

# INTERCOM

A Catholic Pastoral and Liturgical Resource • July/August 2020



## Parish and Pandemic: Preparing to Resume Worship



**Spiritual Outbreak  
During Lockdown**  
Brendan o'Regan



**Feast of the  
Assumption**  
A Prayer of  
Pope Francis



**Preparing Priests  
Today for  
Tomorrow's  
Irish Church**  
Fr Tomás Surlis



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# Editorial

## Ministering to Anxiety in a Time of Pandemic

Fr Chris Hayden  
Editor



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It was a beautiful, warm, sunny morning. One of the many days on which we've been able to say: 'Thank God we've at least been having good weather.' There were many people out and about. It all felt almost normal.

One person caught my attention. A little elderly lady carrying a large shopping bag. She was wrestling with a face-mask. It was down over her chin; she pulled it up to cover her nose and mouth; it slipped again. What struck me was not so much the face-mask as the look in her eyes. She was frightened. Her struggle with the mask didn't seem to slow her walk, which was, while certainly not youthful, notably brisk for a person of her age. My impression was that she was anxious to get back, with her shopping, to the safety of her home. Was she afraid of contracting Covid-19? Afraid because she was breaching her cocoon? Afraid because an equally elderly husband was anxious for her return?

That fleeting encounter seemed to validate some questions that have been nagging me of late. Has anyone helped that vulnerable lady, and countless people like her, not to be frightened? Has the state shown sufficient care for aspects of her welfare other than the physical? Are we, as Church, ministering to her as well as we ought? Have we become so focused on material compliance that we risk overlooking other matters? Has our pastoral vision narrowed?

Not one of us, whether priest or politician, cabinet-member or bishop, has been given a roadmap for these times. It's easy to hurl from the ditch, but on the other hand, it's precisely because we don't have a roadmap that we must be open to scrutiny and review. We have absolutely no reason to believe that we are currently doing the best possible job; there is nothing disloyal or unpatriotic about asking questions. What's more, in a profoundly 'awkward' situation, questions can be awkward.

I know I'm not alone in feeling both gratitude and concern at how government is dealing with the crisis. One can't but be grateful for the enormous and sustained effort to minimise the public health consequences of the pandemic. On the other hand, it seems at times that anxiety, rather than being assuaged, is being managed in an almost strategic way. This may be quite indeliberate, but a cursory review of statements from recent weeks points to it. Progress in containment, even as it is being welcomed, is presented as further cause for anxiety. The slow, tentative opening up is being portrayed as something taking place beneath a great sword of Damocles.

To be clear: anxiety can be a perfectly appropriate response in the face of threats. But is widespread fear really conducive to public health? Are we the better for having our elderly population living in a state of anxiety? And if we are so feckless as to need to be motivated by fear, then are we not too feckless to be motivated by fear?

As Church, we need to be rigorously self-critical. It is of course essential that we play our part in safeguarding public health, but not in a way that is blind to broader aspects of the crisis – not least to the sadness and anxiety many people experience. We will not have done our duty when – if it were possible! – we have made our churches 'safe.' There is undoubtedly some tension between the sanitising transformation of our churches, on the one hand, and the sense of peace and sanctuary they should provide, on the other. We may not be able to square this circle, but to default into a position of absolute maximum physical safety may not be wise.

To raise these matters, to nod in the direction of 'seeking a balance,' is not to be cavalier with people's health, any more than is allowing people into libraries or supermarkets, where social distancing and physical contact remain matters of concern. In such instances, a degree of risk is accepted – managed, yes, but accepted – so that we can actually live rather than simply stay alive. As Church, we can learn from other sectors emerging from lockdown. We can strive for whatever balance may be permitted by the demands we face. We are, of course, already striving. May the Lord help us to strive wisely and well. May he help us to minister thoughtfully to the many little people presently carrying large burdens.

Chris Hayden



# Prayers and Reflections for July/August

## Pope's Intention for July

We pray that today's families may be accompanied with love, respect and guidance.

## Pope's Intention for August

We pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.

## A Prayer of St Ignatius of Loyola, 31 July

O Christ Jesus,  
when all is darkness  
and we feel our weakness  
and helplessness,  
give us the sense of Your  
presence,  
Your love, and Your strength.  
Help us to have perfect trust  
in Your protecting love  
and strengthening power,  
so that nothing may frighten  
or worry us,  
for, living close to You,  
we shall see Your hand,  
Your purpose, Your will  
through all things.



Photo: Wikimedia Commons



## A Prayer of St John Vianney, 4 August

I love You, O my God,  
and my only desire is to love You  
until the last breath of my life.  
I love You, O my infinitely lovable God,  
and I would rather die loving You,  
than live without loving You.  
I love You, Lord  
and the only grace I ask  
is to love You eternally.  
My God,  
if my tongue cannot say  
in every moment  
that I love You,  
I want my heart to repeat it to You  
as often as I draw breath.



## On Being Without the Mass

'... to my great sorrow, for five days I was not able to offer the holy sacrifice, the biggest privation of the whole campaign. One good result at least came from this trial: it showed me in a way I never realised before, what a help daily Mass is in one's life.'

Fr Willie Doyle SJ

From the front line of the Battle of the Somme, September 1916



## Feast of the Transfiguration and 75th anniversary of dropping of atomic bomb on Hiroshima, 6 August



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Fundamentally, we are saying that the decisions about nuclear weapons are among the most pressing moral questions of our age. While these decisions have obvious military and political aspects, they involve fundamental moral choices. In simple terms, we are saying that good ends (defending one's country, protecting freedom, etc.) cannot justify immoral means (the use of weapons which kill indiscriminately and threaten whole societies). We fear that our world and nation are headed in the wrong direction. More weapons with greater destructive potential are produced every day. More and more nations are seeking to become nuclear powers. In our quest for more and more security we fear we are actually becoming less and less secure.

*The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response.*

A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace.

US Catholic Bishops Conference. May 1983



## On the Assumption of Mary into Heaven

The feast of the Assumption of Mary is a call to each of us, especially those who are afflicted by doubt and sadness, and live with their gaze turned down, unable to raise their glance. Let us look up. Heaven is open. It does not inculcate fear. It is no longer distant because on the threshold of Heaven, a mother, our mother, is awaiting us. She loves us, she smiles at us and she thoughtfully assists us. Like every mother she wants the best for her children and she says to us: 'You are precious in God's eyes; you were not made for the small satisfactions of the world, but rather for the great joy of heaven'. Yes, because God is joy, not boredom. God is joy. Let us allow Our Lady to take us by the hand. Each time that we hold the Rosary in our hands and pray to her, we are taking a step forward, towards the great destination of life.



Photo: Editor

Pope Francis, Feast of the Assumption, 2019



# Get Connected

## Facebook, Fake News, Fakebook

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At least once a week, I find myself taking to Facebook to ask those in my timeline to 'please stop sharing fake news.' Fake news can range from people sharing a Happy Birthday message to Pope Francis in July (his birthday is in December) to those sharing a story about how clicking and liking a photo will see Facebook donating a dollar or a euro to support a family with a sick child (they won't).

From the silly to the serious, I see fake news in my timeline every single day. I try to do my bit to gently correct, or in some cases to clearly call out, the person posting the fake news. I also find myself having to block chain messages that come into my inbox on Facebook Messenger. People share these messages and forward them without questioning where they have come from or considering how the content might affect the person receiving them. Facebook in particular seems to be perpetually in the grip of an epidemic of fake news and foul chain messages. Facebook feels more like Fakebook every day.

This type of fake news sharing happens all the time within personal Facebook pages, but increasingly I am seeing fake news being shared without question on official pages belonging to parishes and other organisations. This is an unacceptable trend that we need to be mindful of if we are looking after social media pages for a parish, diocese or other church organisation.

But who are the biggest culprits when it comes to spreading the fake news? Is it automated online bots or humans who spreading fake news? A piece of research published in January 2019, in the journal, *Science*, said that older people are almost four times more likely to have shared fake news on Facebook than the younger generation.

On average, Facebook users over the age of 65 shared nearly seven times as many articles from fake news domains as those aged between 18 and 29, researchers from NYU and Princeton found in the study. The researchers analysed the Facebook history of about 1,750 American adults, cross-referencing



links they had posted with lists of known fake news publishers.

This finding is backed up by the demographic data, with over-65s, who came to the internet later in life, sharing more than twice as many fake news articles as those in the second-oldest age group.

The research authors wrote: As the largest generation in America enters retirement at a time of sweeping demographic and technological change, it is possible that an entire cohort of Americans, now in their 60s and beyond, lacks the level of digital media literacy necessary to reliably determine the trustworthiness of news encountered online.'

So please, think before you tweet and fact-check before you Facebook! I recommend HoaxSlayer.com <<http://HoaxSlayer.com>> as a really good source for checking for fake news stories and scams on social media.

### DIGITAL FAQ ANSWERED

#### What is a hashtag?

A hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#). Hashtags are used on social media websites and applications to identify content on a specific topic. A

hashtag is like a search engine built into your tweet or Instagram post. Examples of hashtags used recently by the Catholic Church include #PopeFrancis

When you click on the Pope Francis hashtag, 'popefrancis,' you will find tweets and Instagram posts in which those posting information, news and comments have used the hashtag to link their own content in with a global search topic on a social media platform. Hashtags are a great way of connecting people on a common theme, but please use them sparingly.

**NOTE:** Hashtags and many other social media questions are addressed on 'The Digital Parish', a Facebook page offering tips and guidance for those reaching out online at this time. The page also features some case studies on how people are coping with lockdown and social distancing in the context of faith. Drop by and get in touch if you would like to share your story.





# Preparing Priests Today for Tomorrow's Irish Church

Photo: St Patrick's College, Maynooth



**O**n 8 December 2016, the Congregation for the Clergy published an important and timely update to the guidelines for priestly formation. This is known as the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis – The Gift of the Priestly Vocation (RFIS)*, and it incorporates the insights of the Synod on the Formation of Priests (1990), which were drawn together by Pope John Paul II in *Pastores dabo vobis – I will give you shepherds* (1992). The promise made by God to give shepherds to his people (cf. Jer 23:4) is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ ‘the good shepherd’ (Jn 10:11), who is ‘the great shepherd of the sheep’ (Heb. 13:20).<sup>1</sup>

In the Semitic world, the shepherd knows his sheep individually and they know his voice in such a way that they will follow no other. The shepherd does not drive his sheep; he calls and they follow, trusting that he will lead them to green pastures and restful waters to restore and defend them.<sup>2</sup> Time spent in initial formation is time spent in green pastures, with the time and space

necessary to drink deeply of restful waters and to get to know Jesus better. *Pastores dabo vobis* reminds us that the Lord has promised to be always with his Church and that ‘by faith we know that the Lord’s promise cannot fail... It is ... the foundation and impulse for a renewed act of faith and fervent hope in the face of the grave shortage of priests which is being felt in ... parts of the world.’<sup>3</sup>

PDV and the *RFIS* present an integrated vision for priestly formation, which builds on insights born of the dialogue between faith and reason in the sciences (theology, anthropology, psychology, etc.). Formation is a multi-faceted process or journey in four stages: 1. Propaedeutic; 2. Philosophy/Discipleship; 3. Theology/Configuration; 4. Vocational/ Synthesis. Each stage of formation has four dimensions: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral:

1. Human formation is the foundational dimension, upon which all other dimensions are built and developed. It looks to the Fathers of the Church who

‘developed and practised the care or “therapy” of the man of faith called to apostolic service, for they were convinced of the profound need for maturation that remains in everyone.’<sup>4</sup>

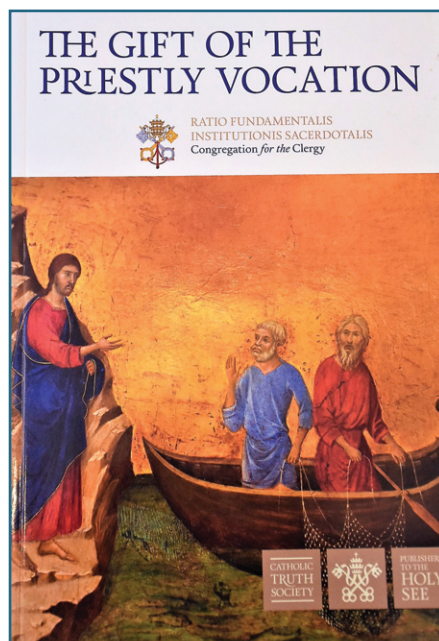
We know that ‘grace does not supplant nature, *but perfects it*,’ therefore, a ‘correct and harmonious spirituality demands a well-structured humanity [...] to cultivate humility, courage, common sense, magnanimity, right judgement and discretion, tolerance and transparency, love of truth and honesty.’<sup>5</sup> These are the human characteristics, aptitudes and virtues which priestly formation in Maynooth seeks to grow and develop in each seminarian. All this is done with the guidance of a Vocational Growth Counsellor and a Director of Formation. There are also regular Human Formation Seminars (including a dedicated programme of formation in Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding), monthly meetings of the Seminary Community Forum (comprised of seminarians and formators) and monthly Rector’s Talks. Through engaging in human



formation, the seminarian learns how to relate to himself and others in a mature and healthy way, and is open to learning from life and from others, so that he can minister more effectively in the future.

2. Spiritual Formation is 'directed at nourishing and sustaining communion with God and with our brothers and sisters, in the friendship of Jesus the Good Shepherd and with an attitude of docility to the Holy Spirit.'<sup>6</sup> With the help of a Spiritual Director, the availability of a rich liturgical and community prayer life in the seminary, as well as regular Retreats and Days of Recollection, *Lectio Divina*, Eucharistic Adoration, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Rosary, daily Meditation and periods of personal prayer, the seminarian grows in spirit. His soul becomes more finely attuned to the divine frequency on which he can listen attentively to the voice of God in the Scriptures and respond to his promptings. By paying careful attention to his spiritual formation and by 'setting out to follow the Master with faith and freedom of heart, seminarians learn, after the example of Christ, to make a gift of their 'own will by obedience to the service of God and their fellow men and women.' [They develop] the maturity ... to live the reality of his own body and affectivity within the logic of gift [and attain] the spiritual self-mastery that is needed for a proper relationship with the world and worldly goods ... so as to become sincere and credible promoters of true social justice.'<sup>7</sup> In this way, the seminarian prepares to live the three priestly promises of celibacy, obedience and simplicity of life.

3. The Pontifical University, Maynooth enables the seminary to fulfil the requirement of the *RFIS* that intellectual formation should aim to achieve 'a solid competence in philosophy and theology, along with a more general educational preparation, enough to allow [the priest] to proclaim the Gospel message to the people of our own day in a way that is credible and can be understood.'<sup>8</sup> Maynooth College shares a campus with Maynooth University, which means that the seminary is at the heart of a large, modern, dynamic educational institution where the seminarians learn how to engage in fruitful dialogue with contemporary Irish society, and how to engage in a mature and respectful manner with a variety of bodies of opinion and trends of thought.



4. Pastoral Formation seeks to integrate the insights and learnings which happen in a gradual way in the other three dimensions, in a way that helps the seminarian to 'acquire the inner freedom to live the apostolate as service, able to see the work of God in the hearts and lives of people.'<sup>9</sup> The pastoral experiences offered to the seminarian throughout his time in initial formation range from working with homeless people to working in a school setting; they are all geared towards helping the man to develop himself as 'a group leader and to be present as a man of communion.'<sup>10</sup> The priest, as pastor, is called to go out of himself, to bring Christ to what Pope Francis so often calls the peripheries, having first found Christ in himself.

All those who are involved in the great work of priestly formation – seminarian and formator alike, are called to grapple with what Timothy Radcliffe OP calls 'the courage of the timid,' and what Cardinal Christoph Schönborn calls 'the way of conversion.'<sup>11</sup> Radcliffe writes that 'the

disciples are invited to follow Jesus and take to the road, not knowing where it will take them. They will have to let go of their old identities and be sent to the ends of the earth where they will die. They are invited to share in the freedom of Jesus and enter into the mystery of the infinite love which is God.'<sup>12</sup> To follow Jesus means first to plumb the inner depths, our personal 'ends of the earth' and there to discover the love of God which the priest is called to share with the people of God. It is to have 'a love for learning at Jesus' school ... [and involves] rethinking, repentance ... This is thoroughgoing renewal, even today. It starts with me.'<sup>13</sup> It means that I have to learn, first of all, that I need to listen; I need to learn; I need to be open to discovering the love of God in new ways and in unexpected places. Then, perhaps, I will be ready to take the Gospel message to the road and to allow myself to be led by Christ to the destination mapped out by love.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Psalm 23:1-4.

<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 1, citing: *Discourse at the end of the Synod* (27 October 1990), 5: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 28 October 1990.

<sup>4</sup> *RFIS* 93; cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio II: PG* 35, 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.2, a.2 ad 1 and I, q.1, a.8 ad 2.

<sup>6</sup> *RFIS* 101; cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 12: AAS 58 (1966), 1009-1011.

<sup>7</sup> *RFIS* 109, 110, 111. Cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 15; *Pastores dabo vobis*, 50 and 30.

<sup>8</sup> *RFIS* 116.

<sup>9</sup> *RFIS* 119.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43, where the Pope speaks of the Church of the Third Millennium as the 'home and school of communion.' The same must be said of the seminary.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Timothy Radcliffe, *Alive in God – A Christian Imagination* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019), 52; Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, *Jesus' School of Life – Incentives to Discipleship* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2016), 19.

<sup>12</sup> T. Radcliffe, *Alive in God*, 52.

<sup>13</sup> C. Schönborn, *Jesus' School of Life*, 18-19.

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# Being Together, Listening Together: Parish and Pandemic

A simple reciprocal pronoun, ‘one another,’ lies at the heart of our understanding of how we are called to live our faith, of how we are Church. We bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2); we comfort one another (1 Thess 5:11); we care for one another (1 Cor 12:25); we admonish one another (Rm 15:14); we forgive one another (Col 3:13); we are servants of one another (Gal 5:13); and we love one another (1 Pet 1:22).<sup>1</sup> And yet, in these weeks, this core element of Church has been taken from us – not completely – but certainly visibly and tangibly, and that is troubling.

Being together and coming together *is* Church. We need one another for salvation. We are to be for one another the spoken word of salvation. In being together, we mediate God to one another. How, then, do we speak? Not just in these pandemic times, since we must admit as we entered this crisis that many in our communities were, for some time now, not hearing that word as a word spoken for them. Are we troubled because we lost the ‘few’ in these pandemic weeks, or because we were losing the many in ordinary weeks? What have we done, as Church, to speak anew this salvation to one another? As we emerge from this, questions must be asked. What is the life of our parishes? What is the work of our communities of faith? What did we have to stop in these days... and was it missed? If it was, what did we do? And if it wasn’t, what is that saying?

We speak so well of God in so many ways to one another. Think of how we are Church at times of bereavement and loss: carrying one another when the journey seems unbearable; of how we are Church in times of illness: offering one another great solace and comfort; of how we are Church in times of despair: gifting one another hope; of how we are Church in

times of celebration: sharing one another’s joy. These voices have been missed and their silence noted.

But we need to reflect, change and adapt, in order to have the Word of God spoken audibly in our world. If being for one another is such an integral aspect of Church, and if this recent pandemic has given us occasion to see how much poorer we are without one another, then it is also an occasion for us to ask how strengthened we would be if God’s word was heard by more. We must reimagine the voice of our Church. We know its beauty and its depth; how can we have it heard?

Calling for continued innovation, and for always seeing with new eyes, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini wondered why has the Church often remained 200 years behind the times: ‘Why has it not been shaken up? Are we afraid? Fear instead of courage? Nevertheless, faith is the foundation of the Church. Faith, trust, courage.’ ‘Only love,’ he noted, ‘conquers tiredness.’<sup>2</sup>

Pope Francis, too, in addressing the Roman Curia last Christmas, reminded them not to fear change, as it is the nature of the missionary Church. Recalling the words of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, in his book *Il Gattopardo*, Pope Francis reminded them that ‘Everything needs to change, so everything can stay the same.’<sup>3</sup>

The Church, then, must continue this change, prompted not only by dramatic shifts in the world around us, not only by promptings of the prophets in our midst, but also from a simple desire to bring, ironically, the unchanging message of God – that already-spoken word – in new, engaging and novel ways to one another, to a people now listening with different ears.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf Gerard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 98-99. Exploring the praxis of togetherness, Lohfink points to a far from exhaustive list of how we are with one another: Rm 12:10; Rm 12:16; Rm 15:7; Rm 16:16; 1 Cor 11:33; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Thess 5:13; 1 Thess 5:15; Eph 4:2; Eph 4:32; Eph 5:21; James 5:16; 1 Pet 4:9; 1 Pet 5:5; 1 John 1:7; Rm 1:12; 12:5; 10; 13:8 14:9; 15:5; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; Eph 4:25, 32; Phil 2:3; Col 3:13; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:9, 18; 2 Thess 1:3; Heb 10:24; 5:14; 1 John 3:11, 23, 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5. The point is made!

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Interview with Georg Sporschill SJ and Federica Radice Fossati Confalonieri. *Corriere della Sera*, 1 September 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia. Address of his Holiness Pope Francis, Saturday, 21 December 2019.



Photo: Fr John Carroll

Fr Dermot Ryan  
is President of  
St Kieran's College,  
Kilkenny



# Rachel's Vineyard: A Path to Healing and Reconciliation

**B**oth Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis have stated clearly that God does not withhold his forgiveness from those who seek it with a sincere heart. But even when we confess our sins and receive absolution, the sense of being forgiven can be blocked by fear or self-recrimination. We are not always ready to forgive ourselves. I believe many women and men in Ireland are still living, years later, with the emotional and spiritual scars of abortion. How can we help them to be reconciled with themselves, with their lost child and with the God who has never stopped loving them?

*Rachel's Vineyard* is a retreat programme for women and men whose lives have been touched by abortion. A few months ago, I contacted Bernadette, who leads *Rachel's Vineyard* in Ireland, and asked her if we could host a retreat in our Diocese. She readily agreed and invited me to participate. Numbers would be small, she said, but it's not really about numbers, it's about people.

We gathered on a Friday evening, ten of us in all. There were five team members, (including a priest), and five participants (including myself). The other four participants were three women and one man. I was a little nervous that my presence might be an obstacle for them, but Bernadette reassured me that it would not be an issue as long as I was willing to 'go with the flow.' The first evening was about laying the foundations. Everybody present had an opportunity to introduce himself or herself in 'broad brush strokes' and, without going into too much detail, to say a little about how they came to be there.

On the Saturday, much of the time was spent listening to one another, as each person spoke freely about his or her own experience of crisis pregnancy and abortion. There were some tears, but there was also great respect and sensitivity. For the most part, I listened and I was humbled by the honesty and humanity of what I heard. It surprised me to find myself sharing some of my own personal and pastoral experiences around pregnancy and loss, which I discovered had touched me at a deeper level than I had thought possible.



Photo: iStockphoto.com

The Word of God is an integral part of the retreat. At various points, the team invited us to reflect prayerfully on Gospel passages, such as the story of the encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well (Jn 4). The story of the 'woman taken in adultery' (Jn 8) was presented as a Word of Mercy, both for women who had had an abortion and for men who had failed to take responsibility: 'Has no one condemned you? No one Lord! Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.' Gradually, as we prayed the Scriptures, the mood changed and there was a real sense of the presence of God's healing Spirit.

Symbolism and ritual are also an important part of the Rachel's Vineyard retreat. Saturday evening included a ceremony of 'naming' for children who were lost through abortion. The evening concluded with an opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation with individual confession and absolution, in which I was privileged to take part both as a penitent and as a celebrant. Sunday, as is only fitting, was a day of Resurrection, in which the Eucharist had pride of place.

Thousands of Irish women have had abortions in the UK. Many of them went because they didn't know what else to do. If their partners even knew, they often found themselves unable or unwilling to do anything that would have

made the difference. Where are they all now? Many of these women and men are living in our parish communities and quite a few of them are at Mass on Sunday.

The participants in the retreat, in spite of their experience of brokenness, all seemed open to being touched by healing power of God. Clearly one doesn't arrive in that space within a week or two of having an abortion. It takes time and grace. I am equally convinced that we need to be there for people whenever that happens. Rachel's vineyard, led by lay people who have a wealth of personal experience, needs our support, so that it can continue to do this wonderful work. We will certainly sponsor another retreat in Elphin in 2020.

*You can find out more about Rachel's Vineyard and see what previous participants have to say about, it on [www.rachelsvineyard.ie](http://www.rachelsvineyard.ie). If you want to talk to one of the team directly, you can call: 087-8592877.*

Bishop Kevin Doran  
Bishop of Elphin





# The Little Sisters of the Assumption, and the Irish Nun who nursed Pope Francis

The visit of Pope Francis to Ireland generated a lot of media coverage, but one significant historical connection he had with Ireland was overlooked. That connection was with an Irish missionary nun from Co Cavan – a member of the Little Sisters of the Assumption.

The Little Sisters of the Assumption were founded in France in 1865 by Fr Etienne Pernet and lay-woman Antoinette Face, in an effort to ease the misery of urban impoverishment among poor and working class families.

The sisters arrived in Buenos Aires in 1910, and from there spread to other countries in Latin America. In 1932, a second community was established in Flores, comprised of working families and many immigrants. One of these families was an Italian immigrant couple, Jose Bergoglio and Regina Maria Sivori. When their first child – Jorge Mario (now Pope Francis) – was due (he was born on 17 December 1936), they sought the help of the Little Sisters. That help was provided by Sr Olive Maria, who stayed with the family for a week, caring for the mother and her baby boy. Little did she realise then that the baby boy would grow up to be the Pope, leader of the Catholic Church which she, as a young girl, had left Co Cavan to serve on the missions.

Sr Olive Maria was born Susan Cusack, on 1 January 1889, to Philip and Ellen Cusack (née Donohue) in the parish of Crosserlough, near Kilnaleck in south Cavan. She was one of four girls – her sisters were Mary, Ellen and Kate – and two boys, Thomas and Phil, in the family who lived on a small farm. She was baptised in Crosserlough's St Mary's Church, which had opened in November 1888, and attended St Mary's National School, opened in 1886.

Susan joined the Little Sisters of the Assumption at Grenelle in Paris, on 30 October 1909, and was professed on 23 May 1912. She served in Reims and Saint Etienne until 1923, when she was assigned to South America, ministering first in Buenos Aires. In 1933, she moved to Flores, where she encountered the Bergoglio family. In 1963, she moved to Rosario for one year, and then to Montevideo for four years. She spent her



Photo: courtesy of the author

Sr Olive Maria with family members in Crosserlough, Co Cavan

final seven years in Muniz, near Buenos Aires, where she died on 31 October 1975, and she is buried there. A number of relatives still live in Co Cavan. Sr Olive was mentioned in *Crosserlough through the Ages*, a local history, published in 2013.

