoffey is the fifteenth community in Ireland to accompany and support a refugee family in this way. We have been inspired and challenged by the words of Pope Francis, when he appealed to parishes all over the world to consider welcoming a refugee family. *One parish – one family* has been the driving force behind our commitment.



Tallin, Dania and Dad, Khalil

I have been privileged to visit Syria twice before the civil war, in 2009 and 2010. My visits opened me up to the beauty of Syria and its people, the ancient city of Damascus with its stunning Umayyad mosque, the Church of St Paul in Straight Street, the bazaars, coffee houses and most of all the warm, inquisitive and welcoming people. I also visited the beautiful Monastery of Maaloula, where Christians and Muslims have lived side by side for centuries in peace and mutual respect, the extraordinary Krak de Chevalier crusader castle, the majestic citadel of Aleppo and the ancient shrine to St Simeon the Stylite, close to the Turkish border.

With the support of the Irish Refugee Council, we began our work in earnest, fundraising between €8k and €9k, to

help with expenses until the family receive their weekly state payments. New connections and new relationships were fostered in the local community, with offers of help with education, language, child care, integration and, most of all, friendship and hospitality. Our good friends and neighbours in the parish, the Jesuit community at Clongowes Wood, led by Fr Michael Sheil SJ, generously offered us Cappolis Cottage, a three bedrooomed bungalow close to the village of Clane, as a home for our new friends for a while. The painting, decorating, fencing and fixing started in earnest. Monthly meetings became weekly meetings. Great work was done to make the cosy cottage a home.

The day of arrival finally came, Tuesday, 10 December 2019, a wet and very windy day when our minibus travelled first to Baldonnell and then, because of the wind, on to Dublin Airport. Finally, we met Khalil and his wife Nour, and their two beautiful little daughters Tallin and Dania. It was a very moving experience for all of us to greet this young family who had spent a number of years in a refugee camp in Jordan, with the words *salaam alaikum*.

As we sat with Khalil in the front seat of the minibus on that wet and windy December day, I wondered what thoughts were going through his mind as we looked at the wet fields and barren hedges of a winter's day in Ireland. It was a lovely moment, when we carried little Tallin and Dania, fast asleep in their car seats, across the threshold of their new home. Good friends had prepared a tasty lunch to nourish their bodies and minds.



Photo: istockphoto.com



Above:
Photo taken
at Zaatari
Refugee
Camp,
Jordan

Left: Map
of Syria

After months of preparation and hard work, our family had arrived and needed to rest. All around them was the busyness of preparations for Christmas. We were delighted to welcome them gently to our Parish Carol Service. Their story drew us to the Crib, a family story of love, struggle and challenge. People have been kind, welcoming and respectful. As a group we are learning every day about how to support and connect, how to accompany and encourage a gradual transition to independent living.

One Sunday, at the end of Mass in Rathcoffey, I mentioned that our family needed a fridge-freezer. I had only walked into the Sacristy when two people followed me, with an offer of an old and a new one! Our local bike shop not only fixed a 'Hello Kitty' child's bike with new stabilisers and pink ribbons, but generously donated a brand new one. Happy days for these two beautiful children, whose eyes lit up when they saw those special gifts. No language barriers when it comes to pretty bikes! Our group drew up a detailed settlement plan involving education, child care,

medical care, government registration. Best of all was friendship, with local mothers helping a young Syrian Mum, and local dads helping a young Syrian Dad.

As parishes and faith communities, I think we are in a unique position to develop Community Sponsorship. We possess a solid foundation and network of care and contacts, which has helped us here in Clane and Rathcoffey to build new relationships in the wider community. This project has been built on that strong foundation of care, support and respect.

The fact that our young friends are Muslims has been a special feature of our desire to reach out in respect and curiosity to people of a different faith and culture. We have made special connections with other Arabic speakers in Clane. Nadia and her family from Algeria run a local café, and Ramzialis from Algeria is our local locksmith. The café has become a lovely meeting place to chat, connect and practice our Arabic! Our local Algerian friends were really keen on giving something back to a new migrant family.

Last October, I travelled with fifty pilgrims to the Holy Land on our parish pilgrimage. It struck me then, as we journeyed by boat on the stunning lake Tiberias in Northern Israel, that one of our newest families in Clane are natives of the city of Derain, Southern Syria, just a short distance away. It is touching to think that Khalil, Nour, Tallin and Dania have come to us from a land which inspired so many early Christians. They are from those biblical lands of Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt; they speak Arabic, closely related to Aramaic, the language of Christ himself. The word 'Abba' is one we often hear in the Al Shablak home, as Tallin and Dania play with their young parents.

I am reminded of a prayer for peace:

Living Lord, give us a passion for justice and a yearning to right all wrong. Strengthen us to work for peace in the land we call Holy, for peace among Jew, Christian and Muslim, for reconciliation between communities, for harmony between faiths. Inspire us to act with the urgency of your quickening fire, for Blessed are the Peacemakers, they shall be called children of God.

I would encourage other parishes to consider Community Sponsorship. Here in Clane and Rathcoffey we have learned a lot, though in many ways the real learning is only beginning, as we journey and accompany our small family in goodness and kindness.

Khalil and Nour are eager to learn, to go to college and widen their horizons. God willing, little Tallin and Dania will grow out of their 'Little Kitty' pink bikes, into young confident women who will one day understand the courage of their parents in coming to our community in search of a better life. I hope, too, they will continue to experience many more acts of goodness and kindness here and in other Irish parishes.

'Land on the far side of the Jordan, Galilee of the nations, the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, for those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.' (Isaiah 9:2)

Fr Paul O'Boyle PP
Clane, Naas
Co Kildare



Living with a Rare Disease: Caring and Advocacy – An Interview with Les Martin

CHRIS HAYDEN: Les, please tell us about the medical condition of your boys, Cathal and Ciaran.

LES MARTIN: The boys have a rare, genetic condition called metachromatic leukodystrophy, MLD. It occurs in about one in forty thousand here in Ireland. Lynda and I are both carriers, and when our genes are put together there is a one in four chance that our children will have it. Holly, thankfully, hasn't got the condition, but both of the boys have. It means that they are missing a very simple enzyme that helps to clear out some of the bad stuff in the system. This results in the white matter in the brain and the myelin sheet that's around the nervous system beginning to break down very slowly.

As was the case with Cathal, it's very hard to diagnose or detect. When he was about two years of age, we noticed that he wasn't quite walking or developing as well as he should have been. We brought him to the doctor first when he was about fourteen months old, and he was two and a half by the time he was diagnosed. By that time, he was clearly getting much worse. He had been walking a couple of steps while holding our hand, but he lost the abilities he'd acquired in the first few months of his illness. Once kids have symptoms, it's too late. It's a terminal condition, and that's Cathal's lot at the moment.

Having found out what was wrong with Cathal, we had Ciaran tested. He was showing signs of the disease and was only nine months of age when we found out he had it too. Within one week, we got a terminal diagnosis for both of them, but that came with the hope that Ciaran might have a chance if we went to Italy. A few days later, we went to Italy, where he was to be assessed for a trial therapy. We spend several months in Italy, where Ciaran was in isolation in hospital. The whole family went, even though we thought that Cathal was nearing the end. I have four older sisters, and between them and Lynda's family, they took turns so that there was one person with us continually.

We were doing twelve-hour shifts with Ciaran, who was having chemotherapy and stem-cell treatment. Meanwhile, Cathal was in the hotel room and he was very ill. But the Italian doctors were fantastic and they helped us with Cathal's care as well as Ciaran's. It's a very rare condition and there's not much



knowledge of it here in Ireland – there is more expertise in Italy.

CH: It's a terminal condition. What are doctors saying to you at the moment?

LM: Initially, here, we were told that the boys didn't have long. In Italy, they were talking about five to ten years. Ten would be the upper limit. Cathal will be six in May, Ciaran was four just last week. Holly turns eight in August.

CH: When I came into your home earlier, the first person I saw after Lynda was this lovely little child. He looks so serene and he has a radiant smile. And he takes all your time and energy.

LM: He's always been like this. He's completely dependent, but he's still there. He has a great smile and laugh. He wriggles around in the chair. As you can see, he's content.

CH: Are there times of distress?

LM: He has a share of discomfort. He's on a huge amount of medication throughout the day, his whole system is slowly shutting down. A cold or a chest infection would be a big deal for Cathal, but he's proving everybody wrong, and he's here, listening to every word I'm saying ...

CH: Does faith play a role in keeping going?

LM: It does, Chris. The loss we were

delivered shakes everything you think you believe about anything. I was raised in a traditionally Catholic family, but I have a more worldly view of how faith is applied. That doesn't mean I don't pray. I've been at rock bottom many times, where praying is the only thing you can turn to. I don't feel able to summarise my beliefs, but I struggle to accept what has happened to our family. I'm not naïve – the world is like that. There are people in worse situations. It may be that by thinking too much, by trying to reason it, I've robbed myself of the strength people can get from faith. But certainly, I have a faith in something more than what we see here in front of us.

From travelling, I've been struck by the diversity of different faiths that seem to work perfectly well for the people who practice them. On the other hand, maybe it's possible to rob yourself of the real strength of faith by not engaging fully with any one kind of faith. Our local priest here, Fr Donal Roche, and Harry Casey, have been fantastic, particularly at the time of my father's death, and in setting up the meeting with the Pope. I sort of drift in and out, in terms of how much I get from faith.

CH: Do you find that the community aspect of support is more tangible?

LM: Our families have been a huge help. Also, when we had to leave for Milan, in an emergency, we needed to raise some

funds. That was done for us in a heartbeat, while we were in Italy, by the people here. I'm so grateful for that. The families with children on Kieran's treatment programme come from all over the world, as the Italians have made the treatment available to everyone. There are families from much less fortunate circumstances – families from Syria, the Lebanon, Algeria, who don't have the same support from home that we were able to bring with us.

CH: Tell about your advocacy work, Les. What exactly are you advocating for?

LM: MLD is a terminal condition if it's not caught early. Work is being done on screening for new-born children that would identify the condition at birth, when it can still be treated. In Italy, a couple of years ago, the number of conditions screened for was increased from four to forty. This saved the lives of 350 children, a figure which does not include children with MLD. For MLD, the screening is only being trialled. I've been advocating for wider new-born screening here, and in that, I've had a lot of support and very compelling information from the Italian system. The advocacy is going very well at the moment. The Minister for Health has appointed a committee to look at new-born screening and they will soon be making recommendations. I hope that within this year, we'll see a major expansion of our new-born screening programme here in Ireland. This will save lives, and Cathal's life will have been a valuable part of that.

CH: That will be quite a legacy, God willing.

LM: Yes, that is what I'm hoping. We met Pope Francis twice. While I'm not a deeply religious person, I think this has been a bona fide miracle. On both occasions, I asked the Pope to save Ciaran's life. We first met the Pope on our second day in Italy, before Ciaran started the gene therapy programme. We went to a children's Mass in the football stadium in Milan, that the Pope was celebrating. We had a ticket to sit in the crowd, which we did. Lynda and I were like two ghosts, having been given the news we'd received, then landed in a foreign country.

At the end of Mass, I could see sick people, some in wheelchairs, lining up to meet Pope Francis. I took Ciaran in my arms and headed towards the line, chancing my way through several checkpoints. One security person understood when I explained my situation; he took my arm and walked me through security, as far as the Papal Guard, where we were stopped and told we couldn't go any further. The man with me spoke to the Guard, who walked off



Above: Cathal, 6, in his father's arms

Right: Les Martin and his Son, Ciaran, meeting Pope Francis in Milan



and returned a moment later, took me by the hand and walked me right on to the pitch.

We were among the first people to meet the Pope. I asked him for a miracle, that somehow all this suffering could be made worthwhile. If it turns out that Cathal's life, and our advocacy, means that, say, fifty families will be saved from what we have been through, then that will have been miraculous, and I'll be happy that we've had him for the length we did.

The second time we met the Pope was when he was here in Ireland for the World

Meeting of Families. Harry Casey got us a ticket for the celebrations in Croke Park. We were sitting quite close to the stage, and by that time I had a few words of



Les and Lynda at home with Cathal

Italian. I spoke to one of the Papal Guards, telling him that my two boys were very ill and asking if we could have a word with the Pope before he left. The guard gave me a wink and we were brought to the Pope just as he was getting into his car. I told him I'd met him before and asked him for miracles for my two boys, but that they hadn't happened yet. He prayed with us again. As I've said, I've never been a person of great faith, but I'm sure there's some significance to the things that have happened to us, and I'm confident that Cathal's life will be for the good of other kids, yet to be born.

CH: Have caring and advocating led you to see society in any different light? Are we more caring or less caring, more selfish or less selfish, seen through the eyes of a family struggling with the illness you're struggling with?

LM: Lynda and I have the normal stresses and pressures of life – two jobs, three kids, a mortgage. I don't want to be flippant about that, but when your world dissolves in front of you, that gives you a sense of perspective that you don't get from everyday life. Our values have certainly changed. I'll use my time as well as I possibly can and will continue what I'm doing until the day Cathal is gone. I have seen great support from our

community, and I've found great compassion as I've been on this campaign, even while trying to get the ear of officials and various people. When I've told my story, as I'm telling you now, people immediately have compassion and a desire to support. I think that people are, by nature, selfless. Society pits us against each other to some extent, and in order to get along in life, you have to be selfish to a degree, but I can't speak highly enough of everybody who's tried to help us, and I have a great appreciation for those who work in any kind of caring role – whether it's people like yourself, the nurses and doctors... all those who care and who use well this short life that we all have.

I'm a member of the National Rare Disease Task Force, and I'm working with Rare Disease Ireland. There are thousands of rare conditions, and that means a significant number of people here in Ireland who have rare conditions and are poorly served by available resources. This is the drum I have been banging for the past year, and I believe, now, that the support is forthcoming.

My heart was broken when I learned that they were doing something in Italy that could save the lives of fifty children per year here in Ireland. I don't see the number fifty: I see fifty little Cathals.

Overall, there's been slow but positive progress. We're not there yet, but we're getting closer.

CH: What are your hopes for the future?

LM: My biggest hope, what I pray for, is that Cathal goes comfortably when it's his time, and that Lynda and I can bear that. Of course, we also hope that Ciaran will stay well, that he will grow up, that he will experience life. I have no great ambitions other than to see our family emerge from what we've been through.

I wanted to be sure to mention that anyone affected by this or any rare condition, or any of your readers who know someone in that position, might like to engage with the parents' support group, Rare Ireland. At the moment that's a Facebook page, but they are developing a website and registering as an official charity. A second organization, Rare Disease Ireland (www.rdi.ie), works at a higher level, to influence policy, but they're also a source of information and support for families affected by a rare condition. People might also like to look at our Facebook page, Cogs and Kiwi – @themartinfamilytrust.¹

¹ See also, <https://youtu.be/T2gixFpltvc>; https://www.idonate.ie/2997_the-martin-family-.html.

