



Varadkar's frankness
is welcome

See Page 7

Alive!

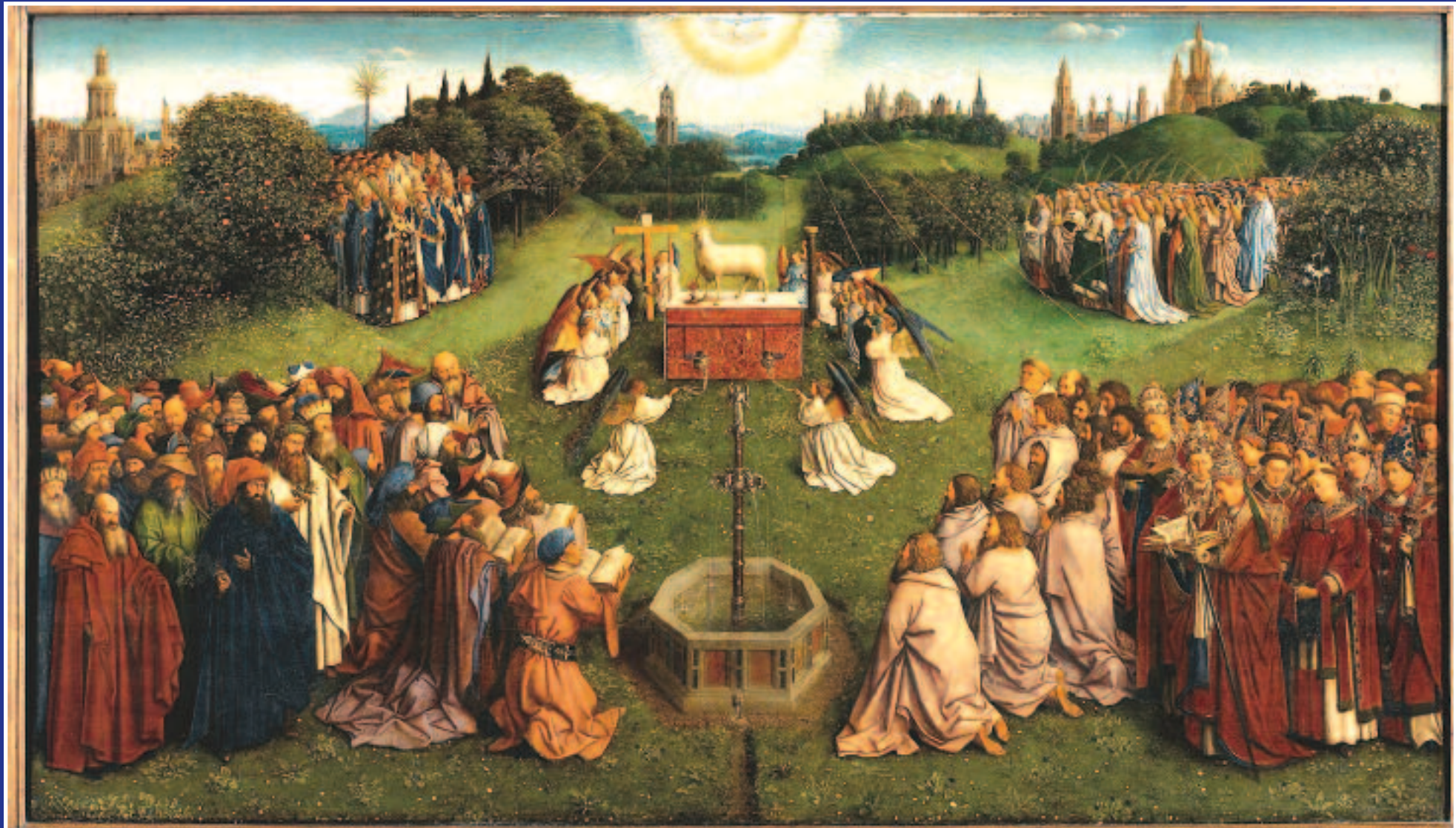
FREE

Catholic Monthly Newspaper

No. 229 January 2017

250,000 copies nationwide

www.alive.ie



**Restored painting, Adoration of the Mystic Lamb,
a great witness to Christian hope and joy.**

● See Page 5



Writer's open letter to
Women's Council:
**Real feminists don't
act like that...!**

Page 12



**Young people
are reversing
the natural
order**

Page 3

■ WHAT IS BEHIND NEW 'POST-TRUTH' SLOGAN?...SEE PAGE 4

Faithful parishes more likely to attract and keep members

WHY some Protestant congregations or parishes in both the US and Canada are growing while others have been in a long decline has puzzled pastors and researchers for a long time.

But now University researchers in Ontario, Canada, claim to have solved the riddle.

Those groups whose pastors and members held faithfully to Christian beliefs, without diluting them, they found, were the ones most likely to flourish. They were also more mission-minded and more likely to attract a younger congregation.

"If we are talking solely about what belief system is more likely to lead to numerical growth among Protestant churches, the evidence suggests conservative Protestant theology is the clear winner," said researcher David Haskell.

On all measures, he said, the growing churches "held more firmly to the traditional beliefs of Christianity and were more diligent in things like prayer and Bible reading."

"It's because theology matters," said Haskell of Wilfrid Laurier University, leader of the research team.

The study found, for example, that in growing churches 100% of the clergy agreed that it was "very important to encourage non-Christians to become Christians" compared with only 50% of clergy in declining churches.

Again, in growing congregations 93% of clergy and 83% of worshippers believed that Jesus rose bodily from the dead, compared with 67% of worshippers and just 56% of clergy from declining churches.

Haskell also suggested that conservative Christians are more evangelisation-minded.



Deeply convinced of the life-saving, life-altering benefits that only their faith can provide, "they are motivated by emotions of compassion and concern to recruit family, friends and acquaintances into their faith and into their church," he said.

More persuasive

Their confidence in their faith, he believed, also made them more persuasive.

"Confidence mixed with a message that's uplifting, reassuring or basically positive is an attractive combination," he noted.

The project surveyed more than 2,200 churchgoers from mainline Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran and United churches in Ontario.

About half attended services in nine churches where membership had risen by at least 2% over the past decade; the other half attended 13 churches where numbers had fallen at the same rate.

Researchers attended services at all 22 churches, then asked members to complete a 40-question survey. They also interviewed all clergy and 195 members who had completed the sur-

vey.

Members and clergy from the declining groups blamed changes in society for a drop in interest in religion.

But when the researchers compared the religious beliefs and practices of the two groups, those that were growing had more members and clergy who held firmly to "traditional" Protestant beliefs and were more diligent in practices such as prayer and Bible-reading.

Some 71% of pastors at growing churches, for example, said they read their Bibles daily, compared with a mere 19% of pastors in the other group.

And on the belief that "God performs miracles in answer to prayers", the difference was 100% to 44% among clergy and 90% to 80% among members.

The figures also suggested that in the declining groups, the clergy had even less faith than the lay members.

In growing congregations two thirds were under the age of 60 as against one third in the other churches.

There was also a difference in the form of worship, with guitars and drums in the growing congregations as against organ and choir elsewhere.

The results of the five-year study have been published in the latest issue of the *Review of Religious Research*.

Turkey warns EU

■ Turkey has threatened to open its borders once again to tens of thousands of refugees and to trigger a new migrant crisis in Europe, after talks to admit it to the EU stalled.

"Listen to me. If you go any further, then the frontiers will be opened, bear that in mind," the country's President Erdogan told the EU in a speech in Istanbul.

Unjust demands threaten notion of 'human rights' says Vatican

THE Vatican's top official at the UN has warned that the very notion of "human rights" is under threat at the present, that it is being undermined by the many demands being put forward today by various lobby groups under the heading of "rights".

These demands, he said, "significantly stray from the vision of the human person" which is the basis for the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and for the other conventions that form international human rights law.

As a result, they discredit the notion of human rights at the very moment when hundreds of millions of people depend on it for justice in their lives.

Speaking in a debate at the UN, Archbishop Bernardino Auza said that the ideals set forth in the *Universal Declaration* "are a powerful and perennial reminder of our common humanity and of the human solidarity that flows from it."

But he called for the term "human right" to be "strictly and prudently applied, lest it become a rhetorical catch-all, endlessly expanded to suit the passing tastes of the age."

He added that "such an elastic approach would discredit and undermine the very concept of human rights."

This threat to the notion of human rights, he noted, comes "at a particularly tumultuous time" in which human dignity and actual rights "are being denied, suppressed and violated across the globe."

As a result, civilians are targeted in war and armed conflict; persons are trafficked for slave labour, sex, or organs; ethnic and religious minorities are being

singled out for persecution and annihilation.

Moreover, human beings deemed unwanted or useless are being discarded in what Pope Francis has termed the "throwaway culture"; and tens of millions of people risk their lives to flee from persecution and extreme poverty.

Source

But in order to foster respect for human dignity and rights, it is essential to understand their source and foundation, argued Archbishop Auza.

"While it is a great sign of ethical progress that today almost everyone speaks about human rights and dignity, many do so without acknowledging where human dignity and rights come from," he said.

Human dignity, the basis for human rights, he said, "expresses the intrinsic worth of every person no matter what race or sex, however young or old, healthy or handicapped, wanted or unwelcomed, economically productive or incapacitated, influential or insignificant."

He explained that human dignity is inherent to every human being from the first moment of conception.

"It is not something that we acquire when we reach a certain physical dimension, mental ability or age," he said. "Nor is it some kind of 'privilege' that can be conceded or taken away by the State, as a matter of policy."

Must recognise Islamic motives in ISIS terrorism

ATTEMPTS to deny any link between Islam as a religion and the atrocities carried out by Islamic State militants have been criticised by the leader of the Anglican Communion.

Rev Justin Welby, who heads the Church of England, pointed out that claims that Islamic State violence has "nothing to do with Islam" are untrue and harm efforts to confront and combat extremism.

Some Muslim and Christian leaders as well as politicians and media have tried to play down these links.

Rev. Welby argued that unless people recognise and attempt to understand what motivates terrorists, including their religion, they will never be able to combat their ideology effectively.

A number of high profile figures, including Boris Johnson, have called on the public to avoid using the term



Islamic State because, they say, its ruthless violence is contrary to Islamic teaching.

But Dr Welby insisted that it was essential to be realistic in recognising the Muslim convictions of terrorists, in order to tackle the whole issue of ISIS violence.

Religious leaders, he noted, need to "stand up and take responsibility" for

the actions of extremists who claim to be inspired by their religious beliefs.

"If we treat religiously motivated violence solely as a security issue, or a political issue, then it will be incredibly difficult, probably impossible, to overcome it," he said.

He also called on countries across Europe to recognise and rediscover the Christian roots of their culture and the Christian understanding of the human person as a child of God which lies at the root of that culture.

This, he said, was the only way to counter the mass disenchantment which is gripping the continent.

Dr Welby made his comments during a lecture at the Catholic Institute of Paris, where he was awarded an honorary doctorate.

During his talk he also reportedly made a scathing critique of "centralisation, corruption and bureaucracy" in the EU.

Murders up in Chicago

■ Police statistics have revealed that in the first eleven months of 2016 a total of 701 people were murdered in Chicago, a city with a population of just over 2.7 million.

At one point during the year the level of violence and law-breaking got so bad that "several hundred" police officers were sent into three of the city's high-crime areas.

Despite this, the final number of unlawful deaths for the year is expected to be almost 300 more than 2015.

In the coming two years, in a desperate bid to curb the violence, the city will increase the number of police officers by 970.

Among those killed was a 15-year-old boy who got into a quarrel over basketball shoes.

Young people are reversing the natural order



THE OPEN DOOR

Last summer in Medjugorje I met a Canadian priest who spoke about a strange thing happening in his country, or at least in Quebec province. Many young people, he said, were bringing their parents back to the Catholic faith.

I wondered if that was just one man's impression or if there was any evidence to support his view.

A few days later I met a lady from Canada and mentioned to her what the priest had said, curious to see what she would make of it.

She looked a bit surprised for a moment, then simply remarked: "It was my 19-year-old daughter that brought me back."

According to the priest, it was those who are now grandparents who first gave up the practice of the faith, and failed to hand it on to their children. They, in turn, had even less to hand on to their children.

But thanks to various Catholic youth events, including the 2013

World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, many of these nominally Catholic young people encountered the faith in all its richness for the first time. And were amazed by what they discovered.

Others came to the faith through Brother André Bessette (died 6 January 1937).

The door attendant in his monastery, Bro. André was renowned for countless miraculous cures, and needed four secretaries to help him deal with the thousands of letters he received each day.

His canonisation as a saint in 2010, it appears, had a huge impact on young Catholics in Canada.

Challenging question

Having come to know Jesus, the question the young people forcefully put to their parents is along the lines: "What was it you wanted that you were willing to give up the faith for it?"

That is a challenging question but we need to break it down a bit in order to see its full meaning and power.

First of all, it could only be asked by a person who has come to some personal understanding of how wonderful it is to be a Catholic.

What the young people discover is, first of all, a radically new vision



Rio was one of the cities that hosted World Youth Day.

of life. For them it is like coming out of a windowless bunker into a glorious world full of light, colour and beauty.

They discover that life has a purpose, an ultimate meaning that makes sense of all the daily joys, sorrows, struggles, hopes. The whole thing is not pointless. They are on a journey to a specific destination. Hope is no longer shallow or futile.

They learn that they matter, that they have a value far beyond anything they had imagined. They are not simply "a chemical scum" or cogs in some vast economic, political, entertainment machine.

It was love that brought them into existence, the love of their parents but above all God's love. Each of

them was created to receive love and then to give love.

The Catholic faith, they learn, is not primarily a system of teachings, sacraments, practices. It is not an ethical system, however noble.

Rather, it is, first and foremost, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, crucified but risen and now alive. It is a response to an individual call.

Each of them was called to an intimate, passionate friendship with the Saviour in the Church, his body.

