NOVATE VOBIS NOVALE

The FURROW

A JOURNAL FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Johanna Merry
Unravelling the Transgender Dilemma

Hugh O'Donnell
Celebration, Conversion, Commitment: A Cosmic Eucharist in *Laudato Si'*

Michael Collins
Ministers and Ministry – Midwifing something new in an Irish context

Richard Shields
Bishops caught in an Institutional Straitjacket?

Brían de Búrca
Saint Mary Magdalene – the first witness of the Lord's resurrection and the first evangelist

June 2022
€4.50 (inc. VAT)

2022 Maynooth Union

Two-Day Conference:

14th and 15th June 2022

Invitation to All Clergy and Lay Faithful

A Synodal Church: Adapting for Mission

The Synodal Way: A Worldwide Perspective
– Sr. Nathalie Becquart

The Synodal Way: A Local Church Perspective
– Baroness Nuala O'Loan

The Church in a Digital Culture
– Bishop Paul Tighe

Digital Evangelisation:
How do we reach out to people in the Digital Continent?
– Ms Brenda Drumm

Restructuring Pastoral Spaces:
Social and Geographical Consideration –
Dr Brendan O'Keefe

Church of Ireland Experience of Uniting Dioceses
– Archdeacon Stephen McWhirter

Special invitation to the following Jubilarians:
Diamond (1962, 1961 and 1960)
Golden (1972, 1971 and 1970)
Silver (1997, 1996 and 1995)

For further details, please go to News and Events:
https://seminary.maynoothcollege.ie/

Volume 73
Number 6
June 2022

The Furrow

Articles

Johanna Merry	Unravelling the Transgender Dilemma	323
Hugh O'Donnell	Celebration, Conversion, Commitment: A Cosmic Eucharist in *Laudato Si'*	330
Michael Collins	Ministers and Ministry – Midwifing something *new* in an Irish context	339
Richard Shields	Bishops caught in an Institutional Straitjacket?	347
Brían de Búrca	Saint Mary Magdalene – the first witness of the Lord's resurrection and the first evangelist	361
Francis Bradley	Homilies for July (C)	368

New Books

Neil Xavier O'Donoghue	Saint John of Cross: Wisdom Sayings	374
Seán Maher	Ponder – Contemplative Bible Study	375
John Paul Sheridan	In Search of the Sacred Image	376
Luke Macnamara, OSB	Entering the Twofold Mystery. On Christian Conversion	378

Shorter Notice

	The Curia is the Pope, and why it cannot listen	380

Index

ISSN 0016-3120

© The Furrow Trust

The Furrow

A pastoral monthly founded 1950.

The motif on the cover of The Furrow is from Jeremiah 4:3, which reads in the Vulgate:

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

Editor: Pádraig Corkery, St Patrick's College, Maynooth. E-mail: editor.furrow@spcm.ie (for editorial enquiries, typescripts etc).
Rates: Single copy €4.50 (including VAT) and postage: Rep. of Ireland €2/Elsewhere €2.90). Annual Subscription: Republic of Ireland €75.00. Northern Ireland and Great Britian Stg£70.00/€75.00. Foreign: €90.00/$106/Stg£84.00. Student rate €50.00/$56.00/Stg£46.00. If you wish to avail of our *online* subscription please follow this link: **https://thefurrow.ie/register/** Subscriptions are payable in advance to the Secretary, The Furrow, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. Telephone (01) 7083741; Fax (01) 7083908 (Codes: National 01; International +353-1). E-mail: furrow.office@spcm.ie Website: www.thefurrow.ie. Subscriptions can be paid by cheque or online through The Furrow website.

Single articles can be purchased and downloaded from our website: www.thefurrow.ie.

Back numbers and advertising rates available from the Secretary.

The Furrow's bank is the Allied Irish Bank, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. Bank Giro Code No. 93–32–01.

Back issues of The Furrow are available on microfilm from: ProQuest Information & Learning Co., 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, U.S.A., and JSTOR.

The Furrow is published by The Furrow Trust and edited at St Patrick's College, Maynooth. The views expressed in its pages are in no way attributable to the College authorities. The Furrow is printed in the Republic of Ireland at Naas Printing Ltd., Naas, Co. Kildare.

Unravelling the Transgender Dilemma

Johanna Merry

In the1980s when I worked as a paediatric psychologist, I remember an eight-year girl who in the course of play therapy imaged herself in drawings dressed as a boy and selected those toys/games usually identified with boys. There was no convincing otherwise, and insisted on giving herself a boy's name. Four decades on, psycho-biomedical science has advanced, and we are learning much more about human sexuality – but not enough to satisfy the inquiry into all its presenting variants. A recent documentary by Sebastien Lifshitz, *Petite Fille* (2020), illuminated the moving true-life story of seven-year-old 'Sasha', born male, but when she was barely three years of age knew she was really a girl. 'When I grow up, I'll be a girl', she started to tell her parents, but her mother told her that that dream of becoming a girl, was not within the realm of possibilities.

Misunderstanding surrounds transgender issues. The boy-girl binary way of thinking, and the sometimes-disturbing reactions of society and Church are being challenged today by personal testimonies and advocacy of LGBTQIA+[1] communities.

I argue that persons who live the trans reality are the ones conversant with the lived experience. They can help us to understand this complex human reality which we tend to shun or reluctantly acknowledge, if we have the will to listen.

I take my cue from the pope who reminds pastoral ministers and the Christian community that each person's life experience is unique, that there is no universal solution to complex human dilemmas. Welcome the person, study the situation, accompany

1 LGBTQIA+ – An acronym for 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual persons that is also used as shorthand for 'persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions or sex characteristics'. Sexual orientation describes an enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction (or a combination of these) to persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to both sexes or more than one gender.

Johanna Merry has a background in clinical psychology and psychoanalysis, pastoral theology and Ignatian Spirituality. She works as a human resource consultant with religious congregations and dioceses.

the person, and integrate him or her into the life of the community are warranted.

What follows is pastoral in intent, in the spirit of the all-encompassing watchful gaze of the Good Shepherd. (Ezekiel 34:11-31).

DEFINITION

Transgender, often confused or interchanged with other sexual variants,[2] is an umbrella term describing individuals whose gender identity does not align with the restrictive duality of male/female assigned at birth (natal sex). Labelled *Gender Dysphoria* by the American Psychiatric Association in 2013[3], the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2019 assigned issues of gender incongruence under the umbrella *of sexual health*. No longer classified as mental or behavioural disorders, the way was cleared for appropriate medical assessments and interventions. Today there is considerable controversy surrounding the risks and benefits of conversion therapy, puberty suppressants, gender-affirming treatments and other forms of reparative intervention. Given that the aetiology of gender dysphoria is still largely unknown, and as research inquiry continues, attempts at more robust judgements are cautionary.

There are wider complex moral and ethical issues for Church and state. In so stating, nobody needs be in any doubt that the intense determination/driven-ness that powers transgender individuals is visceral and all-consuming (cf. Lukas Dhont's 2018 film, *The Girl*). The Church has not remained silent in voicing that transgender identities are considered aberrant, disordered, yet on the other hand states that every person is a beloved child of God. Trans families and individuals are left with a surge of more questions than answers as they struggle to reconcile the two positions.

2 A transvestite (crossdresser) refers to a male or female transgender person who wants to live a "dual role" and wears clothing, accessories, jewellery, or make-up not traditionally or stereotypically associated with their birth-assigned sex. A transsexual refers to a person who physically transitions from male to female or vice versa. A drag (queen) refers to a person, usually male, who uses drag clothing and makeup to imitate and often exaggerate female gender signifiers and gender roles for entertainment purposes. Hermaphrodite – in reproductive biology, refers to a person that has both kinds of reproductive organs/genitalia and can produce both gametes associated with male and female sexes.

3 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR), published in March 2022, updated problematic terminology to preferred terminology e.g., 'natal sex' to 'birth- assigned gender', 'desired gender' to 'experienced gender', 'gender-reassignment treatments' to 'gender- affirming treatments', etc.

LATENCY AND FLUIDITY

Gender identity describes a person's inner sense of being male or female, some combination of both, or something else, including having no gender at all. This may not correspond to the birth-assigned gender – binary male or female.

Gender expression, i.e., how a person carries themselves – their dress, mannerisms etc., may or may not reflect their gender identity based on traditional biological binary expectations. Identity may also be fluid, delayed, or latent. One's birth-assigned gender, gender identity, and gender expression may not always align - by comparison with those for whom these three aspects coincide.

Two narratives might be instructive. One, is the true-life testimony of Phillipa, assigned male at birth, chronicling a 40-year journey of coming to own and embody the identity of a transgender woman within the course of his marriage to a woman, fathering a daughter[4]. Secondly, Tom Hooper's *Danish Girl* (2016), framed on the fictional novel by the same name, introduces viewers to an ordinary married man in an ordinary family asked to cover as a model for an artist. Here he is introduced to dressing up in female attire which awakened unexpectedly his latent drive towards being a woman.

IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Ideologies as to what it is to be a man or woman also bear on the discussion. An anthropological view proffered by Simone de Beauvoir[5] and other social theorists opines that gender orientation is a social role that we choose for ourselves, while in the past it was chosen for us by society.

The Christian view, that "male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27), pre-ordains the binary duality of man and woman in their created state as complementary and intrinsic to their nature.

Pope Benedict XVI has in the past denounced gender theory which, in his view, diverges from the 'creational duality – male and female as grounded in the order of creation, and hence are fundamental to an integral ecology of man'.[6] Pope Francis strongly criticized modern theories that consider people's identity to exist along a spectrum, arguing against concepts/ideologies that regard gender orientation as something that you can choose, genetically manipulate, or a construct imposed by society.[7] The *Congregation*

4 Ryder, Phillipa. *My Name is Phillipa*, Cork: Mercier, 2021.
5 De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage Publishing, 2015.
6 Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia, December 21, 2012.
7 Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (AL), no.56.

for Catholic Education 2019 document[8] provides an algorithm for dialogue and engagement with questions of gender theory. In seeking to align practices with Christian values, Pope Francis has referenced modern views on gender identity using language such as 'cultural colonisation or nuclear weaponry'.[9] His words imply a seeming naivety that may be received as hurtful or even harmful to those persons who are at risk of persecution and violence within particular countries and cultures.

We are learning that the experience of transgender persons and gender variant individuals do not fit the strict duality. Further, developmental theorists point out that one's gender identity is *discovered* rather than *chosen.*

Nonetheless, Pope Francis has demonstrated immense compassion towards gender non-conforming people. Throughout the first months of 2015, Pope Francis had several encounters with LGBTQIA+ persons and groups, including a transgender man from Spain who faced hostility from his parish community and transgender prisoners in Naples. At the October 2015 meeting of Bishops in Rome, mindful of families that face complex difficulties posed by gender issues today, he asked for fervent prayers, even miracles. As recent as January 2022 in a weekly general audience, he addressed those parents who see their children with different gender orientations and are challenged with caring for them. He told them to avoid a condemning attitude and to do what Jesus would do today!

The pope is known to support the ministry of a Carmelite nun in Argentina in creating a safe home for transgender women in face of local community and diocesan opposition. The closeness and tenderness of the pope's charity are palpable in his continuing outreach to a transgender community in the parish of Torvaianica. His noble sensitivity was applauded when he advised staff administering the covid vaccine: 'ask their names not their sex'.

These *emboldened* steps to interface with difference and suffering indicate a change of heart and mind with a softening and reassuring attitude. That his remarks are less of a prejudice towards transgender persons, but rather a rejection of so-called gender ideology. Recent statements intimate Pope Francis is sliding towards a broader stance, reaching out to transgender people and telling them they are 'children of God and part of the

8 The Congregation for Catholic Education: *'Male and Female He Created Them – Towards a Path of Dialogue on Questions of Gender Theory Education'* (2019).

9 Joshua J. McElwee, 'Francis strongly criticizes gender theory, comparing it to nuclear arms', *National Catholic Reporter*, February 13, 2015, referencing his new book: Tornielli, Andrea and Giacomo Galeazzi. *This Economy Kills: Pope Francis on Capitalism and Social Justice*. Collegeville, MN, USA: Liturgical Press, 2015.

Church'[10] – the Church is the people - the people whoever they are, LGBTQIA+ or not. We cannot be selective. While the above events collectively signal a Church that is growing more open to recognising the diverse realities and challenges of modern-day families, progress is tardy.

PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Transgender people have been part of humanity throughout history, across cultures, race, class, faith traditions etc. We discover that societies have always provided space for gender variants such as eunuchs. In contemporary times, there is a greater call from the Christian trans community and wider for the Church to recognise and provide sanctuary as they strive to embrace their identity as 'beloved child of God'. They want the right to their 'home', a place of belonging and a tangible sense of being 'belonged to' within the norms, structure and grace of the institutional Church.

In an environment where there are more questions than answers, coupled with the moral relativism of the age, parents of trans children face serious social, legal and ethical dilemmas. Incremental stress can test family life to breaking point, stretching the threshold of endurance. Lack of acceptance by peers further challenges mental wellbeing. Parents can be plagued by searching questions of self-blame and guilt, scrutinising themselves, scouring their actions, to ascertain personal fault e.g., could the desire for a girl have some bearing on having a trans gender son? The unique bond between a mother and child does not spare her the pain of self-searching.

The struggle to make existential meaning of their reality poses a particular faith dilemma for trans families and individuals. Why me/us? What did we do wrong? What does it mean to have a trans child or sibling? What does it mean to grow up and make a life for yourself outside of society's norms? Each family member tends to adopt their own unique way of coping, e.g., dad may be silent but present, absent but caring, mother more vocal, siblings ambivalent while supportive.

Some theological language has the potential to dehumanise or trigger self-abasement, self-hatred, and a conviction of worthlessness. While church teaching must wisely safeguard members and set benchmarks, it remains a challenge, as in past times, to find a level of temperate language that promotes integration. We

10 Mike McPhate, 'Pope Francis Remarks Disappoint Gay and Transgender Groups', *The New York Times*, August 03, 2016, referencing Ivereigh, Austen. *The Great Reformer: Francis and the making of a Radical Pope.* London: Allen & Unwin, 2012.

are learning that where trans people are squeezed out of a place in society or Church, such actions have the potential to precipitate prejudice and hate crimes. Could it be that disproportionate emphasis on the structural sin of sexuality displaces due regard for the dignity and humanity of transgender persons?

Use of pronouns can be a contentious issue. Trans persons tell us how demeaning it can be when addressed as a *he*, or *she* that does not quite fit who they are. However, using gender-affirming names and pronouns that do not correspond to a person's birth-assigned gender contravenes the Church's stance.

Irrespective of wherever any of us find ourselves on the gender spectrum, we can all agree that each of us is marked in life by some imprint of 'disharmony' – which may be estranged, disowned, or unknowingly pinned onto others (for condemnation). The hermeneutic of grace and compassion applies, as modelled in Luke's woman caught in adultery (John 7:53–8:11) and brought before Jesus for condemnation. Will our action give life, allow the person to thrive, bring people together through love? Or will my attitude cause isolation, alienation?

Christians tend to find comfort in an understanding of their human nature as fallen in some way - the legacy of original sinfulness. Each one of us struggles with our unique mark of disharmony/ woundedness – transgender persons are no different. For believers, the disharmony may be rendered more bearable through an appeal to grace and prayer as they strive to grow in inner freedom to live wholesome lives. As such, Pope Francis urges church leaders to be pastors rather than militant bureaucrats.

PASTORAL PROMPTS

1. Use of the proper name, *gender dysphoria,* makes the situation more relatable.
2. Language that is sensitive and respectful avoids the unwitting use of words that may be received as negatively evocative, provocative, or even ridicule. We never know what is going on internally for people.
3. Patience is needed to accompany transgender persons in the daunting journey they must make – a journey fraught with ambivalence and challenges.
4. Coming out/disclosure is a very personal decision that trans persons have to face throughout their lives, and with every new person they meet … to tell or not to tell? To feel safe and secure in doing so needs to be paced, not rushed. A plan of the 'how' supported by trusted significant others indispensable.