When a girl was born to the Bergoglio couple in 1937, an Argentinian nun, Sr Antonia Ariceta, cared for the mother, the baby and the then one-year-old toddler. The parents and grandmother were active members of *The Fraternity* and of *The Daughters of St Monica* – support groups of laity that were very dynamic in working with the sisters in the Flores community. Men joined *The Fraternity* and women joined *The Daughters of St Monica*. In the context of today's discussions about the involvement of women and laity in general in Church activities, it is noteworthy how this and many other congregations have had very active involvement for centuries. Today in Ireland, the LSA Sisters have a significant number of lay volunteers supporting their missions in South America.

'My father and my mother talked to us about the Little Sisters,' Pope Francis said. 'They used to go zealously to houses where there was a woman who needed to be helped with the housework, prepare

the children to go to school, and so on. A poor woman who could not pay for this help. Servants, poor servants who used to make a deep impression on me always ... from time to time my father or my mother, but more often my father, used to take us to visit them in the Calle Junta. When it rained heavily, this street used to be flooded and we had to cross over by a bridge. In the district, they were called "the Little Sisters of the bridge" because of this bridge that had to be crossed.'

Pope Francis kept up close contact with the sisters; after he was appointed Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he used to visit Sr Antonia and the *Immaculada* community regularly. When Sr Antonia celebrated her diamond jubilee in January 1999, he celebrated the Eucharist in the community's house.

He often visited some sisters who worked in the hospital for infectious diseases. His pastoral or spontaneous visits to the families were marked by special attention to the sick, especially the poorest and weakest. On 15 August 2010, he presided at the celebration for the centenary of the arrival of the Little Sisters in Argentina – an event which was attended by an Irish representative of the congregation.

Jorge Mario kept, as something very precious, the cross that used to be given to the 'Monicas,' and which had belonged to his grandmother. On one occasion he mentioned that he kept it beside his bed, saying: 'it is the first thing I see when I wake up.'

Sr Annette Allain, LSA Coordinator in the USA, stated during the 2015 Papal visit to their community in East Harlem, New York: 'Pope Francis has a first-hand appreciation of our mission and spirituality from an early age, due to receiving home care services from the Little Sisters of the Assumption and also from the involvement of his parents and grandparents in our support groups. It is my belief that his sensitivity to the poor and immigrant population grew from his own personal familial experience. We have been called to become family among the very people Pope Francis loves – those living on the margins of society. This is a privileged encounter of mutuality, believing that the power of growth is in relationship. There is no greater gift than Pope Francis' visit to East Harlem as the Little Sisters of the Assumption celebrate our 150th anniversary.'

In his Foreword to the book, *Il Vangelo guancia a guancia (The Cheek to Cheek Gospel)*, a biography of Fr Stefano Pernet, published in March 2018 by journalist Paola Bergamini, Pope Francis wrote: 'I have many memories tied to these religious women who, as silent angels, enter the homes of those in need, work patiently, look after, help, and then silently return to their convent. They follow their rule, pray, and then go out to reach the homes of those in difficulty, becoming nurses and governesses, they accompany children to school and prepare meals for them.'

The sisters say: 'We like to share with friends and supporters the bonds that unite us to this priest who grew up in a family that shared the charism and the spirituality of our congregation and who now, by the will of God, is our Pope Francis.'

In 1880, the first community of the Little Sisters outside France was established in London, at the request of Cardinal Manning. In early 1891, a community was established in New York, and was followed quickly by one in Dublin, on 4 April 1891, at the invitation of Monsignor Kennedy, Chancellor of the Dublin Archdiocese. Eight years later, on 28 May 1899, the congregation established a house at Grenville Place in Cork. They still have a presence in Cork.



Above: Fr Jorge Mario Bergoglio with his parents, sisters and brothers

Right: Sr Oliva Maria (Susan Cusack)



The sisters arrived in an Ireland where there was great poverty, little or no state aid, poor housing and widespread disease. In 2016, to mark their 125th anniversary, Carol Dorgan wrote a history of the Little Sisters in Ireland: *To Tell Our Story is to Praise God*.<sup>1</sup> The book gives an account of the sisters' arrival and the development of their work throughout Ireland and in the different places to which Irish sisters went. It is a social history of the Ireland to which the Catholic Church and religious communities, especially nuns in very large numbers, contributed so much to the education, health, and well-being of many generations of families, at a time when the state under British and later national rule did not provide such social services for citizens. The Little Sisters of the Assumption can be proud of their contribution to Irish society since those

bleak days of 1891. Their number in Ireland is now just under 70 sisters.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> The book can be downloaded at <https://www.littlesistersoftheassumption.org/celebrating-125-years-in-ireland/>,

Matt Moran is the author of *The Legacy of Irish Missionaries Lives on*. His forthcoming book is *The Theology of Integral Human development*. He was formerly manager of the Mission Office of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Cork.





# The Pearl of Great Price: the Catechism of the Catholic Church

While catechisms may seem to be part and parcel of our Christian education, in fact the Church had no proper catechisms until the time of the upheavals of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Although there were various summaries of the faith since the Church's beginnings, the first catechism as we understand the term today was in fact written by Martin Luther in 1529. Obviously the Catholic Church could not accept Luther's work, but she appreciated the value of a compendium of the faith to instruct the faithful, and many bishops saw that in the confusion caused by the Reformation, a clear explanation of the basics of the faith was needed.

St Peter Canisius and St Robert Bellarmine were among the first Catholics to write catechisms. In 1563, the Fathers of the Council of Trent recommended that the Catholic Church prepare an official catechism. The *Roman Catechism* or *Catechism of the Council of Trent* was written after the Council and promulgated by Pope St Pius V in 1566. This catechism was organised in four sections: the Creed, the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments and Prayer. It was aimed mainly at pastors, to help them in the instruction of the faithful and the preparation of their sermons. In turn, many more popular catechisms in a question-and-answer format were prepared, such as the *Baltimore Catechism* and the *Penny Catechism*. Millions of Catholic children were formed in the faith with these catechisms, which, while at times too complicated for children, did provide a very good explanation of the faith and food for spiritual reflection later in life.

One of the goals of Vatican II was to free the Church from outdated modes of presenting the faith. As Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in his 1998 book, *Milestones*, 'the faith, while remaining the



The Council of Trent, by Pasquale Cati

same in its contents, was to be proclaimed to our era in a new way ... apply[ing] the "medicine of mercy". Ecumenical Councils are great moments of grace in the life of the Church, but often there is a period of confusion in the years following a Council. After Vatican II, this confusion was especially visible in the field of catechetics. Many Catholics born after the Council are worryingly ignorant of the content of the faith, and this can sometimes be true even of people who attended the full complement of religious education and sacramental preparation in their local parish.

In 1985, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the close of the second Vatican Council, Pope Saint John Paul II called an international group of bishops to Rome to reflect on the state of

the Church. The bishops saw the challenges of religious education, and made a proposal that the Holy Father commission a new catechism. In this way, the Second Vatican Council, just like the Council of Trent, could have its own catechism. Pope John Paul II liked the idea and asked Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, to lead a group of bishops who were to produce this new universal Catholic catechism.

This was not an easy task, and Pope Benedict shared some of the challenges he faced in his 2010 introduction to the *YouCat* (a Youth Catechism based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, prepared for the World Youth Day in Madrid): 'I was alarmed by this task, and I must confess that I doubted that such a thing could succeed. How could it happen that authors scattered all over



the world could produce a readable book? How could men living on different continents, and not only from a geographical point of view, but also intellectually and culturally, produce a text endowed with inner unity and comprehensible on all the continents? I must confess that even today, it seems like a miracle to me that this project succeeded in the end.'

In 1992, on the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John Paul II promulgated the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Pope stated that the Catechism was a 'sure norm for teaching the faith.' The success of the *Catechism* was impressive, and many people in the secular media were surprised to see it become a bestseller in different countries. People had a hunger for this sure norm of the faith, and to date millions of copies have been sold.

Countless people have been delighted with this clear presentation of the Catholic Faith, and through the *Catechism* have been able to approach the beauty of Christ and his Church. One reason for the *Catechism's* success is that it contains a treasure trove of quotations from Scripture and from the saints. In the *Catechism*, we meet theology not as some dry academic discipline, but as the living faith of the Bible and of the saints.

The new Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans and Episcopalians entering into full communion with the Catholic Church, while keeping some elements of their Anglican heritage and liturgy, are an example of a fruit of the *Catechism*. One of the reasons Pope Benedict XVI embarked on this ecumenical adventure was that in 2007, a group of former Anglican dioceses sent him a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that had been signed by their bishops, with the statement: 'We accept that the most complete and authentic expression and application of the Catholic faith in this moment of time is found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and its *Compendium*, which we have signed, together with this letter as attesting to the faith we aspire to teach and hold.' In 2009, when he released the provisions for the Ordinariates, the Pope stated that the *Catechism* is 'the authoritative expression of the Catholic faith professed by members of the Ordinate.''

One of the reasons why Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed the Year of Faith (2012-2013) was to mark the twentieth

anniversary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In *Porta Fidei* (in which he explained the Year of Faith) Pope Benedict recommended that all Catholics read the Catechism: 'In order to arrive at a systematic knowledge of the content of the faith, all can find in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* a precious and indispensable tool.' And he continued by explaining that 'it is one of the most important fruits of the Second Vatican Council.'

Like the earlier *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is divided into four sections: the Profession of Faith, the Celebration of the Christian Mystery, Life in Christ and Christian Prayer. I would urge every Catholic to acquire their own copy of the *Catechism*. The words of Pope Benedict when he presented the YouCat are also very fitting: 'This Catechism was not written to please you. It will not make life easy for you, because it demands of you a new life. It places before you the Gospel message as the "pearl of great price" for which you must give everything. So I beg you: Study this Catechism with passion and perseverance.'

#### Logo of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

'The design of the logo on the cover of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (see above) is adapted from a Christian tombstone in the catacombs of Domitilla in Rome, which dates from the end of the third century. This pastoral image, of pagan origin, was used by Christians to symbolise the rest and the happiness that the soul of the departed finds in eternal life.



Logo of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

This image also suggests certain characteristic aspects of this Catechism: Christ, the Good Shepherd who leads and protects his faithful (the lamb) by his authority (the staff), draws them by the melodious symphony of the truth (the panpipes), and makes them lie down in the shade of the tree of life, his redeeming Cross which opens paradise.'

This article is adapted from a piece originally published in *Messenger of Saint Anthony* magazine, Padua, Italy. Courtesy of *Messenger of St Anthony* magazine, Padua, Italy.

Fr Neil Xavier O'Donohoe is a lecturer in Systematic Theology in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co Kildare



#### A message from the editor

Three years ago, I was appointed as editor of *Intercom* for a period of three years. As I write this short message, I am marking 29 years of priesthood, and I can fairly say that editing this magazine has been one of the most rewarding and challenging experiences of those years. I am deeply grateful to all my co-workers: my assistant, Oisín Walsh; the communications team at the Columba Centre in Maynooth; the designer, Colette Dower in Veritas; the Editorial Advisory Board; the many generous contributors and advisors. I would like also to thank my Bishop, Denis Brennan, for his support, and Archbishop Eamon Martin, for entrusting the editorship to me for this period.

To you, the readers, the reason for *Intercom*, a sincere thank you! I wish Fr John Cullen, the incoming editor, every blessing in the new role.





# Prayer to Look Forward to: Planning Prayer for Groups

Church meetings generally start with some prayer. It's an acknowledgement that we believe we are involved in God's work. Yet is it not strange that an exercise intended to express a core belief is at times *pro forma* and eminently forgettable?

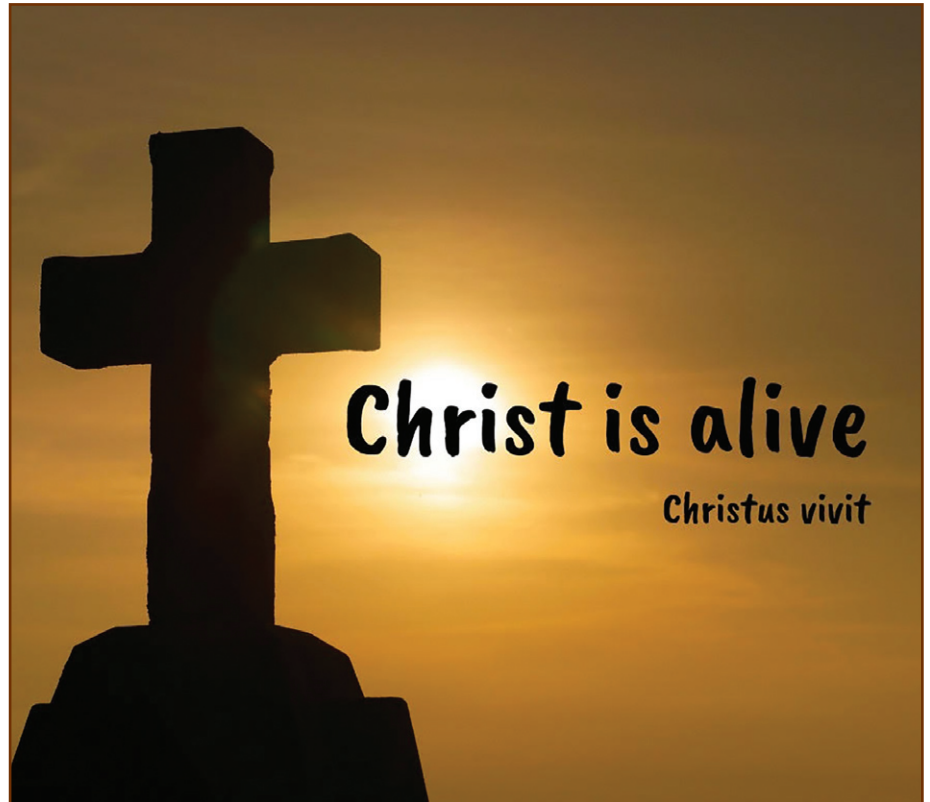
Many years ago, Henri Nouwen described a healthy spirituality as one with three dimensions. It helps us to reach into ourselves, reach out to others (those with whom we work, and those for whom we work), and to reach up to God. A healthy group prayer is one that reminds us of these different dimensions, and preferably in a way that catches our attention. It should not be possible for us to sleep our way through something that is supposed to animate us and bring us to life. Isaiah said: 'each day the Lord awakens me to listen with the ear of a disciple.' I suggest that means being on the alert for something that will encourage or challenge us on the path of discipleship.

It's not that each prayer session must be a 'wow' moment, but there are simple things that can be done that will make a difference. It is a pleasure when our time of prayer speaks to our hearts and creates a bond between us. And it can. What follows is an outline of an approach that I have found helpful.

My starting point is the readings of the day or the nearest Sunday. I browse through the readings with an eye on the particular group for whom I am preparing the prayer. I look for a theme relevant to the people in the group, something that will encourage or challenge them personally, or speak to their relationship with one another, or be relevant to the ministry in which they are engaged.

Having settled on the theme, I look for other material that will expand on the theme: readings, psalms, poetry, reflections, prayers, hymns, music, and I include at some point a question for personal reflection.

With an eye on catching the attention of participants, it can be useful not to use the lectionary translation of scripture texts. The different wording in other standard translations (such as *NRSV* or



*NET*) can make people look again. If you want to go a bit further, the colloquial translation of E. Peterson (*The Message*) can be useful and at times amusing. Where the Psalms are concerned, there are many alternative translations, or prayers based on the Psalms.

One does not need to have an extensive personal library to discover other readings, poetry and prayers on the chosen theme. You can use an internet search engine to source any number of quotations, reflections and prayers on your chosen theme. Pope Francis is also a good source of inspiring and challenging quotations.

Music and quiet time are important to cultivate an atmosphere of prayer. One could have quiet time at the start of the prayer to help people arrive and be present. Alternatively, you can have a period of quiet reflection with a focus-question later in the prayer.

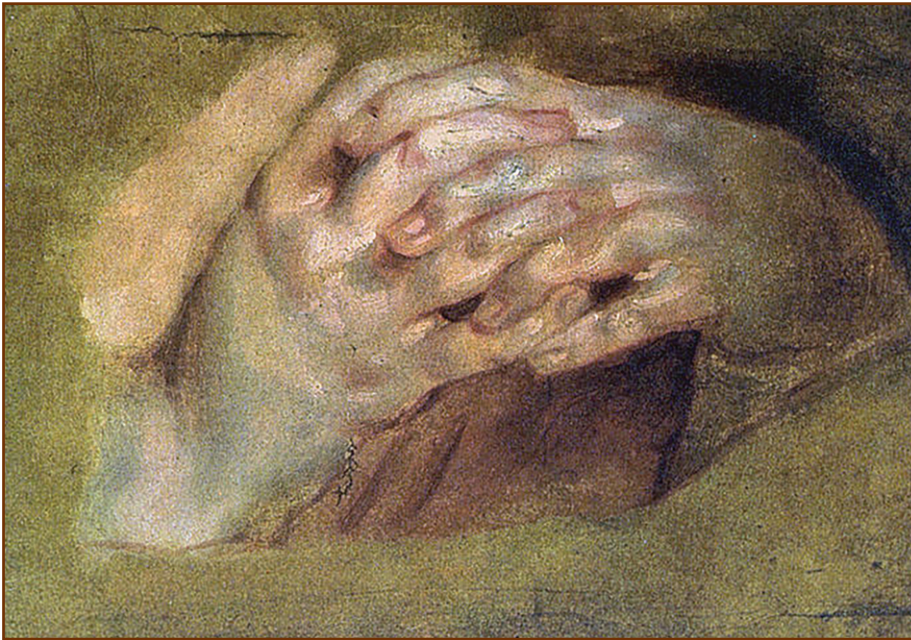
Experience has taught me that there is great value in allowing people to share with one another after they have reflected on the focus question, making sure there are no general confessions and

that the sharing is appropriate to a group situation. This need not extend the prayer unduly. A few minutes chatting with one's neighbour, or in a small group, can suffice to encourage personal engagement with the material. Over time, this will create the lived experience of being a faith community where people do more than pray beside one another, but come to know each other as people of faith.

When all of this is put together, I usually end up with two sides of an A4 sheet, giving a prayer period of fifteen to twenty minutes. It is time well spent, as it will remind participants of the purpose that brings us together in a church group. There is something more important than just business. Donal Harrington and Julie Kavanagh have written simply and powerfully on this in the introduction to their book, *Prayer for Parish Groups*. They describe prayer as the 'heartbeat of every parish group.' Their introduction is worth reading again and again, and the book is a valuable resource.

What follows is a practical example, to illustrate the approach I have described.





Rubens, Praying Hands

## CHRIST IS ALIVE

### Introduction

Lord, Jesus, explain the Scriptures to us.  
Make our hearts burn within us as you talk to us.

### From Psalm 30

I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me  
and have not let my enemies rejoice over me  
O Lord, you have raised my soul from the dead,  
restored me to life from those who sink into the grave.

Sing psalms to the Lord, you who love him,  
give thanks to his holy name.  
His anger lasts a moment; his favour all through life.  
At night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn.

The Lord listened and had pity.  
The Lord came to my help.  
For me you have changed my mourning into dancing:  
O Lord my God, I will thank you for ever.

### From Christus Vivit, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis

Christ is alive! We need to keep reminding ourselves of this, because we can risk seeing Jesus Christ simply as a fine model from the distant past, as a memory of someone who saved us two thousand years ago. But that would be of no use to us: it would leave us

unchanged, it would not set us free. The one who fills us with his grace, the one who liberates us, transforms us, heals and consoles us is someone fully alive.

Alive, Christ can be present in your life at every moment, to fill it with light and to take away all sorrow and solitude. Even if all others depart, he will remain, as he promised: 'I am with you always, to the end of the age.' He fills your life with his unseen presence; wherever you go, he will be waiting there for you. Because he did not only come in the past, but he comes to you today and every day, inviting you to set out towards ever new horizons.

### Reflection on Psalm 30

In a world where there are people who assume you no longer exist, I feel compelled to proclaim your praises, Lord.

I cannot define or describe you but I know from personal experience your power and presence in my life.  
There was a time when I screamed, 'Good Lord, where are you?'  
Then you touched my despairing soul with healing and delivered me from my private little hell.

Thus, I shout your praises, Lord, and exhort all who know you to do the same.

There are times when I feel your anger, but even then I know your concern and love for me remain eternal.

Then my nights of despair resolve into the dawn of new joy.

You turned my griping into gratitude  
my screams of despair into  
proclamations of joy.  
Now I can explode with praises,  
and I will spend eternity in  
thanksgiving to you.

### Reflection Focus Questions

When have I felt particularly alive in recent times?

What helped to give me that sense of vitality?

What can I do to enhance this sense of being alive?

### Music

Easter Hymn (Treorchy Male Voice Choir)

### Sharing and Intercessions

### Litany of Hope

Leader: We believe in God:

All: the One who reveals new life when all seems dead.  
We believe in the new, in the incarnation which renews the face of the earth.

Leader: We believe in Christ:

All: the pledge to us of God's promise of new life.  
We believe in the new, in the possibilities in our midst that challenge us to see with new eyes.

Leader: We believe in the Spirit:

All: whose power enables us to make things new.  
We believe in the new, the new heaven and the new earth coming to birth before our eyes.

Together: God of our lives, you are always calling us to follow you into the future, inviting us to new ventures, new challenges, new ways to care, and new ways to touch the hearts of all. When we are fearful of the unknown, give us courage; remind us that we can bring change and hope into all situations. Create new hearts within us.  
Through your Son Jesus Christ, who is our Lord now and forever. Amen.

John Byrne OSA  
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# Let the Children Come to Me: Faith Learned – Faith Taught

RUTH

My first strong memory of Religious Education was as a child in First Communion Class. The Dominican Sisters, from the start, set the tone throughout the school day. There were prayers at morning assembly, dramatisations of the relevant Gospel stories, each undertaken by a specific class-group, and beautiful hymns and songs, usually about creation, God's love for all and particularly for his children. Assembly was a great time to meet with everyone else in the school, to hear the 'news' and to gustily sing along with the chosen pieces of music which we all loved. The sense of the motto of the school (*veritas* – meaning 'truth') was very strong, and it was understood that spiritual formation was not something which merely occurred during the religious education lesson, but was woven throughout the school day.

In a wonderful turn of events, I ended up marrying the little boy who was my first Holy Communion 'partner.' He was (and still is) 'spirited' and fun-loving, and he was put sitting beside me by the Sister who was preparing us for the Eucharist. Her intention was that I would exert a calming influence on him and that he might repent of his chronic mischief. She was a great woman of faith, but I think I let her down. John continues to be a work-in-progress with regard to the lively disposition!

Our first Holy Communion day was very special. Every detail was meticulously planned by the Sisters – right down to the beautiful calligraphy on the candles which we carried to the altar. John and I led the class into the chapel and were convinced that the whole ceremony depended on us, as were all of the other children, each one of whom had been given a 'post of responsibility.' Our saintly countenances were akin to the angels, but that didn't last too long outside of the church, as the boys raced around the convent garden, attempting to use their now-blessed candles as swords in a battle! The Sisters, relieved that all had gone so well at the ceremony, had the wisdom to look on smilingly, with just the occasional glance up to heaven. Whether this was in grateful thanks for



Photo: the editor

the day, or in bewilderment as to how to tame the battalions, I will never know.

What I do know is that the Sisters had such a positive influence on how I experienced my faith and on how I went on to share it with the hundreds of children I taught in my career as a teacher. Their gentle demonstrations of what it was to be a part of God's family ensured me that I was a treasured and loved member of the community, and that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are present not only throughout the school day, but in every moment. I tried to pass this on to my own students. The motto of *veritas* stayed with me, as I tried to be true to my beliefs, my faith, my history and to those I met along the way. When I didn't know the answer, I tried to be honest and to seek the solution, usually informed by the wisdom of others, and more often than not, with some reference to scripture.

Armed with a bank of songs and religious stories, and children's Bibles from various teachers along the way, I

loved teaching Religious Education. It sat easy with me; I was convinced of the message I was asked to share. I was also teaching at a time when the Good News of the Gospel was valued in society. I was pushing an open door.

Years later, I was invited back by the Dominicans to teach in their College of Education. Amongst a number of curricular areas, I taught the trainee teachers religious education methods. This was such a privilege, as it caused me to share my faith, question my beliefs and suggest ways of teaching and learning that would ensure that the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit would be passed on in a new, culturally appropriate and inclusive manner. My doctoral study of spiritual formation and its impact on the teaching of religious education was assisted by my students, and I learned so much from them. They dared to share their experiences – many of which were very different from my own, and this unveiling was done in a spirit of *veritas*. This was done in the hope that these student-





teachers could, by examining their own faith, pass on the Good News in a way that would be authentic.

### MARIA

‘Múinteoir see, Múinteoir do’, would reasonably sum up the ways in which my mother’s practice as a religious educator influenced my own teaching. My mother, God bless her, was my principal and fourth-class teacher, and I can say that the efforts and attitude she took towards R.E. made an impression on me. As the daughter of an RE lecturer and a Religion teacher (my father teaches religion in secondary school), I was always going to have RE at the forefront of my teaching. I cannot imagine if there ever was another path for me than that of following in my mother’s footsteps as a primary school teacher. From the moment my younger brother, Roy, arrived, he was my first and

least enthusiastic pupil. When he was four, I devoted a disproportionate amount of time to teaching him to do joined writing. I also take credit for his obsession, at the time, with rosary beads of all shapes and sizes.

When my mother became principal of a rural national school, I accompanied her, swapping a large Dublin primary school, for a (supposedly) quiet country school. This change in setting would have a profound impact on my life and on the teacher I would grow up to be. Immediately on arrival, my mother’s influence was felt throughout the school community (she’s too modest to say so!). The revolutionary idea that the children in the school would learn to sing and perform at school and church functions was met with surprise by almost the entire school community, but that change in school practice has stuck with me and is now a pillar of my own practice.

Like an avenging Maria Von Trapp, Mum gathered the school around her at regular assemblies, where we learned to ‘Enter, Rejoice and Come In,’ to ponder ‘If I were a Butterfly,’ and to ‘Be Not Afraid,’ no matter how challenging the situation. As our joyous strains filled the rafters of the local church, our pride and our sense of being part of something greater than ourselves was palpable. I was in no doubt at the time that our demonstration of faith was pleasing to the Almighty, despite our less-than-tuneful rendition of ‘How Great Thou Art’! I learned from my mother that it did not matter whether or not we were perfectly in tune; the purpose of the choir was to create a community in which all were welcome to express their faith.

Moving from a rural primary school to a Dominican secondary school and college of education, I may have taken the phrase ‘following in my mother’s footsteps’ a bit literally, attending Mum’s former secondary school and then sitting opposite her as she lectured me. When, after four years in the college, I was let loose on the world, I too was armed with liturgical music and religious picture-books, and set my course for another rural school in which to begin my practice as a teacher of religious education.

While the spiritual landscape has changed since my mother taught, the feedback I receive daily is that there is still a thirst for religious expression, especially through music. My school choir is my pride and joy. The local community, initially shocked at the presence of electric guitar and drums in the instrumental pieces, have come to delight in the sound of my forty-five-strong choir worshipping the works of Jesus, belting out ‘Shine, Jesus, Shine.’ While the format and style of music may differ from that of my mother’s liturgical samplings, the message remains the same. It echoes the hymn to which my mother and father first walked the aisle dressed in white: ‘Suffer little children to come unto me, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.’

