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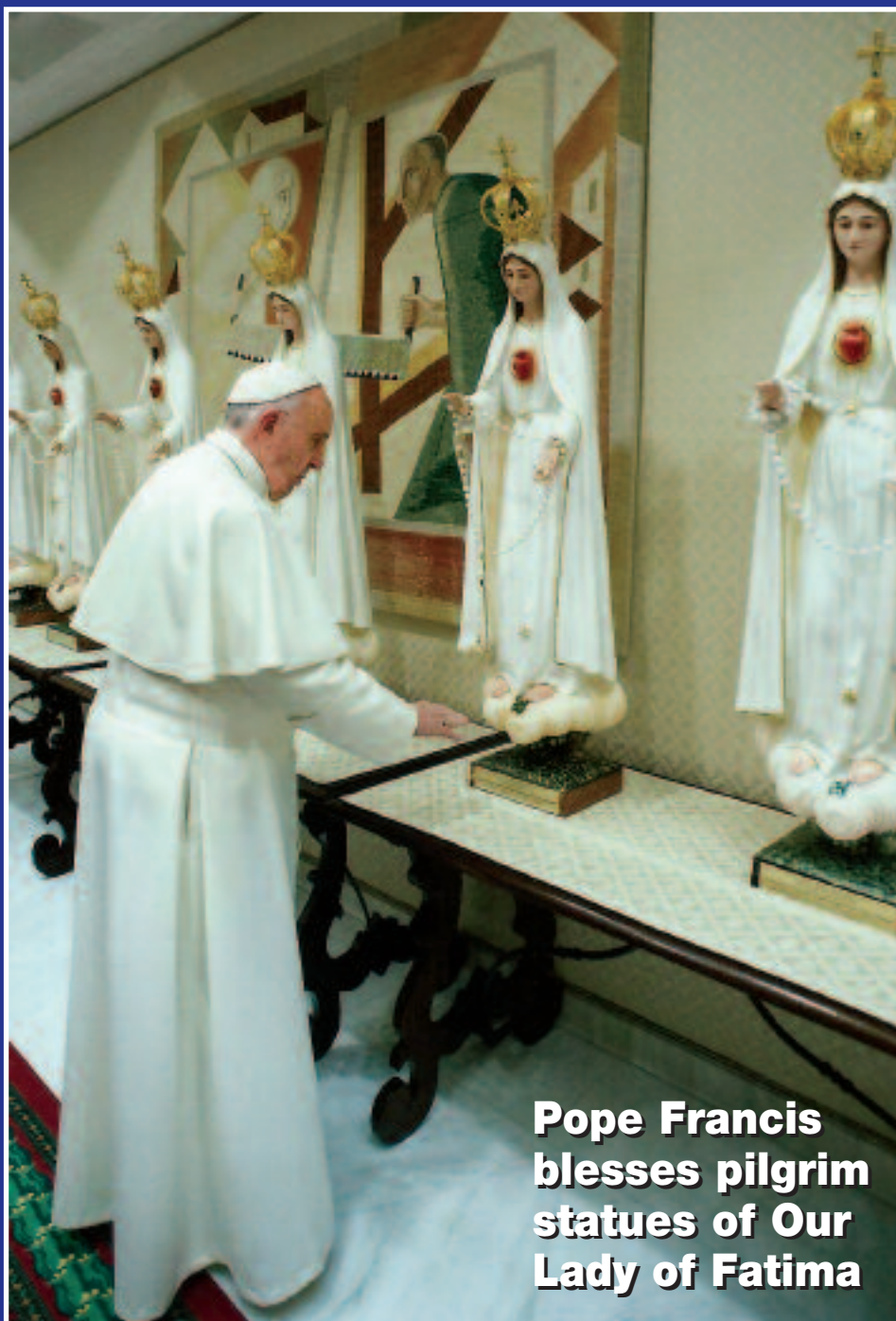
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**Pope Francis  
blesses pilgrim  
statues of Our  
Lady of Fatima**

● During the centenary year of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Fatima in 1917, six statues will be taken to different parts of the world to promote the message of Fatima. The statue for Europe will tour Ireland this month. ... See Page 2



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# Global prayer and penance project for centenary of Fatima apparitions

**POPE Francis has blessed six statues of Our Lady of Fatima for a global effort to increase devotion to the Virgin Mary and to spread the message given by her in Fatima 100 years ago.**

The statues will be brought to the different continents during this centenary year of the apparitions of the Mother of God in Portugal in 1917.

One of the 3 foot high statues, known as the Pilgrim Image of Our Lady of Fatima, will be brought to all parts of Ireland this month, beginning in Armagh Cathedral on 4th March. It will visit churches, hospitals and hospices (details at [allianceofthetwoheartsireland.com](http://allianceofthetwoheartsireland.com)).

The Holy Father has declared 2017, the hundredth anniversary of Mary's appearances to three shepherd children in a

remote part of Portugal, to be a jubilee year.

A Plenary Indulgence is granted to all who take part in the celebration.

## 'Flow of graces'

The aim of the Pilgrim Statue initiative is to spread the message of Fatima, drawing the faithful closer to Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

It will foster prayer through the CARE programme, Confession, Adoration, Rosary and Eucharist and penance (First Friday, First Saturday Communion, Reparation Vigil) for peace in the world and holiness in family life.



• Pope Francis gives a gift to Mrs Joan Keaney, Alliance of the Two Hearts, who represented Ireland at the blessing ceremony.

The project is being organised by the Alliance of the Holy Family International and the Austrian branch of Human Life International.

"We ardently desire," said the organisers, "that all people of prayer will raise their hearts to heaven and pray for the success of this mission so that a flow of graces will descend on our families, communities, Ireland and the world."

Mary first appeared to the children, Lucia Dos Santos (aged 11) and her Marto cousins, Francisco (aged 9) and Jacinta (aged 7) on 13th May, during the First World War.

She appeared on the 13th of each following month, the final apparition taking place on 13th October when the famous Miracle of the

Sun took place before some 70,000 people.

The Marto children died within three years of the apparitions, Francisco on 4th April 1919 and Jacinta on 20th February 1920.

So seriously did they live the messages and so profoundly were their lives changed by prayer and penance that the Church declared them Blessed on 13th May 2000. Jacinta is the youngest non-martyred child ever beatified.

For Pope John Paul II "the message of Fatima is *more* relevant and *more* urgent" today than when Our Lady first appeared.

The progress of the six pilgrim statues can be followed on YouTube on the AHFInternational channel.

## Saudi Arabia switches to Western calendar

SAUDI ARABIA recently changed its official calendar to bring it into line with the Western world. The Kingdom has used the Islamic Hijri calendar since it was founded in 1932.

In future its timeline will be dated from the birth of Jesus and not from the year that Muhammad made his pilgrimage from Mecca to Medina (622 AD). The year will also be 11 days longer.

The change was announced in April last year and became law in October. It went into effect some weeks later.

"Henceforth they will run the state according to a reckoning based on Jesus Christ's birth, not on the Prophet Muhammad's religious mission," reported *The Economist*.

The magazine added that 'guardians of the Wahhabi rite, who seek to be guided by Muhammad's every act, ask whether they are now being required to follow Jesus.'

The clergy have claimed that the political authorities are rewinding the clock to the pre-Islamic age of ignorance.

They also warned that the change could undermine the fasting month of Ramadan.

Saudi Arabia is not alone in having calendar difficulties. In Iran, for example, the year is 1395, in Kurdistan it is 2628 and in Israel it is 5776.

## Syria needs reconciliation, not Western provocation

**A JESUIT priest based in Syria has said that the international media have been "playing a miserable role in this war. They are provoking the two sides and setting one against the other."**

Speaking from Aleppo (right) by telephone, Fr Ziad Hilal said the city had been completely destroyed, yet he was hopeful.

"In the course of its history Aleppo has experienced many conquerors," he recalled. "Thousands have died here and the city has been destroyed time and again. And yet it has always bounced back. So let us hope!"

Asked about media reports of massacres committed against the population in the eastern part of the city by the Syrian army, he expressed his doubts.

"There may have been isolated cases but we haven't heard anything here," he said. "These days a lot of false information and fake pictures are being circulated."

"Organisations on the spot, such as the Red Cross, have not reported such news. The problem is that people tend to exaggerate. It's important not to provoke at this point."

People need to accept one another and "to dare to try reconciliation," he said. "We've destroyed the city because we haven't yet managed to come together in a dialogue. We've lost our civilisation and destroyed our history. What for?"

Asked what the West might do to help, he replied: "First and foremost: stop the provocations! Call on the politicians to exercise reason and seek talks and reconciliation."

He added that "the Middle East must become a peaceful region where all live in peace together. Otherwise it will become hell for us."

Fr Hilal oversees various projects in Syria for the Catholic organisation, Aid to the Church in Need.



## Licence fee blow to BBC

■ From April people in England taken to court for not having a TV licence may receive a conditional discharge.

New guidelines to magistrates indicate the circumstances, such as a mistake or "significant financial hardship", where a warning rather than a fine may be imposed.

The BBC now fears mass non-payment of licences, but Tory MP Philip Davies welcomed this "further nail in the coffin of the licence fee."

He urged the BBC to adopt a subscription model. "If they are so convinced of its value for money then they have nothing to fear from such a move," he said.

# Family holds down mother while doctor poisons her

**AN ELDERLY woman in Holland, with her family gathered to watch a doctor kill her, put up such a fight for life that the female doctor requested the relatives to hold down the victim while she gave her the lethal injection.**

The woman, who lived in a nursing home in Holland, suffered from dementia,

Although the doctor had secretly put drugs in the 80-year-old's coffee to sedate her, she woke up and battled not to be injected with the lethal poison.

The local watchdog committee for killings admitted that the case involved some "irregularities" that merited a rebuke, but they judged that the doctor "acted in good faith" and did not break the country's euthanasia laws.

However they referred the case to the courts so that judges might confirm that other doctors who acted in good faith when killing people with dementia would not be prosecuted.

Committee chairman Jacob Kohnstamm said he was in favour of a trial, "not to punish the doctor... but to get judicial clar-



ity over what powers a doctor has when it comes to the euthanasia of patients suffering from severe dementia."

The paperwork showed that the doctor, having begun, could complete the killing only by getting family members to help restrain the woman.

The report also told how the victim had said several times in the days before she was put to death, "I don't want to die".

The medic did not tell her the plans for her death because she did not want to cause unnecessary extra distress or disruption to the process.

However, when the patient was still in full possession of her mind she had said

she wanted to be killed when she herself deemed "the time was right".

The woman was said to have often shown signs of fear and anger, and would wander around the residential home at night.

As a result, the nursing home's doctor decided she was "suffering intolerably", but was no longer in a position to judge that the time was now right for the killing to go ahead.

Michael Cook of BioEdge commented: "Wrestling your mother to the mattress so that the doctor can give her a lethal injection is not the serene death eulogised by supporters of euthanasia."

He added: "Nobody respected the woman's wish to live at home when it was clear and unambiguous. But they did 'respect' her wish to be killed, when it was not. It's a peculiar interpretation of autonomy which honours a wish to die but not a wish to live."

Holland introduced the law allowing the killing of the sick and elderly 17 years ago, and since then more than 5,500 people have been put down for a variety of reasons.



# Cowardice is crippling the Church in Ireland



## THE OPEN DOOR

The Catholic Church in Ireland today is probably working at less than 5% of its capacity for holiness and mission, the two wings on which alone the Church can rise.

Many factors contribute to this phenomenal lethargy but here we focus on just one - cowardice. And the need for an infusion of courage.

Cowardice is endemic in the Irish Church, weakening families, individuals, Catholic institutions. Yet we won't face it. With many notable exceptions, fear is crippling both clergy and laity.

Cowardice adopts many attractive disguises, presenting itself as compassion, prudence, humility, tolerance, a desire not to upset, etc.

Busyness about secondary matters while we neglect crucial tasks also serves to hide cowardice.

But an army of cowards stands little hope of victory in battle. And we are in the midst of an immense battle with evil.

The Church's primary tasks are to lead her members to holiness, to seek out the lost sheep, including those in

our own families, and to proclaim Christ's death and resurrection, teaching all people the purpose of life and offering them hope and joy.

## On fire with zeal

We can understand that many Catholics seek to avoid such daunting tasks, while unwilling to face their cowardice. What, however, might a courageous Church, on fire with zeal, look like?

- Families first. For husband and wife, the top priority would be to support each other in becoming saints and in leading their children to a holiness that fearlessly bears witness to the faith.

That central driving force of their family life would shape all their decisions.

