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CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Kevin O’Gorman
SYNODALITY –
A Theological Glossary

Priscilla Fitzpatrick
Families at the Centre:
The Spirituality of the Home

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The Furrow

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Novate vobis novale
Et nolite serere super spinas.
Yours to drive a new furrow,
Nor sow any longer among the briers.

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SYNODALITY

– *A Theological Glossary*

Kevin O’Gorman

The word *Synodality* is made up of ten letters. The following is an attempt to state something of the purpose and process of the synodality that is being pursued at present from Pope Francis to the frontiers of the church which are not fixed geographically but flow from hope in the saying of Jesus, ‘For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them’ (Matt 18:20). Commenting on the ‘Christian reworking’ of the *skekinah* (the divine presence)’ here John P. Meier states: ‘The church gathers around the person and words of Jesus. The divine presence it experiences in such worship is none other than Jesus himself, Emmanuel, God-with-us, who has promised to be with his people always. Obviously it is the risen Jesus who speaks in v.20 to his church’.¹ Moreover, this verse is preceded by the solemn statement by Jesus, ‘Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven’. The dovetailing of divine presence and providence here deepens the designation of *Matthew* as the ‘Gospel of the Church’.

While this attempt at analysing *synodality* does not approach the systematic statement of John Thornhill’s ‘The Structuring Principles of Particular Theologies’, it is aided by his assertion that it is ‘from the way in which reflection upon the Christ-event has been structured and this will usually come from some aspect of the Christian mystery which captures the attention of the theologian’.² The principles that proceed from these ten letters are more like *signposts* than structures, pointers to the pathway being pursued by and in the church, signposts for the journey which may overlap on occasion. This pathway is best seen in the shape of a spiral rather than a linear pattern, as theology very often walks and works on

1 *Matthew* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1983), 206.

2 See ‘Chapter Eleven’ in John Thornhill, S.M., *Christian Mystery in the Secular Age – The Foundation and Task of Theology*, (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, Inc.: 1991), 165 – 221, here 165.

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well-trodden ground. This perspective is supported by Karl Barth's statement that 'in its perception, meditation, and discussion, theology must have the character of a living *procession*'.³

Moreover, as well as the outer journey from place to place there is also the *inner* journey undertaken by the participants and understood as continual conversion. This is a commitment to what Joseph Ratzinger (Pope emeritus Benedict XVI) calls 'a process that affects one's entire existence – and one's existence entirely, that is, to the full extent of its temporal span – and that requires far more than just a single or even a repeated act of thinking, feeling or willing'.⁴ It is the task of moral theology to develop the parameters and practical demands of this process, dovetailing the (moral) human drive to goodness and the (divine) draw to holiness in and by the Holy Spirit. Not exhaustive, these *ten* principles express ethical and ecclesial, evangelical and eschatological elements that are essential to both entering into and evaluating to some extent this endeavour. Thus, the theological perspective presented here is necessarily provisional because, as Karl Adam pointed out, 'theology is always on the way to Christ.'⁵

SACRAMENTAL

Starting positions can be contested places where one person or group seeks an advantage, conferring a sense of superiority that reflects a relationship of power among participants perceived as opponents. In the political sphere governments generally get the opportunity to fix the date of the next election, depending on opinion polls and focus groups that give the green light to go to the country in the hope of retaining office. While pole position may be the preserve of only a few in the sporting sphere (usually achieved through a preceding contest), the desire for a level playing field from the offset may be down to the luck of the draw. Happily the church does not have to depend on either competition or chance but draws on the grace of the Holy Spirit to galvanize the goodness and generosity of all its members. The challenge for the church in setting out on (and sustaining) a *synodal* pathway is primarily a call of realising its identity first and foremost as a sacramental people. Moreover, the importance of sacramental identity and involvement is highlighted in the wake of isolation incurred in the course of the global Covid-19 pandemic. This experience (endured

3 *Evangelical Theology – An Introduction*, (London: Collins Fontana, 1965), 15.

4 *Principles of Catholic Theology – Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 55.

5 Quoted in Robert A. Krieg, *Karl Adam: Catholicism in Catholic Culture*, (Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press: 1992), 153.

by many) emphasises the need to entwine belief and being together, as expressed by Michael Drumm:

During Christian sacramental worship, we need to foster a sense in which people are consciously present to one another in a way that doesn't happen on a train or in a supermarket or in a traffic jam or at a bar. The liturgical assembly must be retrieved from the clutches of an all too private form of piety ... The church gathering must be different in creating a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. The church does not exist primarily for the spiritual comfort of individuals but rather to build a community that witnesses to the values of the Reign of God that Jesus preached.⁶

On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord this year, prior to the commencement of a ceremony of baptism, Pope Francis told the parents present 'Do not forget: your children will receive Christian identity and your task will be to guard their Christian identity'.⁷ On the same day, at his installation as Archbishop of Tuam, Francis Duffy stated that the future of the church was 'part of the baptism call of every person, not just clergy or religious but of all the baptised'.⁸ Given this baptismal basis of belonging to the church it behoves those who bear the badge of belief in Jesus Christ and his Gospel of God's Kingdom to behave in a certain manner, brought out by Matthew in the following scene. After rejecting the appeal of 'the mother of the sons of Zebedee [who] came to him with her sons' seeking a favourable appointment for them Jesus asks, 'Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' (Matt 20:22). In response to the reaction of the other ten disciples, who fear that the two brothers have stolen a march on them, Jesus reiterates a standard of *service* rather than the stance of superiority seen among 'the rulers of the Gentiles'. While the NRSV is aspirational here, 'It will not be so among you', the New Revised Jerusalem Bible is authoritative, 'Among you this is not to happen' (20:26). A sacramental people on its synodal way sets the scene for the following to be expressed and explored.

YEARNING(S)

While 'yearning' is not a word heard or seen frequently individual examples are illustrative of its import and impact. On the eve of

6 'From Ballybeg to London: Worship and Sacrament Today', in *Dermot A. Lane (ed.), New Century, New Society – Christian Perspectives*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1999), 133-139, here 138-139.

7 Pope Francis, 9th Jan 2022 – My translation.

8 Quoted in *The Irish Times*, January 10th, 2022.

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his first game as manager of the Galway hurling team a profile of Henry Shefflin ('his peerless achievements on the hurling field') referred to the admission 'that in his last season with Kilkenny, when he was no longer starting on the team, he found himself still "yearning" for a word of affirmation from [Brian] Cody' (manager of the so-called 'Cats' with multiple All-Ireland championships to his credit).⁹ Una Agnew sees yearning in terms of spirituality as, 'a hunger in the heart for love and meaning, it is a longing for fulfilment implanted in us from birth'.¹⁰ While within Scripture the psalms of lamentation look to a sense of loss, the psalms of longing look to a sense of presence, particularly that of God. Thus the Psalmist expresses a spiritual thirst: 'Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God' (Ps 41); 'O God, you are my God, I search eagerly for you. My soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for you, in a land parched, and lifeless without water' (63). Commenting on '*yearns for you*' in the latter case, Carmel McCarthy states that 'the Hebrew verb of yearning expresses intense desire, and, together with the image of thirsting, serves to emphasise the all-encompassing nature of the psalmist's search for God'.¹¹ In the New Testament the Gospel of John takes this image of thirst to its depths in the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well where he offers her the 'living water' which, in 'those who drink', will become 'in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life' (4:14). A synodal process worth its salt must allow its participants to articulate their spiritual aspiration(s). After all, the journey of the church is always guided by the Spirit toward the horizon of holiness where the divine 'yes' to human yearning waits in the sanctification that is salvation.

NEW(NESS)

'God is eternal newness'. This statement by Pope Francis seems a novel revelation, especially as he insists that the incessant involvement of God with us "'impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond'.¹² Implying one of his favourite images – horizon – the identification of 'fringes and beyond' indicates that newness is inseparable from evangelisation. The call and challenge to the church is not of newness for novelty sake but the need to realise the Gospel

9 Keith Duggan, *The Irish Times*, January 8th, 2022.

10 'Christian Spirituality', in Anne Hession & Patricia Kieran, (eds.), *Exploring Theology – Making Sense of the Catholic Tradition*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2007), 250 – 259, here 250.

11 *The Psalms: Human Voices of Prayer and Suffering*, (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2012), 74.

12 *Gaudete et Exsultate – Rejoice and Be Glad*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2018), par. 135.

as the geography of grace which, always going before us, guides us to people and places we might prefer to pass by or prevent participating. Found only in the Gospel of Matthew, the so-called parable of the householder proclaims ‘every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old’ (13:52). Here Matthew’s message to the church is that, just as Jesus did not jettison the old (Law and Prophets) but joined it to the new (Kingdom of Heaven), it must do the same. His exclusion of the saying about the necessity of ‘fresh wineskins’ for ‘new wine’ (Mk 2:22) is more than a matter of exegesis. The evangelist’s exhortation is a case of ‘both ... and’ not ‘either ... or’. Daniel J. Harrington expresses this synthesis succinctly: ‘Both new and old are valued; the new does not make the old useless’.¹³ While referring specifically to Lent, Mary T. Brien’s words have a wider appeal: ‘Moving forward to a new place calls for a reappraisal of where one is at on the journey. For us, on our Lenten journey, the advice of Moses is relevant. While our spiritual health-check may point us in new directions, it will also involve a returning to the roots.’¹⁴ More than a check list these words of wisdom call for a discernment of how the journey to date has been made and it will be made beyond the present. This discernment is decisive as it draws on divine desire for, as Francis formulates finely, ‘in a word he [God] wants to give us a new heart’.¹⁵

OPENNESS

Openness to others is *not* an optional extra for those on the synodal way. At one level this hardly needs stating since people are naturally drawn to disclose their thoughts and emotions, hopes and fears to each other, even at times to strangers. Often seen as a symbol of the synodal way, the story of the encounter of Cleopas and his companion with Jesus on the road to Emmaus eminently expresses such openness. If the Queen of Sheba could open ‘her mind freely to Solomon’ (1 Kgs 10:2), the two disciples opened their hearts fully to the stranger who ‘came near and went with them’ (24:15). By opening themselves to him Jesus is offered the opportunity to open himself to them too, telling them that they were foolish and ‘slow of heart to believe all that the prophets declared’ (24:25). As the Revealer of the Absolute Openness of God Jesus represents the willingness of God to walk in the world with a weak and even wilful humanity. The gradual and mutual opening of the disciples

13 *The Gospel of Matthew*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 208.

14 ‘Homilies for March C – First Sunday of Lent’, *The Furrow*, 73(February 2022), 117-122, here 118.

15 *Rejoice and Be Glad*, par. 83.

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to Jesus enables grace to get a hold on their hearts and heads and take over their lives entirely, empowering them to return to Jerusalem where they had jettisoned their yearnings and those who had journeyed with them to that point. As an exemplar of ecclesial space for synodality, embracing speech, silence and sharing, the Emmaus story in the Gospel of Luke expresses and even embodies the hospitality that is at its heart.

God's word opens up the synodal way that is to be walked. In Psalm 139 the evocation of God's omniscience, expressed in the opening verses, ends with the exclamation 'you know all my ways through and through' (v. 3). This is not a statement of terror as if dealing with a God of wrath who is forever keeping account, especially of fault and failure. Instead, the psalmist proclaims a figure of wisdom who, almost womb like, holds the lives of people in a grasp of tenderness rather than a grip of fear. The presence of God is proclaimed as protective and providential throughout the course of life, commencing with conception. Given this guarding and guiding involvement of God in the life of an individual the psalmist intercedes at the end, 'lead me in the way everlasting'. The juxtaposition of 'my ways' and 'the way everlasting' evokes the divine declaration that 'nor are your ways my ways' and 'my ways [are] higher than your ways' (Is: 55:8-9) which envisages the claim of Christ 'I am the way' who communicates both 'the truth and the life' (Jn 14:6). Marianne Meyer Thompson connects these: 'The following explanatory comment ('No one comes to the Father but by me') suggests that the three predicates could better be understood to indicate that Jesus is the Way that leads to the Father, precisely because he himself embodies the truth and life that come from the Father. Thus we might translate, 'I am the way that leads to truth and life'.¹⁶

Openness is not *only* an intra-ecclesial event but involves others who, in Jesus' words, 'do not belong to this fold' (Jn 10:16). The evangelising comment that follows, 'I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice' means that a church which seeks to be truly synodal must listen for ecumenical echoes in order that the end envisaged by Jesus, 'so there will be one flock, one shepherd' (10:17), may be effected more fully on earth and entirely in eternity. When offering its openness to the world the church remembers that its *raison d'être* is rooted in its evangelical essence. Walter Kasper brings out the integral and important implications of this identity:

'This openness for the problems of the time cannot of course be a wilful, go-as-you-please openness. It is an openness that

16 *John, A Commentary*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 308-309.

must be called both dialogistic and missionary. The two are not antitheses, and it is really only superficial minds that think so. For true dialogue means communicating to the other person something about oneself – indeed *communicating oneself*. In this sense the church's theology has to strike out specific ways in which the church can become the universal sacrament of salvation for the world of today'.¹⁷

Ultimately, the object of ecclesial, ecumenical and evangelical *openness* is for Christ's disciples to be able to own and offer to all others the warm and welcoming words of Seamus Heaney, '*the way Is opener for your being in it*'.¹⁸

DOCTRINE

Coming immediately after openness the mention of doctrine might sound like the screeching of brakes bringing the synodal train to a dead stop. However, scare tactics (whatever their source) are far from the truth. *Doctrine*, as its Latin origin indicates, deals with teaching(s) and in the church concerns faith and morals. Matthew presents Jesus primarily as a teacher, as many texts throughout the Gospel state. Thus, Jesus repeatedly asserts his authority to teach, 'But I say to you', in the course of the Sermon on the Mount which ends with the response, 'Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes' (7:28-29). The conjunction of 'astounded' and 'authority' articulates the reception Jesus and his teaching received. The marked contrast between his authenticity and the arrogance of the 'scribes' will be consolidated in the course of his ministry as conflicts with them and others become clearer and contribute to the conspiracy to crucify Jesus. Matthew's list of 'Woes against the Pharisees' (much longer than Luke's version and mentioned in passing in the Gospel of Mark) lays down a magisterial marker between Jesus and 'the scribes and the Pharisees [who] sit on Moses' seat' (23:2). Telling his hearers to 'do whatever they teach you and follow it' (23:3), Jesus' intolerance towards the scribes and Pharisees is directed against the dissonance between their doctrines and deeds. This is doubled down on by the declarations to his disciples, 'But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students' and 'nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah' (23:8,10). To avoid lapsing into the

17 '*Introduction: Systematic Theology Today and the Task Before It*', in *Theology & Church*, (London: SPCM Press, 1989), 1-16, here 12.

18 '*At Banagher*', *Opened Ground – poems 1966-1996*, (London: faber and faber, 1998), 441-2, here 442.

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culture of control created and operated by the scribes and Pharisees the followers of Jesus must be continually taught and transformed by surrendering to the grace of the Holy Spirit, that is, converted to the Gospel.