MODERN CULTURE & WELL-BEING Towards a Sustainable Future

9781847309082

€14.99 • 204 pp

Catherine Conlon (Ed)

Veritas Publications, 2020

This short book contains no less than twenty-six essays, gathered under the following six headings: Modern Culture and Well-Being; Diet and Exercise; Addiction; Sustainability; Selfishness, Altruism and Resilience; The Way Forward. The variety of topics is remarkable, and at first glance might seem to mitigate against a serious treatment of any one topic. However, this concern is laid to rest by the fact that there is a biography at the end of the majority of the essays – all but six of the contributions have some pointers for further reading. For that reason, I think this book might be approached as a very ample ‘taster’s menu’ in the area of contemporary culture and the challenges it presents to well-being.

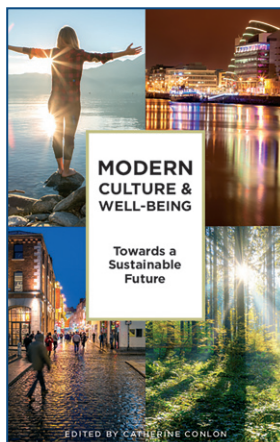
An essay title that caught my attention was ‘Human Influences on Our Declining Insect Pollinators,’ by Maria Kirrane of UCC. While that might sound like a rather specialized topic, the piece is very readable, and leaves one in no doubt that we have entered an ‘insect apocalypse’ that is leading to a decline in pollinators whose consequences may be catastrophic.

Catastrophe, ironically, is something of a recurring motif in this book on Well-Being. It is not so much a self-help book, or a practical guide to well-being, as a sober and sobering survey of the challenges to well-being – personal, social, political and ecological well-being – that confront us today.

‘It is hard to be optimistic,’ writes Davie Philip regarding measures that need to be taken to avert further climate damage. Indeed, that writer seems to be of the view that things are so far advanced that the best we can do is foster ‘local resilience’ for the grave disruptions that will sooner or later be upon us. Sobering indeed.

The chapter on diet and exercise, by Dr William Reville, comments on the oft-quoted dietary advice of a professor of food journalism: ‘Eat food, not too much, mostly plants,’ while the opening essay, ‘Mental Health and Well-Being,’ by Prof. Patricia Casey, includes notes on resilience, which she defines as ‘the adaptive characteristics of an individual which allow them to cope with and recover from (and sometimes even thrive after) adversity.’

What this book does not include is a sustained treatment of Christian faith and well-being. That, perhaps, would require another, longer volume. That said, for its variety and accessibility, this short book is well worth reading.



WELL OF LIVING WATER

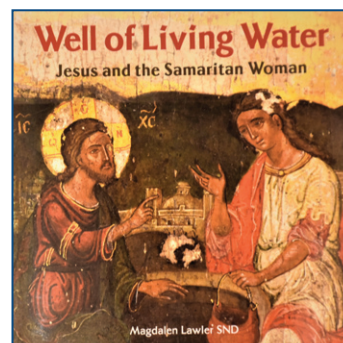
Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

Magadalen Lawler SND

Messenger

Publications, 2019

56 pp



This very short, attractively-produced book has two sources: the account of Jesus’ meeting with the woman at the well in chapter four of John’s Gospel, and an iconographic representation of that encounter, of unknown provenance and date, though likely early nineteenth century Greek. In addition to these sources, the book is informed by the Ignatian approach to meditation, in which the imagination plays a key role.

The first chapter is a general introduction to the icon as a means of spiritual encounter, while the second reflects on how to pray with icons – and with this icon in particular. Thereafter, each short chapter reflects on a different aspect of the icon, and of the Gospel text. Each concludes with an Ignatian reflection and some scriptural passages for further reflection.

What is particularly impressive about this little book is how, at the adept hands of the writer, the icon and the Gospel text illuminate and interpret each other. To give just one example of this mutuality of interpretation, the icon underlines, in a very literal and visual manner, the centrality of the well in this Gospel episode, while the Gospel text encourages us to focus on the juxtaposition of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in the icon. The icon helps us to move beyond the impression that the woman is fundamentally confrontational, to see that instead, her fundamental stance is one of thoughtful listening.

Also very impressive is what the author refers to as ‘a dialogue of hands,’ in which Jesus the teacher gestures toward the receptive, open hand of the Samaritan. This is ‘as powerful in its own way as the impulse of life between the hand of God and the hand of Adam in Michelangelo’s famous Sistine Chapel ceiling.’

Overall, this imaginative approach to the Gospel text in the light of a beautiful icon makes a substantial contribution to the reading of the text. A reminder, if one were needed, that prayer is not merely – or, indeed, primarily – cognitive, but that the colour, position and gesture featured in this icon can draw us more deeply into the mystery than any amount of discursive thinking.

This book would make a wonderful self-guided retreat. It would also be suited for work with small groups.



An opportunity to review current Junior Cycle Religious Education provision in Post-Primary Schools

National Association of Post-Primary Diocesan Advisors

Junior Cycle Religious Education (RE) as an examinable subject within the state curriculum was first introduced on a phased basis in 2000. It was then extended to the whole country and first examined as part of the Junior Certificate examination in 2003. The vision underpinning the introduction of RE as part of the state curriculum was more an educational than an ecclesial one, where the state recognised the role of RE in educating for diversity and greater understanding of differing religious and philosophical perspectives within an increasingly multi-ethnic society.

In a review document (The Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Junior Cycle Religious Education, NCCA October 2017) commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), RE teachers described the outcomes in terms of improved religious literacy and an enhanced understanding of core religious concepts. The teachers felt that the syllabus exposed students to a range of religious traditions and perspectives which they saw as important in preparing young people to live in an increasingly multicultural society. Teachers also felt that studying religious education as part of the examination system gave the subject and the teachers greater status within the school system.

The students interviewed were quite positive about the contribution of RE, stating that it helped to gain respect and understanding for different beliefs and cultures. Students enjoyed exploring different world religions while also studying the various contemporary moral issues. They appreciated the fact that the syllabus accommodated all shades of belief, including students who had a non-religious perspective. However, some students did express the view that they would like school to be a place where they could learn about different religions and worldviews, rather than just instruction in the Christian tradition. The introduction of the new Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification in September 2019 marks another stage in the development of RE at Post-Primary level in Ireland.



Key supportive factors

From my observations and conversations with RE Teachers, Chaplains and Principals, I note some fundamental conditions which underpin quality religious education, irrespective of school type or whether or not the state curriculum is being followed.

Firstly, the Board of Management plays a crucial role in determining the status of RE within their school. The decision to offer the state RE specification has timetabling and other implications for the school, as there are always competing demands within a school community for limited resources. The Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference recently published guidelines for Junior Cycle RE in Catholic schools, and reminds leaders in those schools of already agreed practices around the allocation of two hours per week, and that RE is to be taught by qualified teachers.

Schools whose educational vision includes a spiritual component tend not only to protect their RE curriculum, but also to support other initiatives which nourish the spiritual aspect of students' lives. These initiatives vary, from involvement in faith projects like John Paul II Awards, to a variety of in-school liturgical experiences.

Apart from formal qualifications, the RE teacher's personal faith and their enthusiasm for the work are critical factors. Having a wide range of pedagogical tools that support differentiated learning is a fundamental part of every teacher's toolkit. Being able

to understand the complexity of young people's lives and having the skills to relate the syllabus in an appropriate way to their lives is also paramount. Structured subject departments are well established and having a vibrant RE Team within the school really supports a more coherent, all-school approach.

The RE Teacher wears a number of 'hats' – religious educator, catechist, liturgist, counsellor. Knowing which hat to wear in a given situation demands professionalism, sensitivity, the capacity to reflect on professional practice in the light of the latest educational theory and theological insights, and a commitment to ongoing professional development.

Conclusion

There are different school settings, and the priority given to RE depends on the type of school. The introduction of a new RE specification at Junior Cycle, which has taken into account teacher and student concerns and preferences, offers school leaders and RE teams an opportunity to review their current RE provision and to plan for a future where RE plays an important and positive role in the educational and spiritual experience of the student.

References

- The Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Junior Cycle Religious Education.* NCCA, 2017.
- Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic Schools.* The Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference, 2019
- Looking at our Schools 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools.* Department of Education and Skills, 2016

Luke O'Connor
Diocesan Advisor,
Killaloe Diocese



INTERCOM CROSSWORD

NO 225 BY GINGER

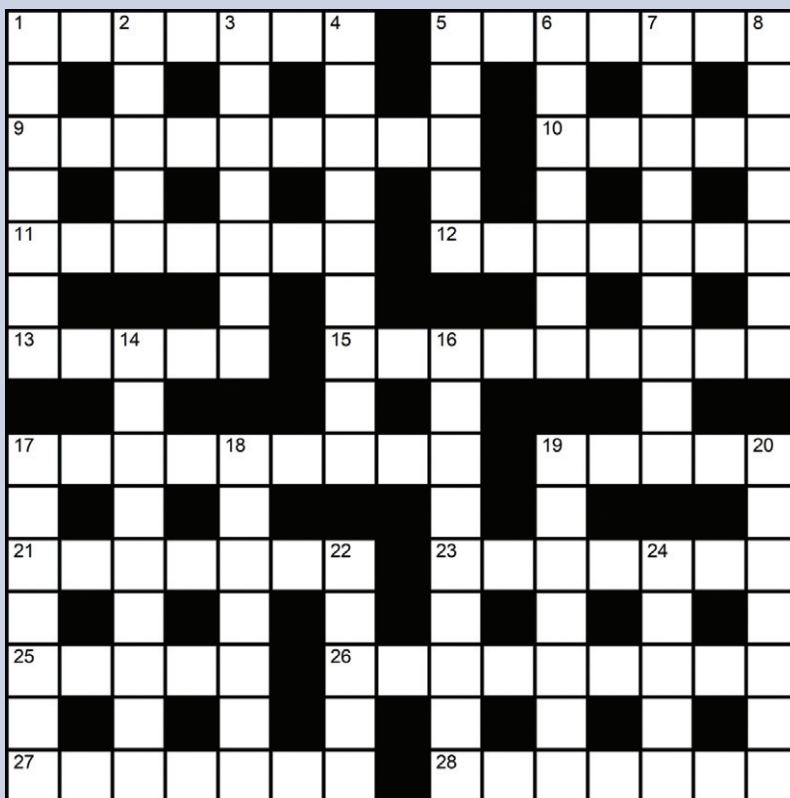
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ACROSS

- 1 Hairy description of Communist leader (7)
- 5 Mother's vehicle acquires a cosmetic (7)
- 9 Hold back prison transport (9)
- 10 Used to take the measure of the king (5)
- 11 See girl and cocktail on the porch (7)
- 12 Skewered and cooked red apes (7)
- 13 Send order of merit (5)
- 15 Encouragement to invent ice breaker (9)
- 17 Tom in band arranged game (9)
- 19 So as I wandered into a watering hole (5)
- 21 A cent in change, very old (7)
- 23 Lift barrel in Cork's river after end of June (7)
- 25 Needs arrangement to be tightly packed (5)
- 26 The most I'd convert for Christian sect member (9)
- 27 Eels dug out of floods (7)
- 28 Ed slips out and scatters (7)

DOWN

- 1 About a hundred surplus to regain health (7)
- 2 Generous person to give a Spaniard gold (5)
- 3 Former colour around Cork is no more (7)
- 4 Give a little alcohol, for a start, to Shakespeare, perhaps (9)
- 5 On the motorway, teachers get sweets (5)
- 6 Make nurse go around for doctor (7)
- 7 Agree ills can be the result of bad immune reactions (9)
- 8 Shorten a spanner (7)
- 14 Claimed in error to be curative (9)
- 16 Happy prisoner housed under canvas (9)
- 17 A red bed, messy and covered with hair (7)
- 18 Frozen lettuce? (7)
- 19 Single, sour, grotesquely heavy (7)
- 20 Hats she renovates and covers (7)
- 22 Subdues, thanks to me and Southerner (5)
- 24 A bed I make up to live (5)



MAY SOLUTION

Across: 1 Discern, 5 Ashamed, 9 Fraud, 10 Gymnasium, 11 Liberated, 12 Sites, 13 Cats, 15 Appraise, 18 Adherent, 19 Tail, 22 Apart, 24 Woodwinds, 26 Interlude, 27 Skier, 28 Derided, 29 Sweater.

Down: 1 Defile, 2 Starboard, 3 Elder, 4 Nightmare, 5 Armed, 6 Head start, 7 Moist, 8 Damask, 14 Sheltered, 16 Patroness, 17 Scientist, 20 Varied, 21 Usurer, 23 Actor, 24 Wound, 25 Waste.

Name

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VERITAS GIFT TOKENS
FOR THE FIRST THREE CORRECT ENTRIES DRAWN

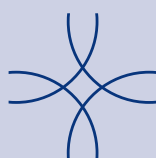
Crossword to be returned by 10 June to June 2020 Crossword,

Intercom Editor, Catholic Communications Office, Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

One entry per person. Photocopies acceptable with a satisfactory explanation – at the Editor's discretion.

Airmail subscribers may send by fax to Int + 353-1-6016401. Please give full postal address.

Correct solution in July/August 2020 Intercom. Winners announced in September 2020 edition.



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Margaret of New Orleans: Angel of the Delta

The Bread Lady of New Orleans, Friend of the Orphans, Margaret of New Orleans, Angel of the Delta, Mother Margaret – these are all titles bestowed upon Margaret Gaffney Haughery, a simple Irish woman of unsurpassed charity to the orphaned, underprivileged, hungry, and destitute of New Orleans. Considered a living saint by many, she devoted her time, energy and wealth to those who needed it most. Although once a washwoman and peddler, on her death she received a State funeral. In recent years, Archbishop Gregory Aymond, of New Orleans, has received various requests that a cause for canonization be opened.

Every year on 9 February, people of New Orleans gather to celebrate 'Margaret Haughery Day.' In the city's Margaret's Place, a statue stands to commemorate this remarkable woman. Erected in 1884, it was the first public statue ever dedicated to a woman in the United States.

Margaret Gaffney was born on Christmas Day, 1813, in Tully, Carrigallen, County Leitrim, the fifth of six children born to William Gaffney and Margaret O'Rourke.

She went to Baltimore in 1818 along with her parents and the two youngest siblings. The older three siblings remained in Ireland until they could be sent for at a later date. The youngest, a baby, died shortly after the family arrived in Baltimore, and in 1822 yellow fever claimed both her parents. In the chaos of the epidemic, her older brother disappeared, leaving Margaret to fend for herself at the age of nine. She was taken in by a Welsh widow who had made the voyage to America with the Gaffney family.