- Catholic schools, at all levels, would proudly proclaim their Catholic identity and mission (not "ethos").

Their principal aim would be to help parents hand on a joyful and confident faith to their children. Neither parents nor staff would allow anything to compromise that aim.

- Each parish community would have a sense of urgency about the need to foster holiness and mission in all its members.

Parish councils would make the lost sheep and evangelisation their no.1 concern, rather than wasting energy on minor matters or actually being an obstacle to mission.

- Bishops and priests would make teaching and preaching their top prior-



• Uju Ekeocha: This is what Catholic courage looks like.

ity. They would teach the whole faith, not just its comforting parts. And they would expose error.

There would be an end to watered down, safe preaching where the call to repentance, holiness and martyrdom is bleached out. Preaching would be based on God's Word, not pop psychology.

## Losing identity

- College lecturers, historians, philosophers, would review their own call to be evangelisers and how they are living their mission. They would be a strong voice, at popular as well as academic level, for reason and the faith.

- Many institutions and groups are losing their Catholic identity and mis-

sion, becoming mere humanitarian outfits. Courage requires members to tackle this issue.

- Why is it left to a handful of dedicated people to speak out for marriage, the family based on marriage, the right to life of unborn children? They take vile abuse while most of us refuse to get involved.

- Catholic journalists and politicians would be proud of their convictions, rather than selling out in order to fit in or advance their careers. Voters would never support a politician with an anti-life or anti-marriage agenda.

A young Nigerian, Uju Okeocha, spoke in Dublin recently on the topic, *How the West exports the Culture of Death*. She was an inspiring example of what Catholic courage looks like.

Five years ago the Gates Foundation targeted Africa with its "aid", determined to spread its anti-life ideology there.

Uju, a specialist in biomedical science, wrote an open letter to Melinda Gates.

Since then she has made herself an expert on the West's death agenda, has travelled the globe to talk on the topic, has awakened in countless young people a commitment to family and life and has advised many politicians and bishops on how to oppose the death culture.

She shows how much just one person with courage and conviction can achieve.

## Clashing visions

And ourselves? We are on the front line of an immense religious conflict: Secularist religion is waging war against Christianity, particularly the Catholic faith.

The two offer clashing visions of what it is to be human, the purpose of life, how society should be organised, the meaning of freedom, the source of joy, the demands of a good life, hope.

They offer profoundly different approaches to every aspect of life: the kind of education we want for children, how we vote, attitudes to sexuality and marriage, our use of money, and so on.

Secularists recognise that Christianity is their religion's great enemy that must be destroyed.

Christians cannot see that a religious war is in full swing. Ever ready to surrender at the first challenge, they foolishly hope for some kind of peaceful coexistence.

This refusal to face reality is yet another symptom of how cowardly we are.

Secularist religion, a Christian heresy, contains many Christian elements which hide its toxicity. But its destructive nature is rapidly emerging.

Society is harmed by our cowardice and other people pay for it, some of them dearly. We can no longer ignore it. Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of your love.

## Growing global concern about HPV vaccine

**CONTROVERSY** over Gardasil and other HPV vaccines and the serious damage they are said to be causing to the health of countless teenage girls is

continuing to grow, not only in Ireland but internationally.

There is also increasing concern that teenagers and their parents are not being given all

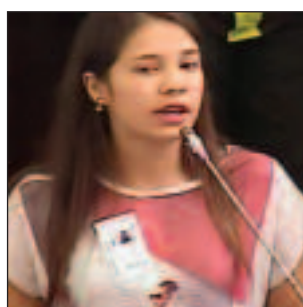
the information about side effects which they need to make an informed decision about the drug.

According to a report on the website Vaccine Impact, Colombia in Latin America has been conducting a public forum where doctors, parents and the young women affected by the drug have been recounting their experiences.

Dr. Francisco Yeppez of the country's National Academy of Medicine told the forum that "the evidence at this time requires us to establish warning signs."

He added, "we cannot wait until we demonstrate scientifically that these elements have causal relationship."

The forum was also told of "growing national and international information about the association between this vaccine and the onset or aggravation of various autoimmune diseases."



Colombia: vaccine victim gives her testimony

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# What is it about God that makes us afraid?

by Gerard Murphy

MANY people who consider themselves atheists or agnostics have too narrow a grasp of the issues at stake. They don't see that the whole way we think about ourselves and our lives is shaped by how we think about God.

I am talking here about the Christian understanding of God, not that of the ancient Greeks or Romans, of 18th century Deism or of Hinduism.

Secondly, although we can know from reason alone that God exists and is our creator, this piece is not an attempt to prove his existence.

We can say in passing, however, that seeking "scientific evidence" for God makes no sense whatever. Science only deals with material reality and God is not material.

A surgeon might as well operate on a person in search of his freedom or his human rights.

Nor is it possible to be agnostic about God in practice. An agnostic is like a truck driver at major roadworks where the traffic lights before him are stuck on both red and green.

This article simply attempts to explore what our view of God, one way or the other, means for our understanding of what it is to be human.

## Areas affected

Areas affected by our view of God include the meaning and purpose of human life, the dignity of the person, freedom, human rights, happiness, morality, worship.

Once we begin to think at any depth, we have to ask what death means for us, for me. Here I discover just how alone I ultimately am.

Is death the end of my existence? Is there darkness or light beyond



• Looking for human rights in a patient.

death? Is there any link between how I live now and in the beyond?

None of these questions can be answered without a lot of reference to what we believe about God.

Even if we don't ask these questions explicitly we answer them in the way we actually live.

Thus, for example, we worship, thank and pray to God or we ignore him. What we do is the lived answer to the God question.

Linked with this is the question

of happiness. A limitation in our usual experience of happiness is that nothing can fulfil *all* our desires.

Moreover, each moment of happiness passes so quickly, leaving us dissatisfied and yearning yet again. How long till we get tired or frustrated with this cycle of desire, pursuit, possession, disappointment, desire...?

If we ask what, if anything, would bring us perfect and lasting happiness, inevitably we face once again the question of God.

## Flaws

Over the past four centuries or so, many of Europe's best minds struggled with the idea of a morality based on reason alone - a morality with no reference to God.

They put forward many different foundations for such a morality - duty, emotion, human rights, and so on - but each one revealed seri-

ous flaws.

Why, after all, should I follow what politicians, parents, the majority decide is acceptable, especially if it is to my disadvantage?

Finally, with the great thinkers defeated, it was left to each person to choose what he or she would consider good or evil. I am my own supreme law-giver. Choice rules.

But this ultimately leads to rule by the most powerful, to tyranny.

Once again we are brought up against the question of God. Can the law, can good and evil mean anything if they are not grounded in the love and wisdom of God?

Since all these central issues in our lives inevitably bring us back to the question of a Creator, should we not face the God issue directly and truthfully?

Or what is it about God that frightens us?



## Monthly Musings

By Fr Joseph Briody

### Prayer and pastoral fruitfulness

FR WALTER CISZEK (1904-1984) spent 23 years in Soviet prisons and Siberian labour camps. He stated that only prayer carried him through. We can pray anywhere. A prison cell or a hospital bed can become a school of prayer.

A priest who is not rooted in the life of prayer, holiness and virtue will be unable to deal with what meets him. So many people approach him for counsel that he must seek divine and human wisdom.

Bad advice can damage. A priest strives to understand the problems of suffering humanity and somehow shine on these God's light. We have many saints who attracted others because of their holiness and wisdom.

St John Bosco was a model priest, a model of pastoral initiative and care, of spiritual direction and counsel, of "accompaniment", as Pope Francis might say.

He was given the title "Father and Teacher of Youth" at his canonisation. For him the usual parish structures were not adequate to the needs of his time. Doing something new, he became a model for

the New Evangelisation.

Everything he did was steered between the two columns of his famous dream - the Holy Eucharist and Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians.

A good and holy priest, he was in love with the Lord, Our Lady, and with poor, suffering humanity.

Saints like him, whose pastoral outreach was amazingly fruitful, teach us the primacy of the spiritual life. Nothing can replace prayer, time spent with the Lord.

If we begin to cut back on our prayer time, or even to cut it out, then we learn the hard truth: "You have sown much and reaped little" (Haggai 1:6). "Without me,



Don Bosco's 'two pillars' dream: the Holy Eucharist and Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians.

you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

It is the Lord who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:6), who builds the house. And they

labour in vain who labour without him (Ps 127).

In an instant, in an encounter with him, he directs us to the large catch of fish, though we may have toiled all night long by ourselves, according to our own plan, and caught nothing (Lk 5:5).

For our action to be truly fruitful it must be rooted in prayer. Prayer alone gives the strength and light necessary to attract souls and to direct them as John Bosco and others did.

Without this prayerful foundation there is only human activity, that is to say, almost nothing, nothing that endures... "Without me you can do nothing!"



Fr Ciszek

### Young people searching for truth

■ Fr Ciszek tells in his book, *With God in Russia*, how some of the Communists he met were optimistic about what Stalin would do for the people. History, however, would tell a very different story.

The optimism petered out as the promised food did not materialise and the mass murders multiplied.

A constructive critical eye is important for filtering what others would

have us believe - especially powerful institutions such as government or media.

Catholics are good at recognising propaganda, ideology or groupthink because they value faith and reason, especially in matters concerning human dignity and our destiny.

Fr Ciszek wrote of the great thirst young people had for religion in the Soviet labour camps. In school they had been indoctrinated with the Soviet regime's official atheism.

They had heard religion ridiculed but wanted to know more. Fr Ciszek was

able to teach them secretly and administer the sacraments. Young people have a natural desire for what is good and noble, ultimately for the living God.

Whether that longing is nurtured or stifled depends on formation: the people they meet, the witness given, the answers they receive.

It is worth pondering how teenagers who had been indoctrinated with Soviet lies against religion hungered for faith and truth, while many teenagers who have had years of Catholic education can show little interest in their faith.

### A right to hear the whole Gospel

RECENTLY I read about a newly installed bishop in the US. The people of his previous diocese were very sorry to lose him.

One woman remarked: "He would never exclude anyone, yet would preach Gospel truth in all its fullness." That's not a bad description of the role of a pastor!

The Church is Catholic. All are welcome and have the right to hear the truth of the Gospel proclaimed in all its fullness and attractiveness.

Conversion is not something negative or heavy. It is a mystery of light. The Church calls to conversion but also accompanies (Pope Francis).

St John Paul II identified "the Proclamation of the Gospel and the Call to Conversion" as a mystery of light in the Rosary. Conversion leads to light.

To love ourselves or our sins more than we love the Lord is to cling to darkness. We strive to give up sin because we love the Lord. When we don't love him enough we want to hold on to our sins.

Lent reminds us of the continual call to give up our sins and to say "no" to ourselves. If we do this lovingly in small things, then we will be able to do it in greater things when Jesus asks.





# Increased risk of suicide for people in gay ‘marriage’

PEOPLE in a same-sex "marriage" are almost three times more likely to commit suicide than those in a natural marriage, according to a large Swedish study.

The study argued that the increased suicide risk could not be blamed on society's intolerance of homosexual behaviour, given that Sweden has an accepting attitude towards same-sex relationships.

"Even in a country with a comparatively tolerant climate regarding homosexuality such as Sweden, same-sex married individuals evidence a higher risk for suicide than other married individuals," said the authors.

They used Sweden's official figures to compare some 6,000 "married" homosexual couples to the larger population of heterosexual couples who married between 1996 and 2009, following both groups until 2011.

The results showed that participants in "gay marriages" had an overall 2.7 times greater chance of suicide than participants in heterosexual marriages. Men were slightly more at risk than women

The study, "Suicide in married couples in Sweden: Is the risk greater in same-sex couples?", was published in the *European Journal of Epidemiology*.

The findings are in keeping with many other studies that have found a strong link between homosexual behaviour and a range of negative psychological outcomes, even in "very accepting" countries, such as the Netherlands.

## Reformation brought division - Cardinal Koch

IT IS better this year to "commemorate" rather than to "celebrate" the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the Vatican's Cardinal Kurt Koch told a French newspaper.

The Reformation, which began in 1517, was, in fact a multitude of small local rebellions against the Church and often bitterly opposed to each other.

"We must do penance," for the Reformation "did not bring about the renewal of the Church desired by Luther, but division," said the cardinal. It also contributed to "the terrible confessional wars, notably the Thirty Years' War."

US historian Brad Gregory, in his acclaimed book *The Unintended Reformation* has emphasised that "Protestantism, as an historical and empirical reality" was never a united movement that later divided.