Calling conversion ‘a principle, in the literal sense of *principium* and considering it ‘not, of course, an intellectual principle but an experimental one’, James P. Hanigan expands this in terms of its ‘community and narrative, rational and personal referents[s]’.¹⁹ Hanigan’s treatment of the first of these is foundational: ‘The *community* referent reminds us that Christian conversion entails church membership, that is, association with a normative community, not merely in a voluntary group that constructs its own norms and purposes, or in one that happens to be personally agreeable. God’s call in Christ means that one is called to join the Church.’²⁰ This statement serves as a caution against considering church doctrine as comparable to the rules of a club while, taken together with the other three, the ‘community referent’ is not a usurpation or undermining of human freedom. From the perspective of moral theology church doctrine is not to be interpreted as an imposition but an invitation, that is, the doctrine in and of the church does not seek to dominate but liberate. Christian conversion is for communion, not control.

There is, in the same volume as Hanigan above, an article entitled ‘Doctrinal Authority for a Pilgrim Church’ by Avery Dulles (taken from his book *The Resilient Church*). The concluding paragraph is worth quoting at length:

My own point of view is governed by the vision of the Church as a pilgrim community renewing itself by creative interaction with its changing environment. The Church, “like a pilgrim in a foreign land”, receives from the risen Lord not a clear vision of ultimate truth but the power “to show forth in the world the mystery of the Lord in a faithful though shadowed way, until at last it will be revealed in total splendour”. Thus the Church may in some sense be called a “Society of Explorers” – to borrow a term from Michael Polanyi’s prescription for the scientific community. The Church, like any other society, needs outside criticism, and depends on all the help that its thoughtful members can provide in the task of discerning the real meaning of the gospel for our time. Faith, then, is not simply a matter of accepting a fixed body of doctrine. More fundamentally, it is a

19 ‘Conversion and Christian Ethics’, in *Introduction to Christian Ethics – A Reader*, Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes OFM (eds.), New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 242-251, here 247.

20 *Ibid.*, 246-247.

committed and trustful participation in an ongoing process. In the course of responsible discussion, certain previously accepted doctrines will be modified.²¹

Coming from such an eminent theologian these words carry considerable weight and communicate a wisdom worthy of synodality. Thus the synodal church seeks to steer a *via media* between the Scylla of relativism and the Charybdis of rigorism, avoiding the reefs where both the ‘doctrine-phobic’²² and doctrine fixated respectively take refuge.

Jesus’ stinging criticism of the scribes and Pharisees that ‘they tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a lift a finger to move them’ (24:4) contrasts, even conflicts, with the compassionate characterisation of him communicated in the call, ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest’ (11:28). Pope Francis throws his authority behind a pastoral availability of mercy in asserting that ‘it is a matter of reaching out to everyone, of needing to help each person find his or her proper way of participating in the ecclesial community and thus to experience being touched by an “unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous” mercy [for] no one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel!’, affirming that it applies to ‘everyone, in whatever situation they find themselves’.²³

21 Avery Dulles, ‘Doctrinal Authority for a Pilgrim Church’ in *Introduction to Christian Ethics – A Reader*, 336-349, here 349.

22 Title taken from Carmody Grey, *The Tablet*, 5th February 2022, p. 9.

23 *Amoris Laetitia – The Joy of Love*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2016), par. 297.

Families at the Centre: The Spirituality of the Home

Priscilla FitzPatrick

This is the *second* in a series of three articles outlining the findings of the first phase of a small-scale research project on baptism conducted in 2021 by academics in St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth and Dublin City University. The purpose of the project was to explore how parents who present their children for baptism can be encouraged and empowered to foster the spirituality of their family. In the first article published in *The Furrow* last month, the experience of, the preparation for, and celebration of baptism was presented from the perspective of baptism team members. The article highlighted the need for parishes to have an increased recognition of the role of the home and the agency of parents in the spiritual lives of their children. This article will primarily address the nature of spirituality of the home. It will show how parents are powerful educators and that it is from our families that we acquire our values, attitudes, beliefs and practices. It will also explore the responses made by baptism team members who took part in the research and the opinions of parents involved with the project. Some views expressed by parents who participated in the *Listening-to-Parents Exercise* of the Archdiocese of Dublin will also be considered.

PARENTS ARE SPIRITUAL

Donal Dorr states that most people, whether they acknowledge it or not, have at their deep core a spirituality that informs most of their actions and their desire for a deeper meaning and purpose to

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life.¹ Nowadays, many people describe themselves as spiritual but not religious. Dorr applies the term *spiritual* to a number of human experiences which most people will encounter at least once in their lifetime. He selects these experiences because they are universal, unconditioned by gender, age, race or religion. They include being loved unconditionally by another human being, being forgiven by someone, devoting one's life to the care of someone or being an activist on any social issue. Jack Finnegan views spirituality as "a question of real activity in real situations" which "draws us into an engagement with all of reality."² Moving into the domain of parenting as a spiritual practice, Gloria Furman advocates for the word "mother" to be thought of as a verb because mothering or nurturing involves "disciplining, serving, caregiving, showing hospitality, and more."³ Sue Delaney suggests that "motherhood is itself a spiritual path" and that "selfless service given to family" is an example of the practice of surrender which is considered by all religious traditions "as essential in the path to the Divine."⁴

Using the criteria above, it is clear that the parents interviewed for this project, as well as the parents interviewed in the *Listening-to-Parents Exercise*, are spiritual people. Some baptism team members acknowledged this spirituality although they felt that it was being expressed in a somewhat alien manner. They also suspected that their image of God was not quite the same as the image of God held by the parents. Consequently, they believe that the church has "huge learning to do." Other baptism team members *assumed* that parents had a negative attitude towards religion or that they were not interested in it. They based these assumptions on the lack of subsequent involvement with parish activities following the baptism of their child, but Donal Harrington argues that living a Christian life in the ordinariness of everyday life *is* involvement and he maintains that parents, by doing this, are among the most involved people in the parish.⁵ He points out, however, that this involvement appears to be below the awareness level of the parish and consequently it goes unrecognised and unvalidated.

As part of the research project, the parents of recently baptised children were asked in an anonymous survey about their willingness to engage in the spiritual nurture of their children post baptism.

- 1 Donal Dorr, *Spirituality: Our Deepest Heart's Desire*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2008).
- 2 Jack Finnegan, *The Audacity of Spirit: The Meaning and Shaping of Spirituality Today* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2008).
- 3 Gloria Furman, *Missional Motherhood: The Everyday Ministry of Motherhood in the Grand Plan of God* (Illinois: Crossway, 2016).
- 4 Sue Delaney, "Motherhood As A Spiritual Path", *The Way* 42/4 (2003). <https://www.theway.org.uk/back/424Delaney.pdf> (accessed January 17, 2022).
- 5 Donal Harrington, *Tomorrow's Parish: A Vision and A Path*, Revised Edition (Dublin: Columba Press, 2018).

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Eighty six percent of respondents stated that it was important for them to continue to help support their children's spiritual lives and one in two parents felt confident that they possessed the necessary capacities to do this. When presented with these findings, most members of the baptism teams expressed surprise by this degree of positivity in the responses given by the parents. It seems that the baptism team members *underestimated* the willingness and capacity of parents. This appears to confirm the points made by Harrington that the spiritual capacity of parents is generally unappreciated and largely ignored by parishes. Contrary to this pessimistic view of parents, it is important to recognise that parents play an active role in the ongoing process of preparing their children to be disciples of Jesus by unconditionally loving their children; self-sacrificing in the interests of their children; allowing the curiosity of their children to challenge their assumptions; letting the playful spirituality of children introduce them to the amazing things that are present in ordinary, everyday life; and re-discovering through their children that the world is a good place and above all, that it is fun.

The parents of young children today want their children to be happy, healthy, confident, independent and open-minded. Any pastoral programme aimed at involving them will need to be based on a holistic approach to the child which includes the child's physical, mental and emotional well-being and not limited to faith formation alone. Pope Francis' vision of pastoral care of families extends well beyond sacramental preparation. He advocates the involvement of professionals from many disciplines with contributions from "psychology, sociology, marital therapy and counseling" to "help keep pastoral initiatives grounded in the real situations and concrete concerns of families."⁶

Young parents of this generation also have a strong tendency towards a postmodern worldview where the views and values of all are tolerated and they perceive the actions of the Church to be at odds with this worldview. For example, some parents in the *Listening-to-Parents Exercise* of the Diocese of Dublin expressed regret that compassion and tolerance were not always obvious in the language used by the Church. This makes it difficult for them to reconcile their views with positions taken by the Church. These parents are not hostile to the Church; they simply feel no connection with it. The Church in its present form does not meet their spiritual needs. The *challenge* for parishes is to develop innovative ways in which to help this generation to think through their personal truths and values.

6 Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family, par. 204 (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2016).

HOMES ARE HOLY PLACES

Homes are more than just ordinary spaces. Homes are holy places. Stepping across the threshold of a family home brings us into a liminal space which marks the transition between arriving and departing. Thresholds are what brides are carried across, where new babies are introduced to their home and once-absent members are reunited with family. It is the place where the wholeness of the family is broken as members go their separate ways, perhaps for the last time. It is also the place where the family opens itself to the stranger and responds with love to their presence. The hallway is where some families display photographs of special family events, many of which feature Church ceremonies. These recorded occasions remind the family that their deepest identity as Christians spans generations. The living-room and kitchen are sacred spaces where guests can experience the ancient Christian tradition of hospitality. The dinner table, when most, if not all of the family are present, creates a ritual space and the relationality of a meal implies more than a transaction about food. *Church*, Harrington maintains, happens within families through their table fellowship and reconciliation. He argues that there is a parallel between the parish community gathering for Eucharist and a family gathering for dinner. He also discerns a parallel between the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the family, with the stages of contrition, confession, restitution and absolution present in the dynamic of family life: “failing and feeling sorry, apologising and being forgiven, reconciling and making good.”⁷ The presence of God in the home needs to be recognised and celebrated by families and by parishes. Parents who may be ‘shaky’ about their faith need to realise that their family is a living cell of the Church. Playing games together, making discoveries together, having family get-togethers, creating new traditions that give happiness, engaging in family-generated activities that help the family to bond in the present and create cherished memories for the future, are all ways of promoting the well-being of every member of the family and of nurturing spirituality within the family.

The spirituality of the home contributes to the development of a personal relationship with God and the language of that relationship is prayer. Nothing is automatically prayer but everything can be prayer if offered to God in faith and with openness.⁸ For children, talking to God can mean painting a picture, singing a song or blowing bubbles. Children are sensitive to the beauty of

7 Harrington, *Tomorrow's Parish: A Vision and A Path*, Revised Edition, 179.

8 David G. Benner, *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer* (Downs Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010)

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creation and respond with awe to the *feeling* of the presence of God in nature: as one child remarked, “nature is like God’s heart.” Participants in the *Listening-to-Parents Exercise* reported having mystical experiences of God through their children. Today’s parents want authentic experiences of God. Parishes may find it helpful to reflect on the words of Saint Pope Paul VI. In 1975, he wrote that “Modern man (*sic*) listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”⁹ He continued: “Modern man (*sic*) is sated by talk; he is obviously often tired of listening and, what is worse, impervious to words.”¹⁰

Prayer does not need to be limited to words and parents are praying when they allow their spirit to be drawn to God through everyday activities like cooking, lighting a candle or playing with their children. To see three generations – grandmother, mother and daughter – playing together in the snow, making a snowman and throwing snowballs at each other amid howls of laughter, will require awareness of everyday spirituality before this scene can be recognised as possible prayer. Prayer is also about listening and Noel Keating maintains that even young children can achieve deep states of spiritual consciousness.¹¹ He argues that through meditation children can experience reduced stress, have their general wellbeing enhanced and experience a positive impact on basic brain function. The experience of being touched is a powerful way to silently communicate welcome, love, compassion, empathy and concern for others and the touch of a loved one has a deep connection to family spirituality and prayer.

There is no strong tradition in Irish Catholic homes of praying with the Bible. The best way to introduce the Bible to children is for parent and child to share a Bible story as equals. Through an open discussion, both parties wonder, ask questions and draw the other’s attention to things that caught their interest. Everyday experiences can be drawn on to connect the family story with the story in the Bible. Listening non-judgementally gives parents the opportunity to learn fresh insights from their children. Parishes can promote the Bible among children by introducing them to *Godly Play*, which is an approach to religious education that is influenced by the traditions and educational methods of Maria Montessori and Sofia Cavalletti. Jerome W. Berryman, the creator

9 Pope Paul VI, EVANGELII NUNTIANDI: Apostolic Exhortation, par. 41, December 8, 1975. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html accessed 11 Jan 2022.

10 Ibid., par. 42.

11 Noel Keating, *Meditation with Children: A Resource for Teachers and Parents*, Foreword by Laurence Freeman OSB (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2017).

of *Godly Play*, explains that the emphasis is on telling and showing the parables, sacred stories and liturgical action, not on reading about them in books.¹²

CHOOSING BAPTISM

Share the Good News: National Directory of Catechesis in Ireland states that the decision to baptise a baby is a significant decision.¹³ While a request to baptise a baby has to be treated with respect and encouragement, the final decision to baptise the child should be made through prayer and reflection following a full discussion taking place between the parents, the wider family and senior parish personnel. It is essential that parents fully understand the commitment involved and the pledge that they are giving prior to making their decision. The *Listening-to-Parents Exercise* highlighted the fact that in general, parents regarded Baptism as the continuation of a family tradition with family heirlooms playing a significant role. The story of a baptism is an important event in the family memory. However, the church also has a story, with ecclesial symbols, about the Sacrament of Baptism which marks the initiation of the baby into a lifelong journey of *discipleship*. Parents need to hear and understand this story before they can fully commit themselves to the decision to have their child baptised.

Most parishes appear to limit baptism preparation to a once-off, hour-long meeting during the week leading up to the baptism. The responses from the baptism team members indicate that more time spent with families would be beneficial. They identified that connecting with families in their *own homes* was more convenient for the families and it allowed other family members to be present. A respondent to the *Listening-to-Parents Exercise* highlighted how much she appreciated the priest visiting the family at home on a couple of occasions prior to the baptism and how this resulted in an increase in family attendance at church. Another respondent was delighted with the Baptism Welcome Mass and she felt that support was available from the community because of this Mass. This raises the issue concerning the nature and level of support that parents can realistically expect from their parish. According to the baptism team members, neither of these initiatives is common practice. A small number of baptism team members reported that in their parish, an annual Mass was offered to which families of

12 Jerome W. Berryman, *Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1995).

13 Irish Episcopal Conference, *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2010).

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children baptised during that year were invited. Again, this is not common practice.

A shift in perspective on the part of parishes which recognises and affirms the activities of the *home* as spiritual will help parents to authenticate their spiritual lives and perhaps begin a new partnership on their spiritual journey together with parishes. The challenge, and opportunity, is to bring the very real spiritual work that happens in the home into creative and lifegiving *dialogue* with what happens when a child is received into the family of God through baptism and beyond. The *final* article in this series will discern if the principles of *Godly Play* can offer some fruitful propositions and what this might look like in practice.