Margaret married Charles Haughery on 10 October 1835. Charles was in poor health, and his doctor felt a warmer climate would be beneficial. The couple left Baltimore, and arrived in New Orleans on November 20th, 1835. Sadly, Charles' health did not improve. He died, as did their daughter, Frances, a short time later, leaving Margaret alone in a strange city.

Margaret found work at the St Charles Hotel, as a washerwoman. She offered herself to the Sisters of Charity at the nearby asylum, exchanging work for room and board. This enabled her to live among the children and help care for them. Her first job, however, was to find the children food. Besides begging at the market for produce, she used her meagre



Above: With staff and volunteers of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. l-r: Sarah Comiskey McDonald, Emilie Gagnet Leumas, Fr Gerry Comiskey, Monica Comiskey, Nora Lambert
Right: The famous statue of Margaret, the first statue of a woman erected in a public place in the US.



personal savings to purchase a cow in order to provide milk. Despite being unable either to read or write, Margaret was an excellent businesswoman. Before long, she owned forty cows and a dairy.

As the owner of a successful business, Margaret was able to help others. After lending money to a friend in need for his bakery, she found she owned half the stock when the business failed. Rather than losing her investment, she took over the business, naming it 'Margaret's Bakery.' It was later renamed 'Margaret's Steam and Mechanical Bakery,' when Margaret installed the latest technology of the times, making it one of the finest 'steam bakeries' in the south of the States. She was pleased to own a business that enabled her to care for orphans and the hungry of the city. Everything – from the bread she made to the profits it rendered – was for the benefit of these charitable causes. Even during the Civil War, she fed both Union and Confederate soldiers if they were in need. Because of her devotion to the wounded on both sides, Margaret was allowed pass through the lines of both Union and Confederate troops with supplies of bread and flour. Her attitude was to give generously to all in need, with no distinction made as to race, creed or political views.

Towards the end of her life, Margaret contracted some type of brain tumour

which afflicted her with severe headaches. As her health rapidly declined, the Daughters of Charity moved her to a room at Hotel Dieu Hospital. Confined to her bed, she was visited by many of her patrons, concerned citizens, and notables such as P.T. Beauregard. Even Pope Pius IX sent her his blessing and a crucifix, which tradition says she held in her hands as she was dying.

Margaret died on 9 February 1882, at 69 years of age. In her will, she entrusted her bakery to the Daughters of Charity and funds to several other orphanages, including the Protestant Orphanage and the Jewish Orphanage. She was born poor and died poor, having given all she owned to others. In all, it is estimated she gave over \$600,000 in donations to the orphaned, sick and poor of New Orleans.

*Fr Gerry Comiskey, is the Parish Priest of Drumlane, Co Cavan.
A native of Co Leitrim, for ten years he was editor of the Leitrim Guardian*

Photos: the Author

Male and Female He Created Them

Reading a Recent Church Document on Gender Theory

The document, '*Male and Female he created them*' – *Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender theory in Education*, issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education in 2019, engages with the extremely topical issue of gender theory and provides a means of response for Catholic schools.

Whereas up to even a few years ago, those who championed the normalisation of gender fluidity were confined to sociology departments, now the media, schools and universities excoriate and even impose restrictions on those who dare to speak against it. We are moving to a position today where children as young as three are presenting with Gender dysphoria and a 'transgender' identity is being accepted by parents.¹ Evidence shows that Psychologists and therapists tend to be unquestioningly supportive of a 'transition' to a different sexual identity, a process which will involve radical surgery and hormone therapy.² These same children are pupils in our Catholic Schools. The problem too is that most Catholic schools do not know how to engage with the situation. Should it be ignored, should it be embraced in the name of Christian tolerance or can we dialogue with it in an intelligent and critical manner while not neglecting the Christian call of compassion? The document proposes a way.

Dialoguing with Gender theory: Listen, Reason and Propose

Listening

The way proposed is that of dialogue with gender theory through a three-step approach of 'listening, reasoning and proposing' (5). This method of dialogue has been critiqued by some Catholic commentators, yet this is not a new approach. The Church has always sought to engage with new cultures by searching in them for the seeds of the 'the logos,' what was reasonable, as a dialogical premise. Early theologians such as Justin Martyr did so with the surrounding Greek culture, as have all missionaries of the Gospel throughout the centuries. *Gaudium et Spes* also advocated a dialogical approach to modern culture, seeking to engage with the human sciences in order to enhance our understanding of human nature (GS 5; 36; 52). Some might object that from the 1960s on, the Church embraced culture indiscriminately, due to a false optimism;



Photo: Wikimedia commons

many are sceptical of dialogue, believing that it inevitably leads to compromise and relativism. Others see a dialogue between the anthropologies of Christianity and gender fluidity as impossible since the differences between them are just too great. Many also believe that the Church has left it too late to dialogue, not having adequately integrated anthropological insights from *Humanae Vitae* or John Paul II's Theology of the Body into its educational curricula before now.³ Gender theory seems to be based on an 'anthropology opposed to faith and to right reason' (1).

Yet the Church wishes to begin the path of dialogue by listening, not in a relativistic way, but by getting to know the dialogue partner and thus the history and sociological roots of gender theory.⁴ The sociological theory of social constructivism has led to the view that 'sexual identity itself is a social construct' (8), thus denying the metaphysical, unchanging aspects of human nature (9). The heights of a social constructivist approach are in the development of gender theory into 'queer theory' where gender is seen as completely 'fluid, flexible and nomadic' (12).

The document acknowledges that the Church could accept some aspects of gender theory, but only aspects which are based on sexual dichotomy. Thus, from the 1960s onwards, Christianity could find something good in a gender theory

which promoted the dignity of women and campaigned to end forms of unjust discrimination (15) as well as encouraging respect for difference as part of responsible citizenship (16).

Albeit from very different premises, many radical feminists, ironically, would agree with the Church's premise of sexual differentiation and oppose the form in which gender theory exists today – a 'fluid' gender ideology with post-modern roots.⁵ Thus, many long-campaigning feminists, such as Camille Paglia, Shelia Jeffreys or Germaine Greer, have problems with the 'trans' movement due to its denial of sexual differentiation.⁶ Feminist theory parasitically needs sexual dichotomy for its anti-patriarchal stance. They argue that, if society eradicates sexual difference, women's rights will be ignored.

While there may be some goals in common with earlier forms of gender theory that accept sexual difference, the Church cannot, in this document, be accused of naively embracing its fluid forms today. Rather, it critiques gender theory's anthropology, which is constituted by (i) feelings rather than nature (19), (ii) a separation of body and soul with roots in Cartesian dualism, (iii) voluntarism, where the will has dominance over the body, shaping it into whatever it wants it to be, and a (iv) a relativistic understanding of the human being (20), positing a multiplicity of equally valid sexual identities (21).

Reasoning

The next section, on 'reasoning,' presents philosophical and scientific reasons which act as a support for sexual difference and thus have something in common with Christian anthropology. Scientific and genetic evidence points to only two sexes – male and female (24). Phenomenology, too, highlights that from the perspective of relationships, sexual difference is constitutive of personal identity (26), and psychoanalytic theory also identifies how children constitute their identities in relation to mothers and fathers (27). The document acknowledges that while medical science can indeed act in situations of gender dysphoria, this should be with objective criteria for therapeutic ends, 'to establish the person's constitutive identity' (24). Psychotherapy can be used to help cope with the confusion in sexual identity but not to facilitate biological change.

Proposing

This section proposes how Christian faith confirms the findings of reason in its acceptance of sexual differentiation and then goes on to give guidelines for a dialogical approach. Christian anthropology highlights that our being made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27) comprises our sexual complementarity, male and female (31). This image is not rooted in a biological materialism, since human bodies are nuptial, expressive of the spirit and of self-gift (33). What has been referred to as the 'Theology of the Body,' is referred to here as a 'fully human and integral ecology' (34). Related to this ecological environment for human flourishing is the family, which is the 'natural place for relations of reciprocity and communion of male and female' (36).

The dialogical approach acknowledges that the Catholic school cannot ignore these gender theories which have become ingrained in the surrounding culture, yet it also calls for the school to educate young people to develop a critical sense (42). A new alliance between Church, State and school is called for, to offer a 'positive and prudent sex education,' (45) which recognises the principle of subsidiarity in educational programmes in affectivity and sexuality (46).⁷ The document is clear that to dialogue in this way does not undermine the Church's Catholic vision (55), and yet that the dialogue is with real people, real families and real children in schools that need to be capable of approaching reality with 'care and tenderness.' (57).

Evaluating the dialogical approach

The dialogical approach of the document is a very welcome first step in helping not just schools but all believers to realistically engage with, rather than simply deny on the one hand, or embrace on the other, the ever-changing cultural minefield of gender theory.

A weakness of a dialogical approach, however, might be that as an ideology, gender theory is fundamentally irrational, founded in emotions and postmodern contextuality rather than in reason. One cannot dialogue with what is irrational.⁸ A second, related, problem, is that Catholic parents and schools have been formed by a post-modern culture. We have seen this illustrated in the last two referenda in Ireland, on same-sex marriage and abortion, where many Catholics see no contradiction between radical positions rooted in gender ideology, and their Catholic faith. By focusing only on the persons involved, they justify their position through emotion clothed as Christian compassion, rather than by reason and objectivity.

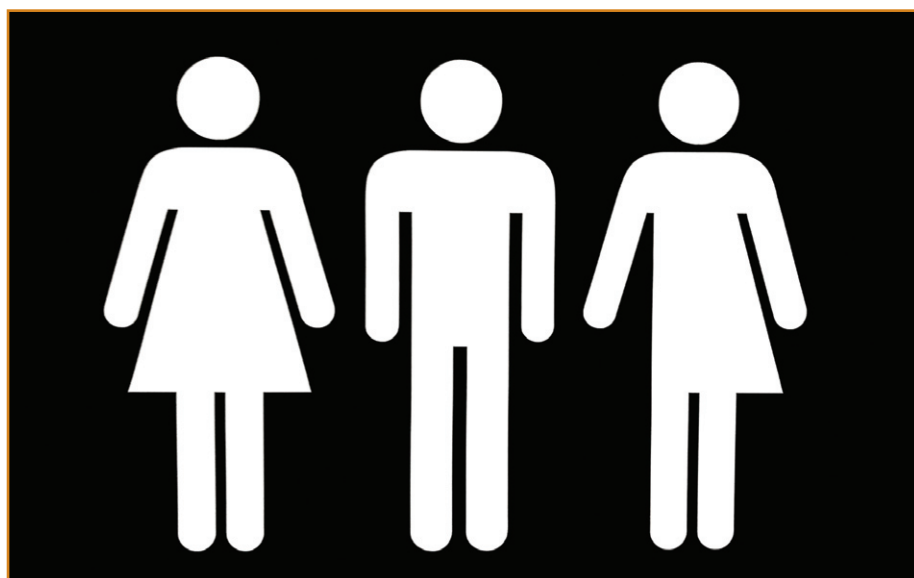


Photo: iStockphoto.com

Compassion abounds in Irish Catholicism, yet to implement the dialogical approach the document advocates, this compassion needs to be complemented with a robust reform of the sexuality and anthropological component of the Religious Education curriculum. With the proposed compulsory introduction of an updated 'Relationships and Sexuality' programme for all Irish schools incorporating aspects of gender fluidity theory, the Church also must be courageous. In the name of religious freedom, it needs to develop and propose to the State the right for Catholic schools to use an alternative RSE programme, grounded in reason and revelation.

A third difficulty is that the approach to Catholic anthropology in the document is rooted in the biblical vision of Genesis, but does not engage the christocentric and pneumatological perfection of the New Testament covenant.⁹ Acknowledging these latter dimensions means that Christian anthropology is not merely to be taught but to be lived in Catholic schools and families. Thus, only through creating a genuinely Catholic culture in the school, by sharing Word, prayer and sacraments, can Catholic teachers, pupils and parents be able to 'put on the mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16). Only then will they have the grace to begin to sift through the prevailing ideologies of culture, to critique them with courage, and to hold steadfast to the faith.

NOTES

¹ Daniel Trotta, 'US Parents accept children's transgender identity by Age Three,' in 'Lifestyle,' *Reuters*, (accessed April 8, 2020), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-lgbt-parenting-idUSKBN14B1C8>.

² See Douglas Murray, *On the Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity*, London: Bloomsbury/Continuum, 2019.

³ See Gabriel Kuby, 'Vatican's new critique on gender theory a "toothless lion",' *Catholic sociologist*, June 19, 2019 (accessed April 8, 2019),

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/vaticans-new-critique-on-gender-theory-a-toothless-lion-catholic-sociologist>.

⁴ See Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1991). The theory of social constructivism arose out of Marxist social theory, recognising that one can change society through changing discourse and structures.

⁵ Even back in the 1990s, as postmodern gender theory developed, it was opposed by most feminists whose academic hermeneutic was Marxist social theory, which separated society into the oppressed (women) and the oppressor (men).

⁶ See Tara John, 'Germaine Greer defends her controversial views on transgender women,' *Time Magazine*, April 12, 2016, (accessed April 8, 2020), <https://time.com/4290409/germaine-greer-transgender-women/>.

See Shelia Jeffreys, *Gender Hurts*. London: Routledge, 2014. As Camille Paglia states, 'Jeffreys identifies transsexualism with misogyny and describes it as a form of "mutilation".' See Camille Paglia, 'On Trump, Democrats, Transgenderism and Islamist Terror,' *Washington Examiner*, June 15, 2017, (accessed April 8, 2020), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/weekly-standard/camille-paglia-on-trump-democrats-transgenderism-and-islamist-terror>

⁷ For a brief explanation of the principle of subsidiarity, see Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), 48.

⁸ As Melanie Phillips, puts it, 'with the loss of religious belief, the West has replaced religion and truth with ideology and prejudice.' See Melanie Phillips, *World Turned Upside-Down: The Global Battle over God, Truth and Power* (New York: Encounter books, 2011).

⁹ For a deeper understanding of Christian anthropology, which incorporates these aspects, see the International Theological Commission, 'Communion and Stewardship: Human persons created in the Image of God,' http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregation/s_cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_2004_0723_communion-stewardship_en.html (accessed April 7, 2020).

Mary McCaughey holds the post of Academic Executive at the Priory Institute and lectures in Systematic Theology at the Dominican Studium Dublin



World Missions Ireland Welcomes Fr Michael O'Sullivan MAfr as National Director

World Missions Ireland recently announced the appointment of Fr Michael P. O'Sullivan MAfr as its new National Director. Following more than twenty-five years of missionary service in the Middle East, Fr Michael returned to Ireland and was subsequently offered the appointment by the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples in Rome.