5. There may be searching questions for the pastoral team:
   - What can we do to nurture and nourish the spirit-lives of trans parents/families who rely on their Christian faith and God's benevolence to bear them up at a time when they may be losing heart and hope?
   - What can we do to foster a culture that allows for authentic interfacing with difference and suffering to bring about a change of heart and attitude towards transgender people when lacking?
   - Is there an appropriately skilled cohort of support persons available to help the family make sense of their complex situation – local doctor, pastoral worker, priest, medical specialists etc.?

CONCLUSION

How can we, as a Christian community, seek to identify and remove obstacles for trans persons to come within range of the Father's voice: 'You are my beloved child, I delight in you.' (Mark 11:1; Psalm 2:7). A lack of adequate *empathy* remains common both in Church and society at large. The Church often portrays a sense of asexuality, or at least an unease with the paradoxes of *eros* (which may accord with accusations of misogyny or patronising?). Cancelling out what we fear or are unable to confront is very much part of our human condition.

Synod 2021-23 is founded on a spirit of *participation, communion,* and *mission.* We are sanctioned to create and co-create sabbath *listening* spaces to re-examine how we are as Church – how exactly the Christian faith is pressed into service of a different kingdom. A scrutiny that warrants deeper layers of unattended reality being sufficiently disturbed, even exposed. That we might draw closer to the compassionate and inclusive style of Jesus in respecting that human life is varied, precious and equal in worth.

Celebration, Conversion, Commitment: A Cosmic Eucharist in *Laudato Si'*

Hugh O' Donnell

At this moment of environmental crisis on a planetary scale, it is important to realise that in our celebration of the Eucharist we are committing ourselves to the earth and her creatures. For it is at this table we promise to make real our communion with all creation as the reality within which the Divine is intimately implicated and revealed. To ignore this cosmic outreach is to limit love to self-interest and to reduce the Eucharist to a local, devotional event. This article will reflect on the deeper understanding of Eucharist as envisaged by *Laudato Si'* and how it opens us to our need to experience a 'profound ecological conversion'.

AN ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION BEGINS WHEN WE REALISE THAT THE WORLD IS NOT THERE SOLELY FOR US

A cartoon by Martyn Turner in the *Irish Times* last April 2021 caught my attention. It is presented in two frames; in one, an image of a bandaged earth is accompanied by the headline; 'Yesterday humanity celebrated 'earth Day'; and in the other, the words, 'Unfortunately, for the other 364, the Earth has to celebrate 'Humanity Days'; drive, drive; gush, gush; frack, frack; burn, burn; chop, chop; dig, dig; pollute, pollute; extinct, extinct; and breed, breed'.

One day a year obviously won't do. It doesn't come near the 'profound ecological conversion' that Pope John Paul II identified as the only course of action that can prevent us from going over the edge.

'Mankind, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth's habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydrogeological and atmospheric spheres, turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrialization, humiliating the flower-garden of the universe, to use the image of

Hugh O'Donnell lives with the Salesian community in Sean McDermott Street, Dublin. His publications include 'Eucharist and the Living Earth' (Columba) in 2007, (revised in 2013). Latest publication, 'Time to Call Home' (Veritas).

Dante Aligheri'. In effect, he lamented, 'the Creator's steward' has turned 'autonomous despot who is finally beginning to understand that he must stop at the edge of the abyss'[1]

When I first came upon that evocative phrase, 'a profound ecological conversion', I wondered could it mean what the words seemed to be saying – that we were being called back to the earth? Indeed, but earth not as an 'it' as Pope Francis makes clear in the first paragraph of *Laudato Si'* (*LS*) where, taking his cue from Francis of Assisi, he remarks that 'our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us'. In other words, the Earth is alive and behaves as a relational other! We are *Adam* from *adamah*, (our name is mud!). For us to respond to her would seem to call for the development of something close to an 'ecological self', to use a phrase of Arne Naess, founder of the Deep Ecology movement. This involves a broadening and deepening of the self away from the gratification of insatiable ego, so as to embrace all life forms[2]. For centuries we have thought *about* the earth. An 'ecological self' thinks, feels, loves itself *as* earth. While this phrase is not used in the encyclical, the reality it describes is there; as when Pope Francis remarks that 'our (ecological) goal is … to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into *our own personal suffering*' (LS 19) (italics mine).

IN THE EUCHARIST THE COSMOS IS PRAYING WITH US

This too is *new* for many of us. 'Christians look towards the east, the rising sun', writes Pope Benedict; 'This is not a case of Christians worshipping the sun but of the cosmos speaking of Christ' – from bat squeak to the voices of billions of galaxies with billions of suns (stars) just like ours in a parish 13.8 billion years old and innumerable light years wide![3]

The encyclical's 'A Christian Prayer in Union with All Creation' advances this understanding of cosmic praise. It reads like an alternative Gloria with its Trinitarian structure and worth reading in that light;

> Father, we praise you with all your creatures. They came forth from your all-powerful hand; they are yours, *filled with your presence and your tender love*.

1 'God made man the Steward of Creation', *L'Osservatore Romano*, Vatican City, 24 January, 2001, p 11.

2 Arne Naess, 'Self Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World' in John Seed, Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming, Arne Naess, *Thinking Like A Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings,* Gabriola Island, BC, New Society Publishers, 1988, p 24.

3 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2000, p 68.

> Praise be to you!
> Son of God, Jesus, through you all things were made. You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother. You became part of this earth, and you gazed upon this world with human eyes. Today *you are alive in every creature in your risen glory.*
> Praise be to you!
> Holy Spirit, by your light you guide this world towards the Father's love and *accompany creation as it groans in travail.* You also dwell in our hearts and you inspire us to do what is good.
> Praise be to you!
> Triune God, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe for *all things speak of you* (*LS* 246), (italics mine).

As this makes clear, God is not only the God of humans with other creatures drawn in as extras to the human drama. It is an attitude that still prevails though sharply challenged by Teilhard de Chardin in his prayer;

> 'Shatter my God, through *the daring of your revelation* the childishly timid outlook that can conceive of nothing greater or more vital in the world than the pitiable perfection of our human organism'.[4]

For it matters deeply how we respect other creatures, their habitats and living conditions, *their habits of acclaim*. And matters above all to the Creator who is 'alive in every creature in his risen glory' (LS 246). Too seldom we recall that our delight in the beauty of diversity can only be the smallest fraction of what it must mean to the One who brought it into being as personal revelation and in whose presence not even the fall of a sparrow is forgotten, (Matt 10: :29).

And this invites our *contemplation*. But contemplation not as a flight from the earth but as a way to love the world:

> 'the Lord chose to reach our intimate depths in a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours' (*LS 236*).

Such contemplation involves a returning on our part to the sacredness of our 'home place' as we face up to the damage inflicted on our mothering earth by our rampant consumerism, extraction,

4 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Hymn of the Universe, 'The Mass on the World', London, Collins, 1965, p 24).

suffocation. If we do not repent of our excesses, and the attitude – 'this little bit won't matter – how can we hear and believe the good news about 'nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness' (*LS 12*).

A COSMIC EUCHARIST

In his encyclical on the Eucharist in 2003, Pope John Paul II has a memorable passage in the language and spirit of Teilhard de Chardin which is wonderful in its broad vision and personal expression.

'I have been able to celebrate Holy Mass in chapels built along mountain paths, on lakeshores and seacoasts; I have celebrated it on altars in stadiums and in city squares…This varied scenario of celebrations of the Eucharist has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world.'[5]

Pope Benedict finds an equally forthright expression for the same insight where he says;

> 'The cosmos is praying with us. It, too, is waiting for redemption. It is precisely this cosmic dimension that is essential to Christian liturgy. It is never performed solely in the self-made human world. It is always a cosmic liturgy. The theme of creation is embedded in Christian prayer. It loses its grandeur when it forgets this connection'.[6]

Because our focus is local and narrow, it's easy to forget that in our liturgy we pray in union with all creation including the millions of animals consumed by forest fires or those pushed towards extinction by the loss of sufficient habitat in which to thrive. Easy to forget that the Eucharist needs to be understood in its widest significance, namely, as expressing Christ's intention to offer his nourishing presence to the whole of creation; that it belongs within the narrative of an unfolding universe; that the whole earth is invited to supper with the Lamb!

Laudato si' puts it succinctly:

> 'It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation …. It is the living centre of the universe' (*par 236*).

5 John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003, par 8

6 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p 70

This of course was Teilhard de Chardin's transformational insight that the Eucharist extends and prolongs Christ's presence in creation. Which is yet another reason why we must commit ourselves to the survival of this planet. It is where we experience the incarnate God. It is the garden in which God plays and invites us to dance with him[7].

We had been brought up to think of incarnation exclusively in terms of the historical Jesus. But there is a cosmic incarnation also to which Pope John Paul II drew our attention in these words;

> 'The Incarnation of God the Son signifies the taking up into unity with God … the whole of humanity, the entire visible and material world. The Incarnation then has a cosmic significance, a cosmic dimension'.[8]

This is an important corrective to the notion of 'spiritual' things coming from above and strengthens the idea of creation and incarnation as one movement of divine love from the beginning. How wonderful then to think of the universe seeded with Christ's promise of fulfilment and how one day we shall sing with every creature in the heavenly kingdom, a hope replenished in every celebration of the Eucharist!

It's as if Christ in the Eucharist, in wrapping his arms around the world, is holding the whole universe close to his heart – 'fixing the number of the stars, calling each one by name' as second by second a supernova explodes in the universe and a star is born (psalm 146).

This is marvellous! We need to allow these words to settle in us; 'Indeed, the Eucharist is an act of cosmic love' (*LS 236*). This is not, I imagine, what is generally in the mind of the one who presides nor of the participating congregation. However, it is worth repeating that the presence of the created world in the Eucharist is not dependent on us. It is there in as much as we are there, an acclaim preceding ours by billions of years.

From 'receiving holy communion' to receiving the gift of belonging in a holy communion with the risen Jesus, others and all creation

Since I was a boy, I have understood the phrase 'to receive holy communion' to mean that in the consecrated host I am receiving Jesus as my Lord. When I hear it now, I find it has become a much

7 Hafiz, *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, the great Sufi Master*, Penguin Compass, 1999, p 270, 'the God who only knows four words/ and keeps repeating them, saying:/ "Come dance with me"'; and p 57, 'I hold the Lion's Paw whenever I dance'.

8 Pope John Paul II, *Dominus et Vivificantem,* 1986, par 20.

more fruitful expression as I realise that I am also receiving *the gift of belonging* to a holy communion; that I am in communion with Christ, with others *and with all creation.* Seen in this way, the Eucharist radiates Christ's risen life to all creatures – 'it embraces and penetrates all creation' (*LS 236*), helping us grow into a *we-awareness* of belonging to a holy communion of life.

With this understanding it is easy to see how the Eucharist, as presented in *Laudato Si'* (*236*), is meant to become *'a source of light and motivation* for our concerns for the environment', an idea important enough to be repeated almost verbatim in the paragraph following which focuses on Sunday as a healing day for *all* our relationships; 'And so the day of rest, centred on the Eucharist, *sheds its light on the whole week*, *and motivates us* to greater concern for nature and the poor', (italics mine). From this perspective, Eucharist is our moment to hold our planet dear.

In other words, the Eucharist makes us advocates for the earth, prepared to raise our voice on its behalf as we allow Earth's own voice to be heard. It is like this: we cannot celebrate Eucharist and not commit to caring for the earth and the poor on this day of '*contemplative rest (which)* opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others'. (*LS* 237)

At the beginning of the celebration there is space for our injustices to be brought to light and pardon sought. But as the nature of such sin or sins, is not specified, some weightier matters are easily overlooked! Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople reminds us of these, (quoted approvingly in *Laudato Si'* 8-9);

> 'For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation, for humans to degrade the integrity of the earth or its natural forests, or destroy its wetlands, for humans to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air and its life with poisonous substances, these are sins'.

On a daily basis, we make war on creation. To talk of moral fault in terms of human relationships alone is not enough. We must deal with global sins against life itself – our unqualified acceptance of corporate and business interests, our polluting the earth on our doorstep, our failure to hear the cries of our precious planet and her downtrodden poor, 'why are you persecuting me?'. Let these be the sins we are mindful of when we celebrate Eucharist. There is an urgency needed which we are failing to heed, an urgency heard in the accusatory lines of Drew Dellinger's well known poem;[9]

9 'hieroglyphic stairway' from *Love Letter to the Milky Way*, White Cloud Press, 2011.

It's 3:23 in the morning
and I'm awake
because my great great grandchildren
won't let me sleep
my great great grandchildren
ask me in dreams
what did you do while the planet was plundered?
what did you do when the earth was unravelling?
surely you did something
when the seasons started failing?
as the mammals, reptiles, birds were all dying?
did you fill the streets with protest
when democracy was stolen?
What did you do
Once
you
knew?

THE EUCHARIST IS A SACRAMENT FOR THE WHOLE OF CREATION

We can certainly look for references that acknowledge the central place of creation in our liturgical texts and find some. We can point to a comprehensive Sunday Preface V which acknowledges God's part in 'laying the foundations of the world' and addresses our responsibility to care for creation 'in all its wonder'; note in Eucharistic Prayer III the lovely expressions 'all that you have created rightly gives you praise' and 'you give life to all things and make them holy'. And of course we praise the God of creation in our presentation of the gifts of the earth.

There is something to build on here, but not enough, without an ecological conversion, to nourish the development of a *creation-based Eucharistic spirituality*. For this is what is being asked of us in the new and challenging articles 236 and 237 of *Laudato Si'* about celebrating Eucharist as a cosmic event.

Today we are much more clearly talking about the sacred and living earth. We have really adopted Teilhard de Chardin's cosmic understanding of Christ and the world with at least a tacit acceptance that evolution is how God creates (*LS 81-83*). But even more than that.

In the wonderful article 85 of *Laudato Si'* we are presented with something completely new to many of us; namely, that there are two books of revelation. Francis writes that 'God has written a precious book, 'whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe'. He continues:

> 'We can say that 'alongside revelation properly so-called, contained in sacred Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night'.

But there is a manifestation of the divine in every creature. In other words, we are not just talking of creation in a general sense to which it is easy to give a nod of the head in acknowledgement but of divine revelation expressed in individual lives.

Article 221 takes us further:

> 'Various convictions of our faith, developed at the beginning of this Encyclical can help us to enrich the meaning of this conversion. These include the awareness that each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us, and the security that Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light.'

Consequently, we can say the Eucharist points to the interrelationship of all beings in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. By offering up bread and wine, the human community takes the whole earth (and, by extension, the universe) in its hands in a gesture of thanksgiving. In the consecrated bread and wine, the entire creation gasps in anticipation of its fulfilment in the heavenly nuptial feast. Cardinal Kasper puts it like this:

> 'In the Eucharist, the world has once again become one in the praise of the Creator – and this means that the world has become whole'. We must work for that wholeness with our every breath.

CONCLUSION

Informed by the Jewish understanding of Sabbath as God resting in creation, (*LS* 237), Celia Deane Drummond suggests a programme and a form of practice:

- Give time and space to the sacred bond (covenant) between God, humanity and creation.
- Acknowledge our contribution to the destruction of creation, including loss of biodiversity, and our need for a deep conversion.
- Celebrate the presence of Christ in the midst of creation …
- Understand creation as manifesting the wisdom of God …
- Develop a sense of wonder, which includes a deep joy in creation …

- Find ways to balance activity and rest and promote ecological justice.[10]

This I believe is how we must present the sacrament today as we move towards a renewed appreciation of Eucharist as 'the living centre of the universe' and 'an act of cosmic love' (*LS 236*). And how we must present the Christian hope for creation as expressed in the Eucharist which impels us to take the multiple threats to its survival (and ours) seriously. So seriously, that at the Dismissal we go out to make peace with every living being with whom we have offered praise, recognising a brother, sister, mother; thereby committing ourselves to uphold the rights of every threatened creature so that our Eucharist becomes a resounding 'yes' to the cry of the earth and the poor, a living hope that does not disappoint.