Rather, from its earliest days until today, 'Protestantism' has been "an umbrella designation of groups, churches, movements, and individuals whose only common feature is a rejection of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church," he said.

Gregory explained that despite the desires of the reformers, "but as a result of their actions, beginning in the early 1520s Protestant pluralism derived directly from the Reformation's foundational truth claim," namely, that Scripture alone suffices.

Cardinal Koch, from Switzerland, heads the Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

# Group launched to oppose the evil agenda of Soros

**MULTI-BILLIONAIRE George Soros, a driving force behind the campaign for abortion in Ireland, heads a global army of activists working to promote his leftwing agenda through the world.**

But now a number of countries have begun to take action against the immense harm that he and his Open Society Foundations (OSF) are doing to their societies.

In more than 100 different nations, including Ireland, Soros is pumping millions of dollars into a vast number of puppet groups and NGOs which campaign for his radical leftwing aims.

These so-called "civil society" groups greatly depend on the mega-donor's funding, and are part of the US billionaire's global strategy to advance his evil agenda. But now governments and other groups have begun to fight back.

Recently, in Macedonia, a new global initiative, Stop Operation Soros (SOS), was announced. Its aim is to expose and to counter the political and social engineering the billionaire is engaged in across the world.

At a press conference Nikola Srbov, a founder of the movement, accused Soros of hijacking civil society in order to impose his own personal ideology on others.

By strategically funding certain groups via his Foundations, said Srbov, Soros "has monopolised the civil society sector, pushing out any organisation which disagrees with his ideology."

Journalist Cvetin Cilimanov, a co-

founder of SOS, accused Soros of working to undermine Macedonia's sovereignty by colluding with the leftwing opposition party and with outside globalist interests.

Soros's foundation works hand in glove with various foreign agencies which promote an anti-human agenda, including USAID and the EU's programme to develop "civil society".

The new movement seeks to "desorosise" Macedonia, to free the people from the grip that Soros has taken on the country over a period of 30 years.

## 'Paid activists'

Hungary too is debating what to do about the Soros influence. In 2014, Prime Minister Viktor Orban said civil society groups financed from abroad were covers for "paid political activists".

Orban told the *Budapest Times* that "some people envision a world without borders: this is exactly the concept which George Soros and his civil society organisations seek to popularise."

This, he believed was, at best, well-intentioned and naive, and at worst it is part of an agenda to destroy traditional civilisations, ways of life, cultures and nations.

"I," however, he said, "am among those who do not want the world's



George Soros

civilisational structure to change. In particular I would not like to see a change in the culture of this piece of land we call Hungary. I love this country."

According to *Bloomberg News*, Hungary's authorities intend to audit the books of foreign-funded organisations.

Minister Janos Lazar said that "every Hungarian has a right to know who wants to influence him or her" from abroad.

That Soros is funding more than 60 groups in Hungary to push his ideology indicates just how big the problem is.

Known by some as "the godfather of the left", Soros is also a major source of funding for the US Democratic Party, so he has considerable influence on its policies.

He is also a major supporter of the pro-abortion and pro-gay movement in the US.

Aly Nielsen of *Newsbusters* revealed that of 158 groups involved in organising or promoting the recent Women's March on Washington, a quarter of them received funding from Soros, totalling a staggering \$90 million.

Among these, Human Rights Watch, the gay-demands group, received \$32 million while abortion giant Planned Parenthood, a big supporter of Hillary Clinton, received \$21 million.

Amnesty International, another abortion lobby group, received \$1,339,000.

Leaked documents have also revealed that Soros is one of the main driving forces in Ireland for legalising the killing of the unborn.

In the past two years alone he has pumped an estimated €500,000 into the fanatical anti-life campaign, funding groups like Amnesty Ireland (\$155,000), the Irish Family Planning Association (\$150,000) and the Abortion "Rights" Campaign (still to reveal how much it has received).

According to Jay Symopoulos of the Free Thought Project, Soros imposes his agenda on states under the guise of promoting a free and open society.

As well as his anti-life and anti-family agenda his aim is "to create a globalist system of governance that supersedes national sovereignty."

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## Discovering the sound of silence

**S**ilence: an accurate description of an awkward first date. Silence: a perfect setting for a horror scene - signalling imminent danger.

Silence: the sheer sense of boredom when waiting for your toast to ping or ice-cream to melt. No wonder we all hate silence.

Fr. Mike Schmitz of Ascension Press has a slightly different take on this idea of silence.

Being a priest on campus, he has often seen college students grappling with silent prayer and telling him that it makes them angry or anxious or think lustful thoughts.

These students ask him if they should stop this silence nonsense - stop praying in quiet because it makes them feel and think adverse things.

But Fr. Mike postulates that silence shows us one of the scariest and most valuable things of all - it reveals us to ourselves.

It's not that silence itself makes us think bad thoughts, it's simply that silence exposes and magnifies what we are suppressing, what we are blocking out by distraction, what we are blocking out by noise.

### Sit quietly

As the renowned Christian scientist Blaise Pascal once said: "All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone."

Boredom. It's okay to be bored. I learnt this harsh concept when my iPod died at the gym a few days ago. No bass to keep me going, no entertainment on the bus home - what was I ever going to do?

Surprisingly, I was able to enjoy the "quiet" time, which I've put in inverted commas because there was still plenty of background noise.

It turned out that the clinking of metal at the gym was arguably a more motivating sound than my worn-out playlist still packed with hits from 2014.

But then, something really hilarious happened on the bus. I sat beside this girl who I thought was with a group of Spanish students who were occupying 95% of the bus.

I sat there for at least 10

minutes, wrestling with the idea of listening to music on my phone.

But somehow I knew the "silence" was good for me - that is, whatever amount of silence you get on a bus full of Spanish students. (Gotta love the Spanish, just maybe not on packed buses).

### 'Voice of God'

So there I sat - trying to be content with this random call to silence I was experiencing. Next thing, the girl beside me tapped me on the shoulder and said, "I think we've met before."

It was like the voice of God. I was wondering why the heck he was asking me to sit there and be silent and aware of my surrounding neighbours, when most of them were jabbering away in a language I don't speak.



Silent prayer

But there she was - the face of a friend I initially didn't recognise.

I was so relieved that I hadn't put my earphones in, only to get off at the same stop as her (we were both going to the same prayer group) and realising I had been plugged up when sitting beside a friend.

Talk about awkward silence, that lack of silence on my part would have been even more awkward.

You just never know how a dose of "silence" could change your day. Even just some of the time - to be unplugged from our constant distraction in the form of music or tutorials.

It's an invitation to meaningful conversation and, of course, to prayer. It is often said that God's first language is silence. Not English, not Spanish, silence. Open yourself to the possibilities that silence brings.

## The YOUTH FORUM



With Katie Ascough

### Silence and Prayer

**H**ave you ever had a significant moment of silent prayer? Just sitting there, minding your own business, and Boom! God strikes you?

I've never been one much for silence. Frankly, it's near impossible to get me to shut up.

Even silent prayer I have found difficult, and to this day I'm usually better with at least having prayerful music to keep my mind from wandering to my wardrobe or fridge.

Having said that, some of my most productive and memorable prayer has occurred when sitting in Adoration in complete silence.

### 'Basking'

There's something about sitting before Jesus in the Eucharist, no medium, no noise, just basking in his sheer presence that brings out the most intimate form of prayer.

It's almost like the cliché that anything worth having is worth fighting for. At least for me, that's my relationship with silence summed up: a struggle but worth it.

Perhaps this Lent you can dedicate part of your day - even just five minutes - to sitting in silent prayer. If you can make it to Adoration, that's even better.

Allow God to enter your contemplative heart, and allow yourself to disconnect from the constant distractions we face. The more you invest in silence, the more you will get out of it, and the more you will crave it because you will see its powerful effects.

No matter how short the time you spend on it, I encourage you to practise silence this Lent.



### The Shower: a place of prayer?

■ The shower is a magical place. Not only can you perform "Singing in the Rain" complete with splashing effects (guilty), but you can also have some pretty decent prayer time.

But what is it about those three walls and a curtain (or similar) that inspires prayer? Is it simply because it's a time of day when we have space to ourselves to switch off?

Does it have anything to do with the melodic white noise of water hitting the basin? Is it because we are finally clean again and not so distracted by that awful BO we've been deodorising for days?

These are the important questions we must ask ourselves. After much deep contemplation and many a Google search, I realised that it doesn't have to be the shower.

It can be any mundane task in which we are physically but not mentally active. Any act which uses our bodies but doesn't necessarily distract our minds. As Saint Teresa of Calcutta said:

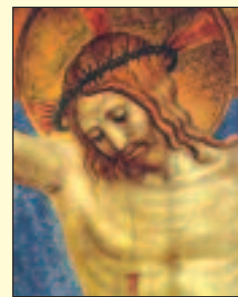
"You can pray while you work. Work doesn't stop prayer and prayer doesn't stop work. It requires only that small raising of the mind to him: I love you God, I trust you, I believe in you, I need you now. Small things like that. They are wonderful prayers."

As St. Teresa so eloquently puts it, we can transform any ordinary task into an opportunity for prayer. No excuse for not cleaning your room now.



### Friday is Special

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## You need to take care of yourself too

by Caitriona Lynch

*Self love my liege is not so vile a sin as self neglecting*  
- William Shakespeare

**M**ums and dads face many kinds of difficulties and challenges when caring for their children. And parenting burnout is amongst the most common around.

Remarkably most parents don't even realise they are suffering from it. Ask these parents when was the last time they took a break from parenting and they stare at you stupefied.

It's like they're amazed. "You're allowed to take a break?"

Taking care of yourself is an important part of being a good mum or dad. When you stop caring for your own needs it's impossible to be a good parent.

The following are some suggestions that I have found extremely helpful in helping me recover from burnout.

**1. Personal space:** the problem about personal space is that children nibble away at it so consistently that it's like "cooking a frog". Suddenly you wake up to the fact that it's *all gone*, and boy do you resent it.

Therefore, as soon as possible, get a baby sitter. Get out. As soon as you do recover some personal space you'll realise how much you've missed it but never knew.

**2. Personal growth:** If you find yourself constantly stuck in the same old routine or indeed watching an entire season of something or other on Netflix over a few days, it's safe to say you're stagnating.

As the fella said, "you need to get a hobby". I took up French about 9 years ago.



*You've got kids!*

My French is still hopeless, but I've had a great laugh, stretched my mind a bit, and I got to meet some very nice and interesting people who have nothing to do with my family life

**3. Exercise:** It's great for killing anxiety and depression. I hate exercise but I must say even three 30-minute sessions a week can have a very beneficial effect.

Particularly when you have little kids. Getting out into the fresh air and having a good brisk walk/run/jog/ cycle can really clear your head.

**4. Creativity:** Once all my children were at school I decided to reintroduce knitting into my life. Even if I only do about 2 lines a day I can still end up with some item or other at the end of the year that I made myself.

It gives me a good old fashioned pioneering sense of production that I find rewarding.

**5. Socialise:** Parenting can be very isolating. Even if you work outside the home, you just clock in your hours and then toddle off home.

Friendship is very important, so do pick up the phone and get to see one another. Eventually you *will* stop talking about your respective children and start to talk about yourselves.



# Editor's Jottings

A closer look at stories in the round...



## Focus on freedom destroying EU

EU leader Donald Tusk has been trying to create some level of stability in the EU as it faces a turbulent political and economic future.

He wanted to distinguish between "what is shallow and unimportant in European tradition and what is lasting, valuable, and unique — freedom of spirit."

Freedom was the central, almost the only, value he could see. "It is in culture and freedom that we will rediscover the essence of Europe," he said.

Political change was necessary, "on condition that it does not restrict freedom as a core value."

For him, "today's world is full of barbarians for whom freedom and culture, as we understand them, have become targets to attack." Against them we must defend "human freedom and civil rights".

### Deep crisis

What Tusk utterly failed to see is that this distorted vision, even without the help of barbarians, will doom Europe, will guarantee EU disintegration. With this kind of thinking at the top it is no surprise that the EU is in deep crisis.

Talk about "culture", "freedom", "rights" and "values" is just a desperate attempt to hide the emptiness at the heart of the secularist political and cultural ideal, an ideal devoid of vision and real hope.

Another fashionable but deceptive slogan is "dialogue". Whether in politics, ecumenism or culture, too often "dialogue" is conducted with no real aim, because nobody will ask what its purpose is.

What held Europe together for 17 centuries, despite many dreadful wars, was not a passion for freedom, but a respect and quest for truth.

This quest drew on both Christian revelation and on reason, recognised that life had a purpose beyond this life, and sought to know that purpose.