*Ruth Forrest is a retired teacher, school principal and lecturer. Her daughter, Maria, is currently in her fourth year as a primary teacher*





# Reopening our Schools; Opening Doors of Hope

## National Association of Primary Diocesan Advisors

Apparently, Dr Spock never said ‘it’s life, Jim, but not as we know it,’ which surprised my inner Trekkie. The quote comes from the song, ‘Star Trekkin,’ not from Spock, like many other misquotes for effect. As I write, despite the misattribution, it perfectly sums up the experience of life in the Ireland of Covid-19. It also echoes the voices, sentiments, fears and hopes of all those principals and chairpersons that I have spoken to on Zoom, another part of our new reality as we struggle to imagine what our schools and classrooms will look like in September 2020. Zoom calls have provided opportunities to meet with those in leadership in our Catholic primary schools, and to give them the space to talk about what it’s like trying to lead and manage a virtual school community. Despite the difficulties and the concern for vulnerable children, stressed teachers and parents, there was also laughter, joy, much good news and most importantly, hope.

Hope is at the heart of who we are as a people of faith. It is that hope that makes us believe that the light conquers the darkness, that death is overcome by the promise of eternal life and that we are loved endlessly and always by our God. Hope characterises what we seek to be in our Catholic schools. We hope that we are doing the best we can for every single child who comes through our doors. We hope that we can see each child as made in the image and likeness of God. We hope that we can be Christ for one another every day in our school community.

It is hope that sustains us now, as we plan to reopen schools in September, and I pray as I write that this will be the reality. It definitely won’t be like it was last September, but in the difference, much will still be the same. We will still



be standing to welcome our children into their classrooms for the first time since 13 March. We may be greeting smaller numbers and on different days, but the welcome and care will be the same. We will still be writing class plans and collaborating with our colleagues to provide the best possible experience for the children in our care.

Never will the Prayer Space in our public spaces and classrooms be more important. In all the other work that will need to be done to reopen safely, attention must be given to places that will remind children, staff and parents that God is indeed with us. Make gratitude and hope the essence of the space: gratitude that we are all back together and hope that we can make this a really good year in our school community, no matter how challenging the physical environment may be. Prayer walls, or boxes that encourage everyone

to write down their prayers of gratitude, hope and worries, might be a useful addition. For many children, school has always been their safe place, and this year it is essential that we do all we can to ensure that they feel safe and loved when they enter the building.

Opening-of-school-year Masses, prayer services or assemblies may not be possible this September. This does not mean that we shouldn’t plan to begin the year prayerfully. If weather permits, a series of prayer services or assemblies

might take place outdoors. An intercom system can be used to lead the children in prayer in their classrooms, and this might be something that would continue on a weekly basis. As parish teams plan for September, they might consider if a weekly visit to the school to lead prayer in this way could be made a priority. There will probably be much talk about the celebration of

postponed sacraments, which will happen when the time is right. Take the time to consult with parents and teachers – and go gently. Teachers will continue to teach as they have the whole way through these strange times, and will use *Grow in Love* to great effect this term, to help children come to know and love God.

The Prophet Hosea tells us that ‘God is the only one that can make a valley of trouble into a door of hope’ (Hos 2:15). May the school and classroom doors that we open in September be doors of hope.

Maeve Mahon  
is Coordinator of  
Primary Education,  
Diocese of Kildare &  
Leighlin



# INTERCOM CROSSWORD

NO 226 BY GINGER

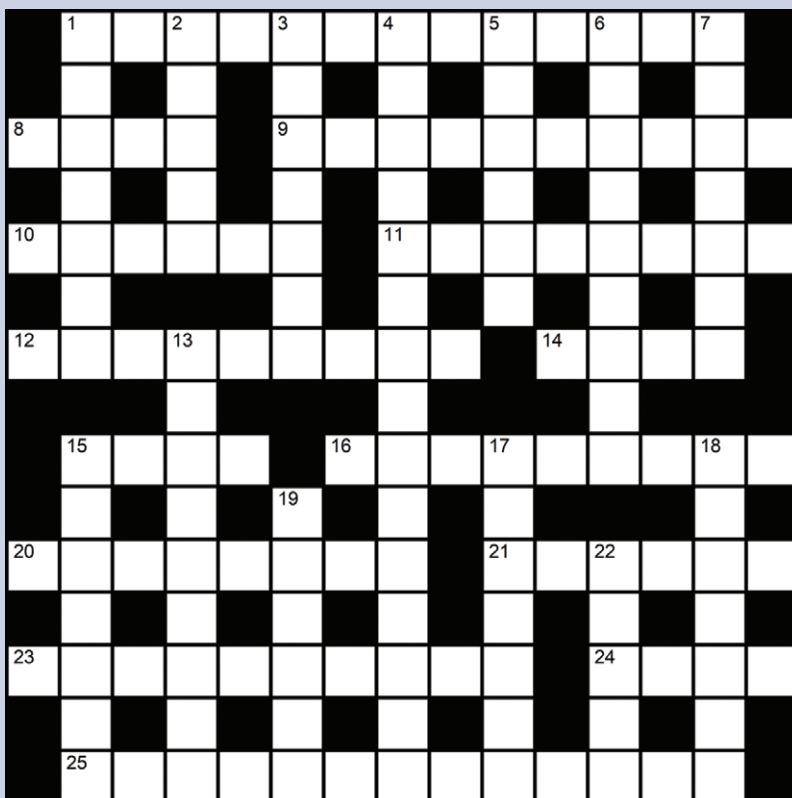
## SPONSORED BY VERITAS

### ACROSS

- 1 I do anagrams to play with helpful neighbour (4,9)
- 8 Big mistake gains nothing in the desert (4)
- 9 Tossing salad, a nun I find from Southern Spain (10)
- 10 Made up for a great weight given to editor (6)
- 11 Member of radio audience let siren off (8)
- 12 He's among those who have Holy Bosco made his patron! (9)
- 14 I object to extremes of latest thaw (4)
- 15 Implores Bible Study initially to include example (4)
- 16 Southern lock, mostly full, causing anxiety (9)
- 20 Drone can transport artillery (8)
- 21 Ill-effect of a French spring (6)
- 23 Fortress advantageous to a wrestler (10)
- 24 Spots broken cane (4)
- 25 Spilling tar on grit boats entails sevral types of handiwork (4,3,6)

### DOWN

- 1 Return of ballad with insect finds early Christian heretic (7)
- 2 No return charge on vegetable (5)
- 3 Footwear assembled around Cork gives cause for outrage (7)
- 4 Not having extreme views, shown by white line (6-2-3-4)
- 5 Quarrel is hurtful, hiding enjoyment (6)
- 6 Sets stale stew, insipid food (9)
- 7 Most accessible organ in cosy home (7)
- 13 Where the high notes are sounded for hymns (5,4)
- 15 Rat bite ruined liturgical headwear (7)
- 17 Possibly do a cure in South American country (7)
- 18 Get hilly country and plus some change (7)
- 19 Its puzzling and strange in game (6)



### JUNE SOLUTION

Across: 1 Redhead, 5 Mascara, 9 Constrain, 10 Ruler, 11 Veranda, 12 Speared, 13 Remit, 15 Incentive, 17 Badminton, 19 Oasis, 21 Ancient, 23 Elevate, 25 Dense, 26 Methodist, 27 Deluges, 28 Disps. Down: 1 Recover, 2 Donor, 3 Extinct, 4 Dramatist, 5 Mints, 6 Surgeon, 7 Allergies, 8 Abridge, 14 Medicinal, 16 Contented, 17 Bearded, 18 Iceberg, 19 Onerous, 20 Sheaths, 22 Tames, 24 Abide.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

**VERITAS GIFT TOKENS**  
**FOR THE FIRST THREE CORRECT ENTRIES DRAWN**

Crossword to be returned by 10 July to July/August 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 September 2020 Intercom. Winners announced in October 2020 edition.





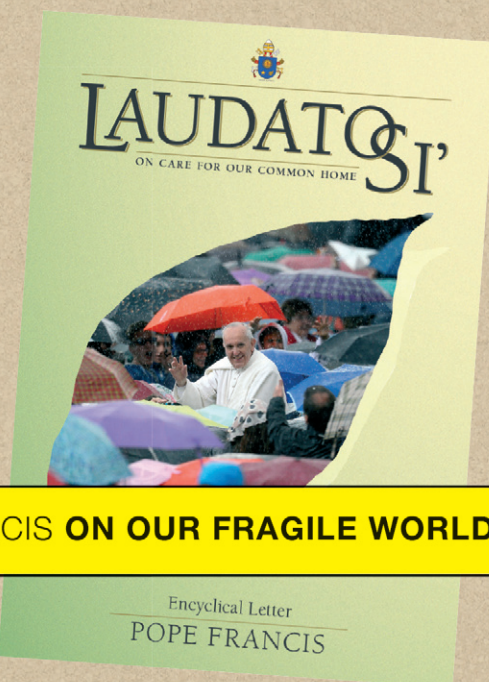
CELEBRATING THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY



*On Care for Our Common Home*

# LAUDATO SI'

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# Parish Resources

## Biblical commentary on the Prayer of Absolution

Fr Chris Hayden  
Editor



God,  
the **FATHER**  
of mercies  
[*Pater misericordiarum*],

The term 'the Father of mercies' is found in 2 Cor 1:3, where it leads into a passage emphasising consolation (*paraklêsis*) in affliction. In Rom 12:1, Paul makes the transition from the theological to the ethical section of the letter with the phrase: 'I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...' Here, the term 'mercies of God' refers back to the entire mystery of salvation described in the previous chapters. God's entire project is mercy; salvation history is mercy. This mercy, however, does not remain at the level of abstract principle, but translates into a personal, subjective comfort in affliction.

through the death  
and resurrection  
of his **SON**

The earliest preaching of the Gospel, the kerygma, was tightly focussed on the *death and resurrection* of Christ. This is seen throughout Acts (2:23-24, 36; 3:13-15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39-40; 13:28-30). What these passages have in common is an accusation levelled against those who killed Jesus, and an affirmation of the fact that God raised Him from the dead. One example (Acts 2:36) will make the point: 'God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.' God has brought life where our sinfulness brought death; that life has been put *precisely where death was*! This is the dynamic of the sacrament: new life and hope, precisely where sin was.

has reconciled  
the world to  
himself

'All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...' (2 Cor 5:18ff). Paul can sum up his whole ministry as a ministry of reconciliation; as a proclamation and propagation of the reconciliation brought about by Christ. The essence of reconciliation is the



Photo: istockphoto.com

changing of a relationship of enmity or estrangement into one of friendship; cf. Rom 5:10, 'We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.'

and sent the  
**HOLY SPIRIT**  
among us

'... he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' (Jn 20:22-23). 'God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba! Father!' (Gal 4:6). The reconciliation effected by the Spirit restores the disciple's relationship with God, so that we are no longer hiding, with Adam, from God's call (cf. Gen 3:9-10) but instead calling out to God.

for the forgiveness  
of sins;

The Spirit's first role is to deal with sin: 'when he comes, he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.' (Jn 16:8). Our sins grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30), but the Spirit deals with sin.

Through the ministry  
of the **CHURCH**

This ministry was at the top of the Lord's post-resurrection agenda... cf. Jn 20:22-23 again. It is a ministry entrusted to the Church, *as Church*. In the sacrament, priests are not free-lancers, or creative artists, but ministers of the Church's mission.

may God give you  
pardon and peace,

Peace follows pardon. Biblically, peace (*shalom*) means the fullness of God's blessings. Cf. Acts 3:19, 'Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshment (*anapsysis*) may come from the presence of the Lord.' Objectively forgiven, the reconciled sinner is offered a subjective, personal share in the Messianic peace... the word 'refreshment' here suggests a healing freshness, in the manner of cool air in contact with a wound.

and I absolve you  
from your sins

Again, John 20:23! The priest acts in *persona Christi*, who says: 'My son, your sins are forgiven.' (Mk 2:5). The priest's extended hand is a gesture of *epiclêsis*, reminding us once again of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

in the name  
of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
✠ and of the Holy Spirit.

The first part of the prayer of absolution is Trinitarian (very much in the manner of the Nicene Creed, and with both following directly on to the Church). From top to bottom, our faith is Trinitarian. The sacrament is about the restoration and strengthening of the life of the Trinity in us. There is also a link with our baptism (cf. Mt 28:19), which is also in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Tears of repentance are linked to the water of baptism, making reconciliation virtually a new baptism: *lavant aquae, lavant lacrimae!*



# Harry Clarke RHA

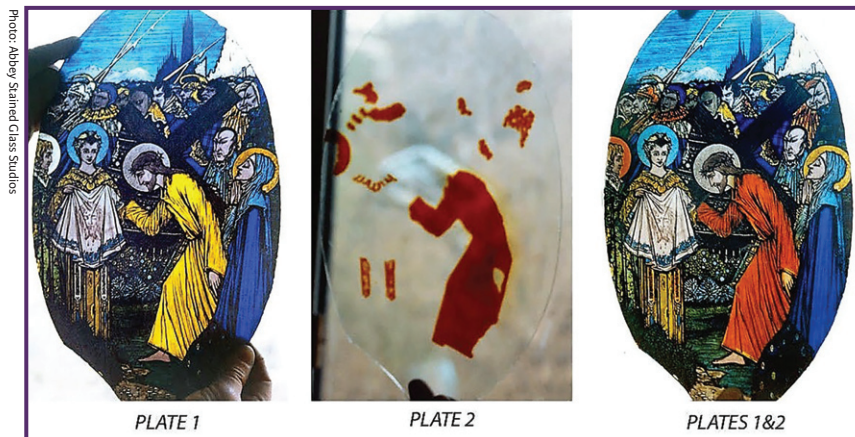


PLATE 1

PLATE 2

PLATES 1&2

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus – sixth Station of the Cross, Lough Derg Basilica

Plate 1: Etched flashed blue glass. Plate 2: Etched flashed ruby glass. Right: Plates 1 and 2 superimposed.

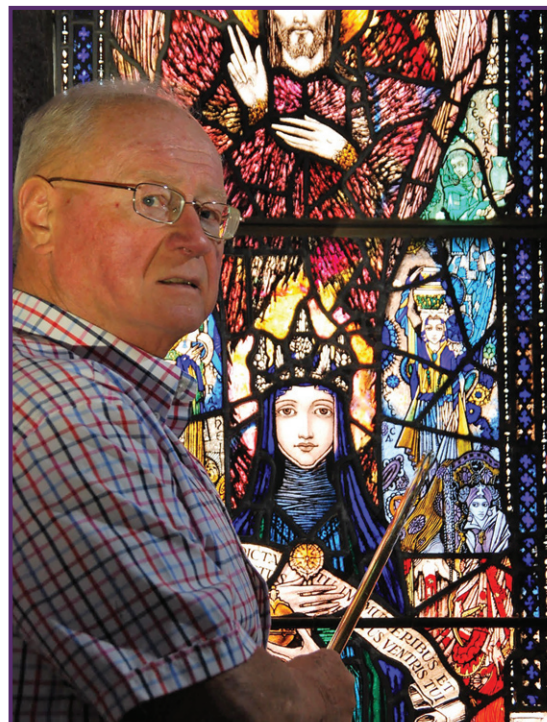
Joshua Clarke moved from Leeds to Dublin in 1875, aged eighteen, after his father married for a second time, leaving him with little prospects at home. He got a job here, but soon left it and used his meagre savings to set up a small church-decorating business. Although his only connection with Ireland was that his great-great grandfather, a Mr O'Cleary, was a Donegal schoolmaster, this ambitious, practical Englishman adapted well to his new Irish surroundings, and he converted to Catholicism. His business was run efficiently and Joshua would check and recheck invoices to make sure there was no wastage or loss. It has been suggested that his frugality with staff members was legendary. Joshua married Brigid McGonigle, of a well-known Irish artistic family, and they had four children, Kathleen, Walter, Harry and Florence. Walter and Harry were both born on St Patrick's Day, in 1888 and 1889 respectively. Their mother Brigid died in 1903, when Harry was just fourteen.

Joshua's business was growing, and he moved to new premises in 33 North Frederick Street, where he was importing stained-glass windows from Germany, fitting them into Irish Churches. He employed James Pope, a draughtsman, then recruited William Nagle, a highly regarded RHA gold-medallist stained glass artist. Joshua's son, the young Harry Clarke, had a comfortable upbringing and was educated by the Jesuits in nearby Belvedere College, but he left school at fourteen to help in the company. At seventeen, he commenced a five-year apprenticeship with his father. A most intelligent young man, Harry learned quickly under the direction of William Nagle, and won a scholarship to the

Dublin Metropolitan School of Art in Kildare Street, where he attended lectures by A E Child.

Harry was always working at some form of graphic art. Some of his illustrations resembled the work of Aubrey Beardsley, a talented young English artist of similar age. Some of Beardsley's creations were quite vulgar. Harry had a mischievous sense of humour, and some of the images in his earlier works bordered on the obscene. This was not well received by the clergy, and there was a reluctance by some priests to commission Harry. From about 1910 onwards, Harry would spend summer holidays on the Aran Islands painting canvasses, together with Sean Keating, Margaret Crilley, Patrick Tuohy, Austin Mulloy, Ethel Rhind and other distinguished artists. My grandfather, also Ken Ryan, a civil servant of necessity and an artist by choice, joined this group. At the end of their Aran holidays, the artists would exchange paintings. Harry married Margaret Crilley, an excellent artist, overshadowed for many years by her husband's talent but now fully recognised in her own right.

Harry was intensely busy with his graphic art, fabric design, canvasses, and now miniature panels of stained glass. He was engaged by London publishers, Harrap, to illustrate works including Hans Christian Anderson's *Fairy Tales*, and Edgar Allen Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. He also produced pen-and-ink illustrations for commercial companies in Dublin. He was entering and winning art competitions regularly and his initial creations in stained glass were well received. For three successive years, he won the gold medal in the



The Coronation of the Virgin in Glory by Harry Clarke, 1922. The author points to Rebecca at the Well, one of the acid-etched biblical scenes in the background.

South Kensington National Competition. His career was taking off, and in 1914 he married Margaret Crilley.

Clarke's first commission, in 1915, was for six major stained-glass windows in the Honan Chapel, Cork, and when they were completed he was immediately commissioned for a further five. He had to design the required images, then paint and fire the glasses in the kilns up to four times in order to get the three-dimensional artistic effect. In addition, many of the coloured antique glasses had to be etched with acid, and this work had to be done wearing a gas mask and heavy protective clothing. The success of this project put Clarke in the limelight, with many new commissions following instantly. His artistic style was unmistakable: the ladies in his windows had beautifully-defined facial features with wide welcoming round eyes; they were elegant and tall, their slim hands usually covered with finely embroidered, fingerless lace gloves, and they often had jewel-like shoes. Clarke could paint 'ugly' as well, as seen in his 'Last Judgement' window in Newport, Co Mayo, in which the beautiful people on the left are going up to heaven, while on the right, the damned, with grotesque, pained facial expressions, are going down to hell. The other studio artists played a trick on Clarke in this window, and incorporated





Above: Detail from a Harry Clarke Nativity Scene, St Marys Church, Killamoat, Co Wicklow.

Right: Harry Clarke RHA, 1889-1931.



Photo courtesy of estate of the late Dr Nicola Gordon-Bowe

an image of his face upside down, along with the other unfortunates on the downward slope.

Clarke also used many smaller pieces of thick, antique dark-coloured glass, instead of the larger pieces of pastel glass used in the Continental windows. This made his windows much heavier, as much more lead was required to hold the stained-glass jigsaws together. This is only one of the reasons why Clarke windows have to be restored every fifty years, instead of every one hundred years as is the case with Mayer's lighter windows. The technical processes for the craftsmen to deliver the glasses to Clarke's exacting standards were labour intensive, making his creations very expensive in comparison with the readymade stained-glass windows imported from Germany.

Joshua Clarke died in September 1921. Earlier that year, the business had been passed to Walter. Later, in 1930, the name was changed to The Harry Clarke Studios.

Renowned artists, including William Dowling, Richard King, George Walsh, William McBride, Terence Clarke (son of Walter), Kathleen Quigley, Charles Simmonds and Christopher Campbell, assisted in the business, and they had to maintain Clarke's established unique artistic style. At its height, the studio had about thirty employees, and there was always great pressure to complete the numerous new commissions. Harry Clarke was a workaholic, but never physically strong. That, combined with working with acid, toxic fumes, painting materials and lead took its toll.

Undeterred, he took on an enormous volume of religious work, and usually completed his projects at the eleventh hour.

New commissions poured in from all over Ireland and abroad. In Lough Derg, the fourteen Stations of the Cross are unique, with a saint holding a miniature panel depicting each Station. These miniatures are usually in two sheets of 'flushed' glasses, both etched and painted, and when both plates of glass are placed one on the other, the image is complete. Another set of windows where this technique is used is in St Joseph's Church, Terenure, Dublin, in 'The Coronation of The Virgin in Glory.' One has to study this window intently, as highly detailed miniature biblical scenes are almost hidden in the background. I would rate it as one of Clarke's outstanding religious pieces. He was commissioned by the Irish government to design a special window for the League of Nation's International Labour Building in Geneva. When this masterpiece was complete, it incorporated eight panels, featuring fifteen miniature illustrations from contemporary Irish Literature. However, the enlightened politicians of the day thought it was 'too risqué,' and cancelled the sale. It is now on permanent exhibition in the Wolfsonian Institute, Florida, sadly lost to Ireland forever. Other non-religious works include 'The Queens Panels,' for Harry's friend Lawrence Waldron, and of course the Bewley's windows in Grafton Street, Dublin, dominated by exotic birds of paradise.

The late Dr Nicola Gordon-Bowe, the preeminent authority on Clarke, spent her career researching Clarke's designs, correspondence and finished works around the globe, and has written many books on the subject. It is impossible to do justice to this extraordinarily talented genius in a short article. In my opinion Clarke is the best stained-glass artist in the world!

Harry Clarke was unwell for some years, and his later projects were delayed, with some unfinished. He died in 1931, aged forty-one, in Coire, Switzerland. The Harry Clarke Studios continued up to the 1960s, but had lost the Master's magic.

I acknowledge papers of Dr Nicola Gordon-Bowe, Dr David Caron and Dr Michael Wynne. I also recall family folklore from my grandfather, amateur artist Ken Ryan, and recollections from my late father, Frank Ryan.

*Ken Ryan, Chairman  
Abbey Stained Glass Studios, Dublin*



## Archbishop Diarmuid Martin on reopening for public worship

As Christians, we suffer through not being able to celebrate our faith through public worship. There is a sense in which this void is especially experienced by priests. Priests share in the anxiousness of all believers and in addition they find themselves unable to carry out to the full what is most essential in their calling. Priests are called to break the bread of the Scriptures and of the Body and Blood of the Lord in nourishing and being nourished by the Christian communities entrusted to their ministry. As Archbishop, I experience that void in a deep way.

There is a longing by believers to be able to return to public worship and towards building up Christian communities. Over the past weeks, all over Ireland, parishes have begun working on plans to be ready to open their Churches as soon as it is safe to do so.

In the meantime, once again I thank all those who have been sustaining and supporting the ministry of the Church in these times. You have been making a unique contribution to building up the Church and the Lord will surely work to ensure that your efforts bear fruit in ways that we do not yet imagine."

*From Archbishop Diarmuid Martin's message of 26 May 2020*



Photo: BBC

## COMECE and Covid-19 restrictions

'The reopening of churches must be implemented by civil authorities in dialogue with ecclesial institutions.'



Photo: istockphoto.com

'Freedom of religion, including freedom of worship, is a fundamental right and a real necessity for many people ... The reopening of churches, in compliance with the rules of sanitary caution, must be implemented by civil authorities in a clear and non-arbitrary way, in full respect of and in dialogue with ecclesial institutions.'

*Fr Barrios Prieto, General Secretary of COMECE (Commission of the Bishops Conferences of the European Union)*

The EU Commission's *Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures*<sup>2</sup> lacks explicit mention of religious services. Fr Prieto notes that this is 'disappointing, as it neglects the key role of religion in European societies.'

COMECE insists that religion has a public, collective dimension, as well as a private one. This is as clearly expressed in all main human right texts, including the *EU Charter*. Its website notes that the aggressive approach of certain secularist actors against the role of religion in the public square may have contributed to the marginalisation of religion in the context of the current crisis.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.comece.eu/freedom-of-religion-at-stake-in-the-context-of-fighting-against-covid-19>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication\\_-\\_a\\_european\\_roadmap\\_to\\_lifting\\_coronavirus\\_containment\\_measures\\_o.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication_-_a_european_roadmap_to_lifting_coronavirus_containment_measures_o.pdf)

## 'Missing Each Other, Missing the Lord'

As we could not receive [the] Sacraments during the pandemic, we were not being nourished and strengthened by them in the usual way. That is part of

the reason, Pope Francis stressed that live-streamed Masses even from parish churches, and spiritual Communion, are less than the Church. Virtual Mass is not the Church. The liturgy is not a film, nor are we spectators. [...] People have come to the realisation that 'watching Mass' is very different from being physically present and participating in the celebration with other members of their family and the community. For all its advantages and immediacy, the virtual is no substitute for physical presence with the assembled community.

*From the Pastoral Letter of Bishop of Ossary, Dermot Farrell*



Photo: istockphoto.com

## Crossword winners

The winners of the May 2020 Crossword competition:

1. Sr Peggy Noone, Taylors Hill, Galway
2. Geraldine Murphy, Dromintee, Co Armagh
3. Anne Ryan, Ballyconnell, Co Cavan

## Pro-Life Concern and Pro-Life Gain

### Pro-Life Concern and Pro-Life Gain: Northern Ireland Assembly votes in favour of pro-life motion

In a letter sent all to MLAs on April 22nd, 2020, the Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland wrote:

*As the Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland, we have a responsibility to do all we can to promote a culture of care and respect for life in our society. This includes a responsibility to inform the conscience of all members of the Catholic Church and people of good will regarding the fundamental moral values at stake in the issue of abortion.*

*[...] we recognise that the legislation passed into law by the Westminster Parliament stands now to be implemented. While we regard this to be an unjust law, which was imposed without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland, we are morally obliged, wherever possible, to do all we can to save the lives of unborn children, which could be lost through abortion, and to protect mothers from the pressures they might experience at the time of an unplanned pregnancy. We trust that you recognise this to be an obligation we all share as concerned citizens and public representatives.*

*[...] we take this opportunity to encourage you to debate these Regulations as a matter of urgency. Insofar as they exceed the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act 2019, we urge you to take steps to formulate new Regulations that will reflect more fully the will of a significant majority of the people in this jurisdiction to protect the lives of mothers and their unborn children. Indeed, as the NIO has noted, this commitment to protect life was expressed by 79% of people, who responded to the consultation exercise conducted by the UK Government last December.*

The extremely liberal regulations, which went further than even the abortion laws in Britain and the Republic of Ireland, were withdrawn by the British Government on 7 May, before being put to a vote in Parliament. This eleventh-hour development can be seen not only as a reprieve for the vulnerable unborn, but also as a recognition of the power of speaking up on their behalf. The Bishops reissued this call to MLAs on 1 June, the day before a vote was passed (46 to 40) in the NI Assembly on a pro-life motion to reject abortions in the case of children with non-fatal disabilities. This vote won't change the law, but it does send a strong message to Westminster MPs who imposed wide ranging abortion regulations on Northern Ireland without the consent of the people. Even after the legislation had been passed, the Bishops spoke up against it. Their voice, along with a choir of other voices, forced Government to act. Surely a case study in persevering advocacy!!