Receiving Communion. That there are alternative ways of receiving Communion is not always accepted with equanimity among Catholics. It would be best for all if those who differ on this issue, instead of condemning one another, tried to think out and explain the values of faith and devotion they find in their favoured practice. This kind of thoughtfulness is particularly valuable about receiving in the hand. People who receive in this way can profit from reflecting on why it is such a good thing to do. People who object to the practice might be helped by such reflection to overcome their fears about it.

– LIAM G. WALSH, OP. *The Mass: Yesterday, Today, and Forever.* (Dublin: Dominican Publications). p.93.

Catholic Politicians, Legislation, and Holy Communion

D. Vincent Twomey

In his article, “Catholics and Abortion Law”,¹ Fr Michael C. McGuckian, S.J., claims that any Catholic politician who supports “an overly permissive abortion law” may be making “a terrible mistake”, but “they are not necessarily guilty of formal co-operation with the act of abortion itself”. He distinguishes between a politician who believes that abortion is morally justified and one who does not “share the intention” of the act of abortion but only permits it. The latter may be guilty of a serious error in judgement but is not guilty of formal co-operation and therefore should not be “excommunicated”.² Instead of “excommunicating” them, bishops should work closely with them to get them to change their minds. He concludes that “Catholic politicians who actively support abortion laws, can certainly be criticized, on legal and moral grounds, but they should not be excommunicated, for they are not guilty of formal cooperation in the act of abortion,”³ and respectfully asks for a revision of the Church’s authoritative teaching as found in *Evangelium Vitae* 73 and clarified by the 2004 Letter of the Prefect of the CDF, Cardinal Ratzinger, to the American Bishops in response to their request for clarification.⁴

The bulk of Fr McGuckian’s article is a moving presentation of the tragic so-called “X-case”, which, he says, caused him

1 In *The Furrow*, 73/1 (2022), 29-39.

2 *Ibid.*, 37. Fr McGuckian does not say that the politician who believes that abortion is morally justified should be denied Holy Communion, but perhaps he implies it or takes it for granted, since it is clearly formal cooperation.

3 *Ibid.*

4 “Abortion and euthanasia are thus crimes which no human law can claim to legitimize. [...] In the case of an intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is therefore never licit to obey it, or to ‘take part in a propaganda campaign in favour of such a law, or to vote for it’ (CDF Declaration on Procured Abortion, 1974).” The same text (EV 73) mentions that it is licit for legislators to vote for legislation aimed at *reducing the harm*. I am relying on Fr McGuckian’s account of Cardinal Ratzinger’s letter.

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to change his mind about the Eight Amendment that he had supported. It was the case of the young girl, pregnant after being raped and displaying suicidal ideation, who intended travelling to the UK to have an abortion. The case culminated in the Supreme Court, where the majority interpreted the Eight Amendment as implying a right to an abortion, if there was a real and substantial risk to the mother's life, including by suicide. He is convinced that "certain extenuating circumstances can render it *inappropriate to punish* a woman who obtains an objectively unjustified abortion".⁵ One's sympathies are indeed with the young victim of rape. But does that justify a Catholic politician's voting for the widespread provision of abortion "services" in Ireland? Should he or she be "excommunicated" because they so voted? Well, yes and no.

The first thing to be noted is that Fr McGuckian confuses the issue by describing the denial of access to Holy Communion to pro-abortion-rights politicians in the USA as an "excommunication policy". Excommunication is a juridical act, the effects of which include, but are more extensive than, being denied the reception of the Eucharist.⁶ The relevant Canon on excommunication linked to abortion (#1398) says nothing about those who legislate for abortion.

However, according to Canon 915, anyone who "obstinately persists in manifest grave sin" should be denied Holy Communion. Can voting in parliament for abortion or euthanasia be described as obstinately persisting in manifest grave sin – understanding "manifest" here to mean publicly manifest – and so move a bishop or priest to deny the parliamentarian concerned Holy Communion (as Cardinal Ratzinger clarified in his letter) after having made every effort to meet the person, inform him or her of the Church's teaching and warn him or her "that he [or she] will otherwise be denied the Eucharist"?⁷

Fr McGuckian clearly says: No. He bases his claim on the distinction between a law that "condones" or "approves" an immoral act and one that simply "permits" it. That distinction he claims, following Catherine Kaveny,⁸ was made by St Thomas in *STh* I-II, q. 93, a.3 ad 3: "... human law is said to permit certain things, not as approving them but as being unable to direct them." What Thomas seems to have meant in the context

5 *Ibid.*, 37, emphasis in text. Here I leave aside what is meant by an "objectively justified abortion". Presumably this strange formulation refers to the application of the principle of double-effect in certain procedures to save the life of the mother at the unintended cost of losing the baby. To call it abortion is misleading, since abortion is defined by the intentional termination of a pregnancy.

6 Cf. Can. 1331.

7 Quoted by McGuckian, *op. cit.*, 31.

8 Two articles by Catherine Kaveny are quoted, *ibid.*, 37.

is that, though certain acts are contrary to the eternal moral law, human positive law “is unable to direct” them (i.e., not to so act), as Thomas clarifies. What is meant by being “unable to direct” is the practical inability to formulate appropriate legislation for objectively immoral behaviour. The classic case is adultery. Did St Thomas imply that it would be morally upright for a politician to approve (by either proposing or voting for) laws that don’t just permit but actively facilitate and *regulate for* the actual provision of abortion and euthanasia? In fact, he expressly says the very opposite in the same response (and it is quoted by Fr McGuckian): “It would be different were human law to approve what the eternal law condemns”. And that is precisely what the repeal of the Eight Amendment did. For the legislators in the Oireachtas at least, repeal was linked to the promised introduction of legislation that was framed so as to provide for one of the most permissive abortion regimes in the world. The legislation thus “condones and approves” abortion. Over 12,000 innocent babies have lost their lives under this law.

Despite this, Fr McGuckian claims that politicians who support such pro-abortion laws can be criticized on legal or moral grounds but not denied Holy Communion. The reason, he claims, is that such approval of laws regulating the provision of abortion (practically on demand) is not formal cooperation in evil. That seems to be an unacceptably narrow understanding of what constitutes formal cooperation. Moral theologians distinguish between formal and material cooperation. The morality of the material cooperation depends on the degrees of cooperation and other moral duties. And here, one must distinguish between mediate and immediate cooperation.⁹ Mediate cooperation may be justified in certain circumstances if there is sufficient reason. Immediate material cooperation, i.e., any contribution to the performance of an intrinsically evil act, such as abortion or euthanasia, which is necessary for its actualization, is the equivalent of formal cooperation and never licit. Legislation to regulate the provision of abortion falls into that category. Catholic politicians who vote for such legislation are thus guilty of a *manifestly* grave sin (manifest, since voting is a public act) and, if they obstinately refuse to change their publicly declared policy, then it follows that they should be refused Holy Communion after every effort to persuade them otherwise fails. Nothing less than their eternal salvation is at stake.

9 See, for example, Benedict M. Ashley, Jean Deblois, Kevin O'Rourke, *Health Care Ethics. A Catholic Analysis, Fifth Edition* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 55-57.

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By its very nature, legislation is there to protect the rights of the innocent, maintain order and to punish wrongdoing. Society's laws also have an important pedagogical role in promoting the values that society needs to flourish.¹⁰ Legislation to allow and support what is intrinsically evil, such as euthanasia or abortion, signals to the population at large that such acts are morally neutral, if not morally positive, and so encourages their practice. In other words, legislation that allows or promotes evil acts removes from weak human beings that societal support they need to discourage them from giving into the temptation to opt for such a radical but harmful solution to their existential predicament.

The existence of legislation permitting abortion gradually changes the mores of a society. And so, it is not surprising that, after years of permissive legislation in Europe regulating the "service" of abortion, the European Parliament would approve the "Matić Resolution" on June 25, 2021, with 378 votes in favour, 255 against, and 42 abstentions. It declared abortion to be a "fundamental human right" (All Irish MEPs voted for the Report.) President Macron has recently called for the legal recognition of such a "right" in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

In theological terms, legislating for intrinsically evil acts is also a form of giving scandal, namely encouraging others to sin (cf. Mt 18:6f.) and so endangering the eternal salvation of others. It is the seriousness of the sin of abortion or euthanasia that obliges bishops and priests to refuse Holy Communion to Catholic politicians who legislate or vote for the provision of abortion "services" or euthanasia. The aim of such a denial is twofold: to move the politician to repent of his own wrongdoing, and to help undo the public approval for the wrongness of intrinsically evil acts that have become part of positive legislation and so part of medical practice. Bishops are primarily responsible for the salvation of souls, which is also the primary objective of Canon Law. They have a sacred duty not to remain silent.

¹⁰ This classical understanding of law tends to be ignored where the approach to law is positivist, but in practice it is evident.

Catholic Shame and Female Blame: *Edna O'Brien and The Country Girls* *Trilogy*

Carleigh Garcia

SHAME AS AFFECT

For most of the twentieth century, in popular Irish culture, Catholicism was intimately connected with shame. Some lived their Catholicism with a sense that feelings of both shame and guilt were a routine part of the faith. Indeed, shame and guilt were often so intertwined that they were almost indistinguishable. Yet shame is distinct from guilt and is arguably, more significant in the Irish Catholic context. Shame flows through established social norms¹ so that the interpersonal relationships formed in each society shape its particular versions of shame.² Since shame is not only biological (e.g. being hot with shame), but is also social, Irish shame varied from the shame of other cultures.

In order to feel shame, one must first have experienced joy or interest in something.³ This is why shame is the most personal of affects. Shame reaches into the depths of who we are as people, making it both dangerous and intrinsically linked to our sense of self-worth.⁴ Guilt and shame are intimately connected yet they are distinct. Guilt is associated with an act of wrongdoing, which

- 1 Jacquet, J. *Is Shame Necessary?: New Uses for an Old Tool*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2015.
- 2 Kaufman, G. *The Psychology of Shame: Theory and Treatment of Shame-Based Syndromes*, 2nd ed., New York: Springer Publishing Company, Inc, 1996.
- 3 Kosofsky Sedgwick, E., Frank, A. and Tomkins, S. *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, London: Duke University Press, 1995.
- 4 Pattison, S. *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

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can be apologised for and amended.⁵ Further, while guilt can be a positive force in ‘creating and maintaining relationships and moral responsibilities, shame has a more dubious effect’.⁶ Shame is not necessarily about morality, but more about conforming to an expected behavior. This is an important distinction since the link between Catholicism and shame in Ireland was reinforced by Church control of social norms. Indeed, for much of the twentieth century, Catholicism in Ireland tended to be hierarchical, fundamentalist and theocratic and to enforce social norms. As successive scandals have subsequently revealed, some Catholic social norms were abusive and unethical. In the Irish version of a twentieth century theocracy, the lines between the state, Church, and civil society tended to be blurred.⁷ The more centralized and authoritative the Church’s teaching became, the more those who did not conform to it felt shamed. When chronically shamed, people tend to hide and to remove themselves from communion with others. They feel there is something wrong with them.⁸ If shame’s ‘sweet spot’ is found, its power can make an individual conform unquestioningly to society’s view of what behavior is acceptable,⁹ beneficial and justified. In the history of humanity, diverse religious traditions have sometimes exploited the power of public shaming to prevent people from deviating from their prescribed norms. So much so that if shame is repeatedly evoked it can become an internalised condition. Sometimes it dehumanizes and leads to social stigmatization where it ‘strips transgressors of their personal dignity’.¹⁰

As a researcher examining the theme of shame and Catholicism in Irish literature, I was fascinated by Edna O’Brien’s infamous trilogy, *The Country Girls* (1960), *The Lonely Girl* (1962), and *Girls in Their Married Bliss* (1964), published together with an epilogue in 1987. These novels focus on twentieth-century Catholic social norms in Ireland, especially in relation to gender, where the negative consequence of Catholic shame is an underlying theme.

5 Park, C. ‘Chronic shame: A perspective integrating religion and spirituality’, *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 35(4), (2016): 354-376.

6 Pattison, p. 129.

7 Valente, J. (2017) ‘Psychoanalysis in Ireland – Ireland in Psychoanalysis’, in *Ireland in Psychoanalysis: Special Issue*, ed. Joseph Valente, Sean Kennedy, and Macy Todd, Breac, 7, online.

8 Karen, R. ‘Shame’, *The Atlantic Monthly*, (1992): 40-70.

9 Jacquet, p. 451.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

CATHOLIC SHAME AND FEMALE BLAME

SHAME AND SHAMELESSNESS: TWO PROTAGONISTS

O'Brien stated she, 'decided to have two [protagonists], one [Caithleen] who would conform to both my own and my country's view of what an Irish woman should be', while Baba 'would undermine every piece of protocol and religion and hypocrisy there was'.¹¹ I assert in this way, Caithleen represents shame and Baba shamelessness. In the novels we follow Caithleen, the ideal of Irish, Catholic girlhood, as her shame develops in the first novel, *The Country Girls* and O'Brien's two consecutive novels. Though originally published individually, reading the trilogy together with the 1987 'Epilogue' allows us to trace the sources of shame present in Caithleen's life until her death. Ironically, O'Brien's fictional narration of shame also became shameful,¹² when O'Brien's expression of sensitive topics was censored by the State for 'explicit content'.¹³ Her first novel was 'burned by a local parish priest, in search of some post-rosary drama'.¹⁴ *The Country Girls* voiced the greater independence women felt in the 1960s,¹⁵ and importantly, it also voiced women's shame as they undermined traditional Catholic gender relations in Ireland.

The Country Girls begins in mid-century, Western Ireland, before continuing in Dublin in the second novel, *The Lonely Girl*. In this patriarchal society, driven by the concept of the nuclear family, and women as the bearers of national identity and virtue, Caithleen's childhood was shaped by shame.¹⁶ Subjected to repeated beatings by her drunken father and the abandonment and sudden death of her mother, she experienced fractured dysfunctional interpersonal relationships, resulting in shame.¹⁷ Relationships are key. Through relationships we learn specific 'ways of thinking and feeling about ourselves',¹⁸ that dictate how we respond to future situations.¹⁹ Caithleen's shame was caused by a variety of factors including her own body issues, the judgment of her peers (including Baba), her intimate relationships and the disapproval of the nuns

11 O'Brien, E. 'Why Irish Heroines Don't Have To Be Good Anymore', *The New York Times*, 1986.

12 Probyn, E. *Blush*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

13 McBride, E. 'Foreword' in E. O'Brien, ed., *The Country Girls Trilogy*, London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2017.

14 McBride, p. ix.

15 Meaney, G. *Reading the Irish Woman: Studies in Cultural Encounters and Exchange, 1714-1960*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013.

16 Ingman, H. 'Edna O'Brien: Stretching the Nation's Boundaries', *Irish Studies Review*, 10(3), (2010): 253-265.

17 Kaufman (1996).

18 Kaufman, G. and Raphael, L. 'Relating to the Self: Changing Inner Dialogue', *Psychological Reports*, 54, (1984): 239-250.