What we need today is a new commitment to truth. When it comes to the value and purpose of human life and the issue of how we should live, the truth is not hard to find.

It may not always be to our taste, but that does not make it less true. When Tusk and Co. begin once again to talk about truth, then we will know they are serious about our future and the future of the EU.



Donald Tusk

## Culture bids farewell to reality and reason

THE British Medical Association has told its staff that equality and being "inclusive" means they should not call pregnant women "mothers".

Officials at the UK doctors' union think that traditional ideas about the roles of men and women reflect "gender inequality".

Their new guidelines go on to say, "we can include intersex men and transmen who may get pregnant by saying 'pregnant people' instead of 'expectant mothers'."

Intersex men and transmen are women who consider themselves men or "identify" as men.

Even women's rights campaigners, however, think the BMA instruction is absurd. "As every doctor knows, only females can have children," said Laura Perrins. "To say otherwise is offensive and dangerous."

It's not necessary to be a doctor, however, to know that only females can have children.

Perrins added that it was



The Nazis regarded Jewish people as 'subhuman'.

"an example of the majority of women being insulted for a tiny minority of people."

But it is far worse than that. It is a refusal to accept reality. It is saying, in effect, "if reality does not fit in with my ideas, then reality is wrong."

How do we even begin to have a rational conversation with people who think like that? And there are many of them.

### 'Pro-choice'

Recently, for example, I spoke with a young "pro-choice" campaigner, a student in Trinity College.

She was very strong on what she considered to be women's rights, though it was not clear where she thought these rights might come from.

She did not accept that the growing baby in the womb was a human being, nor that

abortion involved killing that baby. It simply "terminated a pregnancy".

How could this otherwise kind-hearted and intelligent young woman campaign for such shocking cruelty and violence? Only by completely closing down her reason, hardening her heart and flatly denying reality.

Is this what a Trinity College education has come to?

For her, the unborn child was only a human being if the woman thought it was. So, if the mother didn't believe that her child was human, then it wasn't. And she wasn't an expectant mother, and ending its life was not killing.

The student stated that I would not change her mind. It seemed like she was saying there was no point in arguing from reality and reason. But what is left? Cynical manipulation of people's emotions? The might of the most powerful?

We need not leave Ireland to find the "post-truth" culture. But when some people are defined as "subhuman" the door is opened to barbarism, as recent European history shows.

## Behind conflicting views on Trump

FOR better or worse, the election of Donald Trump as US president has begun a new global era.

Hillary Clinton and the Democrats were very much part of the older era, and would have advanced its ideology, values, structures and agencies.

How people view Trump depends to a great extent on how they view that passing era. We need to remember this, especially when listening to angry commentators, as most of them were ardent fans of that era.

In other words, while Trump has said and done many obnoxious things in the past, and while some of his policies will merit sharp criticism, the issues which divide attitudes towards him are far more radical.

### Human Rights

In 1945 the era of the Cold War began, with the US and western nations on one side, the Communist bloc on the other and the Third World almost lost to sight.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in Paris in 1948, was an attempt to promote respect for human dignity and to provide a moral basis for peace in the world.

During this time the "arms race" and the threat of nuclear war dominated political debate, international relations and the general public's concern for safety and security.

Then came the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of Communism. A new era began, an era of freedom, democracy and peace based on human rights, open borders and



President Trump

economic development.

The vision of a global society came into its own. All peoples, including the poor, would share in it; dialogue between cultures and religions would ensure harmony; development was the way forward, consensus the ideal.

Not just the economy would be globalised. The new society would need a new global culture, based on a global ethic promoted and monitored by the UN.

A torrent of new jargon, words like autonomy, minority rights, diversity, NGOs, gender, governance, fair trade, awareness-raising, began to flood politics, the media and the general culture.

But at a series of UN conferences in the 1990s this new ethic was hijacked by cultural Marxists. They saw it as a global opportunity to impose their radical ideology.

The EU, a host of UN committees, and leftwing NGOs, many funded by US foundations, played a key role in infiltrating this new vision into society.

Everything was progressing nicely, until Brexit and Trump came along with a different agenda. And a new era began.

## RTE to 're-educate' staff into diversity

THE *Sunday Independent* reported that RTE is looking for an outside company to provide "diversity and inclusion awareness training" to its staff and management.

RTE refused to say what money has been set aside to pay for the project. But the training or therapy is to ensure that RTE "reflects the lives, experiences and stories of all the communities on the island."

"Diversity training" sounds very like the kind of Orwellian "re-education" that last century's communist bloc countries used on dissidents who didn't toe the party line.

It is one of the latest PC fads in the corporate world. As RTE says: "This type of training has been successfully used by other broadcasters who are leaders in this area."

But how is "success" measured here or what makes a broadcaster "a leader in this area"?

### Bunker

Perhaps RTE bosses are trying to tackle the narrow, absurd groupthink that prevails among so many of its editorial staff, to help them see that there is a big world outside their bunker.

The *New York Times* definitely sees itself as a media leader. But its chief editor Dean Baquet has admitted that America's media elites can't understand the vast majority of people in the US or the world.

"We don't get religion. We don't get the role of religion in people's lives," he said. "And I think we can do much, much better."

By and large the Irish media have the same problem, so if "diversity training" helps RTE staff to challenge their own narrow ideology it might be a good thing.





# The issues ignored by groupthinking media

■ Is it the first time ever? A journalist has remarked on the leftwing ideology that has ruled the higher levels of the Irish civil service for decades, shaping policies and deciding which groups get taxpayers' money.

David Quinn asked why the Labour Party leftwing agenda has so much influence in society, even when the party is not in power.

One reason, he wrote, is because "a lot of senior civil servants appear to support the 'Labour tendency'," (*Irish Independent* 27/01/17).

This was evident, for instance, "in the sort of groups which government departments fund and have friendly dealings with. They are frequently leftwing and never conservative."

Quinn noted that a great many lobby groups are leftwing and have many allies

## Media Watch

in government departments.

It was no accident, then, that Education Minister Richard Bruton "unveiled his plan to change the schools' admissions policy at a meeting of Equate."

Equate is "a left-wing pressure group with almost no real grass-roots support for its campaign against denominational schools."

What's really odd, however, is that the views expressed each week by Quinn (*Independent*) and Breda O'Brien (*Irish Times*) are rarely heard from other Irish journalists.

Using solid research and careful argument, they reveal important stories the rest of the media ignore.

Being so different to the usual media viewpoint, the two actually highlight the depth and extent of groupthink across the media, both in print and in RTE.

### 'Consultation process'

O'Brien too noted that Bruton announced his plan for a "consultation process" on admissions to faith schools at an event run by Equate.

This leftwing group, advised by Labour's Rúairí Quinn and funded by the One Foundation, campaigns for secularist education.

O'Brien hammered the media over their failure to ask any of the key questions raised by Bruton's announcement, made



Government buildings.

"while sitting at a table paid for by the One Foundation."

But the Minister knew that few journalists would challenge him, the media having become "cheerleaders for the well-funded and powerful."

Instead of tough media questions to the Minister "there was a predictable obliging chorus of 'End discrimination! Ban the baptismal barrier!'"

In fact, selection criteria

only apply in a tiny number of schools where too few places are available, due to bad planning. "But successive ministers have not been challenged on their lack of planning," remarked O'Brien.

Media cheerleading also implies that religious education is divisive, while secularist education is supposedly neutral. But there is no such thing as neutral education.

Opponents of faith-based education, she argued, "want a one-size-fits-all approach that will discriminate against people who want a religious ethos."

How is that neutral?, she asked, or in keeping with religious freedom.

In fact, the minister's proposals would actually reduce choice for the many parents for whom religion is not an issue.

To "combat slick, well-funded lobby groups who want to end denominational education," she advised, voters must make their views clear to their politicians:

That they want underfunding and overcrowding to be fixed, and what is working well, their local schools, to be protected.

### Second highest

Few in the media, noted O'Brien, have pointed out that primary class sizes here are the second-highest in Europe.

Or that faith schools "are highly valued and sought after elsewhere, including the UK, where Catholic schools in particular are recognised as academically excellent and socially and ethnically diverse."

Quinn too saw Bruton's proposals as "only the latest of a series of attacks on the rights of faith schools" by Labour and now Fine Gael.

For him, Fine Gael's agenda on social issues is now basically as liberal/left as that of Labour.

For example, it goes along with radical feminist Katherine Zappone's plans which "will discriminate heavily in favour of day care and against other child-care options, including care at home by a parent."

Zappone, said Quinn, "wants as many women as possible in the workplace, whether they like it or not, and that means children in day care."

Again, Fine Gael plans to hold a referendum to remove legal protection from unborn children.

With many journalists bombarding politicians with agenda-driven questions, "Fine Gael has found it easier to simply lie down and roll over rather than fight back."

But support for the leftwing social agenda prevails not only among senior civil servants, lobby groups and in the media.

"Many academics and lawyers too share the same worldview as the Labour party," said Quinn.

He saw no prospect of a pushback against the leftwing tendency under present political conditions. "Politicians either go along with it or are scared to stand up to it," he said.

O'Brien and Quinn have raised many crucial issues in their articles. Why are the rest of the media so silent about these issues?

## Building border walls in US and EU

■ Donald Trump's intention to build a wall along the US border with Mexico to keep out illegal immigrants has received massive media attention on this side of the Atlantic. And practically all of it has been disapproving.

Was this out of concern for the would-be migrants or was it just an excuse for an extra bit of Trump-bashing by the leftwing media?

If they are really so concerned about migrants, why have the media given so little attention to the EU's mighty wall-building project to defend its own borders. And why no outrage at that project?

Apart from the physical border walls that have been built in the EU (can you name the countries?) there is the multi-billion euro deal with



Turkey to keep migrants there rather than letting them cross into Europe.

Now EU leaders have agreed to cut a similar type deal with Libya to keep out migrants from Africa. Shiploads of money and equipment will be poured into the north African country so that it can build the EU barrier.

But why are the Irish and other EU

media not up in arms about this "wall"? Why so little attention to it? And where are the street protesters?

Enda Kenny wanted to stress that the migrants coming through Libya were not refugees from war-torn countries.

Italy's prime minister, he said, "made the point that of the 180,000 that had travelled last year to Italy, none of these were Libyans."

"So Libya is a country of transit and these are all economic migrants, which is a very different proposition from thousands and thousands of refugees," said Kenny.

But did no journalist think to ask him why it is wrong for Trump to build a wall to keep out "economic migrants", but it's ok for EU politicians to do the same?

## FILM Review

### Hunt for the Wilder People

- MGM Pictures
- Directed by Taike Waititi

Presented with a drama about a hostile youth, child welfare and fostering you'd probably assume you were facing into a sobering few hours. But this film takes a completely different approach.

Set in New Zealand, Ricky Baker (Julian Dennison) is an unwanted boy who has spent his entire life in care and has a long record of disobedience, petty theft and trouble.

The welfare services bring

him to be fostered by Bella (Rima Ta Wiata) and her husband Hec (Sam Neill). Hec is a gruff, grumpy farmer but Bella is warm, funny and sympathetic to Ricky as he tries to adapt to his new environment.

For the first time in his life, Ricky starts to feel at home and cared for. But this is tragically short-lived when Bella dies suddenly.

Expecting to be taken back into state-care, Ricky runs away into the bush that is

unfamiliar to him. The reluctant Hec goes after him but no sooner tracks him down than he has an accident, fracturing his foot.

### Mismatched souls

Now unable to traverse the wild forest, the two mismatched souls must camp out together for six weeks. Their problems only escalate when they return home to discover that the authorities are searching for them, believing that Hec has

abducted Ricky.

Sure that they will never be allowed to return home, the pair go on the run for real. For months the quirky duo evade welfare, police and bounty hunters and encounter other outsiders as eccentric as they are.

Eventually their escapades attract national media interest which makes their adventure all the more perilous but their bond all the stronger.

This strange movie han-



dles serious themes in a zany, unconventional way. But it is sensitive and intuitive, offbeat but charming, unsentimental yet full of heart.

It shows how families come in different shapes and can be formed at any time in any place.

• Warnings for language and adult references.



# COMMENT

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

## Can they learn?

Britain's exit from the EU will have massive economic, social and employment consequences for Ireland. And it is virtually impossible to see how the border will be anything but "hard".

Yet the EU has refused to begin even informal Brexit negotiations until the UK notifies it of its decision to leave the union. The Irish government under Enda Kenny has supported this position.

Here we have an example of our political elite kowtowing to Brussels rather than putting the interests of the Irish people first.