Stormont Parliament Building in Belfast

Photo: iStockphoto.com

## Sacramental weddings decrease – evangelistic challenge increases

It will come as no surprise to parish clergy that there has been a marked decline in the number of people opting for sacramental weddings. This well-informed impression is confirmed by hard figures from the Central Statistics Office.

CSO statistics for 2019 show that 43.6% of couples opted to marry in the Catholic Church, while 41% opted for a civil or other non-religious ceremony. In 2018, the Catholic marriage figure was 47.6%; in 2017, it was 51%; in 2016, it was 53.7%. Back in 1990, it was 93.2%!

These figures point not to a narrowly sacramental crisis, nor even to a catechetical need, but to a deep and broad evangelistic challenge. We have work to do.



Photo: iStockphoto.com



# Book Review

Clare O'Toole  
Shillelagh, Co Wicklow



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Veritas Publications, 2019

**C**atholics are an Easter people. We know there is forgiveness and redemption on the other side of Christ's Passion. We know that suffering can be sanctifying.

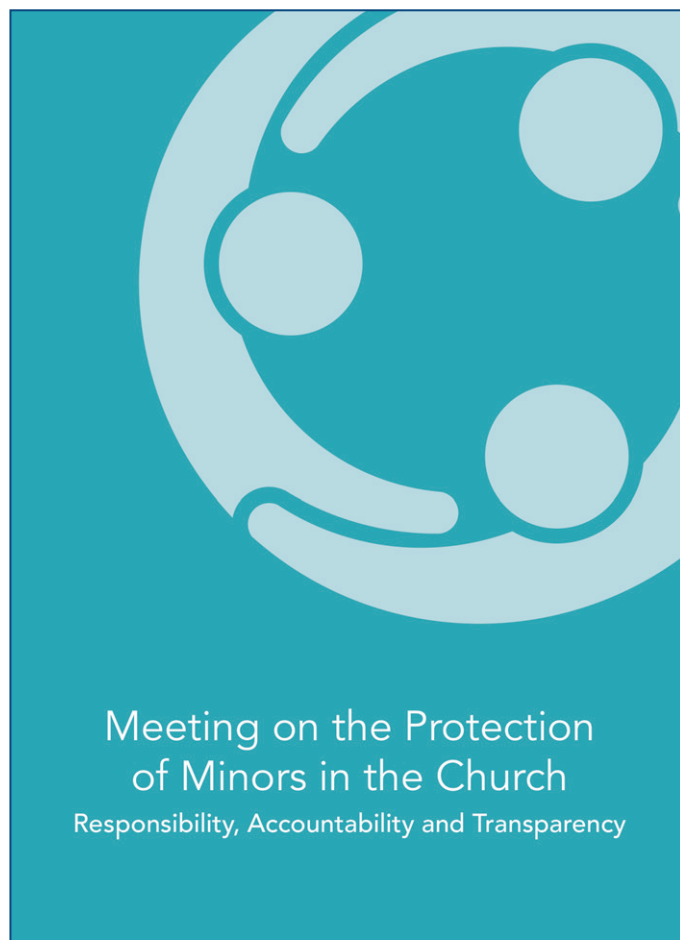
It's a good thing that we are Easter people, because the Catholic Church is suffering. The Church's sex abuse scandal has wounded every single member of our beloved Church, from the victims and their loved ones, to the clergy, both innocent and guilty, to the laity and the scores of lapsed Catholics and their children, who are separated from their parish communities and the sacraments.

The shocking realities of the Church's sexual abuse scandal are its scale and duration, as well as the manner in which victims around the world were dismissed and silenced. The process of reform is hard work, requiring deep humility, a full confession of the wrongs committed, profound remorse and, by the grace of God, a complete renewal of the culture of chastity in the life of the Church.

This book documents a gathering of 190 Church authorities from across the globe at the Vatican in February, 2019, to address the mishandling of the sex abuse scandal in the Church. The book begins with seven testimonies from abuse victims. The startling accounts of lost innocence, broken lives and the struggle for justice preview the enormity of the task ahead. A candid confession of failures, and commitment to concrete actions for prevention of abuse of minors follows, with a series of reflections and proposals offered by Church leaders.

As a lay Catholic, I may not be the primary intended audience for what is essentially an internal document (a record of a meeting held by and for Church authorities). Yet I have found this book well worth reading, for the insights it offers into the struggle. Many of *Intercom's* readers will be better positioned than I am to evaluate proposals related to Church administration, oversight and Canon law. What I can offer, however, is a lay perspective on this series of essays by Church leaders, under the rubric of *Responsibility, Accountability and Transparency*, that explores the spiritual, administrative and cultural failures of the Church.

In the opening contribution, Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle appropriately reminds us how powerful the instinct to turn away from shame and suffering is within us: 'Fear of wounds isolates us and makes us indifferent to the needs of others.' It was a stark reminder of my own powerful instinct to turn away from the suffering and the shame of this crisis. I seriously contemplated leaving the Church rather than facing this crisis. As if, by pretending I wasn't Catholic, I could make it just go away! The urge to put this ugly business behind us is both very human and very misguided.



The many Catholics who have fallen away from the faith in response to the scandal signal the inadequacy of continuing past behaviour in the hope that the issue can be resolved, quietly and efficiently, behind closed doors. The only responsible path forward is to accompany the Church and her victims in a journey that, in Cardinal Tagle's words, 'preserves justice and celebrates the gift of forgiveness.'

The essays gathered under the rubric of *Responsibility* discuss the practicalities of accompanying both the accused and victims. A detailed discussion of the process for adjudicating individual cases of abuse outlines protections for both the accused and the victims. Cardinal Gomez warns of the dangers of clericalism, a culture that warps the pastoral relationship between clergy and their flocks, and which, in this case, placed the institution of the Church 'above the suffering of the victims and the demands of justice.' To combat the culture of clericalism, Cardinal Gomez proposes clearer codes of conduct for both clergy and bishops, and more rigorous means of fraternal correction.

Under the heading of *Accountability*, several of the essays include calls to increase collegiality and oversight, both within the conferences of bishops and through commissions comprised of both clergy and laity, with oversight capacities at

diocesan and regional levels. It was heartening to read a candid discussion of the failures of oversight at the highest levels of the Church, as well as the recognition that this is the moment for the Church to come together, to pool all her resources and skills among clergy and laity alike. Pope Francis affirmed that 'If in the past the response was one of omission, today we want solidarity, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history.' *Accountability* means additional administration, more not less communication, and a commitment to openness and sharing.

Essays on the topic of *Transparency* include rigorous discernment of where genuine concern for privacy, papal secrecy and religious discrimination parts ways with facile excuses for inaction. While acknowledging the importance of privacy to protect the innocent, transparency and communications are indispensable in the resolution of this crisis which is, at its core, an abuse of power.

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*I urge our Church leaders to renew their faith in the laity. Tell us the truth. We can handle it! Continue to discuss challenges facing the Church and make us part of the solutions that are chosen.*

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As journalist Valentina Alazraki writes: 'Secrecy, in the sense of an excessive tendency toward secrecy, is strictly tied to the abuse of power. Today our societies have adopted transparency as a general rule, and the public believes that the only reason not be transparent is the desire to conceal something negative or corrupt.' Transparency in the procedures and norms for ecclesiastical processes protects all involved, and may prove to be one of our best lines of defence against the ever-more-prevalent wave of religious discrimination coming on the heels of the sex abuse scandal.

Transparency of procedures and traceability of communications are vital steps towards restoring trust in the Church and animating her mission. Cardinal Marx proposes that Church administration 'must – just like the Church as a whole – not only be a tool, but also a symbol for the unification of humanity, and the unity of mankind with God.' He describes both the goals and effect of transparency as follows: 'Administrative procedures become transparent, if it is understandable and traceable who has done what, when, why and what for, and what has been decided, rejected or assigned...



photo courtesy of Fr Michael Collins

Thus people encountering the administration are not faced with an anonymous, incomprehensible power structure.' Transparency and traceability in Church administration strike at the very heart of clericalism, by demystifying processes and procedures and thereby allowing the people of God to engage with Church personnel as co-equals in the body of Christ.

Surprisingly, reading this account of what went terribly wrong has given me a greater sense of belonging, of being part of the struggle to renew our beloved Church. On a personal note, I urge our Church leaders to renew their faith in the laity. Tell us the truth. We can handle it! Continue to discuss challenges facing the Church and make us part of the solutions that are chosen. Proclaim and celebrate efforts and successes achieved. Publish as widely as possible child protection policies, clerical codes of conduct and oversight procedures. Let us work with the clergy to celebrate our survivors as sanctifiers of our holy Mother Church, and our holy priests as icons of Christ among us.

There is no quick fix, no silver bullet to right this wrong. We cannot simply turn the page and move on. The suffering will not yield its fruit without a genuine transformation and spiritual renewal of the Church that touches each member of the body of Christ. We are all in this together and Christ Himself is leading the way.

In his concluding remarks for the meeting, Pope Francis acknowledged the profound evil of the crimes committed, by reminding us that 'Behind this there is Satan.' As Catholics, we know real evil exists and we know its ultimate source. We also know that Christ will triumph over evil. *Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church: Responsibility, Accountability and Transparency*, is both a full confession and a roadmap for redemption.



# Apologetics: The Virtue of Open-Mindedness

‘The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid.’

G.K. CHESTERTON, *Autobiography*

Being open-minded is generally seen as a virtue. It can be a good thing if it means being willing to change one’s mind if new evidence presents itself. In reality, being open-minded often just means being in tune with a certain set of moral values which prioritise personal freedom, sometimes at the expense of healthy communities.

Therefore, those who disapprove of certain behaviours are often written off, if not as close-minded, certainly as narrow-minded. For example, those who are comfortable with polyamory, the practice of having multiple sexual partners with the consent of all involved, might be described as open-minded.

But is that really open-mindedness, or just not wanting to be considered prudish or out of touch? There are good reasons why monogamy works, not least because exclusivity in sexual relationships forces people to resolve differences and strengthen their relationship, rather than seeking escape elsewhere. So being open-minded about polyamory might, in fact, involve deciding that it does not help human beings to flourish.

Generally speaking, human beings are very poor at evaluating arguments on their actual merits. It was a nineteenth-century psychologist, William James, who observed that ‘a great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.’ Being more intelligent does not mean that we are better at evaluating the evidence for our beliefs. It often means that we are better able to come up with reasons to justify our prejudices.

In 2013, Yale Law Professor Dan Kahan presented people a problem involving statistics about whether a skin cream helped a rash or not. Unsurprisingly,



people who were good at maths worked out the correct answer more easily. But when presented with a problem where the solution appeared to show that gun control did not work to reduce crime, maths ability went out the window for liberals. The same was true of conservatives, except their maths ability disappeared when they were presented with a solution which showed that gun control worked. The smarter the person, the better they argued in favour of their preferred position.

In fact, the stronger a person’s maths skills were, the less likely they were to find the solution if it disagreed with their basic beliefs about gun control. Meanwhile, people with poor skills in maths were 25 per cent more likely to work out the implications of the statistics if the figures agreed with their political views about guns. People with strong maths skills were 45% more likely to fail to find the solution if it disagreed with their worldview.

This is disheartening. It would be lovely if we were willing to be swayed by substantial evidence. In reality, this is only the case if we engage in slow, painful thinking. Most of us engage in mental shortcuts that are quick but often

wrong. Take the famous question about a water lily that is doubling in size every day. At 48 days, it covers an entire pond. When did it cover half the pond? The counter-intuitive but correct answer is at 47 days. Our mental shortcuts lead us to divide the days by two and the most common answer is 24 days.

There are, of course, far more important questions than the amount of time it takes lilies to cover a pond. For a thoughtful person, questions about the existence of God, or the right approach to take to the treatment of elderly people in a pandemic, cannot be reduced to mathematical equations. Perhaps the best way to begin is to acknowledge that we do not know everything and neither can we discover everything from first principles. We can, however, if we are believers, pray for wisdom and the ability to step outside our prejudices.

Having friends whom we trust to point out when we are not so much pursuing the truth as justifying ourselves is also helpful. Nourishing ourselves by reading and listening to people who seek beauty, truth and goodness is a good counter to the kind of thinking that our society values – quick but often shallow.

This does not mean sub-contracting our thinking to others. A useful open-mindedness is only developed by continually challenging ourselves, by observing when we are resistant to something and testing whether that resistance is well-founded. Saint Paul told us to test everything, but he also told us to hold fast to what is good.

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# Appreciation of an Inspiring Priest

An extraordinary man went into hospital in early May, a few days after his 91st birthday. He brought his iPad and iPhone with him so that he could keep in contact with his many friends, access Mass via the webcam, and pray the Divine Office on his *Universalis* app.

He is extraordinary because on 5 March 2020, before Covid-19, he celebrated the 65th Anniversary of his Ordination as a priest in the Dublin Diocese. While you might expect he would want to enjoy retirement, he was busy writing to the editor of this magazine to ensure that the Parish Development and Renewal process (PDR) is remembered and not let 'wither on the vine.' He believes that now, more than ever, the church in Ireland needs to shake down this process, give it a fresh name and appearance and, working with the faithful, review and address the spiritual needs of the community in the aftermath of Covid-19. He is a great advocate of Pope Francis and hugely committed to the message of *Evangelii Gaudium*. He is hopeful for a church that will re-invent itself and get to know the 'smell of the sheep'.

An example of this man's vision is the fact that in 1988, when the community engaged in the PDR process, one of the groups that emerged from the exercise was the set-dancing group. They recall that this priest was so committed to the positive impact that dance and socialising would have on a community that he insisted the proposed tiled floor in the parish centre would instead be a maple timber floor, suitable for the bounce of the dance.

The Family Group also emerged from the PDR process, and they appreciated that this priest loved creation and saw the beauty in all things – especially young families. He often visited the Toddler Group on Friday mornings and invited them to the church for a blessing. He used every opportunity to help families integrate their faith into their daily lives.

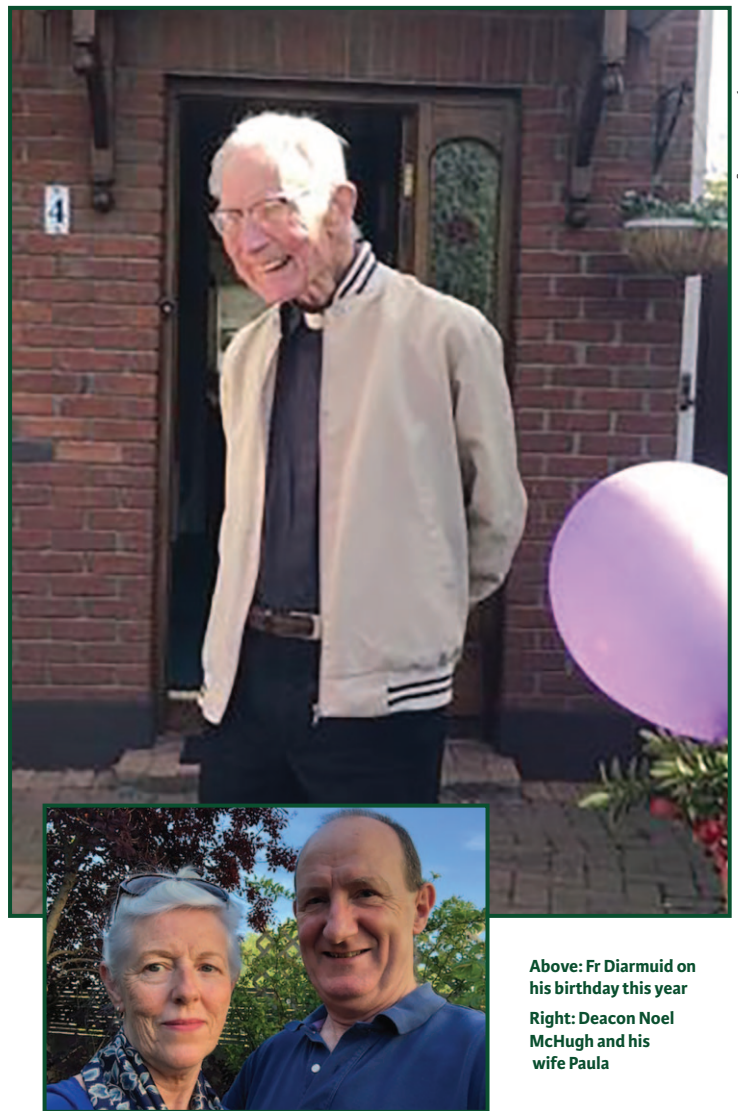
In 2013, he organised a Family Faith Celebration in the parish, inviting families, young and old, to participate in a two-day faith celebration. He brought Catherine Wiley from the Catholic Grandparents Association to our parish for the first time. The sports fans among us got a chance to meet Ger Brennan

from the All-Ireland winning Dublin Teams of 2011 and 2013, and to hear about his faith journey. Families from outside the parish came and enjoyed the experience so much that they formed a connection with the parish.

When setting up the Third World Partnership with a village in Ethiopia, he asked us to ensure that we listened to the needs of the community there, rather than imposing what we thought was best. He also suggested that we should only partially finance the projects, ensuring that our partners retained some responsibility for the development. This advice has informed our approach with our partners over the past ten years.

It is no wonder that he was the first man my wife, Paula, and I called when the life-support machine was turned off on our beloved son John at the age of 23. This man, having baptised our children, officiated at Conor, Elizabeth and John's First Holy Communions and their Confirmation ceremonies. He came to the hospital immediately after we called. He prayed with us. He referred to our John as a 'masterpiece,' and reminded us that we were like 'gold in a furnace,' that this was a test, and we would survive this terrible loss of our beloved son.

When our kids were young, this priest was known as Fr Con-and-on-and-on-ly, because he came from the school of



Above: Fr Diarmuid on his birthday this year  
Right: Deacon Noel McHugh and his wife Paula

homiletics that believed you should state your message until it sticks, and again if necessary. More recently, I overheard a parishioner liken him to a bottle of aged wine, suggesting that his homilies had improved with time. This would not have bothered him, as he has spent his life wanting to break open the 'Joy of the Gospel' in the best possible way.

The priest that I am talking about is Fr Diarmuid Connolly (Canon Diarmuid, as of 2013). His belief is that the challenge facing our church today is to change the current indifference of many baptised Irish Catholics into enthusiasm and expectation, the type that we all experience when we walk down Clonliffe Road or Lansdowne Road, when going to see our favourite team play. We owe it to Fr Diarmuid to keep trying.

Noel McHugh is a Deacon.  
He and his wife Paula are members of  
St Ciaran's Pastoral Team in Hartstown

Photos: courtesy of Noel McHugh



# Spiritual Outbreak during Pandemic Lockdown

When the Covid-19 lockdown started, there was a massive shutdown of workshops, concerts, shows and religious services. But it didn't take long for the lively imaginations to kick in, and soon there was an online spiritual and creative outbreak.

Church liturgies have been broadcast online for a long time, a wonderful service for those who can't attend in person, of which people not directly affected were often unaware. Now they know! And now we're familiar with concepts that were alien only a few months ago – Facebook Masses, Zoom Masses ... who would have thought?

I first became aware of the creative outbreak when I heard that US singer-songwriter Mary Chapin Carpenter was performing one song per night from her home (with dog and cat in attendance). The simple format particularly suited her intimate style and insightful lyrics. Performers and composers with more religious themes quickly took to Facebook Live, YouTube and Instagram to sing their songs and play their music. Some went live, some recorded first, and most of their output is still available on the various online platforms.

Derry singer-songwriter Eilidh Patterson, whose latest album, *Journey Maker*, is made up entirely of spiritual songs, opted for short concerts, 'Live From Lockdown,' from her home over several Sunday evenings. Beki Hemingway, an American singer-songwriter now living in Ireland, was an early adapter and with husband Randy performed a wide range of songs, some spiritual in a broad sense (e.g the prayer-like 'Thank You for the Rain'). On the classical front, Andrea Bocelli had millions of viewers in April for his short concert from the Duomo, the Cathedral in Milan. His rendition of 'Amazing Grace' from the front of the Cathedral was a highlight.

Irish liturgical composers have been active as well. Liam Lawton streamed an impressive live concert from Graiguecullen-Killeslin parish church in mid May; Sr Marie Dunne posted videos of some of her beautiful songs on YouTube, with intentions related to the

pandemic; Ephrem Feely posted a variety of pieces through his channel; Rónán Johnston, along with wife Joanne, streamed several soulful songs on Facebook. On 24 May, Ian Callanan streamed a live concert on YouTube, 'straight from the farm.' American composer Steve Warner, currently working as Music Director in Newman University Church, St Stephen's Green, Dublin, conducted a webinar on music and culture which was quite unique, and linked in to his new CD, 'Easter in Ireland,' with the Newman Vocare Ensemble based there. Indeed the small community there has been playing a blinder – daily masses with music, Taizé nights on Tuesdays, and Rosary from Our Lady's Chapel.

Singer-songwriter Johnny Duhan has a unique, intimate style and his live broadcasts on Facebook perfectly suited his combination of songs and stories. He went for a series of Monday night concerts based on his back catalogue and autobiography.

I've been a fan of US singer-songwriter John Michael Talbot for ages, and apart from broadcasting encouraging messages on Facebook, he also has been offering concerts. Another US singer, Jenn Bostic ('Jealous of the Angels'), was in the middle of a UK tour when the Covid axe fell, but when she just about got home, she played concerts from home on the dates she would have been due to go live over here.

Then, of course, there were those virtual choirs and split-screen

performances. My favourite was the version of 'Be Not Afraid' by 'Catholic Artists From Home,' which included Talbot, Dan Schutte, John Angotti, Sarah Harte and many more. Coming in a close second was a rendition of 'Day Is Done (All Through the Night),' by the Notre Dame Folk Choir Alumni.

For some of these performers, the lockdown had drastic effects on their incomes, so it was perfectly understandable for some of them to have sought to monetise their online output. Some stayed free, some had online 'tip jars,' and some had a registration charge in advance – all good!

Sometimes, especially in the early days, the audio or video quality was ropey and some camera angles were unusual, but I found that many of the performers improved on this front as time went on – they too were learning new skills.

This selection has been a personal one rather than a comprehensive overview of all the good spiritual and religious material out there – I think there's a book in that.

Brendan O'Regan teaches English and Religion. He is a columnist with the *Irish Catholic*, and runs a website on faith and culture, [www.faitharts.ie](http://www.faitharts.ie).

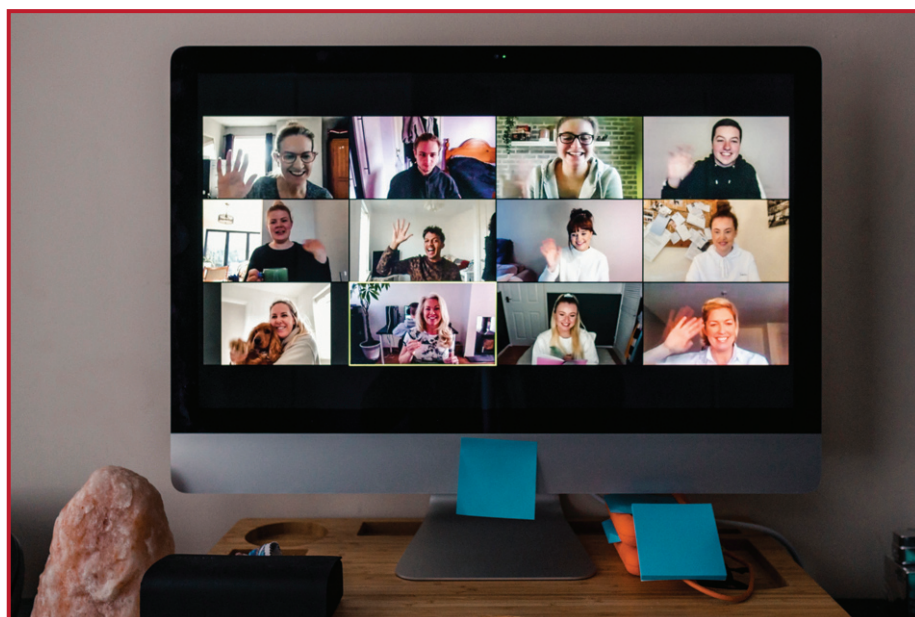


Photo: iStockphoto.com

# Lectio Divina

## On Life and Prayer (Psalm 1:1)

### **Lectio: What the Word says in itself**

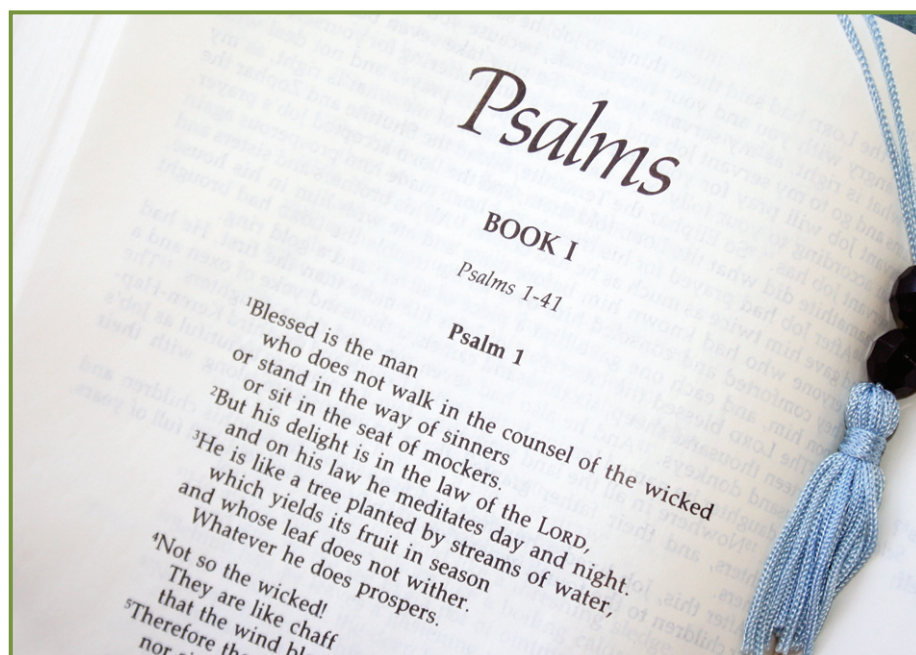
It is fascinating that the Book of Psalms, the prayer-book of the Bible, opens on a negative note; indeed, it opens on three negative notes. The blessed individual is one who does *not* walk, does *not* stand and does *not* sit in a certain way. These three verbs in the opening line of the first Psalm are intended to encompass all of human activity.<sup>1</sup> Straight away, two things may strike us: the Bible's prayer-book opens by considering how we live, not merely how we pray; and how we live is not just a matter of doing – it is also a matter of avoiding. The first verse of the first Psalm thus has a salty flavour and an astringent effect. It doesn't sit easily with a mentality that wants to affirm everything.