10 Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2008, p 16

Gratitude and Joy. Books about positive thinking are plentiful. The fine arts also express joy and gratitude in so many different ways For example. in Friedrich Schiller's poem 'Ode to Joy' we read: 'Joy commands the hardy mainspring / Of the universe eterne. / Joy, oh joy the wheel is driving / Which the worlds' great clock doth turn. / Flowers from the buds she coaxes, / Suns from out the hyaline, / Spheres she rotates through expanses, / Which the seer can't divine.' (trans. W. Wertz). Scripture provides many pointers towards gratitude and joy: 'The joy of the Lord is your strength' (Nehemiah 8:10) is a strong expression of it. Despite this, Christians are often criticised for being stern and miserable. As such, they are hardly going to convince other people about their way of life, let alone inspire them.

– Joachim Hartmann & Annette Unkelhäußer, *Joy in God,* (Dublin: Messenger Publications), 2021. p.19.

Ministers and Ministry – Midwifing something *new* in an Irish context

Michael Collins

The prophet Habakkuk writes, *"The vision still has its time, presses onto fulfilment and it will not disappoint … and if it delays, wait for it [2:3]"*. In some ways this captures one of the major challenges of ministry. We grapple to discover God's vision for the times we live in. Our impatience, or maybe our lack of ability to discern God's vision, causes us to supplant our view of what we believe ministry should be. Inevitably, this turns out to be a vision with a small 'v' for it has but one purpose; to ease our sense of angst as we attempt to regain control.

Sometimes what God has envisioned is just too vast for us. We attempt to tame the panoramic view God gifts us, by viewing life through the keyhole of our limited imagination. All in an effort to manage God's dream for us and the people we serve. As the Taizé chant from Good Friday reminds us, we need to *"Wait for the Lord"*. Waiting for, and discerning God's vision for our time is the primary and core task of ministry.

LETTING GO IN ORDER TO TAKE HOLD OF SOMETHING NEW

We are called to midwife something *new*, and as such expectant patience is required. There is always the temptation for us to fast forward the process so as to present a plan that is manageable, doable and dare I say comfortable. This allows us to occupy ourselves in doing something, but it rarely brings about the conversion of thought, heart and action that our faith promises. As a result we create a kingdom of our own making which will eventually flounder. Remember the words of the prophet, *"God*

Michael Collins is a priest of Killaloe Diocese and is currently Co-Parish Priest of Newmarket on Fergus Parish which is part of the Tradree Pastoral Area. He is also DA for Post Primary Schools in Killaloe Diocese.

This talk was delivered to the Priests and newly commissioned Lay Pastoral Ministers as part of a Killaloe Diocesan event on Spy Wednesday prior to the Chrism Mass.

vision presses onto fulfilment". Therefore at some point we are going to have to engage and encounter it. The alternative is for us to opt out, or to claim that this will see me out, or to think that "Church" as we currently experience it, will do.

As disciples first, and ministers second, we are called to be ready. We are called to be open. We are called to be willing to put ourselves at the service of this life giving vision and mission of God. When we do the end result will be radically different. We are called to align and open ourselves to God's lifegiving and creative love. It is about allowing ourselves to be clay in the hands of the Master Potter. It is about living as a disciple, something the ego rails against. And if our ego has not yet felt the pinch, we are probably nowhere near the point of real and true engagement with God mission. Even the ego must experience the paschal mysteries we celebrate this week, that of life, death and resurrection!

As ministers we are called to be like Mary who after some soul searching said "your will not mine be done". This takes careful discernment, it takes purposeful waiting, it takes courage, and dare I say, radical faith. Anything less will only result in us short cutting the process in the guise of a relentless stream of unending new initiatives. In shortcutting the process we attempt to avoid that "messy middle". We adapt God plan to fit into our vision, while all the time we risk insulating ourselves to the reality of the Paschal Mystery we celebrate each Holy Week. God's lifegiving vision often results in something first having to die. As ministers we sometimes wonder why ministry ceases to be lifegiving for ourselves or for those we serve. We can long for resurrection without wanting to engage the reality of the Cross.

A SYNODAL CHURCH AT THE SERVICE OF SOMETHING OTHER THAN ITSELF

As ministers, our waiting is not about wasting time or avoiding that which needs attention. Christian waiting is waiting with anticipation. That is what Mary models for us at the Annunciation. She waits with expectant hope which enables Christ to be born. As people called to ministry in the Diocese of Killaloe we are not called to "aimless waiting" in the chance that something might happen. We are called to *expectant* waiting, so that something new will be born, that something new will be imbodied, that something new will be incarnated in our midst, and in our time.

In waiting expectantly we wait in a manner that make us available. We wait like the good servants at the wedding feast with our wicks trimmed, lamps lit and extra oil held in reserve. We wait ready for when God knocks on our heart to engage us in service.

In service of His Kingdom and not in the development of our own little fiefdoms which later, with a raft of terms and conditions, we will affiliate to the Kingdom of God.

The premature birthing of a vision or of a new culture is dangerous. We are good at taking off before the starter's gun has sounded. We like to feel we are doing something and that we have not relinquished autonomy or control. And what happens? We expend huge amounts of energy only to find ourselves having to come back to the starting point to begin all over again. Then we project our disappointment onto God, our fellow ministers or those to whom we are called to serve. But remember the prophets words; *"the vision will not disappoint".* So what's all the disappointment about? Might it be more about the death of our plans and the slow lingering death of our vision? Might we be projecting onto God's vision something we need to own in relation to our ministerial plans and dreams?

In ministry, misplaced grief is dangerous as we never truly mourn that which has actually died. This is the very dynamic that prevents the sprouting of new shoots. We must let go before we can take hold of something new. This is something which Pope Francis is continually inviting us to engage and to encounter in the life of the Church, in the life of discipleship, and in the life of faith. This is something we have only tentatively begun to explore as a Diocese.

As ministers we can very quickly slip into a world view of seeing ourselves as the ones called to fix, to make good and to restore. We find ourselves in a cycle of writing plans and schedules often for the sake of writing plans and schedules. If nothing else it helps to maintain our "messiah" complex. And while we are disciples called to walk with one another, we very quickly can adopt the role of leader and expert. How quickly we become instructive as Church; something Synodality is challenging in a radical way. Such a view of ministry only breeds co-dependency while Synodality encourages cooperation, involvement and empowerment. "They need me" we tell ourselves, but deep down the major dynamic is that as ministers, we need to be needed. We find our ministerial identity in what we do, not in who we are as beloved disciples of Jesus Christ. It is probably one of the major dynamics affecting ordained and lay ministry. In our post Covid world – who needs us or who wants us? This has become a core question for so many involved in ministry. And yet, it is not meant to be about me.

Remember, the Church has never, and should never, exist for itself. We are called to *mission*. We are called to reach out beyond ourselves. We are call to evangelise. We are called to the "lost sheep', the "lost coin", the "prodigal" son or daughter. A self-

referential church is not the Church as envisioned by Jesus. As Pope Francis reminded us at one of his audiences when he said "*I would say that it is right to be concerned, but above all to be mindful if one perceives a worldly church, that is, one that follows the criteria of success of the world and forgets that it does not exist to proclaim itself, but rather Jesus*".

IT IS THE FAITH COMMUNITY THAT SUSTAINS AND ORDERS MINISTRY

Remember we are called first to be disciples. In the Gospels the disciples never went out alone. Jesus always sent them in pairs. While convenient, the ministry of the lone ranger has no place in the Gospel. And yet, within our current diocesan structures, we run the risk of not just creating, but facilitating a system with nothing but lone rangers. The prospect of increasing numbers of ministers being asked to stand alone at solitary *Look Out Posts*, raises an immediate need for us as a Diocese to review our structures.

I can still remember a sociology lecture given by Fr Liam Ryan in Maynooth University when he said *"a spoon of strawberry jam is lovely on a slice of toast. But spread that same spoon of jam over ten slices of toast and you may as well have no jam at all".*

There is a corelation between the *quality* of ministry and the sense of *community* within which we minister. One flows out of the other. This is what prevents celibates becoming bachelors; it prevents lay and ordained ministers running on parallel tracks; it prevents lay ministers from overinvesting in the work of ministry and neglecting their primary relationship with family; it prevents our ministerial endeavours evading the core needs of the faith communities we are called to serve. There is a corrective found for ministry which is engaged within the context of community. When we neglect the community aspect or locus of ministry, this in itself is telling us that there is something out of kilter in our model of ministry. Ministry outside a community, or a collaborative framework lacks the counterbalance we all need. Ministry within the context of healthy Christian community affords structure, maintains boundaries and establishes a contract.

This is at the heart of Holy Week when we hear Jesus say – "not my will but yours be done". Obedience is always found at the heart of authentic ministry. To live our lives through the lens of what God is asking of us in the context of this faith community at this particular time is the primary vocation of those engaged in ministry. Remember we are called to be faithful not successful. Such a barometer puts a radically different hermeneutic on how we asses ministry and our ministerial endeavours.

WHEN THE BURDEN BECOMES TOO HEAVY TO BEAR

I am not sure if any of you have come across the Jesuit Priest, Greg Boyle. He is based in Los Angeles where he ministers to ex-gang members and their families. He once said: *"It would seem that, quite possibly, the ultimate measure of health in any community might well reside in our ability to stand in awe at what folks have to carry rather than in judgment at how they carry it".*

This give us reason to remember this evening our fellow ministers and those to whom we minister who have struggled, or those who have left ministry or who have left the Church. Those who have fallen like Jesus under the weight of the cross they had to carry. I continually ask myself on what side of that equation as presented by Fr. Greg Bolye do I find myself on. As ministers we are called to be of service to those who struggle. We are called to help people carry their load, not to stand in judgement as to how they carry it. This is more easily done for the people to whom we minister to, rather than to those we minister with; our co-workers in the vineyard. Holy Week reminds us that we are called to be Simons of Cyrene not the Solders who stood in judgement and cast lots for the spoils. We are called to help lift the crosses that others have to carry. We are not called to hit those who fall when they are down. Genuine care is enabled when, in awe filled wonder, we acknowledge what people have to carry rather than standing in judgement as to how they carry it. It is about humbly admitting, that there but for the grace of God goes any of us.

The gateway to love is empathy for it enables us to exercise authentic service. Empathy is both the pathway and the key that leads us from judgement to mercy. Empathy moves us from walking away, to standing by people. It moves us from shame to acceptance. From self-preservation as ministers and as a Church, to spending ourselves in solidarity with those who have fallen or those who are falling by the wayside.

As ministers and leaders we are always disciples. It was the mantra of John the Baptist and it must become our mantra too – "we become less so that Jesus can become greater". We become less so that others can rediscover their true dignity as children of God. It's about replacing our opinions, our views, our judgements and our prejudices, with a Christ inspired empathy and love. It is the mantra of Holy Thursday and the reoccurring mantra of the Mass. "Do this in memory of me". If we are exercising healthy ministry this will be our greatest, and probably our only worthwhile legacy. That we did it in memory of Jesus. When the programmes and the plans have long faded into distant memory what will still remain? I am reminded of what Sr. Bosco a Career Guidance Teacher and

member of the Pastoral Care Team in St. Joseph's Secondary School Tulla, constantly reminded me as a young priest when she quoted Maya Angelou: *"People may not remember what we did or said, but they will remember how we made them feel".*

ALLOWING JESUS MINISTER TO US BEFORE WE MINISTER TO OTHERS

We have gathered this evening as fellow ministers for a meal on the eve of Holy Thursday, the day on which we commemorate that most special meal, the Last Supper. Meals and the sharing of food at table, have the ability to break down barriers, create bounds and build connections. It is no wonder that Jesus spent so much of his ministry at dinner tables. That he chose to commission his disciples for ministry at a meal.

Here again, Jesus picks the venue of the Upper Room. Jesus is the one washing feet. Jesus is the one who breaks the bread and pours the wine. It is clear that he is ministering to his disciples before he commissions them to minister to others. He is also modelling ministry for them. Like the early disciples, before we ever contemplate ministering to others, we must first have allowed Jesus to minister to us. If you have had the humbling experience of having your feet washed by another when you least deserved it, you will engage the washing of another's feet in a radically different way. And the same is true of all ministries.

Before we contemplate ministry, we must have allowed Jesus to minister and feed us first. After any length of time at the coal face of ministry, we realise that we cannot do this work for very long if we are drawing solely from our own resources. We need prayer and we need a relationship with Christ, if we are ever going to find the wherewithal to leave our modern day upper rooms.

Like the early disciples we too can lock ourselves into the fear filled 'Upper Rooms' of our times. How we lock the doors of our heart for fear we might get hurt; we lock the doors of our eyes for fear we might see something that will change us; we lock the doors of our mind for fear our minds might be changed by learning something new; we lock the doors on new possibilities for fear of the unknown, we lock the doors into new ways of being Church for fear we might end up losing the little we have managed to salvage and hold onto. We will only hear the words that gave the disciples courage to unlock the door of that first Upper Room and venture out, if like them, we are in conversation with Christ in prayer. It is in prayer that we grow to believe those Easter words "Do not be afraid", "Do not be afraid I am with you always yes till the end of time".

BEING NOURISHED IN PRAYER BEFORE WE ATTEMPT TO FEED THE HUNGRY

Remember, all the tensions we witness around this Last Supper table emanated from the disciples own insecurity. It is Christ who maintains unity. And what happens when Christ is not present? As he foretold before his death, the flock was struck and the flock scattered. Prayer is the glue that holds us together as Church and as fellow ministers in the Diocese of Killaloe. Prayer is what feeds us. If we haven't allowed ourselves to be fed by Christ we will end up feeding on "fast food". In our ministry we will only have 'junk food' to offer to those who come hungering for so much more. As ministers we are called to offer nourishment to the *People of God*. We are called to nourish them with Christ and not mere paltry offerings from the larder of our own resources. If we as ministers in the Diocese of Killaloe never pray and break bread together, we will never realise the full potential or the new synergies that could arise from the new ministerial initiatives we are embarking on as a Diocese this evening.

BEFRIENDING THOSE JESUS BEFRIENDED

In his ministry Jesus was often criticised for whom he eat and kept company with. People also criticised Jesus for the amount he eat and drank. And yet, it would seem that Jesus would rather have offended the people who had plenty of everything, those who had so much that they had become full of themselves, so as to feed and build up the vulnerable and those on the margins. Ministry is about living and working with those on the margins, those who truly hunger and thirst. Christian ministry is about growing in our ability to live in solidarity with those in our Church and in our society that have nobody to stand by, for, or with them.

If we befriend Jesus we will end up befriend the people he kept company with in the Gospel; thieves, tax collectors and prostitutes to name just a few. Healthy ministry naturally draws us into mission, a mission in which we risk being contaminated by the stranger's isolation. We take this risk in an effort to give people a sense of belonging. As a Church we are called to follow the example of Jesus and to befriend those that others may deem "unsavoury". Those currently on the margins of church and society. This might result in us losing the "respectable" people we currently have. In the Gospels Jesus seems to continually remind us that it is people and their stories that make a meal truly nourishing and memorable. In Jesus' world view it is never the guest list or the menu that is influencer of where, or with whom, he sits at table

with. As ministers we may find ourselves exchanging our ticket to the banquet's main table because we have found that real life, fulfilment and nourishment is to be had on the margins. That place where life is real and the needs are great. It is about living an *incarnate* style of ministry.

EMPOWERING DISCIPLES TO A MINISTRY OF LEADERSHIP

Ministry is demanding. In fact the work of ministry could occupy us fully. But as commissioned ministers for the Diocese of Killaloe we are called to something more than just work or a job. Yes we are called to work in the vineyard but we are also called to find, train and enable the next generation of ministers. This is the mission entrusted to us by Jesus in his grand commissioning when he said "Go make disciples of all nations". As commissioned ministers for the Diocese of Killaloe we are disciples forming disciples. We are not merely engaged in charitable work. By our ministry and the lives we live, we are called to bear witness. Our witness is meant to inspire others to become disciples and so volunteer themselves to also come and work in the vineyard. If at the end of our ministry we find we are holding the baton, then something is amiss. If Jesus, the actual Messiah, has given us a model of ministry in which He empowered His disciples to a ministry of leadership, anything less is not following in His example. Ministry is not an occupation or a pastime. Nor is it something we choose to do with our surplus time or our surplus resources. It is a way of life. We are called and commissioned in the hope that we will enable others to hear that call and engage in what St. Paul has called running the great race right to the end.