Once they grasp that, and see how deeply it can transform their thinking, their values and principles, life can never be the same again.

Sacrifice

Then comes the startling challenge to their parents. "What was it you wanted that you were willing to sacrifice all this for it?"

It's a question that Irish parents too need to answer. And not only parents. Teachers also, and college lecturers, journalists, presenters, politicians, judges and so on.

Was it wealth? Yes, in some cases. Comfort? Yes, in many cases. Dismay at scandals? Indeed. The desire to think as they wished? Yes, generally meaning the desire to let the media do their thinking.

Were they seeking freedom – the freedom to do as they pleased in a

given situation? Perhaps this more than anything. They wanted no God, church or even rationality itself telling them what to do.

Already our disintegrating society shows what a disaster this has been.

So many young people with a deep sense of emptiness, the best of them clutching at some "cause", however destructive it may be, to give them some sense of importance.

Many of them turning to obsession with sport, endless TV or music, limited ambitions, alcohol, drugs, pleasure.

Sterile sex outside marriage reflects the absence of hope and the wider sterility in their lives. No wonder depression is an issue among so many young people.

And so, parents, although they wanted to do the best they could for their children, deprived them of the greatest gift they could have given them: the Catholic faith.

Where do we go from here? The whole Church needs to become far more dynamic and fearlessly challenging.

Parent or child, priest or lay person, we need to challenge both ourselves and others: "What was it you wanted that you were willing to compromise or even sacrifice your faith for it?"

Most mothers want to stay at home-poll

FEWER than one in five mothers with children under 17 would opt for full-time work if given a free choice, according to a new Irish opinion poll.

The survey asked, "If money were no object, and you were free to do whatever

you wanted, would you stay at home, would you work full time or would you work part time?"

35% of women with children under 17 preferred to stay at home full time; 48% would opt to work part time and just 17% would choose full time work outside the home.

The survey of a representative sample of 1,001 adults aged 18 and over was conducted for the Iona Institute using the Amarach Research online omnibus service.

The Institute's Maria Steen commented: "the survey shows how misguided the recent Budget was in discriminating in favour of working parents at the expense of parents who would rather stay at home with their children, for part of their childhood at

least."

This policy, she noted, was introduced by Children's Minister, Katherine Zappone despite parents' clear preference. "Why," asked Ms Steen, "is Government policy so biased in favour of mothers who want to go out to work?"

She continued: "The poll also shows that people are much more likely to say women in the home are undervalued compared with women who work outside the home."

"This is hardly a surprise when official policy itself so badly undervalues the choice to stay at home with our children."

The fairest way forward, she believed, was for Government to "be neutral between home-care, day-care, and other forms of child-care."

Retrouvaille a Lifeline for Marriage

Do you feel alone or distant from your spouse? Have you lost the desire to communicate with each other?

Do you feel disillusioned or bored in your marriage? Have you separated, divorced, or are you thinking of doing so, but want to try again?

The **Retrouvaille** programme can help you recover your marriage.

Next programme commences: 10th - 12th February 2017 in Dublin
Post weekend days
19th Feb - 5th & 19th March & 2nd April

Contact: Tony & Anne 01-4953536; Mike & Anne 01-4500922;
Or text or call 086-4135440
www.retrouvaille.ie

COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEDJUGORJE SHORT BREAKS 2017

14 APRIL 3 NIGHTS	from €549pp
2 JUNE 4 NIGHTS	from €589pp
8 SEPTEMBER 4 NIGHTS	from €589pp
4 OCTOBER 4 NIGHTS	from €589pp

www.journalistours.ie | info@journalistours.ie | 01 241 0860 | T.O.052 | T.A.0689

MARIAN PILGRIMAGES

FULLY ESCORTED PILGRIMAGES

MEDJUGORJE 2017

2017 Early Booking Prices

April & May 7 nights	June 7 nights	July 7 nights
from €579	from €619	from €599
August 7 nights	Sept 7 nights	Oct 7 nights
from €649	from €659	from €579

Bookings before Feb 1st 2017 will avail of the €50 discount included in the above prices. Early booking discount is not available for Easter, Anniversary, Youth Week or departures from Belfast

HOLY LAND AT EASTER

8 nights - from €1495
11 - 19 April
Follow Jesus' steps on The Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem's Old City on Good Friday

All Pilgrimages include an expertly created itinerary with spiritual director, flights, accommodation, transport, guide and a local Marian Pilgrimages representative while abroad as standard.
Full itineraries are available at www.marian.ie or on request by phone

WWW.MARIAN.IE
(01) 878 8159 | (028) 956 80005 | info@marian.ie
19 Eden Quay, Dublin 1
Fully licensed and bonded tour operator TO142 - ATOL 10206

What is behind new 'post-truth' slogan?

by Gerard Murphy

The word of the year for 2016 is "post-truth", according to the *Oxford Dictionary* authors. They chose this as the word which best captures the year's major social and cultural developments.

It's a good choice, and certainly names a major trend in modern culture, a very influential trend that merits close attention.

The "liberal" media's sudden fondness for the word, however, may really point to a panic that their ability to shape public thinking and society is in decline.

But what does the word mean? Basically it says that truth has become unimportant or irrelevant. It points to a mentality that says, "don't bother me with the facts, I've already made up my mind."

The Dictionary puts it more elegantly. It defines post-truth as:

"relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public

opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."

In other words, the phrase recognises that vast numbers of people, in deciding how to act, are no longer guided by the truth but by their own emotions, desires or their personal opinions.

This applies, in particular, to political issues, so the media linked the phrase with another word, to give us "post-truth politics".

Mainstay

According to the Dictionary's editors, use of "post-truth" in headlines, articles, magazines was up by 2000% in just one year.

It became "a mainstay in political commentary" and was regularly "used by major publications in their headlines, with no need for clarification or definition."

Two major events in 2016 greatly boosted use of the word: the EU referendum in Britain and Donald Trump's presidential campaign.



Post-truth voters?

But this suggests that there's more to this whole story than meets the eye.

In Britain it was the media backing the Remain side in the referendum which took to using the phrase "post-truth politics", in an attempt to explain how their agenda was rejected by the public.

They didn't want to say that a majority of voters were stupid, gullible, phobic or racist, but that was the real implication in their "post-truth" diagnosis.

Likewise in America. The media, almost all in Hillary Clinton's camp, were bewildered by the huge support for Trump right throughout the campaign.

They simply could not grasp that so many people might detest Trump and some of his policies, yet find Clinton's agenda even more obnoxious.

But once again it would be too arrogant, even for the liberal media, to accuse half the electorate of stupidity and phobia. It was easier to blame "post-truth politics".

Liberal groupthink

In this telling of the story, the high-minded media know the truth and are eager to communicate it on behalf of their candidate, but the public won't listen to reason.

A very different way of telling the story has the media locked into a liberal groupthink, ignoring or suppressing key truths. Far from being post truth, voters saw through that

kind of bias and resisted that kind of manipulation.

Having said all that, the media are right to be concerned about today's disregard for reasonable argument. Their mistake lies in failing to see that they are a major part of the problem.

It's a dangerous situation. It means that there is no longer much point in providing good reasons for or against a particular course of action.

Rather, people are more likely to be influenced by those best able to manipulate their emotions.

We see this in the current Irish campaign to legalise the killing of the child in the womb. But the media are not concerned about post-truth here.

We saw it also in the campaign to destroy the family by removing the procreation and rearing of children from the definition of marriage.

Only a new love and respect for the truth, in all its richness, will save us from the Dark Age into which our civilisation is sinking.



Monthly Musings

By Catherine Kavanagh
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy in Mary Immaculate College

The fashionista is a strange animal

"EVERYBODY wants to be us", says Meryl Streep in the film, *The Devil Wears Prada* (pictured right).

I've taken to reading glossies lately – lots of time in waiting rooms and so on. You know – magazines aimed at women, mainly fashion and cosmetics, but also containing articles on current affairs topics supposedly more relevant to women than to others.

They appear to be produced by people who really do have the inordinately high opinion of themselves articulated by Streep.

But the fashionista is a very strange animal: miserable – she can't look at an item of food without worrying about the calorie content (although this apparently does not extend to alcohol).

Miserable and lonely: the "relationship" articles are essentially glorifications of casual sex.

This, like any addiction, needs to be fed by ever stronger doses in order to produce the original sensation – to the point that quite distressing behaviours, verging on the abusive, are presented as merely "a bit more spice" in your life.

In the meantime, the really deep issues around choosing a life partner and starting a family are all but ignored.

Miserable, lonely and greedy: I suppose the lack of depth in relationships has to be compensated for somehow, and there is an insane amount of "must have" in the articles about clothes and cosmetics.

Miserable, lonely, greedy and angry: the current affairs articles, almost without exception, espouse a very liberal perspective on social issues, and any disagreement is met with seething fury rather than rational argument.

That anything at all might be said for traditional views (not just Catholic, but Judeo-Christian more generally), is not even acknowledged. "Everybody wants to be us"... Really?



Deep roots of division



ARE we in for another roller-coaster of a referendum on the right to life? As one might expect, all the discussion revolves around the rights of the woman.

The only reason that abortion is a contentious issue to begin with, however, is the status of the foetus: is this just another organ, to be tweaked with at will? If so, why is there an issue?

But what if the foetus is what it looks like almost from the earliest stages: a fully human being, distinguished from other human entities like you and me only by being very much smaller and more dependent?

Then we really have to ask

under what circumstances we permit the deliberate taking of innocent human life.

Reading much of the earlier feminist philosophy of abortion, Judith Thomson (1973), for example, it is clear that they always knew they were dealing with another human being (check out "Thomson's Violinist").

But because the unborn child radically depended on his or her mother, they maintained that the mother, being the sole source of support, had the right of life and death over the child.

If that is granted, then any other apparent argument is merely PR.

Cuts in special needs

A TEACHER friend of mine recently filled me in on the appalling cuts in Special Needs services in schools. The allocation of help bears no relation at all to the actual needs of the pupils in her school.

Add to that the cruel cuts in mental health services – services which were woefully inadequate to begin with – and you begin to wonder what any of the sanctimonious caterwauling about cherishing difference actually means.

The cut in Special Needs also sends another message: that we do not value education as the formation of the human person, but only as the production of trained operatives for commercial enterprises.

But without the formation of the person, we will have doctors and nurses without any consciences, dishonest businessmen and lawyers, in fact, a completely unethical workforce generally – and then it will be too late to be sorry.

Children will take in infinitely more from what we do than what we say, and if our practice is cruel and indifferent, that's what they will learn.



Matria potestas

■ The Romans had a law, patria potestas (power of the father), which was the power of the head of a Roman family over his wife, children and household.

This included the right to punish by death and involved complete control over all the rights of all members of the family.

Of course, the original rigour of the law weakened over time, and today we would see it as completely unjust.

But "the woman's right to choose" amounts to matria potestas: the absolute right of life and death of a mother over her own child.

Alcoholics in Holland can now ask to be killed off

HOLLAND has expanded its list of undesirables who can ask to be killed to now include alcoholics.

Writing in *Linda*, a Dutch magazine, journalist Marcel Langedijk told how his brother Mark had been an alcoholic for eight years.

Married with two children, he had seen his marriage collapse and was being cared for by his parents. He had plenty of family support, said the journalist, but was unable to dry out.

Having been through 21 stints in hospital or rehab without lasting success he decided he had had enough and asked to be put down.

The killer, a woman doctor in a black dress and sneakers, arrived to give him his lethal injection. She confirmed that he wanted to be killed and then gave him three shots of poison.

A comment on the *Bioedge* website asked if the Dutch will now "extend the favour" to hopeless addicts of marijuana which in its potent modern form "damages the brain in the long term"?

Another commenter noted that it was very sad that his children would remember him this way.

The future of euthanasia, he said, was "bleak, depressed, hopeless, cutting off loved ones, no desire for the struggle that it takes to overcome, to achieve, to conquer, to be free from one's addictions."

He concluded: "Those who don't give God a chance to help, lose their lives."



Bishop slams EU military aid for Sudan

A CATHOLIC bishop from Sudan has blasted the EU and Germany for providing military aid to his government, revealing that it is being used against the country's poorest people.

The equipment is not for the benefit of the people but is part of an attempt to halt the flood of refugees from Africa into Europe.

Government attacks on the people of the Nuba mountain region, said Bishop Macram Max Gassis, are "a hidden and forgotten conflict."

He wanted to highlight the "hunger, disease, insecurity and, above all, silence in the face of evils that are killing innocent people, particularly children, women and elderly."

These, he noted, "are maimed, rendered homeless and killed due to aerial bombardment which has become the order of the day."

The outspoken Bishop Gassis travelled to Brussels in order to make his point as forcefully as possible.

He described it as "alarming" that "Europe has moved ahead, partnered with and supplies Sudan with high-tech surveillance and registration equipment".

This equipment, he said, is going to people "who use chemical weapons, conduct indiscriminate aerial bombardment, starve their population and won't allow life-saving medicines to reach the Nuba population," all with the aim of "stemming the flow of refugees from Africa."



Bishop Macram Max Gassis visiting a Sudanese village.

Alive! needs your support



Alive! accepts CREDIT CARD Donations & Payments

Tel: 01-404 8187



Anonymous Donations

€500: An Co. Leitrim; CQ;
€250: An;
€100: LMCH;
€50: An; Anon Tipp;
€40: RJ;
€30: An;
€25: MO'D;
€20: AC; TG
€15: An;
€10: An;
Stg: £50: AB Portaferry;
£30: MMCC; £20: Bilbo Co. Down;

I wish to support *Alive!*. Enclosed is my donation for

€1,000 ☐ €500 ☐ €250 ☐ €100 ☐

€50 ☐ €25 ☐ €15 ☐ other €

Name

Address

Tel:

Please send your donation to:

Alive!, St. Mary's Priory, Tallaght, Dublin 24

THANK YOU for your continued support.

If 8,000 people contribute just €20 each we can continue for another year.

SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OF YOU WHO DONATED TO ALIVE! DURING DECEMBER

Famous 'Lamb' altarpiece is back on display in Ghent

ALMOST 600 years after it was painted, and despite many attempts to steal or even destroy it, the famous Ghent altarpiece is once again bearing witness to the great mysteries of the Catholic faith.

From the time it was first unveiled on 6 May 1432 Jan van Eyck's painting has attracted artists and cultured visitors from all over Europe.

But for those who approached it with faith, and not simply curiosity or artistic interest, it gave a glimpse into heaven and inspired immense Christian hope and joy.

The faithful taking part in Mass were reminded that they were united with the eternal sacrifice of Christ; they were in union with the angels and the saints in worshipping Christ, the Lamb who was sacrificed but now lives.

After four years of careful work, the first stage of a major restoration project has been completed and the oil painting, known as *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, has been put on display once again in St Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent.

The renewal of the 12-panel work, which is a mas-



The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb in St Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent.

terpiece of Catholic iconography dating from long before the Reformation, was made possible by a large grant from the Getty Foundation.

The work features various scenes from the Bible and contains 100 figures. On its exterior wing panels is an Annunciation scene, to be seen when the altarpiece is closed as it generally was, except on holy days.

Described by a contemporary art historian as "the most influential painting ever", its enormous influence was due to several factors: it was the first major oil painting, revealing the capabilities of the new medium, and its artistic realism was a

new development allowing highly detailed portraits, down to the hair in Adam's nostril.

Sensation

Commissioned by a wealthy merchant, the mayor of the Belgian city, and his wife, it was begun by Hubert van Eyck in 1426, and completed by his brother Jan after Hubert's early death.

Standing at 4.6m wide and 3.5m high, it immediately it became a sensation.

Its central panel, based on a scene from the Book of Revelation, depicts the victorious Lamb of God, standing on the altar of sacrifice in heaven, and being wor-

shipped by all the angels and saints.

The Lamb's blood, flowing into a chalice, is a reminder of the eternal sacrifice of Christ which is made present every time Mass is celebrated.

But that the painting has survived at all is a miracle in itself. In 1566 rioting, image-destroying Calvinists, the ISIS of their day, tried to take control of Ghent and went in search of the masterpiece.

It was barely saved from destruction, thanks to a group of knights who had the forethought to dismantle it into its 12 panels, and hide it in the bell tower.

In 1794 French Republican troops captured Ghent and shipped the four central panels home to the Louvre in Paris, Napoleon's new art museum.

It was stolen again during the Great War and once more by the Nazis during the Second World War, and was almost blown up by a renegade SS officer while being stored in a secret salt mine in Austria.

Work on restoring the rest of the altarpiece is continuing, and will be completed, it is hoped, in time for a major Van Eyck exhibition in 2020.

Social Media: Revolution Needed

Growing up in the fast-paced digital age is kinda scary. When I was a young teen, I thought Bebo and Club Penguin were as high-tech as it gets.

I'll never forget the feeling of rebellion when Club Penguin banned me for 24 hours for typing a mild curse word. Oh the thrills.

But today, I look around and I see an endless stream of apps and websites with functions we can't possibly keep up with.

The internet is a frightening place. Whether intentional or not, the amount of trouble you can get yourself into (and yes, I mean more than a ban from Club Penguin) – is uncanny.

I came up with three P's to watch out for: Porn (including sexting), Predators, and Pretend.

Porn: if you haven't yet seen the website "fightthenewdrug.org", please stop reading these articles and go check it out now. It is a key source for anyone exposed to porn (which is everyone).

It is important to note that porn is not a problem exclusive to 18+ websites. Take Snapchat as an example. Snapchat started as a simple app where you shared photos with your friends.

Then came the filters, which attracted huge attention. The first thing my 8-year-old brother says to me when I come home is, "Katie, can I use your snapchat pleaseeee?"

Adult content

Now, listen to what Lauren MacEwen of Xbiz (US porn business) reports: "Snapchat is definitely accepting of adult content. This can be a great platform for [porn] performers to give free content, or reward their followers with content."

She also acknowledges that "Snapchat (and Tumblr) have the youngest audience of all the networks, with the majority being below the age of 24."

Conclusion: porn stars are targeting young people through Snapchat.

I was annoyed at Snapchat before I even knew this worrying fact. What I find particularly disturbing is how Snapchat has progressed from a young person's app into an adult magazine.

Now, when you swipe left to see your friends' stories, what comes up first is "recent updates" from world news and entertainment.

You know the number one feature? Kim Kardashian's

butt. That is what we're seeing the most of on snapchat "updates", as if we must be updated on Kim's lack of clothing.

Alongside these images, I've seen articles about female body parts, sex tips, the list goes on.

Snapchat is a prime example of how a nice little app appeals to young people, is repeatedly updated and modified, and turns into a sexualised, porn-infiltrated outlet. Even the porn stars are catching onto this.

But Snapchat isn't the only problem. On Twitter and Instagram you can follow (and be followed by) anything from "cute pups daily" to "daily sex videos".

Spam

There is also a huge problem with spam - 2.5 billion emails containing porn are sent each day

Porn companies target children as young as 7, with 11 being a prime target. They try to hook us while we're young. And sadly, it works way too often.



And this isn't just a guys' issue. At least one-third of porn users are women.

But I must admit, what I've noticed to be the bigger problem with girls is sexting. Especially if a girl is in a relationship with a guy who watches porn, she'll want to give him something else to look at.

Ultimately, women and girls end up sharing private photos to try to win back the attention they have lost through porn.

This often leads to a lowering of self-respect and an endless cycle of defeat and even depression.

What can we do? We need a revolution. Please, make your number one New Year's resolution to talk about the struggles of porn amongst your families and friends.

Check out fightthenewdrug.org, and make a personal commitment (whether you're a porn addict or just like checking out the racy stories on Snapchat from time to time), to actively stand up against our porn culture.

Porn kills love, and we deserve better.

The YOUTH FORUM



With Katie Ascough

Predators on the Internet

When it comes to predators on the internet, I have noticed three types.

First, there's the very real and scary (though less common) threat of sexual predators who convince young people to meet up with them.

This seems to be more of a problem in the U.S. and the U.K., but we're not immune to it in Ireland. It's something we need to be aware of – and make sure the young people in our lives are aware of it.

The second type of predator on the internet is the porn predator. My guy-friends have told me they often get friend requests (on Facebook and Instagram especially) from topless women.

The idea here is that they add you, you look at their content, and then they allure you to their pornographic website. This is actually a key marketing tool for many porn stars.

Creepy

The third type, whose typical target is female, is the can-we-get-married-tomorrow, creepy older men. Mostly they just add you, but sometimes they grace you with a message.

I've seen everything from "Can you give me a little chance to tell you what's on my mind dear... Am harmless," to "Hello, nice to meet you, am here in search of my soul mate..."

First of all, the fact that you need to tell me you're harmless is not a good start. Also, if you think adding random women on Facebook is the way to find your soulmate, you need to go read some Jason Evert.

Point here is that for women, the biggest threat seems to be men playing on our emotional weaknesses. I assume they either think that we'll feel sorry for them, or that we'll bask in the unwarranted attention.

What they are trying to get out of it, I am not sure, but I wouldn't assume it's anything good. Best thing to do: do *not* reply, and block.

Never underestimate predators on the internet.

Pretend Life Vs. Real Life

■ It's not just sexual threats that the internet presents us with. What about family time and real-life conversations?

As an American friend said to me the other day: "the Luas [Dublin tram] is a sad place - everyone is on their phones."

Think about the real-life conversations we are missing by being so fixated on our techno gadgets. Think of all the family time you've missed out on, because at dinner time you were too busy scrolling through your newsfeed.

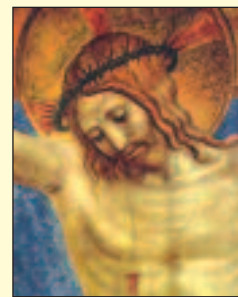
Maybe your phone is the reason you don't know about your brother's new girlfriend, or maybe you've missed an opportunity to put in a kind word when someone is having a terrible day. You just never know.

And I am one to talk. I'm constantly on my phone – half the time because I genuinely need to be, and half the time because I should be doing something else.

It's important to realise that the internet is a great gift, but it comes with a responsibility to use it wisely.

Friday is Special

because Sunday is special
An invitation to Catholics to take up again the ancient custom of abstaining from meat each Friday in honour of Christ's passion and death.



Volunteers needed in every area to help promote this project.



LEAFLETS AVAILABLE

Please contact Grace, 089-4688726 or fridayisspecial4@gmail.com.

*We're a Catholic family.
We don't eat meat on Fridays.
A Year of Mercy project by Alive!*

Encouraging honesty in our children

by Caitriona Lynch

To be honest I find it *really hard* to be completely honest, so this has to be a case of, "do as I say, don't do as I do" (St Paul).

Secondly. If lying becomes a habit it can be very difficult to break. So get in there asap and put new habits in place.

There are many reasons why we lie but they usually fall into one of these categories.

- We want to avoid the consequences of our actions (in the case of children that's punishment);
- We want to avoid disappointing those we love (parents);
- We want to avoid unpleasant outcomes;
- We want to impress someone, or get their attention.

The rot can set in when we catch our children out in a lie. We want to punish them because of the trouble it led to, or to teach them it is wrong. So they lie even more to avoid all that grief. What then can you do?

Keep calm

Depending on the seriousness of the act, and assuming no one has been badly injured - Keep calm and parent on. For example, if juice has been spilt and denied, don't lose the head. Discuss the situation and the problem.

Minor matters like this provide an ideal situation for teaching the *really* important lesson: Lying is *wrong*.

'Wrong' is a word we don't hear very often nowadays. However if you don't teach your children at the earliest of ages the importance of telling the truth, you are going to have huge issues communicating with them as teenagers.

Don't set up a lie, by asking, for example, "Have you tidied your room yet?" Ask



You've got kids!

instead, "When are you going to do your room?"

Get the whole story. Encourage them to share everything with you. Don't be mumbling phrases like "That's awful, can't believe you did that, you did what!!! ... etc during your child's narration.

Remember, unless someone has lost their lives most things can be repaired, sorted, got over.

Don't belittle them for being honest. Certainly there need to be consequences and depending on the age and the seriousness, some punishment may well be in order. Obviously smashing the car is different to spilling juice.

Make a habit of celebrating honesty. Tell them how glad you are and great they are, to have told the truth.

Delight in "do overs": If you had to do it over what would you do differently? This turns a mistake into an opportunity.

We also need to guide our children through the making of appropriate amends to the affected people.

Of course nothing speaks louder than our own example. So walk the walk, talk the talk, and no white lies. What you give yourself permission to do, your children will do also!

Editor's Jottings

A closer look at stories in the round...



Religion, human dignity and conscience

FR Jacques Mourad, a Syriac-Catholic priest, was held captive by ISIS for five months. Introducing Aid to the Church in Need's 2016 annual *Report on Religious Freedom in the World* he stated:

"If religion teaches us anything it is the value of the human person, the need to respect each other as a gift from God.

However, it is not "religion" which teaches us the value of the human person, it is the Christian faith. Various strands of Islam and Judaism, for example, do not share the Christian understanding of human dignity.

Nor, certainly, does modern secularist religion. And human sacrifice was a major element in Aztec worship.

Ignoring or blurring real differences does not really lead to authentic dialogue or to peace and justice in the long run.

Moreover, the "experts" cannot agree on what they mean by "religion", on what should be included or excluded from it. Many want to drop the word altogether as unhelpful.

We rightly object when "religion" is blamed for evils done by a particular group as in the silly secularist claim that "religion leads to intolerance" or "religion causes wars".

On the other hand, then, we cannot credit "religion" in general with the things we approve of. Especially if we are really referring to the Christian faith.

Conscience

Fr Mourad concludes: "It must be possible both to have a passionate faith in one's religious beliefs as well as to respect the right of others to follow their conscience, to live out their own response to the love of God who made us all."

But what if conscience tells us to chop off a thief's hand, to behead infidels, to sacrifice captives or simply that abandoning our spouse and family is ok? Is conscience enough?

For a Catholic, conscience is a judgment about what is good or evil, about what is to be done or what avoided. But with this goes the duty to be properly informed about good and evil. For Catholics, Church teaching plays a vital role here.

If we forget the second part, the duty to seek the truth, conscience just becomes a cover for ruthlessly doing whatever we want.



Fr Jacques Mourad: Conscience not enough!

Varadkar's frankness is welcome

Show yourself a man - part 5

LEO VARADKAR, a former Health Minister and medical doctor, has questioned why people use the word 'foetus' for the child in the womb.

He recently asked a pregnant friend if she knew what sex her baby was. Had he asked her about "her foetus", he said, she would have been "quite offended. And the same goes for my sisters."

For him, "a foetus is a medical word. It's like talking of your glossus instead of your tongue or your digits instead of your fingers."

He often wonders, he told a seminar in UCD, "why people use a medical word to talk about what is a form of human life, if not a person." This "form

of human life" is, as he put it, a baby.

We can take it, then, that Mr Varadkar knows that to abort a foetus is, in fact, to kill an innocent baby in the womb.

Varadkar is up there with *Irish Independent* journalist Ian O'Doherty who also openly accepts that abortion is the killing of an unborn child.

O'Doherty, noting the "hypocrisy" of Katherine Zappone, wrote: "We have a Minister for Children who sees nothing wrong with marching in favour of ending the life of children."

This kind of frankness or truth from both men is a welcome advance. It ends the phoney war about abortion: Is "it" a baby or a cluster of cells?

Being real men, then, both



Leo Varadkar

Varadkar and O'Doherty want to protect the unborn child, they oppose abortion? Wrong. Both believe that killing babies should be permitted. That we as a people should permit it.

So what kind of men are they? To be frank too, is this not sociopathic thuggery?

'Too restrictive'

Varadkar says that the present legal protection for children is "too restrictive", what he means is "protective".