Fr Michael, a fluent French and Arabic speaker, comes originally from Kilrush, County Clare. He became more interested in pursuing life as a missionary after his studies at the Cistercian College in Roscrea. From there, he joined the White Fathers of Africa in Templeogue. Following further studies in Dublin and Switzerland, Fr Michael completed a two-year internship in Algeria, which led to additional theological studies in Toulouse. Ordained in 1991, he spent a year in Algeria at the beginning of the civil war, before further studies led him to Rome. Fr Michael has held roles in Sudan, Lebanon, Jerusalem and the UAE, to name but a few, and was last year the local coordinator of the Holy Father's historic visit to Abu Dhabi.

'I feel privileged to have been chosen as World Missions Ireland's National Director,' said Fr Michael. 'It is indeed an honour to be working in an organisation that is driven to promote and support the life-giving work of our overseas missionaries. In these uncertain times, I am energised to be part of such a strong mission, a mission of purpose that positively impacts struggling overseas Church communities.'

Founded almost 200 years ago, World Missions Ireland (Pontifical Mission Societies) is the Pope's official charity for overseas mission. It is part of a global network of 120 offices, many known as Missio, under the coordination of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Rome. Together, they are the Holy Father's chosen instrument for sharing the Gospel and building the Church throughout the world by helping everyone in need – regardless of their background or belief.



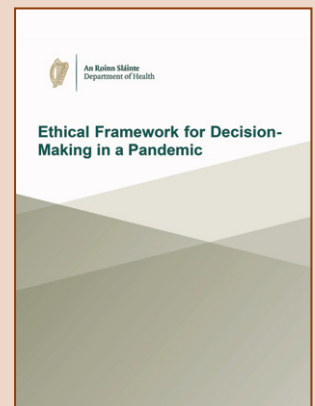
Photo: WMI

Fr Michael O'Sullivan at an EU conference in Brussels presenting the Abu Dhabi document on Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar University in Feb 2019

Department of Health Publishes Document on Healthcare Decisions during a Pandemic

Planning for, and responding to, a pandemic requires reflection on values, because scientific/clinical information alone cannot drive decision-making. Shared values give us a shared basis for decisions. Using ethical principles to guide decision-making can enhance trust and solidarity, and can strengthen the legitimacy and acceptability of measures put in place. While healthcare ethics may not always be able to offer precise answers to every difficult question arising in the context of a pandemic, it can provide useful tools to help address the issues involved, to weigh up competing interests and to reach appropriate decisions. An ethical framework enables aspects of a particular decision to be teased out and deliberated upon, before a final decision is made.

Ethical Framework for Decision-Making in a Pandemic, An Roinn Sláinte/Department of Health (2020)



Knock continues as a Place of Pilgrimage

During the Covid-19 crisis, pilgrimage Masses have been broadcast online from Knock Basilica every Sunday at 3.00 pm. Each weekend there has been a special welcome for the pilgrimage groups that traditionally travel to the National Marian Shrine for their own celebrations.

Pilgrims have been able to place their petitions online on the Knock Shrine website in advance, so that they can be placed on the altar for the Mass. Many pilgrims light candles during their visit to Knock Shrine. This service has also been made available online: a candle is lit at the outdoor candelabra for each request received.

Crossword winners

The winners of the April 2020 Crossword competition:

1. Patricia Egan, Mount Anville Wood, Dublin
2. Elizabeth McKevitt, Presentation Convent, Clondalkin, Dublin
3. D. Murphy, Maynooth, Co Kildare

Church Leaders thank those caring for the sick and those caring for the community

Following their weekly video conference on 17 April, the leaders of the Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland, Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Irish Council of Churches have expressed their appreciation for those working on the frontline during the Coronavirus pandemic. They stated that they looked forward to a time when the pandemic abates: 'We will also have a renewed and strengthened sense of community on this island and a new understanding and deeper appreciation of one another.'

'To be a community,' the Church leaders said, 'means that as individuals we acknowledge our interdependence and work together to achieve something for the greater good, which will benefit us all. In the last number of weeks, we have witnessed the vast majority of people on this island working together, in a way that has perhaps never been seen before, protecting one another from this terrible unseen enemy which is attacking our community. Deserted streets and roads are not signs of abandonment, but of love.'



Photo: Editor

Religion *and* Discrimination, or Religion *as* Discrimination? A recent UN Report

A February 2020 United Nations report to address 'gender-based violence and discrimination in the name of religion or belief' was strongly criticised by Archbishop Ivan Jurkovic, the Vatican observer to United Nations in Geneva. 'The report, at least in part, is actually an attack on freedom of religion or belief as well as freedom of conscience,' he said.

The Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief was discussed on 2 March at the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council. The Report attacks 'worldwide religious precepts [underlying] laws and state-sanctioned practices that constitute violations of the rights to non-discrimination of women, girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+).'



Photo: iStockphoto.com

The report states:

'The Special Rapporteur notes that in a number of countries around the world, governments continue to maintain partial or total bans on access to abortion, and religious figures have both encouraged these measures and advocated against efforts to reform the laws.'

'One area of particular concern regarding accommodations to national law for religious beliefs is the use of conscientious objection by healthcare providers and institutions unwilling to perform abortions or provide access to contraception on religious grounds.'

'The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned ... that religious interest groups are engaged in campaigns characterizing rights advocates working to combat gender-based discrimination as 'immoral' actors, seeking to undermine society by espousing 'a gender ideology' that is harmful to children, families, tradition and religion. Invoking religious tenets as well as pseudoscience, such actors argue for the defence of traditional values rooted in interpretations of religious teachings about the social roles for men and women in accordance with their alleged naturally different physical and mental capacities; often calling on governments to enact discriminatory policies.'

A Nice Cup of Tea



Photo: eddie Gilmore

Mamie, one of the senior members of the Irish Chaplaincy community, and Paul, seniors' manager

When I arrived at the train station one Monday morning in January to catch my train to London, I was greeted by volunteers from the Samaritans handing out tea bags to commuters.

It was the day of the year on which people are said to be most likely to be depressed: the third full week back at work after Christmas; still dark in the morning; credit card bills coming through. But I was feeling pretty up-beat. I was relishing the cold, frosty snap we were having, and was glad to be back into the routine of work following my usual start-of-the-year inertia. The previous Monday had been my personal low-point, and as I'd sat on the train that dark, grey, gloomy morning, asking myself what was the point of it all, I'd assumed that must be the 'most depressed' day, and wondered why the Samaritans hadn't given us a tea bag this year! I'm fortunate that I've never experienced deep depression, but each year the beginning of January is a bit of a struggle. I cling to the knowledge that I've been there before and made it through in one piece.

The point of the tea bag, according to the Samaritans, is that it's good to talk to

someone. But let's face it, for some people that's easier said than done. For myself, I realise that following the excesses of the Christmas period I crave time on my own, just to be still and to rest and to hibernate. I was lucky to be able to leave the office on a couple of occasions and go off to cafés nearby, where I got on quietly with my work on my laptop, while enjoying a cup of tea.

When in Dublin, I sometimes enjoy the warm hospitality of the Mercy sisters in Baggot Street, in the house where Catherine McAuley founded the order in the 19th Century (and one of the members of which is our lovely Sr Moira who, I'm proud to say, was named *Irish in Britain Volunteer of the Year* for 2019). I'm always struck by Catherine's last words to her sisters as she lay dying: 'Be sure you have a comfortable cup of tea for them when I am gone.' Ever since, the comfortable cup of tea has been a symbol of the warm and caring relationships which were at the heart of Catherine McAuley's Mercy vision.

Whenever we have a visitor at the Irish Chaplaincy, the first question they are usually asked is 'would you like a cup of tea?' Barely an hour goes by at the

Chaplaincy without someone putting the kettle on (not to mention Gerry appearing at the door with his offer of chunky chocolate cookies, and Liz and Breda with their pastries, and Fiona with her mini-muffins, and Pat with her leftover cakes, and with Paul his Friday bars of chocolate... it's not a great hardship to work in that office!).

A couple of weeks earlier, I'd been invited to speak at a couple of Masses at a church in London. I'd been asked to share about the experience of going on retreat, and I also planned to talk about the work of the Chaplaincy. I encouraged people to find places of stillness in their daily and weekly lives, whether it be going into the local park for ten minutes to look at the trees and listen to the birds, or getting up half an hour earlier in the morning to sit quietly in a favourite armchair with a cup of tea. I realised that I needed to follow my own advice, and so I got into just such a routine each day, sitting in the early morning darkness in a comfy chair with a nice cup of tea.

When spending a year in Seoul with my family, from 1999-2000, my regular retreat day was a monthly twenty-four hours spent with the Columbans, a wonderful and highly entertaining group of men. It was a bit of an oasis for me, with back issues of the *Irish Times* in the garden room and *real* tea! I would arrive there fairly exhausted from the demands of three young children, teaching English six days a week, and generally being in an unfamiliar place (rich as that experience was). One of the community, Pat Muldoon, who was especially kind to me, said on every visit: 'Be kind to yourself.'

I think that's ultimately the message of the Samaritans, when giving out their tea bags on the third Monday back at work after Christmas; and of our fantastic people at the Irish Chaplaincy, whether out on their pastoral visits or when putting on the kettle and dishing out little treats: let's be kind to one another.

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A Wedding to Remember



Photo: iStockphoto.com

For the past twenty years, I have told the following true story to every couple in whose wedding preparations I have had a hand.

On the first Saturday of July 1999, I celebrated the nuptial Mass of John and Joan*. In the hotel, at the end of the meal, when the top table had disbanded, I joined some guests who were still seated at a round table nearby. As couples drifted away to meet other friends or go for a walk in the evening air, I found myself left in the company of a couple I did not know. As soon as all the others were out of earshot, the sixty-year-old man turned to me and: 'You know, Father,' he said, 'we hate going to weddings.' Something in his voice and eyes told me it was not an idle comment. Giving him a nudge, his wife said to him, 'Go on. You may as well tell him why.' In a pained whisper, he said: 'You see, we don't remember getting married. Neither of us does. And it hurts us every time we attend a wedding; hurts us that we have no memory of making our vows, no memory of ourselves at the altar.'

They described the days before their wedding, and the morning itself, how they became engrossed in all sorts of last-minute details, preparations and concerns. The end result was that 'the hour' itself passed them by. They concluded by saying to me, 'We've never told another soul about this. But it hurts us deeply.'

One week later, I officiated at the wedding of Annette and Michael. The reception was in a different hotel. After the speeches, I joined a group comprised

of the bride's aunts and uncles. In time, this group dispersed, leaving just a trio together: one uncle, one aunt, and me. Once the course was clear, they turned to me and blurted out: 'We don't remember our own wedding. We don't remember getting married. And it kills us.' Their account was a re-run of what the previous couple had described a week earlier. 'Of course,' they ended, 'we've never told anyone about this.' Hearing such a story twice within eight days certainly set me thinking!

Deirdre and Eamon married two weeks later. Both were parishioners. When the speeches were done with, a group of my neighbours beckoned me to join them at their table. As time passed, couples rambled off until just three of us remained: a couple whom I'd known well for many years, and myself. Incredibly, they launched into a cry from the heart, telling me that, much to their shame, they did not remember their own wedding Mass or vows – all because they had allowed themselves become caught up in last-minute arrangements and associated worries. 'The children,' they said, 'would be horrified if they knew.'

This third identical story in four weeks shook me. Driving home on that third night, I wondered how many other couples had similar stories. By the time I reached home, I had a plan of action I would offer to young couples in an effort to protect them from going down the same amnesiac road. It's simple. To each couple, I recount my experience of those three 1999 weddings. Then I encourage

them to disappear for half a day in the week of their wedding, mobiles powered off, to some place they enjoy and where they will not meet anyone who knows them. I ask them to visit a church to pray together for a little while, and round off the 'away time' with a meal in a venue where neither friend nor neighbour will ambush them. Then, having changed gears, they are to return home and try moving through the remaining days at a more relaxed pace.

I know that a goodly percentage of the couples to whom I've proposed this plan have adopted it and in turn recommended it to their friends.

We cannot infuse memory of their weddings into couples whose minds were saturated with other concerns on their 'big day'. But pastors can offer pathways to today's soon-to-be-wed couples that will enable them to hold, cherish and remember getting married. Such remembrances can sustain and comfort couples at times of difficulty. They can delight and nourish couples at times of joy.

The above plan is one pathway that can help.

* All names have been altered.

*Fr Bernie Moloney
is parish priest of
Emly, Co Tipperary*



Apologetics: Learning About Faith from the Wexford Martyrs

In 1992, Pope John Paul II beatified seventeen Irish men and women who had died for their faith in the 16th and 17th centuries. The liturgical feast day of these Irish Martyrs is 20 June.

Among the beatified was a group of Wexfordmen – a baker named Matthew Lambert, and sailors, Robert Tyler, Edward Cheevers and Patrick Kavanagh.

Along with a group of five sailors (two of whose names are lost to history), Matthew Lambert had arranged for safe passage from Wexford for Viscount Baltinglass (James Eustace) and his Jesuit chaplain, Wexfordman Robert Rochford. The plot was foiled; Lambert and his fellow conspirators were imprisoned. In subsequent interrogations, they were questioned about matters of faith. In response to his accusers, Lambert said: 'I am an unlettered man. But I speak for my friends accused here with me. I do not understand these matters you ask me, and I believe in the faith of my mother, the holy Catholic faith.'

The accusers were unimpressed. Lambert and his companions were found guilty of treason. They were hanged, drawn and quartered in Wexford, in the year 1581.

Lambert's striking defence speech both raises and answers profound questions regarding the nature of faith. To begin with some questions: Why would an unlettered man, with little understanding of his faith, put his life on the line for it? Why would a man who, by his own admission, was unable to account for his faith, be so insistent? Lambert could not marshal a single argument, other than to insist: 'this is what I believe.' To his accusers, Lambert must have seemed insanely fixated. If it were operating in our enlightened age, the court might well have sought a psychiatric evaluation.

Was the apparent courage in fact rooted in cowardice? Were Lambert and his companions under the thumb of the clergy? Were they experiencing unbearable social pressure? Had reason been indoctrinated out of them? In an age in which the very idea of 'martyrdom' has been hijacked, at times quite explicitly, some people find fanatical attachment to ideas to be a satisfactory

explanation for the willingness to disregard one's life. But there is a better and more coherent explanation for the course chosen by the Matthew Lamberts of this world.

Lambert's words, and his readiness to die rather than deny his faith, are perplexing only when one reduces faith to a matter of propositions or concepts. The word 'reduce' is crucial here, because Lambert's speech makes it clear that propositions *are* important: he accepts, on principle, the propositions of the Catholic faith. But he knows something more, something deeper. He knows that his life has been enriched by the experience of faith. That knowledge is not merely, or even primarily, conceptual. It is a knowledge that is diffused right through his way of living. It is a knowledge, mostly tacit, of faith's effects, and precisely because it is diffused through his life, forming the contours of his living and his thinking, that knowledge is not thrown into crisis by Lambert's inability to marshal arguments in support of his position: *I am an unlettered man... but...* That little word 'but' carries a rich cargo of meaning.