CONCLUSION

Remember what the prophet Habakkuk wrote: *"The vision still has its time, presses onto fulfilment and it will not disappoint … and if it delays, wait for it [2:3]".* As ministers in the Diocese of Killaloe may we grow sensitive to God's vision and dream for us. May we minister in a manner whereby we display our belief that God's vision has its time and that it does not disappoint. May we wait with anticipation to hear the whisper of God's invitation in our own hearts before we go about extending invitations to others. And if we are disappointed, or disheartened, may we like the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, feel our own hearts "burn within us" as Jesus talks to us on the road. Even if he does present in the guise of a stranger and we walking in the wrong direction!

Bishops caught in an Institutional Straitjacket?

Richard Shields

Mary McAleese, a Catholic theologian and former President of Ireland, bluntly put it this way: "In my view this understanding of magisterial control over Church members is no longer sustainable. For generations it has been based on unchallenged presumptions which have shaped and protected a dominant church culture of celibate male hierarchicalism and clericalism, which silenced and scorned the voices of the faithful especially the laity, especially women and especially those who dissent both lay and clerical." In her talk to the *Root and Branch Conference* last year in Bristol England, McAleese opined that "the Church will continue to haemorrhage members and experience a lessening of both external and internal impact unless it shifts from a culture of imposed obligation to a culture of invitation, from a catechesis of imposed obligation to a catechesis of open invitation."[1]

I am intrigued by McAleese's notion of "a culture of imposed obligation." While she applies it to infant baptism, I would like, as a kind of thought experiment, to "turn a critical spotlight" on the issues of hierarchicalism and clericalism and ask: to what extent are the overseers of a "culture of imposed obligation" imbued with "an attitude that reduces [their own] faith to obedience, not so much to the grace of God, as to institutional norms and expectations."[2] In this article I will employ the psychological construct of "*over-identification*" as a heuristic for understanding the often unbending stances of some bishops and priests regarding church practices and policies. The tendency to defend their decisions by conflating them with dogmas and divine revelation adds to their seeming inability to talk openly about the contradictions in the beliefs and

1 Mary McAleese, "No Synodality Without Freedom of Speech – Canon law must acknowledge the human rights of Church members." Dr Mary McAleese – Root and Branch Synod Bristol. Association of Catholic Priests

2 Ibid.

Richard Shields is a Canadian theologian. Now retired, he lectured in practical theology at the Toronto School of Theology, University of St. Michael's College.

practices of ordinary Catholics.[3] What is behind the inclination of many bishops and clergy to see their vocation and the power of their office primarily in terms of guardians of the Church's faith and protectors of the morals of its members? I suggest that the concept of "*over-identification*" can be helpful in explaining the seeming impasse between the ordained and non-ordained in the Church when it comes to issues of shared decision making. Finally, I explore pathways to change that move from the bottom up. Initiatives based on the prophetic role of the laity and their sense of the faith[4] of the Church and the synodal path toward, as a way of encouraging, in McAleese's words, "the phenomenal resource that is the talent, insight and wisdom of the faithful."

WHO ARE YOU, YOUR EXCELLENCY, WHEN YOU ARE NOT BEING A BISHOP?

The question of who are you is obviously one of identity. What does it say of one's identity if the answer is "I am always a bishop"? It is not a question of whether the role defines the person or vice versa; but a query about the balance between the two. When this balance tilts in the direction of the role, there is a danger of identifying oneself so much with the institutional Church or its clerical offices that one's objectivity is skewed or individuality compromised.[5]

Examples of bishops and clergy as "company men" are not hard to find. When, for example, Pope Benedict (Josef Ratzinger) was prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith he supported an institutional distance from the laity. In 1990 he wrote that "the bishops of the Church" by reason of their magisterial office "must protect God's People from the danger of deviations and confusion, guaranteeing them the objective possibility of professing the authentic faith free from error, at all times and in diverse situations."[6] It is not surprising, then, that as Archbishop of Munich-Friesing he handled cases of clergy sexual abuse in a

3 See: Richard Shields, "On the Duty of Ecclesiastical Office Holders to Listen to the Laity," *The Furrow*, 72 (2021): 493-500.

4 The sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of the laity is also referred to as the sense of the faith of the faithful (*sensus fidei fidelium*). I use these terms interchangeably in this article.

5 For a more robust discussion of identity and role of ordained ministers see: Eamonn Fitzgibbon, "Clericalization of the Laity – A prescient Warning of Pope Francis for the Catholic Church in Ireland," *Irish Theological Quarterly,* 85 (2020): 16-34 and Brendan Hoban, "Elephants in the Living Room", *The Furrow* 47 (1996): 659–69.

6 *Donum Veritatis*, n. 14. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/ rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html

manner more protective of the offenders than the victims.[7] Professor Werner Huth, a psychoanalyst and long-time professor at the Jesuit Philosophical College in Munich, suggests that Ratzinger's actions should be attributed not so much to indifference to the victims, as a felt need to protect the Church's public image, to spare it shame and the scandal of having its moral failings exposed.[8]

Ratzinger's subsequent explanation was guarded and ambiguous – an apology without admission of guilt, qualified with several broad theological reservations.[9] Huth suggests that the kind of reaction, witnessed in many other bishops who have historically covered up crimes of abuse, is indicative of "over-identification" with the ecclesiastical office and its role within the institution. "People like that have great difficulty letting themselves be open to others. They see themselves as representatives of their institution, making it almost impossible to carry on as ordinary citizens."[10]

This phenomenon does *not* seem to be the case with Pope Francis. Much has been written since the beginning of his pontificate about Francis' approach to leadership and Church authority. When he refers to himself as a sinner and admits that he is not infallible, we hear Jorge Bergoglio talking about himself.[11] What also comes through is his vision of the Church as the people of God. "The Church, as the agent of evangelization, is more than an organic and hierarchical institution; she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God. She is certainly a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary." [12]

7 "Ex-Pope Benedict knew about sexual abuse as archbishop of Munich," *Euronews*. January 1, 2022. https://www.euronews.com/2022/01/20/ex-pope-benedict-xvi-knew-about-sexual-abuse-as-archbishop-of-munich-report-says; "Munchener Missbrauchsfall: Schwere Vorwurfe gegen Benedikt XVI, *Katholisch.de*, January 4, 2022, https://www.katholisch.de/artikel/32613-muenchner-missbrauchsfall-schwere-vorwuerfe-gegen-benedikt-xvi

8 "Psychoanalitiker Dr. Werner Huth," *Abend Zeitung*, February 21, 2022, https://www.abendzeitung-muenchen.de/muenchen/psychoanalytiker-dr-werner-huth-es-ist-eine-ueberforderung-wenn-menschen-zum-zoelibat-gezwungen-werden-art-794345

9 "Former Pope Benedict asks forgiveness over handling of abuse cases," *Irish Times*, February 8, 2022,https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/former-pope-benedict-asks-for- forgiveness-over-handling-of-abuse-cases-1.4796939.

10 Huth, "Psychoanalitiker."

11 Antonio Spadaro, "Interview with Pope Francis", September 21, 2013. "L'Osservatore Romano" of 21 September 2013 Francis (vatican.va)

12 Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, 2013, n. 111. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

Pope Francis can not only live with, but has a preference for "a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures."[13] In Vatican journalist John Allen's view, "the pontiff seems utterly unabashed about admitting mistakes, confessing ignorance, and acknowledging that he may have left himself open to misinterpretation."[14] Two popes, two ways of understanding the ecclesiastical office; as well as two diverging visions for the Church. Francis conveys a sense of a synodal Church—people and pastors, walking together, listening to and discerning the will of God for the Church as a community. Benedict represents a traditional hierarchical view that places bishops above the laity, with the responsibility of protecting them from doctrinal error and, if you will, from themselves. Are we at an impasse or a turning point in the Church's life?

Over-identification and the gap between the ordained and non-ordained in the Church

Clericalism, an overused and thus imprecise word, oversimplifies what is wrong. It offers a framework too narrow for doing what needs to be done to bring about effective change in prelates who are overly focused on structure and authority. More than a pedestal on which clergy place themselves or the laity place the clergy, clericalism represents an over-identification with and preference for a model of Church which ignores the role of the faithful in articulating the whole Church's understanding of Christian beliefs and practices. "Over-identify," an admittedly psychological term, refers to a disposition or attitude in which one's identity is so conflated with the institutional Church that it becomes difficult to separate one's self from one's role. When the Church is defined as hierarchical and religious truth as "taught" rather than "discerned," over-identification is manifested in a misplaced certitude in doctrinal wording, rigidity in authoritative structures, and hypocrisy in terms of denial, silencing, covering up uncomfortable realities, all of which build barriers to mutually respectful relations between the faithful and their pastors.

Clerical superiority is reinforced both in doctrine and liturgy. Traditional Church teachings on the sacrament of ordination speak

13 Ibid. n. 49.

14 John Allen, "Under Francis There is a New Dogma," *Crux*, July 13, 2015, https://cruxnow.com/church/2015/07/13/under-francis-theres-a-new-dogma-papal-fallibility

of an ontological change in the person himself that "permits the exercise of a 'sacred power' that comes from Christ," so that the ordained "possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself."[15] Neil Ormerod notes that the "notion of ontological change makes the sacramental character or seal a personal possession, [playing] powerfully into certain types of priestly spirituality, giving them as a personal possession a privileged place in the church ... [This, in turn] feeds into a sense of priestly identity and the clericalism it breeds, making of priests a special caste who hold a power which is unaccountable to anyone because it is isolated from any set of social and interpersonal relations."[16] Holy Orders situates the consecrated person in the tiered order of Church organization. Construing ordination as such does not deny, but obscures the notion of being set aside for service both of the Gospel and the faithful community.[17] It also risks situating priestly and episcopal identity within a "culture of imposed obligation," sealed as it were by an indelible mark or ontological change.

The present pope's call for a Church in which people and their pastors walk together is not grounds for unbounded optimism. There remain those at the highest levels of Church governance who are invested in a tiered model of Church. Recently, Cardinals George Pell and Gerhard Mueller launched scathing attacks on the German "Synodal Way." According to Pell, questions raised by participants in the synod threaten "the unity on the major elements in the hierarchy of truths" which requires unquestioning adherence to traditional teachings of the Church. Conflating teaching authority with divine revelation, Mueller pronounced the so-called the liberal views of some German bishops to be heretical and he urged German Catholics to reject the authority of the bishops who endorse them.[18]

It is obvious, then, that a lop-sided understanding of the Church and its governing-teaching authority endures. Such views

15 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1993, paragraphs 1538 and 1548, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P4T.HTM

16 Neil Ormerod, "Sex Abuse, a Royal Commission, and the Australian Church," *Theological Studies,* 80 (2019) 4: 950-966, especially 958-960.

17 Maciej Raczynski-Rozek,"Viri Probati and Presiding Over the Eucharist according to Edward Schillebeeckx," *Bogoslovni Vestnik* 78 (2018) 1: 105-119.

18 "Cardinal Pell calls for Vatican reprimand over sexuality remarks by a cardinal and bishop," *America Magazine*, March 2022, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022 /03/17/cardinal-pell-sexuality-doctrine-church-242620). "Cardinal Calls on Pope Francis to Intervene," Catholic World Report, May, 2021 available at https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2021/05/27/cardinal-muller-calls-on-pope-francis-to-intervene-with-the-church-in-germany/; also reported in German in the Tagespost, available at https://www.die-tagespost.de/kirche/weltkirche/kardinal-mueller-haeretischen-bischoefen-darf-man-nicht-gehorchen-art-226709

reinforce the notion not only that the laity have an inferior position in the Church, but also are less trust-worthy than bishops and priests in matters of faith and Church – hardly an attitude capable of taking the questions of the laity seriously. As John Burkhard points out, the Catholic faithful have every right to question and "the hierarchy has no right to foreshorten the human process of learning and the normal process of growing in understanding of the Christian faith."[19]

TRADITIONAL CATHOLICISM AND THE LOSS OF TRANSCENDENCE

Today the Catholic Church is experiencing, at least in Western nations, a steady exodus of members who find it difficult to reconcile common sense with claims of transcendent truth. But there are many Catholics who doubt, have reservations about, or outright disagree with many aspects of Church teachings or practices, yet refuse to waver in their commitment to their Church. Theirs is a dissent rooted not in defiance or lack of instruction. The situation of faith today is precarious. Western culture (and I write from this perspective) has changed over the past two centuries from a hierarchically structured and religiously interpreted world, to one in which authority is bestowed by the people and religion is left to personal choice. A shift to what Charles Taylor describes a "closed world structure," a view of the world that excludes reliance on what is beyond empirical measuring and requires instead scientific technological models of understanding the world.

This loss of transcendence makes it harder to maintain traditional beliefs and practices, fostering instead norms and practices which make reference to what is beyond nature (supernatural) unnecessary or even detrimental.[20] Hans Joas, building on Taylor's research, argues to what he calls "the secular option," a cultural context in which belief and unbelief stand on equal footing and "believers have had to justify their particular faith, not just as a specific confession or with respect to other regions, but also as such, as faith *per se – vis a vis* a lack of faith ... [which] has become normalized."[21] On a mundane level this reality is played out in an attitude of tolerance, in which religion is set aside as a non-issue or "homogenized" in a way that relativizes absolute claims.

19 John J. Burkhard, OFM Conv., *The Sense of the Faith in History: Its sources, Reception, and Theology* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 2022), 341.

20 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age,* (Cambridge, MA. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 551-592.

21 Hans Joas, "The Church in a World of Options," in *The Church in Pluralist Society: Social and Political Roles,* ed. Cornelius J. Casey and Fainche Ryan, (Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 45-55, at 49.

A Church in which cohesion and compliance were once taken for granted is now confronted with a new "normal." Religion and/or belief have become options (personal or private matters) and judgments of fact and value are made to the exclusion of any transcendent reality or truth. In this reality to invoke authority to pressure, threaten, or force a semblance of unity would be counter-productive. Bernard Lonergan warns that where authority is substituted for dialogue and power is used to control, a reaction of "lasting resentment and a smoldering rebellion" inevitably set in. In place of the desired common "mode of understanding, there arise misunderstanding, distrust, suspicion, fear, hostility, factions."[22]

However, many bishops and bishops' conferences still respond to serious questions and challenges from the laity in an authoritarian manner. For example, recently the United States Bishops Conference shut the door on a discussion which *they* initiated on denying communion to pro-choice politicians with a proscriptive instruction on the Eucharist. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee justified its discriminatory policy against LGBTQ Catholics by repeating the very teachings that were being challenged. Both responses appealed overwhelmingly to doctrines in, to employ McAleese's language, a "catechesis of imposed obligation." Both responses were formal and abstract. Missing in these bishops' actions was the pastoral concern, the "who am I to judge?" modelled by the bishop of Rome. Captive, it would seem, to a "culture of imposed obligation" and defensive of Church dogmas, these ecclesiastical office holders failed to engage in any pastoral *listening*. The damage this causes is plain. Charles Taylor puts it well. "Searchers don't feel welcomed, invited to express what they're looking for. Instead, they hear embattled defenses of dogmas, of moral teachings which often don't connect with their experience, of a magisterium which, in spite of all the difficult dilemmas where honest Christians will almost certainly disagree, claimed [until recently] to speak with one voice. This itself was enough to undermine the charisma of heartfelt conviction which is central for the teaching of Christian faith."[23]

DEFENDING THE DIVINE IN A HUMAN CHURCH

When it comes to authority and power in the Church, how many office holders so identify with the institution that they can no longer enter into the experiences of their parishioners – especially

22 Bernard Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical Mindedness," in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 51, 1977, 132-143, at 133.