What if counsellors are getting it wrong?

A RECENT survey about mental health in Ireland found that 90% of people thought it was important to talk about the issue.

It's a problem, however, that no one is quite sure what mental health actually is, or if we should even talk about our emotional or psychological state in terms of health and illness.

Take the case of a client who tells a counsellor: "I feel very down all the time and find it a struggle to get out of bed in the morning. I feel worthless and have no real purpose in life. Nothing seems to matter any longer."

The €80-an-hour counsellor listens a while, asking a few probing questions. Then, tells the client: "I don't know why you have come to me, there's nothing wrong with you at all."

Puzzled

The client is puzzled, so the counsellor explains: "Your response to your situation is completely appropriate. Anyone who has no sense of his own worth and has not discovered a purpose in life *should* feel the way you do."

Warming to the topic he might go on: "How could you have a sense of your own worth when you think you're just a big-brained animal or a machine made of meat?"

"How could your life have meaning when you ignore its inbuilt purpose, when you think that happi-



ness is now or never, that time is draining away, like water from a sink, that the grave is your home forever?"

Of course, no counsellor is going to say any of this, even if it's what the customer needs to hear. Apart from anything else, it would be bad for business.

With €5 still on the clock he might tell his client: "Your problem is not emotional or psychological, it is religious. Talk to a priest."

What good would that do him? The priest might help him to tackle the root of his problem: to grasp his extraordinary dignity as a child of God, the importance of humility and the truth that the purpose of life is to get to heaven.

There is great concern about the "epidemic" of mental illness in the Western world today, but what if the experts have got it wrong, that they have misdiagnosed people's condition?

What if many or most of our "mental health" issues are really religious issues, a symptom of the loss of Christian faith and hope? Should this not be a big part of any discussion about mental health?

Newspaper editors in pocket of government minister?

COLUMNIST John Burns reported in the *Sunday Times* (27/11/16) that Minister Simon Coveney met the editors of three national newspapers in Leinster House over the previous two weeks. Each one separately, it seems.

"The bosses of the *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times* and *Sunday Independent* were all ushered to Coveney's offices for a pow-wow," wrote Burns.

This wasn't reported in the papers in question, nor did they reveal what was discussed. But it certainly raises some very important questions about links between government ministers and the media. Here are a few:

How often do ministers meet privately with the editors of the country's major newspapers? What is the purpose of such a high level meeting? What matters are on the agenda? What is in it for the minister? And for an editor? Why are readers and the public kept in the dark about such meetings?

What is the level of cooperation or complicity between the government and the media in pushing any agenda from water charges to public sector pay, to EU rule? Why would any of these editors risk undermining his readers' trust in his newspaper in this way?

How about RTE's *Prime Time* reporting on and discussing some of these issues - and doing so with the practically invisible editors themselves? This would definitely be a public service.

Blooming hell!

■ The mayor of Bloomington, Indiana, recently announced that the local authority is renaming two paid holidays for city workers, to respect "differing cultures".

Columbus Day in future will be known as "Fall Holiday" and Good Friday will be called "Spring Holiday."

Could anything be more bland, colourless, drab, intolerant, and culturally impoverished? And where's the respect for Christian culture?

We don't respect differing cultures by abolishing all cultural differences. Secularists are imposing their own poverty of soul on the whole society, and calling it "respect for diversity". And we're expected to swallow their nonsense. How pathetic!

Does fake news make for better propaganda?

■ The Irish reaction to Britain's decision to leave the EU has been quite extraordinary.

Given the massive implications of the decision for Ireland, implications that become starker each day, we might have expected a lively debate about our own future in the EU.

We might have expected politicians, lobby groups and media commentators to have engaged in intense, informed and wide-ranging discussions on the pros and cons of our remaining an EU member.

• Given the huge amount we export to Britain, the

Media Watch

UK's departure could be catastrophic for our economy and for countless workers and their families.

• The problems for north-south relations go far beyond peace concerns and border controls.

• The growing pressure for EU control of corporate tax, a keystone of Irish prosperity for decades, is becoming unbearable.

• Until now Ireland has always received significantly more funds than it gave to Brussels, which

was a major attraction of EU membership.

But in recent years that has changed. We now pay in more than we get, and that will rise dramatically when the UK, one of the biggest contributors, pulls out.

These and many other issues have profoundly changed our relationship with Brussels and with the immense and costly bureaucracy which controls so much of our lives.

Why, then, has the possi-



Who's next after Brexit?

bility of an Irish exit from the EU not been publicly debated by all kinds of experts and on the different radio and TV shows?

A few lone voices have tried to break the solid politico-media wall of silence, but with little success.

From the day UK voters decided for Brexit the consensus of our elites has been to shut down any discussion of an Irish exit.

And media groupthink on the EU has played a key role in maintaining this wall of silence.

What we have here is an important example of how the media largely control the news and views we are exposed to. And how this control is shaped by their own agenda.

Biased reporting

The recent race for the White House was another example of the careful selection of news given to Irish people, echoing for the most part the kind of news given to American voters.

Clinton supporters were not misled simply by the polls, but even more by months of biased reporting and comment.

Thanks to social media, however, American people no longer depend on the national media's distorted presentation for their understanding of what is going on in the world.

According to Pew Research, nearly 45% of the US population get their news from Facebook.

But there are major problems here too. A report by *Buzzfeed* claimed that in the three months leading up to the election, Facebook users saw more fake news headlines than real ones.

The issue is so big that

Barack Obama, during his final official visit to Germany, sharply criticised the spread of fake news online, arguing it was a threat to democracy.

"If we are not serious about facts and what's true and what's not, particularly in an age of social media when so many people are getting their information in sound bites and off their phones, if we can't discriminate between serious arguments and propaganda, then we have problems," he said.

Obama was probably upset at the failure of the politico-media establishment to get Clinton elected.

Nevertheless, what he said was right. Respect for the difference between truth and falsehood, between well reasoned argument and manipulative propaganda is essential for the well-being of any society.

But he might have asked if it makes much difference whether the news stories are fake or genuine, given that so much of mainstream media output is just propaganda.

With the *Irish Times*, for example, subjecting its readers to a relentless barrage of pro-abortion news and views, and operating as an anti-life propaganda machine, does the truth still really matter?

In fact, our rotten media, dominated by an anti-human, secularist agenda, have played a major role in undermining respect for the truth, and are seriously damaging our society. But can they see that?

Media prejudices block understanding of US result

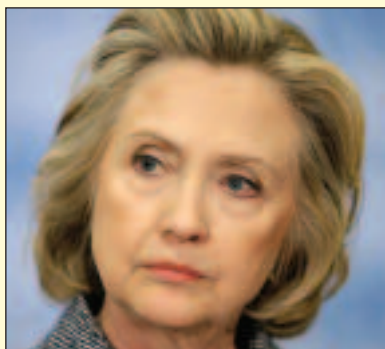
■ Researchers for the Nieman Lab found that just 13 US newspapers (9 dailies and 4 weeklies) came out in favour of Donald Trump during the US election campaign.

Against that, 229 daily papers and 131 weeklies, a total of 360 titles, endorsed Hillary Clinton.

The organisation's Pablo Boczkowski commented: "I think it's reasonable to argue that during the second half of the 20th century, even a fraction of the negative coverage [given to Trump] would have been enough to seriously damage the chances of a presidential candidate, and maybe even derail the candidacy altogether."

In Ireland the national media were overwhelmingly pro-Clinton - was **George Hook** the only prominent commentator who supported Trump?

No surprise, then, that so many journalists here and in the US are still bewildered and outraged by Trump's election, and unable to understand it.



What was it about her history and policies?

A clearly distressed **Kathy Sheridan** in the *Irish Times*, for example, was "stunned" that voters would show "complete disregard for what the candidate [Trump] was actually saying."

And she was indignant that RTE would provide "oxygen" for "the enlightening political contributions" of Katie Hopkins who welcomed the result.

The gist of all the media questioning is, "how could anyone vote for

such an offensive, sexist etc. liar with such dreadful policies?"

If we grant for a moment that Trump is every bit as bad as the media and the liberals said he is, and said over and over again, that only leaves us with a bigger question: why could Clinton, with the backing of the whole liberal politico-media establishment, not draw enough votes to win?

Surely the media should be asking what it was about *her* history and *her* policies that made her appear even worse than Trump to so many voters?

A survey conducted by WPA Opinion Research, for example, showed that nearly 60% of Trump voters agreed that their vote was impacted by the Republican platform's "strong positions on unborn human life and religious liberty."

If the media could get over their liberal prejudices and their outrage and attempted some honest reporting they might find that it is not so hard to grasp why Trump won.

FILM Review

Risen

Directed by Kevin Reynolds • Released by Sony Pictures

Too often we think of the Resurrection as simply the ending of the Crucifixion story. In fact the Resurrection is a beginning, not an ending.

This film takes a unique look at, viewing events through the enemy's eyes, as it were.

Roman tribune Clavius (Joseph Fiennes) has risen through the ranks of the empire's vast army, quashing uprisings and enforcing laws. He dreams now of settling down to a family life and

peace.

But once again he is summoned by Imperial orders. Pontius Pilate's chief enforcer, he is charged with overseeing the crucifixion of a man who claims to be the Messiah.

Having supervised countless executions Clavius is keen to get this one over with. However it's not so simple. Pilate has been informed by the Jewish Sanhedrin of a prophecy that the Messiah will rise from the dead.

Struggling to maintain order in Jerusalem, Pilate realises that zealots might steal the body, fake a resurrection and incite further unrest.

Clavius must therefore secure the tomb, a simple task that to his horror goes unfulfilled to say the least.

Message

The Body of Christ is missing and rumours are rapidly spreading that he has risen and is appearing to many with a wonderful message. Apoplectic, Pilate commands

Clavius to recover the body and quash the message.

Like a detective, Clavius begins the search, seeking leads, dragging in witnesses for questioning.

But every person he interrogates seems to have been profoundly changed by who they claim to have seen. Clavius is conflicted. He knows when people are telling the truth and when they are not.

The only way to locate this missing person is to apprehend his disciples. When he



does though, Clavius learns that this investigation isn't about the pursuit of truth, it's about the embodiment of it.

This is a powerful film,

ambitious in scale and detail, thoughtful and intelligent. By exploring the Resurrection from a different perspective it makes us do so too. Highly recommended.

COMMENT

St. Mary's Priory, Tallaght, Dublin 24.
Tel: 01-4048187 Fax: 01-4596784 E-mail: alivepaper@gmail.com

What a year!

With Brexit in the UK, the election of Trump in the US, the rejection of Renzi's referendum in Italy, the rise of right wing parties in Holland, Austria and France, 2016 was a year of popular revolt against the current way of doing politics.

It was a refusal by massive numbers of people to co-operate any longer with this kind of politics - with the arrogant bureaucracy of Brussels and Washington, the influence of powerful lobby groups, the promotion of anti-family and anti-life agendas, the mere lip-service to the serious concerns of the people.

This revolt also exposed the deep bias of the Western liberal media which vigorously backed the old order. The UK was partly an exception, but in the US, for example, 360 newspapers backed Clinton as against 13 for Trump.

Bitterness

That liberals react to defeat so often with anger and bitterness is very telling. They are thoroughly "pro-choice" until their choice is rejected.

Their anger is understandable. For liberals and secularists, this world is all there is. So success or failure here and now is all that matters, it is the absolute. And not getting their way is utter failure.

Christians, however, see that secularist view as the thinking of bunker dwellers crippled by a primitive, cramped view of life. They, on the other hand, have a far broader vision of the world, and wider horizons, and this enables them to see life from God's perspective.

As a result, they do not expect salvation from May, Trump, a bunch of lefty TDs or the EU's army of bureaucrats.

Rather, their faith in God gives them a balanced perspective on this life, on its successes and failures, it joys and sorrows—they know all the time that only in heaven will they find Jesus Christ's true peace and happiness.

Alive!

Bishops make persuasive case for 8th Amendment

IRELAND'S Catholic bishops have pointed out that the only reason for weakening or deleting the 8th Amendment (Art. 40.3.3) from the Constitution would be to deprive some categories of unborn children of the right to life.

Such a move would bring no "benefit for the life or health of women in Ireland," they noted, "but it would expose unborn babies "to greater risk."

It would also drastically undermine society's regard for every person's basic right to life.

Deleting the Article "would radically change the principle, for all unborn children, and indeed for all of us, that the right to life is a fundamental human right," said the bishops.

In a submission to the Citizens' Assembly they persuasively, step by step, made the case for defending and keeping the 8th Amendment.

Their document, *Two Lives, One Love*, briefly but lucidly explored a range of crucial issues linked with protection for mother and child and with the future of Irish society.

For the bishops the key principle is the reality, based on both reason and faith, that no human life is without value. Rather, every life is sacred from the very beginning.

They note that "there is no logical or scientific basis" for considering "a born child to be a person with all the rights this involves" while viewing an unborn child as "a non-person".

Rather, "the distinct identity of a human individual is already present once fertilisation has taken place." This is the basis for all fundamental human rights.

These rights "are not

'given' by society and they cannot be taken away by society," say the bishops. Rather, "fundamental rights are 'acknowledged' in constitutions and charters."

Distressing cases

Two difficult and distressing cases require attention in the present debate, namely children with life limiting conditions and children conceived as a result of rape.

Neither of these justifies a change in the basic law, but they do require better care and support for the parents, especially the mother, involved, including appropriate perinatal hospice services.

Even in the worst case scenarios, "the situation of an unborn child with a life-limit-



ing condition is comparable to that of a born child or adult at an advanced stage of terminal illness," say the bishops.

They also stress that a woman who has been raped needs compassionate care and support, but aborting the baby is never the way to go.

"A child conceived following rape is also a person. He or she has rights, including that most fundamental of all rights, the right to life."

The bishops also challenge the use of words like 'foetus', 'embryo' and 'zygote'

when activists speak or write about unborn children.