The starting point for the 'New Atheism' is a demand that the propositions of faith be proven in advance. This generally condenses into a demand for proof of the existence of God, before the believer can be taken seriously. And since the existence of God cannot be conceptually proven (this itself being a truth of faith, if one takes the evangelist's words, 'No one has ever seen God' [Jn 1:18] as referring to intellect as well as sight), the New Atheist claims a victory. And rightly so, on his own reductive terms.

But in reality, faith is not simply a matter of facts. It is also about the will, the affections, the heart; it is about one's alignment with the world; it is about one's sense – mostly tacit – of meaning. Blaise Pascal, born some forty years after the martyrdoms of 1581, gives a profoundly adequate gloss on what happened in the dock in Wexford: 'The heart has its reasons of which the reason knows nothing.' Lambert was motivated by something he could not articulate; moreover, the power in his life of that

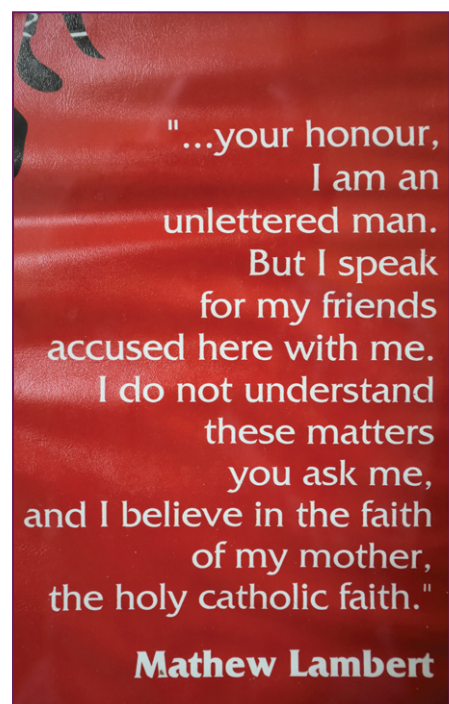


Photo: Editor

'something' did not derive from a capacity to articulate it.

Pastorally, this is gold-dust. How liberating it would be for many Catholics to know that they need not feel burdened by an inability to defend everything they believe; to realise that it is eminently reasonable to live by truths we are unable to prove; and to have the confidence that the truth of our beliefs is borne out by their effects in our lives.

As we have seen, Blessed Matthew Lambert's stance does not licence an anti-intellectual or fideistic approach. Theology and philosophy, with their carefully reasoned propositional content, are necessary to the life of the Church, but they are not necessary in the sense of being a direct, explicit and immediate foundation for the lived faith of each believer. To use an analogy – albeit a partial one – Matthew Lambert and his companions walked securely on a bridge whose engineering subtleties were far beyond them. Today, let us by every means teach the faith; let us form capable apologists. But as an integral part of that enterprise, we need to make it clear that the life of faith is just that: a life, rather than a set of propositions which much be proven prior to engagement with the kind of life to which they call us.



Photo: istockphoto.com

Blaise Pascal's slightly earlier contemporary, René Descartes, was wrong to divorce knowing from loving and willing. His fundamental error was to imagine that there was available to weak and fallible human beings an unmoveable *cogito*, a point of total, neutral, non-dogmatic certainty, prior even to faith itself. Descartes was wrong. Lambert was right. He as much as explicitly acknowledged that he could not prove his faith from first principles, but his life pointed to the power and effectiveness of his beliefs.

'By their fruits you shall know them.' If our beliefs produce good results, if they cohere in a life well lived, in a sense of peace and of personal flourishing despite life's many burdens and obstacles, it is not unreasonable to see those fruits as a *post hoc* confirmation of the reasonableness of our beliefs. Not a propositional proof, but a validation after the facts. That is the kind of validation we find in Lambert and his companions.

It can hardly be stressed enough that religious faith is not a theory, but a way of living; not an avoidance, but a way of engaging with reality. Clamouring for proof in advance can pose as the more intellectually rigorous stance, but true intellectual rigor must examine the full reality, which is more than intellectual. A refusal to engage with anything beyond the propositionally provable can be, and sometimes is, a manifestation of timidity

rather than courage. As American philosopher Martha Nussbaum puts it: 'to try to grasp love intellectually is a way of not suffering, not loving – a practical rival, a stratagem of flight.'² The same can be said of attempts to grasp faith on exclusively intellectual terms.

To the extent that Blessed Matthew Lambert reasoned about his faith, it is safe to say that his reasoning was dialectical rather than deductive. Clearly, he did not start from propositions and plot out his life in accordance with them. Equally clear is that the faith he had received ('the faith of my mother, the holy Catholic faith') was a conversation partner, guiding and being validated by his lived experience. For Lambert, in other words, there was a dialectical rather than intellectual relationship between faith and life.

Once again, Pascal offers a key to the relationship between faith and reason, as we see it working out in the life and heroic death of Matthew Lambert: 'Reason's last step is the recognition that there are an infinite number of things which are beyond it. It is merely feeble if it does not go as far as to realise that.'³ Blessed Matthew Lambert recognised the limits of his own capacity to reason, but for all that, there was nothing credulous or feeble about his faith.



Photo: Wikimedia Commons

NOTES

¹ Cf. also *Pensées* 423. See also *Pensées* 382: 'I freely admit that one of these Christians who believe without proof will perhaps not have the means of convincing an unbeliever... but those who do know the proofs of religion can easily prove that this believer is truly inspired by God, although he cannot prove it to himself.'

² Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 268-269.

³ *Pensées* 188.

Fr Chris Hayden



Lectio Divina

God so Loved the World (John 3:16-18)

Lectio: What the Word says in itself

Whenever I see 'John 3:16,' the first thing I think of is a man at a sports stadium holding up a placard with this reference on it. Anyone who has looked up these verses will have found a sublime summary of the Gospel, even of the whole Bible. God's saving purpose and our suggested response is contained in this simple, yet very deep, statement.

The few phrases we are contemplating are part of a longer conversation that Jesus had with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, 'a leading Jew.' Probably worried about his fellow Pharisees' disapproval, and maybe about his own reputation if he is caught talking to Jesus, he comes to Jesus 'by night.' As such, the whole conversation has an atmosphere of darkness and light about it. Nicodemus is confused and asks questions. Jesus reveals deep truths.

Central to these truths is that, out of his abundant love, God gave us his Son, his Only Begotten, so that we might have eternal life. The Greek word for 'he gave,' *edoken*, is also used in all the Gospels of Jesus' giving of the Eucharist. Contrary to human fears about God's judgement, God sends his Son to save the world. Yet God's gift requires a response from us. We have to believe in 'the name of God's only Son.' In the Bible, the name is the person: Jesus, the Light of the world.

Meditatio. What the Word says to me/us

As we meditate on these words, we might like to put ourselves into the shoes of Nicodemus. As Christians in a sometimes-hostile world, we too may feel nervous or afraid. We can easily understand Nicodemus' confusion: Jesus is saying things that are mind-blowing and hard to grasp. Yet his words shine with truth and love, and we need to let them sink in. Other expressions may come to mind; for instance, 'God is love.' We try to let the Holy Spirit shape our thoughts. Who is this God who 'loved the world so much'? Who is this Only Begotten Son? What does it mean to believe in Him? Is belief just about ideas, or has it something to do with trust?

We let Jesus' words comfort us. He hasn't come to condemn but to save. We let his words wash over us. But what



Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937), *Jesus and Nicodemus*

about those who don't believe? We leave them to God and we trust in God's love. And then, by trusting in God's love, we start to appreciate Jesus' words in a new way. We start to live his words in our hearts. We start to believe and we start to love. We start to love this Father who, in giving us his only Son, gives us everything he has. We start to love Jesus, who has come to save us.

Oratio. What the Word leads me/us to say

These reflections may make me feel grateful. I may wish to thank God our Father for the gift of his Son, Jesus. I may also wish to know Jesus better, and to better appreciate his sacrifice on the cross for me.

I say 'for me,' because his sacrifice is no longer a general act for the world, but a personal act to save me. I let these feelings of gratitude in my heart unite me to the peace and love in Jesus' heart. I rest in that peace and I try to abide in that love. I speak if I feel called to speak. Maybe my heart says it all.

Contemplatio. Being transformed by the Word

Nicodemus came to Jesus in secret, afraid, with many questions. Jesus spoke, and Nicodemus went away a different

person. We too have spoken. We too have asked questions. We have prayed. It is now time to let Jesus speak. We do not try to predict his words with our words. Instead we try to open our hearts to listen.

Actio. Putting the Word into practice

Jesus' words to Nicodemus focus us on the gift that God constantly offers us in his Son. If God is love, then his whole being is a gift. Jesus, in turn, offers his whole life back to his Father in his sacrifice on the cross. In so doing, he offers his life for the salvation of the world. More particularly, he offers his life for me.

I need to contemplate this more frequently, so as to believe it more firmly. In so doing I should begin to trust God more completely. I also need to take concrete actions to make my life more of a gift to others.

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Leap Year 2020

This year being a leap year, we have an extra day to synchronise the calendar year with the astronomical year. However, adding the extra day every four years meant that we had too many leap years. In the reform of the Julian Calendar by Pope Gregory XIII, in the papal bull *Inter Gravissimas* (24 February 1582), the extra day in February was added every four years, except when the year was divisible by 100, but not if divisible by 400. Thus, the year 1900 was not a leap year but 2000 was.

The calendar was also out of sync with the spring equinox by 10 days. The Gregorian reform solved this by removing 10 days, so that 4 October 1582 was followed next day by 15 October. Often noted is St Teresa of Avila, who died 4 October 1582, and whose feast day is 15 October – the following day.

It took over 200 years for the reform to be generally adopted, and even then it was 1927 before adoption by Turkey. England adopted the reformed calendar when in 1752 – and the calendar was now eleven days out – 2 September was followed by 14 September. A controversial consequence of this was the tax year, which normally began on 25 March, moving to 6 April.

Some countries still have their own calendar. Ethiopia, for example, has a year of twelve thirty-day months, and a thirteenth month of five or six days, but is years behind the Gregorian date; others, including Israel, use the Gregorian Calendar as well as their own.

29 February

Those born on 29 February are sometimes called leaplings or leapers. What about the saints whose feast day is 29 February? The *Roman Martyrology* has a page for 29 February but includes them also on the previous day. The first mentioned is Pope Hilary, bishop of Rome 461-468. He was the successor of St Leo the Great. He added oratories to the baptistery at St John Lateran's, in honour of St John the Baptist and St John the evangelist. The basilica is dedicated to the two saints John. Other commemorations are St Oswald, Benedictine monk, bishop of Worcester from 961 and archbishop of York from 972, who died in 992; also Blessed Antonia of Florentia, widow and abbess, St Augustine Chapdelaine, French missionary to the province of Guangxi in China, who died 29 February 1856, and the Chinese martyrs of the 17th-20th centuries, canonised in 2000.

Some martyrologies and calendars have included St Moena, died 571, bishop of Clonfert, sometimes named as first bishop, in the monastery founded by St Brendan. In Eastern Church listings we find St John Cassian, 360-433, monastic founder and writer.

Actiones nostras

In its usual translation, the well-known medieval prayer reads: Direct we beseech thee, O Lord, our actions by thy holy inspiration, and carry them on so that every word and work of ours may always begin from thee and by thee be happily ended. It is the prayer said at the beginning of sessions of Dáil Éireann. It is found in several 15th/16th century missals. It is included in a missal giving a 14th century order for the admission of a dean and canons of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

In our present *Missal*, it is the collect for Thursday after Ash Wednesday. It appears also at Morning Prayer of Week I, where the prayer is translated: Lord, be the beginning and end of all that we do and say. Prompt our actions with your grace, and complete them with your all-powerful help.

Immaculate Heart of Mary (20 June 2020)

The feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is observed as an obligatory memorial on Saturday after the second Sunday after Pentecost (the day after the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus), though this year it is an optional memorial, as it coincides with the memorial of the Irish Martyrs. The feast goes back to St John Eudes (1601-1680), the 'father, teacher and first apostle' of devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In



1643, his followers celebrated a feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary, which was later observed elsewhere and given the date of the 22 August, the octave day of the Assumption.

The collect of the day speaks of God preparing 'a fit dwelling place for the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary.' St John Paul II, in the encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, reflects, 'We can say that the mystery of the Redemption took shape beneath the heart of the Virgin of Nazareth when she pronounced her *fiat*. From then on, under the special influence of the Holy Spirit, this heart, the heart of both a virgin and a mother, has always followed the work of her Son and has gone out to all those whom Christ has embraced and continues to embrace with inexhaustible love. For that reason her heart must also have the inexhaustibility of a mother. The special characteristic of the motherly love that the Mother of God inserts in the mystery of the redemption and the life of the Church finds expression in its exceptional closeness to man and all that happens to him. It is in this that the mystery of the Mother consists. The Church, which looks to her with altogether special love and hope, wishes to make this mystery her own in an ever deeper manner. For in this the Church also recognises the way for her daily life, which is each person.'

The diakonia of liturgy, word and charity

Fifty-three years ago this month, Pope Paul VI issued the *motu proprio*, *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* (18 June 1976) restoring the permanent diaconate. The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (21 November 1964), had stated that such a restoration of a 'diakonia of liturgy, word and charity' was permissible, leaving the decision to Bishops' Conferences. Though the Bishops' Conference of Ireland did not request such permission until 2001, in the intervening thirty years, great numbers of men and women have engaged in apostolic and liturgical ministries and activities. Approval was given in 2005, and the first permanent deacons were ordained in June 2012. Deacons are now an essential part of church life in many dioceses throughout the country.

The Most Holy Trinity

7 June 2020

Readings

The first reading. If we do not readily see the link between tenderness, compassion and commandments, the shortcoming lies in our understanding rather than in the reality. The God who gives the commandments is indeed 'a God of tenderness and compassion.'

The second reading. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians ends with the fullest trinitarian formula in the New Testament. His struggles to foster unity among the argumentative, fractious believers at Corinth are crowned with a reference to the very source of unity: the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The Gospel. To refuse God's son is to refuse God's love; and to refuse God's love is not to be condemned by God, but to condemn oneself.

General Intercessions

Introduction

We have been called into the life of the Trinity, to whom we now make our prayers with confidence and praise.

Intercessions

1. By the power of God's Holy Spirit,
may the Church be enabled to gather together in Christ
all the scattered children of God.
May the Spirit bring reconciliation where there is division
and healing where there is bitterness.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. May Christians engaged in civic life and in politics
be a leaven for the Kingdom of God.
May they never fear to promote authentic goodness and justice.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. For Catechists, that they may deeply understand, dearly love
and authentically live the faith they are called to share.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. For those who have fallen away from the practice of the faith,
that the Lord may draw them closer to himself,
and that the example of believers
may strengthen and confirm them in their faith.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. May the Spirit of life raise all the departed
to share in the fullness of life with God and the saints.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Conclusion

Father, help us to profess, with our words and with our lives, your undivided unity with your Son and with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Liturgical Music

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

Holy, Holy/Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen from well-known Mass settings.