23 Charles Taylor, "Shapes of Faith Today," in *Renewing the Church in a Secular Age: Holistic Dialogue and Kenotic Vision*, ed. by Charles Taylor, José Casanova, George F. McLean, João J. Vila-Chã, 2016, 269-283, at 276, http://www.crvp.org/publications/Series-VIII/21-TOC- McLean.pdf.

those who have issues with the Church? The sanctity or holiness of the Church presents a particularly thorny challenge. Obviously, all members of the clergy including the Pope are sinners. While holiness remains an inspiration and a measure of faithfulness, the notion of "holy, Catholic Church" is often skewed by a rhetoric of what Joas describes as "self-sacralization" – a disposition which "prevents the institution from judging itself by the same high standards it uses with regard to others."[24] Bishops are at the pinnacle of a clericalist culture. How they dress and are addressed, sets them off (and often isolates them) from the rest of the faithful. Even in the Eucharistic prayer, "all the faithful" appears almost as a footnote to "pope, bishop, the order of bishops, and all the clergy." To the extent that a priest or bishop feels that every statement made or decision taken must represent the purity and inerrancy of Church teachings, as well as their own integrity and that of their office, the "culture of imposed obligation" perdures and authentic dialogue remains out of reach. This way of thinking lacks "historical consciousness,"[25] ignores the truth that Church doctrines were formulated in different historical periods. Many have meanings that do not make sense in new historical circumstances and become impediments to rather than anchors of faith. "Historical consciousness challenges the church to a cooperative model of teaching and learning...rather than a competitive one."[26]

Both the public at large and the media in particular tend to identify the Church with its office holders. Defending the institution does little to justify ecclesiastical decisions; but instead draws criticism and foments skepticism. When bishops or priests are convicted of crimes against children, embezzlement of church funds, or leading a double-life, the whole Church is the subject of ridicule. In the light of public scrutiny, an abstract theological distinction between the Holy Catholic Church and a Church of sinners doesn't hold up. Defensive attitudes only serve to increase the pressure to become absorbed in a role.

24 Hans Joas, "The Church in a World of Options," in *The Church in Pluralist Society: Social and Political Roles*, ed. Cornelius J Casey and Fainche Ryan, (Notre Dame, ID: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 45-55, at 48.

25 Lonergan, "Natural Right." see also: Bernard Lonergan, "The Transition from a Classicist World- View to Historical-Mindedness," in *A Second Collection*, ed. William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1974), 1-9.

26 Burkhard, *Sense of the Faith,* p. 339. In *Amoris Laetitia* Pope Francis gives a compelling example of how historical consciousness and pastoral responsibility can be mutually reinforcing. https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa- francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf) Many negative responses to the Pope's exhortation, however, indicate how difficult the transition to historical consciousness remains for many members of the hierarchy.

When clergy over-identify with an ideal image of the Church, they too easily get caught up in the rules, in a "culture of imposed obligation." When bishops see themselves as the primary or sole defenders of orthodoxy, their statements wrongly assume a tone of righteousness, if not infallibility. The role absorbs the man, whose personal fears, feelings and thoughts are kept private; while public statements and decisions repeat and reinforce formulaic doctrines. Caught up in the performative aspects of the office, the ecclesiastical office holder "doesn't have time to listen to those who are suffering, the poor, the sick, the imprisoned: the evil of clericalism is a really awful thing." [27]

Is there a way out of an understanding of ecclesiastical office that places more value on teaching than on listening, that views the voice of the faithful as less value than that of the *magisterium*? What pathways are opening that will allow us to see bishops and priests (and them to see themselves) as co-responsible with the laity for accomplishing the Church's mission? Ordination does not place one in control of the truths of the faith. Ordained ministry is in the service of the Gospel (2 Timothy 2:2). Persevering in the teachings of the apostles is a responsibility and a gift to all the baptized (Acts 2:42).

SENSE OF FAITH AND SYNODALITY OR HOW TO STOP AN OCEAN LINER

The Catholic Church can be likened to a big ocean liner – slow moving, difficult to stop or reverse course. We ignore at our own peril Hans Joas' comment on the challenge to change "that institutional structures and their inertia resist lofty declarations and tend to restabilize themselves after phases of turmoil..."[28] From a structural-organizational perspective there is reason for pessimism. Confidence, however, in the reality of the Holy Spirit and conviction of the sense of the faith of believers are grounds for hope.

a. The "sense of the faith" and what it means to be Church

At the start we need to recognize the unquestionable need in the Church for "formation at a deep and profound level" about the meaning and practice of the sense of the faith.[29] While there have been significant developments in understanding the "sense of the faith" since Cardinal Newman's famous essay "On Consulting the

27 Pope Francis, "Morning Meditation", December 13, 2016, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco- cotidie_20161213_people-discarded.html)

28 Hans Joas, "The Church in a World of Options,", 46.

29 Fainche Ryan, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine: The Twenty-First Century," in *The Church in Pluralist Society*, 101-122, esp.113-117.

Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,"[30] even today his work remains relevant, especially in situations where the faithful are not consulted. In concluding his discussion of Newman's contribution to the "sense of faithful" in the Church, John Burkhard notes several characteristics that I have outlined and adapted in the following four points.[31]

- The sense of the faithful does not require any expertise in theological language or the ability to explain any specific doctrine. Newman referred to the "*sensus*" as an instinct, not in the sense of a hunch or a vague feeling, but "a more global grasp of realty,"[32] specifically the reality of God. "Sense" describes knowledge, in faith, of the reality of God (see: 2 Timothy 1: 12) and serves as the basis for the following three characteristics.
- The sense of the faithful is an activity. While the laity "know the content of their faith convictions,"[33] the dynamism of the sense of faith unfolds in the movement of discernment, a prayerful openness to the power of the Holy Spirit.
- The sense of the faithful functions, if I may use the term, as a "smell test." The faithful are able to detect when something is not right with what is being taught by the hierarchy or in the structures of teaching and authority in the Church. Where "various opinions, customs, and institutions" are out of sync with the Gospel, the faithful exhibit "a jealousy of error."[34]
- The sense of the faith is integral to a movement of faith toward a *conspiratio* (a shared faith-conscious or community of belief) of bishops and laity. Rather than a moment in time, the sense of the faith is an unfolding, open to disagreement, where "the strength of one makes up for the deficiency of another."[35]

These characteristics are of particular significance to the ecclesial practice of the sense of the faith, especially where there is no shared starting point. The concerns and aspirations of Catholics vary from place to place, from continent to continent, and from one historical period to another. When we speak of the sense of the faith in a practical vein, we must view it as a partial, provisional phenomenon

30 John Henry Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," *Rambler*, July, 1859, https://www.newmanreader.org/works/rambler/consulting.html

31 See: Burkhard, *Sense of the Faith*, 96-99. I am indebted to Burkhard for his insightful summary of the characteristics of the sense of the faithful according to Newman. However, the contents of these four bullets express my own sense of where Newman's ideas can still lead the Church. Any deficiency in interpreting Newman should be attributed to me, not to Burkhard.

32 Burkhard, *Sense of the Faith*, 97.

33 Ibid. 97.

34 John Henry Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful, cited by Burkhard, *Sense of the Faith*, 99.

35 Newman, "On Consulting the Faithful," cited by Burkhard, *Sense of the Faith*, 95.

– expecting neither too much nor too little of it. As *conspiratio* is not an "all at once" experience, not every conversation must include the pastors. In this context it makes sense to drop the broad theological categories "universal consensus" and "infallibility in believing," which obscure the conflictual and disruptive quality of discourse among parishioners on even practical matters. "The history of the *sensus fidelium* is, then, a checkered one. Just as there are instances when the pope and bishops faltered, failed, or overreached, so, too, instances can be adduced when theologians and the laity at large got it wrong."[36] We don't have to get it right the first time. What we do have to have are a few people who are prepared to ask "what does it mean to be Church?" and who a willing to help the Church find its place in the world today.

b. The "sense of the faith" is not just about doctrine

The historical development of the theology of the "sense of the faith" has been focused more on doctrine than practice. Because of this, the discussion has been deficient in clarifying the connection between what we believe and its implications for what Pope Francis describes as the Church's "customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures."[37] Newman, we should recall, did not reduce matters of faith to only magisterial teachings, but included "subjects on which the laity are especially concerned."[38] These are not just issues of style. How effective the Church is in communicating the message it was entrusted with (2 Corinthians 5:16–6:2) depends on how it acts. Practice either makes doctrine accessible or obscures the message. Church practices – from how it is governed to popular devotions – are not to be considered of lesser importance that church teachings. They are, in fact, the Church teaching by example – be that good or bad.[39] Shaping the life of the Church as a visible community is not the sole prerogative of the hierarchy, but a responsibility shared all the baptized. Hierarchialism and clericalism warrant serious discussion and decisive action. As Munich's Cardinal Marx recently pointed out, how we regard offices in the Church

36 John J. Burkhard, "The Sensus Fidelium: Old Questions, New Challenges", *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings*, 70/2015, 27-43, at 28. View of The Sensus Fidelium: Old Questions, New Challenges (bc.edu).

37 Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, n. 27.

38 "Judgment of the English Bishops on the Royal Commission," *Rambler*, May 1859, https://www.newmanreader.org/works/rambler/contemporary.html

39 Karl Rahner, "Practical Theology Within the Totality of Theological Disciplines," in *Theological Investigations,* Volume 9, tr. Graham Harrison (London: Darton, Longmans, and Todd, 1972), 104-105.

too often embodies "a way of thinking and an attitude"[40] that gets in the way of the laity hearing and acknowledging their own voices and makes it difficult for many in the Church to recognize "the phenomenal resource that is the talent, insight and wisdom of the faithful."[41]

To summarize, the sense of faith is a dimension of Church life. *It does not require total unanimity in order to be real.* It is not an outcome of discussion, but the basis for the legitimacy and necessity for dialogue in the Church. The laity do not have to wait for a process that has the official sanction of the institutional church or one that fits within diocesan structures.

c. The Synod and synodality

As Catholics around the world take part in a Vatican initiated consultation, others are already in a process of diocesan and national synods. Many Catholics have placed their hopes for change on the Synodal Path inaugurated by Pope Francis in October 2021 and moving toward a full assembly of bishops in 2023. It is not surprising that for many Catholics "synodality" refers to a Church structure—a meeting of delegates, clerical and lay, to discuss and decide on some topic or theme. This has given rise to expectations about the ordination of women, access of divorced Catholics to the Eucharist, acceptance of same sex marriage and a number of other hot button issues. It also raises questions of representation – how are delegates selected, who do they speak for or answer to?

Pope Francis, however, reminds us that synodality is more than an official assembly, it is a way of being Church. Synodality is about building a community of shared faith and moral consciousness – what God expects of the Church in the 21st century.[42] Over fifty years ago Karl Rahner explored the notion of dialogue in the Church. Although he did not use the term "synodality," what Rahner said sheds light on the notion of synodality as an essential dimension of Catholic life.[43] Dialogue among believers has to be rooted in the truth of God. It must be a discussion grounded in faith and aimed at discerning what we believe God is calling us to. It must, according to Rahner, have a missionary impulse. More than an inner Church debate, dialogue must be a transformative

40 „Es geht um Haltungsveränderungen," *Vatican News*, March 13, 2022. https://www.vaticannews.va/de/kirche/news/2022-03/muenchen-kardinal-reinhard-marx-kirche- deutschland-reform-glaube.html)

41 McAleese, "No Synodality Without Freedom of Speech."

42 Pope Francis, "Speech on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops," October 17, 2015 https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html

43 Karl Rahner, "Dialogue in the Church" in *Theological Investigations*, volume 10, tr. David Bourke, New York: Herder and Herder, 1973,103-121.

conversation in which all parties are learning how to enter more deeply into the reality of God in the world and at the same time avoiding a reductionist approach to either Church teaching or the situation of the faith today.

d. Synodality and the life of the believer

Obviously, Catholics talk to each other about any variety of things going on in their Church. Few, however, would see this as consequential for the life and mission of the Church; nor would they see themselves as "the Church" taking responsibility for itself. A dialogue about clericalism, for example, is no trivial matter. Yet, regardless of expressions of support for or criticism of dialogue from Church leadership, the reality remains that governance is reserved exclusively to ordained men, who may or may not include lay men and women in their structures. This prompts the question: *Cui bono*? What difference will it make? The Pope himself, recognizes the inertia at the heart of this feeling, but makes it clear that complacency is not an acceptable response. "I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities … I encourage everyone to [do so] generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear."[44]

Dialogue in the Church, according to Rahner, should not, therefore be considered primarily as a consultation leading up to any decision-making assemblies of the institutional Church.[45] The faithful are not junior partners in ecclesiastical reform. They have a right to meet and question, challenge and learn, and in mutual conversation to experience the mood and motivation to insist that they are co-responsible with the clergy for the good of the Church. The "grass roots" of the People of God can and should take up the challenge of ending clericalism. They understand – perhaps more than they realize – what being a bishop is about. Their participation in the universal priesthood of Christ provides a horizon for understanding and judging the ministerial priesthood. What is lacking, however, is the practice necessary to make this appreciative understanding operative. Confidence in the reality of the Holy Spirit and conviction of the sense of the faith of believers are grounds for hope. A dialogue about clericalism can be legitimately initiated by a group of even three or four of the faithful. A small beginning will help all who participate not only to understand the situation that causes them concern, but to come to know themselves as vital to the life of the Church. Theological

44 Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, n. 33.
45 Rahner, "Dialog in the Church."

correctness is not a requirement for being part of the conversation. Discernment means entering a process in which issues are sorted out, a new consciousness emerges, and a contemporary vision of ministry is developed.[46] What is needed are people who are ready to ask what it means to be a Christian in a Church struggling to be faithful in world that seems no longer to need faith; people who will speak with a confidence, not because they represent a movement or a power group in the Church, but because they have strong voices and they are saying something that needs to be heard. Theology refers such action to the Holy Spirit. It is the fruit of discernment, a genuine self-realization of the Church, even if only partial and provisional. In a word, these conversations are acts of the Church, of the People of God.[47]

There is no crystal ball to predict how this will happen. What a lay response might do or even look like will only emerge when parishioners begin to talk in a serious conversations based on concern for the Church. According to German canon lawyer Christoph Ohly, "because of being bound to one another in the Church, the laity have the possibility, even the responsibility, of offering their advice, their viewpoint, and thus their influence on the life of the Church in matters of teaching."[48] But most important, as McAleese points out, they "can showcase to the Church in general and the magisterium in particular what it is to be an equal citizen of the Church, how to respectfully embrace freedom of speech, how to listen to, how to hear and how to trust the voices of lay men and women who care about the Church and who are open to guidance from the Holy Spirit. Their fresh wisdom may yet provide answers to problems a decomposing hierarchical infrastructure cannot face."[49]

46 Raczynski-Rozek, "Viri Probati," p. 115.
47 Rahner, "Dialog in the Church".
48 Quoted in Burkhard, *Sense of the Faith*, 37.
49 McAleese, "No synodality."

Saint Mary Magdalene – the first witness of the Lord's resurrection and the first evangelist

Brían de Búrca

Dalia Marx, associate professor of liturgy and midrash at the Jerusalem campus of Hebrew Union College-JIR writes:

> "Whenever I read about Mary Magdalene or think of her, I cannot escape a bitter sense of loss. This Galilean woman, a faithful disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, merited, according to the Christian Bible, to be with Jesus at the time of his painful death and later to receive from an angel the gospel about his resurrection. She served as the "apostle to the apostles," bringing the news to the rest of his disciples. In the general cultural memory, however, she is often remembered as a sinner. Even I, a Jewish woman, who until recently had little knowledge of the Christian Bible, knew her as such. What a pity: we have such an impressive woman with profound religious feelings who had a crucial role, and yet, we mostly think of her as a sinner! This phenomenon is not unique to the story of Mary or to Christianity. In many traditions we find stories of strong women who later are put down as immodest, unworthy, or sinners, typically defamed as sexual sinners…."[1]

Mary Magdalene is first mentioned in St Mark's passion narrative after the death of Jesus. "*There were some women watching from a distance. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary who was the mother of James the younger and Joset, and Salome. These used to follow him and look after him when he was in Galilee . And there were many other women there who had come up to Jerusalem with him" (Lk 15:40-41).*

At the crucifixion the male disciples were nowhere to be seen. In all of the four gospels Mary Magdalene along with other women, stood near his cross and witnessed his death and where he was

1 Barbara E. Reid OP, and Shelly Matthews *WISDOM COMMENTARY Volume 43B, Luke 10-24, p 392ff.*

Brían de Búrca OMI ministered for many years in Britain and the continent. He is now retired.

buried. It was Mary, with other women, who discovered the empty tomb.