19 Probyn; Kosofsky Sedgwick, E., Frank, A. and Tomkins, S.

in school. She developed two romantic relationships with married, older foreigners, and in the second novel, Caithleen becomes Kate, as her new lover Eugene finds Caithleen too 'Kiltartan'.²⁰ This hints at the contempt Eugene feels for Caithleen and her country roots. As the trilogy progresses, Eugene's contempt develops. Caithleen belongs to a 'socialization process', where 'women learn to define their self-identity through a relationship to a man'.²¹ She is shamed by her father and compatriots as they continuously try to remove her, at times physically, from relationships they deem unsuitable and a threat to their, and her, reputation, and virtue. When speaking to a priest about her behavior, she says, 'It's as big a sin for my father to be like that as for a man to have two wives'. The priest replies he is surprised to hear her speak of her father like that because he is a good man.²² As a consequence of her internalized shame, Caithleen feels unlovable and inferior. Her continuous search for love reinforces her failed relationships and the shaming of the men surrounding her.

As the name of the novel suggests, ironically, *Girls in Their Married Bliss* examines the lives of Kate and Baba after they have married. O'Brien chose to alter the ending of the third novel in 1987, as she did not see Ireland's culture changing.²³ Though O'Brien's second protagonist, Baba, is unhappily married and does not find joy in motherhood, nonetheless she survives. Unlike Kate, shameless Baba did not suffer from chronic shame. Indeed, Baba often deflected shame onto Kate. Kate's attempted transformation into what an 'Irish woman should be',²⁴ simply resulted in shame when she did not uphold Catholic social norms, illustrating her internalisation of these norms and her inescapable shame. Baba also rejected these Catholic norms yet rejected their attachment to shame. O'Brien 'knew that Baba's asperity had to prevail', and the heroine's 'masks are coming off by the minute'.²⁵ Although Baba might have been able to avoid shame, and remove her mask, symbolically removing shame, Kate could not. By the final novel, Kate's first-person perspective is too shameful to recount. Baba becomes the new narrator, as she does not care about the opinions of the Church and society. Kate's act of hiding comes from her inclination to turn away from the other and to withdraw herself to prevent shame through further exposure. Yet this only reinforces

20 O'Brien, E. *The Country Girls Trilogy and Epilogue*, London: Jonathon Cape, 1987.

21 Kaufman, G. (1996), p. 43.

22 O'Brien (1987), p. 343.

23 Byron, K. "'In the Name of the Mother ...': The Epilogue of Edna O'Brien's Country Girls Trilogy", *Women's Studies*, 31, (2002): 447-465.

24 O'Brien, E. (1986), online.

25 Ibid., online.

her shame rather than prevents it.²⁶ While it is natural to respond to shame by hiding, this act simply reinforces shame by creating silence.²⁷ O'Brien demonstrates this through Kate's sterilization and death.

Kate defies social convention and Church teaching by becoming pregnant outside of wedlock. Even after Eugene divorces his wife and marries Kate, she repeats the pattern of searching for love, in an attempt to reinforce her sense of worth. Though Kate is never unfaithful to him, Eugene leaves and takes their only child, breaking yet another interpersonal bridge. She decides to become sterilized, thereby permanently separating herself from the Irish, Catholic, female ideal of motherhood. Indeed, she feels she is no longer worthy of being a mother. Eugene illustrates his contempt for Kate, making her feel a 'debased, dirty thing, a derided and low animal'.²⁸ Not only is she shamed by her husband but she is also ashamed of not upholding social norms. We see 'abuse and misogyny are internalized...converted into self-hatred,'²⁹ which leads to chronic shame around her sterilization. In severe shaming situations, wishing no longer to explore and take interest in the world, a person can feel 'unlovable', 'undeserving of love and unworthy of a place in society'.³⁰ When shame leads to self-contempt, it can lead to the desire to get rid of or remove the part of the hated self, and in O'Brien's novel this is represented by Kate's sterilization, and eventual suicide.³¹

In the 'Epilogue', Baba relays Kate's death by 'accidental drowning'³² after a lapse of twenty years. The narrative picks up after Kate regained custody of her estranged son, who leaves for university, and another failed relationship with a married man. Kate tells Baba she is trying to overcome a 'last big breach'. She 'put her hand to her heart and said she'd like to tear it out, stamp on it, squash it to death, her heart being her undoing'.³³ It was not so much her heart that was her undoing, but her shame. After repeated ruptures of relationships, constant shaming at the hands of her friends, kin, countrymen, and husband, she died of mortification.

26 Park, pp. 359-361.

27 Kaufman, G. *Shame: The Power of Caring*, Rochester: Schenkman Books, Incorporated, 1992.

28 Wurmser, L. *The Mask of Shame*, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

29 Rookes-Hughes, L. 'The Family and the Female Body in the Novels of Edna O'Brien and Julia O'Faolain', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 22(2), (1996): 83-97.

30 Moran, P. and Johnson, E. *The Female Face of Shame*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

31 Bouson, J. *Embodied Shame: Uncovering Female Shame in Contemporary Women's Writings*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.

32 O'Brien, E. (1987), p. 571.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 677

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As Baba says, ‘I don’t blame her, I realize she was in the f--- wilderness. Born there. Hadn’t the reins to haul herself out’.³⁴ Still critical of the Church, Baba discusses its stance on motherhood and contraception as she relays her only friend’s tragic ending, and an understanding of Kate’s inability to save herself.³⁵ In retrospect, Baba’s shamelessness was her salvation, while Kate’s shame was her undoing. If, like Kate, a ‘person comes to the point where there is no place left to hide from the shame and contempt they feel, it becomes lethal, and they choose to erase themselves’.³⁶ When shame no longer provides a chance to re-evaluate the self and do good but is instead an internalized, chronic condition, it can lead to self-contempt and suicide.

CONCLUSION

Through an analysis of O’Brien’s novels, it becomes evident that shame involves attachment to societal norms. O’Brien’s trilogy suggests that shame itself is not at fault, but rather the social norms that shame enforces.³⁷ It is worth noting that some accused O’Brien of shaming women through her writing.³⁸ Other critics have argued that O’Brien released them from shame by giving a voice to a generation who were ‘previously muzzled’.³⁹ By confronting issues such as marriage, sexuality, family, education, religion, and motherhood in *The Country Girls Trilogy*, O’Brien offered a fictional Irish shame narrative that offers readers an opportunity to reflect on Catholic social norms in 20th century Ireland. When analyzing Kate’s character, we might ask whether her transgressions against the norms of the time were transgressions that required shame, or whether shame led to her humiliation and stigmatisation. Hopefully, Kate’s fictional death helps us reflect on what aspects of Catholic culture and faith can be life-giving, and what societal norms can be oppressive and dangerous, particularly to women.

34 Ibid., p. 679.

35 Ibid.

36 Johnson and Moran, p. 5.

37 Jacquet, p. 214

38 O’Leary, A. (2019) ‘The Country Girls – an evocation of “Catholic” Ireland’, *Books Ireland*, 386, (2019):30-31.

39 McBride, p. xvi.

The Great Reset and Synodality in the Church

V.J. McBrierty, D.M.D Murphy, and C.P. Power

It has been a recurring theme in Church history that periods of profound turbulence and almost insurmountable challenges to the Christian way of life have surfaced. The Catholic Church in Ireland is now embarking on a ‘synodal pathway’ to address the prevailing downward trends in religious participation in the aftermath of Vatican II. Current experience indicates two divergent paths. The first path is to adapt Christ’s message to suit the herd mentality of the day which chooses to reject traditional thinking. Christian doctrine in this approach, must be stripped down to what is acceptable to the present generation. This was foretold by Fulton Sheen in his prophetic utterances in 1947 when he spoke about the emergence of a ‘new church’, which he described as the ‘ape’ of the traditional church due to its parasitic nature.¹ The second and alternative path is the traditional one that challenges each generation to bring to life the message of Christ

1 J. Pronechen interview in 2019 regarding the Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen’s revelations in 1947 about the future of the Church. <https://www.ncregister.com/blog/fulton-sheen>.: see also Fulton J. Sheen, ‘*Communism and the Conscience of the West*’, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, (1948) and V.J. McBrierty and D.M.D. Murphy, ‘*The Church in Crisis: the Prophetic Dimension*’, The Furrow, LXXIII, No.2 (2022). pp.106-111.

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in changing times, always remaining faithful to traditional dogma as handed down by the Apostles. As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out: ‘The future of the Church can and will issue from those whose roots are deep and who live from the pure fulness of their faith. ... and it will not issue from those who accommodate themselves merely to the passing moment.’² It is the traditional route that is adopted herein, mindful of the formidable challenges presented by the unrelenting change in society which, as R. Ludlum reminds us, is ‘another area of human endeavour that is both an art *and* a science, and, it too, is all around us – either enriching our lives or destroying them.’³

Any meaningful way forward must take account of a number of fundamental issues: (i) The current global crisis, fueled by the Covid-19 pandemic, which is all-embracing in its impact on the individual, on social and moral values, and on national and global governance; (ii) the institutional church which must review its internal administration involving clerical and lay participation, ever mindful of its core pastoral mission as defined in fundamental Christian dogma; and (iii) the inter-relationship between Church and State as laid down in the Compendium of Christian Doctrine.⁴

In plotting the way forward, there is much to be learned from those timeless lessons of history that can provide meaningful guidance and perspective in addressing these challenges.

The Current Global Crisis: In today’s cyber-controlled world two developments in particular stand out, namely, the ‘*New World Order*’ promoted by the World Economic Forum during their deliberations in Davos, Switzerland in 2020;⁵ and the challenging insight of a significant and controversial participant at the 18th annual meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club at Sochi in October 2021.⁶

The ‘*New World Order*’, masterminded and funded by the élite of the world’s economic community, vigorously promotes global solidarity, wholly secular in its approach, devoid of any spiritual or religious dimension. Subsequent examination of these developments revealed many disturbing aspects, not least

2 Cardinal Ratzinger, in conversation with The Patrick Madrid. (1969) <https://youtu.be/1f1dWbn3lgl>

3 R. Ludlum. ‘*Trevaayne*’, Bantam Books, Jan., 1973.

4 ‘*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*’. To His Holiness Pope John Paul II, Master of Social Doctrine and Evangelical Witness to Justice and Peace (2004).

5 ‘*The Great Reset*’ is the name of the 50th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held in June 2020. Proceedings were authored and published by Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret in ‘*Covid 19-The Great Reset*’, Forum Publications, July 19, 2020.

6 The Valdai International Discussion Club in Soshi, Russia, (2021). www.frontiere.eu/valdai-club-meeting-2021-president-putin-on-values-and-state 27/10/2021.

of which the erosion of personal identity and traditional values, implemented with increasing ease in a continuously developing cyber world. Suffice it to say, this totalitarian socialist approach proposes a radically new profile of social behaviour, termed '*The Great Reset*', which is in stark contrast with traditional norms.⁷ Still in its formative stage, can lessons be learned as to the possible outcomes? Experience in the Soviet Union over the last century is a sobering lesson that is especially relevant.

The participants at Sochi interpreted current policies in the Western World as a form of revolution akin, in many respects, to the revolution in Russia in 1917 when the Bolsheviks, driven by the dogmas of Marx and Engels, single-mindedly sought 'to change existing ways and customs and not just political and economic ones, but the very notion of human morality and the foundations of a healthy society.'⁸ The debate at Sochi further asserted: 'We are facing systemic changes in all directions, from the increasingly complicated geo-physical condition of our planet to a more paradoxical interpretation of what a human is and what the reasons for his existence are.' The debate warned that 'any geopolitical, scientific and technical, or ideological rivalry becomes pointless in this context if the winners will have not enough air to breathe or nothing to drink.'

Lessons should be drawn from Russia's 'difficult and sometimes tragic past,' and, in particular, recognising, 'the destruction of age-old values, religion and relations between people, up to and including the total rejection of family; encouragement to inform on loved ones; affirming so-called 'social progress' by those who believe they are introducing humanity to some kind of a new and better consciousness; and promoting socio-political structure or values that someone, for their own reasons, has called universal. Ignoring the philosophical, moral, and spiritual aspects also gives free rein to scientific developments that might well compromise and surpass an individual's ability to think and to reason: 'Where is the limit of interference in the human body beyond which a person ceases being himself?' they asked. These changes are gaining momentum, and they certainly cannot be stopped because they are objective as a rule. Egotistic interests continue to prevail over the notion of the common good.'

The history of Russia shows that, in the end, 'it is impossible to impose anything on anyone, be it the principles underlying the socio-political structure or values that someone, for their own

7 V.J. McBrierty and D.M.D Murphy and C.P. Power, '*A New, wholly Secular, World Order?*', *Furrow*, 72: October 2021, pp. 561-564, V.J. McBrierty and D.M.D. Murphy, '*The Church in Crisis: the Prophetic Dimensions: Quo Vadis, Prophecy or Fantasy*', *The Furrow*, 73: (2022). pp.106-111.

8 See footnote 7.

reasons, has called universal. ... After all, it is clear that when a real crisis strikes, there is only one universal value left and that is human life, which each state decides for itself how best to protect itself based on its abilities, culture, and traditions. They concluded their analysis on a positive note: 'Unfortunately, we had to bring back many sad memories, but at least our society has developed what they now refer to as herd immunity to extremism that paves the way to upheavals and socio-economic cataclysms. People really value stability and being able to live normal lives and to prosper while confident that the irresponsible aspirations of another group of revolutionaries will not upend their plans and aspirations. It is fervently hoped that the current so-called progress in the West will not take a comparable length of time to correct itself.'⁹

Archbishop Viganò also considered 'the Great Reset' to be 'a global coup d'état in which a financial and ideological élite has succeeded in seizing control of part of national governments, public and private institutions, the media, the judiciary, politicians and religious leaders,' thereby creating the worst dictatorships of all time because of its wholly global reach in our cyber universe.¹⁰

These collective observations define the scope of the formidable global challenges through which the current synodal pathway must steer.

Since time immemorial, the Church has relied on a supportive internal administration to carry out its core pastoral mission, with periodic reviews and renewal of its dual responsibilities in an ever-changing world. Such is the case with the forthcoming Synod in 2023, facing into a world riven by pandemic and rampant growth of social secularization as outlined above. The challenge is indeed formidable in a church that has developed internal flaws and weaknesses, most notably in the wake of Vatican II, as described by B.F. Meyer in 1971,¹¹ by S. Mulligan in 2012,¹² and in many

9 This debate clarifies the reason for the persistent reference to Russia in the Marian Apparitions, initially in Fatima, some months before the revolution in 1917. Our Lady asked for 'the Consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart and the Communion of Reparation on the first Saturdays. If my demands are followed, Russia will be converted, and peace will come. If not, Russia will spread her errors throughout the world, bringing about wars and persecutions against the Church.... Many nations will be destroyed. At the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, which will be converted, and an era of peace will be given to the world.' On March 25, 1984, Pope John Paul II solemnly consecrated the world and Russia to Mary's Immaculate Heart as had been first requested in Fatima. The errors to which the debate refers are precisely the errors advocated in *the Great Reset*.