"We question why, in public discourse, healthy unborn children are always referred to as 'the baby' while those who, in the opinion of some, do not measure up to expectations are routinely defined as the 'foetus' or the 'embryo'."

It was their concern "that language is being used with the intention of depersonalising certain categories of unborn children in a way which seeks to normalise abortion."

The 8th, on the other hand, had brought immense blessings for the country.

"Many thousands of Irish people are alive as a direct result"; and parents who experienced a crisis pregnancy were culturally supported in making the decision in favour of life.

The document is to be made available in parishes in the coming weeks.

Pope's frank new interview

INTERVIEWED by a Belgian Catholic weekly, *Tertio*, Pope Francis encouraged young Catholics not to be afraid and not to be ashamed of their faith.

And he encouraged those without faith to "search for the meaning of life." His advice to the young was "seek out horizons and do not go into retirement at the age of 20."

The Pope also expressed satisfaction with the Year of Mercy. "People were very active," he said. "People felt called to reconcile themselves with God, to encounter the Lord again, to feel the caress of the Father."

The idea for the year went back to Pope Paul VI and St John Paul II. "I believe that it was inspired by the Lord," he said.

John Paul, in particular, highlighted mercy with his encyclical letter, *Rich in Mercy* (Dives in Misericordia), by canonising

St Faustina and his focus on the Feast of Divine Mercy.

Francis was asked about the drive by many politicians to separate religion from public life: for example, in education; and the idea that religion should be reserved to private life.

"I do not want to offend anyone," he replied, "but this is an old-fashioned mindset, it is a legacy from the Enlightenment, in which every religious phenomenon is a subculture."

There must be a healthy respect for the secular, he said, and he favoured a secular over a confessional State.

Different

But secularist ideology or Laicism was different, "it closes the doors to transcendence, to both transcendence towards others and, above all, towards God; or towards what is beyond us."

He added: "Openness to transcendence is part of the human essence. It is part of man." A culture or a political system that does not respect this "cuts down the human person, it does not respect the person."

On the question of peace, he believed "the world is conducting a third world war: Ukraine, Middle East, Africa, Yemen ... It is very grave."

While calling for "No more war!", countries still "manufacture weapons and sell them to those who are fighting; as arms producers we sell them to those who are at war with each other."

For him much of the problem lies with today's lack of leaders: "Europe is in need of leaders, leaders who go ahead," he said.

Catholic Pro-life Apologetics Training Day

**Saturday, 4th February
Dungannon Co. Tyrone**

**Abortifacients, contraception,
abortion, media techniques.**

Contact Colette: Human Life
International (Ireland),
Guadalupe Centre, Main Street, Knock,
Co. Mayo. Tel: 09493 75993



ITALY PILGRIMAGE

ROME €649

EASTER BREAK

13 APRIL | 4 NIGHTS

Staying at a central hotel
Full religious programme

01 241 0816
www.jsewalshtours.ie
info@jsewalshtours.ie

TO: 052 1 78365

Medjugorje

8-17th May

9 nights.

Spiritual Director

Fr. Aloysius.

Insurance included

€599pps.

Pat or Phil 087-2238911

ITALY PILGRIMAGE

SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO & ROME

2 JUNE | 6 NIGHTS

€869

ppa inc

01 241 0816
www.jsewalshtours.ie
info@jsewalshtours.ie

TO: 052 1 78365

SCRAPS

COLUMN

by Tom English



Two camps emerging?

BECAUSE of the internet, we have round-the-clock coverage of opinion on Catholic websites, blogs, etc expressing concern for Pope Francis' exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*. Battle lines seem to be drawn and it can only get worse.

Never before have I witnessed such doubt among senior clergy about the direction Pope Francis is leading the Church. And this document, it seems, is in the eye of the storm. What cardinals and others are looking for is 'clarity' on certain references in the exhortation regarding "irregular" situations of couples.

I think the Pope has a duty to clarify any issues or 'dubia' that arise among the faithful. Since the Church began, whenever there were disputes, the apostles always turned to Peter to settle matters. Silence and ambiguity will only generate further doubt.

Of course all these shenanigans don't matter a tuppance to people who have no regard for the Church. You need the eyes of faith to see the implications of what a Pope says. St Augustine wrote: 'We do not first understand in order to believe; we must first believe in order to understand.'

If this particular dispute is not sorted out though, I believe there may be two camps emerging in the Church - like *Veritatis Splendor* v *Amoris Laetitia*. I hope and pray it doesn't get to that stage.

The Church has been through much worse trials and it has survived them. In the words of Jesus: 'Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Mt 16:18).



Pope Francis: pray for him

New Year's revolution

A NUMBER of weeks ago, myself and a number of others (five in total) got together and decided to try an 'experiment in prayer'. It involved each of us, at the same time but not necessarily in the same room, praying the rosary for a *specific* intention. And it was to be done each day over one week.

The 'specific intention' was a well-known personality (with a lot of influence) whom we felt needed a lot of prayer as he was becoming almost demonic in his condemnation of our Catholic faith.

What started out as an observation among friends about this particular individual, ended up with the question: will prayer change him?

I would like to think that we were led by the Holy Spirit to carry out such an experiment because it seems to be working.

We all noticed recently that there was a change in this individual's attitude. Yes, it was a small change but a change all the same. But did it have anything to do with our 'experiment'? We couldn't say for sure but where there's prayer, there's hope.

So the obvious response was: what would happen if there were more people to pray for him over a longer period of time? Time will tell.

I encourage others, especially prayer groups, rosary and adoration groups, to come together to pray for a *specific* intention. It could be for a journalist or a judge, a priest or a politician - but be specific. Make it a New Year's *revolution*!

Think of yourselves as the servants at the wedding feast of Cana - by praying, we are 'filling the jars', and Jesus will bless our efforts.

Leadership

WHETHER you're a GAA manager, Taoiseach, bishop or Army General, the role as a leader of people is crucial. Real leaders look up to Heaven so that others can look up to them.

Because of their faith, they have the confidence to know there is a right way and a wrong way to get things done.

Was it Alexander the Great who said: 'I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.'

scrapscolumn@gmail.com

Cardinal warns against gender ideology and intolerance

A DUTCH cardinal has strongly criticised the practice of "sex change" or "gender re-assignment" surgery, describing it as a violation of the human person.

And he warned that even many Catholics were being led astray about gender ideology, unable to grasp or explain why it is wrong, because "they don't hear anything else."

Sex-change operations, he noted, contradict the dignity of the human body and cannot fit in with sound reason or Catholic teaching.

In a lecture at Blackfriars, Oxford, on the topic, "Is Medicine Losing Its Way?", Cardinal Willem Eijk, 63, criticised the whole ideology of gender.

And he pointed out that attempts to justify such body "enhancements" rested on a false anthropology, a "dualistic" understanding of the human person.

In this materialistic or dualistic view, which splits soul and body, the person is solely the human mind, with the body as a secondary or

"external" instrument.

But this was contrary to Catholic teaching which stresses the deep unity of body and soul.

"The capacity to procreate results in a direct sense from the biological reproductive organs," said the Cardinal.

This capacity "is intrinsically anchored in the human person because the body is an intrinsic dimension of the person," who is composed of both body and soul.

Betrayal

He warned that the "dualistic view of man" was also being used to justify the disposal "of one's life in the most radical way, by euthanasia and assisted suicide".

But this was a betrayal of medicine, which "should maintain its healing or therapeutic character", he said. "These techniques, once available, change the charac-



Cardinal Willem Eijk

ter of health care, but they also change our culture."

The cultural changes, he noted, were also leading to intolerance toward people who did not accept the new ideas.

"We are living in a quite intolerant society," said the Cardinal. "People talk about tolerance and say the individual is free to think what he likes."

"But in practice, people have to accept this dualistic view of man and the view of the body as something that can be

molded as we please.

"When you say that perhaps it is not a morally good approach, you are excluded," he said. "You have to think according to these modern theories or you are excluded. And this attitude is taking over the university world, parliament, the media."

He strongly believed that such intolerance will make life for Christians ever more difficult. Catholics, he insisted, must press for the right to live by their consciences if they are not to face harassment or even jail in the future. But young people who become active in the Church and "accept the whole faith," are a source of hope and will be willing to testify to it.

Gender theory is so new, the latest stage of reckless liberalism, that the Church has seldom denounced it by name until the last five years.

But both Pope Benedict and now Pope Francis are ever more conscious of the ideology's destructive nature.

WHAT

GOD MEANS TO ME!

Ireland, once known as the land of saints and scholars, is a place of many devout Catholic families, and mine was one of them.

I was named after Jacinta, the young Fatima visionary, and, as a baby, I was placed on the altar of the Loreto convent in Letterkenny and consecrated to Our Lady.

I found it very easy as a child to love God and Our Lady. As I got older however, I began to prioritise other things and God became someone who I would only reach out to if I was in need of help.

As a teenager I was no different from others, struggling with body image, peer pressure and a want of fitting in.

I left for college at 17 and was exposed to a drastic lifestyle of drink, partying and other so called norms of college life. I became so ashamed of choices that I had made that I refrained from going back to confession. I thought no way could I tell a priest what I was up to!

Strayed away from God's healing and mercy I became consumed in self. I convinced myself of my unworthiness and the negativity suffocated me.

My turning point happened on a ferry boat to Tory Island. I was visiting my granny on her 90th birthday and I was approached by the serving priest on the island at the time, Fr Paul Gallagher.

Fr Paul asked me would I like to go to Medjugorje with him sometime to help with a group of secondary children.

He gave me his details and told me to contact him, I politely conversed with him for a while and I thought nothing more on the conversation after that day.

In the following few weeks I received a phone call from my mother to say that Fr Paul had booked me to go with a group that July and that was that!

When I arrived in Medjugorje I remember having a huge feeling of unworthiness. I was surrounded with these 'holy'

people and I felt like I really didn't belong.

When I was there I was given a huge grace and deep desire to go to confession. I was many, many years away from the sacrament. My soul was heavy and dark and I wanted rid of it all.

Crippled with fear, shame and guilt it was only by the grace of God I was brave enough to approach a priest. I wasn't able to manage much words in that encounter but I broke down and cried from the depths of my soul.

I went to confession twice more on that pilgrimage and didn't stop crying all week. The group that I was supposed to be helping with ended up minding me instead!

Armed with a new found love of my faith, my life began to change. I went to Medjugorje twice more in that year and developed a thirst for repentance and prayer.

Under the guidance of Fr Paul I learnt how to pray from the heart and to strive always in putting God first and foremost in my daily life.

I was however under the illusion that I was the only young person in love with Christ and it was quite a lonely place to be.

I actually eventually googled 'Young people in their faith in Ireland'. An

upcoming retreat in Castlecomer, organised by a young Catholic movement called Youth2000, came up as the top search.

I had an amazing experience on that retreat and was delighted to find like-minded young people.

I made some of the most genuine and loving friends through Youth2000 and it also introduced me to a group called Pure in Heart.

Pure in Heart for me was a saving grace, it taught me to rebuild a love of self and love of others in a pure and Christ like way. It reminded me of the dignity I had as a human being, created in the likeness and image of Christ.

Today my faith is everything to me. I sometimes wonder how I ever managed to exist those years without it. My heart goes out to those who have yet to experience or get to know the love of Christ in their life.

The freedom, joy, peace and clarity that I have in my life now gives me the strength to live out each day, striving to do good and to see goodness.

As a young person in Ireland today I do find it difficult to stand up for my faith, to be brave and speak out on modern day issues that go against the Catholic Faith. I pray that I will always try harder.

Before I met Fr Paul, I was like the walking dead, with no purpose or genuine love in my heart. I will be eternally grateful to the Lord for sending me his servant.

Fr Paul died last August at the age of 54, from cancer. I will thank the Lord every day for his life and pray that I will meet him in heaven some day.



Jacinta McGeever, 26, is a primary school teacher.



Celebrating the Wonder of Marriage

Study: children do best with married parents

HAVING one of the highest rates of family breakdown in the world, and one third of its children living in broken homes, the UK is a wide field for research into the destructive effects of the modern disintegration of marriage.

The latest study, from the Marriage Foundation, shows that children whose parents are married to each other have a significantly higher sense of their own dignity than children in other family arrangements.

Showing the benefits of marriage, the study found that teenagers whose parents were in stable, long-term cohabiting relationships reported the same levels of self-esteem as those from single parent households.

Overall, girls with cohabiting parents had the lowest sense of their own worth, while boys with married parents had the highest.

"Conventional wisdom has it that child outcomes depend on parents staying together rather than marital status," said the Foundation's research director, Harry Benson.

"This new finding shows that assumption to be false. In terms of self-esteem, teenagers living with parents who are together but not mar-



Harry Benson

ried are no better off than children living with lone parents."

Benson pointed out that it is not family income but marriage and the security it gives that makes the difference for children.

"It appears that children of married parents are responding to something they see in their parents' relationships that reflects greater security," he said.

He believed that children of married couples were more likely to see their parents as "one solid and secure unit".

The study, *Marriage boosts self-esteem for teenage boys and girls*, was based on data

from 3,822 children aged 11-16 polled in the British Household Panel Survey.

Sir Paul Coleridge, chairman of the Marriage Foundation, pointed out that the study shows the importance for children of their parents' public declaration of commitment to each other.

"A married couple," he said, "is not only more likely to save their child from undergoing the trauma of family breakdown," but the evidence now shows that their public commitment also significantly increases their child's self-esteem.

Coleridge, a former High Court judge, said that during his career in the family courts, he saw a huge rise in the number of children going through the system due to the rising number of cohabiting couples who split after becoming parents.

"It is not being moralistic or judgmental to say marriage works best for families," said the former judge. "It is a statement of fact."

A lifetime of love

Parents whose preborn babies have been diagnosed with **life-limiting conditions** are asking for a new understanding of the **value of their babies' lives**.