Mary Magdalene is the person of continuity between the death and resurrection of Jesus.

> "She was there at the beginning of his ministry and she was there at the end. She was there when they were following him in cheering throngs. And she was there when they were taking his life, dashing it against the stones of synagogue and state, turning on him, jeering at him, shouting for his death, standing by while soldiers poked and prodded him to ignominy. She tended his grave and shouted his dying glory and clung to his soul"[2]

We know very little about her background or who she was from the Gospels. St Luke describes Mary Magdalene with these words:

> *"After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means"* Luke 8:1-3.

In the verses quoted above Luke tells us that women were also there involved early on in the ministry, well before the passion. He mentions the women who accompanied Jesus by name (8:2-3) indicating that they are important and remembered as disciples of Jesus, who with the Twelve heard Jesus' word, and were with him as he journeyed along the way to Jerusalem.

"Mary (called Magdalene)" means that she came from Magdala, a small town near Tiberias on the western shore of lake Galilee. We know nothing about her family background. We are told that all of the women accompanying Jesus and the male disciples had been cured of ailments with both Mark (16:9) and Luke (8:2) adding that seven demons were driven out of Mary Magdalene by Jesus.

Luke, like Mark, credits the women with serving (*diaconia*), while adding that the service was *out of their own resources*: from their own means, possessions, property, money, or goods. That the resources belonged to the women is clear from the feminine plural pronoun *"their"* own means. Luke depicts them as "givers." These women were not there as servant women cooking for Jesus and the

2 Joan Chittister, *The Friendship of Women*, BlueBridge Books, 2006. [*Mary Magdalene, Loc 639 Kindle*]

male disciples but were a group of women taking initiative to help Jesus and his religious movement financially. In some way Luke is showing that Jesus *depends* upon the help of women, and at the end of the Gospel, this help shifts away from the material into the urgent mission of spreading the good news of the risen Christ. Mary Magdalene and other women are the first to hear the news of the resurrection and told to share the good news. They are told by Jesus: '*Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there'* (Mt 28:10). In Mark's Gospel they are told by the young man in a white robe that Jesus is risen and that they must *'go and tell his disciples and Peter, "He is going before you to Galilee; it is there they will see him, just as he told you"* (16:8). In Luke the women, Mary of Magdala, Joanna and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them told the apostles the message they heard that he had risen – but "*this story of theirs seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe them*." (Lk 24:7-11). The Fourth Gospel portrays her as the first disciple to meet the risen Lord and be commissioned by him to bring the good news to the unbelieving male disciples. In this Gospel Jesus says to her: '*Go and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*.' *So Mary went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her*" (John 20: 17-18).

"The apostles proclaimed the resurrection of Christ to the whole world. But Mary proclaimed the resurrection of Christ to the apostles themselves: she was an apostle to the apostles"; "Mary Magdalene is held by the Christian Church to be an 'equal of the apostles': because she was the first messenger sent by the Lord Himself to announce His resurrection."[3]

As Brendan Byrne rightly remarks on Mary Magdalene: "It is hard to overestimate her significance in the early Christian tradition."[4]

And yet, Mary Magdalene, named fourteen times in the New Testament – more than any other woman apart from Mary, the mother of Jesus, herself, known in the early Church as Apostle to the Apostles, became known over time as a repentant sexual sinner. How did this come about?

Many myths have developed about Mary Magdalene. She is often confused with other gospel Marys and other unnamed women: Mary of Bethany (John 12:1-8) and the anonymous women of Mark 14:3-10 and Matthew 26:6-13 who anoint Jesus for burial, the unnamed woman called a sinner who sat at Jesus'

3 https://orthodoxwiki.org/Mary_Magdalene#Titles

4 Brendan Byrne SJ, *Come to the Light: Reflections on the Gospel of John*, Liturgical press, Collegeville. Ch 16, At the Empty Tomb.

feet crying and dried his feet with her hair (Luke 7:36-50), the unknown woman caught in adultery (John 7:53–8:11), and the nameless woman healed of haemorrhaging (Luke 8:43-48). It should be noted that *no gospel text* makes any reference to her having been a 'sexual' sinner or indeed a sinner in any way.

The first textual evidence associating Mary Magdalene with sinful sexual activity is a sixth-century homily by Pope Gregory the Great. By several imaginative leaps, he connects the story of the woman "who was a sinner" (Luke 7:36-50) and the first mention of Mary Magdalene in Luke 8:2. The through-line involves the myrrh the woman uses to anoint Jesus's feet: for Gregory, the woman procured the myrrh through selling her body. In his homily, he denigrates the woman by imagining her motives and practices before her repentance:

> She whom Luke calls the sinful woman [Luke 7:37] … we believe to be Mary from whom seven devils were cast out [Luke 8:2]. … And what did these devils signify, if not all the vices. … It is clear, brothers, that the woman previously used the unguent to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts. What she therefore displayed more scandalously, she was now offering to God in a more praiseworthy manner. She had coveted with earthly eyes, but now through penitence these are consumed with tears. She displayed her hair to set off her face, but now her hair dries her tears. She had spoken proud things with her mouth, but in kissing the Lord's feet, she now planted her mouth on the Redeemer's feet. For every delight, therefore, she had had in herself, she now immolated herself. She turned the mass of her crimes to virtues, in order to serve God entirely in penance, for as much as she had wrongly held God in contempt. [5]

Pope Gregory's inaccurate identification of Mary Magdalene with the 'sinful woman' of Luke 7 became more or less church teaching for over a thousand years. Over time the very name "Magdalene" has come to be associated with institutions for 'fallen women'. The women and girls who suffered in the Magdalene Laundries included those who were perceived to be 'promiscuous', unmarried mothers, the daughters of unmarried mothers, those who were considered a burden on their families or the State, those who had been sexually abused … Confined for decades on end – and isolated from their families and society at large – many of these women became institutionalised over time. It is a sad and shameful part of Ireland's recent history.

5 Pope Gregory the Great, *Homily 33* [PL 76:1239–40]. Quoted in Barbara E. Reid, Shelly Matthews *Luke 1–9* (*Wisdom Commentary Series Book 43*), pp. 462-464

There were other Magdalene centres, like the Magdalene House in Chicago, offering a place of healing for women who survived trafficking, prostitution, addiction, and homelessness.

Important to note is that Mary Magdalene in Luke 8:2 is introduced to us *immediately* following the story of the unnamed woman in Luke 7:36-50 who, in Jesus' words, "showed such great love." This woman is seen in two different ways by Simon and Jesus. Jesus sees a woman who has been freed from her sins and who is extravagant in her gestures of love. Simon sees a sinner, and because that is all he sees, he is convinced Jesus is not a prophet (7:39).

How interpreters of this text see this unnamed woman is also interesting. A glance at the way Bible editors title the passage is revealing (there are no titles in the Greek text).

> "Many editors keep the reader's view firmly fixed on the woman's sin: "The Pardon of a Sinful Woman" (NAB); "The Woman Who Was a Sinner" (NJB); "A Sinful Woman Forgiven" (NRSV). La Nueva Biblia Latinoamericana mistakenly makes her "La mujer pecadora de Magdala," "The sinful woman from Magdala". We have yet to find a version of the Bible that places the focus on "A Woman who Showed Great Love," which is the way Jesus characterizes her in the text. In a social system built around domination, or submission, while men are understood to be complex, varied, and capable of an array of deeds both good and bad, women tend to be defined under one of two poles, either the good woman/wife or the bad woman/whore… The most common interpretation of the woman in Luke 7 is that she is a prostitute. That is the catch-all term for any woman who sins. Interpreters who assume she is a prostitute tend to focus on her being known in the city, her loosened hair, her expensive alabaster flask of ointment, and her sensual way of touching Jesus's feet. Typically, they project much more onto the story concerning her "prostitute lifestyle" than the details of the story allow. Consider, for instance, the sermon of Pope Gregory the Great (sixth century), quoted above, that links Mary Magdalene to the "sinner" of Luke 7 and suggests that the oil she uses on Jesus's feet was "previously used … to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts."[6]

Commentators rarely conjecture about the nature of men's sins. People complained when Jesus went to the house of Zacchaeus to eat: *"He has gone to eat at a sinner's house"* (Lk 19:8). His sins

6 Barbara E. Reid, Shelly Matthews *Luke 1–9* (*Wisdom Commentary Series Book 43*) p 432

could be multiple and varied. The presumption is that Zacchaeus' sin was working for the Romans. No one suggests his sin had to do with sexual acts. When Peter says *"Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"* (Luke 5:8) his sins, likewise, could be multiple and varied. But commentators never suggest his sins were of a sexual kind.

The unnamed sinner in Luke 7 might also have been working for the Romans and so, like Zacchaeus, would have been "a well-known sinner." But being a woman the general presumption is that her sins, her many sins, were of a sexual nature. There is a sexual bias that haunts this story as with the story of Mary Magdalene. However, Mary Magdalene's is a healing story , no less so than the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8:26ff); no one connects the poor man chained in the tombs with sexuality.

From New Testament times many stories, both true and false, praiseworthy and negative have developed about Mary Magdalene. In conclusion I would mention how Mary is seen in the fourth Gospel and how she was proposed to us as a model for the new evangelisation in the decree of Pope Francis.

> "She (Mary Magdalene) not only discovers the empty tomb but is also the first to receive a resurrection appearance. Thus in a double sense she becomes the *apostola apostolorum*, the apostle of the apostles. She calls Peter and the Beloved Disciple to the empty tomb and she is sent to the "new family" of Jesus to tell them that Jesus is ascending "to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."… Thus she is the primary apostolic witness to the resurrection."[7]
>
> "Mary is a model for everyone on how to respond to the risen Christ: Proclaim the good news. Seek knowledge and clarity when you do not understand this mystery of faith, and inform and inspire the faith of others… as we celebrate Jesus' triumphant resurrection, let Mary, the first person to witness and proclaim the resurrection, inspire all of us to do the same."[8]

In the early third century, Hippolytus of Rome calls the woman who met the risen Christ "apostle to the apostles" in his commentary on the Song of Songs (25.6, 7). Pope Francis recognised this tradition in June 2016 and elevated the memorial of Mary Magdalene on July 22 to a feast day. Mass on that day now also includes a preface titled "Apostle to the apostles".

7 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, Crossroad Publishing Company: Tenth Ann edition, 1994. pp719-720

8 Jaime L Waters, *'Everyone is called to preach', America*: April 8, 2022.

"The Church, both in the East and in the West has always regarded Saint Mary Magdalene the first witness of the Lord's resurrection and the first evangelist, and with the greatest reverence has always honoured her although in diverse ways. Given that in our time the Church is called to reflect in a more profound way on the dignity of Woman, on the New Evangelisation and on the greatness of the Mystery of Divine Mercy, it seemed right that the example of Saint Mary Magdalene might also fittingly be proposed to the faithful. In fact this woman, known as the one who loved Christ and who was greatly loved by Christ, and was called a "witness of Divine Mercy" by Saint Gregory the Great and an "apostle of the apostles" by Saint Thomas Aquinas, can now rightly be taken by the faithful as a model of women's role in the Church."[9]

9 Holy See Press Office *Mary Magdalene, apostle of the apostles,* 10.06.2016 https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/sanctae-m-magdalenae-decretum_en.pdf

I and You. People are relational beings, created to seek another, a 'you'. Nevertheless we are often confronted with our own egoism or with the egoism of others. We long to be seen, we long for real encounter, yet we often suffer from a lack of personal relationships and from isolation. We desire a life with depth, yet we run away from ourselves, diverting ourselves with any number of distractions. Is there some kind of medicine to heal us from the sicknesses of a false self-centredness and lead us into living relationships?

– Joachim Hartmann & Annette Unkelhäußer, *Joy in God,* (Dublin: Messenger Publications), 2021. p.27.

Homilies for July (C)

Francis Bradley

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time *July 3*
Is 66:10-14, Ga. 6:14-18. LK. 10:1-12, 17-20.

One of the great themes in the Gospel of Saint Luke is *The Journey*. Jesus walking the roads of Galilee, resolutely taking the road for Jerusalem. Jesus is talking to people, encountering the crowds, teaching them the truths of life through the Parables. Jesus leading us, his disciples today, to follow him *ar shlí na fírinne*, on the path of truth all the way to heaven.

July is the month of journeys. Gone may be the morning and evening journeys to school and back, only to be replaced with journeys to the airport or the holiday cottage we've found down the country as we strive to free ourselves from the drudgery of a regular daily routine. We might take out the walking boots and dust them down for a bit of trekking, or check out if we can still ride a bike for a few miles like we used to. We'll meet people along the way; we'll have time to stop with them for there'll be less hurry now that the summer holidays are upon us.

As the Church, we are invited to take heed of the road signs of life around us. The road signs we see now don't just say Dublin or Killarney, The Burren or Malin Head – they read *Communion*, *Participation*, *Mission*. And maybe we think, "God, there'll not be much fun in that!"

These are the signposts along the Synodal Pathway which Pope Francis is asking us to take. Like taking the road to wherever we hope to go on our holidays, maybe we just want to drive at speed and get the chore of the journey over us. But the Pope is asking us to slow down, to listen, so that we can enjoy the run – it's the journey, not the destination, that's important.

The Gospel today has Jesus sending out the seventy-two in pairs "to all the towns and places he himself was to visit." According to the Gospel, wherever they go, whatever route they take, they

Francis Bradley is Parish Priest of the Parishes of Buncrana and Burt, Inch & Fahan, Co Donegal and Chancellor of the Diocese of Derry.

should travel light. We probably pack the kitchen sink when we head off on a journey! But whatever we take with us, we should realise that we carry a precious cargo, for we bring Christ with us wherever we go; and he's already in every town or place we want to visit – there to welcome us. He's no kill-joy; he wants us to have life, and have it to the full. He wants us to enjoy our holidays and come home refreshed, ready to begin anew.

Isn't the nicest part of going away, the thought of coming home again! If we see our holiday time as part of the blessings Christ wants to bring us, then, as the Opening Prayer says, he will "fill us with holy joy", he will "bestow eternal gladness". We might have to go away in order to find these things; and having found them, we should make sure we bring them home with us.

Communion, *Participation*, and *Mission* might be what we see on the signs; but let joy and gladness be the gifts we find and bring back with us for ourselves and for others.

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time *July 10*

Dt.30:10-14. Col. 1:15-20. Lk. 10: 25-37.

We have a curious relationship with law: we struggle with its demands and yet, we know deep down that we need it. Law is an expression of the order which is written into the whole of creation, ourselves included. Humbly, we have to acknowledge that the need for law arises in the nature of who we are.

Every system of law expresses the rights we enjoy and the responsibilities we carry. Gandhi said that, "the Ganges of rights arises in the Himalayas of responsibility". Ironically, in today's world, there is on the one hand an apparent rebellion against the notion of law, and yet an almost immediate knee-jerk appeal to the rigours of the law as soon as we feel misunderstood, hurt or disappointed by something. Litigation and compensation are big money-spinners!

In our world, law is connected to justice – our law courts often have a blindfolded statue of Lady Justice, holding aloft the scales of justice in one hand and the sword of truth in the other. She is blindfolded so that she will be fair. Unfortunately, that has not been everyone's experience. Neither have people heard the truth! And so, we have expensive Tribunals of Inquiry and Judicial Reviews of sentences. Coincidentally, it's said that the scales of Justice on Dublin Castle were never level – because the rain water would gather in one pan of the scales more than the other; the scales would tip. But eventually a solution was found: a hole was drilled in both pans!

In the powerful parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus shows how it is mercy, not merely justice, which needs to be shown. The priest and the Levite, representatives of the old law, pass by as though they were blindfolded – we are told that they see the half-dead man – but they are surely blind to his needs. The Good Samaritan however sees his needs and responds in kind; he is moved by mercy and he shows the generosity of love. He holds this poor man not in the imbalanced scales of justice, but in the tender arms of merciful love.