Indeed, the people have been completely excluded from any debate about the benefits of Ireland staying in the EU or leaving it. There is no Citizens' Assembly on this issue. Our political masters know best, as they did in Britain.

**Ireland's recent grovelling to a UN committee supposedly promoting human rights but actually abusing its power to advance an anti-family, anti-life, left-wing agenda is another example of establishment betrayal of the people.**

It is this kind of arrogance of the elites that led to the revolt of the masses in the US and now across Europe.

Marine Le Pen, expected to top the poll in the first round of France's presidential election, has said the old division of left-right is out of date; the division now is between patriots and globalists.

There is some truth in this. Growing numbers of people in Europe are no longer willing to let unelected officials in Brussels or at the UN make the decisions which have major impact on their lives and livelihood.

## Lobby groups

Here, as in the US, the media have sided with the political elites. And with the network of lobby groups funded by multi-billionaires to push their economic and social agendas.

President Trump has described the US media as "in many ways the opposition party... a big portion of the media, the dishonesty, total deceit and deception."

It was certainly extraordinary that almost the entire US media industry backed Hillary Clinton, despite her shocking record.

So Trump is far from alone in seeing the media as "the opposition party", as on the side of the political and corporate elites.

**In Ireland the politico-media establishment is not the opposition, it is in power, cut off from the people, disregarding their concerns and promoting the globalist ethic.**

Will it be able to learn from what has been happening elsewhere and change, or must we go through our own social-political revolt?

**Alive!**

## Feeding church reopens after attack

ONE of the Holy Land's most famous churches, the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish, has reopened after it was seriously damaged in an arson attack two years ago (right).

The attack on the church, built beside the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel, was blamed on Jewish extremists. A verse in Hebrew denouncing the worship of "false gods" was spraypainted on a wall at the church.

Israel's President Reuven Rivlin attended the reopening ceremony, in order to say "loud and clearly, that hate cannot win."

In recent years Jewish extremists have targeted mosques, churches and Israeli groups working for peace.



# Serious questions about Citizens' Assembly

**THE Citizens' Assembly is coming in for growing criticism from those concerned for the protection of human life, as it appears more and more to be a platform for promoting abortion in Ireland.**

The real story, it seems, is not what is happening before the cameras but the decisions being made behind the scenes and the unknown people making them.

They are the ones who decide, for example, who should address the Assembly and how the discussions should be framed.

At a recent meeting of the Assembly, for example, only one of the four contributors giving evidence respected the right to life of the unborn, whom he described as "total without power".

Responding to the line-up of speakers, prolife spokeswoman, Sinéad Slattery said it was "bizarre" that BPAS should be invited to make a presentation under the heading of "case studies" and

"care paths".

A leading abortion provider in Britain, she noted, it has campaigned against Ireland's protection for the unborn.

Slattery argued that fair play demanded that the closing two weekends focus almost exclusively on the achievements of the 8th Amendment in protecting human life and dignity.

"Otherwise," she said, "the entire process will be tainted and any recommendations coming from the Assembly will lack credibility."

## 'Pro-abortion rally'

Elphin's Bishop Kevin Doran believed that the Assembly meetings were "becoming more and more like a pro-abortion rally."

According to Sinn Féin TD Peadar Kirby, the outcome of the assembly is in "little doubt if it continues to stack sessions with pro-choice witnesses."

For Independent TD Mattie

McGrath the invitation to the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute was "misguided and profoundly problematic" and the Assembly now suffers from a "fatal lack of fairness".

Organisers were taken aback to receive more than 13,500 submissions from the public. Of these, 70% wanted to keep the 8th and just 28% would repeal it. All the written submissions backed the

Amendment.

Breda O'Brien, in the *Irish Times*, noted that Justice Mary Laffoy who chairs the Assembly, being a woman of principle, resigned from a Commission in the past because she could not carry out her work with integrity.

"In this matter of life and death, integrity was never more needed," commented O'Brien.

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## Saturday, 25th March, 2017

**Mass: 9pm-11pm** Conducted by Fr Freddie Warner, SMA & Fr. Bernard McGuckian, SJ

<p><u>9pm to 11pm</u></p> <p>Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction &amp; the Veneration of Precious Relic from the Holy House of Loreto</p>	<p><u>11pm Mass</u></p> <p>Celebrants: Fr Freddie Warner, SMA &amp; Fr. Bernard McGuckian, SJ</p> <p>Music by Una Nolan, Director of Music, Knock Shrine</p>
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**Vigil Intentions**

TO PRAY FOR THE WELLBEING OF POPE FRANCIS AND HIS INTENTIONS.

- TO CELEBRATE AND PRAY FOR THE GIFT OF LIFE FROM CONCEPTION TO NATURAL DEATH.
- TO PRAY FOR AN END TO PORNOGRAPHY AND THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND GIRLS FROM HUMAN TRAFFICKING.
- TO PRAY FOR VICTIMS OF ALL PSYCHOLOGICAL ILLNESSES

**Knock Shrine: (094) 9388100**  
**Dublin office: (01) 8733356**  
**Limerick office: (061) 419458**

ORGANISED BY THE APOSTOLATE OF ATONEMENT FOR MERCY



# SCRAPS

by Tom English .....



## Sing Street: just another anti-Catholic film?

FOLLOWING the rave reviews of the film *Sing Street*, I got the opportunity to watch it myself on Netflix. I could identify with the film as it is about a young man (Conor) growing up in the 1980s, particularly focusing on his time in a Christian Brothers' school and his home life.

The film captures the 1980 young music scene well with all the banter and romance thrown in. Unfortunately though, it is pock-marked with anti-Catholic clichés which ruin an otherwise heart-felt movie.

When Conor has to move to a 'lower-class' school because of the recession and the imminent break-up of his parents' marriage, his older brother Brendan makes a reference to be on his guard against the Christian Brothers who engage in the "systematic beating of their young charges". And when their father asked them what the school's Latin motto meant, the older son quips: "Let's rape our students".

Further on, Brendan tells his kid brother about their parents' relationship: "Two Catholics in a rented flat who just got married because they wanted to have sex - they didn't even love each other". So it's the Catholic Church to blame for their parents splitting up?

When Conor arrives at his new school, an old Christian Brother is drinking alcohol from a hip flask while he has his back to the class.

Another scene: when Conor goes to school with make-up on his face (like a Duran Duran band member), the Head Brother violently forces him to wash it off in the school toilet, but not before he (oddly) offers Conor to use the bathroom attached to his office to clean it off: "You can use my bathroom if you like. Come on in here". I wonder what the director was trying to infer here?

### Bullies

The final school scene shows the band mocking the Head Brother, referring to him as a bully, even though the biggest school bully is on stage with the band! Conor, with a rainbow-strapped guitar, shouts: "[This song] is for every Christian Brother and for every bully you ever knew". The message here seems to be - it's okay to forgive bullies just so long as they're not Christian Brothers.

The film is dedicated to 'older brothers'. But Conor's older brother is not exactly a good role model. He is a university drop-out who smokes hash in front of his family, including a younger sister. Is the Church to blame for this as well?

Now I know this is only a movie, but the reason why I mention these scenes is because my experience of school life with the Christian Brothers in the 1980s is so far removed from what is portrayed in *Sing Street*. The Brothers who taught in my school were dedicated men who loved teaching the lads and encouraged us in every way possible. Above all, they taught us to put God at the centre of our lives.

There were lay teachers then, however, who used violence to get their way but I don't think we'll see a movie about them now, will we?

I feel sorry for anybody who has had a bad experience with the Brothers in the past and this film may only confirm their memories and strengthen their prejudices and add a further nail in the coffin for 'bad old Catholic Ireland'.

But from somebody who was brought up in a non-religious household my personal memories of the Christian Brothers are very positive.

### Clarity is charity

■ As a result of their interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia*, the bishops of Malta have given the green light to divorced and civilly remarried Catholics in their dioceses to receive Communion if they are "at peace with God". One wonders if other bishops across the world will follow suit. But what will be done in one diocese may not be permitted in another. So we need clarity from Pope Francis.

In school, if a teacher explains a lesson that's vague, you put your hand up and ask for clarity, no? Or am I being too rigid? More on this next month.

scrapscolumn@gmail.com

## Pope: media must respect people's reputations

**POPE Francis has highlighted the media's responsibility to be truthful, given their power to form public opinion.**

"They are the builders of a society," said the Pope in an interview. "In and of themselves, they are made to build, to interchange, to fraternise, to make us think, to educate. In themselves they are positive."

But they can become harmful, he warned, since they are used by sinners.

"Disinformation is probably the greatest damage that the media can do, as opinion is guided in one direction, neglecting the other part of the truth," he said.

Faced with a particular situation, "they may say only a part of the truth, and not the rest. This is disinformation."

"Because you give only half the truth to the listener or the observer, therefore it is not possible to make a serious judgement."

He continued: "The media should be clear, transparent, and not fall prey to the sickness of always wanting to communicate scandal, to communicate ugly things, even though they may be true."

Another temptation is calumny, used "to slander, to sully people, especially in the world of politics."

Francis stressed that "every person has the right to a good reputation."

"Perhaps in their previous life, or ten years ago, they had a problem with justice, or a problem in their family life. Bringing this to light is serious and

harmful; it can annul a person."

The Pope distinguished between slander, telling a lie about a person, and defamation, "uncovering something that is true, but already in the past, and which has already been paid for with a jail sentence, a fine, or whatever."

There is no right to defame a person, he said, "it is a sin and it is harmful."

### Under Mary's protection

■ A Washington photographer spotted that one of Donald Trump's nominees for a key post in his cabinet was wearing socks with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe imprinted on them at his Senate confirmation hearing.

Ryan Zinke from Montana was being quizzed about his suitability for the job of Secretary of the Interior.

But *The Washington Post's* Melina Mara posted a photo on Instagram drawing attention to his socks.



Others have pointed out that Zinke is Lutheran, not a Catholic, and questioned whether his choice of socks had any religious significance for him. "Maybe he just liked the way it looked, who knows!," said one comment.

### WHAT

## GOD MEANS TO ME!

I grew up in Dublin in a good hard-working family. I had an older brother and a younger sister. When I was thirteen years of age, my family broke up and I had to move home. This left me very wounded.

I left school at fifteen with no education or trade. I began doing drugs and ended up addicted to many different types of drugs, looking for the secret of happiness. My journey of addiction would last for over fourteen years.

At first the drugs gave me confidence. After a while they became my God and I used them to escape from all my problems.

The first thing I would think of when I opened my eyes in the morning was how am I going to get drugs today. It was like oxygen, I could not function or communicate without them.

When I was taking heroin I did a lot of things that I now regret, and I ended up in prison a few times.

During this time, I met my girlfriend who also was an addict and in 1996 we started a methadone program for six years. We also had our first baby, a little girl who, to our shame, was born addicted to methadone.

Life on methadone was horrific, it was like being sedated all the time with no quality of life. After fourteen years of active addiction I was left a very broken person.

When I went to my doctor for help his only answer was to give me more and more medication and tablets. I was left very suicidal and I lost the will to live.

In so much physical mental and emotional pain, I felt the only answer would be to kill myself.

In 2002, however, my sister heard about a residential addiction treatment centre in Knock, County Mayo, called Community Cenacolo.

The Cenacolo way, shaped by the vision of the Italian nun, Mother Elvira, who founded it over 30 years ago, is one of recovery from addiction through prayer, work and friendship.

All 60 Cenacolo houses worldwide

have the same structure. No TV, newspapers, radio, internet or mobile phones.

The day starts at 6am and includes Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, working in pairs: tending animals, cutting firewood, preparing food, cleaning, building and maintenance.

There is time for music, football, etc, communal prayer and Scripture reading and the lads all eat together. The, day full of work and fresh air, is good for mind and soul.

There is no paid staff in Cenacolo and no charge for the people who join. Cenacolo gets no government funding or social welfare and relies purely on divine providence and the generosity of donors.

When they are in need of anything they pray for it. People just knock at the door with food and with clothes, and it's in these moments that you really see God working.

When I contacted the Cenacolo Community I had to attend an assessment meeting and do a few working days there before they would take me in. It took a bit of getting use to but I was willing to try anything to get my life back.

I started to pray the rosary with the lads and I got a great sense of peace from this. I remember the first time I got enough courage to call out a decade of the rosary in the chapel.

It was the first time I had heard the

tone of my voice in years with no drugs inside me but it was a big thing for me to push myself to do it.

Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament was new for me in Cenacolo. The lads opened the tabernacle and exposed the Blessed Sacrament three times a day when we prayed the three rosaries in the chapel.