And isn't it interesting that the first verb of this book of prayers is not 'pray' or 'worship' or 'sing' – or something equally obvious? Instead, it's 'walk'! In the Bible, walking has a moral, ethical significance, as in Rom 6:4, where St Paul tells us that we were baptised so that we might 'walk in newness of life.' The book of Psalms thus opens on a prophetic note: no separation between ethics and worship, between life and prayer, between Sabbath and workday. This connection between prayer and life, located at the very beginning of the book of Psalms, orientates our engagement with the entire Psalter; it shapes the authentic life of prayer.

### **Meditatio: What the Word says to me/us**

Christians read the Psalms as people who have been baptised. In baptism, a threefold negation occurs moments before the water is poured. The individual (more commonly, adult believers speaking on the infant's behalf), rejects Satan, all his works, and all his empty promises. From its very first moment, the Christian life is lived within certain boundaries; to say 'yes' to God is to say 'no' to what is not of God; to seek the things of God is to reject all that is contrary to God's ways. To walk as a disciple is to refuse to walk along any other path.

This does not mean that discipleship is a dour affair, an ongoing 'no' to life and its pleasures. On the contrary, the Christian life is a 'yes' to all that is good



and lovely. But that very 'yes' implies a 'no.' We need only think of the earliest Christians, whose 'yes' to the God and Father of Jesus Christ led them to be branded as atheists, saying 'no' to every other god.

In the life of Jesus, negation is paramount: Jesus does nothing of himself (Jn 5:19), he does not speak by his own authority (Jn 12:49), he does not do his own will (Jn 5:30).<sup>2</sup> We, disciples, are not above our master! (Mt 10:24).

### **Oratio: What the Word leads me/us to say**

Lord, to turn toward you is to turn away from what is contrary to your love and goodness. May we guard our 'yes' to you by saying 'no' as often as it takes. May we ever walk in your goodness and avoid the paths that lead away from your love and wisdom. Help us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, whose whole life was a 'yes' to your plans, even when that 'yes' cost his life.

### **Contemplatio: Being transformed by the word**

The Word illuminates the Word! Other Psalm verses can help us to see the transformative potential of the words we have been considering:

'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' (Ps 119:105).

'Make me know the way I should walk.'  
*Tabhair dom eolas na slí atá le triall agam* (Ps 143:8).

### **Actio: Putting the Word into practice**

Let us be courageous in accepting the demands of discipleship and the need to buttress our 'yes' to God with a 'no' to anything that would draw us away from him. Let us wisely reject 'feel-good' distortions that would have us open to everything, aware that the mind open to God is closed to what is not of God.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, many translations do not render the first verb of the Psalter in a way that is in keeping with the Hebrew, *hâlak*, to walk. Happily the RSV (but not the NRSV) does so. The Grail translation, which we use in the breviary, substitutes 'follow.' Likewise, the second and third verbs, stand and sit, are often lost in translation. As we see here, the obscuring of the verb 'to walk' can significantly impoverish our understanding of the Psalm.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Von Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 29.

Fr Chris Hayden  
Editor





# Thoughts on Pain and Suffering

Pain and suffering have always been with us. Suffering is synonymous with life. We don't invite it into our lives. There is nothing heroic about suffering unnecessarily. Pain is not good in itself. However, pain and suffering can lead to some good. They inspire works of mercy and acts of heroism. As CS Lewis writes in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, 'God... shouts in our pain: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.'

Many of our questions about pain and suffering arise from a misplaced image of God. God is not a God of punishment but a God of love. The God of love must be our starting point if we are to make sense of the afflictions of being human. Our God of love gave us one significant and precious gift, and that is freedom. If he hadn't, we wouldn't be who we are.

We are free because of God and we act freely because of God. There lies the crux of the matter. We are human, not divine. To be a free human is to experience pain and suffering. As St Thomas Aquinas would put it: we live in a material world and not in a world of endless miracles. The book of Job has much to say on the matter, because Job is an innocent man who is suffering greatly: 'There is no one like him on earth: a sound and honest man who fears God and shuns evil' (Job 1:8). Job cannot understand why he has to suffer, while those who are living questionable lives do not. A fair question! By the time we come to the end of the Book of Job we learn that Job has accepted that God is God and we are not God. He has come to recognise his human reality, which includes suffering and pain. Job comes to know the meaning of suffering and pain in God's design: 'I have been holding forth on matters I cannot understand, on marvels beyond me and my knowledge' (Job 42:3).

The writings of psychiatrist Viktor Frankl can help us to make sense of suffering and pain. When he found himself in a concentration camp, he was surrounded by suffering, pain and death. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl explains clearly what confronted him and his fellow inmates. 'Their question was, "Will we survive the camp?" For, if not, all this suffering has no meaning.' The question which beset me



Job's Despair

was, "Has all this suffering, this dying around us, a meaning?" Frankl's answer is profound. Suffering, he says, ceases to be suffering the moment it finds meaning, such as the meaning of sacrifice. Once we change our attitude to pain and suffering, it has no power over us. We, in a sense, control it.

This is, essentially, the grand drama of our redemption as Christians. '...it was appropriate that God, for whom everything exists and through whom everything exists, should make perfect, through suffering, the leader who would take them to their salvation' (Heb 2:10). We are told that suffering and pain would be part of God's plan. In the prophecy of Simeon, Mary is told: 'a sword will pierce your own soul too' (Lk 2:35). She would not be immune to the horrific events of the Way of the Cross. We know, too, that our God experienced pain and suffering to the point of death. God is very much with us: 'Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or attacked. As scripture promised: For your sake we are being massacred daily, and

reckoned as sheep for the slaughter. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us.' (Rm 8:35-37).

The meaning of pain and suffering lies in seeing the cross not as an instrument of torture and death, but as the great sign of hope, which leads to redemption and resurrection. When we give pain and suffering a meaning beyond illness, and locate them in the context of our faith, especially by uniting them with what Jesus and others, like Frankl and Kolbe, have done, then it is no longer as overwhelming. However, the challenge remains and the journey is an individual one, and no one can say to someone who is suffering that it cannot be all that bad.

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## Te Deum

The *Te Deum* is part of the Office of Readings on Sundays outside Lent, during the octaves of Easter and Christmas, and on solemnities and feasts. It may also be used on special occasions of thanksgiving, such as at the end of the year, and as a bishop blesses the congregation at his episcopal ordination.

A late eighth-century tradition attributes to hymn to St Ambrose and St Augustine, composed and sung antiphonally by them on the night of Augustine's baptism in 387. It was called the Ambrosian Hymn in the older breviaries. St Hilary was also regarded as the composer, whether the fourth-century bishop of Poitiers or fifth-century Hilary of Arles. But there is greater agreement that the composer was St Nicetas (333-414), bishop of Remesiana, in modern-day Serbia.

In the reform of the Liturgy of the Hours after Vatican II, some suggested its omission from the Office of Readings. But, as noted in our liturgical books, the last part may be omitted. This part, with verses from the psalms, is an addition and its penitential tone is not in harmony with the hymn's great outburst of thanksgiving.

## Grains of Incense and the Paschal Candle

As the Easter Vigil begins, the Paschal Candle is prepared and five grains of incense may be inserted in it in the form of a cross, to the words: 'By his holy and glorious wounds, may Christ the Lord guard and protect us. Amen.' This optional rite is a powerful reminder of the victory of the cross but it has very complicated origins.

The earliest reference is found in the tenth-century Sacramentary of Corbie, a monastery near Amiens in France: 'Let them make a cross on the Candle out of incense, and let the year of the Lord and the Greek letters  $\alpha$  and  $\Omega$  be inscribed.' It is argued that the phrase *de incenso* means 'with the fire,' that is, a lighted candle. A confusion, if any, of incense and fire or light! In the liturgical books of the twelfth and following centuries, we find a great variety of practice. In different places, the grains of incense could be inserted into the candle before the Vigil, before or during the singing of the *Exsultet*, or not at all. Words of blessing might or might not be said, again at different times. The grains signified the passion and wounds of Christ, or may have been simply decorative.

## Sequence

A query about the sequence, the hymn used at Mass before the Gospel on a few occasions, ended: 'Of course, these all disappeared with Vatican II.' The comment isn't quite accurate. The introduction of a sequence at Mass goes back to ninth century and soon hundreds, even thousands, were composed and used in various places. Every day could have a sequence, though they were not obligatory. The Missal of 1570, after the Council of Trent, reduced the number to four and their use was obligatory. They were *Victimae paschali* on Easter Sunday and during the Easter octave, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* at Pentecost and during its octave, *Lauda, Sion*, composed by St Thomas Aquinas for the feast of Corpus Christi, and *Dies Irae*, for All Souls Day and the Requiem Mass. In 1727, the thirteenth-century hymn *Stabat Mater* was added as a sequence for the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

These five sequences of pre-Vatican II days, including the 1962 Missal used in the Extraordinary Form, are retained in the Roman Missal revised after the Council and as we use it today, with some changes regarding usage. Therefore, the proper sequence is sung or said on Easter Sunday and Pentecost. It is optional during the octave of Easter and for the feasts of Corpus Christi and Our Lady of Sorrows. *Dies irae* is not retained.

The sequence is a hymn of the feast, sung before the *Alleluia*, though in the past it was sung after the *Alleluia*, as a sort of extension or sequence of the Gospel acclamation.

## Begin at the chair

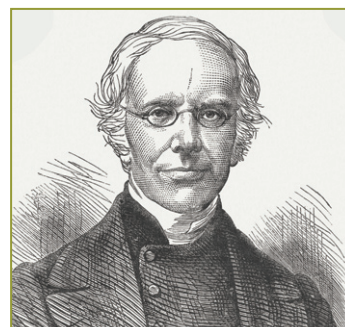
Having revered the altar, some celebrants remain there and begin the introductory rites of the Mass. However, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (50; cf. Order of Mass 1) says: 'the Priest stands at the chair and, together with the whole gathering, signs himself with the Sign of the Cross.' The same *GIRM* (310) reminds us that the chair signifies the celebrant's 'function of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer.'

At the end of Mass, after Communion, 'the Priest may return to the chair' and 'then, standing at the chair or at the altar,' says the Prayer after Communion (*GIRM* 164-165, cf. Order of Mass 138-139) and concludes the celebration with the Blessing.

## 14 July 1833

On the opening day of the summer Assize court, a service was held in various places, including Oxford. In 1833 Oriel College had responsibility for the service at St Mary's University Church, with John Keble as the preacher. Keble had taken his degree before being elected a fellow of Oriel, not yet 19 years of age. Ordained priest in 1816, he resigned to assist as curate in his father's parish of Fairford in the Cotswolds. In 1827, he published *The Christian Year*, a collection of poems on the liturgical year. He was elected professor of poetry at Oxford in 1831.

He took 1 Samuel 12:23 as his scriptural text: 'As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and right way.' Samuel strongly opposed the people's call for a king, yet he would not cease to pray for them. He would continue to teach them what was the good and right way. Keble did not hesitate to preach to a



John Keble

congregation, which included judges, on that Sunday, 14 July 1833, and to condemn what he saw as the *National Apostasy*, the title of the published sermon. For Keble, a Christian nation was subject to the laws of Christ's Church. Though not mentioned in the sermon, he saw this apostasy in the proposed suppression by the civil authorities of ten Irish bishoprics, the twenty-two established in 1690 being reduced to twelve.

John Henry Newman, vicar of St Mary's at the time of the sermon, says in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, 'I have ever considered and kept the day as the start of the religious movement of 1833,' the Oxford Movement.

Photo: istockphoto.com



# Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

5 July 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* This prophetic text is applied to Jesus, at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The paradox of God's ways is evident: the king who comes is victorious yet humble; riding on a donkey yet banishing chariots.

*The second reading.* In Paul's terminology, 'misdeeds of the body' refers not only to 'sins of the flesh,' but to every action and attitude that ignores, or is at odds with, the reality of God.

*The Gospel.* Jesus is not opposed to learning and cleverness. He wants his followers to use all their abilities in the service of his kingdom. But leaning and cleverness alone will not avail, without the attitude of childlike humility which looks to God in all circumstances and for everything.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

Let us turn to the Father who reveals the Son, raising our hearts in prayer to the God and Father of Jesus.

### Intercessions

1. For the Church,  
that in her teaching and preaching  
she may not merely reflect human learning and cleverness,  
but call all believers to humble faith in God the Father.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. For those who shape public opinion,  
that they may be men and women of intelligence,  
truth, justice and compassion.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. May those who plan for and respond to public emergencies  
be guided by God's wisdom;  
may they strive to balance the critical needs of the moment  
with the wider, long-term good of society.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. We pray for the children and young people  
whose lives have been disrupted by the Covid-19 restrictions.  
May God watch over them;  
by his grace may they thrive and grow in goodness.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For the faithful departed,  
that they may hear the Lord saying to them:  
'Come to me, and I will give you rest.'  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we join with your Son, Jesus, in thanking you for your goodness and providence. 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 144: I will bless your name for ever, O God my King** – *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 14th Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

Be Thou My Vision – *Veritas Hymnal/Hosanna/Laudate/Seinn Alleluia/In Caelo/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Sing of the Lord's Goodness – *Laudate/Gather/Celebration Hymnal*

Ag Criost on Síol – *Veritas Hymnal/Hosanna/Laudate/Seinn Alleluia/In Caelo Come To Me – Alleluia Amen/Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Críost Liom – *In Caelo*  
Lauda Jersusalem, Dominum – *ICMA*  
2017/[www.liturgy-ireland.ie](http://www.liturgy-ireland.ie)

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Editor

# Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

5 July 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30

This text is not a 'put-down' of learning or of the learned and the clever. Far from it. God ought to be pursued with the vigorous application of human intelligence.

It is about humility in our intelligence, in our science. It is about an appreciation that the current state of knowledge and of science is but a fraction of all God's knowledge, of all there is to know.

Before humankind can say there is no God, humankind must first be able to say: 'Now we know absolutely everything there is to know!' If we ever reach that point, we will be staring God in the face!

Human knowledge is to God's knowledge what a four-year-old's knowledge is to her father's knowledge. The child trusts the Father, mind you! But here is the cut: only the receptive child will truly learn, only the child open to the possibility that he or she does not know everything will be able to learn more. Most children possess this capacity quite naturally. Sadly, many adults lose it. They conclude from their limited knowledge something that requires absolute knowledge: there is no God!

Only humble human intelligence can receive the divine intelligence. Thus 'these things' – the mysteries of the kingdom of God – are hidden from those who confuse their limited knowledge with absolute knowledge and thereby close themselves off from God. But the mere 'child' – really an adult but a child of God – who appreciates that their science is very partial, still possesses the openness that God can enter.

And the condition of God entering this openness? Quite simply, take Jesus seriously. He became one of us, he left us a teaching. This is the burden; this is the yoke. Take him and take his teaching seriously. Stop believing as if Christmas never happened. As if Easter never happened. As if he was never here! As if he did not leave a teaching! Just come to him as he has revealed himself. He will give you rest. And it is a wonderful rest.

*Fr Paddy Barville, St Senan's, Enniscorthy*

## The Deep End

In the opening lines of the Gospel today, Jesus praises God for the grace of openness and humility he sees around him, for revealing 'these things' to infants and hiding them from the 'wise.' I imagine Jesus had had enough of the arrogance and the egos of the elite. The authorities of the time who were so closed to his message of love and compassion. Jesus' disciples were not from the upper echelons of society, but they trusted in Jesus, they wanted to understand, they had an openness to learn. For Jesus, God's grace was found in the humble, in those who were open to new possibilities, in those whose hearts were not hardened or consumed by ego.

Over the past number of months, we have all been humbled a little, whether we were open to it or not. The Covid-19 epidemic stopped us in our tracks and suddenly we realised we were not in control. We were humbled by a microscopic invader with macroscopic consequences.

While many opportunities lay in our cocooning, I am very aware how many are struggling with our new reality. It has been a traumatic and stressful time for most people. And yet, within it all, our faith asks us to watch out for signs of hope, for stories of resurrection all around us, for good news.

Today, we hear some of the most beautiful lines in the Gospel: 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.' Reading *The Message* interpretation of the text reads: 'Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I will not lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.'

During days of uncertainty, may we remember and whisper these lines, with open hearts.

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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 11:25-30

1. For Jesus, the key to a personal knowledge of God and relationship with God is not primarily through academic study but through a mind and heart open to learn. Recall moments when you had a sense that your relationship with God took a significant step forward. What kind of dispositions prepared you for that growth?
2. Jesus lived in a society in which people were very conscious of status, dignity and external appearances. He wanted to break down the barriers this created, so that all would be aware of their worth and dignity. Perhaps you can recall someone who was not highly thought of in human terms, but who was a light to you.
3. In v. 27, Jesus lets us into the secret of his relationship with his Father, one of total trust. This trust freed him from anxiety and worry about himself. As a result, he was a person of gentle and humble heart and was able to bring rest to those who were overburdened. Recall people whose trust in God enabled them to be supportive to others who were stressed or burdened. Perhaps you have experienced this yourself?
4. Recall and give thanks for people who, like Jesus in the story, were able to combine challenge with sympathetic support and understanding. Perhaps you have been able to do this for others at times also.

*John Byrne OSA  
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# Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

12 July 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* God's word is never lacking, never ineffective; the variable is our response. Human freedom is the only reality that can hamper God's word, but even then, the word is not outdone.

*The second reading.* Paul mentions two types of suffering in this short reading: the sufferings that are an unavoidable part of normal life, and the 'groaning,' the restlessness and dissatisfaction that are the lot of the believer who knows that his or her heart will be restless until it rests in God.

*The Gospel.* The parable of the sower is the first full parable in Matthew's Gospel (and in Mk and Lk). It is the key to understanding all the other parables. Every parable is intended to elicit a response to God's word; in every instance, Christ the sower sows his word in the heart of the listener, who must choose whether or not to bear a harvest.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

Let us now turn in prayer to God the Father, whose word has been sown in our hearts.

### Intercessions

1. The Church exists in order to evangelise,  
in order to sow the seed of God's word in human hearts,  
so that a rich harvest might be produced.  
May those who sow be themselves fertile and productive soil;  
may their lives witness to God's goodness.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. For those who sow and reap in the most literal sense.  
May farmers be blessed and safe in their work;  
may their land and stock be productive;  
and may God bless them with good yields and harvests.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. For those whose lives are full of distractions,  
that learning to give space and attention to God and his word,  
they may bear a harvest of peace and goodness.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. We ask the Lord to strengthen those who are ridiculed  
or marginalised on account of their faith.  
May they grow strong in their witness,  
and not be deflected from the path of discipleship.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For all the faithful departed,  
that they may encounter a merciful judge and share in eternal life.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

Your word, Lord, remains forever. May it bear a rich harvest in us. 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 64: Some seed fell into rich soil and produced its crop** – *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 15th Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

Seed Scattered and Sown – *Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*  
Ag Criost an Síol – *Veritas Hymnal/Hosanna/Laudate/Seinn Alleluia/In Caelo*  
Out of Darkness – *Gather/Laudate/In Caelo/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*  
Lauda Jersusalem, Dominum – *ICMA 2017/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*  
In You Creation Finds Its Joy – *Seinn Alleluia/In Caelo*  
Unless A Grain of Wheat – *Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/In Caelo/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

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Editor

# Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

12 July 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 13:1-23

We hear all sorts of reasons for unbelief, but every time I read the parable of the sower I'm struck by its reach. Is there a reason advanced for unbelief that's not included in the parable?

Jesus compares people who hear the word to seed that falls on the edge of a path. The seed of the word is sown in the heart but there's no understanding. Where there is no understanding, abandonment follows. The heart is simply not receptive, whereas receptivity is the precondition of understanding; the heart is not open, and entry through anything that's solidly closed is difficult. The word simply bounces off non-receptive hard objects and falls away.

Next, Jesus compares people who hear his teaching to the seed that falls on patches of rock. It lacks both rich soil and deep roots. When confronted with human suffering – scorching sun – the faith of some people withers because it's not deeply rooted in the rich soil that is Jesus Christ. Scorching and withering – apt descriptions of human suffering.

That objections to God based on this very argument can attract millions of views on YouTube suggests that many have not taken Jesus and his teaching seriously. The God in whom many refuse to believe is not the God found in the teaching of Jesus Christ. They dismiss a God unrelated to Jesus Christ!

Next, Jesus compares people who hear the word to seed falling in thorns. Falling in the midst of the worries of this world and the lure of riches, the seed is choked to death! A strong image, mind. Choked, and common parlance often adds 'the living daylight's out of!'

It's dramatic, but for most people the choking happens unconsciously. It's simply that other stuff – the cares of this world (interests that are good and wholesome in themselves) and the pursuit of wealth – take our hearts. For many the interests become false gods.

Is there a source of unbelief that's not covered in this parable? It seems that many people attempt to believe without Jesus Christ and his teaching, which means they end up believing in nothing!

*Fr Paddy Banville, St Senan's, Enniscorthy*

## The Deep End

Today's Gospel is in three parts: the parable Jesus taught, an explanation on how to listen, and an explanation of the parable Jesus taught. The parable itself is well known and concerns seeds, where they land, and what happens to them. We might take note of the seeds as representing God's Word and the effect it has, or does not have, on us. What makes the difference in the parable is the type of soil the seed lands on and how suitable it is for growth to take place. Let us consider our own hearts as the soil: how open are we to receiving seeds that may be planted there? What condition is our 'soil' in?

Any decent gardener will know that good soil is key in order to cultivate anything. Soil needs to be weathered, broken down; it can be too acidic, or it can be too alkaline. Good soil needs organic matter such as compost or manure. It needs lots of air and water; it needs to be tended and prepared.

We too are weathered down by various forces in our lives, and at times have manure thrown at us. This can either close us down and harden our

hearts, or it can open us up help us to grow, ready to receive the seeds that are scattered. Like the soil, we must take care of our bodies, hearts, and minds, adopt a holistic approach to our well-being.

The lesson on 'hearing' in the Gospel today is also important. How do we listen? Do we listen or read God's word while being distracted by many things, or are we fully attentive, even for a few minutes each day? How do we listen to one another? Fully attentive or with one eye on our phone? There is a great richness in the text today, spend time with it. Perhaps think about how you might prepare better the soil for planting.

'The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.' (Wendell Berry)

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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 13:1-23

1. Jesus uses parables to make people think about their own responses to his message. As you read this parable you may recognise that at different times you have been like each of the different types of soil. As you recall times when you presented fertile soil for the word of God, what helped you create that receptive atmosphere? What lessons for life do you get from that?
2. Parents with children, teachers with pupils, speakers with listeners, are all like sowers in a field where the preparation of the soil is up to another – the child, pupil or listener. They can sow the seed but cannot guarantee that it will bear fruit. At times there may be a temptation not to try any more. The challenge is to sow in hope. When have you been surprised by the harvest you have reaped?
3. 'We are wasting our time here' may sometimes be the apparent wisdom in a group. Have there been times when you have gone against this apparent wisdom and seen your efforts bear fruit?

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# Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

19 July 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* Notice the detailed description of God's attributes: God is just, strong, sovereign; a mild and lenient judge; powerful; our teacher and our source of hope. This reading might be used to invite people to reflect on their image of God and on how that image might need to grow and develop.

*The second reading.* A wonderful reminder that prayer is not primarily a matter of choosing the correct words. We can pray only if God's Spirit is at work in us, and the heart of prayer is something deeper than words.

*The Gospel.* Jesus makes it clear that evil doesn't merely coexist with good: the flourishing of evil along with good is part of God's plan.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

Let us turn in prayer to God, whose providence embraces all things, good and bad.

### Intercessions

1. May God, in his wisdom and mercy,  
lead the Church to ever greater holiness;  
may he purify her of her sins,  
even while allowing them to serve his greater purpose.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. Just as the people in the Gospel ask Jesus to explain his word to them,  
let us ask the Lord to give believers and unbelievers alike  
a desire for true wisdom and understanding.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. Let us continue to pray for those whose lives and livelihoods  
have been disrupted by the Covid-19 crisis.  
May those who are fragile or vulnerable  
find the strength, hope and support they need.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. We pray that the mentality of radical individualism  
which has been part of our culture  
may yield to a spirit of solidarity and mutual support.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For all the departed:  
those who have succumbed to illness,  
those who have died suddenly,  
and those who have nobody to pray for them.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

Father, grant us listening hearts and willing hands, that we may live up to our calling to be salt of the earth and light of the world. 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 85: O Lord, you are good and forgiving** – *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 16th Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

Praise My Soul The King of Heaven – *Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*  
Unless A Grain of Wheat – *Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/In Caelo/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*  
Lauda Jerusalem, Dominum – *ICMA 2017/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*  
God's Holy Gifts – *Remain In My Love/ICMA 2006*  
Thanks Be To God – *Laudate/In Caelo*  
Though We Are Many – *Sing The Mass/ICMA 2011/12/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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Editor

# Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

19 July 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43

Jesus compares good people to wheat and bad people to weeds. The kingdom is like a field of weeds and wheat. The kingdom of God, no less! Yet we're hardly able to cope with the sinfulness of the Church. Where is this kingdom? It's already here, it's in the Church, the Church that contains and always will contain both saint and sinner.

I have a choice; do I give power to the sinner or to the saint, the weeds or the wheat? 'Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church...' we pray in every Mass. You'd think that Jesus hadn't taught the parable of the weeds and wheat, not at all, never said a word like it!

You'd think he wasn't betrayed by somebody who shared his table. You'd think he didn't die between two thieves. You'd think he didn't describe the kingdom for us. Should the Church be different? You'd think that the incarnation never happened at all!

That's my point – many people attempt to persist with a belief that doesn't seem to take Jesus Christ and his teaching seriously. Is it any wonder that so many fall away? Of course, weeds are dangerous if they get out of control. But the best way to deal with weeds is a reminder that in the end there's judgment. Dare I say it: Hell! The weeds are thrown on the fire and burnt.

How can there be Mercy without Justice? Justice is the very precondition of Mercy. Mercy is undoubtedly God's greatest attribute but that presupposes Justice.

Do we really think that God bestows mercy forcibly? Did Jesus? God will never – never – superimpose himself or his mercy on our freedom. We must use our freedom to receive mercy, that's its purpose.

Divine Justice just is, it's the default position, but mercy is our choice, always. There's nothing as sensible as the Catholic faith properly understood. The failure to take Jesus and his teaching seriously is causing havoc among us.