10 Archb. Carlo Maria Viganò, ChurchMilitant.com, November 18, 2021.

11 B.F. Meyer, *The Church in Three Tenses*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. (1971)

12 S. Mulligan (ed.), 'Reaping the Harvest: Fifty Years after Vatican II', The Columba Press, Dublin, 2012.

apparitions and spiritual occurrences.¹³ There has been scant improvement in the Church over the last decade, increasingly falling victim to new knowledge not, as yet, fully understood. Change generates uncertainty, and uncertainty generates instability in the minds of those who fear the unknown, which, in turn, more than ever, is clouding the fundamentals of Christian dogma. As to the underlying ailments, Meyer argued that ‘faith becomes in time a heritage, and the inheriting of faith is a subtle process. The heirs are inevitably set the task of discriminating between the inalienable and the irrelevant, between fidelity and bias. This need to discriminate defines the root problem of the contemporary theology of the Church: within the Church itself, the tools of discrimination are in disrepair.’¹⁴ In particular, the balance between the institutional and pastoral dimensions needs to be redefined to address the problems within before addressing the challenges without.¹⁵

History again has much to offer, recalling earlier periods of dramatic change when visionary guidance was urgently required. Two such leaders come to mind, namely, Pope Gregory I (c.540-604) who bridged the Holy Roman Empire and the Medieval epochs¹⁶ and Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) who held office following the dissolution of the Papal States and created a roadmap to steer the Church into the twentieth century and beyond.¹⁷ Although centuries apart, the scale of the challenges and the way in which they were addressed were remarkably similar. The life experience of both left them well equipped to develop a meaningful relationship between Church and State with policies that were progressive, remedial, and visionary at the forefront of civil governance while maintaining the core Christian dogma handed on from Christ and the apostles.

In preparing for the forthcoming Synod in Ireland in 2023, the discussion thus far has singled out a number of key areas to be addressed in a world in which the technological revolution continues to raise a range of philosophical, moral, and spiritual questions. It is indeed a time for change, but what should be the nature and focus of such change?

- *The Institutional Church*: As the historical profile above shows, the fundamental dogmas, defined in the Church’s teachings over

13 See footnotes 1 and 11. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Fátima

14 See footnote 13.

15 G. O’Hanlon, ‘Mapping a Way Forward for the Catholic Church in Ireland’, *The Furrow*, 72: (2021) pp.455-463

16 Pope Saint Gregory I, <https://catholicism.org/gregory-great.html>

17 C.J. O’Malley (ed.), ‘*The Great White Shepherd of Christendom, Pope Leo XIII: his life, poems, encyclicals and public documents*’, J.S. Hyland & Company, Chicago (1903)

millennia, are the bedrock of the Church and are inviolable in any attempt to achieve change, in the interpretation of recurring parlance such as ‘Papal Re-set’. ‘Tradition is not a museum, true religion is not a freezer, and doctrine is not static but grows and develops. Tradition is not a museum, it remains a living tradition whereby the doctrine handed on by Christ and the Apostles must always be paramount and cannot be changed’.¹⁸ The Old and New Testaments provide a rich and timeless tapestry of humanity’s relationship with the Almighty. All of Christianity, past, present and future, is typically encapsulated in the writings of St. Paul and in his total fidelity to the mystery of Christ.¹⁹ This is also emphasized by St. John of the Cross when he reflects on St. Paul’s message not to grow weary in the midst of tribulation but to be steadfast, rooted and grounded in the love of Christ.²⁰ On a journey that is never easy, the focus must always be directed to Christ on the cross, accepting the many crosses that come our way in life as a form of divine currency towards the expiation of sin.²¹ Pope Gregory viewed the mediation of the sacraments, and the Eucharist, as central to salvation in a troubled world.

The current mission to achieve global *brotherhood* cannot preclude the *fatherhood* of God as it is central to Christian belief: Christ’s message that we are all brothers stems from the fatherhood of God. That said, the different approaches to spirituality since time immemorial must be respected, and not viewed as a threat.

- *The Church and State*: The Compendium of Christian Doctrine clearly sets out the basic ground rules in defining the relationship between Church and State. Martin Luther King interpreted those fundamentals in stating that ‘the church must be reminded that it is not the master nor the servant of the State, but rather the conscience of the State. It must be the guide and the critic of the State, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority’.²²

18 Pope Francis, in conversation with Austin Ivereigh, ‘*Let us Dream*’, Simon and Schuster, London, 2020

19 Letters of Paul, especially 1 & 2 Corinthians, with special reference to 1 Cor 12:1-31.

20 Spiritual Canticle of John of the Cross.

21 V.J. McBrierty, ‘*The Sign of the Cross*’, *The Furrow*, 72: (2021) 180-181.

22 Martin Luther King Jr., <https://sojo.net/media/dr-kings-reminder-church-conscience-state>.

- A more comprehensive and meaningful approach to lay participation should be addressed since each baptized member of the Church is called to cooperative participation in the mission of Christ and of the Church. As emphasized in Vatican II, this flows from our baptism which confers on us the right and the duty to participate fully in the life and mission of Christ and the Church. This follows on from Pope Gregory's assertion that every Christian has a place in the concord of the church, from contemplatives and laity, a participation that must be viewed as cooperative, not threatening.²³
- *Personal Faith*: The alarming fall-off in Church attendance and in vocations to the priesthood since Vatican II signals the need for a new mission of *re-conversion* to augment the Church's age-old external mission of evangelization. This will involve a greater understanding of faith, not a faith of *fear* but a faith of *love* involving a personal relationship through prayer with Christ. Faith remains an essential element if we are to deal with the imponderable questions that cannot be answered with human logic. But it is not a blind faith: It is a faith that draws fundamentally upon the life of Christ on earth, on the prophets, and on sacred scripture. It is also a faith, according to H.N.V. Temperley, that draws upon our inner conscience of morality, an aesthetic appreciation of beauty, and the power of the individual to gain knowledge about the universe.²⁴ This is where the scientist, the poet, and the composer have an edge. Nature indeed provides a meaningful metaphor when wrestling with the concept of 'faith', which requires belief to address this category of human uncertainty. The poet Keats, pondering on the wondrous complexities of life, recognised that the beauty of creation is bound up with the mystery of creation, the unsolved wonders, the unknown, the uncertainty that is indeed a fundamental aspect of human life, that is, '*unfathomed complexity linked to perfect order*'. In dealing with the uncertainties of life, he further remarked: '*When man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason ... the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration*'.²⁵ Keats's appreciation of the wonders of nature led him to its creator whereas revelation

23 See footnote 22.

24 H.N.V. Temperley, '*A Scientist who believes in God*', Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1961, pp. 96-108.

25 J. Keats, '*Selected Poems and Letters: George and Thomas Keats, 21 Dec. 1817*', D. Bush (ed.), Harvard Univ., Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Mass. (1959). p.261.

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leads us to the full salvific mission of Christ. But, in the end, as one learned preacher once summed it up: Human reasoning brings you to the door of the church, faith brings you into the sanctuary.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that the ongoing ‘papal re-set’²⁶ does not follow the same route specified in ‘the Great Reset’ which eliminates God, deifies humanity and makes science and technology its saviour.²⁷ In this context, the guidance of the Apostles Peter, Paul and John is entirely apposite.²⁸

26 See footnote 19.

27 See footnote 6.

28 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Pet 2:1-3; 1 John 2:24; 1Cor 12:4-31.

Securing the Future. My contention is that it is now the time when the leadership of today’s Church, with insight and discernment, with courage and honesty, must take a fresh look at the Christianity it has created over the past two millennia, a Christianity in which we have been brought up and lived all our lives up to this second decade of the first century of the third millennium and consider what needs to be changed, and then change it. Living things that do not change die. Acceptance by the apostles and first disciples in council in the year 49 of the necessity of fundamental change saved the Church from being just a small sect within Judaism and dying out. That gave it its own identity and independent existence, and at that time and until recently it enabled it to take the gospel to almost every nation.

– MICHAEL KNOWLES, *The Meeting that Changed the World* (Durham, England: Sacristy Press) p.3.

Soul Brothers? – *St. Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles & Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ, Apostle to the ‘Gentiles’ of Modernity*

Hilda Geraghty

Why would one dare to put a name beside that of St. Paul? – Other than that of St. Peter, of course. But that is what I am daring to do, if only to make people think about what is at stake for the Church in the modern world if it doesn't have a St. Paul figure to do for it what he once did for a fledgling Christianity. The magnitude of the cultural challenge facing Paul in the Roman Empire of the first century is comparable to that facing the Church in the modern world, which is why the comparison springs to mind.

CULTURAL CHALLENGE

How was Paul to make Christ's message understandable and liveable to people of a seriously different culture from that in which the message originated? – persuading Gentiles, i.e. non-Jews, to accept a faith born within Judaism, whose central figure was the Jewish Jesus? He had to be radical in order to be successful, and Paul was nothing if not radical. “In Christ we are a new creation!” he proclaimed.

With divinely inspired freedom, he bravely stripped away whatever in Judaism was not necessary to that new creation, even and above all *circumcision*, that supreme badge of Jewish identity, and along with it the rituals, feasts, customs and many regulations that had accumulated in Judaism during its long history. This provoked the first crisis in the Church, as to whether circumcision should be abandoned or retained. Under Paul, Christianity became a brand-new faith, developing its thinking as it went along. He

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made it a breath of fresh air in the stale atmosphere of the Roman empire, that was gratefully received by the oppressed. It was *new*. Paul's ability *to see things from a Gentile viewpoint* led him to strip away the husk, the outdated garments of Judaism. What he left of it was the biblical revelation, on which Christianity rested as on a foundation. It then proceeded to develop itself in its own right.

Driven by passionate zeal for the cause of Christ, Paul had opened his mind way beyond all the prejudices and horizons of his time. However, and this is what leads me to find parallels in the two men of my title, the challenge of Modernity, which has steadily risen over the past three centuries, is arguably as great a cultural challenge for the Church as that faced by the infant Jewish-Christian Church in the first century. In terms of facing up to that challenge, with a passion similar to that of St Paul, both intellectual and spiritual, the figure that comes to mind is that of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), French Jesuit priest and palaeontologist.

THE DANGER OF EVADING CULTURAL CHALLENGE

Almost each day of his life as a scientist among his colleagues in the field, Teilhard (1881-1955) was acutely aware of the huge danger facing the Church if it could not present Christ in a way that spoke to the science-based culture of Modernity. We can see in sad signs that the Church has evaded this challenge for too long, and that Teilhard was right when he saw how Christianity in the western world was about to fall off a cliff. Again and again the adult children of believing and practising parents are simply walking away from the Church as soon as they can. *We are no longer able to hand on the faith from one generation to the next*, to the heartbreak of many a parent. Celebrations of First Communion and Confirmations have a hollow feel to them, the children never again seen in Church. They may grow up to become 'spiritual but not religious'. Even Christmas in church seems a little fragile, for many a nostalgic once-a-year drop-in, with carols from yesteryear. "*Say what we will,*" writes Teilhard, "*our century is religious - perhaps more so than any other ... only it has not yet found the God whom it can worship.*" i.e. a picture of God that makes sense to them.

A DAZED CHURCH?

This state of things still leaves the Church somewhat dazed, I think, because for most of its history it was in the vanguard of culture. Everywhere Christianity went it was a vehicle of literacy,

education and progress, and in many places still is. Many great scientists were full-blooded Christians. These included no less than Georges Lemaitre, a Belgian priest, who first discovered in 1929 what later became known as the ‘Big Bang’. The Church was on the cusp of the wave of western civilisation. How was it passed out by Modernity? Teilhard, however, saw the teaching Church of his day as clinging to a static, outmoded cosmology and anthropology, rooted in ancient Greece, and that it had become too narrowly focused on salvation in terms of an after-life, and an individualistic piety, rather than on improving *the world itself in its own right* so as to form the Kingdom of God on earth. In Teilhard’s eyes the Church needed to look outwards to the fields white for harvest, and learn *how to interpret Christ* for today’s culture.

*“If we want to achieve the so much needed synthesis between faith in God and faith in the world, then the best possible thing for us to do is to bring to the fore on a dogmatic basis, in the person of Christ, the cosmic aspect and the cosmic function which make him organically the principle and controlling force, the very soul of evolution.”*¹

NEW CLOTHING FOR CHRIST?

Teilhard strove with all his mind and heart to lead the Church into giving Christ a new set of clothes, that is, new credibility. Because clothing matters, and sends out a message the wearer may or may not be aware of. Older clothing is worn out, a little pathetic, down at heel and reflects poorly on the wearer. This is largely the state of the Church in western society today. Image, how others see us, does matter, especially if you want to be an apostle. Interestingly, we learn from the Passion narrative that Jesus’ robe was “*woven in one piece from neck to hem.*” He looked dignified, even elegant. If the Church is to hold on to its own cradle Catholics, as well as fulfilling its mission – “*Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation,*” – it needs to improve its image. It needs to show it is integrating the landscape of Modernity into its deepest level, theology. Modernity can be a friend to the Church, not a foe, Teilhard is saying. It is hard to live one’s today in yesterday’s mind-set. However, the Church in Teilhard’s words, is presenting ‘*too small a Christ*’, an out of date understanding of Christ, to have an impact on people who are more or less aware of

1 From *Christianisme et Évolution*, 1945, p3, as quoted by N.M. Wildiers, *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin*, Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, London and Harper and Row, New York, 1968, p.133.

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the cosmic dimensions of the universe and the evolution of life on earth. *People have not been taught the place and role of Christ in this story*, - and Teilhard burned to teach them.

THE COSMIC CHALLENGE

What does the Church say to a well-educated post-Christian, who writes,

“Slowly, like a dimmer switch being turned down, I found my belief in God fading. The reaches of time seemed too icily immense for the life and death of a single human being two thousand years ago possibly to have had the cosmic significance claimed for it by Christianity.”²

That is Tom Holland, writing in the final chapter of his magnificent book *Dominion*, subtitled *The Making of the Western Mind*, recounting the story of Christianity’s role in western civilisation. Teilhard would point out that when the single human being in question is an incarnation, an historical embodiment of God, no less, it does make a difference. Jesus the Christ, the human being risen out of death, *through his organic extension in the Eucharist*, – “*Take and eat. This is my body*”- reaches out to gradually incorporate and unite more and more of humanity in a new matter-spirit-unity *par excellence*. Potentially that includes all of the human race, drawing it into one great whole in himself through the power of love. This ever-evolving, emerging Christ is the ultra-human, converging over the ages towards an Omega point, centre of the whole. That single historical person is the Human God, the point on which all of history turns, at once both way-to and centre-of Omega, exerting its drawing power on all of reality. The Church didn’t see the danger in failing to work on re-interpreting its teachings in the light of the awesome perspectives revealed by science. Of critical importance was its fear and resistance to the notion of evolution, that seemed to pose such a threat to God as Creator. Yet evolution became the new key, first to interpreting the biological mysteries of life, and later to interpreting the reality of everything generally. Too conditioned by a dualism of spirit and matter, the Church was failing, in Teilhard’s view, to see and love the world in the right way, as the very stuff of the Kingdom. For what other ‘stuff’ is there? “*What is Christian and what is human no longer appear to coincide. Hence the great schism that threatens the Church*,” he writes, – schism in the sense that Christianity was in danger of splitting off

2 Tom Holland, *Dominion :The Making of the Western Mind*, Little, Brown. 2019.

from mainstream culture, to become a dwindling minority faith. Teilhard was not afraid *of* the perspectives of science, but afraid, rather, *for* a Church that was not facing up to them. That is the root of the crisis of faith in the Church and the world today.