Every time I shared a difficulty I was having the lads would say to me tell Jesus in the Tabernacle your difficulties. It took me a while to understand the true presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

But in moments of Adoration the overwhelming sense of peace love and healing I experienced was unreal. With the help of Cenacolo I learnt how to live a normal life again with the healing power of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Before Cenacolo my life was in total darkness. When I had a problem, I took drugs but now when life gets difficult I pray to the risen Jesus and his holy Mother for help and they have never let me down.

While I was in Cenacolo my girlfriend did a short detox in a Dublin detox centre and then we got married in 2005.

With the help of Cenacolo my wife and I are drug-free for over 14 years and we have been blessed with 10 children.

Every morning when I wake up I thank God for the gift of life and for all the beautiful people he has put in my life.



• Damien Richardson is studying to become an addiction counsellor.

● Community Cenacolo is free. It provides residential treatment for alcohol, drug and other addictions. Info from [communitycenacolo.ie](http://communitycenacolo.ie) or Tel: 09493 88286 or Jean 087- 2687040.



# THE THINGS THEY SAY...

## ● EU laws

The best estimate is that there are now at least 40,000 legal acts, 15,000 court verdicts and 62,000 international standards binding on us by virtue of EU membership.

— Dominic Grieve, barrister and Tory MP

## ● People bullied

It was not just a civilised debate that went on before the Brexit campaign. It was a serious amount of bullying of the public in Britain to stay in the EU, or else...

The people were bullied, the people didn't listen to them, people saw that the EU was in serious difficulties and they voted to regain control of their borders. And they were totally right.

It's very important to remember that Britain is in a much stronger position than



Laura Perrins

the rest of continental Europe.

Italy is basically bankrupt, Greece is bankrupt, Spain is bankrupt and when we are out of the EU the vast majority of people will see it is a great decision for Britain.

— Laura Perrins, *Question Time*, BBC

## ● Opposition

I think the media is the opposition party in many ways. I'm not talking about all of them, I know people in the media that I have tremendous respect for. But a big portion of the media, the dishonesty, total deceit and deception.

It makes them certainly partially the opposition party, absolutely. I think they're much more capable than the opposition party. The opposition party is losing badly. Now the media is on the opposition party's side.

And I actually said to myself, they treat me so unfairly it's hard to believe that I won. But the fortunate thing about me is I have a big voice, a voice that people understand. And you see it now. We're bringing back jobs.

— President Trump, interview on CBN (*Christian Broadcasting Network*).

## ● Trump talks to CBN

To be on par, if you will, with ABC and Fox News with Sean Hannity, it really gave me a sense that it was a new day in Washington D.C.

He had said all along that it was time to change the way his administration dealt with the media. And I think he was making good on that promise by having CBN News be a major part of the media equation...

If he's really serious about cutting through the clutter of the mainstream media, then he needs to be looking to talk directly to our type of audience.

My pitch was that we are an audience made up of 'deplorables' who call themselves proudly deplorable and these are the folks that

got Donald Trump elected president of the United States.

— David Brody, political correspondent at CBN.

## ● Bolshevik Revolution

It's been reported that Dublin City Council is to spend €30,000 of taxpayers' hard-earned cash commemorating the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

It seems an odd use of money given the fact that the local authority is always claiming to be cash-strapped.

But, money aside, it'll be interesting to see how the events that created the Soviet Union will be commemorated. Will, for example, focus be given to the tens of millions of people killed under communist rule?

Let's hope it doesn't descend into an historical nostalgia exercise lauding

the Bolshevik 'ideals'.

— Michael Kelly of Irish Catholic

## ● Heroic Streep?

Receiving an "Ally for Equality" award Meryl Streep once again congratulated herself on her courage in criticising Donald Trump. "It's embarrassing and terrifying to put the target on your forehead," she said.

But in the context, it is hard to give Streep points for bravery. Had she stood before the audience of LGBTQ activists and their progressive supporters to defend Trump, that would have shown courage.

Confirming the opinion of her listeners and portraying Trump's critics (including herself) as bold dissidents seems more like a profile in conformity.

— Jacob Sullum of Reason.com

## Lent: a time of grace for your family

Lent is a time for prayer, fasting and helping the poor (almsgiving). Let us, as a family, give God the best we can throughout the 40 days of Lent.

We all have our own personal relationship with Jesus but here I'd like to suggest a way that brings Lent into the family home.

It is up to each family, of course, to embrace Lent in the way that is most suitable and loving for its members. But it's important not to let this graced time pass by unnoticed.

One thing I do with my class to highlight Lent is to make a Lenten-Easter Wreath to hang on our door and at times place in our Sacred Space.

A Lenten-Easter Wreath helps the children to pray through Lent, just as an Advent wreath helps them pray through Advent and prepare for Christmas.

The wreath has violet, rose and red triangles and tree twigs on one side for Lent and bright coloured blooms on the reverse side for Easter.

**Making the Wreath:** Cut a large circle from a piece of white poster board and then cut a circle out of the centre of that to form the wreath.

Cut different shaped triangles from construction paper, in shades of violet, rose, and red, and glued the pieces all over the wreath (creating a mosaic look).

Glue on a few tree twigs here and there around the wreath. Cut blooms from

## Handing On The Faith

Aoife Hogan



Lenten Wreath



Easter Wreath

Spring-coloured construction paper and glued them to the other side of the wreath.

**As a family:** Place the wreath in your family Sacred Space, Lent side up. Around the outer edge of the wreath lay six tea-light candles. As a family you will gather round the wreath six times during Lent.

During the first gathering, explain that you will meet each week for prayer around the wreath to reflect and discuss its symbolism like this:

● The wreath is a circle that

reminds us of eternity and life everlasting, which is ours because of Jesus' death and Resurrection.

● The colour violet symbolises the acts of self-sacrifice we make during Lent in penance for our sins and in preparation to celebrate the Resurrection.

The priest wears violet vestments on Ash Wednesday and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Sundays of Lent.

● The rose colour symbolises the joy we experience as we anticipate the Resurrection. The priest wears rose vestments on the 4th Sunday of Lent.

● The colour red represents sacrifice, especially the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. The priest wears red vestments on Palm Sunday.

● The tree twigs represent the crown of thorns that was part of the suffering Jesus endured.

During the first week of Lent one tea-light is lit for your family prayer. Two tea-lights are lit during the second week of Lent, and so on.

On Easter Sunday, the Easter side of the wreath is displayed, surrounded with the six tea-lights, and one large white candle in the centre of the wreath.

With all the candles lit your family prayer focuses on Jesus, the Light of the World.



## JUST FOR PRIESTS

### How we celebrate Mass does matter

A wasp is a most extraordinary creature: although it is so tiny, it can eat, see, walk and fly. It can build a nest and reproduce. And it can sting.

Despite all our technological advances, the greatest man-made achievements come nowhere near the wonder of a wasp. And yet when one approaches us our reaction is to try to kill it.

Our capacity for wonder is remarkably limited, and is soon exhausted. Maybe that's the only way we can survive in such an extraordinary world.

Through his plan of salvation God has made our world even more wonderful than anything we could imagine. Could we ever even begin to appreciate the wonder of God sending his Son as our saviour?

But it is important that we keep some sense of wonder - this is what lets us see that life is worth living, and that the future is full of promise.



Central to wonder is the worship of God. In worship, in the readings and prayers of Mass, for example, we recall again and again the immense love of God for us, and we try to enter ever more deeply into that love.

But even here routine can set in very quickly. It may be God's word, but our minds are distracted by a host of concerns.

### Rattle off

As priests we may be addressing Almighty God, but we rattle off our words as if they meant little or nothing.

And if the priest at Mass acts like this, how much more difficult will it be for the congregation to stay focused on the wonderful events being celebrated.

Perhaps, then, we need to review from time to time, just how carefully and rev-

erently we as a community celebrate Mass.

Since the priest "sets the tone", we begin with ourselves. Do we prepare the books beforehand, so that there is no flicking through pages as we desperately search for the day's readings or the special preface?

Does the way we approach the altar indicate a sense of awe at what we are about to celebrate? Does it help to focus the congregation's attention on God?

Do we recite the prayers as though we are addressing the Father, and not simply reciting empty words?

Given the richness of the prayers we all need time to absorb what we are saying. So rushing the words is really not on.

The Gloria and the Creed are recited by the whole community, but too often each person is going at his or her own pace in a purely individualistic way.

The readings need to be prepared beforehand, not simply to check that there are no "big words", but to ensure the meaning of the text is correctly conveyed.

Being able to take part in Mass is the greatest privilege given to us in this life. We need to express that to ourselves and to others in the way we celebrate.



## Mass a Sacrifice

With the shortage of priests today, some parishes in Europe have begun to replace Mass, even on a Sunday, with a Eucharistic service led by a deacon or a lay person.

This service usually consists of the readings from the Mass, various hymns and prayers and the distribution of Holy Communion.

If it is reverently celebrated it may appear to some Catholics as more attractive than the Mass. Indeed, many would find it difficult to explain the difference between Mass and this kind of communion service.

This is not surprising, given that leading Catholic theologians like Rahner and Schillebeeckx, to mention the most famous, have been spreading a distorted understanding of the Mass over the past 60 years or so.

They have put an immense focus on the Eucharist as a community celebration designed to build up community. At the same time they have played down the sacrificial nature of the Mass, the fact that the Mass is a sacrifice.

For many of them the notion of sacrifice was too crude and too primitive for our sophisticated times.

Pope John Paul II, however, was alarmed by this development, and tried to correct it in his great encyclical letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*.

He wrote: "At times one encounters an extremely reductive understanding of the Eucharistic mystery. Stripped

### KNOW YOUR FAITH

of its sacrificial meaning, it is celebrated as if it were simply a fraternal banquet.

"Furthermore, the necessity of the ministerial priesthood, grounded in apostolic succession, is at times obscured and the sacramental nature of the Eucharist is reduced to its mere effectiveness as a form of proclamation" (No.10).

#### True nature

John Paul used the words "sacrifice" or "sacrificial" over 70 times in the letter, not to speak of other terms linked with sacrifice.

He was clearly concerned to refocus the Church's attention on the true nature of the Mass as a sacrifice, the sacrifice of Calvary.

His concern with "ministerial priesthood" was tied in with this. For Catholics a priest is a man who, in the person of Christ (in persona Christi), offers sacrifice.

Without the priest there can be no sacrifice. Without sacrifice there is no need for a priest - anyone can lead the communion service. Priest and sacrifice go together.

One important way to recover our understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass is by careful attention to the words of the Mass. Here we notice how frequently the theme of sacrifice is mentioned, indicating its importance.

## UK students are denied knowledge of religion

Having taught for 17 years, for the most part in Irish Catholic schools, working as an English teacher in a UK secular school has been an eye-opener.

What I see here in England, however, is not so much atheism as religious illiteracy, ignorance of basic Christian ideas and teachings.

A recent ComRes survey discovered that 10% of young Britons believe that Santa Claus makes an appearance at the birth of Jesus. It would be amusing, if it weren't so tragic.

The same pattern is emerging with older children in UK schools. Religious illiteracy is the norm in academies (the type of school in which I teach).

They deliver a type of mass-produced, insipid secular education which comes with its own brand of "brain-washing".

UK secularism is simply another type of indoctrination. It comes with State approval but leaves children with fewer educational choices.

What if you don't want to send your child to this type of school? You have religious freedom, right?

The British Humanist Association has a full-time worker vigorously campaigning to abolish all faith schools in the UK, not just for their own children but for everyone's.

The new atheism is no longer "live and let live". It is more about forcing others to live in the same way as themselves.

In fact, it's worryingly similar to the "religious oppression" against which many atheists claim to be taking a stand.

The majority of well-known atheists are individuals who received a religious upbringing. The majority of my British white pupils, on the other hand, have no exposure to any faith or reli-



### SPEAKER'S CORNER

By Maria Horan

gious vocabulary.

How can they make an educated decision on something when they have not been given the tools to do so?

Even atheist Richard Dawkins admits that it's far more sensible to have a decent knowledge of what exactly you are rejecting.

#### Atheists

Many of my students like to call themselves atheists, but they haven't thought enough about the existence or the absence of God to really believe this. Atheism has become for them a cover for "laziness".

A lack of abstract thinking and an unwillingness to engage with challenging subject matter damages their analytical skills and their ability to think outside the box.

On a practical level, it is very difficult for religiously illiterate students to really understand a lot of what they are being taught.

How do you teach Shakespeare, full of Christian references, to a class who knows nothing about the concepts of



heaven and hell?