"We hear the media describe our children as 'fatal foetal abnormalities', which is not a medical term, and we want people to understand the love and joy our children brought. Parents need support so that we can pour a lifetime of love into whatever time we have with our children. Their lives may be short, but they are precious and important," said Tracy Harkin of Every Life Counts.



"I was so proud that my lovely son, Gormagh, came home for those 33 weeks... it was just home. The home we had for him as our little son."

Mandy O'Neil on her son, Gormagh, born with Trisomy 13, who was diagnosed with Trisomy 13 at 12 weeks.



"I am so thankful for the time we had with Noah, every life counts and every moment we had counts too, time is so precious."

Laura Daly-Devine on her son, Noah, born with Hydrops Fetalis and lived for 6 hours.

"Muireann was born, two fists in fighting position... ready to take on the world. And fight she did, for six whole weeks. She was an amazing little girl."

Mandy Dunne on her daughter, Muireann, who lived for 6 weeks with Trisomy 13.



"She is at the very heart of our family and has made us better parents and better people."

Tracy Harkin on her daughter, Kathleen Rose, living for 10 years with Trisomy 13.

"She brought nothing but joy, nothing but love."

Derbhille McGill on her baby girl, Clodagh, who lived for 33 days after birth with Trisomy 18.



"Maya lived for one hour and thirteen minutes after she was born, and those minutes will last in my mind, heart and soul for a lifetime. Maya was alive and kicking in my womb and she was a determined little fighter who was adamant she would meet her Mammy and Daddy."

Ciara Conroy on her daughter, Maya Rose.

See more at www.everylifecounts.ie

Our Marriage in a Minute!

1. Love at first sight?

No, we first met at a Legion of Mary annual renewal ceremony (called the Acies). Later we went with the Legion to World Youth Day in Cologne and became great friends.

2. Favourite memory of our Wedding?

Walking up the aisle with my Da. Singing Karaoke together and watching our friend John singing the Blues Brothers.

3. Best holiday ever?

Our honeymoon in Egypt, snorkelling in the Red Sea, visiting Mount Sinai and meeting the Bedouins in the desert.

4. Who makes the breakfast?

We fend for ourselves. First up, best fed!

5. Who takes out the bins?

Ciara takes them out (when she remembers). Children bring them in.

6. Song of songs?

Ciara - Clannad, In a lifetime. Keith - David Gray, Shine.

7. Saints on speed dial?

Servant of God, Frank Duff, St Thérèse and St Thomas Aquinas

8. Greatest joint achievement?

Passing the Catholic faith onto our four



children (a work in progress!)

9. Best advice on marriage?

Put Christ at the centre of everything, pray the Rosary as a family, forgive each other, limit screen time and other distractions, have fun. Do something extra for God - like the apostolate or pro-life activism.

10. At this point in time, what makes your marriage worthwhile?

Living in a loving home and being supported through thick and thin. Knowing the other has your best interest at heart.

— Keith and Ciara Kavanagh with baby Seosamh, pictured above.

Familiar with God

St Catherine of Siena, born in 1347, was a twin and the youngest of 25 children. A mystic, from early on she regularly experienced deep intimacy with Jesus, his mother Mary and the saints.

The Dominican friar, Blessed Raymond of Capua, became her spiritual director and first biographer.

He tells us that Catherine would often recite the divine office or prayer of the Church while walking along a cloister in the company of Jesus, mystically visible to the saint.

At the conclusion of each psalm, as was and is the custom, she prayed the Glory be. But her version was as follows: "Glory be to the Father, and to You, and to the Holy Spirit!"

The "to You" (in Latin, tibi) here was in the singular, it was an intimate way of talking to Jesus.

For Catherine, the Lord was not a distant figure, and prayer was not a routine exercise. "Rather, the Lord was at her side, and prayer was conversation between friends," says Bishop Robert Barron.

It is Catherine's use of the word "tibi", however, that is of particular interest.

In French, for example, Tu (You singular) is used with children, in the family and among friends, to express familiarity and intimacy.

Vous (You plural) is used even to one person when the situation is more formal or

KNOW YOUR FAITH

there is a distance between the two people (e.g. Si'l vous plait).

The same is true in Latin, with Tu and tibi (the dative case of Tu) being used in a familiar relationship. And that is how Catherine spoke to Jesus.

The same was true in old English. Thou (thee, thine and thy) were for familiar conversation while You was more formal.

But something odd happened in English. You became familiar while Thou and thy became formal, the very opposite of how it had been.

These words are still used in some popular prayers, like the Our Father (hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done) and the Hail Mary ("the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus").

We need to remember that far from being formal they seek to express our deep intimacy with God, with Jesus his Son and with Our Lady.

As St Catherine realised so clearly, the core of our faith is a close relationship with God, our warm friendship with Jesus. Maybe we each need to ask, "How warm and personal is my love for Jesus?"

Letter to NWCI: Real feminists protect life

An open letter to the National Women's Council

DEAR Orla and all in NWCI, I am writing this letter in severe disappointment. Dear oh dear. From one feminist (i.e. me) to another (you, I think...).

A quick recap is clearly essential on the meaning of feminism, so please read on and take note:

1. You and the NWCI don't get to hold a monopoly on what feminism is and is not. You don't get to decide what the feminist agenda for all women is, and that includes abortion "rights".

The prolife women in your ranks are being silenced by your "one-size-fits-all" approach to feminism and Women's Rights, despite your claim to have diversity in your group.

If you think that prolife women don't exist amongst your ranks, it is simply that they remain quiet because they feel intimidated.

You, Orla, have made it clear (in rather sadly stereotypically and aggressively male terms, too) what your "party line" is as regards abortion, and these women don't want to be ostracised.

And who can blame them for not challenging your enforced censorship?

This is oppression and the



Speaker's Corner

By Maria Horan

sort of silencing that men imposed on women for too long. Women can oppress other women and it's easier to do than you might think.

2. Feminists come in all shapes and sizes. Some are straight, some are gay, some are black, some are white, some are old, some are young... I presume you're getting the picture?

3. This is where things get really interesting. Some feminists are prolife!

Wait. You may have missed that one, so I'll say it again in case you weren't listening the first time. Some feminists are prolife!

4. Wait, there's more. Some are prolife and... gay, straight, black white, young, old and... atheist! Wow! And sometimes a mixture of a variety of the above!

5. Ladies, hold onto your bonnets and your knitting. The future is coming. And a great article from "pro-choice" Slate shows that it is young, female and across the spectrum. Google "Slate, The future of the pro-life movement".

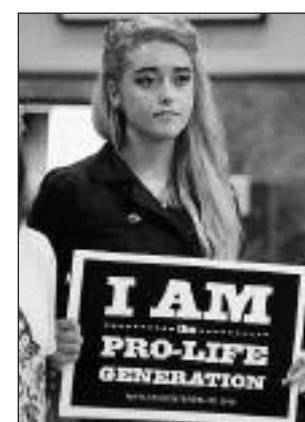
6. Education is the Key. You lot need to educate your-

selves and do your homework on Feminism.

For instance, you might discover that it was men, not women, who were instrumental in legalising abortion in the UK and the USA.

Check out the web for Lint Hatcher's piece, "The Men Behind the Women's Movement". You may even be surprised by what you come across.

"If we're going to move abortion out of the books and into the streets, we're going to have to recruit the feminists. Friedan has got to put her



Prolife future is young and female.

troops into the thing – while she still has control of them."

What misogynist said this? Why, the NARAL co-founder, Larry Lader!

Go read the other "mastermind" behind legalising abortion in the USA – the not very feminist Bernard Nathanson. You'll find his book, *Aborting America*, on Amazon.

Do let me know when you find the feminist agenda in Nathanson's book! Because I have been searching for ages and I still haven't found it.

And here's a truly great book on what happened regarding the legalisation of abortion in the UK: *By Their Fruits: Eugenics, Population Control and the Abortion Campaign*.

And it's written by a feminist, Ann Farmer. See, Orla, I knew you'd like that detail! Being supportive of all the Sisterhood, as I know that you truly are!

So why on earth are you still reading my letter? Go forth and find the Truth! Because you won't find it in the NWCI, I can guarantee you that.

Yours, etc.
Maria Horan, M.A. in Women's Studies.

• Maria Horan is a teacher of English, a writer and novelist. Irish born, she lives in the UK.

Monthly Meditation

When to speak

A spiritual guide should be silent when discretion requires and speak when words are of service. Otherwise he may say what he should not or be silent when he should speak.

Indiscreet speech may lead people into error and an imprudent silence may leave in error those who could have been taught.

Pastors who lack foresight hesitate to say openly what is right because they fear losing the favour of men.

As the voice of truth tells us, such leaders are not zealous pastors who protect their flocks, rather they are like mercenaries who flee by taking refuge in silence when the wolf appears.

The Lord reproaches them through the prophet: They are dumb dogs that cannot bark. On another occasion he complains: You did not advance against the foe or set up a wall in front of the house of Israel, so that you might stand fast in battle on the day of the Lord.

To advance against the foe involves a bold resistance to the powers of this world in defense of the flock. To stand fast in battle on the day of the Lord means to oppose the wicked enemy out of love for what is right.

When a pastor has been afraid to assert what is right, has he not turned his back and fled by remaining silent? Whereas if he intervenes on behalf of the flock, he sets up a wall against the enemy in front of the house of Israel.

Therefore, the Lord again says to his unfaithful people: Your prophets saw false and foolish visions and did not point out your wickedness, that you might repent of your sins.

— Pope St Gregory the Great (died 12 March 604)

Amos: a reluctant prophet

The Prophets, Part 25, Call of Amos



Fr Joseph Briody

A prophet's call usually comes early in his writing to remind readers that the message is from the Lord: Hosea 1-3, Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1 and Ezekiel 1ff. Each call is personal.

Amos' call (7:1-8:3) is narrated along with several visions. The first two visions go together. In them (locusts and fire) God sends disaster on the land. However, Amos begs God not to carry this out and God agrees.

God is patient. He listens to Amos' prayer. However, for the third and fourth visions, he asks only that Amos report what he sees.

It is going to happen. There is no room for an appeal from Amos. People had their chance. Now Amos simply states what will happen.

He was a reluctant prophet: "I am no prophet..." (7:14).

Understandable, since his call was largely to proclaim the difficult message that God was going to destroy his people.

The message was to judge the hearers of the 8th century B.C. rather than call them to repentance.

God's intention

His reluctance as a prophet is notable, though other prophets too lament their lot. Jeremiah is reluctant at first (1:6) but his objection is dealt with immediately and does not upset God's timetable.

Amos turned back God's intention twice, and held it off for a considerable time. He responded to the vision of the locusts and of the fire by asking for mercy. God relented.

Then the Lord compelled him, telling him that no

more appeals would be accepted. The third vision (the plumb line) and fourth (the basket of ripe summer fruit) left Amos no choice but to give Israel the dreadful message.

The prophet must do God's will regardless of his personal feelings. It is the Lord himself who "shows" the four visions to Amos (7:1, 4, 7; 8:1).

The first two report God's intention to punish Israel (locusts and fire). The Lord withdrew these. The third (the plumb line) explains the punishment that will come.

Israel had not stood uprightly before God. A plumb line (7:7-8) is used

by a mason to ensure a wall is standing erectly and not tilting.

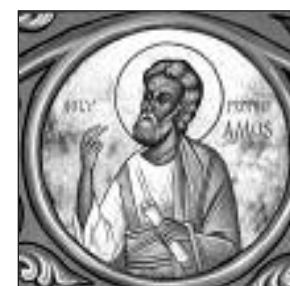
Samaria (capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel) failed the test of uprightness. As the mason tumbles a tilting wall, so will the Lord bring down Samaria and her people.

The fourth vision (the basket of over-ripe fruit) indicated that the time was overdue for the Lord to intervene. His people were ripe for destruction.

Amos 8:11-12 states that the great punishment will be a total lack of the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord will be yearned for in vain.

It would already be too late when 8th century Israel realised that the condemning word of the Lord communicated through Amos could have been the bearer of salvation rather than destruction.

If only they had heeded... This becomes a summons to conversion for future peoples.



THE THINGS THEY SAY...

● EU cash cow has died

Ireland is now, on balance, a loser, not a gainer, from EU membership. In 2014 it became a net contributor to the EU Budget for the first time, paying in €1.69 billion and receiving €1.52 billion.

This means that in future any EU monies that come to the Republic under the CAP, EU cohesion funds, Erasmus programmes, research grants and the like, will effectively be Irish taxpayers' money recycled through Brussels.

Henceforth the EU will no longer be the 'cash cow' that it has widely been regarded as being for decades, and which is the basis of much Irish Europhilia, official and unofficial.

— Frank Keogh, of Technical Engineering & Electrical Union

● Earthquake coming

It is now clear that next year's French presidential election has the potential to make Brexit look trivial. On this continent it could well



Michael O'Leary

make even the triumph of Donald Trump seem a mere tremor before the main earthquake.

If National Front leader Marine le Pen wins in May she will lead France out of the euro and the European Union, which will then cease to exist. That would mark a shattering of the post-war settlement in Western Europe.

— Harry de Quetteville, the Telegraph

● Privatised RTE

I think the best thing that could happen to RTE would

be to privatise it. Break it up and sell it and allow it to compete openly and fairly with Newstalk and the other private sector media.

It has been a failed monopoly for many years. It has not served the country well and the sooner it is broken up and sold, and we have a much more disparate broadcast media, certainly in the television sector, the better.

— Michael O'Leary of Ryanair

● Lost identity

Democrats are now a party lost in the wilderness in search of an identity...

They are thinking hard about why they suffered historic losses over the past eight years, but the answers are simple. They care more about transgender bathrooms than they do about economic policies that will help hard-working families.

They support movements across the country that burn down their own cities and set police cars on fire. Americans

are tired of the divisiveness and they want leaders who will work to provide a better future for them.

Instead of recognising and correcting its failures, the Democratic Party is on track to repeat them. The Republican Party should rejoice.