*“The resistance to her expansion which the Church meets at the present time is not... because her dogmas are too sublime, and her system of morality too hard. It is because people no longer recognise in us their religious and moral ideal, and so turn away in the hope of finding something better.”*³

THE TENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

It is the problem of Christian humanism, of how to balance the interests of God and those of human beings. *When correctly interpreted*, Teilhard would say, their interests are one and the same. Because for Christian faith, God is now and forever a human being, and the human being, Christ, is God. *Poorly interpreted, however, people may turn away from ‘God’ to seek what seems humanly better.* Teilhard wrote *The Divine Milieu* as an attempt to teach Christians how to see and love the world in the right way, to find and celebrate God in *the daily material reality and sheer effort* of their lives. In this way their whole living could be motivated and energised, as a joyful act of contributing to the evolution of the Kingdom of Love. In a word, “life to the full,” *here, now*, as well as over the horizon.

“Humanity was sleeping – it is still sleeping – imprisoned in the narrow joys of its little closed loves. A tremendous spiritual power is slumbering in the depths of our multitude, which will manifest itself only when we have learnt to break down the barriers of our egoisms and, by a fundamental recasting of our outlook, raise ourselves up to the habitual and practical vision of universal realities.

*Jesus, Saviour of human activity to which you have given meaning, Saviour of human suffering to which you have given living value, be also the Saviour of human unity; compel us to discard our pettinesses, and to venture forth, resting upon you, into the uncharted ocean of charity.”*⁴

3 Teilhard de Chardin, *L’Incroyance Moderne*, p.2, quoted by N.M. Wildiers, *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin*, Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, London and Harper and Row, New York, 1968, p.118.

4 Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, Harper Torchbooks, The Cathedral Library, Harper and Row, Publishers, New York, 1965, p.146.

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BREADTH OF VISION

To return to comparing the two figures: one of Paul's personal gifts was the sheer breadth and intellectual cast of his mind. Quite independently of the prologue to the fourth Gospel, written later by St. John the Evangelist, though clearly inspired by the same Holy Spirit, Paul exclaimed of Jesus,

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together ... And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*⁵

With divinely inspired daring, Paul placed the totality of the world, of reality as then known, at the feet of Jesus the Christ, – a man whose lifetime was partly contemporary with his own! There is a providence, perhaps, in the fact that Paul had not known Jesus during his earthly life, but only through a profound mystical experience. This it was that gave him the *perspective and the depth of faith* to make such cosmic claims for Jesus the Christ.

It was precisely this passage, and others of similar depth both in Paul and St. John the Evangelist, that gave Teilhard both inspiration and scriptural support for the cosmic dimensions of his Christ. What he did was to work out step by step, throughout his whole life, nothing less than *a theory of everything*, holy grail of scientists. Except that Teilhard's *everything* included both evolving consciousness – '*the within of things*' – and the Human God, incarnated in Jesus the Christ. And he went on to fearlessly interpret the entire cosmic story and the evolutionary story in that light. Christ, the Human God, is nothing less than the *Alpha and Omega* of the whole of reality, from the atoms of the big bang to the complexities of a whole human race of nearly eight billion individuals. For "In him all things hold together." Christ must be clothed in the glorious cosmic robes of *the whole*, as we now know it.

FAITHFUL TO THE ESSENTIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

From a spiritual viewpoint in *The Divine Milieu*, and a scientific view point in *The Human Phenomenon*, and in numerous other works (all forbidden by the Church to be published during his

⁵ Col.1:14-20.

lifetime), Teilhard sets out his unified view of the evolution of the cosmos and of life on earth. He suggests how the major doctrines of the Church might be re-interpreted for people today in a whole new light, radiantly meaningful.

Dutch theologian and general editor of the official French text of the works of Teilhard de Chardin, N. M. Wildiers writes:

“His faithfulness to Church teachings is not to be doubted for a moment. His passionate love for Christ and the Church are beyond all question. The renewal he aimed at in theology never affected the kernel of Catholic teaching in matters of faith, but only its outer aspect, the way in which it was presented. He believed that the solution and renewal, so badly needed, were to be found, not in departing from traditional theology, but in exploring it more deeply.”⁶

Teilhard wanted Catholic dogmas, first developed within a static, older, smaller Greek cosmos, to be reset in a world now seen as dynamic. It becomes a question of transposing them.

“The transposition into cosmogenic dimensions of the traditional view expressed in cosmic terms: creation, spirit, evil, God (and, more specifically, original sin, the cross, the resurrection, the Parousia,⁷ charity ...) – all these notions, once they are transposed to a ‘genesis’ dimension, become amazingly clear and coherent.” He is convinced that *“the most traditional Christianity can be interpreted so as to embrace all that is best in the aspirations of our times.”* To make this evident is the job of the theologian who has understood what the spiritual predicament of our time is... The central problem ... is undoubtedly that of the relation between God and the world ... *“In every branch of sacred science, the time has come to investigate, by study and by prayer, the area in which God and the cosmos come together.”*⁸

ALWAYS POINTED TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Teilhard, the palaeontologist, never ceased to be fascinated by the future, and where evolution might lead us. *“Studying the very ancient past has revealed to me how the future is built,”* he wrote. With amazing prescience, he intuited that the evolution

6 N.M. Wildiers, *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin*, Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, London and Harper and Row, New York, 1968, p.138

7 The return of Christ in glory at the end of time.

8 N.M. Wildiers, *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin*, Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, London and Harper and Row, New York, 1968, pp 123-4.

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of consciousness would bring about a living pooling of minds, a *noosphere* (from the Greek *nous* for 'mind') around the planet, something which has happened in our times through the internet, that is bringing about a growing unification of humanity. This however is not without its dark side. *"Whatever has yet to be completed is of necessity imperfect, defective, unfinished. Evil is thus structurally part of an evolving world. An evolving world and a perfect world would be mutually contradictory."*

According to Teilhard, there is no reason for evolution to stop. As conscious beings we are the universe grown conscious of itself. We are now responsible for where evolution is going and the arrow of time points only one way. The future beckons us on, but without the Human God to guide it and lead it, evolution will miss its mark. The ultimate destiny of the cosmos and the human story is to reach a central Omega point of convergence, as a united humanity, which through the power of love, will be divinised through union with God. *"Love is the most powerful and still least known energy in the world,"* he writes. *"Love is the affinity which links and draws together the elements of the world ... Love, in fact, is the agent of universal synthesis."*

The visions of science and theology blend in Teilhard's totally unified vision, which is why he can come under fire separately from both camps, for different reasons. Others, however, welcome his unified vision of reality as a deliverance from the dualism that would pit matter against spirit, body against soul, earth against heaven. *"There is neither spirit nor matter in the world; the stuff of the universe is spirit-matter."*

God's work is *one*, and we are called to build up God's Kingdom *through* building up the earth in the right way. It is dangerous to keep the spiritual and material separate or even opposed in our minds, because the material approach, as things stand, is seriously gaining hearts and minds, and the process is perhaps accelerating in developed countries. Meanwhile the Church in the west is withering in apparent old age. More and more people are becoming 'spiritual but not religious.' *"The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope."* Will the future belong to the Church? Only if its voice can be heard using the concepts and language of Modernity.

However, one happy fruit of Teilhard's growing influence after his death is how his vision of *the whole* became the inspiration of the American Thomas Berry, who went on to become the father of the ecological movement. This has powerfully gripped the world today, increasing its sense of unity and responsibility for *the whole*. Because everything is related to everything else, an insight grounded on Teilhard's vision.

URGENCY OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION

Giving a new voice to Church teachings expressed in the concepts of Modernity is an urgent task. Like St Paul, Teilhard had the all too rare ability, and the life experience, to see things from the 'Gentile' viewpoint. With his burning missionary heart, he makes an impassioned plea to the Church to look, not beyond the world, but *at it*, and exclaims,

*"Jerusalem, lift up your head. Look at the immense crowds of those who build and those who seek. All over the world, men are toiling- in laboratories, in studios, in deserts, in factories, in the vast social crucible. The ferment that is taking place by their instrumentality in art and science and thought is happening for your sake. Open, then, your arms and your heart, like Christ your Lord, and welcome the waters, the flood and the sap of humanity. Accept it, this sap – for, without its baptism, you will wither, without desire, like a flower out of water; and tend it, since, without your sun, it will disperse itself wildly in sterile shoots."*⁹

"WHO ARE YOU TO TEACH US?"

Paul, of verifiable mystical experience and a conversion from persecutor to advocate, needed no qualification for his moral authority. What about Teilhard?

Though of quite a different order, some see a form of divine accreditation, a seal of approval, in the fact that Teilhard died of a sudden heart attack *on an Easter Sunday*, the 10th April 1955, as he had long wished to do. It was the feast nearest his heart, the day of the risen Christ, Omega centre and destiny of the evolving cosmos, to whom he had passionately dedicated his life's work.

Unlike Paul, who freely preached and taught, Teilhard was a gagged prophet right to the end. Frustration was his cross, and his sufferings on that score were as great as his burning desire to teach and rescue the Church he loved, for the sake of the world. Yet he bore this unending trial patiently, humbly, without bitterness, heroically obedient. When some wondered why he would not leave his Jesuit order or the Church, he would smile and quote St. Exupéry, 'In order to have an effect upon the house, you have got to live in it.'¹⁰ Fortunately, he had his full-time career as a

9 Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*. Harper Torchbooks p 154, Harper and Row, Publishers New York 1965.

10 Robert Speaight, *Teilhard de Chardin, a Biography*, by, Collins, London, 1967, p. 323.

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palaeontologist working in the field, mostly in China, to occupy him.

The French philosopher, Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) writes:

There is nothing shady about the origins of Père Teilhard de Chardin's celebrity; everything in him was pure. Under the continual flow of scientific or other alluvions he kept intact and miraculously preserved the nugget of pure gold which was the piety and faith of his childhood.¹¹

In the fervour of his prayer we see the intensity of his love for Christ, the mark of a saint.

“Disperse, O Jesus, the clouds with your lightning! Show yourself to us as the Mighty, the radiant, the Risen! Come to us once again as the Pantocrator who filled the solitude of the cupolas in the ancient basilicas! Nothing less than this Parousia is needed to counter-balance and dominate in our hearts the glory of the world that is coming into view. And so that we should triumph over the world with you, come to us clothed in the glory of the world.”¹²

To conclude, if Paul in the first century gained the title ‘missionary to the Gentiles’, Teilhard in the twentieth and beyond can be seen as a parallel figure, a soul brother, missionary to the sophisticated ‘Gentiles’ of Modernity, and teacher of teachers.

Each of them claimed nothing less than *the whole of reality* for the Human God.

[Quick easy presentation of Teilhard de Chardin's thinking available in three PowerPoints on this link in a Google browser (only): <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QAUyWUA2wHFPJsgcQQKE7tRNV6719rV?usp=sharing>]

11 Seminarium no. 4. *ibid.*, p 326.

12 Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*. Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, Publishers New York 1965, p.128

Translating Vatican II

Gerald O'Collins

In recent years the heat has been on defects in biblical and liturgical translations. Versions of the sixteen documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) have escaped a scrutiny that is long overdue.

Before he leaves this earth for eternal life with God, Pope Francis aims to re-establish (or establish?) the central place of the Council in the life of the Church for the twenty-first century. That involves our having confidence in the available translations of the Vatican II documents. By and large, our confidence is justified, but not always so.

Leisure time over Christmas and New Year gave me the chance of taking down from the shelves of my house library and examining four well known translations of Vatican II documents: the 1966 translation edited by Walter Abbott, a 1988 edition of the translation edited by Austin Flannery, the 1991 bilingual edition (in English and the original Latin) produced by Norman Tanner, and the 2009 *Vatican Translation* published by the Vatican Press.

Taking the versions in chronological order, I checked them on how they rendered four passages in the Council's documents, found respectively in *Dei Verbum* 12 (the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation); *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 18 (the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests); *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7 (the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy); and *Lumen Gentium* 16 (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church).

Among other things, these passages spoke of 'the living tradition of the whole Church (*vivae totius Ecclesiae Traditionis*)' (DV 12); of a form of biblical prayer traditionally called '*lectio divina*' (PO 18); of Christ being 'supremely (*maxime*)' present under the Eucharistic species (SC 7); and of the work of Satan in deceiving people (LG 16).

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THE LIVING TRADITION

When interpreting the Scriptures, Vatican II urged us to take into account ‘the living tradition of the entire Church’, as the Abbott translates accurately DV 12. Tanner and the *Vatican Translation* also correctly follow suit, whereas Flannery simply omits ‘living’ when rendering the passage as ‘taking into account the Tradition of the entire Church’.

Does this omission matter very much? The phrase ‘living tradition’ has its background in the nineteenth-century Tübingen school of theology and the trail-blazing work of Johann Sebastian Drey (on living tradition) and Johann Adam Möhler (on organic tradition). It is also a phrase that conjures up the mindset of John Henry Newman and inspired me when writing *Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

Describing tradition as ‘living’ is more than a matter of borrowing from some great theologians of the past. It fits in with the image of tradition as a living stream flowing from the well-spring of divine revelation that the Constitution on Divine Revelation had developed in the previous chapter (DV 9).

LECTIO DIVINA

When setting forth in PO 18 various spiritual means for supporting the life of priests, the Council expressly recommended ‘*lectio divina*’, a prayerful mulling over the inspired Scriptures. This particular method of prayer goes back to Origen in the second century, was taken up in the Benedictine tradition, taught by St John of the Cross and many others, and enjoyed a second spring in the twentieth century. It is dispiriting to report that Abbott, Flannery, and the *Vatican Translation* all failed to pick up the specific reference and spoke of ‘spiritual reading’ in general.

The three translations were not alone in this mistake. I do not know anyone who has remarked on the fact that, for the first time in church history, a general council had used the precise, technical term ‘*lectio divina*’.

Tanner’s version recognized that the document was not speaking of spiritual reading, which might include the works of St Teresa of Avila, St Francis de Sales, and the letters of Abbot Chapman. Tanner’s translation proposed ‘faith nourished by the [prayerful] reading of God’s word’. By definition, *lectio divina* is just that, the prayerful reading of Scripture’. Vatican II wanted priestly spirituality to be ‘nourished’ precisely by ‘*lectio divina*’ in the classical sense. Tanner’s version describes what ‘*lectio divina*’ is about. We would be better advised to use that Latin expression, as

we do for the ‘Gloria’, the ‘Sanctus’, the ‘Agnus Dei’ and other ancient prayers or methods of prayer.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRESENCE

We come now to *two* important cases that bear very significantly, respectively, on the sacramental life of the Church and her view of those who are not baptized but belong to other faiths.