*Fr Paddy Banville, St Senan's, Enniscorthy*

## The Deep End

In today's Gospel, we hear many parables about the 'Kingdom of heaven' and what it is like. This might move us to think about the afterlife, but Jesus was describing God's kingdom in the here and now, 'on earth as in heaven.' Jesus, through parables, is trying to describe what is difficult to comprehend. Parables allow our minds and hearts to ponder, to imagine, to move beyond the constraints of language. Jesus is describing what God's vision for this world is like, in the here and now!

Taking one of these parables, the mustard seed, we can explore a little more. There is an ancient text which forbade planting mustard seeds in Palestinian gardens because the shrub would take over. It can go wild, out of control, and attract unwanted birds. Author Shane Claiborn compares it to *kudzu*, a wild vine that could blanket entire mountain areas and even crack cement buildings. I like the idea of something so small causing so much

mischievous, holy mischief! The Kingdom of Heaven is like this? Yes, growing even where it is not wanted.

People in authority during Jesus' time might have had images of the 'lofty cedars of Lebanon' representing the 'reign of God.' There was a grand vision. As with most of Jesus' parables, he turns things on their head. It is through the smallest of seeds that God's grace affects the world, silently making its way through the cracks.

'Might I,' quavered Mary, 'might I have a bit of earth?' 'Earth!' he repeated. 'What do you mean?' 'To plant seeds in – to make things grow – to see them come alive.'

FRANCES H. BURNETT, *The Secret Garden*

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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 13:24-43

1. The owner of the field who allowed the wheat and the dandelion to grow together is a reminder to us to be patient with ourselves and with others when we see that not everything is right. Sometimes a preoccupation with the negative (the dandelion) can blind us to the positive in our own lives and in the lives of others. When have you found that a willingness to live with the messiness of the present created the conditions for future growth?
2. Have you ever found that it was through accepting the dandelion that you learned important lessons for life, e.g., learning through mistakes, stupid questions, or foolish risks?
3. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are reminders that seemingly insignificant things can have very positive results. Have you ever been surprised by the benefit to yourself or others of a kind gesture, a small initiative, or a word of encouragement?

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# Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

26 July 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* In the original Hebrew text of this reading, King Solomon asks God for the gift of a listening heart. Thereafter, Solomon was noted for his great wisdom, but his initial request was itself a wise one.

*The second reading.* All things work together for the good of those who love God. In this short statement from the letter to the Romans, Paul teaches us about God's providence, his ability to foresee and bless all our circumstances. Our task is not to understand how God is doing this, but to trust that it is happening.

*The Gospel.* The people in the first two parables sell all they own to obtain a treasure they have found. The third parable cautions us against expecting perfection, even as we receive God's gifts.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

Let us now turn in prayer to God, who is the giver of every good thing.

### Intercessions

1. That God may bless the Church.  
May she point people towards God and his kingdom,  
and may her own failings  
not prove a hindrance to the spread of the Gospel.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. We pray for political leaders and people of influence in public life.  
May they have something of the wisdom of Solomon.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. For those who have been wounded by sinfulness within the Church,  
and by the Church's failures to acknowledge that sinfulness.  
May they find healing and peace.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. May God bless those who are searching for meaning.  
May they find his truth and be willing to change their lives  
in order to live by it.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For the dead,  
that God's mercy may enfold them  
and that they may share in the life of the saints.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

Father, we thank you for the reassurance that you guide and bless us in all things. 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 118: Lord how I love your law!** –  
*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 17th Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

Lord of All Hopefulness – *Veritas Hymnal/Hosanna/Laudate/In Caelo/Seinn Alleluia/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Praise My Soul The King of Heaven – *Veritas Hymnal/Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Faithful Is The Lord Our King (Mo Ghile Mear) – *ICMA 2013/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*  
Be Not Afraid – *Glory & Praise/Gather/Laudate/In Caelo/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Ag Criost an Síol – *Hosanna/Laudate/Seinn Alleluia/In Caelo*  
Though We Are Many – *Sing The Mass/ICMA 2011/12/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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Editor

# Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

26 July 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 13:44-52

The kingdom is like treasure hidden in a field. How many will pass this field oblivious to its contents? Ponder the multitudes who pass the field that is the person of Jesus and his teaching, and the guardian of all that – the Church. Nothing there for me! Ponder the reasons presented for this passing.

Now let Jesus explain: the reason is ignorance, ignorance of treasure so great that a man or woman is prepared to sell everything just to have it. Jesus' argument is using something we understand – good business sense – to explain the eternal. Once this treasure – Jesus Christ – is found he becomes the finder's focus. The finder hides the treasure again and sets about raising the needed finance.

But why not just take the treasure? Because the treasure cannot be separated from the field. If you try to separate them, you'll end up with neither – nothing. A field is very ordinary but it's in the ordinariness of the field that the treasure resides. We find the kingdom of God in the ordinariness of life, even Church life, not by escaping that ordinariness! There's nothing glamorous about a field. It might even be full of weeds! But there's treasure there.

And why is it necessary for the finder to sell everything he owns to buy the field? Because this treasure can only be purchased with your life. It's an all-consuming business. But there are grave dangers while raising the purchase price.

Before completing the disposal of everything he owns, and raising the necessary capital, the finder might be consumed by other interests, distracted, his desire stolen, carried away by an enemy, or even choked to death!

The desire to purchase this field must be protected and cultivated, or everything will be lost. This is the reason the finder hides the treasure again – a thieving enemy is never far, and he loves to manipulate human desire, to steal our true treasure.

There are echoes here of the man who started to build but couldn't finish. He could be you and he could be me!

*Fr Paddy Banville, St Senan's, Enniscorthy*

## The Deep End

Over the past few weeks, we have been reading Matthew 13, with its parables on the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew uses this phrase to describe what our world might be like if we really lived like Jesus lives. This vision is not one focused on power, even though the word 'kingdom' might be misleading! It is more a web of relationships. Like the seed parables show us, God's Kingdom grows quietly, in unexpected places; like seeds, it sometimes grows in the darkness, unseen.

Today's parable focuses on treasure, something very precious. When we are obsessed with finding something, it consumes us. We will put all our resources, time or money, into finding it. In this parable, Jesus urges us to strive for the ultimate treasure, i.e. God.

During the Covid-19 crisis, many people have been thinking about what is most important in their lives. A break from the 'rat race' forced all of us to slow down, to step back, to 'pull the emergency brake.' We saw who the real heroes in our

society are. We witnessed many acts of kindness and community spirit. We stepped back, paused. No doubt, things will not be the same again after this pandemic. But hopefully we will have awakened to what our 'treasure' really is.

'Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world.'

Arundhati Roy, 'The Pandemic is a Portal,'  
*Financial Times*

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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 13:44-52

1. Have you ever found yourself saying 'that was worth it' after giving up something (time, pleasure, money, etc.)? What was the treasure that made the sacrifice worthwhile?
2. The 'kingdom of heaven' is when God is really the ruler in our life. What treasures have you obtained when you allow God to be at the centre of your life?
3. In life, we gather a lot of things, some good and some bad. The wise person in the kingdom of heaven is one who knows how to sit down and make decisions on what to keep and what to discard. When have you undertaken that kind of discernment? What have you discarded? What have you retained?

*John Byrne OSA  
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# Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

2 August 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* The Lord's providence embraces daily needs such as water, bread and milk, while also promising an everlasting covenant.

*The second reading.* St Paul concludes a major section of his letter to the Romans with a wonderful statement of trust in God. Nothing whatever, not even death itself, can come between us and the love of God.

*The Gospel.* The miracle of the loaves and fish we have just heard points towards the Eucharist, and the emphasis falls on the loaves. Listen to the verbs that describe the actions of Jesus when he is handed the loaves: he took, he blessed, he broke, he gave. These are the verbs that will describe Jesus' actions at the last supper.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

We gather, like the multitude in the Gospel, to listen and to be nourished. Let us now raise our hearts and minds in prayer.

### Intercessions

1. For Pope N., our Bishop N., and all the bishops.  
May they be courageous in proclaiming the faith  
in season and out of season, and in teaching all its righteous demands.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. In anxious times,  
may the believers trust wholeheartedly in the loving providence of God,  
and in this way be a healing leaven within society.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. May Catholics grow in their appreciation of the Eucharist;  
may those who have lapsed from the practice of their faith  
return to it with conviction and gratitude.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. For our young people,  
that in a world of entertainment and distraction  
they may experience moments of reflection  
in which they can draw closer to God  
and discern the direction and meaning of their lives.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. May all the dead experience the promise of the second reading,  
that even death cannot separate us  
from the love of God made visible in Christ.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

We thank you, Lord, for your generosity to all. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Editor

## Liturgical Music

### Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

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

### Responsorial Psalm

**Psalm 144: You open wide your hand, O Lord, you grant our desires** – 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 18th Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

If God Is For Us – *Glory & Praise/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*  
Come To The Water – *Glory & Praise/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New*  
Though We Are Many – *Sing The Mass/ICMA 2011/2012/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*  
Faithful Is The Lord Our King (*Mo Ghile Mear*) – *ICMA 2013/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*  
Christ Has Died – *www.liturgy-ireland.ie*  
Draw Near and Take the Body of the Lord – *ICMA 2014/Sing The Mass/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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# Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

2 August 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 14:13-21

John the Baptist has been beheaded. Jesus, too, is in danger and so he withdraws to a lonely place with his disciples. The crowds follow him; he is filled with pity for them and heals the sick. When the disciples suggest that the people leave in order to get something to eat, Jesus again responds in compassion and feeds over five thousand from the meagre rations of a small travelling group.

The theme of humanity having too little and Christ's love expressed through giving in abundance weaves its way through the ministry of Jesus from Cana to Calvary. Six jars of water become the best of wine at Cana. From five loaves and two fish, over five thousand are fed with twelve full baskets left over on the shores of a lake. And on Calvary, blood and water gush from his pierced side, sprinkling the nascent Church in the persons of the Virgin Mary and St John. Through him all things are made new – water into wine, five loaves and two fish feed five thousand, and a pierced side in death gives birth to his Church.

This abundance of divine love is freely given, as expressed in the prophet Isaiah in the first reading 'You who have no money, come ... drink wine and milk.' In this way, God becomes poor in order that humanity may be enriched. Only in accepting the overflow of God's presence, his tender mercy and his love, and the giving of that love to the other without calculating a cost, can the deepest hunger of the human soul be truly satisfied.

*Fr John Harris, Dungarvan*

## The Deep End • Not enough

Have you ever felt like you have nothing left to give? We all have times when we feel as though we do not have 'enough' to offer, whether it's time, money, energy, or even love. When work is busy, we don't have enough time for family. When we are physically or emotionally exhausted at the end of a long day, we might not have the energy to play with our children or visit a friend. In the face of suffering in our own society and around the world, we often feel helpless – whatever small amount of time or money we can give will never be enough.

But where we see 'not enough,' God sees potential. What we see as a small contribution is not small to God, if it is all we have to give and it is given with love. 'All we have with us is five loaves and two fish,' say the disciples to Jesus – a tiny offering when faced with a giant task. But Jesus takes what they have, blesses it, and uses it to give sustenance to thousands. In the face of human limitations, God can do plenty.

We are told at the start of today's reading that Jesus 'took pity' on the large

crowd that followed him. They have been out all day and are hungry, not to mention tired. They are so engrossed in listening to Jesus that time has slipped away. They are running on empty, and I'm sure they would be dismayed if, as the disciples suggest, they had to hike to the nearest village to buy food. Jesus understands their exhaustion and hunger, their limitations and their 'not enough.' What they have to give is inadequate, but he can do more with it than they could ever have imagined. We too are limited in what we have to offer. But whatever we can give – to our families and friends, to those in need – God sees and blesses and multiplies.

'Give something, however small, to one in need. For it is not small to one who has nothing. Neither is it small to God, if we have given what we could.'

ST GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

*Triona Doherty  
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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 14:13-21

1. The news of the death of John the Baptist prompted Jesus to go off and be alone, but the crowds followed him. Despite his personal sorrow, he was able to reach out in compassion to the crowd. Perhaps there have been times when you have put personal preferences and desires to one side, in order to reach out to another. What was it like for you when you were able to do this?
2. When Jesus saw the crowd, he recognised their need and responded to them. Who has been a Jesus-person for you, someone who recognised your need and reached out to you? For whom have you been a Jesus-person?
3. The scene symbolises the Eucharist, reminding us of the sacred meal to which all believers are invited, in order to receive nourishment from the Lord. How has the Eucharist been a source of nourishment for you?
4. When the disciples became aware of the problem, they wanted to send the crowd away, but Jesus told them: 'You give them something to eat.' They thought what they had was insufficient, but Jesus used the little they had to feed the crowd. When we give the little we have to a situation, the results are often beyond our expectations. Have you had this experience?

*John Byrne OSA  
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# Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

9 August 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* Elijah learns that when the Lord wants to communicate with us, he does so not by shouting but by whispering. Wind, fire and earthquake may draw our attention, but the Lord's voice is gentle. He does not impose himself.

*The second reading.* St Paul dedicates a good section of his letter to the Romans to grappling with the relationship between Israel, the people of the Covenant, and the New Covenant of Christ. His final answer is not a solution, but a hymn to the wisdom of God.

*The Gospel.* The Lord walks on water. This miracle is intended to point back to the passage of God's people through the sea as Moses led them out of captivity. Now, it is Jesus who leads us from the captivity of sin, and this happens by our passage through the water of baptism.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

The Psalmist tells us that the Lord's help is near for those who fear him. Let us ask confidently for that help.

### Intercessions

1. We pray for the Church's ministry of teaching and of reconciliation;  
may it be signed by mercy and faithfulness, justice and peace.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. Where God is honoured, there is justice and peace.  
May leaders and planners ever pursue justice and peace,  
and may their efforts be blessed by God.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. Peter, a man of faith, was also given to fear.  
May God strengthen those who suffer anxiety or sadness.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. For the needs of our parish community;  
may God console the afflicted, help parents, accompany the separated,  
guide the young and comfort the elderly.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For all the faithful departed,  
especially those who we ourselves have known and loved.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

Give us, Lord, your saving help, as we make these prayers with hope and confidence. 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 84: Let us see, O Lord your mercy and give us your saving help –**

*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 19th Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

You Are Mine – *Gather/Laudate/In Caelo*  
Christ Be With Me – *Feasts & Seasons*  
Be Thou My Vision – *Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/In Caelo*  
O God Our Help In Ages Past – *Laudate/Celebration Hymnal/Liturgical Hymns Old & New*  
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

# Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

9 August 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33

In the late 18th century, in their letters home, young British aristocrats on the Grand Tour to Italy often referred to the 'sublime,' the philosophical notion of being awed by the majesty of the Alps or the violence of a sea crossing. The 'sublime' was always found in nature at its most dramatic and obvious.

In the First Reading, Elijah is promised an encounter with the majesty of God. Elijah also looks to find God in the 'sublime,' but he must learn that God is no longer found in the great forces of nature which had proclaimed his presence on Mount Sinai or the earthquake which the Psalmist sings of, or even in the fire through which God spoke to Moses in the burning bush. Instead it is in 'the gentle breeze,' which is only a whisper, that God reveals himself, causing Elijah to cover his face.

The disciples also encounter nature at her extreme, as their boat is swamped in the storm on the lake. Amidst the violence of the storm, Jesus approaches the boat with words that reassure the disciples: 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It is this gentle revelation of Jesus as the Son of God, walking over the waves in the violence of the storm, that inspires Peter, if only momentarily, with such faith that he too walks on water. This gentle revelation of his divinity will be even more obvious in the days of his Passion: when he does not permit violence to save him in the Garden of Gethsemane; in his refusal to answer the charges against him before Pilate; and in his acceptance of his death on the Cross. In each of these quiet moments, Jesus demonstrates his divinity, in perhaps an even more profound way than in his more obvious miracles.

*Fr John Harris, Dungarvan*

## The Deep End • That sinking feeling

Have you ever used the expression 'My heart sank'? It is usually used to describe an experience of extreme disappointment or anxiety; a moment when our courage or hope fails and we feel that things are about to turn out very badly indeed. We might be going along just fine, confidently navigating life's twists and turns, when something knocks us off balance. It could be an illness, a financial blow, falling out with a family member or friend, worry about a son or daughter. Especially when we lose someone close to us, grief can make us feel as though we are sinking.

What strikes me about today's gospel is that Peter doesn't hesitate about taking that first step out of the boat. Once he sees who is calling him, out he gets and begins to walk towards Jesus. But then, as soon as he feels the force of the wind, as soon as he realises that the conditions around him are challenging and frightening, he loses courage and starts to sink.

Wind and storm are metaphors for situations we face. Sometimes it is a single thing that knocks us back. Sometimes it is a build-up. A few months ago, at the early stages of 'lockdown,' we thought it wouldn't be so bad to take a break and stay at home for a few weeks. But as the weeks turned into months, many people were overwhelmed by increasing feelings of loneliness, fears for health and anxiety about the future. It can feel like sinking.

The good news of today's gospel centres around the line, 'Jesus put out his hand at once and held him.' As soon as Peter starts to falter and sink, Jesus reaches out to steady him and pull him to himself. When we are in trouble, sometimes all we can do is trust in God. When our faith and hope are shaken, and we are sinking, he will reach out and hold us close.

*Triona Doherty  
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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 14:22-33

1. The story illustrates the power of faith. Have you noticed that when you believe in someone, or something, you can do things that would not be possible when you are full of doubts? Recall moments when your faith gave you strength and courage? Name for yourself the different kinds of faith that had this effect: belief in yourself, trust in another, faith in God.
2. When Jesus got into the boat, the winds ceased. Who has been a Jesus-person for you, helping to calm a storm that frightened you or made you anxious?
3. The experience of Peter gives encouragement to us when we waver in our trust and belief in God. In his doubt and fear, Jesus reached out to him. Who has reached out a helping hand to you when you felt you were sinking?
4. The story ends with a profession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Have you had experiences of being rescued from some hazard or danger, experiences which deepened your faith in the presence and compassion of God?

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# The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

15 August 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* This dramatic passage from the last book of the Bible is applied, in different ways, both to Mary and to the Church. It makes it clear that giving birth to Christ – which is the Church's task – leads to a dramatic confrontation with the powers of evil.

*The second reading.* Christ's literal, physical overcoming of death is at the heart of our faith. Believers are destined to share in Christ's victory, and that is why St Paul can describe their death as 'falling asleep.'

*The Gospel.* The opening detail, that Mary went *as quickly as she could* to visit her cousin, is no accident. Mary, now carrying God's Word, simply has to share the Good News with her cousin. The Gospel demands to be shared as a matter of urgency!

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

Let us turn to God in prayer, as we honour our Blessed Mother's participation in his plan.

### Intercessions

1. For the Church and all her members,  
that like Our Lady, each of us may desire to share  
the Good News of Jesus as a matter of urgency.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. For all those who are caught up in the drama  
of bringing Christ into the world,  
and who are tested by the powers of evil.  
May Mary, the woman of Revelation, intercede for them.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. For those who profess faith in Christ,  
but whose conviction regarding eternal life is weak.  
May God lead them to a stronger and more mature faith,  
and may their lives be shaped by the truths they profess.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. For teachers, catechists, parents,  
and all who pass on the faith to children.  
May the intercession of Mary our Mother help their efforts to bear fruit.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. As we honour Mary taken into heaven,  
we remember the dead,  
that they, too, may live in the light of God for eternity.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

We thank you, Lord, for giving us, in the Blessed Virgin Mary, a sure hope and comfort for our earthly pilgrimage. 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 44: On your right stands the queen, in garments of gold** – 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 Feast.

### Songs

When Creation Was Begun – *Hosanna/Seinn Alleluia*  
Magnificat – *Alleluia Amen/Seinn Alleluia/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*  
Tell Out My Soul – *Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*  
Gentle Woman – *Glory & Praise/Gather*  
Hail Mary – *Alleluia Amen/In Caelo*  
Céad Moladh Le Muire Bheannaithe – *In Caelo*

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Editor

# The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

15 August 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Luke 1:39-56

Artists often capture the essence of the Assumption far better than any theologian's explanation of what happened to the Virgin Mary when her earthly life came to its natural conclusion. Many of the artists depict the Virgin, crowned with twelve stars, rising from her bed, standing on the ancient serpent, as angels bear her to heaven. In some depictions, the Father and Son await her, while the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, hovers above her as at the Annunciation.

After this moment of grace, there is the apocalyptic battle between the Woman and the dragon. The dragon is found through the ages, from early Roman persecution to nationalistic ideologies, to the all-consuming relativism of today's individualistic culture. Opposite the dragon stands the Woman, clothed with the sun and crowned with twelve stars. In the pangs of childbirth, she flees the dragon. She is the Virgin Mother, graced in the love that is God, surrounded by the twelve tribes of Israel and the people of God, from the communion of saints to the pilgrim Church on earth.

The Woman is the same pilgrim Church, as she gives birth to Christ anew in each generation, with its own suffering and trials. The Church clothed with God's light, nourished through the Scriptures and the Sacraments, is the guarantee of God's victory over the darkness of the dragon in its modern expressions. No matter how frail the Church appears at times, the Woman's victory over the dragon has already been won.

The prize of this victory is shrouded in mystery, but in the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, we glimpse the heavenly reality which our overcoming of the dragon promises. For in her Assumption, Mary leaves death behind, she is clothed in life, taken body and soul in heavenly glory, exclaiming as she did in her Magnificat: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of my Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.'

*Fr John Harris, Dungarvan*

## The Deep End • Sign of Hope

*O Mary, Queen of Ireland, when you appeared at Knock,  
You gave hope to your people in a time of distress,  
and brought them comfort in a time of sorrow.  
Be with us now as a sign of salvation and hope,  
as we entrust ourselves to your loving care.*

Today, the Feast of the Assumption, we might pray again the above 'Prayer of Consecration of Ireland to the Immaculate Heart of Mary,' introduced by Archbishop Eamon Martin in March this year (the full text is available on [www.catholicbishops.ie](http://www.catholicbishops.ie)). In it, we pray for the protection of Mary in these difficult times, particularly for those who are sick and those who minister to them. As someone who knew deep suffering, we can always turn to our Mother Mary in our pain and distress.

Today's Gospel highlights the beginning of Mary's journey. While we often think of Mary as a meek character, passively accepting God's plan for her, the woman we meet today is the epitome of joy, as she exclaims: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my saviour.' Her prayer, the *Magnificat*, overflows with joy and delight. In spite of her fears for the future, in spite of the sorrows that await her, she is filled with joy and moved to praise God. Her words and her presence give us hope.

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### For Your Newsletter:

#### *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
You have given the world its true light,  
Jesus, your Son – the Son of God.  
You abandoned yourself completely to God's call  
and thus became a wellspring of the goodness which flows forth from him.  
Show us Jesus. Lead us to him,  
so that we too can become capable of true love  
and be fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world.

*Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est*

How stand before him to whom nothing is hidden? How answer for the days and years squandered which were given to serve him alone? Oh! Turn then, poor soul, and look to Mary. Look to her who is all merciful that she may obtain for you pardon and mercy. She is kind and loving; she has a mother's heart full of pity for the erring, a Mother of Mercy to the sinner and the fallen.

*Fr Willie Doyle SJ (1873-1917)*



# Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

16 August 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* This short reading sums up a great deal of the concern of the biblical prophets: We are to 'have a care for justice,' and in so doing, we can be confident that our sacrifices will be accepted on God's altar.

*The second reading.* St Paul is perhaps history's most striking case-study in the workings of God's providence: originally a zealous Pharisee who despised pagans and persecuted Christians, he is now proud to be a Christian missionary to pagans.

*The Gospel.* We cannot know the tone with which Jesus spoke his apparently harsh words to the pagan woman, but the outcome is clear: Jesus is impressed by her great faith and grants the healing she asked for.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

Just as the pagan woman in the Gospel brought her daughter to the attention of Jesus, let us now bring our needs to the Father of all mercies.

### Intercessions

1. For the Church,  
that the Lord may sustain her in her prophetic ministry,  
so that she may tirelessly proclaim justice, peace, the right to life,  
and the dignity of the human person.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. For those who regard the Catholic faith as an ideological enemy,  
that their eyes may be opened to the blessings faith brings,  
both to individual believers and to society.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. We pray for those who are disturbed by evil forces,  
for those who dabble in the occult,  
and for those who minister God's deliverance and mercy to them.  
May the Lord bring healing to his vulnerable children,  
and strengthen those whom he calls to minister to them.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. For our Irish missionaries,  
especially those in the most challenging and dangerous places.  
May the Lord be with them;  
may St Patrick and all the missionary saints intercede for them.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For the dead,  
that the Lord may shine the light of his face upon them  
and that they may rest in his peace.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

God our Father, may these and the unspoken prayers of our hearts help us as we labour for your kingdom and its justice. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Editor

## 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

**Psalms 66: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you –**

*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 20th Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

Let the People's Praise You O Lord – *In Caelo*

Taste and See – *Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/ICMA 2005/2009/2013/Hear In Christ We Gather*

Sing A New Song – *Glory & Praise/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

The Cry of the Poor – *Glory & Praise/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

From the Many, Make us One – *ICMA 2016*

Lauda Jerusalem, Dominum – *ICMA 2017/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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# Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

16 August 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

‘God will deliver them over to you and you will conquer them ... you must make no covenant with them nor show them any mercy.’ So reads the Book of Deuteronomy’s prescription against the people of Canaan. It is in this tradition that today’s Gospel, upon first reading, presents an unflattering image of Jesus. Instead of a kind and loving Lord, we find a Jesus who appears cold and uncaring, unwilling to help the Canaanite woman, who seeks his mercy for her possessed daughter.

Jesus makes it clear to the woman and to his disciples that he has come to the ‘lost sheep of the House of Israel.’ Then follows the verbal duel between the woman and Jesus, regarding the feeding of dogs with the bread of the household. The woman’s retort, ‘... but even the house-dogs can eat the crumbs that fall from the master’s table,’ elicits Jesus’ surprise at her faith, and his mercy, which results in her daughter’s healing.

It requires the same expression of faith as the Canaanite woman to seek the mercy of God, because God’s mercy is not just directed to individuals – it is also communal. It is through God’s bestowing of mercy upon us that we learn to be merciful towards others. That is why we begin the celebration of each Mass by seeking God’s forgiveness, repeating the same words the Canaanite woman spoke to Jesus: ‘Lord have mercy.’ And it is only when we are healed of any wrong towards God or another that we are worthy to receive the Lord.

The faith of the Canaanite woman in Jesus’ ability to heal her daughter is great, but the mercy of Jesus, through which her daughter is healed, is far greater. Jesus again fulfils the Law, as he so often does in Matthew’s Gospel. The prescription against the people of Canaan and all Gentiles, as found in Deuteronomy, is brought to its completion through mercy, ‘for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.’

*Fr John Harris, Dungarvan*

## The Deep End • A woman of faith

You can almost hear the chuckle. It is not mentioned, but I always imagine that Jesus smiles or even laughs as he delivers the line, ‘Woman, you have great faith.’ Today’s gospel recounts an unusual exchange between Jesus and the unnamed Canaanite woman who challenges him. She has seen what Jesus can do, she has faith, and she is advocating for her daughter. She is persistent, shouting out to Jesus and apparently also badgering the disciples, to the point where they plead with Jesus to ‘give her what she wants.’