— Lisa Boothe, columnist, the Washington Examiner

● Untold story

If I had listened to the pro-choice line when I discovered I was pregnant, I wouldn't have my beautiful three-year-old daughter, Hollie. And those pushing for repeal of the 8th Amendment would have no words to console me for the loss I'd have suffered.

I am so grateful that the 8th Amendment was there when I faced a crisis pregnancy. I dread to think what might have happened if there had been an abortion clinic just

down the road from where I live.

So many others who were in a similar situation to mine are thankful for the life and love of the child they have today. This is the great positive untold story of the 8th Amendment.

— Mary Kenny

● Won't meet them

The medical literature says that terminating because of a disability leaves people at risk of mental health difficulties such as depression. But how many mothers and fathers are told that?

Minister for Health Simon Harris won't meet Tanya Coonan or her group, Every Life Counts, and has never met the other groups who represent parents of babies with life-limiting conditions.

They want to tell him that there is a better way than abortion...

Maybe Harris won't meet them because it would require the State and the Minister to treat these babies and their parents with the dignity and care that respects the human rights of all, even the most fragile.

— Breda O'Brien, Irish Times.

● Reason for hope

As believers we are challenged to find ways of opening the lives of people today to the God who gives life its foundation and purpose...

There is an absence in the lives of so many people today of any sense of the eternal; there are few opportunities in this hectic world to connect with the infinite.

Our task, as people of faith, is to share with others 'the reason for the hope we have within us' – the joy of a personal, loving relationship with God.

— Archbishop Eamon Martin

A model for our families

Our families today can learn a lot from the Holy Family, where each member had unique and precious qualities.

Each of those qualities can be interwoven within ourselves and within our own families.

To begin, we need to remember that we are creatures – each of us was created by God and that we are called to put our trust in him.

God united Mary and Joseph in marriage, and the Holy Spirit brought Jesus to them. Just as he had a plan for Jesus, Mary and Joseph so God also has a grand plan for each of our families.

We open ourselves to God's will, even when we are troubled or scared.

Joseph, Mary and Jesus faced challenges individually as well as a family, but in their struggles they were united and responded with trust in God's will.

Our families too must remain united and support each other, trusting in God's will, by trusting in our Creator.

Secondly, we need to recognise the uniqueness of each person. Jesus, Mary and Joseph were all different, unique individuals.

Created by God, like ourselves, they had different temperaments and different personalities. We can relate with that as there are differences amongst all family members at one time or another.

Handing On The Faith

Aoife Hogan



Even though we are all so different, we must remember that we are all created in the beauty of God's eyes.

The members of the Holy Family were different but they lived together, prayed together, worked together and ultimately they stayed together.

Paramount

Let's take those key words – lived, prayed, worked, stayed. No matter what adversities or struggles came their way, those four things united them.

It is how we live, pray, work and sustain ourselves individ-

ually and as a family that is paramount. Those four strengths come from God, our Creator.

So many families in today's society are disintegrating. If however we could make a conscious effort to live, pray, work and stay together with trust in God's love far fewer families would be falling apart.

Thirdly, the members of the Holy Family are relentless in their charity. Their goal was to work together for the salvation of the whole human family.

Jesus gave himself for us, but that giving, that salvation, involved Mary and Joseph too. As a family we should come together and show small acts of charity towards one another and to those outside the family.

Acts of charity and kindness as a family unite you together but also unite you with God and bring each member's soul closer to salvation. They are also a way of living a life of adoration.

FAMILY PRAYER:

Father, help us to live as the Holy Family, united in respect and love. Bring us to the joy and peace of your eternal home. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



JUST FOR PRIESTS

Great opportunity, but priest blew it

Not long ago I took part in the requiem Mass for a retired businessman who had been sick for some time.

He was a religious man who had brought up his children in the practice of the faith, cared for the poor and attended daily Mass until shortly before his death.

The "homily" during the funeral Mass, however, was quite disturbing. The priest made no mention whatever of Jesus, and he said nothing about Christian hope, the resurrection or eternal happiness in heaven.

Judgment may be a central element in Christ's teaching about salvation, but it too was completely ignored. In fact, there was nothing Christian in the homily.

Instead, in a piece of New Age waffle we were told that the dead man will live on in the memories of those who knew and loved him, whatever benefit that will be to him.

Quite a large congregation took part in the Mass and it's likely that many of them hadn't been to church for some time.

Here, then, was an excellent opportunity to preach the word of God, to speak about the purpose of life, to awaken Christian hope and to reach out to the lapsed. But



the priest completely blew it.

He failed Christ and the Church and he failed the mourners and the rest of the people.

People have told me of similar experiences at Church weddings they have attended – the priest basically

ignored Catholic teaching about the sacrament, sometimes giving the best man's speech instead.

But all this is just a symptom of a greater problem in the Church in Ireland today. We are talking about a massive absence of zeal and possibly a loss of faith among many priests.

We see this also in the lack of concern about the huge apostasy that is happening in our country, and in the lack of urgency in going after the lost sheep.

Meanwhile those preaching a message of despair are on fire to spread their agenda. How can we explain all this?

NEWS OR PROPAGANDA?

■ Francois Fillon, a Catholic, has been chosen as the Republican candidate in next year's presidential election in France. He overwhelmingly beat his opponent, Alain Juppé.

The *Guardian's* Paris correspondent, Angelique Chrisafis, described Fillon as "socially conservative" while saying that Juppé was "more moderate" and "centrist".

But who gets to decide who is "moderate" and what "centrist" is? For many voters Fillon, getting 67% of the vote, was the moderate and Juppé the extremist.

Fillon, said Chrisafis, emphasised his Christian faith "as he attempts to appeal to a hardline Catholic vote."

But what is a "hardline" Catholic or does she believe that everyone trying to live the Catholic faith is "hardline"? Would it not be less biased to simply say "committed"?

In *Guardian* propaganda, then, wanting to uphold marriage and to protect unborn babies makes you an extremist and a hardline Catholic.

And many liberals swallow this nonsense, ending up "shocked" when their view of the world collides with reality.

● ACCOMMODATION

ALGARVE, Albufeira, Portugal. Luxury 1 or 2 bed apartments for rent. Sky TV, shared pool, long/short term. Special winter rates. Tel: 087 2371716.

KERRY (20 mins drive Killarney). 3 bed traditional Irish cottage, completely refurbished, plus well kept gardens in very scenic area. Ideal house for retired couple. For sale or to let longterm. Tel: Seán 087 2371716.

LUXURY 2 bed bungalow for holiday lets, short or long stays, all mod cons, suitable for wheelchairs, in beautiful surroundings at Knock, Mayo, 087 6406588.

MEDJUGORJE. Apart to rent, 3 bedroom, lift access, all mod cons. 5 mins from church. Tel: 086 1055388.

● MISCELLANEOUS

ALOE vera. Forever living products. Distributor: Phil Colgan 01-6281436; 086 2437653.

ADOPTERS needed. 14 kind Alive! readers needed to adopt 1 cat or 1 kitten each - 9 kittens

DVD Transfers

Cine films, photos and slides transferred to DVD with music & titles added.

Also Camcorder and video tapes edited and transferred to DVD.

Tel: 01 2807838

or 087-9132265

Email: alleventsvideo@eircom.net

Remember Your Loved One with a Special Keepsake

- Memorial Cards
- Bookmarks
- Acknowledgement Cards
- Key Rings
- Wallet Cards

memorialcardsireland.ie



Call 053-92 35295
for a catalogue
info@crprint.ie

CLASSIFIED ADS

Breda 01-404 8187

Classifieds: €1 per word; Box No. €3.00 extra

aged 2 to 3 months old and 5 adult (3 females and 2 males) friendly attractive cats, aged 6 months to 3 years. May be delivered to new homes. Please ring Ann on 086 2127853 anytime.

PSYCHOTHERAPIST- counselor. Biodynamic massage. Practising Catholic. Tel: Gerard Moore, Cahirciveen area, 085 1036006.

WANTED. Crucifix. The larger the better. Tel: Matthew 01 8253229.

● NOVENAS

DEAR Sacred Heart of Jesus I ask you this very special favour (mention it). Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it in your broken Heart where your Father can see it. Then in his merciful eyes, it will become your favour, not mine. Amen. Say this prayer for 3 days, promise publication and favour will be granted. BC, PB, Vivienne, GM.

● PERSONAL

GENT 64, single, no ties, NDNS, with rural & Roman Catholic values & beliefs. Tall, good looking with excellent family background, likes eating out, cabaret, (showbands), hurling & football etc. Seeks attractive rural lady, 50-60 with values outlined for friendship & relationship. Box 9601.

TIPPERARY man, mid-60s, single, refined, farmer, loves music, wltm single lady (never married) for friendship. Box 9602.

LIMERICK lady, single, (never married), refined, retired civil servant, NSSD, wltm single gent (never married or widower), 65-70yrs for friendship or relationship. Box 9603.

CORK City male, 50s, single, no children, happy, living near sea in great town in S.E. Would like to



If you enjoy reading

Alive!

... please help us to promote it.

Could you distribute 50, 100 or more copies door-to-door once a month?

We DO need your help.

Please contact
Breda (01) 4048187

hear from sincere attractive female, from any country between 27-50, for friendship, relationship, possibly marriage. Tel: 086 0546477.

SINGLE refined educated male, ND, late 70s, seeks sincere lady for friendship or relationship. Dublin or adjacent areas. Tel: 089 9474739.

SINGLE Clare male, 51, wltm single lady for longterm relationship. Solvent. Clare/Limerick only. Tel: 086 8222525.

● PILGRIMAGES

FATIMA 8-15 May, 2017. Centenary celebration. Limited availability. Call Maura 086 8069891 to secure your place.

FATIMA 18-25 May, 2017. Centenary celebration. Hotel Avenida. €749. Early booking advised. Details: Joan Bourke Tel: 061 600951.

PILGRIMAGE to Medjugorje, departing Shannon, 6-13 Sept, €659 before 1st Feb. Contact John O'Brien 061 380614.

MEDJUGORJE departures, 7

Did you make a donation to Alive! in 2016?

Alive! is a registered charity.

● If you are an individual donor (PAYE or Self-Assessed) and your total donation to Alive! was €250 or more in 2016 we can reclaim your tax.

Please ask us for a form or Tel 01-4048187 for more info.

● If you are a company and your donation to Alive! was €250 or more in 2016 you can claim tax relief on your donation.

Pontifical Mission Societies

Your gift will help mission churches train their own sisters, brothers and priests. 35,000 religious students helped last year.

€50 will keep a student for one month.

€250 will buy a religious student's books.

€1,000 helps four sisters complete their training.

€2,500 educates a student priest to ordination.

Please donate what you can and pray for missionaries

Fr. Maurice Hogan SSC; National Director WMI, 64 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin 6. Ireland. www.wmi.ie Tel: (01) 4972035

nights, on 14 June and 6 Sept. Contact Phyllis Mulligan 042 9336705.

WALSINGHAM: England's National Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. 21-25 April (4 nights). All-in cost €450. Day-trip included. Pilgrims make their own travel arrangements on designated Ryanair flights. Private coach from airport. Accommodation in Pilgrim Hostel. Tel: 086 8554665/01 2808072. Email: mgolden30@gmail.com

MEDJUGORJE, 17-24 May, ex-Belfast & Dublin, £579. Staying opposite church. Sp. director, Fr. Brian McKevitt. Tel: Brenda Smyth 028 (Rol 048) 90833730.

Top banker warns: robots will put millions out of work

THE governor of the Bank of England has warned that advances in technology could put millions of people out of work in the coming years.

Mark Carney reckoned that machines could replace 15 million workers, almost half the UK's workforce, with livelihoods being "mercilessly destroyed".

The Bank has predicted that entire professions, such as accountancy, could be pushed to the verge of extinction as computers take over their roles. Most at risk are administrative, clerical and production staff.

Least likely to be affected are people in lower-paid jobs, such as hairdressers, carers and nannies.

"The fundamental challenge," said Mark Carney, "is that alongside its great benefits, every technological revolution mercilessly destroys jobs and livelihoods, and therefore identities, well before the new ones emerge."

Industrial revolution

He pointed out that this happened when the industrial revolution eclipsed agriculture and cottage industry and the service economy displaced manufacturing.

From global terrorism to financial crises, he noted, "for too long, for far too many people, the world seems to be getting riskier. They are right."

The level of anxiety has been increased further by what he called "a lost decade of growth", where real incomes have not increased.

The typical young adult in the early part of this century, he noted, earned £8,000 less in their 20s than their predecessors did.

On the other hand, in the past decade the incomes of the over-60s rose at five times the rate of the population as a whole.

And the richest 1% of people in the world in 2010 held about half the global wealth, up from one third in 2000.

HOLY CALENDARS & BOOKS

ORDER FORM

Please send me:

Church Art Calendars.....

The First Edel.....(€2)

A Nest of Saints.....(€2)

Catechism on the Eucharist.....(€2)

No More Tears in My Eyes (€5)

The Dumbag Letters.....(€4)

Crystal Vase.....(€2)

Donation for Alive!.....

Number

Amount enclosed



Includes all Feast Days!

Church Art Calendars 2017

2 for €5.00
(Stg £4.00) including p&p

Send your order to:
**Alive!, St Mary's Priory,
Tallaght Village,
Dublin 24.**

Name.....
BLOCK CAPS PLEASE

Address.....



KIDS' CORNER



Dia dhaoibh, a Pháistí,

For the past few weeks we have been thinking a lot about a little baby, Jesus. We have listened to the story about all the things that happened when he was born.

One of my favourite moments was when the angel appeared to the shepherds and told them, "I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by all the people."

The angel was telling them that the birth of Jesus would bring joy to the whole world, to every single person. Now we need to ask, "Does his birth fill me with real joy?"

Why would it?, you may wonder. When I tried to list the reasons why the birth of Jesus makes me happy I got 11. But there are a lot more. How many can you list?

First on my list was "it lets me be friends with Jesus." Then, "No Jesus, no First Holy Communion."