In an eloquent, now classical, passage on the various ways in which we experience in the liturgy the presence of the crucified and risen Christ, the liturgical constitution recalled the supreme example, his presence in the Eucharist (SC 7). The (Latin) adverb used by the Council is a superlative derived from *magnus*, ‘*maxime*’, which carries here the meaning of ‘supremely’, ‘above all’, or ‘as greatest of all’. The meaning of ‘*maxime*’ is not to be reduced to that of the less emphatic ‘*praesertim*’ (‘especially’ or ‘in particular’).

Elsewhere, in different contexts, and apropos of different matters, the liturgy constitution and other documents of Vatican II use ‘*praesertim*’. Here in SC 7 the Council adopts the stronger adverb ‘*maxime*’.

Astonishingly, Abbott, Flannery (at least in 1988) and the *Vatican Translation* all talk of the presence of Christ, ‘especially’ under or in the eucharistic species. More is at stake here than a mere lapse into false translation.

Tanner proposes that Christ is ‘present *most fully* under the eucharistic elements’. This translation has the merit at least of preserving the superlative character of what is stated. But it is hard to justify the switch from the realm of greatness (*magnus*) to that of fullness (*plenus*). They are not the same thing. What is great is not necessarily full, or more importantly, vice versa. What is the fullest in a series is not necessarily the greatest in that series.

I leave it to readers to express their dismay at this misrepresentation of what the Second Vatican Council taught about the intensity of the Eucharistic presence, a misrepresentation that derives also from the official Vatican publishing house.

THE SUCCESS OF THE DEVIL’S DECEPTIONS

A final example comes from the translation of an adverb (‘*saepius*’) in *Lumen Gentium* (no. 16) concerned with the extent of diabolic success in blocking the divine offer of salvation. Abbott renders the adverb correctly: ‘rather often’ people can be deceived by the Evil One. Tanner catches the comparative nature of the word by rendering it ‘more often’.

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The *Vatican Translation* surprisingly waters down the force of ‘*saepius*’, misreading it as if it were the straight equivalent of ‘*saepe*’: ‘But often men [!] [are] deceived by the Evil One’.

Flannery’s mistranslation credits the adverb with a superlative meaning and could prove damaging: ‘very often [people are] deceived by the Evil One’. In my experience, this false translation has been invoked to suggest that a majority of human beings will not be saved and hell will be heavily populated.

CONCLUSION

This article has put on display *four* mistranslations of Vatican II documents. Perhaps these errors were corrected in later editions or printings. In fact, the 1996 edition of Flannery set right its version of SC 7: Christ is present ‘most of all in the eucharistic species’.

Moreover, I want to express my warm thanks to the editors and translators who produced these translations and repeatedly ‘got things right’. Nevertheless, in a few places these versions can lead people astray.

Those readers who know Latin can check for themselves the degree of accuracy achieved, using the original texts of the Council available on the Vatican website. Others will have friends or acquaintances who read Latin and can help them with such checking.

Beyond question, fully accurate translations of the Vatican II documents by themselves will not remedy everything. But they promise to clarify the vision and practice for which Pope Francis has been calling.

Eastern Thought. From his early days, Thomas Merton cast his sights towards faraway green hills in the expectation of hues that were fresher and greener. From infancy, he was accustomed to frequent interchange with the cultures of a number of countries and continents. It is perhaps not surprising that his literary and religious interests knew no boundaries either.

– BISHOP FINTAN MONAHAN, *Peace Smiles, Rediscovering Thomas Merton* (Dublin: Veritas), p.71.

Homilies for May [C]

Brenda Dolphin

Third Sunday of Easter

May 1

Acts 5:27-32. Ps 29 4-6 and 11-13. Apoc 5:11-14.
John 21: 1-19.

Follow me

The readings today raise a very pertinent question for us in terms of our relationships.

Of all the apostles Peter is a very lovable character. He is honest, big-hearted, transparent and he also has his faults, he is impulsive and he makes mistakes. One of the biggest mistakes he made was on the night Jesus was arrested. Peter followed him from the garden of Gethsemane as far as the charcoal fire burning in Pilate's courtyard. There, when questioned he publicly denied vehemently that he knew Jesus.

That denial had a huge impact on his sense of self-respect and caused Peter great shame and distress. He knew that he had let Jesus down. Good Friday came with its anguish, pain and heartbreak. Jesus died and was buried. There was a lot of unfinished business in their relationship and then Easter Sunday happened.

A second chance

When we catch up with Peter in today's gospel it is after the Resurrection and he finds himself unexpectedly in Jesus' presence in a relaxed setting. Once again he is beside a charcoal fire where Jesus has prepared breakfast for the group of weary fisherman. After they had finished eating Peter is surprised by Jesus' three insistent questions "Peter do you love me". In his replies we see Peter gradually healing the wounds of his failures and readying himself to go forward unencumbered by past baggage.

Never too late

There is a very important message for all of us in this encounter between Jesus and Peter. What we learn is that with Jesus we get

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a second chance. We learn that it is never too late to speak what is in our hearts to those we love. Even if it happens that the person we love has died before we can mend a relationship, because of the Resurrection, because we believe as Christians in the Communion of Saints it is always possible to speak our heart to those we love, to tell them what is deepest in our hearts, to tell them that any unease that may have happened in the relationship was nothing more than a passing cloud in the sky.

Do you love me?

Do you love me? Three times Jesus asked Peter the question. If Jesus were to stand in front of you today and ask you the same question what would you say?

If like Peter your response is “yes”, then how do you show Jesus that you love him concretely day by day? A consequence of that yes to Love can mean that you will know great joy and peace. It can also mean you will also face difficulties, you will be tested but you will also have the inner certainty that Jesus will be with you always, especially as you grow older.

The first reading highlights for us just how complete was Peter’s healing. With the gift and power of the Holy Spirit at work in him, Peter went around Jerusalem and beyond preaching the message of the Good News, suffering, being harassed and brought before the Sanhedrin because of it yet glad to be able to suffer humiliation for the sake of Jesus. What a turnaround!

Following Jesus calls us to trust implicitly that God’s love never fails, God’s love sustains, God’s love fills our hearts with hope. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. If he could enable Peter’s rehabilitation, then he will not hesitate to do the same for you today.

Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 8

Acts 13: 14, 43-52. Ps 99 1-3, 5. Apoc 7:9, 14-17.

John 10: 27-30

God our Shepherd

When Jesus lived on the earth the vigilance of shepherds was vital for the safety of the flocks of sheep that were the mainstay of the economy of the country in which he lived. The protective presence of the Shepherd freed the sheep from anxiety. Under the watchful tender gaze of the Shepherd the sheep could graze in peace and roam with a sense of security and freedom.

While the notion of the Shepherd is not very relevant for us

today the underlying truth is no less important for us. God (our Good Shepherd) watches over us in love. His protective love enfolds and encircles us often without our knowing or being aware of what is happening.

When we put our trust in God, when we put our hand in God's hand we know that we are safe. No one can steal us away from God. We are the only ones who can do that to ourselves.

God's protective care does not mean that we won't suffer difficulties in life but what it does mean is that in difficult moments God is with us sustaining us, supporting and encouraging us. Our faith and trust in God's love ensures our safe passage through trials and hardships. We emerge from these trials stronger and surer of who we are – God's beloved children.

Eternal Life

In today's gospel Jesus promises us Eternal Life. Is Eternal Life something for the future or is it something that we can experience today here and now? There is a moment when time stands still, when we can experience Eternal Life and that is the moment we are in adoration. When we kneel down in adoration before God (or Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament) we experience something of Eternal Life.

In adoration we look to God or at some attribute of God (beauty, goodness, truth, or oneness) so strongly that everything else fades away. We stand in wonder, admiration and awe.

God's person, beauty, goodness and truth overwhelm us so much so that it takes our minds off ourselves, our own heartaches, headaches, hurts and resentments.

In the miracle of adoration, we are already with God, entirely with God, and the boundary between time and eternity is seemingly removed.

It is true that we cannot now understand that adoring God will bring endless happiness. We always want to be doing something. We want to criticize, intervene, change, improve, shape. And rightly so! That is our duty. But in death, when we come to God, all that ceases. Then our existence will be pure astonishment, pure looking, pure praise, pure adoration – and unimaginable happiness. As the second reading today points out: "the Lamb who is at the throne will be their Shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water".

Light for the Nations

From adoration we are propelled to bring the message of God's love to all whom we meet and encounter in our lives whether they

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accept it or not. In the first reading Paul and Barnabas draw the people by their teaching but jealousy and resentment leads to they being expelled from the city. This setback only serves to send them onwards in their journey of preaching the good news far and wide. Today we pray for people who are called to follow Jesus more closely and to tell his message at home and in far flung places where there is a thirst and longing to hear the Good News.

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 15

Acts 14 21 – 27. Ps 144 8-13. Apoc 21:1-5. John 13 31-35.

As I have loved you

In today's readings God's message is very clear. The essence of the message is that we love one another just as Jesus taught us to do, just as he loves us.

If we do this, we will be witnesses to God's unfailing love in the world.

Loving the other person was already promoted in the Old Testament, in the Commandments. The newness that Jesus brings to the message is "As I have loved you". "Love one another as I have loved you"

For those of us who follow Jesus, his New Commandment is based on what Jesus himself did when he lived on earth. He lived love as sacrifice both in his life and in his death. While he lived on earth Jesus extended love to all, warmly, openly, transparently.

Life wasn't easy for Jesus. He met with scorn, injustice and hatred. However, Jesus turned these situations into expressions of love:

Jesus turned a situation of betrayal into compassion – compassion for Peter who betrayed him.

Jesus turned injustice into prayer – on the Cross he prayed "Father forgive them".

In Jesus, compassion gets the better of anger. As we read in the prophet Hosea "my compassion grows tender".

St Teresa of Avila, the great Carmelite saint once said – "It is Love that gives worth to all things".

The human struggle to love the other as ourselves

Loving the other is not an easy thing to do. It means that we sacrifice ourselves and put the other and not ourselves at the centre of the Universe. This is something that is very tough for human nature and which is the struggle of a lifetime.

We struggle to get past the daily annoyances, the imagined hurts. However, the truth is that even in our failure to live up to

what Jesus asks of us, if we are struggling honestly, then we are at least on the road to following what is asked of us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

When we accept the reality that lies behind the commandment, that our neighbour is as worthy of love as ourselves, then in our very attempt to act on Jesus' demand, we are acknowledging that our neighbour is worthy of love even if, at this point in our lives, we cannot come anywhere near living up to the ideal.

That's the crucial point: in continuing to struggle, despite our failures, to live up to the Jesus' great commandment of love we acknowledge the dignity inherent in others; we acknowledge the dignity inherent in our enemies, we acknowledge that they are worthy of love, and in doing so we also acknowledge our own shortcomings.

That's "imperfect" of course, but it's a start!

The Irish Jesuit, Michael Paul Gallagher, (*In Extra Time*) says:

"You probably don't hate anyone, but you can be paralyzed by daily negatives. Mini-prejudices and knee-jerk judgements can produce a mood of undeclared war. Across barbed wire fences, invisible bullets fly."

Loving the other as oneself, Gallagher submits, is for most of us an impossible uphill climb.

In this view, authentic love is not so much something we *feel*; it is something we *are*. At its root, love is not simply a feeling nor is it a moral virtue (though these are part of it). It is a given, something that makes up part of who and what we are.

Love, not least falling in love, can help make us more conscious of our oneness in being with others. When we feel love deeply or passionately, then perhaps (like Thomas Merton in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* describing a mystical vision he had on a street corner) we can awake more from our dream of separateness and our illusion of difference and see the secret beauty and depth of other people's hearts. Perhaps too it will enable us to see others as the person that each one is in God's eyes.

And wouldn't it be wonderful, Merton adds ... "if we could see each other that way all the time."

A question

What comes to your mind when you hear the word Love?

Whom do you really love – meaning for whom would you be willing to give your life?

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 22

Acts 15 1-2 22-29. Ps 66 2-3, 5-6. 8. Apoc 21:10-14.

John 14 23-29.

Jesus describes how the Holy Spirit works in us.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks to his disciples. Since he is about to leave them and go to the Father he promises them *three* things.

1. That both the Father and He will come and live in their hearts.
2. That the Holy Spirit will come and help them have a deeper and fuller understanding of the message he has given them, of the words he has spoken to them. "He will remind you of all that I have said".
3. His gift of Peace – "Peace I leave you my own Peace I give you".

What he is saying to his disciples and indeed what he says to us is that if we are attentive to what is happening within us great things will happen for us and within us.

We know that the result of the Holy Spirit at work within us is an ever deepening sense of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. When the Spirit is at work in our lives then we find inner harmony, deep peace and an enlivening joy. Equally, when the Spirit is at work in the community there is harmony, union and mutual love.

The Holy Spirit at work in us prays a prayer of joyful gratitude, of wonder and of praise. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to love and that love finds its expression in a prayer of gratitude wonder and awe. The Spirit at work in us helps us to realise that God is enough for us. We don't need to amass material things. There are gifts that are priceless and that cannot be bought.

A listening heart is necessary in order to hear the Spirit speak within us through our deepest desires, our inner longings and our thirst. The Holy Spirit teaches us to listen and then to say "Yes" to God.

God speaks to us through our experiences of life. It is important that we listen to these experiences, that we savour them and that we learn from them.

When we are in communion with Jesus and the Father through the power of the Spirit at work in us, there is a welling up of Joy within us that cannot be restrained, that will not be dampened and through its infectious nature draws us into deeper communion not only with the Lord but also and very importantly with each other as well.

Peace

There once lived a king who declared that he would give a prize to the artist who would paint the best painting depicting peace. Many great painters sent the king several of their best pictures. Among the various master pieces was a picture of a calm peaceful lake perfectly mirroring towering snow-capped mountains. Overhead was a clear blue sky with fluffy clouds. The picture was perfect. Most of the people who viewed the pictures of peace from the various artists thought that it was the best.

When the king announced the winner, everyone was shocked. The picture which won the prize had mountains too but they were rugged and bare. The sky looked very angry. It looked like a storm was raging. This picture did not look peaceful at all. It looked like the artist has mistakenly submitted his painting depicting a storm rather than peace. But if anyone looked closely at the painting, she could see a tiny bush growing in the cracks of a rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. In the midst of the of the angry weather around her, the bird sat peacefully on her nest.

Peace does not mean being in a place where there is no noise or trouble. Peace means being in the middle of all the chaos and still being calm at heart. Real peace is a state of mind, not the state of one's surroundings.

The mother bird calmly sitting on her nest despite her chaotic surroundings is the best representation of peace.

The Peace that Jesus gives: "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you ... Do not let your hearts be troubled."

Jesus doesn't promise His disciples a peaceful, easy life when they will always relax and never experience conflict or fear. He does promise that in the end, they will live together again in peace when he returns. That means that no matter what they face, the disciples' future is secure because of Jesus. Trust in Jesus is what gives them true peace, not a peace based on their situation. We too can share in that same peace when we believe and trust in Jesus!