Jesus’ rebuke seems shockingly unkind: ‘It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the house-dogs’. But the woman doesn’t give up. It is a matter of justice for her, as is evident in her witty response about the dogs getting the scraps from the master’s table. ‘Good for her!’ – we feel like cheering.

It’s a strange story, with Jesus at first appearing cold in his response to the

woman. But as we know, he has a tendency to test his followers. His disciples, who know him well and have seen lots of miracles, often fall short. But this woman passes with flying colours. Jesus can see that she is a person of strong faith, clever and determined. She is not easily dismissed. In allowing her to state her case, Jesus also presents a challenge to the religious and social status quo. This pagan woman (Jesus’ reference to ‘house-dogs’ tells us a lot about her status) exhibits more faith than his own disciples.

Jesus does not want us to be silent, compliant or complacent. He rejoices in those who are brave and persistent, and eager to challenge the injustices they see around them – those who have the gift of changing minds and hearts. We might call it the gift of prophecy.

*Triona Doherty  
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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 15:21-28

1. Having met with rejection from the Pharisees, Jesus goes to Gentile territory and encounters unexpected faith in the Canaanite woman. His mission had previously been to his own people, so this now adds a new dimension to his mission. Have you had occasions when a chance encounter set your life off in a new direction?
2. The initial reaction of Jesus to the woman was one of rejection, but her persistence won a response from him. When have you found that persistence was needed to gain what you sought? What did that experience teach you?
3. In our days, welcoming the stranger is a challenge – we are more comfortable with our own. What difference has it made when you were able to offer a friendly, welcoming face to a stranger?
4. Who are the ‘Canaanite women’ who call out for attention today – people in Church or State whose needs are not being attended to?

*John Byrne OSA  
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# Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

23 August 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* St Peter was not the first person in the Bible whose authority was symbolized by keys. Here, Eliakim, the royal steward, hears the Lord saying to him that the key of the House of David will be placed on his shoulder.

*The second reading.* St Paul, having applied all his insight and intelligence to the question of the relationship between the people of the covenant and the new, Christian, covenant, can only conclude by hymning the wisdom of God: 'Who could ever know the mind of the Lord?'

*The Gospel.* The Lord's second question is crucial: 'But you, who do you say I am?' As Christians, we need to be able to answer this question for ourselves, and not simply report what we have heard others say.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

Let us now turn with confidence to God, whose wisdom far surpasses ours and whose providence runs ahead of all our needs.

### Intercessions

1. For the Church,  
that she may always truly be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic,  
true to her foundation on the rock of St Peter's profession of faith.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. Our Lord promises that the gates of the underworld  
can never hold out against the Church.  
Let us pray that he may sustain each and every believer,  
in whatever challenges we may face on account of our faith.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. We ask God to bless all those  
whose work is hidden, undramatic and unnoticed.  
May those who work at administrative tasks be sustained  
by the knowledge that their efforts  
are in the service of the common good.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. For those who are suffering, personally and financially,  
in the wake of the recent pandemic and economic upheaval.  
May they be strengthened by faith  
and sustained by the kindness of others.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. For our faithful departed,  
that they enter into God's glory and praise him  
in the company of Mary and the saints.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

We give you thanks, almighty Father, for the providence through which you guide our paths and see to our needs. 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 137: Your love, O Lord, is eternal, discard not the work of your hands** – *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 21st Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

Now In This Banquet – *Gather/Laudate/Celebration Hymnal Liturgical Hymns Old & New*  
The Church's One Foundation – *Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*  
We Walk By Faith – *Gather/Laudate/Celebration Hymnal*  
Taste and See – *Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/Hear In Christ We Gather/ICMA 2005/2009/2013*  
Christ Be With Me – *Feasts & Season*  
The Beatitudes – *Alleluia Amen/Hosanna/Laudate/In Caelo*

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Editor

# Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

23 August 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

The Gospel for this Sunday contains one of the most argued sentences in the New Testament. Inscribed in large gold letters beneath Michelangelo's dome in St. Peter's Basilica are the words: *Tu es Petrus et super hanc Petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam ... tibi dabo claves regni caelorum*. 'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church ... I will give the keys to the kingdom of heaven.' It is a most striking statement of papal authority, but one which is disputed.

The authority given to Peter and his papal successors lies in the keys rather than the rock. In the ancient world, keys were very large and only entrusted to the most loyal of servants. In the first reading, the 'key of the House of David' is so large it is placed upon the shoulder of Eliakim. Already, this office contains connotations of the cross, and the holder of the keys is in need of a rock-solid faith to fulfil his ministry.

In the Gospel, Christ entrusts the keys to Simon, renamed Peter, for this office is not just a role or function. The one to whom the keys are given embodies the authority which penetrates the spiritual realm in his unique ministry of binding and loosing on earth and in heaven. All the baptised, too, are entrusted with keys like Eliakim in the first reading and Simon Peter in the Gospel, in that each of us has a role in unlocking the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The faith gifted to us in baptism is to help make the Kingdom of Heaven a reality in our daily lives, through how we pray and live with others: 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' As shown by Peter's exclamation of faith in today's Gospel, and his attempts to hinder Christ's mission in next Sunday's, our wielding of the keys comes from God's initiative and revelation, and not from personal perfection.

Fr John Harris, Dungarvan

## The Deep End • 'But you ...'

'Christ asks for a home in your soul, where he can be at rest with you, where he can talk easily to you, where you and he, alone together, can laugh and be silent and be delighted with one another.'

CARYLL HOUSELANDER

There is something very exciting about really getting to know someone. Whether it's talking to a like-minded new friend, or the first flush of romantic love, there is nothing like the thrill of getting close to someone and enjoying their company, discovering who they are and being truly ourselves with them.

Today, Jesus asks an important question: Who do you say I am? He sets up the question by first asking the disciples: 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' He gets answers based on the gossip and chatter about him: 'John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets.' But then Jesus gets to the heart of the matter with the burning question: 'But you, who

do you say I am?' He knows that his disciples know him better than anyone, and so it proves to be, when Peter immediately answers: 'You are the Christ.' There is an intimacy and a confidence in this response, based on the time they have spent together and the close and loving relationship between them.

Jesus asks us that same question today: 'But you, who do you say I am?' The 'but you' is crucial. He is not asking what we have heard about him. Of course, we learn about Jesus from the Scriptures. Most of us have been learning about Jesus ever since we were children, listening to stories and parables in school or at home. But do we know him? Do we pray and talk and spend time with him? Perhaps we could reflect in the coming days on this question: Who is Jesus, to you?

Triona Doherty  
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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 16:13-20

1. This marks a turning point in the life of Jesus and of the disciples. It is the first time that his disciples recognise him as the Messiah. Recall turning points in your own life when you came to some deeper understanding of who Jesus is.
2. 'Who do you say that I am?' This is possibly the most important question that Jesus puts to us. In your heart of hearts, how do you answer this question?
3. Jesus praises Peter for his faith, and comments that this was not his own doing but a gift of God. Perhaps there have been times when you have been more than usually conscious that faith is a gift. Be thankful for the gift you have received.
4. These are troubled times for the Church, and the promise of Jesus that 'the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it' is an encouragement. What helps you to draw strength from this promise of Jesus? What signs of hope do you see in the Church today?

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# Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

30 August 2020

## Readings

*The first reading.* The prophet Jeremiah was, at times, a reluctant prophet. He would have preferred to be free of the burden of proclaiming God's word. But the same word burned within him like a fire in his heart, and he simply had to proclaim it. May God give his prophets the same ardour in our time.

*The second reading.* St Paul condenses the entire life of discipleship into offering ourselves as a living sacrifice. For his original hearers, this was a ground-breaking idea, as a sacrifice was, by definition, put to death. We are asked to put to death everything in us that is not of God.

*The Gospel.* It was Peter's compassion that turned him into an obstacle to Jesus. He would have to learn to let his compassion be guided by prudence, and his desire to avoid suffering to be tempered by obedience to God's plan.

## General Intercessions

### Introduction

The Lord has been our help; he is the One to whom we cling. Let us now pray to him in confidence.

### Intercessions

1. For the Church's ministry of proclamation and teaching.  
May Pope N. and the Bishops, by word and example,  
help believers to offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. For those who misunderstand  
the place of the Cross in our Christian faith.  
May believers and unbelievers alike see the Cross  
as a sign of love and forgiveness.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. May believers practice the cardinal virtues of  
Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance,  
and in this way be a leaven in society, light of the world  
and salt of the earth.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. May God bless our communities,  
our workplaces and our places of recreation;  
may he help us to bring his goodness and his wisdom to all that we do.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. We pray for the dead.  
May those who have clung to God in this life  
be held fast by him in death,  
and may the Lord have mercy on every one of his children.  
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

### Conclusion

Your love, Lord, is better than life. May our lips and our lives always speak your praise. 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 62: For you my soul is thirsting, O Lord my God** – *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 22nd Sunday Ordinary Time.

### Songs

The Servant King – *Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal/In Caelo/Feasts and Seasons*  
You Are Mine – *Gather/Laudate/In Caelo*  
My Soul Is Thirsting – *Gather/Laudate*  
I Thirst – *Gather/In Caelo*  
My New Commandment – *ICMA 2013/Hear In Christ we Gather*  
Faithful Is The Lord Our King (Mo Ghile Mear) – *ICMA 2013/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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Editor

# Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

30 August 2020

## Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27

The 17th century philosopher Thomas Hobbes famously characterised human life as 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short,' and much of human history is the tale of attempts to escape from the human condition to a more joyful existence. This is a feature of cycles of rebirth in ancient philosophies, and of today's preoccupation with mindfulness. Each is a manner of avoiding the necessary suffering that is a feature of human life.

In contrast, Christianity's truth lies in Christ becoming man in order to suffer and to take on the sufferings of all peoples – embodied in taking up the cross, the instrument of torture and death which becomes the tree of life. To follow Christ means taking up one's own cross and the suffering it brings. Contrary to Peter's suggestion, there is no possibility of escaping suffering. To seek to do so is to become an obstacle to full Christian living.

Jeremiah, in the first reading, knew what it was to carry the cross of mockery and scorn from those who refuse to listen to the call for repentance. How easy it would have been for him to stay quiet, hide away; but once the word of God set his heart aflame, Jeremiah could not contain that word – he had to proclaim it to others. Likewise, Christians today need to proclaim the Word of God, no longer palatable in the public sphere. Like Jeremiah, we too risk ridicule and derision. To profess and to live the Christian message in these circumstances is to do no more than follow Christ, taunted and mocked on his Cross at Calvary.

St Paul suggests that Christians live as part of the world, not by embracing the world's ways but living in such a way that we offer ourselves to God as a sacrifice in response to his mercy. Of course, this entails living the way of the Cross, but the reward is great – 'anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.'

*Fr John Harris, Dungarvan*

## The Deep End • Self-giving love

I remember reading, during the early weeks of the coronavirus pandemic, an account of a 'day in the life' of an Irish healthcare worker. She described the precautions she had to take while attending to patients in hospital, the protective equipment she had to wear, and the strain of working in such a challenging environment. She talked about coming home from work to her family after each shift; how she had to immediately shower and change, stay apart from her husband and children so as not to put them at risk, and then go to sleep in a separate room.

These extraordinary levels of self-sacrifice have rightly come to be more appreciated in recent months. Doctors, nurses and other frontline workers have been going beyond the call of duty to take care of their patients, often sacrificing their own family life, health and safety in the process. They have had to put their own fears and anxieties aside

in order to help others, and are rightly described as heroes; they remind us every day of the incredible ways in which people can make sacrifices for others, out of a sense of compassion, justice and love.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells his followers that they must take up their cross. When he tells them that he is going to suffer and be put to death, they naturally react with shock. It seems like a strange path to choose. But he is not doing it simply to make life difficult for himself. His sacrifice stems from his passionate and compassionate love. We too are capable of making extraordinary sacrifices out of love. Those frontline workers who carry on in the most difficult circumstances are prepared to put others' needs before their own – the very thing that Jesus says being a disciple entails.

*Triona Doherty  
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## For Your Newsletter:

### *Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel*

Matthew 16:21-27

1. Short-term loss is sometimes necessary for long-term gain, as a student studying, or an athlete training, can testify. When have you found that denying yourself proved to be worthwhile because of what you gained afterwards?
2. Jesus was teaching his followers that the path of discipleship would involve pain and suffering. Peter would have none of it. When have you found that taking up your cross brought you life, even though at the time it may have been difficult?
3. Jesus knew that because his message of good news was not acceptable to the authorities he would suffer and die. In spite of this, he trusted that the power of God would overcome evil. Have you seen a message of good news survive even though opponents tried to stifle it?
4. Jesus promised that those who suffer for the kingdom would be rewarded. Perhaps, even in this earthly life, you have experienced reward for faithful discipleship. What have these rewards been?

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# Leathanach don Cheiliuraí

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## An Ceathrú Domhnach Déag Saor 5 Iúil 2020

### Réamhrá

Bíonn an saol deacair orainn uilig in amanna. Bímid faoi bhrú agus ualach trom a iompar againn. Is feidir linn dóchas agus misneach a fháil i Soiscéal an lae inniu. Deir Íosa, 'Taraigí chugham, sibhse a bhfuil saothar agus tromualach oraibh agus bhéarfaidh mé faoiseamh daoibh.'

### Smaoineamh

Sa chéad leacht inniu, feicimid rí ag teacht isteach go Zion ag marcaíocht ar asal. Duine ag marcaíocht ar asal, is sin comhartha síochána. Is lúdach a bhí in Íosa, bhí eolas aige ar an scríoptúr. Bhí eolas aige ar an tangaireacht. Sin an fáth go dtánaig sé isteach go Iúrsalem ag marcaíocht ar asal ar Dohmhnach na Slat. Chomhlíon sé an tangaireacht agus fosta chur sé ina luí orainne agus dá phobal féin gur fear síochána a bhí ann. Tugann sé an teachtaireacht chéanna dúinn i Soiscéal an lae inniu. 'Tógaigí oraibh mo chuing agus tagaigí ar scoil chughamsa, mar táim ceansa úiriseal ó chroí agus gheobhaidh sibh faoiseamh do bhur n-anamnacha; óir tá mo chuing-so iompar agus m'ualach éadrom.' Is é an dushlán atá ansin ins an phobal ina mairimid. Ní hionann síochán agus easpa conspóide. Ciallaíonn sé meas agus urraim a bheith againn do no daoine a chastar orainn ar bhonn laethúil. Mar a deir n haitheanta ciallaíonn sé grá do Dhia agus grá dar gcomharsan. Is deas castáil le daoine atá úiriseal go leor lena gcuid lochtann féin a fheiceáil agus a bheith ceansa go leor leis an tsúis dhall a thabhairt do lochtanna daoine eile.

### Guí an Phobail

Anois le lán mhuinín inár gcroí, cuirimid ár n-achainín os comhair Dé.

1. Ar son ár bPápa, na heasbaig agus an chléir go léir. Go stuga Dia neart agus misneach díofa leis an tSoiscéal a chraobhscaoileadh. A Thiarna éist linn.
2. Ar son daoine óga. Go dtuige said an tábhacht atá le Soiscéal Dé agus go ndéana said é a chleachtadh ina saol. A Thiarna éist linn.
3. Ar son daoine tinne. Go dtabharfaith Dia tarrtháil orthu agus go dtuga sé faoiseamh coirp agus intinne díofa. A Thiarna éist linn.
4. Ar ár son féin. Go gcuidigh Dia linn ár saol a chaitheamh go síochanta de réir an tSoiscéil. A Thiarna éist linn.

5. Ar son na marbh. Guímid ar a son sin atá imithe romhainn, cuimhnímid ar anamnacha phurgadóir agus orthu sin a fuair bás ar na mallaibh. A Thiarna éist linn.

### An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dar dtreorú agus Briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá.

### Focal Scoir

Go raibh an Tiarna in a sholas gheal romhat  
Go raibh sé ina realt eolais os do chionn  
Go riabh sé ina chosán réidh fút  
Agus ina thréadaí chinéalta i do dhiaidh  
Inniu, anocht agus i dtólamh.

*Beannacht Cholmcille*

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## An Cúigiú Domhnach Déag Saor 12 Iúil 2020

### Réamhrá

Is ionann an síol a bhfuil Íosa ag déanamh tagairt de agus an dea-scéal. Is é an dea-scéal inniu ná go bhfuil Briathar Dé a scaipeadh ar fud an domhain. Ba cheart dúinn a bheith buíoch do Dhia a chur a Mac ar an tsaol seo agus an dea-scéal a thabhairt dúinn agus a chur ar ár gumas an bheatha shiorraí a bhaint amach.

### Smaoineamh

I leabhar Iasiah fáidh, tugann Dia aire don talamh tré bháisteach a chur anuas air lena dhéanamh torthúil. Mar an gcéanna thug Dia a bhriathar dúinne. I Soiscéal an lae inniu, cuireann Íosa Briathar Dé i gcomparáid le síol a thit ar an talamh. Tá a fhios againn gur labhairt sé le slua mór daoine agus d'éist sian lena raibh le rá aige. Cosúil le múinteoir maith ar bith, labhair sé leo faoi chúrsaí a raibh eolas agus tuigbheáil acu orthu, agus rinne sé iad a chomhnsacadh leis an cheacht a bhí a theagasc aige.

Cuireann Íosa pictiúir sholiéar os comhair a lucht éisteachta: 'Chuaigh an curadóir amach ag cor síl.' Tugann sé cuntas ar na háiteanna ar thit an síol agus ar an thoradh a bhain leis. I measc Phobal Dé tá mar a gcéanna amhlaidh. Ar na saoltaí deireannacha seo tá lán neithe saolta i gcoimhlínt le Briathar Dé, mar shampla na meáin chumarsáide agus na meáin shóisialta, agus cuid mhór den am, bhéadh siad sin ar chomhcheim leis ne dreasógaí ag plúch an tsíl in am ár dTiarna.

Mar lucht leanúna Íosa is é and sprioc a ba cheart a bheith againne ná toradh maith a thabairt a bhéadh ar chomhcheim leis an tsíol a thit ar thalamh mhaith.

### Guí an Phobail

Le dochas inár gcroiche, tiontóimid chuig Dia na glóire.

1. Ar son ár bPápa N., ár nEasbag N., agus na hEasbaig go léir, go mbéidh sé de mhisneach acu an dea-scéal a chraobhscaoileadh i gcónaí. A thiarna éist linn.
2. Ar son na ndaoine uilig atá lag agus in ísle brí ag an am seo. A thiarna éist linn.
3. Ar son tuismitheoirí agus múinteoirí atá ar a ndícheall ag scapíeadh síol an chreidimh. A thiarna éist linn.
4. Ar son na ndaoine atá bocht agus atá gan teach gan dídean. A thiarna éist linn.
5. Ar son anamnacha na marbh uilig, na glúnta a churagh romhainn, anamnacha Phurgadóir agus iad sin a fair bás ar na mallaibh. A thiarna éist linn.

A Dhia uile chumhachtaigh, cuirimid ár pbaidreacha os do chomhair, guímid go ndéana an Mhaigdean Mhuire idir-ghuí ar ár son. Sin é ár ngui chugat tré Chríost ár dTiarna.

### An Phaidir

Aithenata an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus Briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá.

### Focal Scoir

A Íosa ina bhfuil mo spéis  
Is beag mo threán  
Sín orm do chabhair in am  
Is ná lig m'anam i bpian i bhfad.

*Aitreachas an Bhrathar Bhoicht,  
Dánta Diaga Uladh*

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## An Séú Domhnach Déag Saor 19 Iúil 2020

### Réamhrá

Tá an domhan mar ghort ina bhfuil an t-arbhar agus and cogal ag fás taobh le taobh. Tá an Eaglais mar an gcéanna agus fosta an duine aonarach. Tá meascán den mhaith agus den olc ionainn uilig. Tá sé tabhachtach idirdhealú a dhéanamh idir an mhaith agus an t-olc agus ár ndícheall a dhéanamh an t-olcas a dhíbirt.

## Smaoineamh

Cuireann an parabal a d'inis Íosa pictiúr den domhan os ár gcómhair go mbéadh fiú páiste in ann é a thuigbheáil. In am Íosa, ba mhaith leis na daoine é and t-olc a scarúint ón mhaith. Dream acu sin ab ea na Fairisínigh. Bhí am ag Íosa don uile dhuine agus mheasc sé le ach an seort daoine. Be é an parabal a chuala muid i Soiscéal an lae inniu an freagra a thug Íosa ar dhaoine ar nós na bhFairisíneach. Ina chuideachta sin, tá an parabal sin dírithe ormsa agus ortsa. Tá an Tiarna ag impí orainn aithrí agus athrú a dhéanamh agus tá sé ag tabhairt ama dúinn le sin a dhéanamh. Níl fiú duine amháin againn nach bhfuil sé riachtanach dúinn athrú éigin a dhéanamh agus feabhas a chur ar ár saol. Le seo a chur i gGríoch tá sé riachtanach dúinn an sproic a chur romhainn go gcaithfidh ár saol a fheabhsú. Caithfidh tuigbheáil go bhfuil muid ag brat ar Dhia. Caithfidh úsáid a bhaint as sacramaint na hAithrí. Cibé a tharlaíonn, níor cheart dúinn lagmhisneach a theacht orainn. Chomh fada ia atá muid ag déanamh ár ndícheall tá grásta Dé ag obair istigh ionainn.

## Guí an Phobail

Agus muid anois i láthair Dé, labharfaidh muid anois le Dia ón ar gcroí.

1. Ar son ár nAthair Naofa, N., ár nEasbag N. agus an chléir go léir, go dtabharfaidh Soiscéal Dé uchtach agus ionsparáid díofa i dtólamh. A thiarna éist linn.
2. Ar son bheatha an duine agus ar son bheatha an linbh sa bhroinn, go mairimid uilig faoi chúram Dé agus faoi bhrat Maighdine Muire. A thiarna éist linn.
3. Ar son daoine atá tinn agus ar son na ndaoine a thugann aire díofa, tabhair tarrtháil orthu a Thiarna. A thiarna éist linn.
4. Ar son daoine atá i ngéibhinn agus i bpríosúin ar fud an domhain, go bhfaigh siad ceart agus cothrom na féinne. A thiarna éist linn.
5. Ar son daoine óga, go dtreoróidh an Spiorad Naomh iad ar bhoithre an tsaoil. A thiarna éist linn.

A Dhia mhór na Glóire, sin iad ár bpaidreacha agus credimid go dtabharfaidh tú cluas le héisteacht duinn ar an mhaidin seo.

## An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus Briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá.

## Focal Scoir

Má's fada an lá, tig an oíche; má tá, ní thig an oíge fá dhó a choiche.

*Sean-fhocal ó Chúige Uladh*

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## An Seachtú Domhnach Dhéag Saor 26 Iúil 2020

### Réamhrá

Is é téama no liotúirge ná an Eagna. Is é an chiall atá le hEagna ná muid a bheith ar an eolas ar caidé atá ceart i súile Dé. Sa chéad léacht dúirt Dia le Solamh, 'Cibé rud is mian leat a fháil uaim, iarr orm é.' Is é an rud a d'iarr sé ná Eagna, is é sin croí tuisceanach chun an mhaith a aithint thar an olc agus a bheith in cheannsaí mhaith.

### Smaoineamh

Is maith le hÍosa am a thabharit dúinn, am le haithrí a dhéanamh. Tá an teachtaireacht sin i Soiscéal an lae inniu. Tá sé le feiceal sa dara parabal den tSoiscéal, an scéal faoin iasc agus an eangach. Ní thabharfar eangach i dtír go mbéidh sí lán agus is ansin amháin a scarfar an t'iasc maith ón droch iasc. Tá ár dTiarna ag rá linn go mbéidh an scaradh ann, ach ní bhéidh sé ann go dtí an deireadh. Tá Dia foighdeach agus tugann sé an t-am agus an deis dúinn le haithrí a dhéanamh inár bpeacaí. Is é an deacracht atá ann, níl a fhois againn cé'n uair a thoirfais an deireadh. Tcimid daoine eile ag fáil bháis ach sílimid nach bhaineann sé linne. Ag an phointe seo táimid ag cur dallnamullóg orainn féin. Is é frinne an scéil nach bhfuil a fhois againn cé'n uair a thoirfais an bás. 'Sibhse fosta mar sin bígí ullamh, óir is ar an uair nach síleann sibh a thoirfais Mac an duine' (Mt 24:44). Tá an t-am againn ach caithfidh úsáid a bhaint as. Sin an pointe atá sa dá pharabal eile sa tSoiscéal inniu, an stór in bhfolach sa ghort agus an péalra luachmhar. Is é an rud atá a thabharit dom. Cosúil le Solamh caithfidh tú croí tuisceanach a bheith agat. Caithfidh tú an uile rud a chur ar leataoibh agus tús áite a thabhairt don Tiarna, do Dhia.

### Guí an Phobail

Le dochas inár gcroiche, rfachaimid in airicis an Tiarna agus muid ag guí.

1. Ar son na hEaglaise ar fud an domhain mhóir, go dtreoróidh an Spiorad an Eaglais sa treo cheart agus ar shíúil ó chathú an diabhal. A thiarna éist linn.
2. Ar son daoine atá in ísle brí agus atá ag iompar crosta troma ag an am seo. A thiarna éist linn.
3. Ar son daoine atá bocht agus iad sin uilig atá ar an ghann-chuid. A thiarna éist linn.
4. Ar son na ndaoine atá tinn agus don uile dhuine atá ag fuilstin ina gcorp nó ina n-aigne. A thiarna éist linn.
5. Ar son na marbh uilig, na glúnta a chuaigh romhainn, anamnacha phurgadóir agus iad sin a fuair bás ar na mallaibh. A thiarna éist linn.

A Thiarna, is cúis lúchaire dúinn a bhéith in ann labhairt leay tar an mhaidin seo. Cuir do bheannacht orainn don lá seo agus don tseachtain atá romhainn.

### An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus Briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá.

### Focal Scoir

Tá muileann Dé mall  
Ach meileann sé go mín  
Fanann sé le foighid  
Is glacann sé an t-íomlán.

*Sean-fhocal ó Chúige Uladh*

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## Domhnach XVIII 'Le Linn na Bliana' 2ú Lúnasa 2020

### Réamhrá

Sa Soiscéal inniu feicimid Íosa ag tabhairt bia do 5000 duine a bhfuil ocras orthu. Go dtuigimid an t-ocras atá orainn as an méid a thugann Dia dúinn ina Bhriathar agus san Eocairist.