The law as it has developed in our part of the world has little room for mercy – it is cold and clinical. On the other hand, the love of God in heaven, the love of the Good Samaritan which we need to espouse and imitate, is warm and kind. The Good Samaritan's heart suffers from a septal defect – a hole in the heart – a hole through which tender, merciful love flows out to those who are in need.

With great humility we all need to see that, deeper than our natural need for law is our primal need for mercy – to be given and received. Mercy is the law that God has written in our hearts. Only mercy can restore every relationship, even our relationship with ourselves. And in our heart of hearts, we all know this to be true. The Good Samaritan is who we need and who we want to be.

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time *July 17*

Gn.18:1-10. Col. 1:24-28. Lk. 10: 38-42.

There is a story called *The Parable of the Long Spoons*: One day a man said to God, "I would like to know what Heaven and Hell are like." God showed the man two doors. Inside the first one, in the middle of the room, was a large round table with a large pot of delicious stew. It smelled like his mother's and made the man's mouth water, but the people sitting around the table were thin and sickly. They appeared to be malnourished. They were holding spoons with very long handles and, while each found it possible to reach into the pot of stew and take a spoonful, because the handle was longer than their arms, they could not get the spoons back into their mouths. They were dying of hunger. The man shuddered at their misery and suffering. God said, "So, you have seen Hell."

Behind the second door, the room appeared exactly the same. There was the same large round table with the large pot of delicious stew. The people had the same long-handled spoons, but they were well nourished and plump, laughing and happy. The man said, "I don't understand." God smiled, "It's simple", he said, "Love requires only one skill – the ability to be kind and think of others

more and of yourself less. These people learned early on to share and feed one another; each reached across the table to feed the person opposite them. While the greedy – well, they think only of themselves!"

We are a country which has always prided itself on its hospitality: we're the land of the *Céad Míle Fáilte*, the hundred thousand welcomes. But is this still true? Or instead, has the growth in our average personal wealth and our increased sense of independence meant that we've let this slip with so many of the other great standards by which we became famous?

The pandemic lockdowns were sore on the hospitality sector; hotels were shut, restaurants, bars and such venues sat silent, dark and deathly still; people's livelihoods were threatened. We learned, surely, during the lockdowns that, whatever our relative wealth, we will be the poorer if we do not reach out to one another, for we are dependent on each other.

But deeper than the need we have to feed others is the need we have to be fed ourselves, by God. A commentator has said that the psalms perfectly reflect every side of life: for example, that a sheep will drink only from still water whereas a deer will drink only from running water. In other words, that amid the frenetic activity of our lives from which we can glean energy and excitement, there needs to be stillness and peace where our deeper needs are met.

We are all glad of those with whom we live or to whom we call, and they'll feed us and look after us; they are the Marys of this world. But today's Gospel chides us to learn that, yes, Mary was a great host; but Martha was the one who gained most.

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time *July 24*

Gn. 18:20-32. Col. 2: 12-14. Lk. 11:1-13.

In any discussion or debate, particularly where you stand in need of a favour from someone and you are nervous about asking, it is great when you discover that you're pushing at an open door. When you discover that the one you approached as a tough adversary is in fact a benevolent friend, your life can be transformed for the better. Most especially in the law courts of the United States, there is a procedure known as plea-bargaining. This concerns an arrangement between prosecutor and defendant whereby the defendant pleads guilty to a lesser charge in exchange for a more lenient sentence or an agreement to drop other charges. It may appear at first to run counter to the full demands of justice, but it is an effective means by which justice itself can be slowly restored, the offender effectively reformed and the pain and hurt of the offence repaired.

It can avoid lengthy, time-consuming and frustrating argument which can inflict further harm, wasting both time and money.

Although we often say that we should never do it, we all plea-bargain with God. It may be in reaction to difficult news we've received, an impossible situation we've encountered or as we taste the bitter pain of impending loss. We might feel embarrassed to admit it, but this is a reality for most of us. We might dismiss it as childish, but we should perhaps view it instead as child-like, an expression of the intimate relationship we have with God, our heavenly Father.

Look at how Jesus teaches us to pray; he emphasises the need for us to pray like children speaking to their father, reminding him of our love for him, our reverence for his title, and our wish that his will and not ours be done. Notice how we are to address him as "Our Father", not "My Father" – there has to be an acknowledgement of being part of a family, a community. From the first word of the prayer, we are again being reminded of *Communion*, *Participation* and *Mission*.

In prayer, it is not so much that we are visiting God, but allowing him to visit us. Our first thought might well be that we are calling on God, calling in on him, asking, searching; a *Guns N' Roses* approach where we are "knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door"! But in truth, the opposite is the case. Holman Hunt's famous painting of *The Light of the World*, shows the figure of Jesus preparing to knock on an overgrown and long-unopened door. The door in the painting has no visible handle, and can therefore be opened only from the inside. The ball is always in our court!

Though we might think of it as childish, we should just make our pleas before God, our merciful and loving Father, and not endlessly and frustratingly resist. We should let God push at our open door. Where prayer is concerned, far too often we allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good.

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time *July 31*

Si. 1:2, 2:21-23. Col. 3:1-5, 9-11. Lk. 12: 13-21.

In the heart of the Sperrin Mountains, on a fast-flowing stretch of a spate river there, fresh-water pearl mussels grow in abundance. They are a protected species; their presence means that the surrounding land and mountain slopes are designated as an area of special scientific interest. This can be a curse to those who wish to put their land to other use, and a blessing to those who wish to enjoy rugged unspoilt beauty. Gold has recently been discovered in significant quantities and now the moral and legal battle is on to

see which naturally occurring commodity will hold precedence – will the presence of the mussels outweigh the value of the precious ore, or will it go the other way?

Fresh-water mussels are one of the best indicators of the purity of the environment in which they grow. Filtering the water through their simple structure, they feed from the nutrients contained there. They sit upright in the river bed, using the good things which pass in the flowing waters, but all the time, even in the midst of a flood or a stream in spate, clinging confidently to that river bed, withstanding whatever current comes their way.

Like ourselves, mussels grow best in a pure environment. However, should an impurity be introduced, a grain of sand or some chemical foreign to their environment, the mussel does not give up. Almost immediately, it begins to slowly coat the impurity with the simple substances it would otherwise use to build and maintain its shell. The result is that, after the passage of many years, should you be fortunate enough to find and open such a mussel, what you will find within is nothing that resembles the original impurity. Instead, you will find an iridescent gem, a smooth and eye-catching pearl, something of beauty, wonder and value.

The words of this morning's opening prayer reminds us of so much of what they do. There we prayed that "you [God] may restore what you have created and keep safe what you have restored." This is exactly what a mussel does.

Many of our approaches to life are born of vanity – for we arrogantly think that we, and not God, are the great craftspeople of the earth, the architects of beauty, the engineers of wonderful and spectacular things. We are these, yes, but only insofar as we imitate the patterns and lessons found in the world of nature about us.

Amid the many things of beauty in the ancient and eternal city of Rome is the Pantheon, famed for its wonderful dome, the world's largest unreinforced concrete dome, still standing perfect two millenia and more after its construction.

Nestled away in a niche there is the tomb of the great artist Raphael; his fiancée is buried beside him; she died before they could marry. The inscription on his tomb can be translated as "While he lived, nature feared that she might be outdone; and as he died, that she would die with him."

We are enriched in so many ways by God. We will discover these riches only insofar as we respect God as their source, appreciate the beauty of nature, and see ourselves as the mere stewards of such overwhelming gifts.

New Books

Saint John of the Cross: Wisdom Sayings. Terence O'Reilly. Cambridge: Icon, 2021. Pp. x+75. Price £11 pbk. ISBN: 9781913825935.

"Dichos de luz y amor" (sayings of light and love) is how Saint John of the Cross describes the *apophthegmata* (wisdom sayings) that he occasionally gave to those who he guided as a spiritual director. As he is perhaps the most famous poet in the Spanish language, it is a great joy that Terence O'Reilly, Professor Emeritus of Spanish at University College Cork, has done us a significant service by preparing a new edition of this important work of spirituality.

Over the course of his career as a spiritual director, it is probable that Saint John of the Cross composed hundreds if not thousands of these "sayings." Each was a kind of gift that he gave to someone who was coming to him for spiritual direction. Each "saying" is a short verse, usually between two and four lines, that he composed to give to his followers to ponder in their prayer. Most were given to the different Carmelite Sisters in Beas, near Granada, along with some Carmelite Friars.

At some stage Saint John decided to gather some of these apophthegmata together into a single collection and so he chose about eighty of them and prepared a manuscript with this short collection (*el manuscrito de Andújar*). He added a very brief preface where he explains his hope that the readers will "make progress in [God's] service and love." These sayings are "far off" from "the chatter and dry eloquence of human wisdom, feeble and contrived." Rather, they present, "words bathed in sweetness and love." The aim of these sayings is to remove "obstacles and causes of stumbling in the path of many souls who stumble because they are ignorant and in ignorance go astray" (p. 3). After his death, various early Discalced Carmelites added other sayings that they had received or heard from Saint John of the Cross, so that today the collection has been more than doubled to 186 sayings.

As it is a short book with only 75 pages it could be read in a single sitting. But this would fail to do it justice. These sayings are meant to be savoured one by one. Reading more than two or three of them at a time would be too much for meditation.

Professor O'Reilly has done us a great service by preparing this new translation which reads very well. I must also particularly commend him for including the original Spanish. All too often English speakers are considered to be incapable of handling original languages. While it is true that the Spanish language has evolved in the 430 years since Saint John's death, it would be a shame to simply present the reader with

a translation. Professor O'Reilly's edition is the best of both worlds, it provides an elegant English translation that helps those unfamiliar with the nuances of sixteenth century Spanish. But even those with "un poquito de Castellano," learned on their Spanish holidays, can read the Spanish original aloud and capture something of the music and poetry of this great mystic and Doctor of the Church. This then is enlightened by the translation that captures as much of the meaning as is possible for a translator of poetry. Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire is reputed to have said, "I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men, and German to my horse." This book allows its readers to use the Spanish of history's greatest poet in the Spanish language and to attempt to make his words our own as we speak to God.

There is much to commend this edition, allow me to conclude this review by wholeheartedly recommending it for spiritual reading and by quoting one of my favorite sayings:

> *A la tarde te examinarán en el amor. Aprende a amar como Dios quiere ser amado, y deja tu condición*
> In the evening you will be examined in love.
> Learn how to love
> as God wishes to be loved,
> and forget about how you are.
> (Saying 59, p. 27)

St. Patrick's College, Maynooth Neil Xavier O'Donoghue

Ponder – Contemplative Bible Study, Year C. Mahri Leonard-Fleckman. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press (Little Rock Scripture Study), 2020. 299+xi pages.

The genesis of this book is in the gathering of a community to pray and listen to the Scriptures with the ears of the heart. That, in itself, is recommendation enough for the work, particularly in these "synodally charged" times. As outlined in the introduction, those who gathered approached the endeavour with faithfulness and with wisdom. They sought the advice of those charged with the ministry of teaching the Scriptures but without turning the endeavour into an historical quest nor into an agenda-focused movement but rather a return to the contemplative and a gentle yet strong hearing with the ears of the heart.

The work is the product of this exploring and listening and it offers the tools to do so to others who might also be so inclined. A good introduction situates the work in the contemplative tradition with an Ignatian slant, but without prescribing any major methodological focus. Good and practical orientation notes for the liturgical year are also provided.

After this, the readings of the liturgical years are the focus of each of the chapters. In each case the readings, or at least a significant excerpt, are

reprinted (American liturgical version), with decent situational notes and comments for the first, second and Gospel reading of each Sunday. After this comes a "contemplation note" which is often quite rooted and a vast array of pithy quotes from contemporary authors are used to good effect. The format and the presentation are simple and clear. The volume, as an ensemble, is most well-constructed.

This will not be a harbour for the oppressed priest looking for a homily at the last hour but it will be an excellent *vademecum* for the individual or parish group who seeks to offer time and space to the reading of the Scriptures as a means of entering into the contemplative space necessary for a refreshing and refocusing of the Christian community.

I offer one criticism: the psalms of the liturgical seasons, while included as texts, are not included in the commentary and no orientation of them is offered. Given the pivotal role of the Psalter in offering a music to that "listening with the ears of the heart" which is contemplation, I consider this a major omission. However, I would still hold this to be an excellent resource for individuals and parishes.

Broadford, Co. Kildare. Seán Maher

In Search of the Sacred Image. Aidan Nichols. Gracewing Publishing, 2020. £15.99

A casual glance through the prolific writings of the Dominican, Aidan Nichols will uncover several his previous works in the area of sacred art, including, *The Art of God Incarnate: Theology and Image in Christian Tradition* (1980) and his more recent and monumental, *All Great Art is Praise: Art and Religion in John Ruskin* (2016). Therefore, the reader knows that with this latest volume they are in very safe and knowledgeable hands. Nichols highlights the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the particular period of interest for this book, ending with the Second World War. This was a period where "the search for the sacred image entailed rediscovery of the achievements of medieval art, whether of East or West" (p.86). As the introduction states, Nicholas is impelled by the question: what sacred images should surround the faithful at worship and be available to them in instruction, meditation, and prayer? It is a timely question because so often religious art can be reduced to the arena of the art gallery. What is sometimes not appreciated is that religious art can also be sacred art – an object which aids prayer and devotion and might be a valuable tool in catechesis.

The book's content is distributed across six chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. There is a modest scattering of end notes for each chapter and the select bibliography at the end is divided according to the chapters, allowing a more focussed reading, should the readers intend in pursuing a particular topic.

The first chapter begins with something of the history of the 'Old

Ritualists' or 'Old Believers' and their influence in relation to Russian iconography from their emergence after the seventeenth century liturgical reform. Coupled with this is an exposition on the architecture, design and decoration of their church buildings, and in the context of this book what their icons looked like: iconography of the ancient piety versus that of the Italianate style" (p.5). Nichols goes on to a detailed explanation of the style of the iconography and the manner in which it had developed and relies appropriately on the work of the historian and art critic, Mikhail Alpatov.

Chapter two titled, *The Fortunes of the Primitives* shifts the focus to Western Art and to the art of the Middle Ages. The word 'primitive', employed as a wide nomenclature in the study of art is employed generally here, to mean "art produced before the 'first' period of Raphael's work, seen as the symbolic turning points between late mediaeval/early Renaissance on the one hand, and High Renaissance on the other" (p. x). Nichols explains that the term primitive does not imply inferior. He begins with the rediscovery of the Primitives in Italy, before moving an expansive survey of this rediscovery throughout Europe. He continues with 'Nazarenes' of the Lukasbund or 'Brotherhood of St. Luke' from Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century. This guild-type group shunned the pedagogical approach of the academy (in their case, Vienna) which might give them the technique, but could not give them the inspiration. In a letter to his father, Johann Friedrich Overbeck wrote that it was 'religion, the study of the Bile, which uniquely and alone made Raphael who he was" (p.51). A French Nazarene brotherhood would also be found France with the artists, Andre-Jacques-Victor Orsel and Hippolyte Flandrin and then in the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood in England. Nichols indicates the connection between Overbeck and the French artists, and a subsequent connection to the pre-Raphaelites, with the comments of William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rosetti on the Flandrin murals in St. Germaine-des-Pres, in Paris.

Living and working in one of his buildings, I was drawn initially to chapter three The English Scene and the work of the 'Gothic Revival' and A.W.N. Pugin. He begins with John Flaxman and Charles Eastlake, the former a sculptor and artist who had lived for several years in Rome and who had begun to make the case for mediaeval art; the latter an artist, writer and gallery director who was an authority on the Nazarenes. While Pugin was not a painter, his stature as architect and decorator of churches and his influence on the Gothic revival merits the consideration given here and the role of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood is equally important, and the chapter deals in particular with the work of Hunt and William Dyce.