Feast of the Ascension*May 29*

Acts 1: 1-11. Psalm 46 2-3, 6-9. Eph1:17-23. Luke 24 46-53.

Ascension

The feast of the Ascension gives us an insight into life that we need to understand to better sort out the paradoxical interplay between life and death, presence and absence, love and loss.

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The Ascension names and highlights a paradox that lies deep at the centre of life, namely, that we all reach a point in life where we can only give our presence more deeply by going away so that others can receive the full blessing of our spirits.

Jesus leaves his disciples definitively in his bodily form. He returns to his place at the right hand of his Father.

Jesus, when bidding farewell to his friends, spoke these words: "It's better for you that I go away." "You will be sad now, but your sadness will turn to joy." "Don't cling to me, go instead to Galilee and I will meet you there."

This is a moment of intense separation for the disciples. They must let Jesus go. How can they make sense of his words "You will be sad now but your sadness will turn to joy"?

How might we understand these words? How is it better that someone we love goes away? How can the sadness of a goodbye, of a painful leaving, turn to joy?

Perhaps we understand this best in the experience parents have when their children grow up and leave home. They find it painful to see them grow away from them, painful to say that particular goodbye, painful to see them, precisely, ascend.

But, if their children's words could say what their hearts intuit, they would say what Jesus said to his disciples before his Ascension: "It's better for you that I go away. There will be sadness now, but that sadness will turn to joy when, one day soon, you will have standing before you a wonderful adult son or daughter who is now in a position to give you the much deeper gift of his or her adulthood."

This is precisely what Jesus' Ascension teaches us that going away deepens intimacy by giving us precisely a new presence, a deeper, richer one, but one which can only come about if our former way of being present is taken away.

The mystery of love and intimacy contains that paradox: To remain present to someone we love we have to sometimes be absent, in ways big and small. In the paradox of love, we can only fully bless each other when we go away. That is why most of us only "get" the blessing our loved ones were for us after they die.

It is not easy as all of us know, when someone we love goes away, far away and for a long time or if we lose a loved one to death. Separation anxiety is a primary experience for every human being. The baby experiences it when the mother cannot or does not respond perfectly to the baby's needs – the baby feels helpless and gets very anxious because if the mother/caregiver does not respond immediately they experience overwhelming need. There comes a moment in the life of every human being when she/he must learn to handle the rising anxiety that erupts at the moment

of a sensed separation from the one they depend on. How the person copes with the anxiety aroused by separation affects the person emotionally all through his/her life.

Jesus in his Ascension does not leave his disciples in a vacuum. He very clearly tells them to go and wait for his Spirit to come. That Spirit will fill them with courage and strength such that they would never know if he had not left them physically. Jesus had to go so that his Spirit coming into his disciples would lead them to a way of living that was beyond their imagining at the moment of his departure.

And so it is for us as St Paul prays:

“May the God of Our Lord Jesus Christ give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him.”

Amen.

Lent. God is with us in a special way during Lent, our Christian season of prayer and fasting, and God wants to unlock the doors of the prison of depression or pessimism in which we may feel ourselves trapped. When we take time to pray, to reflect, things that had previously escaped us in the jumble of existence becomes more clearly visible. It is God who gives this new vision, God who unblocks our ears so that we can hear the echoes of the distant melody of hope, God who touches our hearts and draws us towards what is good and beautiful. Hope, trust in the nearness of God, can set us free to walk more courageously into the unknown – it opens up our horizons. It is not a substitute for action, but it relies on God to point the way forward: ‘If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labour’ (Psalm 127.1)

– TERESA WHITE, *Hope and the Nearness of God* (London: Continuum, 2021), p.209.

New Books

Counsels of the Holy Spirit: A Reading of St Ignatius's Letters.
Patrick Goujon SJ. Translated by Joseph Munitiz SJ. Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2021. ISBN 1-788 123 182

Letters have always been important in Christianity. The first documents of the newly forming testament to Christian revelation were the letters of St Paul. The word 'Encyclical', the highest authoritative statements of a Pope, comes from the Latin for 'circular letter'.

There are up to 7,000 preserved letters composed by St Ignatius and his secretaries. Patrick C Goujon SJ in *The Counsels of the Holy Spirit* provides a short and very accessible introduction to the most important of these letters. The selected letters are chosen in order to "discover what lay at the heart of his desire to 'help souls;' it is then 'an initial exploration.' (p.9)

While introductory, Goujon does manage to retell very well the insights of Ignatian spirituality through the voice of Ignatius himself. He does so by way of a careful reading. The style of the book is clear, well-structured, and to the point. It is also practical, in line with the ethos of *The Spiritual Exercises*. In the letters, we hear Ignatius again and again responding to the request for advice. The personal question for Ignatius then was: 'How can advice be given in such a way that room is left both for the work of the Spirit and also for that of the person seeking advice, and at the same time allowing real advice to be offered?' (p. 25).

It is the question of every spiritual director. To offer advice is to offer direction or we might say 'a rule.' But rules can have negative connotations, especially today. One important initial distinction is that 'spiritual conversation allows for the notion of authority, but not for that of power (p.23)'. Freedom must always be respected. Indeed the nurturing of freedom to follow God should be the purpose of the advice or 'rules.' Ignatius then primarily used the language of fostering virtues and overcoming vices. The rules are about discerning the movement of God in shaping the self and service of others. Alongside that, each individuals must in freedom make the particular decisions that bring this about in their own situation.

This book is to be recommended, especially for spiritual directors and those training in this important ministry. It is also a gentle reminder of the power of the letter in a digital age.

St Patrick's College, Maynooth

MICHAEL SHORTALL

See God Act. *The Ministry of Spiritual Direction.* Michael Drennan SJ. Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2021. ISBN 9781788124980.

The author introduces ‘the ministry of accompaniment’ whereby ‘we can be helped by others and be helpful to them’ in the journey to the fullness of life God has intended and invited us to with reference to the story of the encounter between two disciples and Jesus on the road to and at Emmaus in the Gospel of Luke. While this is well trodden territory in retreats and days of recollection there is a freshness in the foundation that is laid here as it ‘tells of a journey that embraced both the human and faith levels, an inner as well an outer journey’ wherein ‘Jesus was able to relate to the two disciples and open new horizons for them, leading them to a deeper appreciation of what they had experienced’. With these terms of reference the book brings readers to a ‘series of reflections on our lives in the Lord’ with a particular focus on spiritual direction drawing on experiences and ‘insights from Scripture, spirituality and psychology’. Not surprisingly the first of fourteen chapters is entitled *Journey in Faith*. While focussed on the ‘ministry of spiritual direction’ the early chapters cover themes such as relationship(s) with God and others, resistance, discipleship and prayer. The latter part of the book deals with the dynamics of spiritual development and how these dovetail in dialogue with a spiritual director. The final chapter, *The Onward Journey*, reprises the Emmaus experience with reference to another story in the Gospel of Luke, the journeys of the Prodigal Son in the parable that contains ‘a great deal of what is central to spiritual direction’. With a number of key word maps, reflections at the end of each chapter, Appendices that contain some cases for discussion including the conversion of Saint Paul (in the Acts of the Apostles version) and a select bibliography, this is a book to be pondered and prayed over by those participating in, practising and preparing for this ministry. Moreover, the statement towards the end of the *Introduction* that ‘spiritual direction and prayer are incarnated in the life of each one of us, and also in the lives of all of us who travel together as a community of faith’ is a timely reminder of the role of both spiritual direction and discernment in the synodal pathway the church has embarked upon. With its intriguing title, *See God Act* is an illuminative and indispensable *vade mecum* for those involved or interested in this vital ministry.

St. Patrick's College, Maynooth

KEVIN O’GORMAN, SMA

Come Drink at the Fountain. Edmond Cullinan TOC. Dublin: Veritas, 2021. ISBN 978-1-80097-010-6.

Subtitled *Introducing the Carmelite Authors*, the author aims to address ‘the great restlessness abroad’ through ‘Carmelite spirituality [which] is particularly accessible because it has been expressed in the writings of very gifted women and men’. The first two chapters present Saint Teresa

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of Avila, chapters three and four Saint John of the Cross and Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection respectively, chapters five and six focus on Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, ‘Her Family and Spiritual Brothers’ and her *Story of a Soul*, with the final chapter looking at Saint Edith Stein in the context of the liturgy. Her essay ‘The Prayer of the Church’ is selected because it ‘shows her understanding of the continuity between Jewish and Christian prayer and how both the liturgy and contemplative prayer are the prayer of the Church’.

The format in each chapter is a presentation of both the person and her/his principal writing, followed by a *Dialogue with Chiara Lubich* and a selection of *Readings for Lectio Divina*. Brother Lawrence, in his *The Practice of the Presence of God*, is at one with St Teresa in seeing ‘prayer in the context of living the Christian life’ and with St Thérèse in ‘his way of confidence and love’. The description of his prayer life – ‘I keep myself in his presence by simple attentiveness and a general awareness of God that I call “actual presence of God” – dovetails with the contemporary emphasis on and exercise of mindfulness. In the ‘Dialogue’ with Edith Stein, addressing a conference of mayors from throughout Europe, Chiara Lubich stated ‘she died as a Christian nun, but she died because she was Jewish’ and thereby ‘she set the cornerstone of a “European home” in which all religions can cooperate in building brotherhood’. This example of bringing the Carmelite tradition to bear on the world today witnesses to its being a way of life in which both weakness and wisdom can find a welcome.

As Mícheál O’Neill O. Carm. notes in the *Foreword*, ‘whoever opens the pages of this book will find a very attractive presentation of Carmelite saints and their spirituality’. As well as being an introduction to the Carmelite tradition this book is an invitation, issued in its very title with both a biblical inspiration and an indication by Saint Teresa of Avila, ‘*with this other fount, the water comes from its own source, which is God*’. If taken up, an invitation involves an initiation and the author both achieves and accompanies this admirably. A *Select Bibliography* completes and complements this very fine production.

St Patrick’s College, Maynooth

KEVIN O’GORMAN, SMA

Revisiting the vision of Fr. Patrick J. Whitney, Founder of St Patrick’s Missionary Society, Kiltegan. Gary Howley. Dublin: Columba Press, 2021. Pp. 300.

In one of the photos in this book, that of the episcopal ordination of Joseph Shanahan, the side of the college chapel at Maynooth can be seen, and indeed the chairs that are used in the photos look very familiar! While this is an account of the ministry, vision and mission of the founder of St. Patrick’s Missionary Society, better known to most Irish people as the Kiltegan Fathers, it is also very much a Maynooth book. Certainly, the

initial pages, which chart the establishment of a Maynooth Mission to Africa and Whitney's desire to establish a Maynooth Nigerian diocese is replete with the names of college staff who were supporters of his work and the names of newly ordained students who would become the core of the original foundation of the Society.

This time in the history of the college saw the establishment of both a Maynooth Mission to China and a Maynooth Mission to Africa (and a failed attempt for a Maynooth Mission to India). Only a few years prior to the photo, the college president, Daniel Mannix had been ordained coadjutor to the Archbishop of Melbourne in the same college chapel as Bishop Shanahan. It was a period of great missionary endeavour for the Irish Church, with the founding of religious congregations of both men and women who would have a profound and lasting effect on the global Church, remembering in particular the Holy Rosary Sisters found by Shanahan and with the assistance of Pat Whitney.

With the assistance of the college president, Joseph McCaffrey, Joseph Shanahan CSSp was given permission at the meeting of the Irish Bishops in 1919 to address the Maynooth students. The idea was simple. Many newly ordained priests were likely to spend the first years after ordination in dioceses in the United Kingdom; why not spend those five years in Nigeria? It was after one of these encounters with the Maynooth students that PJ Whitney was inspired and eventually, with the permission of his bishop, Joseph Hoare of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, he 'signed on' for Nigeria in May 1920 and left with the newly ordained Bishop Shanahan and other confrères in November 1920.

The book gives a solid account of the early work in Nigeria and Whitney's work back in Ireland to promote vocations and to raise money for the missionary work being done. This is one of the strengths of the book. While it might have been the vision of Whitney and others, it took his brother priests and others to help him to realise that vision. It took towns, villages and parishes all over Ireland to support that work and to fundraise to build the infrastructure of mission.

The book is incredibly detailed and very well referenced. The author has a fine attention to detail, although I think that the congregation on page 94 is the 'Poor Servants of the Mother of God', off the Piazza di Spagna and round the corner from the Propaganda Fide. Detailed though it may be, it is still immensely readable, even to someone who might not have much knowledge of the Kiltegan fathers or the life and work of Patrick J. Whitney. The author is able to evoke the enthusiasm of the Society's founder and the great zeal for missionary work at the time.

This is a book that will honour the founder, and rightly so. What is often said of other Irish Religious Congregation and Society founders is true of Fr. PJ Whitney; if they had been French, they would have been canonised decades ago. The book also will be of immense benefit to future historians of the Irish Church, by giving an excellent account of one particular glimpse into a glorious missionary age.

Shorter Notice

Channelling the Inner Fire: Ignatian Spirituality in 15 Points. Brendan McManus SJ. Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2022. ISBN 978 1 788125314.

This publication is part of the Messenger Booklet series that strives to open the treasures of the Christian tradition to a wider audience. Ignatian Spirituality continues to be relevant and meaningful today in a world far removed from the life and times of St Ignatius of Loyola. Brendan McManus presents a very helpful and practical account of the Ignatian way based on his own experience of searching, seeking and, ultimately, discovering. Fifteen short texts grapple with the complexities, trials and triumphs of life through the lens of Ignatian spirituality. The booklet ends with a helpful list of sources for further reading and reflection. This pocket size publication could be used as a resource for seekers navigating the seas of life.

The Courage of Their Convictions: Stories of Inspirational Men and Women of Faith. Gemma Grant. Dublin: Veritas, 2021. ISBN 978 1 80097 007 6.

This charming book outlines the lives of almost thirty holy women and men whose lives continue to inspire Christian disciples and people of good will everywhere. Though the publication features inspirational people from across the globe it has a significant Irish presence that will appeal to Irish readers. Inspirational Irish people featured include Edel Quinn, Alphonsus Lambe, Little Nellie of Holy God, Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, Father Patrick Peyton, Sr Clare Crockett, Frank Duff and Matt Talbot. Holy women and men from the global family include Dorothy Day, Archbishop Fulton Sheehan and Élisabeth Leseur. The story of each person is narrated in *c.* 10 pages in a very accessible and upbeat style that may inspire readers to delve more deeply into the lives and witness of those they find most remarkable.



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SAVE THE DATE

2022 Maynooth Union Two-Day Conference

14th and 15th JUNE 2022

Invitation to All Clergy and Lay Faithful

Special invitation to the following Jubilarians:

Diamond (1962, 1961 and 1960)

Golden (1972, 1971 and 1970)

Silver (1997, 1996 and 1995)

Speakers include:

***Archbishop Paul Tighe, Ms Brenda Drumm,
Sr. Nathalie Becquart, Baroness Nuala O'Loan,
Archdeacon Stephen McWhirter
and Dr Brendan O'Keefe***

For further details, please go to News and Events:

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