### Smaoineamh

Nuair a smaoinimid ar an Soiscéal d'Aifreann an lae inniu is furasta dúinn cuimhnear ar scéal cáiliúil na gcúig builín agus dhá iasc. Is cuimhin linn nuair a bhí siad go léir ithe go raibh 12 ciseáin fágtha. Is furasta dúinn dearmad a dhéanamh ar an áit a dtosaíonn Soiscéal an lae inniu; le bás Eoin Baiste. Feicimid go bhfuil brón ar Íosa tar éis bhás a chol ceathrar. Tógann sé é féin go dtí áit uaigneach. Tá a fhios againn go léir faoin eispéireas seo nuair a fhaigheann duine atá gar dúinn bás. Feicimid Íosa a chaithfidh déileáil lena bhrón agus b'éigean dó déileáil lena mhothúcháin. Bhí sollúlacht ag teastáil uaidh.

Ach nuair a thagann an oiread sin daoine aige ag lorg cabhrach ní bhíonn Íosa mall ag tabhairt freagra ar a riachtanas. Taispeánann Íosa conas a bheith flaithiúil. Tugann sé freagra ar an slua in ainneoin a bhróin féin. Tá ocras ar na sluaite le haghaidh bia, ach freisin le brí, cuspóir agus comhbhá ina saol. Cothaíonn an mhíorúilt iad ach is míorúilt í ar chóir dúinn Dia ar fad a mhúineadh dúinn a bhfuil grá aige dúinn a bhfuil suim mhór aige inár saol. Mar is eol dúinn na riachtanais inár saol lig dúinn a bheith níos flaithiúla ag cabhrú le daoine eile ina gcuid riachtanas.

### Guí an Phobail

Tá go leor riachtanas agus mianta againn. Cuirimid iad os comhair ár nAthar neamháí anois.



1. Guímid ar son gach duine a fhreastalaíonn san Eaglais, guímid ar a son siúd a dhéanann é i bhfocal agus i sacraimint. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Go dtabharfaí an teaghlach Críostaí ar fad le chéile san aontacht ar ghuigh Críost ar a son. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Tabhair síocháin dóibh siúd atá ag fulaingt ó fhoréigean agus ó chogadh. Bíodh a fhios acu an tsíocháin a thug do Mhac. A Thiarna, éist linn.
4. Tabhair na mairbh go léir chuig an aiséirí deiridh áit a mbeidh muid go léir leat. A Thiarna, éist linn.

Déanaimid na paidreacha seo agus ár gcuid paidreacha go léir trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

#### An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá:

#### Focal Scoir

Ná bí i bhfeirg liom níos mó, báigh m'anam i bhfuil do ghrás. A Dhia Dhuine, céad fáilte romhat anois agus ar uair ár mbáis.

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### Domhnach XIX 'Le Linn na Bliana' 9ú Lúnasa 2020

#### Réamhrá

Bím ag lorg do ghúise, a Thiarna, ná folaigh d'aghaidh orm.

#### Smaoineamh.

Má tá muid macánta linn féin, táimid go léir ag lorg Dé. Baineann léamh an lae inniu le Dia a lorg agus b'fhéidir faoi Eisean a lorg sna háiteanna míchearta go léir.

Dúradh le Éilias dul agus seasamh os comhair an Tiarna. Bhí sé ag súil go dtiocfadh sé le gcumhacht mór. Tháinig sé i ngaoth mhín agus ní i ngaoth láidir. Tá an gaoth mhín líonta le rúndiamhair. Is é seo an bealach a n-oibríonn an Tiarna. Tá sampla eile againn de láithreach Dé sa Soiscéal agus tá sé an-mhín freisin.

Is minic a bhíonn ár gcuid smaointe faoi Dhia mícheart. Déanaimid cuardach air i gcumhacht. Nuair a dhéanaimid cuardach air inár saol ansin bímid ag súil go bhfeicfidh sé cumhacht mhór aige. Múineann an chéad léamh dúinn. Caithfidh sé fanacht leis. Ní mór dúinn é a fheiceáil i rudaí beaga milis an tsaoil. I duine a chuidíonn ar bhealach beag, i bhfocal rí ó dhuine a thugann suaimhneas dúinn. Feicimid Dia i ngrá le teaghlach agus le cairde. Feicimid Dia nuair a dhéantar stoirmeacha an tsaoil a mhaolú. Lig dúinn ár lámha a chur ina

lámha, lig dúinn taithí a fháil ar a chumhacht chiúin.

Caithfidh maireachtáil air seo i ngach nóiméad den saol. Ní mór dúinn muinín a bheith againn, eolas a bheith againn ar a láithreach sa ghaoth mhín ionas go mbeidh a fhios againn fós go bhfuil sé ann nuair a thagann an stoirm, cosúil le stoirm an tSoiscéil atá lán le torann. A Thiarna, cuidigh linn a fheiceáil go bhfuil tú gar dúinn gach lá dár saol.

#### Guí an Phobail

Lig dúinn cuardach a dhéanamh ar Dhia inár nguí.

1. Doirt amach do Spiorad ar an Eaglais; go bhfeicfidh gach duine inti mórgacht do ghrá. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Cuidigh linn maireachtáil le súil na bhflaitheas inniu; cuidigh linn d'uacht a dhéanamh ar talamh. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Tabhair inniu an misneach chun maithiúnas a thabhairt do dhaoine eile díreach mar a thugann tú maithiúnas dúinn dár bhfoghail. A Thiarna, éist linn.
4. A Athair, bí linn inár ndeacrachtaí agus go bhfanfaimis gar duit i gcónaí. A Thiarna, éist linn.
5. Múin dúinn tuiscint a fháil ar a chéile. A Thiarna, éist linn.

#### An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá:

#### Focal Scoir

D'fhonn go ndéanfaidís Dia a lorg féachaint an mbeidís ag meabhrú na slí chuige agus go n-aimseoidís é. Go deimhin, ní fada ó aon duine againn é. Gníomhartha na nAspal.

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### Deastógáil na Maighdine Beannaithe Muire 15ú Lúnasa 2020

#### Réamhrá

Ar go leor bealaí is sampla dúinn Muire. Is sampla í de shaol Chríostaí. Is sampla í inniu den rud ar féidir linn a bheith ag súil leis.

#### Smaoineamh

Sa deabhóid atá againn do Mhuire measaimid í mar mháthair agus mar mhúnla na hEaglaise. Is é an rud a thabharfaidh Dia di an rud a thabharfaidh sé dá eaglais. Is í gúna na glóire ár gúna glóire freisin. 'Tá mháthair an rí gléasta le róbaí ór tromithe'. Inniu déanaimid ceiliúradh ar Mháire mar phatrún na

heaglaise. I soiscéal an lae inniu aithníonn Eilís í mar mháthair an Tiarna. Tagann an salm don lá inniu leis an teideal 'Amhrán Bainise don Rí'. Is banríon í; 'An bhanríon ar do fola gann ór mar Óifir'. Insíonn an t-ór dúinn glóir Mhuire ag taobh a Mac ar neamh.

Meabhraíonn sí dúinn go bhfuil ár dteach síoraí ar neamh agus nach maireann ár dteach anseo go deo. Is comhartha dóchais í agus tugann sí sólas dúinn ar ár mbealach.

#### Guí an Phobail

Guímid le dóchas agus le muinín:

1. Tabhair misneach dúinn an Soisceal a thabhairt don domhan agus dóibh siúd ar gá dóibh é a chloisteáil. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Bí leis an uaigneach, le breoiteachta agus leo siúd atá ag fulaingt. Taispeáin dóibh do ghrá. Cuidigh linn aire a thabhairt dóibh agus do ghrá a roinnt leo. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Is féidir linn a leanann tú i míne. Déan humhal croí dúinn. A Thiarna, éist linn.
4. Tabhair sólas do gach duine a bhíonn ag caoineadh na marbh. A Thiarna, éist linn.
5. A Athair, tabhair áit agus scíth dóibh siúd a fuair bás i do shíocháin. Go mbeimid go léir páirt i nglóir Chríost. A Thiarna, éist linn.

Déanaimid na paidreacha seo agus ár gcuid paidreacha go léir trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

#### An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá:

#### Focal Scoir

A Athair shíoraí, Dia na mbeo, cuireann muid ar n-intinní faoi do chúram caoin, le hidirghuí na Maighdine Beannaithe agus trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

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### Domhnach XX 'Le Linn na Bliana' 16ú Lúnasa 2020

#### Réamhrá

An chuid is mó den am, nuair a bhíonn rud éigin uainn guíonn muid ar a shon. Uaireanta is é an rud deireanach a dhéanaimid. Stadfaimid muid agus cuirimid an milleán ar Dhia nuair nach bhfaigheann muid gach rud a theastaíonn muid.

## Smaoineamh

Is dúinn an bhean ó Chanán. Níl sí sásta a iarraidh ach uair amháin. ‘Ach thaining an bhean agus d’fhan ar a dhá glúin ina láthair.’ Tá sí leanúnach. Tarlaíonn sé seo chomh minic sna Soiscéil. Caithfidh coinneáil ag fiafraí. Cuireann sé na focail i gcumhne dúinn; ‘Óir, gach duine a iarrann, glacann, agus an té a lorgann, faighean, agus an té a bhuaileann, osclófar dó’

Duirt Íosa léi freisin; ‘is mór é do chreideamh, a bhean! Bíodh agat mar is áil leat’. Feicimid é seo go minic sa Soiscéal freisin. Tá sé an-tábhachtach dúinn creideamh a bheith againn i gcumhacht Íosa.

## Guí an Phobail

Le creideamh mór, guímid.

1. Ar son ceannairí na hEaglaise. Go raibh sé de mhisneach acu i gcónaí labhairt amach ar son an tsoiscéil. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Ar son pobal na tíre seo. Go bhfanaimid dílis dár dtraidisiúin Críostaí. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Go mbeadh meas i gcónaí againn ar thraidisiúnta chreidimh eile inár measc. A Thiarna, éist linn.
4. Ar son na ndaoine a fuair bás le déanaí. Go bhfuil siad in éineacht leatsa, a Thiarna, sna Flaithis. A Thiarna éist linn.
5. Ar son na ndaoine atá tinn, guimis go mbeidh feabhas orthu gan mhoill. A Thiarna éist linn.

Le misneach cuirimid ár gcuid paidreacha i lámha ár n-Athar.

## An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá:

## Focal Scoir

A Thiarna mhilis, céad míle fáilte, a Mhic Mhuire, gráim thú. Cé hé mise ar choir dom teacht chugat? A Rí Neimhe, dean cúinne beag dom.

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**Domhnach XXI**  
**‘Le Linn na Bliana’**  
**23ú Lúnasa 2020**

## Réamhrá

Tá údarás sa chéad léacht agus sa soiscéal inniu. Tugann an dara léacht agus an salm cuireadh dúinn an nasc idir seo agus an chaoi a leanann obair eagna Dé ar aghaidh a fheiceáil.

## Smaoineamh

Tagann an focal ‘údarás’ chun cuimhne sna léacht inniu. Is focal é nach maith linn i

saol an lae inniu. Mearbhaímid é le ‘cumhacht’ agus ‘rialú’. Deir an domhan linn go bhfuil smacht againn ar ár gcinniúint féin. Ach uaireanta caithfidh daoine eile a threorú. Tá a fhios ag Íosa cén chuma atá orainn. Cuireann sé treoir os comhair na ffrinne os ár gcomhair. ‘Agus Riachta mé duit eochracha róir na bhfoireannas; rud ar bith a bhfuil tú ag brath ort ar féidir a fháil air a chéile, agus rud ar bith a scaoileann thu ar lagh a bheil e air a chéile’

Tá an salm mar phaidir dúinn. Is paidir é don eaglais agus don Phápa. ‘Maireann do bhuannachadh go síoraí, a Thiarna; ná caith dímheas ar shaothar dorainn.’ Guímid ar son na hoscailteachta glacadh leis nach bhfuil gach freagra againn agus an umhlaíocht chun glacadh le teagasc Chríost agus treoir daoine eile.

## Guí an Phobail

Guímid le dóchas:

1. Go dtuga Dia treoir an Spíoraí d’ó an Pápa agus an clér go léir. A Thiarna éist linn.
2. Ar son muid féin go raibh spiorad na ffrinne go láidir inár measc. A Thiarna éist linn.
3. Ar son na ndaoine atá tinn nó atá cráite le uaigneas agus ar son na daoine a thugann aire dóibh. Tabhair compóird agus solás dóibh. A Thiarna éist linn.
4. Ar son daoine bochta sa domhain seo. Go roinnfear saibhreas agus achmainní an domhain go fial agus go cothrom ar dhaoine atá ar an ngannchuid. A Thiarna éist linn.

A Dhia, neartaigh muid sa chreideamh ar ár n-aistear tríd an saol seo. Is é seo ár nguí chugat trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

## An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá:

## Focal Scoir

A Rí na rí, a Rí na cruinne, a Rí a bhí, a bheas is atá, go maithir dúinne agus dá bhfuil uile. Gabh mo ghuí, a Rí na ngrás.

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**Domhnach XXII**  
**‘Le Linn na Bliana’**  
**30ú Lúnasa 2020**

## Réamhrá

Tugann an soiscéal inniu dúshlán dúinn. Cad a chosnaíonn sé a bheith i do dheisceabal d’Íosa? Cad atá muid sásta a dhéanamh?

## Smaoineamh

Déanann Soiscéal an lae inniu muid míchompord. Tá ár saol ag leanúint Chríost agus sin an áit a mbíonn sé deacair. ‘Mas áil le duine daonna lámh arm o bhuíon, séanadh sé é, a chuid suas a chros agus leanadh mé.’ Bheadh sé go deas smaoineamh go raibh sé éasca Críost a leanúint. Is leantóirí Chríost céasta muid. Tá iallach orainn a bheith macánta faoi bheith inár leanúna d’Íosa. An bhfuil sé éasca againn? An bhfuil iarracht á déanamh againn? An bhfuil mé ag leanúint an tslua nó an bhfuil mé ag leanúint Íosa? Glacann sé misneach a bheith i do Chríostaí. Foghlaimimid sa Tiomna Nua go dtagann slánú as an gcros. Caithfear arán a bhriseadh ionas go roinnfear é. Sa chros feicimid doimhneacht ghrá Dé.

Sea, glacann sé misneach a bheith i do Chríostaí. Ach, is bronntanas ón Spiorad Naomh é sin. Níl muid linn féin. Tá na bronntanais againn a thugann sé dúinn le bheith ina bhfor-leanúna do Chríost. Tugann an salm an chúis dúinn. Ní féidir seasamh in aghaidh Dé. Guímid gach rath air. Chun é a leanúint ciallaíonn sé go n-iartar orainn a bheith. Is fearr a ghrá ná an saol a insíonn an salm dúinn. Is é a ghrá ár saol.

## Guí an Phobail

Le muinín, casaimid ar an Athair.

1. Méadú ar ár gcreideamh agus tabhar é chun foirfeachta. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Tabhair croí flaithiúil dúinn. Go dtuga muid lúcháir dár dtithe, dár gcuid oibre agus do gach duine a mbuailfidh leo. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Guímid ar son gach duine a oibríonn, cibé áit a oibríonn iad. A Thiarna, éist linn.

Guímid do gach duine ar saoire ag an am seo den bhliain. Go bhfaighidh siad sos. Seo iad ár nguomh chugat, Íosa Cristost, ár dTiarna.

## An Phaidir

Aitheanta an tslánaithe dár dtreorú agus briathar Dé dár dteagasc, tá sé de mhisneach againn a rá:

## Focal Scoir

A Íosa a chuir brí sa tSacraimáid, a d’fhuascail na mílte a bhí craite i bpéin, lig braon ar mc chroí de do ghrasta féin go maithé tú dom gach peaca da ndearna mé.

\*\*\*



**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

### Benedictine Men's Retreat

Monday, 13–Saturday, 18 July 2020

### Benedictine Women's retreat

Sunday, 19–Tuesday, 21 July 2020

Guided by the Benedictine Monks of the Abbey of Saint Joseph. The retreats are a presentation of the central truths of the Catholic faith in the form of meditations, examination of conscience and prayers.

Contact: Monks of St Joseph Abbey

Fax 00 333 80 962529

Email [spiritualexercises@claival.com](mailto:spiritualexercises@claival.com) or [info@ardsfriary.ie](mailto:info@ardsfriary.ie)

Tel 074-9138909.

See [www.ardsfriary.ie](http://www.ardsfriary.ie) for more details.

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:unajenkins1@gmail.com)

### Wellbeing Retreat

Thursday, 27–Sunday, 30 August 2020  
Ards is an ideal place to take a break from the pressures and stresses of life. During these three days you will be offered a variety of ways to relax your body, mind and spirit. These will include walking, yoga, meditation, sightseeing, painting and swimming. You will also enjoy healthy home-cooked food served by our friendly and helpful staff.

Facilitator: Philip McParland

Contact: Ards Friary Retreat Centre,

Creeslough, Co Donegal

Tel 074-9138909

Email [info@ardsfriary.ie](mailto:info@ardsfriary.ie)

Web [www.ardsfriary.ie](http://www.ardsfriary.ie)

Facebook Ards Friary Retreat Centre



## SEASIDE RETREATS

FFCJ Ibricken Lodge,  
Spanish Point, Co Clare

### Preached Retreat (6 Days)

Friday, 31 July–Friday, 7 August 2020

*Theme: Hedge School of Hope – Discerning the presence, power and love of the Holy Spirit who makes all things new.*

Director: Billy Cleary CSSP

### Directed Retreats (6 Days)

Monday, 10–Monday, 17 August 2020

Directors: Moya Hegarty OSU and Frank Downes OP

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](mailto:geraldinefcj@yahoo.ie)



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## MOUNT ST ANNE'S

### SUMMER RETREATS

#### 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](mailto:secretary@mountstannes.com)

## SABBATICAL PROGRAMMES 2020/2021 – CONTACT OFFICE FOR DETAILS

Mount St Anne's Retreat and Conference Centre, Killenard, Portarlinton, Co Laois R32 WN59  
Tel 057-8626153  
Email [secretary@mountstannes.com](mailto:secretary@mountstannes.com)  
For full details on these and all our courses, see [www.mountstannes.com](http://www.mountstannes.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: '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

### Private Retreats

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Contact: Ms Kate Duggan  
An Tairseach, Organic Farm & Ecology  
Centre, Kilmantin Hill, Wicklow A67 YX26  
Tel 0404-61833  
Email [info@antairseach.ie](mailto:info@antairseach.ie)



## DROMANTINE RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

### 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](mailto:admin@dromantineconference.com)  
[www.dromantineconference.com](http://www.dromantineconference.com)



## AN TOBAR SPIRITAN RETREAT CENTRE

### Ashram Experience

26 June–26 July 2020  
Residential and non-residential bookings available. Vegetarian meals.  
With Korko Moses SJ

### Services available

- School retreats
- Spiritual Accompaniment
- Individual & Personal Retreats
- Group Facilitation & Accompaniment
- A variety of retreats residential & non-residential throughout the year. Self-Catering & Catered Retreats
- Pathways to sustainable ecological living
- A quiet place to pass the day

*Bookings Essential:* Bookings will be confirmed on receipt of deposit.  
*Accommodation:* 17 Ensuite Rooms. Please let us know at the time of booking of any special requirements, dietary etc. *Facilities available:* Conference room with projector for meetings and private retreat groups. Meeting rooms for smaller groups also available.

Contact: An Tobar Spiritan Retreat Centre  
Ardraccan, Navan, Co Meath  
Tel 046-90789730  
Email [antobarnavan@gmail.com](mailto:antobarnavan@gmail.com)  
[www.antobar.ie](http://www.antobar.ie)



# mart

**Available:** Large church organ for donation. Can be delivered.  
Contact: Sr Bernadette Purcell  
Tel 01-4042615

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

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

**Wanted:** Small Scottish Border Parish of St Isidore's, Biggar is looking for any outdoor statues, Calvary figures, Stations, etc. We have beautiful extensive ground and are hoping to open them for prayer, reflection and retreats days.  
Contact: Fr Thomas Doyle  
Email [thomaswdoyle@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:thomaswdoyle@hotmail.co.uk)  
Tel 018999220189





## THE GOSPELS

**According to Matthew,  
Mark, Luke and John**  
Veritas Publications  
ISBN 9781847304162

We naturally think of biblical interpretation as a genre of writing. That is correct, but it's not the whole story. The way in which Biblical texts are produced is also a form of interpretation. The elegance of the volumes we use in the celebration of the liturgy is not just a matter of aesthetics: it points to the reality of Scripture as God's word to us. A solid, well-bound, ornate tome has a certain authority, which reminds us of the authority of the word. A beautiful volume, carried with gravity and accompanied by candle-bearers, reminds us that the word is our light.

This box-set of the four Gospels contains very little text other than the Gospels, yet it is a richly interpretative work. Each Gospel is separately bound, in a large, paperback format, and has an elegance that underlines the beauty of the Word. What little text there is in addition to the sacred word consists of a brief introduction to the Gospel in question, and, after the Gospel, a brief overview of the practice of *lectio divina*. This, too, is an interpretation, communicating to us that the word demands to be read with understanding and then prayed with fervour.

Within each text, the elegant pagination, beautiful illustration, and thoughtful paragraphing continue the interpretation. I am reminded of the words St Augustine once heard in a garden: *tolle lege*, take and read.

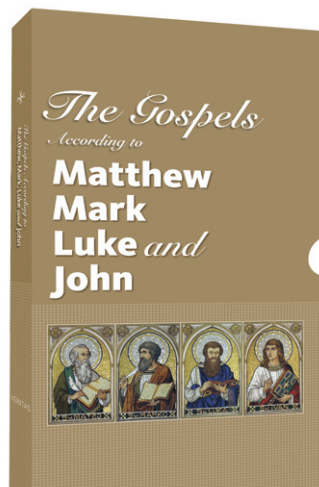
This would make a beautiful gift. Currently on offer from Veritas for just €5. (<https://is.gd/4gospels>)



## GLIMPSES OF THE GOSPELS

**Theological, Spiritual & Practical Reflections**  
Jack Mahoney SJ  
Messenger Publications, 2019

The problem and the promise of biblical commentary as a genre is that it is endless. There is no limit, in principle, to the amount of commentary that can be produced on a given book or text. That does not mean that a given commentary necessarily has something new to say; but on the other hand, the



inexhaustibility of the Word means that there is always, in fact, something new to be said.

This little volume of theological, spiritual and practical commentaries on a range of Gospel texts happily falls into the 'promise' rather than the 'problem' category. The Jesuit author brings an Ignatian sensibility to the Gospel text, and he does not shirk from using the faculty of imagination.

Moored in the text, imagination avoids fantasy and can help us unearth fresh meaning. I particularly appreciated Fr Mahoney's reflections on the temptation of Jesus in the desert. Indeed, it is almost a case-study in how the informed imagination can bear exegetical fruit, and in this short space I will confine my attention to the author's comments on the temptation.

The author seeks to enter into the thought-process of our Lord, as he prepares for his public ministry by taking a forty-day retreat. For Jesus, this is a time for 'planning his ministry, and praying for guidance about the campaign he was preparing to undertake...' How would he proceed and what would he avoid?

The Lord 'decided now that he would use his powers of healing and miracle-working in order to make it clear that God's kingship was not just about to come, but that it was... operative in the presence and transforming words and actions of Jesus himself.' But surely he could use those powers to provide some much-needed food for himself in the desert? The first temptation!

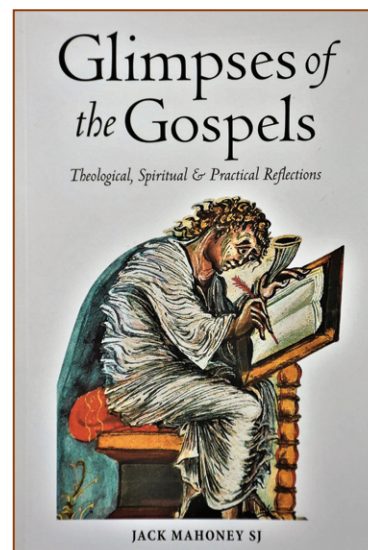
Then Jesus had to reflect on his proclamation strategy. Should he work first through the great and the good, in the hope of a trickle-down effect? Should he court the powers that be? That, our author notes, sounds terribly like the second temptation: courting the favour of power, as a means of getting things done.

Then there was the issue of attracting a following. The message had to be heard, but without hearers there would be no hearing. Fr Mahoney speculates: 'perhaps it occurred to [Jesus] that what would be wanted was a really spectacular event that the authorities and people of Israel simply could not ignore, one that would establish his identity as undeniably the Son of God: something like appearing on the lofty pinnacle of the Temple... and casting himself down dramatically.' I was reminded of the words songwriter Johnny Duhan puts on the lips of the tempter: 'Climb the steeple, and jump down / show the people, God's in town.'

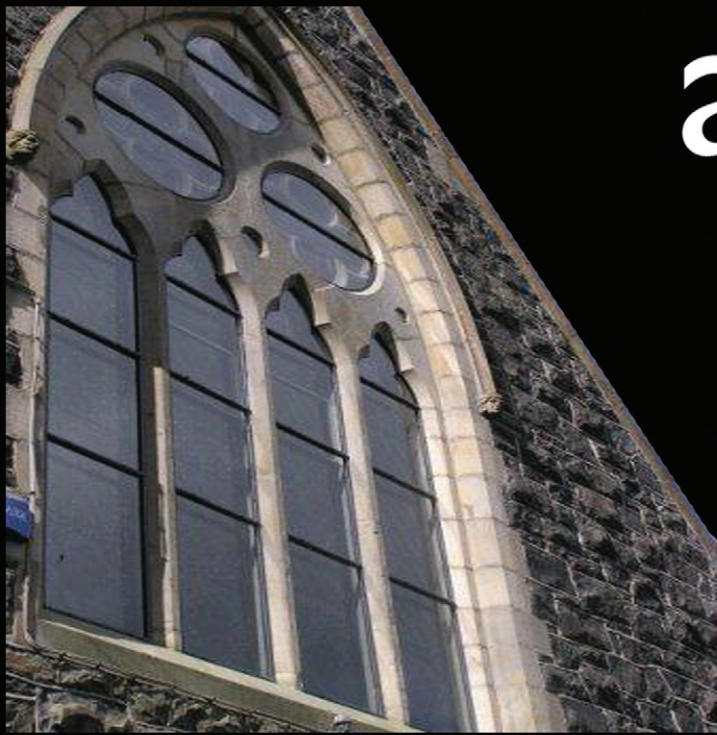
Other Gospel texts explored include the Sermon on the Mount, various parables, and resurrection accounts. Highly recommended!

### NOTE

'The Three Temptations,' from the Album *Creation*.







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THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN IN GLORY BY HARRY CLARKE RHA IN 1923

SEE ARTICLE ON STAINED GLASS ARTIST HARRY CLARKE RHA IN THIS ISSUE



KEN RYAN POINTS OUT, REBECCA AT THE WELL, ONE OF THE MANY INTRICATE MINIATURE ACID ETCHED HIGHLY DETAILED BIBLICAL SCENES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT, IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN. ABBEY STAINED GLASS STUDIOS HAVE CONSERVED AND RESTORED ALL OF THE HARRY CLARKE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS IN ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH.

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