Responsorial Psalm

Canticle of Daniel – Alleluia Amen!/
*Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and
Major Feast Days/Cantate/Laudate/
Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration
Hymnal*

Gospel Acclamation

Sing **Alleluia** together with **verse** of the
Most Holy Trinity.

Songs

Sing Praise To Our Creator – *Veritas
Hymnal*
I Bind Unto Myself – *Laudate/Celebration
Hymnal*
Holy God We Praise Thy Name – *Veritas
Hymnal/Hosanna/In Caelo/Liturgical
Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Anima Christi – *ICMA 2013*
Faithful Is The Lord Our King (*Mo Ghile
Mear*) *ICMA 2013/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*
Christ Has Died – *www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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Editor

The Most Holy Trinity

7 June 2020

Homily Notes • Gospel: John 3:16-18

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, we are reminded that the mystery of the Trinity is an invitation to live and to love. Once we have incorporated the Trinitarian life into our personal and communal life, we come to understand the mystery of the Trinity better.

The more we live lives of faith, the more we understand the Trinity.

The more we live in unity as family and as parish community, the more we understand the Trinity.

The more we love, the more we understand how we are loved by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Our whole Christian life is caught up in the life of the Trinity. In our liturgy, we pray to the Father through Jesus and in unity with the Holy Spirit. And we are taught to imitate the Trinity, which means entering more and more fully into the life of God, a life which is never selfish, but generous and compassionate. Trinity Sunday is an opportunity to remind ourselves of this truth that we sometimes easily forget. Family and community form an image of the Trinity. The love and compassion of family and community give witness to the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So we are invited today to share in the life of the Trinity, the very life of God. We are invited to live in a way that reflects this divine love. Let us stay close to Jesus, because only in Him can we begin to understand, however little, this immense mystery of God's love for us.

Every time we make the sign of the Cross, we are expressing our belief in the Trinity. Often we do this carelessly, without any thought of what we are doing. When you make the sign of the Cross today, take a moment to pay reverence to the great mystery of the Holy Trinity. It brings together in so few words and a simple movement of the arm all that we believe in and all that we live for.

Fr Willie Purcell, National Vocations Office, Maynooth

The Deep End • Full Immersion

'Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.'

HENRI NOUWEN

What was the Incarnation, if not God's compassion in human form? Today, the Feast of the Trinity, we hear one of the most well-loved passages from John's Gospel: 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son.' In giving Jesus, God immersed himself fully in our world and in our humanity. Not only that, but

he experienced humanity in its most broken form, all the way to suffering and death. And all of this, he did out of love and compassion for us.

We have only to look at how he treated those who were most marginalised in his own time. He was with people in their brokenness, in their fear and suffering. He became weakness itself. We are called to do the same. True compassion means entering into the brokenness of the world. You will have heard the expression that we can't truly understand another person until we have walked a mile in their shoes. Before we judge others for their choices or their situation in life, we must really understand them, be with them, and share in their experiences. That is true compassion.

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For Your Newsletter:

Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

John 3:16-18

1. The reading evokes contrasting images of God, a God who judges and a God who saves. We might reflect on how our image of God has changed with the years. What has helped you to believe in a God whose will is that you should have eternal life?
2. God sent his Son into the world for this purpose, that we might have eternal life. How has the story of Jesus helped you to have that kind of faith?
3. The eternal life promised is life that begins now, and survives all forms of death, failure, defeat and humiliation. What has helped you to have that sense of being alive, even in painful and disappointing circumstances?

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The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

14 June 2020

Readings

The first reading. 'Remember... Do not forget.' Remembering is a *Leitmotif* in the book of Deuteronomy; it is also at the heart of our liturgical celebrations: we remember what God has done for us, and we are strengthened to live as he calls us to live.

The second reading. One cup – one loaf – a single body of believers. The Eucharist is a means of, and a call to, communion in Christ.

The Gospel. Arguments over the significance of the Eucharist began after Jesus' first homily on the Eucharist! *What does this mean? How can this be?* Jesus answers, not by splitting hairs or getting drawn into theological minutiae, but by re-affirming what the Eucharist is. This gift of gifts can never be entirely understood: it is to be gladly received in faith.

General Intercessions

Introduction

As we celebrate our Eucharistic faith, we turn to God, the Father of mercies, and make our needs known to him.

Intercessions

1. That the Eucharistic faith of the Church may never waver,
and that she may ever proclaim the abiding presence of Christ
in the Blessed Sacrament.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. On this day on which Eucharistic processions through streets
have traditionally been celebrated,
we pray that our faith may have a concrete effect in the civic square,
in our streets, our workplaces and our places of recreation.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. For those who, for whatever reason,
are unable to attend the celebration of the Eucharist.
May they be united with Christ and his people
through our common faith.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. For ourselves, gathered here.
May our Eucharistic Lord touch our hearts and give us a deep desire
to know, love, serve and proclaim him.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For the faithful departed,
that they may share in the eternal supper of the Lamb.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Conclusion

May our prayers be pleasing to you, Lord God, and may your mercy sustain us
always. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgical Music

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations: Holy, Holy/Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen
from well-known Mass settings.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 147: O praise the Lord, Jerusalem! –
*Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and
Major Feast Days/Cantate/Laudate/
Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration
Hymnal*

Gospel Acclamation

Sing **Alleluia** together with **verse** of the
Body and Blood of Christ.

Songs

Unless A Grain Of Wheat – *Hosanna/
Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old &
New/Celebration Hymnal/In Caelo
Though We Are Many – Sing The Mass/
ICMA 2011/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*
The Last Supper – *Grow in Love/ICMA
2015*
Bí 'Íosa Im Chroise – *Veritas Hymnal/In
Caelo Though We Are Many – Sing The
Mass/ICMA 2011/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*
Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord
– *ICMA 2014/Sing The Mass/
www.liturgy-ireland.ie*
Taste and See – *Gather/Laudate/
Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration
Hymnal/ICMA 2005/07/13*

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Editor

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

14 June 2020

Homily Notes • Gospel: John 6:51-58

Over the past months, in all of us, there has been a hunger for freedom, healing, family and even food, a hunger created by the Coronavirus. But Jesus has in mind another kind of hunger, a deeper longing of the human spirit that is not so easily satisfied. It is difficult to put a name on the deep human yearning that goes beyond any physical hunger we experience.

In spite of what troubles life brings you, remember that you are not alone. The One who suffered and died for you is in you. He is as close to you as you are to yourself. He knows what it is like for you to live with disappointment, what it is like to live with that illness that saps your spirit and the hard knocks that life gives you.

We are what we receive – the Body of Christ. This means that the bread of life is not an individualistic thing or our solitary meal. The moment we receive it is not only a precious moment – a time for prayer – it is also a time to form community.

The Lord who lives in you and me is none other than the Lord who lives in our next-door neighbour, in the homeless, the poor, the marginalised and the migrant; it is the same Christ who feeds all of us. There is one and the same body and the same Christ for all.

The Gospel from John today speaks clearly also: 'Whoever eats me will draw life from me'

On this feast of Corpus Christi, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, we believe that Jesus is God, we believe that God is Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that Jesus has given Himself to us as flesh and blood to eat and drink – our food for the journey. We believe that this flesh and blood is given to us today and every time we receive the Eucharist. God Himself will transform us if we believe in Him and try to do His will.

Fr Willie Purcell, National Vocations Office, Maynooth

The Deep End • Apart, yet together

At the end of March this year, a host of Irish sports stars came together to urge people to 'unite by staying apart.' 'We're all in this together... Now it's time for us all to unite and rise to the occasion by keeping our distance and by staying at home,' they said in a video message. It seems like such a paradox: how can we be united when we are all so far apart? It is hard, when we are used to living in community, supporting others and being supported, to accept the idea that we can be apart, yet together.

It was a particular challenge for Christians across the globe, as the coronavirus outbreak saw Masses and church services cancelled and the faithful called upon to stay at home. Physically, we were separated from our church community, but thankfully most of us were able to tune in to live-streamed Masses on TV, radio or online, where we could unite with the church in prayer. For

me, it brings to mind the experiences of all those who are unable to attend Mass for various reasons, perhaps because they are housebound or in hospital or living in a place where there is no priest available, but who are nonetheless united in communion with the Body of Christ.

Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we are 'apart, yet together.' In the Mass, we are united with the whole church across the world – those in the church building with us, as well as all those who are not. Today, the Feast of Corpus Christi, St Paul tells us: 'Though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all share in this one loaf.' In challenging times, we are united by Jesus, the living bread.

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For Your Newsletter:

Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

John 6:51-58

1. Jesus tells us that to have life we need more than physical nourishment. How have you been aware of deeper hungers? What has met that deeper longing in you?
2. Jesus tells us that it is not just something he gives us which will give us life, but himself in his life, death and resurrection. How has your faith in the person of Jesus fed you?
3. Jesus speaks about 'drawing life' from him. In day to day living what are the practices which support your faith and help you to draw life from Jesus?
4. The Eucharist is one of the ways in which we draw life from Jesus. Recall with gratitude how the Eucharist has been a source of nourishment and life for you.
5. Perhaps you can also think of examples of people drawing life from one another. From whom have you drawn life? Who has been able to draw life from you?

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Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

21 June 2020

Readings

The first reading. The prophet Jeremiah suffers greatly on account of his faithfulness to God's word. His courage consists not in the absence of fear, but in his continued proclamation, even when it costs him dearly.

The second reading. 'The gift itself considerably outweighed the fall.' The consequences of sin are very real, very concrete, but God's grace and his providence are always of greater consequence. Sin has entered the world, but God's Son, in entering the world, has defeated it.

The Gospel. 'Do not be afraid.' Three times in this short reading we hear those words. Why the repetition? Because Jesus sees and understands our tendency to fear, and because he wants to replace it with courage.

General Intercessions

Introduction

God, who bids us not to fear, knows our concerns before we express them. And so we turn to him with confidence.

Intercessions

1. For all Christians leaders and all Christ's disciples.
May each one be guided by a concrete conviction
of God's presence and action in the world.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. For those who administer and enforce our laws;
for judges, lawyers, police, prison and probation officers,
that their work may be guided by authentic wisdom
and tempered by compassion.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. For those who suffer from anxiety, depression,
or mental anguish of any kind,
that they may not be overwhelmed,
but find strength in their faith and in those who care for them.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. For ourselves,
that by our celebration of this Eucharist
we may grow in courage and in our capacity
to witness to Christ both in our deeds and in our words.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. We pray that the God whose mercy outweighs human sinfulness
may bring all the faithful departed to share in his life.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Conclusion

Lord, hear our voices and the voices of all those who cry out to you in their need. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgical Music

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

Holy, Holy/Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen from well-known Mass settings.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 68: In your great love, answer me, O God – Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feast Days/Cantate/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal

Gospel Acclamation:

Sing **Alleluia** together with **verse** from the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Songs

Be Not Afraid – *Glory & Praise/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/In Caelo*

Christ Be Our Light – *Laudate/Seinn Alleluia/In Caelo/Liturgical Hymns Old & New*

Be Still For the Presence of the Lord – *Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/Feasts & Seasons*

I Am The Bread of Life – *Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/In Caelo/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/ICMA 2013*

Taste and See – *Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/ICMA 2005/07/13*

Sprinkling Rite – *Seinn Alleluia/Gather/Mass of St Mel/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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Editor

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

21 June 2020

Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 10:26-33

We are living in a changing world, there is great uncertainty, even fear for the future. The world pandemic has left us frightened and confused. We are mourning the loss of many things: employment, health and even loved ones. But we never lose hope; our hope is rooted in God. Hence, this time can be a blessing in disguise, as it makes us less reliant on ourselves and more on the power of God.

The Word of God this Sunday speaks of adversity and how to respond as Christians. Jeremiah reflects on the cost of being God's faithful witness. He tells us of the hurt and pain he experiences as a result of being a prophet. 'I hear so many disparaging me... All those who used to be my friends watched for my downfall.' But the truth of the matter is that there is always a price for authentic witness. The prophet Jeremiah shows us that authentic faith makes us fearless in the face of suffering and persecution. It gives us the power to live more generously, more trustfully and more bravely.

This is also the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel. 'Do not be afraid' is the message that should resonate in the hearts of us all. Jesus preaches a very different Gospel: he tells us that real happiness comes from belief in God, from seeking the will of the Father, from giving to others, from sharing what we have with those who do not have, from praying and from forgiving. Jesus does not invite us to have absolutely nothing – but always the challenge is there: What are you doing with the gifts you have been given? Are you loving God and loving one another? How are you living your daily life? Are you seeking only your own pleasures or are you seeking the Kingdom of God?

We must be always ready to accept whatever comes into our lives with trust in God, knowing that God will bring us through even the darkest days.

Fr Willie Purcell, National Vocations Office, Maynooth

The Deep End • Noli temere

The last words of Seamus Heaney, in a text to his wife Marie, were the Latin words *Noli temere* – 'Don't be afraid'. According to his son Mick, the words became 'a shorthand for hope' in the weeks that followed. He had done what poets and writers do best – express our fears and anxieties in a way that made sense.

Fear took on new forms earlier this year when we were all thrown into that strange period of lockdown due to the coronavirus threat. We were fearful for ourselves and our health. We were worried about our families, particularly our elderly or vulnerable loved ones. Many people were anxious about the future – they had lost their job or business and were full of uncertainty as to when, or even if, things would improve.

We also became conditioned, in a way, to be fearful of each other. While we understood it was necessary, it was upsetting to have to stay away from other people – to refrain from hugging or

shaking hands, to move away or even cross the street when we saw another person approaching.

And of course there are deeper fears that come from being isolated and feeling alone with our thoughts. It is natural to question God in these circumstances, whether we turn to him in prayer seeking comfort, or struggle to pray because we cannot understand why all this is happening.

Our communities are still reeling from this new state of fear. We have lost so much, and the future is uncertain. Jesus has comforting words in today's Gospel: 'Do not be afraid... everything now hidden will be made clear.' Life does not always make sense, but God has it all in hand, and armed with this knowledge we can face the future with hope. He is with us through the mess and the fear: 'Why, every hair on your head has been counted.'

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For Your Newsletter:

Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

Matthew 10:26-33

1. 'Do not fear' is the unifying theme in this passage which is set in the context of a mission sermon by Jesus, preparing his disciples for what lay ahead. He urges them to have courage in speaking and living his message, drawing strength from their trust in the Father whose care for us exceeds his care for hundreds of sparrows. How has trust in God been a source of strength in life for you?
2. For Jesus the important thing is to be true to one's real self, even if this does involve some material or physical loss or pain. When you have had that kind of courage, what was it like for you?
3. There is no such thing as secret discipleship. It is in declaring their allegiance to Jesus that his followers will find life. They will be the losers if they hide their discipleship. Does this resonate with your experience?