How do you explain the historical elements of the Reformation to a group who don't understand Christian concepts?

One of my students knew so little about the Christian faith that he wasn't able to explain his own baptism. Another student discovered, by chance, that she had been baptised, but her mother had somehow forgotten to tell her.

She announced proudly that she was going to go to church that Sunday. In another class, when I mentioned the symbolism of the apple and its connections to the Garden of Eden in the Bible, a student stared at me, bewildered and asked: "Miss, what's the Bible?"

I'd love to say that these are rare incidences, but colleagues have experienced similar moments. If this is progress, could someone explain to me how?

So, many of my students don't know what the Bible is and have only a vague notion of Adam and Eve.

Perhaps Dawkins and like-minded atheists would care to explain how on earth I am going to teach these same students to read, let alone analyse "Frankenstein".

Yet this is the obligatory pre-20th century novel that they must study in order to pass their GCSE English literature exam.

Or perhaps some of the Irish politicians who believe that time could be better used on literacy instead of RE might have some tips.

But wait. A major reason why my students struggle with their textual literacy is due to their religious illiteracy. Oh dear...

• Maria Horan is a teacher of English, writer and novelist.

## Monthly Meditation

### Misshapen vessel

For many people today, Christianity, with its claim to be true, seems to be particularly blind to the limits of all our knowledge concerning what is divine.

It is characterised by an especially foolish fanaticism, so that it cannot be taught and insists on saying that the bit [of the elephant] it has felt in its own experience is the whole thing...

And yet, someone who is born blind knows that he was not born to be blind and therefore will not cease to ask why he is blind and to seek a way out of his blindness.

Likewise, man's resignation to the verdict that, when it comes to what is essential, that on which his life ultimately depends, he was born blind is merely apparent.

The titanic attempt to take possession of the whole world, to get from our life and for our life whatever might be possible, shows that man is not content with that verdict.

For if he does not know whence he comes and whither he is going, then is he not, in all his being, just a mis-shapen vessel?

The apparent composure of the farewell to truth about God and about the essential nature of our selves, the seeming content at no longer having to bother about this, is deceptive.

Man cannot come to terms with being born blind, and remaining blind, where essential things are concerned. The farewell to truth can never be final.

— Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)

## Final message of Amos: hope

### The Prophets, Part 27.

The last hands to edit the Book of Amos and much of the Old Testament were those of Judaism after the exile (587 B.C.). The book's present form came from these circles. The result is a message of hope.

The Lord will shake Israel like a sieve but everything of value will remain. The Lord will raise up the fallen house of David:

"I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall upon the earth ... In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old" (9:9-11).

Indeed hope that looks to the Messiah is the final



Fr Joseph Briody

message of Amos. The house of David will be raised up again and the mountains will flow with wine.

Abundance of wine was a sign associated with the coming of the Messiah. This is why the account of the Wedding at Cana is so powerful. The jars of wine are a sign that Jesus is the awaited Messiah.

"Behold, the days are coming ... when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.

"I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined

cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit... (Amos 9:13-15).

#### Challenging

Amos is challenging. He foretells inevitable destruction because things have gone too far. The message of hope is part of the message of destruction (9:8-10).

The message of Amos is to "seek the Lord whose word Amos proclaimed" (Tarazi). He speaks most to those

who "hunger and thirst for hearing the words of the Lord..." (8:11-12).

Only these can find in it the word of salvation. Those who feel comfortable and secure in reading Amos are in danger (9:10).

The Lord did ultimately strike down his people (5:16-17). Yet this word of condemnation offers an alternative: "Seek the Lord and live..." It may be that he will be gracious (5:6, 14-15).

It gives us hope. And we can be grateful for the hope inserted later into the book of Amos under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to complete the message the Lord wants us to hear through Amos.

God swears by his holiness: what is prophesied must come to pass and does (4:2).







# Celebrating the Wonder of Marriage

## Now wish they could turn back the clock

Research in the past has shown that couples who remain together despite being unhappy in their marriage are at least as likely to work through their difficulties and end up happy together as those who divorce and remarry.

They are also less likely to cause untold pain and emotional and psychological damage to their children and to other members of their families.

Now dozens of people have taken to the "secret-sharing" website, Whisper, to admit that their decision to divorce was a mistake and that they wish they could turn back the clock.

The reasons for regret varied greatly, from a divorced woman's discovery that "being single is so hard!" to a man who discovered too late that it was himself he was unhappy with, not his wife.

"I regret divorcing my husband everyday. It's too late to turn back," wrote one woman. Another recognised that she had made "a life-altering mistake". Even though it's too late, she wrote, "I realise now I love him. I miss him everyday and know that what we had, I cannot have with any other man."

Another, blaming Karma for her decision, wrote, "I regret divorcing my ex husband for the man I am married to now."

The realisation that the replacement man did not measure up was echoed by a woman who wrote: "I don't think I will ever be happy again. I truly regret divorcing my first husband. I wish I could go back and work it out."

A soldier told how he was still in love with his ex wife and was sorry he divorced her "after she cheated on me while I was deployed."

### Lasting impact

The devastating and lasting impact of divorce on children is becoming ever more evident both in life and in research, but it did not receive much attention. A mother, however, told how she was married for 9 years and got divorced on 28/12/10 when their daughter was 7. "I hate my lying, cheating, selfish ex husband," she wrote. "But I regret divorcing him because it majorly affected our daughter."

One person seemed to be reaching out to his or her ex, writing: "I now realise that we had something special and I didn't see it until now after my divorce. I truly regret not seeing it sooner. You know who you are. I'm C.M. and you are C.J."

Others told how they were on the brink of divorce but were glad they pulled back, helped perhaps by a book, a pet or by cooking together.

"After nearly divorcing because we both committed affairs, God saved our marriage. We've never been happier," wrote one couple.

A woman wrote: "I cried myself to sleep for months when I found out I was pregnant with baby no.3 because my marriage was on the brink of divorce. That baby is the joyful glue that brought our family back together."

Another person was going through a rough time in their marriage and was close to divorce. "I turned to Whisper to vent," they said.



"Someone recommended reading a book, *The Love Dare*. Thank you, it's helped me so much."

*The Love Dare*, by Alex and Stephen Kendrick, is a Christian advice book for married couples who want to strengthen their union.

Used in the storyline for the 2008 film, *Fireproof*, it has sold over 3.5 million copies and been translated into over 20 languages.

The book is, in fact, a 40-day programme with each day's devotion including a passage from Scripture, a statement of principle such as "Love is patient".

There is also a daily "dare". The first dare, for example, says: "Although love is communicated in a number of ways, our words often reflect the condition of our heart."

"For the next day, resolve to demonstrate patience and to say nothing negative to your spouse at all. If the temptation arises, choose to not say anything. It's better to hold your tongue than to say something you'll regret."

The testimonies on Whisper are a sad warning to unhappy couples that divorce may not bring them the happiness they hope for, but rather leave them with a sense of loss and grief.

## Our Marriage in a Minute!

### 1. Love at first sight?

Maybe not love but we have been together since the very first time we saw each other.

### 2. Favourite memory of our wedding?

Our favourite memory from our wedding was the beautiful medieval church in Rome where we got married and the wonderful ceremony from the first minute to the last.

But I have to add a funny memory which is when Tommy had confession before the ceremony but the priest accidentally left his microphone on and the whole congregation heard his confession.

### 3. Best holiday ever?

We went to Paris 3 years after we got married without the children which was our first real time alone since we got married and it was very relaxing and romantic and Paris is a beautiful city.

### 4. Who makes the breakfast?

We have breakfast at different times and we both eat different stuff so we end up making our own.

### 5. Who takes out the bins?

I fill them all week and then Tommy takes them out once a week and thinks he is the boss.

### 6. Song of songs?

Oxford Comma, Vampire Weekend and Mardi bum, Arctic Monkeys



Tommy and Fedi Swift

### 7. Saints on speed dial? (favourite saints)

St John Paul II. He kissed me on the forehead when I was a baby and Tommy's favourite is St Joseph the father, husband and worker.

### 8. Greatest joint achievement?

Our three lovely children, Riccardo, Leonardo and Susanna.

### 9. Best advice on marriage?

Two important factors in marriage are love and sacrifice. A shared view that the marriage takes constant attention and work and I would also add: Never go to sleep on an argument.

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

Having someone to depend on for the rest of your life, someone with the same goals as yourself and having that feeling of safety, friendship and trust.

## UK is family break-up capital of the world

New figures released by the Marriage Foundation have shown that Britain is now top of the list for family break-up in the developed world.

One third of marriages in the UK disintegrate even before the children reach their teens.

When couples are living together without being married the break-up rate is even worse, soaring to 60%.

The result is devastation for tens of millions of young children, with the destructive impact of the break-up often continuing to harm them in many ways right through their lives.

Sir Paul Coleridge of the Marriage Foundation asked, "How many more surveys and reports do we need before the Government puts this problem at the very top of the social justice agenda?"

He described the latest figures as "a loud wake-up call that there is a family breakdown epidemic in the UK."

The findings were based on an international review of studies conducted by leading academics and involving thousands of families in more than 20 countries.

Only a few poor countries in South America and southern Africa had higher rates of family break-up than Britain.

### Scourge

Family disintegration is now a major scourge in Ireland too. But neither politicians nor the media want to know, often because it is too close to the bone for themselves.

As a result, the impact of marriage and family breakup on children is receiving far less attention than it

deserves.

Surely this should be a top priority for the Minister for Children, Katherine Zappone. But she has yet to make any child-centred statement on the issue.

Meantime, in England the Court of Appeal has rejected a woman's demand for a bigger divorce settlement after she argued that she could no longer afford the lifestyle the couple were accustomed to in marriage.

Her argument, said her barrister, was, "why should I be relegated to a house that's far inferior to that which I lived in during the marriage and that which I had before the marriage?"

The case was a reminder of another aspect of family breakup that receives little attention - the harmful impact on the living standards of all who are involved, not least the children.



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**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. PJ, SAR, An, PF. 1496338.

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**MEDJUGORJE** departures, 7 nights, on 14 June and 6 Sept. Contact Phyllis Mulligan 042 9336705.

**MEDJUGORJE** pilgrimage. Eleanor Healy Group. Easter week. Ex Dublin. Contact 086 8650708 or 087 2351294.

**PILGRIMAGE** to Medjugorje Easter Sunday April 16, Fr. Johnny Cusack; Sept 6, Fr. Paul Casey; May 17 to Fatima, Fr. Dan Sheridan. Tel: 049 4336291 or 087 2549960.

**LOURDES**. 4-10 Aug, (6 nights) ex Cork airport. Sp. Dir. Fr. Bernard Hughes. Group leader Mrs Breda Fleming (Innishannon, Cork). Contact Premier Travel, Cork Tel: 021 4277700 or Breda Fleming 085 8118089.

**MEDJUGORJE** June 28, ex Belfast, €699/£619. Sp. Dir. Fr. Jonathan Flood. Contact Rose Boyle 085 2849034.

**MEDJUGORJE** pilgrimage Sept 20, 7 nights, ex Cork, to Mostar Airport. JWT Lic. No. TO 052. Contact Joan 087 9688233.

**MEDJUGORJE**. 6-13 Sept. Departing Shannon. John O'Brien. 086 8586304.

**PILGRIMAGE** to San Giovanni, Loreto and the Adriatic Coast. September 15-22. Daytime flight from Dublin. All dinners (with drinks) and some lunches included. Full itinerary. €995, all inclusive. Tel: Mary 087 1247669.

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**MIR** Ministries presents Weekend of Praise, Worship and Healing. Guest speaker: Maria Vadia, Sat 11th March and Sun 12th March, Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork. Further details: Celia 087 2405568.

**CATHOLIC** Bible teaching with Br Johnson Sequeira. www.jcilm.info. 18th March (Sat), 10.30am-6.00pm, 19th March (Sun), 2.00pm-6.00pm: Church of the Assumption, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Tuesday March 21st, 6-9.30pm: Leahy's Farm Dungourney. Wednesday March 22nd, 10.30am-4pm: Glounthaune Parish Hall. Thursday March 23rd, 11am-9pm: Treacy's Hotel Waterford. Friday March 24th, 10am-1pm: Leahy's Farm Dungourney. Saturday March 25th 10.30am-7pm: Mitchelstown Parish Hall. Sunday March 26th 11am-9pm: Glounthaune. Further details from Chris 085 2392207.

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**DIVINE** Mercy Sunday, 23 April, 2017, at Castleknock Parish, Dublin. Our Lady Mother of the Church. Starts at 3pm and concludes with Mass at 6pm. All are welcome.