A new year is a new beginning. Ask your parents or teacher what a new year resolution is.

Slán go fóill,

Aisling

KIDS & CATS

Three boys live beside each other and each has a cat. Write in where each boy lives, and the name and colour of his cat. Follow these clues:

1. Seán lives in house number 1.
2. The cat called Fluffy lives in the middle house.
3. Pat's cat is called Lucky.
4. The ginger cat is called Treacle.
5. Mick's cat isn't black.
6. One of the cats is white.

	House 1	House 2	House 3
Boy's name			
Cat's name			
Colour			

Sudoku

Each box and each line across and down should have the nos. 1 to 6.

	2			4	
4					2
		3	6		
		2	1		
6					3
	3			6	

Answer:

Cats: Seán's cat is called Treacle and it is ginger.

165 COLOURING PICTURE - WIN €10



Name.....

Address.....

Age.....

Last Month's Colouring Picture Winner was:

Sean Nolan, Hollybank Road,
Drumcondra, Dublin 9.
Age 5.

Dec. X-word Winner:

Edward Sheridan,
Rossduff, Aghnaccliffe,
Co. Longford.

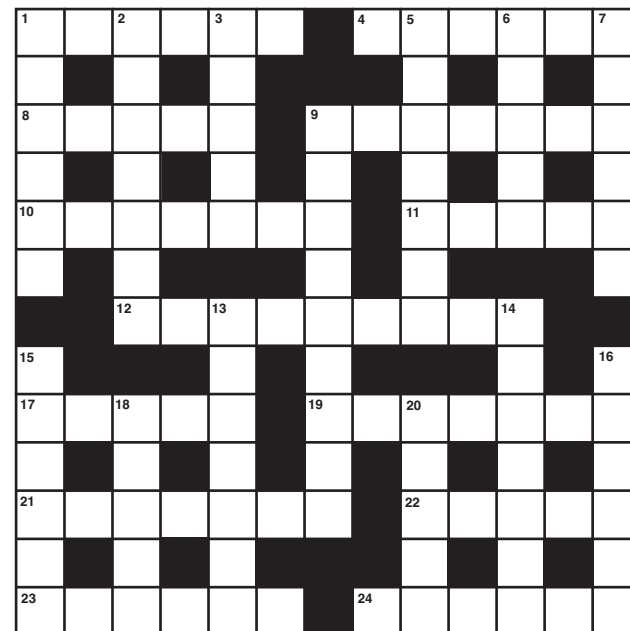
Solution to Dec. Crossword:

Across: 1. Secular 5. Whelp 8. Manic 9. Chicago 10. Average 11. Padre 12. Tutors 14. Oregon 17. Units 19. Tetanus 22. Puccini 23. Resin 24. Terse 25. Embassy.
Down: 1. Samba 2. Contest 3. Lycra 4. Rocket 5. Whisper 6. Eland 7. Protein 12. Trumpet 13. Respite 15. Genesis 16. Strike 18. Incur 20. Throb 21. Sunny.

Prize Crossword...No.208

€25

Cryptic Clues: €25 for the first correct entry out of the bag. Entries before **14th January**. One entry per family. Winner and answers next month.



ACROSS:

1. Flower colour? (6)
4. Rum and pie perhaps for the referee (6)
8. Approaches the north with listeners (5)
9. 'T' shirt? (7)
10. Andy about to take one painkilling drug (7)
11. Get measurement from the lime tree (5)
12. Many chats about him on the boat! (9)
17. Missile causing a right row (5)
19. Some trace of the French syrup (7)
21. It takes a month to just see this part of London (7)
22. Observed, say, part of the play (5)
23. Dry country? (6)
24. Not open as it's cold around the south-east (6)

DOWN:

1. An evil type of sin (6)
2. Small chapel or a Conservative MP (7)
3. Try to do composition (5)
5. Little mother has the least amount? (7)
6. It's popular to hire this small bay (5)
7. Sounds like this main course is on a platter! (6)
9. Rep to cast out onlooker (9)
13. Firm goes to Westmeath and finds ranch worker (7)
14. Rob and Les somehow get 5c coins (7)
15. Ram and cat destroyed the road surface (6)
16. Story about a foot? (6)
18. Textile fibre from Ronay, perhaps (5)
20. Lease out painting frame (5)

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone.....

Solution to Alive!, St Mary's Priory, Tallaght, Dublin 24.

Lives of the Saints

Dorothy Day



● Part 2: Early years

In the opening pages of her autobiography Dorothy Day quotes the *Book of Ecclesiastes*: "Only this have I found, that God made man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of questions."

Her life, until she got an answer to her biggest question, which answered all her questions, bears out the Wise Man's observation.

Dorothy's parents were nominally Protestants. "We did not

search for God when we were children", she wrote of herself and her siblings – three brothers and a sister.

"We took him for granted. We were taught to say some evening prayers and that was about it." How much did she hear of religion as a child? Very little, she says. "And yet my heart leaped when I heard the name of God."

Those words hold the key to the miracle that is the life of this Servant of God. In her life, devoid of external influences which might nurture her faith, we

see the action of the Holy Spirit.

Through small incidents, with hindsight, we see God leading her to the answer to that overwhelming question, "Why am I here?"

Day was born in Brooklyn on 8 November, 1897. When she was six, her father, a journalist, got a newspaper job in California. The family moved there, settling first in Berkeley and later in Oakland.

One rainy Sunday she went into the attic of their home, picked up a Bible and started reading for what felt like hours.

She recalled nothing of what she read but remembered the impression the experience created.

"I had a sense of holiness in holding the book in my hands. I did not know then that the Word in the Book and the Word in the

flesh of Christ's humanity were the same, but I felt I was holding something holy."

These were the years of a happy and trouble-free childhood. They reveal intimations of a grace which was eventually to blossom into a vibrant Catholic Faith.

But first came the turbulence of her late teens and early twenties when she rebelled, rejecting religion, getting involved in radical agitation and becoming an anarchic communist, ending up in prison.

Two parts

"My life", she wrote in the 1950s, "has been divided into two parts. The first twenty-five years were floundering, years of joy and sorrow, it is true. I did not know what I believed, though I

tried to serve a cause."

One thing she did know, she later admitted, in the words of Kirilof in Dostoyevsky's novel, *The Possessed*, "All my life I have been haunted by God."

In Oakland their next door neighbours were Methodists. Dorothy attached herself to them and went to their church – unique in her family in doing so, but in her own description "becoming disgustingly, proudly pious" and smug.

"I asked my mother why we did not pray and sing hymns but got no satisfactory answer."

Then, in the early hours of 18 April 1906 disaster struck San Francisco. An earthquake tore the city apart and with it the peaceful life of Dorothy and her family.

Britain's PM: Don't be scared into silence about faith

UK PRIME MINISTER Theresa May has encouraged Christians to bear witness to their faith at work and in public places, and not to allow themselves to be intimidated into silence. She also told MPs that Britain should be proud of its Christian heritage.

"We have a very strong tradition of religious tolerance and freedom of speech and our Christian heritage is something we can all be proud of," she told MPs in the House of Commons.

"I'm sure that we would all want to ensure that people at work do feel able to speak about their faith, and also be able to speak quite freely about Christmas."

The prime minister, who a few days earlier had told a Sunday newspaper that Christianity "lies behind what I do," was giving her support to a report produced by the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship.

The report encouraged people to spread the word of God at every opportunity – whether in the workplace, the playground or at the bus stop.

Describing the issue as important, May noted that the phrase used in the report was "the jealously guarded principle" which allows people to speak "freely and, as you say, respectfully and responsibly, about one's religion."

The Equality & Human Rights Commission had earlier criticised employers and organisa-



Theresa May

tions which thought they had to drop references to Christmas and to use secularist phrases such as "Season's Greetings" and "Winterinterval".

The Commission gave the example of a Christian check-in staff member at British Airways who was suspended for refusing to remove a cross on a chain from around her neck.

Bible

The Christian lawyers' report warned that British society was forgetting "that its many freedoms derive from centuries of applying the Bible to public life."

Urging Christians to be "intentional" about sharing their faith, the report was intended to be a resource which will "inform followers of Christ about the freedoms we have to do this."

It wanted to encourage "confident and fruitful evangelism in every area of public life. Freedom, in every sense of the word, depends on it. So let's speak up," it said.

The Christian lawyers also urged employees to look for opportunities to spread the gospel but to do so in a respectful manner and not to "brow-beat" co-workers.

Believers, they said, "should foster a culture of conversation about faith. The more such discussions are commonplace, the less it will be felt to be 'wrong'. Ongoing natural discussions are better than forced, isolated occasions."

The report noted that religious beliefs have protection that other beliefs do not.

"If you are expressing an opinion that is informed by your Christian beliefs, you have greater legal protection than if it is simply expressed as your opinion on a topic," it said.

"This is, therefore, a good reason not to be shy about stating how your faith informs your opinions."

The document also noted that Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media present a "wonderful opportunity for getting the good news of Jesus Christ out to a vast audience at little cost."

But it warned that although these liberties have been hard-won, they could also be easily lost. "If not attended to, they will wither away," it said.

"Like a muscle, without exercise they will atrophy. The Bible tells us that we grow as we give, and the truth about our gospel freedoms is that 'if we don't use them we'll lose them'."

A tiny handful took a gamble

Dear Nettles,

I admit I was stunned by Donald Trump's election to the White House. Having followed the news, studied the opinion polls and observed the markets, I was sure Hillary had it in the bag.

We had such high hopes for her, not least with the kind of judges she intended to appoint to the Supreme Court. But all that's just dust now.

I'm old enough, however, not to be too downcast at surprises. And this is a good time of year to recall by far the biggest surprise we've ever had down here.

Who would ever have believed that Him above would send his own Son as a man, to save the world? It still blows my mind.

From the day Gabriel, that two-winged cretin, visited Mary I suspected something big was going on. But never anything like what happened.

I observed her and Joseph setting off for Bethlehem, but didn't pay much attention. Well, no one expects anything too revolutionary from a pregnant woman. Or a tiny baby.

Then came the heavenly performance out on the hillside for the shepherds and we knew trouble was brewing.

Dumbag writes..!

Letters from a Master to a Trainee Tempter

After that things went quiet for about thirty years and it seemed we had gotten into a panic over nothing. Little did we know that this was just the calm before the storm.

Although that's not right either, because Jesus never really went in for "storms". He was more into what they now call "personal contact".

He didn't go out of his way to make friends and had a disturbing ability to see what other people were even thinking.

Powerful draw

But those who were open and who came to know him felt a powerful draw to him. They couldn't explain it, but said they felt a new spirit in themselves.

And slowly it dawned on them, "If I stick with this guy, then my relationship with him will have to become the driving force of my life; it will become central to my whole way of thinking and acting."

At that point, a lot backed off; they weren't prepared for that kind of commitment. Better to stick with the safe routine they knew and where they were in charge.

But a tiny handful were prepared to take a gamble. He warned them it would be a rocky road, but they were still determined to follow him as best they could.

They observed his concern for the nobodies of society, for the poor and the sick; they were awestruck by the hours he spent in prayer; they listened to his stories and his teaching.

Again and again they were shocked at what he came out with: "this is my body"; "blessed are the poor in spirit"; "marriage is for life"; "take up your cross"; "keep forgiving"; "I will raise you up".

His little stories could hit you like a train at top speed. And that is how the biggest, the deepest, the most peaceful revolution in history began. Indeed, it became so successful that people no longer saw it as revolutionary at all.

But even today it was this revolution, ultimately, which saw Hillary C. denied the White House.

Yours in turmoil,

Dumbag

Discovery of God's love turned his life around

US swimmer Michael Phelps (right) can rightly be called a legend - in a career that spanned five Olympics he won 28 medals, 23 of them gold. No other athlete in any sport has won more than nine gold medals.

But in an interview with the ESPN TV channel, the 32-year-old champion recently revealed that in 2014 he was in a very dark place. And that a book by a Christian pastor helped him pull through by giving him a new vision of life.

Two years earlier, aged 27, he had retired from swimming, for the first time, disappointed with his performance in the London Olympics. This left him with a lack of purpose, he didn't know what to do with his life.

But he also had by then a well-established drink problem, due in part to his background. When he was aged 9 his father had walked out on his family, a betrayal that continued to affect the swimmer into adulthood.

In September 2014 he was arrested for drunk driving, for the second time. As a result, he was dropped from the US team for the 2015 World Aquatics Championships.

For five days he kept to his bedroom, wondering how many times more he was going to "mess up" and thinking about ending it all.

"I didn't really leave my room," he said. "I didn't eat, I didn't really sleep. I just figured it was the best thing to do to end my life."



Instead, a footballer friend, Ray Lewis, intervened, persuading him to go into a rehab centre.

Lewis, who is public about his Christian faith, also gave Phelps a book: *The Purpose Driven Life*, by the mega-church baptist pastor Rick Warren.

In rehab Phelps began reading the book and claims it changed his life. "It turned me into believing there is a power greater than myself," he told ESPN, "and there is a purpose for me on this planet."

He added: "It helped me when I was in a place when I needed the most help." The book and his time in rehab also convinced him to try to reconcile with his father, which he eventually did.

26th DIVINE MERCY NATIONAL CONFERENCE

**Main Hall, RDS, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
24th, 25th & 26th February 2017**



**"Have Mercy on us...and on the whole world"
- (From the Diary of St Faustina)**

**Speakers: Fr Bernard Mc Guckian SJ
Fr Michael Maher SM
Robert Stackpole (USA, Author, Educator)
Canon Michael Fitzgerald (Cork)
Frances Hogan (Author, EWTN)
Denise Kelly (Pro Life Testimony)**

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (Dublin) will preside at Holy Mass on Saturday

**Tickets: Weekend €35
Saturday €30, Sunday €20**

Available online by Paypal

**Group bookings or enquiries
Tel: 086-066 9203**

**Email: divinemercyconference@gmail.com
www.divinemercyconference.com
Confessions, Mass and Adoration.**