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Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

28 June 2020

Readings

The first reading. Elisha, God's spokesman, is shown hospitality. This act of kindness towards someone going about God's business has life-changing consequences for Shunem, the woman who extended the hospitality.

The second reading. St Paul closely links baptism with death. Baptism is, of course, the entrance into a new way of living, but that way of living entails dying to sin. To be baptized is to be called to a life-long dying to all that is not of Christ.

The Gospel. Jesus demands very real sacrifices of those who wish to follow him. At the same time, he promises eternal life to those who do even small things with great love.

General Intercessions

Introduction

We are gathered to taste and see, and to celebrate, the goodness of the Lord. Let us leave aside any hesitation and make our prayers with full confidence.

Intercessions

1. For the Church,
that she may receive Christ
with the hospitality of her obedience to his Gospel,
and in this way have a lasting effect
in the lives of believers and of the world.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. For political leaders,
that there may be congruence between the demands they make of
citizens and the way in which they themselves live.
May all those who serve in public life be authentic and credible.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. For those who conduct research in the area of genetics and medicine,
that they may seek to safeguard every human life,
and that they may never regard any human being,
at any stage of life, as a means to an end.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. May the Lord help us, during the coming week,
to use our gifts, energies, talents, time and resources
in his service and for the good of others.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For the baptised who have died.
By God's mercy, may their efforts to die to sin during this life
lead them to a full share in the life to come.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Conclusion

We thank you, Lord, for prompting the prayers of our hearts, and we trust that you walk with us on the road of discipleship. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgical Music

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

Holy, Holy/Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen from *Sing The Mass, Anthology of Music for the Irish Church, 2011*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 88: I will sing forever of your love, O Lord – *Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feast Days/Cantate/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Gospel Acclamation

Sing **Alleluia** together with **verse** of the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Songs

Laudate Dominum – *ICMA 2016*
Unless A Grain Of Wheat – *Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/In Caelo*
Be Thou My Vision – *Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration hymnal/Seinn Alleluia/In Caelo*
Bí 'Íosa Im Chroise – *Veritas Hymnal/In Caelo*
Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord – *ICMA 2014/Sing The Mass/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*
Taste and See – *Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/ICMA 2005/07/13*

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Editor

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

28 June 2020

Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 10:37-42

The first reading, from the second book of the Kings, highlights the reward of those who open their generous heart to friends of God and by extension to all God's people.

There is always a response from heaven for every act of kindness we show to others, especially for the sake of God. Every act of love is remembered by God. All of us, no matter what we have or who we are, are always in want of one thing or another, either basic human necessities or basic spiritual needs. All of us, too, face the problems of life: we are either coming out of a problem, or we are in one, or we are about to enter into one.

The spirit of generosity calls for sensitivity on the part of the giver and receiver. Today, God is calling us to be sensitive to the needs of others. Being sensitive also implies that we should not be a burden to those who are helping us.

Saint Paul, in the second reading, recalls that Jesus gave himself as a ransom for our salvation and has made us one with him through baptism. By baptism, we welcome Christ in our lives. But we must also see Christ in others, especially the poor, the stranger, the unloved, and we must welcome them too.

The Gospel, today from Saint Matthew, brings the first two readings together. We must love God more than anything or anyone. We must love Christ more than our parents, our sisters, our brothers, our children, our friends. This statement does not mean that we have to stop loving our parents, sisters, brothers, children, etc.; it simply tells us that God is of absolute importance.

May we always seek the face of the Lord and find him in one another. If we judge others, then we condemn ourselves. If we seek simply what the Lord asks of us today and every day, we are blessed and in turn bless one another.

Fr Willie Purcell, National Vocations Office, Maynooth

The Deep End • The face of Christ

There is great goodness in our country and in our world. This became clear when our communities were thrown into turmoil in recent months. Long before the official initiatives sprang into action to support those in need during the nationwide 'lockdown,' stories began to emerge of the ways in which communities were mobilising to make sure their most vulnerable members were looked after. Local supermarkets delivered goods, postmen and women checked in on the elderly, neighbours made phone calls and arranged to pick up groceries and prescriptions. Through it all, we began to realise how much we depend on each other. As the noise of everyday life fell silent, we began to ponder: what is it that makes us a community?

Parishes were grappling with the same question. In the temporary absence of access to Mass and the sacraments, what makes us a community of disciples of Jesus? Every effort was made to reach out

to parishioners, through online Masses, prayer initiatives and practical help and support. In every parish in the country, volunteers became the face of Christ to others.

In today's Gospel, Jesus lays down the markers of the Christian community. His key points are welcome and compassion. When we reach out in a spirit of welcome and neighbourliness, when we give as little as a drink of water to another person, we are on the right path. In his Easter message, Archbishop Eamon Martin said: 'In our present situation we have seen the light of the risen Christ shine out... in the kindness shown by neighbour to neighbour and in gentle and simple acts of compassion carried out by countless "Good Samaritans." Despite the uncertainty, suffering and grief caused by the pandemic, the Lord is near.'

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For Your Newsletter:

Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

Matthew 10:37-42

1. Jesus never wanted suffering for anyone but he knew that if anyone was going to follow in his footsteps, promoting love and respect for every person, they would meet with opposition. Fidelity has its price, but also its rewards. Would you agree?
2. The passage is a call to both radical and practical discipleship. When have you found that in order to achieve a certain objective you had to make it a priority, and then take the practical steps necessary to reach your goal? What were the benefits to you when you did this?
3. 'Hate' is prophetic exaggeration for the uncompromising loyalty Jesus seeks in disciples. There may be times when people make demands in conflict with fidelity to another relationship. This can be painful. When have you found that being clear about your priorities helped you in that situation?

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SOLÚNTAS NA TRÍONÓIDE RÓNAOFA 7ú Meitheamh, 2020

Réamhrá

Mar is dual i dtús gach ceiliúradh, gearraimid fíor na croise orainn féin, ach ag teach le chéile ar Sholúntas na Tríonóide Rónaofa, tá éifeacht ar leith ag baint leis; *In ainm an Athar ...*

Smaoineamh

'Sna laethanta nuair a chuirí na páistí faoi scrúdú roimh an Chomhneartaithe, bhí sceitimíní ar Sheán bhocht ag seasamh dó os comhair an Easpag, ach nuair a chuir the tEaspag an cheist seo air, 'Inis dom mar gheall ar an Tríonód', thosnaigh Seán ag stadaireacht. Ach nuair a dúirt an tEaspag, 'Ní thuigim thú, a bhuachail', phléasc Seán amach, 'Tá sé do-thuigthe, is rúndiamhar í'.

Sea, is fíor, ach féach an tionchar atá ag an Tríonód ar ár mbeatha Chríostaí. Baisteadh sinn 'In ainm an Athar ...' Mar a luas theanna, cuirimid tús le gach ceiliúradh, 'In ainm an Athar...' Féach chomh minic a bhíonn, 'Gloir don Athair...' mar conclúid ar ár n-urnaithe. Sa bhFaoirtin tugan an sagart aspalóid, 'In anm an Athar...' I bPaidir Eocairisteach II, deir an sagart, 'Naomhaigh... na bronntansis seo le drúcht do Spioraid' I bPaidir Eocairisteach III '... na tabhartais seo ... a naomhú tríd an Spiorad céanna' Agus féach a bhfuil dár gcreideamh fite fuaite sa Chré, pé acu Cré Nicea nó Cré na nAspal. Tá ábhar maith machnaimh anseo.

Guí an Phobail

Le dóchas agus le creideamh cuirimid ár n-achanaí i láthair an Athar.

1. Ar son na hEaglaise ar fud an domhain; go mbeannófá í le aoirí misniúla. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Ar son ár náisiún: go mbeidh ár slí maireachtála mar fhianaise ar an grá a mhúineann Íosa dúinn. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Ar son na síochána: go mhbeimid uile gníomach ag saothrú ar son na síochána sa teaghlach, sa phobal agus sa láthair oibre. A Thiarna, éist linn.

4. Ar son ár ndaoine muinteartha atá imithe romhainn agus are son na mairbh uile: go raibh siad i bpáirt leis na naoimh ag bainis an Tiarna ar neamh. A Thiarna, éist linn.

A Athair ionúin, tabhair cluas le héisteacht lenár n-achaníní, trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

An Phaidir

Le dóchas is le buíochas guímis chun an Athar mar a mhúin Íosa dúinn.

Focal scoir

Glóir don Athair, agus don Mhac, agus don Spiorad Naomh.

SOLÚNTAS CHORP AGUS FHUIL RÓNAOFA CHRÍOST 14ú Meitheamh 2020

Réamhrá

Seo mar a deir Íosa linn i Soiscéal na féile seo, 'An té a itheann m'fheoil agus a ólann m'fhuil, tá an bheatha shíoraí síge, agus tógfaidh mé suas é an lá deireanach'.

Smaoineamh

Ar feadh daichead bliain san fhásach, mhúin Dia do na daoine gur uaidh féin a thgann gach ní, 'uisce as an gcarraig chrua ... manna nárbh eol do d'aithreacha'. Deir Pól linn, 'Ós aon bhuilín amháin é, níl ionainne, dá líonmhaire sinn, ach aon chorp amháin toisc go gcaithimis go léir an t-arán céanna'. Ón uair a cuireadh i bpáirt le Críost sin inár mbaisteadh, cothaítear sinn lena chorp agus lena fhuil ag bord na hEocairiste.

Guí an Phobail

Toisc nach ar arán anháin a mhairimid ach ar gach ní a thagann ó bhéal Dé, le dóchas, cuirimid ár n-achanaí ina láthair.

1. Cothaítear sinn le hArán na Beatha; bímis flaithiúl go háirithe leo siúd atá bocht agus faoi phian an ocrais. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Ós aon sinn i nglacadh an t-arán céanna: bímis i bpáirt le chéile i ngach aon slí. A Thiarna, éist linn.

3. Ar son dhaoine óga: go mbeidh Briathar Dé agus dea-shample a sinsir mar spreagadh acu. A Thiarna, éist linn.

4. Ar a son siúd atá imithe romhainn: go raibh acu radharc ar ghlóire Dé ar feadh na síoraíochta. A Thiarna, éist linn.

Tabhair do chabhair lách do do phobal, a Thiarna, agus glac lenár nghuí, trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

An Phaidir

Mhúin Íosa dúinn nach ar arán amháin a mhaireann an duine, ach ar gach focal a thagann ó bhéal Dé, mar sin guímis:

Focal scoir

A Íosa mhilis,
ní suíochán duit mo theanga,
ní lóistín duit mo choí;
ach bronn orm do bheannaitheacht,
's go bhfana sí agam choíche

DOMHNACH XII LE LINN NA BLIANA 21ú Meitheamh 2020

Réamhrá

Bíodh focail seo an tsalmaire mar ábhar dóchais againn agus sinn bailithe do Eocairist:

Leanfaidh cineáltas is fábhar mé
gach uile lá de mo shaol.
I dteach an Tiarna a mhairfidh mé
go brách na breithe.

Smaoineamh

Tá Iarimíach boch faoi sceimhle, 'Eagla ar gach aon taobh', ach féach mar a thánaig misneach agus dóchas chuige, ag rá, 'Canaigí don Tiarna, molaigí an Tiarna, óir shaor sé anam an bhoicht ó láimh lucht déanta an oilc'. Molann Pól dúinn gan a bheith thíos de bharr pheaca Ádhaimh, 'mar is fairsinge go mór ná sin a bhí grásta Dé agus an tabhartas a dáileadh ar mhórán de dheonú an aon duine amháin, Íosa Críost'. Spreagann Íosa na deisceabail a bheith misniúil, 'ná bíodh aon eagla oraibh'. Is mar sin dúinne freisin os comhair an tsaoil, cuma cad a thagann inár n-aghaidh.

Guí an Phobail

Mar phobal Aifrinne anseo inniu, tugaimis chun cuimhne muintir an ghátair agus an sceimhle ar fud an domhain uile atá ag brath ar ár nguí ar a son.

1. Ar son clann Dé uile: go gcloise siad Briathar Dé is go ndéana siad beart dá réir. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Ar son ár bPápa, ar son Easpaig, agus ar son tréadaithe uile na hEaglaise: go bhfása siad i ngrásta agus go raibh toradh ar a saothar. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Ar a son siúd atá thíos de bharr easpa ghrá: go gcase an taoide dóibh is go dtaga siad slán chun cuain. A Thiarna, éist linn.
4. Ar son ár gcairde agus ar son ár ngaolta atá imithe romhainn: go gcónaí siad sa tsíocháin. A Thiarna, éist linn.

A Thiarna, éist lenár nguí agus neartaigh sa chreideamh sinn, trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

A Phaidir

‘Táimse leatsa agus tusa faoi mo choimirce,’ a deir an Tiarna. Mar sin guímis:

Focal scoir

Tusa, crioslaigh thú féin chun comhraic. Éirigh agus abair leo gach a n-ordaímse duit. (1r, 1:17)

DOMHNACH XIII LE LINN NA BLIANA 28ú Meitheamh 2020

Réamhfhocail

Inár mbaisteadh tumadh sinn i gCríost, rannpháirteachas le páis, bás agus aiséirí Chríost. Bás Chríost – ciallaigh sin bás do ord peacúil an tsaoil seo. Agus le haiséirí Chríost tháinig ord nua spioradálta neamhaí i réim. Riarann Críost beatha nua aiséirí orainn. Inár saol Chríostaí mar sin bheirimid iarracht maireachtáil i ngrásta agus i gcumhacht ár mbaiste. De réir Phóil sin grá Dé léirithe i gCríost.

Smaoineamh

Is misinéirí Íosa sinn agus is mian leis go mbeimis réidh é a leanúint fiú go pointe an bháis. Gealltanais iomlán mar sin atá uaidh agus sinn i mbun ár misin. Caithfidh an deisceabal bheith réidh fiú glacadh le géarleanúint mar chuid den aspalacht. Deir Íosa, ‘An té a ghlacann sibhse, glacann sé mise, agus an té a ghlacann mise, glacann sé an té a chuir uaidh mé’. Cuireann Íosa béim ar an suáilche a bhaineann go mór le grá agus le meas – ‘sé sin flaithiúlacht a thaispeáint do thoscáirí Dé. Nach deas na focla seo ag Íosa faoina dheisceabail agus an obair is mó ar siúl acu, ‘sé sin beatha Dé a riaradh ar an domhan! ‘Agus má thugann duine ar bith oiread is an cupán de fhíoriúisce don mhuintir bheag seo, as ucht gur deisceabal é ní bheidh sé gan a thuarastal a fháil’.