In the remaining three chapters the reader's attention is turned to Byzantine art and its revival throughout Europe. French artists looked to Byzantium in the development of 'hieratic' art. Nichols focusses on the Charles Diehl, Gabriel Millet and Louis Bréhier in the study of Byzantine art and on the School of Beuron, which emerged with the foundation of the Abbey of Beuron in 1863. Chapter five's topic is the revival and

survival of the Russian icon, which began according to the work of Gerold Vzdornov not in the period around the Great Icon Exhibition of 1913, but earlier at the end of the eighteenth century and right through the nineteenth. Nichols surveys the period from Russia's Silver Age to the Bolshevik Revolution and then to the diaspora after the revolution and its effect on an understanding of and fervour for the icon. Chapter six returns to France and the work of Maurice Denis, two of whose paintings adorn the front and back of the book.

The scope of this book is breath-taking. A clarity on definitions and technical terms would help those unfamiliar with some of those used – perhaps even a glossary. My only other criticism is the lack of pictures, although to do the themes justice, it might have turned it onto a coffee-table volume. However, to be even selective about what might be included here, the author and the publishers would have had a Herculean task. I'm sure the sheer cost of copyright would have been excessive. We are lucky to live in an age where images are easily available on the internet, and I found everything I was interested in. As a result, the reading of the book took considerably longer than usual due the fact that I got lost in the works of various artists mentioned and in the writings of various critics. This volume is essential reading for any interested in this particular period of art and in the evolution of the idea of sacred art. It is still more a worthy addition to Nichols' other works on art and the sacred image.

Maynooth College John Paul Sheridan

Entering the Twofold Mystery. On Christian Conversion. Erik Varden. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2020. Pp 272. Price £14.99 Pbk / E-book.

Following his much acclaimed volume, (The Shattering of Loneliness. On Christian Remembrance. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018), the Bishop of Trondheim, formerly a monk in the Cistercian Abbey of Mount St Bernard in Leicestershire, England, has gathered together a series of talks and homilies delivered when Abbot into a second volume. The key term of the title, namely, the "twofold mystery", is drawn from the poetry of Elsa Morente and refers to the mystery of sorrow and that of joy accessible only to the one who truly loves. The subtitle points to the means for accessing this love, and knowledge, namely, the path of Christian conversion. Following a very personal introduction detailing the foundation of his calling to a more intensely lived Christian life, the volume divides into two parts, namely "What makes a monk" and "A Monastic Year." Each is divided into three chapters. The first chapter addresses the three monastic vows of obedience, stability, and *conversatio morum* and drawing from the monastic storehouse, treasures new and old, results in an energetically refreshing presentation of the vows. This anticipates the following chapter entitled patrimony which draws upon

monastic wisdom to reflect on contemporary questions, including toxic versus healthy masculinity. The final chapter of the first part speaks of the goal of the monastic life, namely, the expansion of the heart. A symphony of sources, scriptural, liturgical, monastic, patristic, and contemporary voices, are drawn upon to trace a way to expansion of heart and the ensuing joy.

The second part of this volume is dedicated to the liturgical year and divided into three chapters covering the seasons, ordinary time, and the saints. This collection of homilies, given at the respective seasons and times, reflects well the overarching theme of the volume, namely, conversion and entry into the Christian mystery. The homilies have a strong paraenetic force.

Although containing talks and homilies from diverse occasions, the volume holds together well, even if, the first part is by far the richer. It is here that the vows and tools with which monks are equipped to intensely live the Christian life are clearly exposited so that they may be adopted by all Christians. Attentive readers are challenged not so much cognitively, but ethically, to take up Saint Benedict's wonderful invitation to enter into the divine mystery.

Glenstal Abbey LUKE MACNAMARA OSB,

Shorter Notice

The Curia is the Pope, and why it cannot listen. John O'Loughlin Kennedy. Delgany: Mount Salus Press 2020.

This book is, the author's words, 'an assessment from the pew of how some current weaknesses of the Church might be overcome … a critique of the management structure and its disordered priorities … [by] a committed member, concerned at how easily religion can obscure rather than illuminate the Way'. John O'Loughlin Kennedy was, with his late wife, a co-founder of what is now known as Concern Worldwide, and his experience down the decades combine with his expertise in economics and in management skills to fit him eminently for the task which he has set himself.

The title reproduces a remark of Pope John Paul II, the subtitle points to a central contention of the book. Whereas Curial staff includes many highly qualified people, the structure within which they work and its ethos make it impossible for them to serve the work of the Gospel effectively. The work of the Gospel is for the author the raison d'être of the institution but the institution's history, from Constantine onwards, has caused it to think its raison d'être to be itself.

As the argument unfolds, several disciplines are called in aid: church history, the history of doctrine, ecclesiology, the theology of ecumenism, sociology of religion, and more; the sweep is breath-taking. But O'Loughlin Kennedy is at his best when he brings his knowledge and experience of organisation and management to bear upon his theme, both in diagnosing the problems and in his proposals for reform.

Many of the proposals echo decisions of Vatican II, as he says, and he makes a strong case for the claim that all can be shown to be within the mainstream of Christ's message in the Gospels, even if some of the detail is bound to be contested. Throughout the book, John O'Loughlin Kennedy's personal faith shines through, as when he writes: 'If some of the above proposals imply imperfection in current practice, this does not negate Christ's promise to be with us'. *The Curia is the Pope* requires and deserves careful study; attention to its conclusions can illuminate the synodal path.

Index

Volume 73, Nos., 1-6 (January – June 2022)

Articles

A New Vocabulary: Delta, Omicron, Co-Responsibility, Synodality: *Tony Hanna* 86
Authentic Encounters; Brian Merry 286
'Bishop, Can Church Teaching Change'? – Doctrinal Change and the Synodal Pathway. *Gerry O'Hanlon, S.J* 3
Bishops caught in an Institutional Straitjacket? *Richard Shields* 347
Can we *really* call the women in Luke's Gospel Disciples*;* *Marian Mortell* 259
Catholics and Abortion Law: *Michael C. McGuckian, SJ* 29
Catholic Politicians, Legislation and Holy Communion*;* *D. Vincent Twomey, SVD* 211
Catholic Shame & Female Blame: *Edna O'Brien and The Country Girls Trilogy*; *Carleigh Garcia* 215
Celebration, Conversion, Commitment; A Cosmic Eucharist in *Laudato 'Si*; *Hugh O'Donnell* 330
Christians in the Middle East; *John McAreavey* 138
Cultural change in the Vatican*; Moira A. Glencorse et al* 112
Families at the Centre; *Cora O'Farrell* 165
Families at the Centre;The Spirituality of the Home; *Priscilla Fitzpatrick* 204
Featured Review
Reclaiming the Piazza, Volumes 1-111, *John Paul Sheridan* 52
Towards a Politics of Communion: *Catholic Social Teaching in Dark Times, Stefan Gillow Reynolds* 181
'Go Therefore and make disciples of all nations; recent Catholic teaching on Non-Christian religions; *Jonathan W. Chappell* 131
Homilies
February (C) *Edmond Cullinan* 47
March (C) *Mary T. Brien* 117
April (C) *Eugene Duffy* 173
May (C) *Brenda Dolphin, RSM* 173
June (C) *Paul Clayton-Lea* 309
July (C) Francis Bradley 368
How Many Dioceses do we Need? *Albert McDonnell* 10

Incarnation and Justice: Anglican Social Theology in Dialogue with Jon Sobrino; *Jonathan W. Chappell* 292
"I Put my Mouth' : Teaching from Technology to Theology: *Michael A. Conway* 67
Jesus and Mary; *Gerald O'Collins, S.J* 162
Love of God, Neighbour, and Self in and through Human Sexuality:. . . . . 39 *Michael G. Lawler/ Todd A. Salzman.*
Marian Images; *Kathleen Coyle, SSC* 150
Ministers and Ministry – Midwifing something new In an Irish context; *Michael Collins.* 339
News and Views:
Catholics and Abortion Law; *Tom Healy* 180
Regular church goer of 70 years: – That I have never heard those passages; *Brían de Búrca* 279
Saint Mary Magdalene – the first witness of the Lord's resurrection and the first evangelist; *Brian de Búrca.*. 361
Soul Brothers?- St. Paul and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ; *Hilda Geraghty* 229
SYNODALITY – A Theological Glossary*; Kevin O'Gorman SMA* 195
The Church in Crisis: the Prophetic Dimension; *V.J. McBrierty and D.M.D. Murphy*. 106
The Great Reset and Synodality in the Church; *V.J.McBrierty et al* 221
The Mystical Stage of Religion: Towards a Description*; Philip McParland* 143
The NCCA'S recommendations for a new Relationships and Sexuality Education; *Richard Casey*. 301
The Office of Bishop in the Thought of Pope Francis; *Patrick H.Daly* 79
The Online Parish Community. *Shane Crombie* 23
The Synodal pathway in Killala Diocese, 2017-2022; *Brendan Hoban* 269
To integrate the World views of Science and religion; *Hilda Geraghty* 95
Translating Vatican II; *Gerald O'Collins*. 239
Unravelling the Transgender Dilemma; *Johanna Merry*. 323
Wounded Healers in Recovery – a Church of and for the Future; *Margaret Naughton*. 101
You Have Seen Me, and I am Grateful: The Courage of the Poor, *Peter C. Wilcox* 18

New Books

Beyond Belief: How Pentecostal Christianity is taking over the world *(Reg Naulty*) 189, Book Reviews 1975-2021 *(Kevin O'Gorman SMA*) 313, Come Drink at the Fountain *(Kevin O'Gorman SMA)* 253, Columba Marmion *(Columba McCann, OSB)* 191, Counsels of the Holy Spirit; A Reading of

St. Ignatius's Letters (*Michael Shortall*) 252, Divine Diamond: Facets of the Fourth Gospel (*Luke Macnamara*, *OSB)* 61, Entering the Twofold Mystery. On Christian Conversion *(Luke Macnamara OSB)* 378, Hearers of the Word [Lent & Holy Week] *(Kevin O'Gorman, SMA),* 186, "Heart speaks to Heart": Saint John Henry Newman and the Call to Holiness *(Andrew Meszaros*) 316, Hope and the Nearness of God: The 2022 Lent Book *(Chris Hayden)* 188, In Search of the Sacred Image *(John Paul Sheridan)* 376, Irish Jesuits 1596-1696 *(Collmán Ó Clabaigh OSB),* 123, Looking Back to the Future (*P.J. McAuliffe)* 58, Mission to a Suffering People *(Collmán Ó Clabaigh OSB)*, 123, Mysteries of the Lord's Prayer *(Luke Macnamara OSB*) 125, My Words Will Not Pass Away *(Kevin O'Gorman SMA*) 59, Ponder – Contemplative Bible Study *(Seán Maher*) 375, Revisiting the vision of Fr. Patrick J. Whitney; (*John Paul Sheridan*) 254, Saint John of Cross: Wisdom Sayings (*Neil Xavier O'Donoghue)* 374, See God Act *(Kevin O'Gorman SMA*) 253, Staying Tender: Contemplation, Pathway to Compassion *(Luke Macnamara OSB*) 62, Strangers and Nomads: Catholic Martyrs of England and Wales *(Callum D. Young)* 189 Streets and Secret Places (*Kevin O'Gorman SMA*) 60, Search of the Sacred Image (*John Paul Sheridan*) 376, Staying Tender: Contemplation, Pathway to Compassion *(Luke Macnamara)* 62, To Prepare His Ways *(Kevin O'Gorman, SMA)* 187, The Grace of "Nothingness": Navigating the Spiritual Life with Blessed Columba Marmion *(Columba McCann, OSB),* 191, Travelling on Titanic with Father Browne; *(P.J. McAuliffe)* 315, Undaunted: Stories of Freedom in a Shackled Society *(P.J. McAuliffe*) 314, Unheard Voices *(Marie Keenan)* 62, World Politics Since 1989 *(Reg Naulty*) 63.

Shorter Notices

Channelling the Inner Fire *(Brendan McManus SJ)* 256, Ignatian Spirituality in 15 Points *(Brendan McManus SJ)* 256 The Courage of Their Convictions: Stories of Inspirational Men and Women of Faith *(Gemma Grant)* 256, The Curia is the Pope, and why it cannot listen *(John O'Loughlin Kennedy)* 380.

Varia

A Living Tradition. Angela Hanley, *What happened to Fr. Seán Fagan.* (Dublin Columba Press), p.185. 179
As an individual you need community. Brendan McManus, SJ, *Channelling the Inner Fire*, (Dublin: Messenger Publications), 2022, p. 36. 142
Catholic Social Teaching. Anna Rowlands, *Towards a Politics of Communion,* (London, T & T Clarke), 2021, p. viii. 268
Discretion. Saint John of the Cross, *Wisdom Sayings*, Translated by Terence O'Reilly (Cambridge: Iona) p.viii. 39
Dreaming Big. Gary Howley, *Revisiting the Vision of Fr Patrick J. Whitney*, (Dublin: Columba Books), 2021, p. 3.. 149
Eastern Thought. Bishop Fintan Monahan, *Peace Smiles, Rediscovering Thomas Merton* (Dublin: Veritas), p.71. 242

Far Reaching Influence on Vatican Councils. Bishop Fintan Monahan, *A Perfect Peace, Newman Saint for Our Time*. (Dublin: Veritas). p. 65. 46
Freedom. Brendan McManus, SJ, *Channelling the Inner Fire*, (Dublin: Messenger Publications), 2022, p. 28. 185
Freedom. Gabriel Dolan, *Undaunted: Stories of Freedom in a Shackled Society,* (Kenya, Zand Graphics), 2021, p. 13. 278
Gratitude and Joy. Joachim Hartmann & Annette Unkelhäußer, *Joy in God,* (Dublin: Messenger Publications), 2021. p.19.. 338
Hope. Teresa White, *Hope and the Nearness of God,* (Bloomsbury, 2021,) pp. 80-1. 100
I and You. Joachim Hartmann & Annette Unkelhäußer, *Joy in God,* (Dublin: Messenger Publications), 2021. p.27.. 367
Joy. Kevin O'Gorman, SMA, *Divine Diamond: Facets of the Fourth Gospel*. 2021, (Dublin: Messenger Publications), p. 46. 161
Lent. Teresa White, *Hope and the Nearness of God* (London: Continuum, 2021), p.209. 251
Receiving Communion. Liam G. Walsh, OP. *The Mass: Yesterday, Today, and Forever.*(Dublin: Dominican Publications). p.93. 210
Revelation. Michael Barnes, SJ, *Ignatian Spirituality & Interreligious Dialogue*, 2021 (Dublin: Messenger Publications) p.97. 300
Saint Faustina. Éamonn P. Bourke, *Mercy in All Things.* (Dublin: Veritas), p.58. 192
Securing the Future. Michael Knowles, *The Meeting that Changed the World* (Durham, England:Sacristy Press) p.3. 228
Sin. Timothy Radcliffe, *Alive in God*, (London: Bloomsbury Continuum) p. 120. 291
The Experience of the Dark Night. Edmond Cullinan, TOC, *Come Drink at the Fount: Introducing the Carmelite Authors* (Dublin, Veritas, 2021,) p. 54. 116
The importance of the Martyrs. Dudley Plunkett, *Strangers and Nomads: Catholic Martyrs of England and Wales*, (UK: Gracewing) 2021, p.6 17
The Providence of God. Teresa White, *Hope and the Nearness of God,* (Bloomsbury, 2021,) p. 24. 78
The Ways of the Spirit. Denis Tuohy, *Streets and Secret Places*, 2021 (Dublin: Messenger Publications) p. 67. 57

Document

Fratelli tutti On Religion and Violence, Pope Francis 126
Fratelli tutti On a Better Kind of Politics, Pope Francis 317

The Furrow

Help secure a bright future for

The Furrow

by remembering the journal in your will,

or

by making a donation.

The entire journal is available online.

Catholic Association of Preachers Conference

Rome, Monday 3rd–Friday 7th October 2022

Inspired and Equipped to Preach the Good News

Speakers:

Archbishop Joseph Augustine Di Noia O.P.

– Adjunct Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Ms Joan Henshaw

– Presentation skills coach and author.

Cost: €550 (all included except flights)
Deposit: €150 to be paid by 15thJune2022
Venue: Palazzola Retreat House by Lake Albano, South of Rome.

For further details please, contact:
admin@catholicassociationofpreachers.org.uk