**PREPARE** yourself and your family for the World Meeting of Families by reading and promoting *A Nest of Saints*, the truly inspiring story of Sts Louis and Zélie Martin, parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux. €2.50 per copy including p&p; 6 copies for €10 postfree. From Alive!, St Mary's Priory, Tallaght, Dublin 24. Tel: 01-4048187.

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**SPECIAL** thanks to the Sacred Heart for favours received. LT.

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## Please take part in 40 Days for Life

**Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday, 4th March to 15th April**

- Prayer • Fasting • Outreach and peaceful public witness at an abortion referral centre, Berkeley Road, Dublin.

No previous experience necessary.

You will always be with trained volunteers. You just have to stand and pray for even one hour this Lent. You can make a difference. You may save a baby's life and a mother and her family from the trauma of abortion.

23 countries are taking part in this campaign which has the prayer support and encouragement of Pope Francis.

**Contact Ann 087-0544882; Oonagh 086-3374920; Kathleen 087-7030236. www.40daysforlife.com.**



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# KIDS' CORNER



**Dia dhaoibh, a Pháistí,**  
If you don't already know the Angelus by heart, this is a very good month to learn this lovely prayer. In it we remember the wonderful event that happened on 25th March more than 2000 years ago. That day the angel Gabriel appeared to Our Lady and invited her to be the mother of Jesus, to bring God's Son into the world. This was a huge shock for Mary, but if God wanted it, she would definitely not say no. "And the Word was made flesh" says St Luke in his gospel. In other words, Jesus was conceived in his mother's womb at that moment; his life began, and exactly nine months later, on 25th December, he would be born. This was so wonderful that we remember it every day. We call this prayer the Angelus from its first words: "The angel of the Lord". Angelus is the Latin for angel. Don't forget, Lent is a time for doing some penance, like not eating sweets, each day. Slán go fóill,  
..... *Aisling*

**Sudoku**  
The numbers 1 to 9 should be in each box and in each line across and each line down. It is not as difficult as it looks.

3	1	7						
	2	9	6		4	7		8
		8	7		3			
2			1	6	9			
			3	5	8			7
			4		5	8		
7		5	8		1	9	2	
						3	1	5

**Who am I?**  
Here is a puzzle to keep you thinking for a while. Teresa's daughter is my daughter's mother, so what way am I related to Teresa? Tick the correct answer: grandmother, mother, daughter, granddaughter, I am Teresa.  
**Answer:**  
..... I am Teresa's daughter.

**167 COLOURING PICTURE - WIN €10**



Name.....  
.....  
Address.....  
.....  
.....  
.....Age.....

**Last Month's Colouring Picture Winner was:**  
Katie Harding,  
Iona Park, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.  
Age 6.

**Feb. X-word Winner:**  
Ena O'Rourke,  
Walkinstown Road,  
Dublin 12.  
**Solution to Feb. Crossword:**  
**Across:** 1. Masquerade 8. Ulysses 9. Adare 10. Upon 11. Snip 12. Tat 14. Toecap 15. Larder 18. Net 20. Noun 21. Ante 23. Aroma 24. Nankeen 25. Saint Peter.  
**Down:** 1. Maypole 2. Sash 3. Unsung 4. Reappear 5. Draft 6. Augustinian 7. Letterkenny 13. Maintain 16. Dunleer 17. Turnip 19. Thora 22. Gnat.

**Prize Crossword...No.210**

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

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
8						9						
10								11				
12						13			14			15
								16				
17		18						19		20		21
22									23			
24								25				

- ACROSS**

  - 1. Sees aid destroyed on the beach (7)
  - 5. Steal to return automaton (5)
  - 8. Number of a crowd? (5)
  - 9. Rules ie. for free time (7)
  - 10. Subjugate as regards the media (7)
  - 11. Smaller picture on TV? (5)
  - 12. A toy to play with - a car, for example (6)
  - 14. It's clever to smash statue (6)
  - 17. Am I to leave Spanish friend? (5)
  - 19. A Delight from the Middle East? (7)
  - 22. A more slender white spirit? (7)
  - 23. Knock down storey (5)
  - 24. Dirge about a mountain range (5)
  - 25. Job he gets as a deliverer (7)
- DOWN**

  - 1. Sr. Ita breaks instrument (5)
  - 2. A prize causing one to become emaciated (7)
  - 3. Girl returning from Tenerife (5)
  - 4. Listen somehow to join the army (6)
  - 5. Get dried fruit when rain is moving south (7)
  - 6. Football team have depression? (5)
  - 7. Where there might be a hospital drama? (7)
  - 12. A person who raises a glass for this kitchen utensil (7)
  - 13. Rout proves counter-productive? (7)
  - 15. Same outfit (7)
  - 16. Sir put out to incite trouble (4,2)
  - 18. Homer's poem from 151 AD? (5)
  - 20. Sounds like these musical pieces cause disharmony (5)
  - 21. Brave man goes north for bird! (5)

Name.....  
Address.....  
.....  
.....  
Telephone.....

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

**Lives of the Saints**

**Dorothy Day**



● **Part 4: Early faith**  
**T**he Day family now lived in relative poverty but eventually were able to move to a better house on the North Side of Chicago. One day the Episcopalian rector called to the family. As Dorothy's mother had been baptised in that denomination, he persuaded her to let the boys join the church choir. They did, and eventually all the children were baptised and confirmed.

Dorothy went to the local high school and through her early adolescence her faith grew deeper. "All those years I believed. I had faith. The argument of authority, of conscience, of creation - I felt the validity of these. It is hard to see how I could fling my convictions from me a few years later; it is hard to understand unless it was because of the turbulent life that was in me." In her school years Dorothy worked hard and read a lot, including Dickens, Tolstoy and

Dostoyevsky. In these years revolution was fermenting in Russia - and like the writers she loved, her sympathies were with the oppressed. On 4th May 1886, ten years before Dorothy was born, a protest was held in Haymarket Square in Chicago. It was organised by the anarchist community to protest the killing and wounding of several workers by police the previous day. **Haymarket Affair** A riot ensued. Known as the Haymarket Affair, it and the movement behind it fascinated Dorothy. It drew her towards the social activism which would eventually characterise her whole life. She also read *The Jungle*,

Upton Sinclair's dramatic story exposing the brutal conditions in Chicago's stockyards at the turn of the century. "The fact that *The Jungle* was about Chicago where I lived, whose streets I walked, made me feel that from then on my life was to be linked to theirs, their interests were to be mine; I had received a call, a vocation, a direction to my life. "I felt that even at fifteen, God meant man to be happy, that He meant to provide him with what he needed to maintain life in order to be happy, and that we did not need to have quite so much destitution and misery as I saw all around and read of in the daily press." As this conviction grew, so also did her sense of the contradic-

tions between what she saw in the lives of Christians around her and the teachings of Christ. "Children", she wrote later, "look at things very directly and simply. I did not see anyone taking off his coat and giving it to the poor. I didn't see anyone having a banquet and calling in the lame, the halt and the blind. And those who were doing it, like the Salvation Army, did not appeal to me." Dorothy won a scholarship to the University of Illinois, and one of the first things she did on arriving there was to join the Socialist Party. For some years this would put her on a path, sometimes violent, which was very different from the one which might have been imagined earlier in her life.



# Survey: many couples have fewer children than they would like

IN AN ironic twist to the "right to choose" ideology, *The Economist* has drawn attention to "a growing problem" across the globe, the fact that many couples in many countries have smaller families than they would like to have.

The Greek people, for example, believed that on average the ideal family would contain 2.6 children but they expected that the average number of children per couple would be 1.7.

"The pain of having no or fewer children than you desire is often extreme," said an editorial in the magazine. "It can cause depression, and in poor countries it can be a social catastrophe."

It added: "For more and more couples, the greatest source of anguish is that they have fewer children than they want, or none at all."

The magazine conducted a survey in 19 countries, asking

people how many children they would like and how many they expected to have.

"In every rich country we surveyed, couples expect to be less fertile than they would like, and many in developing countries suffer the same sorrow," it reported.

## Money

The main reason given for the lack of children was money, but the kind of lifestyle desired by couples might have been more accurate.

"From Brooklyn to Beijing, the cost of housing and education is so high that many young people say they cannot afford as many children

as they want," said the report.

Medical infertility is also a major part of the problem, with couples in rich countries delaying having children until late in their thirties. In poor countries inadequate health care is a problem.

By one estimate, at least 48m couples globally have been trying for a child for the past five years but without success, up from 42m in 1990.

Sources of the problem not mentioned by *The Economist* include sexual infections due to promiscuity and the lasting damage caused by prolonged use of chemical contraception.

These drugs are designed to poison women's bodies and cause them to malfunction.

In its recommendations, however, the editorial did

stress the importance of education "both to warn women about how fertility declines with age and, especially in Africa, about preventable infections such as chlamydia and gonorrhoea."

Noting that family planning "has come to mean family restriction," it argued that it ought to mean helping people to have as many children as they want.

## RTE mockery of Eucharist

■ RTE was sent more than 900 complaints from Laois, Carlow and Kildare alone in response to the recent mockery of the Blessed Eucharist by presenter Ryan Tubridy and his Late Late Show guests, according to the *Irish Catholic*.

# A dreamer? Certainly not!

Dear Nettles,

**Dumbag writes..!**

**Letters from a Master to a Trainee Tempter**

When a 16-year-old boy, captured by a band of pirates, arrived as a slave in Ireland about the year 400 it was of interest to

no one down here except the demon charged with setting him on the right path, if you know what I mean.

First of all, the guy, he called himself Patricius, had little education. And sheep minder was not exactly the kind of thing anyone would put on his CV.

Back home he had been baptised as a Catholic but had already fallen away from the practice of the faith. And where he was going he wasn't likely to meet anyone who would bring him back.

With the Church being torn apart for decades by arguments over who Jesus Christ really was, we had more to focus on than an ignorant teenager.

But it turned out that there was a lot more to this slave than met the eye. Uneducated he was; stupid he was not.

In a kind of solitary confinement he began to reflect on his life, short as it was so far. But he did think about the way he had been brought up. And that meant thinking about his faith.

Whether it was due to a happy childhood or to heavenly grace, he, who had every reason for anger and deep bitterness, set off on a totally different path.

## Great joy

Jesus would be the great joy of his life. As he struggled to recall all he had been told about the Lord his heart began to take fire.

He tells us a bit about it in the book, *The Confessio*, which he wrote when an old man, to give glory for all the blessings he had received throughout his life.

"After I arrived in Ireland, I tended sheep every day," he writes, "and I prayed frequently during the day. More and more the love of God increased, and my sense of awe before God." Note that, his "sense of awe" before God.

Then he goes on: "Faith grew, and my spirit was moved, so that in one day I would pray up to one hundred times, and at night perhaps the same." At night the same? This guy still wasn't twenty, for hell's sake.

He continues: "I would rise to pray before dawn in snow and ice and rain. I never felt the worse for it, and I never felt lazy. As I realise now, the Spirit was burning in me at that time." It sure was.

In his early twenties he escaped from Ireland, guided by voices that came to him as he slept. You can read the details yourself in his *Confessio*.

What, however, would he do with his new freedom? The world was his oyster once again. He had a lot of catching up to do on its delights and opportunities.

But he wasn't interested. He was, in fact, hooked on Jesus. He would serve him as a priest. Then the voice again, and he woke up knowing his life's work.

Who would believe that one man, with such an appalling start, could have had such an impact on virtually the whole world? Awesome!

Yours dejectedly,

*Dumbag*

Celebrating 300 Years of Fatima Apparitions 2017

**MERCY KNOCK**

Mercy Sunday  
April 23rd 2017  
7.15pm

Concelebrated with the  
Cardinal Bishop of Dublin  
His Beatitude  
Cardinal Eamon Martin, DD

Co-celebrants:  
Bishop of Dublin, His Grace  
Bishop of Clogher, His Grace  
Bishop of Down, His Grace  
Bishop of Ely, His Grace  
Bishop of Exeter, His Grace  
Bishop of Hereford, His Grace  
Bishop of Llandaff, His Grace  
Bishop of London, His Grace  
Bishop of Norwich, His Grace  
Bishop of Oxford, His Grace  
Bishop of Salisbury, His Grace  
Bishop of Southwark, His Grace  
Bishop of Truro, His Grace  
Bishop of Winchester, His Grace  
Bishop of Worcester, His Grace  
Bishop of York, His Grace

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Book of Gospels: £2.00  
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The appeal of Our Lady of Fatima**

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