Guí an Phobail

Is é ár dTiarna Íosa Críost a ghlaodhann orainn leanúint lena mhisean agus deascéal an tslánaithe a fhógairt do na náisiúin.

1. A Thiarna tabhair dúinn do Spiorad chun ár misean a chomhlíonadh.
2. Tabhair suaimehneas intinne dúinn agus neartaigh ionainn croí na féile chun cuidiú leis na mílte gan bhia gan dhéan.
3. Bailigh Críostaithe le chéile i gcorp spioradálta amháin go gcreidfidh an domhan i gCríost ár Slánaitheoir.
4. Lón croíthe ár gcairde le do ghrá, agus tabhair ceansacht Chríost dúinn go léir.
5. Tabhair sólás do na daoine atá ag fáil bháis agus taispeán do thrócaire do na mairbh – go bhfuighidh siad síocháin shíoraí i gCríost.

A Athair, ós páistí do chlainne sinn glaoigh tú orainn go léir saothrú sa tsaoil seo ar son na bochta agus lucht dearóile. Misean ar leith é. Iarraimid do ghrásta trí Chríost ár dTiarna. Áiméan.

An Phaidir

Agus ‘go dtaga do ríocht’ á rá againn go mbí toradh ar ár gcuid oibre agus misean ar siúl againn an ríocht sin a fhógairt.

Focal Scoir

Moladh, glóir agus onóir bheirim go deo dhuit, a FhíorMhic Dé, Daor do cheannaigh tú an ghlóir le d’fhuil uasail onóraigh féin.

Words of Encouragement for Priests, from Archbishop Eamon Martin

[O]ur daily celebration of the Eucharist – with or without a congregation; with or without a webcam – is at the very centre of our lives and identity as priests. The sacrifice of the Mass which we offer faithfully each day during this crisis gathers into one the sacrifices which so many of our people are making during these difficult days and presents them in unity with the suffering and death of Christ on the Cross: ‘May the Lord accept the sacrifice... for the praise and glory of his name.’

The Mass also sends us out – despite the restrictions – to be as close as we safely can to our people – to offer them the comfort of Christ’s presence: by telephone, email, social media, webcam and in person, with the appropriate life-saving precautions. Our calling as priests remains strong in this crisis: to be with our people, to encourage them, to bring them the hope and consolation of Word and sacrament.

Thank you, my dear brother priests, for all that you are and all that you are doing in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Homily, Chrism Mass, 9 April 2020



Photo: istockphotos.com

Due to the ongoing restrictions readers are advised to check with those advertising events on these pages to check if the event is still going ahead or has been scheduled

ARDS RETREAT CENTRE

Vision

Sunday, 7–Friday, 12 June 2020

The Vision programme was born out of love for the eight beatitudes and the difference they could make in the lives of the individuals, families, church communities and society. The programme gives people an understanding of each beatitudes, and also ways of internalising the love that the beatitudes contain.

Facilitator: Fr Flan

Christian Mindfulness

Friday, 5–Sunday, 7 June 2020

Mindfulness in the Christian tradition is a foundational prayer practice since ancient times. First employed by the earliest monastics as a way of stabilising the mind and heart in the awareness of the Divine Presence it invites us into a deep spirit of recollection that allows us to live from the 'Sacrament of the Present Moment'. This retreat will invite you to practice the presence of God in each moment and with every breath, offering teachings and techniques from the great masters of Christian prayer.

Facilitator: Fr Richard

Matt Talbot Retreat

Friday, 14–Sunday, 16 August 2020

The Matt Talbot Retreat is intended specifically for people recovering from alcoholic addiction.

Contact Patsy 0044 771 287 1870,

Mickey 0044 776 453 35588,

Jim 0044 785 048 2282

Email patsybrogan@hotmail.co.uk

Iconographers Retreat

Monday, 17–Monday, 24 August 2020

Learning to write an icon: Skilled tutors will be on hand to demonstrate and teach skills necessary for this sacred work. The course is open to all members of the Association of Iconographers. Contact: Una Jenkins. Tel: 087 665 2819. Email unajenkins1@gmail.com

Contact: Ards Friary Retreat Centre, Creeslough, Co Donegal

Tel 074-9138909

Email info@ardsfriary.ie

Web www.ardsfriary.ie

Facebook Ards Friary Retreat Centre

MOUNT ST ANNE'S

SUMMER RETREATS

To Walk Freely in Life Living in God's Love

2–8 June 2020

Facilitated by Fr John Finn MSC

Odysseys of Faith

12–18 June 2020

Facilitated by Fr Brendan Comerford

Christ-Like Hospitality

22–28 June 2020

Facilitated by Fr Nick Harnan

Come Healing – The Splinters that we Carry...

12–18 July 2020

Facilitated by Fr Vincent Sherlock

Believe in Me and in the One Who Sent Me

24–30 July 2020

Facilitated by Fr Gerard McCarthy

And God Said...

4–10 August 2020

Facilitated by Rev Dr Ruth Patterson

Meeting with Christ

25–31 August 2020

Facilitated by Fr Charles Cross

Limited places available –
early booking advised

Bookings/Enquiries

to the Secretary

on 057-8626153

Email secretary@mountstannes.com

SABBATICAL PROGRAMMES

2020/2021 –

CONTACT OFFICE FOR DETAILS

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Jesus – an Unfinished Portrait

Monday, 8–Saturday, 13 June 2020

Christians are asked to love their founder, Jesus, as he surely loves them. We reflect on the life and teaching of the one we worship as Christ the Redeemer.

Denis McBride CSsR

Growing in years, peace and contentment; A Spirituality of Ageing

Tuesday, 1–Monday, 7 September 2020

This retreat will outline a spiritual approach to assist us as we grow older. It will offer some guidelines to help us to let go of any regrets and to harvest the fruits of our lives, so that the final stages can be lived in peace, fulfilment, and trust.

Fr Des Corrigan SMA

Praying with the Psalms

Friday, 2–Thursday, 8 October 2020

In this retreat we will revisit a number of the Psalms and experience how they can invigorate our relationship with God, self and others.

Fr Gerard McCarthy SVD

6-Day Directed Retreat

Tuesday, 1–Monday, 7 September 2020

Sr Mary Connellan SSL, Fr Dermot Mansfield SJ

For enquiries or bookings contact:

Retreat & Conference Centre,

Dromantine, Newry, Co Down BT34 1RH

Tel 028-30821964 (From Rol 048)

Email admin@dromantineconference.com

www.dromantineconference.com



AN TAIRSEACH

Sabbatical Programme – Ten Weeks

6 September–13 November 2020 – Autumn
Exploring Spirituality in the context of an evolving universe, an endangered earth, in the Christian tradition.

Retreat: 'Resting in the Arms of God'

15–20 June 2020

Facilitator: Ms Deirdre Ní Chinnéide

Retreat: 'In Communion with the Sacred Universe'

29 June–4 July 2020

Facilitators: Niamh Brennan and
Sr Colette Kane OP

Teacher's Summer School: Knowing Our Place, from Stardust to Sand

Department of Education approved for CPD
6–10 July 2020

Providing teachers with the confidence and competence to teach the story of the universe; the effects of global warming and the necessity of environmental awareness and care. It is also aimed at fostering the curiosity of students and developing environmental awareness and care of the environment. The main curriculum areas covered by the course are SESE.

Facilitator: Sr Colette Kane OP

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Email info@antairseach.ie



SEASIDE RETREATS

FFCJ Ibricken Lodge,
Spanish Point, Co Clare

Lay Retreat (3 days)

Friday (evening), 19–Monday (lunchtime),
22 June 2020

Theme: 'Meeting God in Creation'.

Directors: John Feehan and
Hugh O'Donnell SDB

Directed Retreat (6 Days)

Wednesday, 19–Wednesday, 26 August

Directors: Marion Dooley FCJ and
Fr Joe Coghlin

Dreams Weekend

Friday (evening), 28–Sunday (lunchtime),
30 August 2020

A Pathway to Inner Wholeness

*Dreams, it is said, can provide inspiration
that can be revealed to us in no other way.*

Director: Mary Leahy FCJ

For further information contact:

Geraldine Lennon FCJ, 5 Laurel Hill Court,
Summerville Avenue, Limerick
Tel 086-3423692

Email geraldinefcj@yahoo.ie



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Tel 01-4042615

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Contact: 085-8601794

For sale: Old Church pews for sale.
Photo available. Contact: 086-8351732.

Wanted: Two church pews to complete
the recently refurbished school oratory
in Calasanctius College in Oranmore,
Co Galway. Contact: Ger Harkin.
Tel 087-2024688.

Available: Church benches (6 @ 11 ft
and 6 @ 8 ft) in N. Cavan.
Contact: 086-8755695.

NEW RESOURCES

Rev Dr John-Paul Sheridan
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Maynooth
Co Kildare

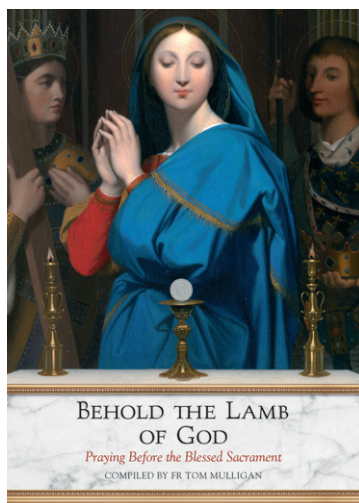


BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

Praying Before the Blessed Sacrament
Compiled by
Fr Tom Mulligan
Veritas Publications, 2020
ISBN 9781847309563
pp. 80 • €7.99

Parishes throughout the country have taken to the renewed practice of Eucharistic Adoration, which is the successor of the traditional forty hours adoration, or Sunday afternoon Eucharistic devotions, of our parents and grandparents. What parishioners need are good solid resources to enhance and enrich their prayer life. Fr Tom Mulligan offers this delightful little book, which will fit conveniently into the pocket or the handbag.

The book is divided into twelve reflections, each on different themes. There is an opening prayer from St John Henry Newman, which is a beautiful way to begin one's Holy Hour. Each of the reflections has a wealth of prayers and meditations; each piece could hold one's concentration for some time, so the book will last longer than its slim size might suggest. I would encourage parishes to stock it in their shops, and to buy it for their Eucharistic Ministers and Adorers as a source of inspiration and spiritual nourishment.



DARK BEAUTY

Hidden Detail in Harry Clarke's Stained Glass
Lucy Costigan and Michael Cullen
Merrion Press, 2019

No one is ever the same after their first experience (or exposure) to the work of Harry Clarke. As a seminarian, I worked on Lough Derg, where I would spend ages at the windows in the Basilica of St Patrick, especially in the evening, as the sun shone through the final station and the figure of Our Lady. I couldn't believe that such genius could come from the mind of one man! Yet it did. A few years ago, in the Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow, and quite by accident (I was looking for the Dalí) – I came across Clarke's *Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, from the Burrell Collection. It was like discovering Clarke all over again, there in the corner of a busy gallery. His masterpieces are, in the words of his friend, Lennox Robinson, 'glories from his imagination. They will shine and glow those blues and reds – how he loved blue! – an inspiration to the faithful.'

Even before you open this book, you can see a subtle attention to detail on the front cover. The book title and authors' names are done in a typeface reminiscent of Art Deco/Nouveau and/or Charles Rennie Mackintosh. This bodes well.

What leaps off the page is the passion and enthusiasm of the contributors. The forward comes from the archivist and photographer of the Basilica of St Vincent DePaul in Bayonne, New Jersey, who is justifiably proud that this was Clarke's first commission in the United States. Lucy Costigan, the writer, and Michael Cullen, the photographer, write about their first encounters with Clarke's work, and are equally enthusiastic.

The book is divided into chapters based on the typologies of decoration found in the windows – fashion, flora and fauna, borders and tracery, etc. For the uninitiated, there is a biography of Clarke, written in conjunction with some of his more famous pieces. Costigan mentions the dichotomy in Clarke's art: the extraordinary detail in the religious themes of windows mostly commissioned by ecclesiastical patrons, and the sometimes bizarre and macabre details to be found in his illustrations, for example those for Poe's *Stories of Mystery and Imagination*.

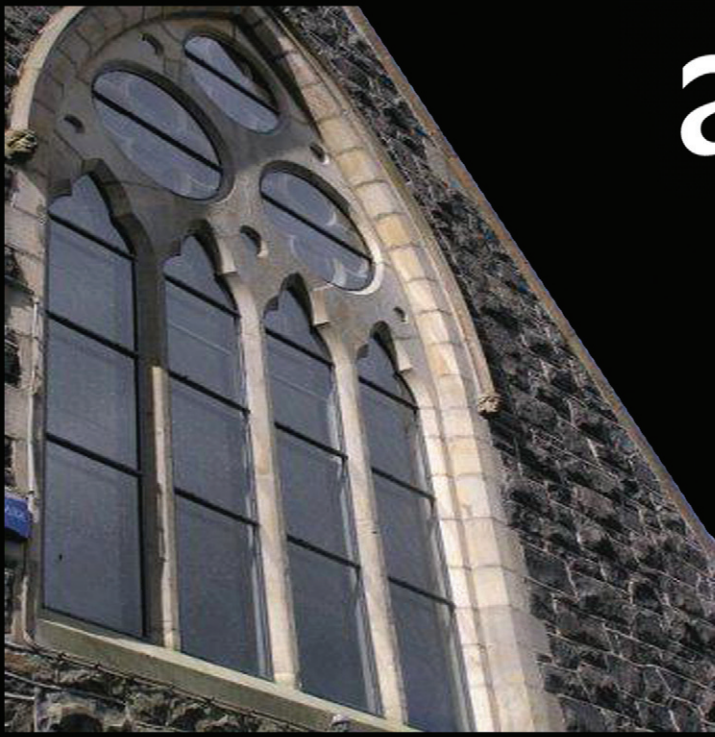
The book explains beautifully the uniqueness of Clarke's design – the use of certain colours, the angular faces which owe something of their origin to the Art Deco imagination, but which are unique to Clarke. Even the familiar scene of the grotto at Lourdes (page 76) could never be mistaken for anything but a Clarke window.

The details from the windows are the 'wow-factor' of the volume. Page after page presents the genius of these works of art. One in particular is the forest and the vision of St. Hubert from Carnalway, Co Kildare (pages 62–63). It is almost impossible to imagine that this is a detail, so rich is the colouring of the forest and the ornamentation on the saint's costume.

The book has a helpful compendium of terms, along with an index of all the works mentioned and an index of all the known stained-glass works, while the footnotes are as extensive as they should be in a work of dedicated and meticulous scholarship.

A Harry Clarke window or illustration will hold the enthusiast for hours. Thankfully for me in Lough Derg all those years ago, this was possible, but given the usual position of windows, it is sometimes not so easy to study the detail. This is where *Dark Beauty* is invaluable to the observer. A book to be read, but also to disappear into for hours; and a book to raise up another generation of enthusiasts.





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