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A Gospel
Challenge

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The *Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf* is a familiar story among the nursery rhymes, fairy tales and folk lore that parents tell their children once they are tucked up in bed. But there is another version with an interesting twist that is reflected in its title, *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*.[1] Often my wife has recalled the protests of our son when she read the story to him, "No mammy! It's the big bad wolf!". Despite her references to the wonderful illustrations in the book, he insisted that she had made a mistake time and time again. Already our three-year-old son had learned a narrative where pigs are good and wolves are bad. The story was unfamiliar, and it unsettled him. In his recent decree, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis says,

> Let us rethink our usual way of doing things; let us open our eyes and ears, and above all our hearts, so as not to be complacent about things as they are, but unsettled by the living and effective word of the risen Lord.[2]

Recently, I noticed an unfamiliar word; "antigypsyism". I passed over it without giving it much thought. The term "antigypsyism" reminds me of some other words that have become part of my everyday experience that I may be taking for granted; "sexism" and "anti-Semitism". Understanding these words may help to get to grips with this new word and to appreciate its significance in pastoral and socio-political developments such as the *Revised National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017-2020)*.[3]

Some words have made a difference to our public discourse. In this section, two words will be reviewed, "anti-Semitism" and "sexism", to remind us of how they came into our everyday vocabulary and to consider the difference they have made.

1 Trivizas, Eugenios, Helen Oxenbury, and Johnny Morris, *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig.* Egmont, 1993.
2 Pope Francis. "Gaudete et Exsultate." # 137.
3 Department of Justice and Equality. "National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017-2021)." Department of Justice and Equality, Dublin, 2017.

Colin Thomson is Traveller Inclusion Manager, Parish of the Travelling People, St Laurence House, 6 New Cabra Road, Dublin 7.

HATRED OF JEWS

Between 1879 and 1881, a German activist and journalist, Wilhelm Marr published a series of pamphlets, and founded the *League of Anti-Semites*. Marr advocated that Germans and Jews were locked in a protracted conflict. It was in this context that Marr coined the term "anti-Semitism" which is a form of racism that emerged from the "scientific" racial theories developed in the 19th century.[4] The term is inaccurate as Phoenicians, Arabs and Hebrews make up the Semitic people but only Jews, even if they do not speak Hebrew, are the objects of this ideology of Judenhass (Jew-hatred). The term "anti-Semitism" is defined as hostility toward or discrimination specifically against Jews as a religious or racial group. In the twentieth century, the Holocaust was the consequence of the hatred of Jews that was structured into the lives of nations throughout Europe. Emil Fackenheim is a Jewish philosopher who asserts that Jews are compelled to learn from and remember constantly the lessons of the Holocaust. He is among those scholars who argued that the term should be written without a hyphen as "antisemitism". He stated, "the spelling ought to be antisemitism without the hyphen, dispelling the notion that there is an entity "Semitism" which "Anti-Semitism" opposes".[5]

The persistence of the ideology of hatred in antisemitism is apparent as it applies to all Jews no matter how he or she lives and behaves. It is an ideology that is applied to an orthodox traditionalist, an assimilated modernised conformist or even those who are non-practicing; all experience exclusion because of they are categorised as Jews. The racial theory that supported this "scientific" outlook has been discredited.

MISOGYNY

In 1965, Pauline M. Leet coined the term "sexism". In a speech, she established the relation between sexism and racism in a way that was readily understood in the context of the civil rights movement:

> When you argue … that since fewer women write good poetry this justifies their total exclusion, you are taking a position analogous to that of the racist – I might call you in this case a "sexist" … Both the racist and the sexist are acting as if all that has happened had never happened, and both of them are making decisions and coming to conclusions about someone's value by referring to factors which are in both cases irrelevant.[6]

4   Zimmermann, Moshe. *Wilhelm Marr; The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism.* Oxford University Press On Demand, 1986.
5   Prager, Dennis, and Joseph Telushkin. *Why the Jews?: The Reason for Antisemitism.* London: Simon and Schuster, 2007
6   Shapiro, Fred R. "Historical Notes on the Vocabulary of the Women's Movement." *American Speech* (Duke University Press) Vol. 60, no. 1 (1985): 3-16, 6.

Caroline Bird added to the popular use of the term when she included it in the introduction to her book, *Born Female* (1968) in which she explores the everyday experiences of women suffering injustice and exploitation. The understanding of sexism has expanded significantly since then.[7]

Initially, prejudice was understood as solely negative and hostile. However, research indicated that it is more difficult to challenge oppression that is sympathetic and benevolent. If a woman challenges the current situation, she is likely to experience a backlash in which her behaviour is judged, and her actions sabotaged or demeaned. This is true for women in the workplace, but it is also the case for women in the family. Rigid gender roles cause men and women to confuse benevolent sexism with mature heterosexual intimacy. Sexism, whether hostile or benevolent, harms every woman; she may hide her skills and her ambitions. Sexism influences the way a woman perceives herself. There is a long history of women negotiating their space beyond the stereotypical.

Sexism is an ideology that misrepresents women. Another voice is being heard but social transformation is slow. The struggle to overcome that ideology and social conditioning is on-going in society and in the Church. The word "sexism" has expanded the vocabulary of institutional discourse but something else is needed too. Institutional discourse is expanded with new words and it is restructured by principles of inclusion which act like its grammar. "Active participation", "empowerment" and "solidarity" are examples of principles that challenge sexist ideology by challenging traditional practices and restructuring social action. For example, in the State, political parties have adopted quotas for the selection of candidates to promote the equal participation of women in the political process, one hundred years after women won the right to vote. In the context of the Church, Pope Saint John Paul II wrote in 1995, "an effective and intelligent campaign for the promotion of women" begins with "a universal recognition of the dignity of women".[8] The number of women working in the Vatican has increased since then and a group of women have formed the first female association in the Vatican; D.VA' – for 'Donne in Vaticano'.[9] The association provided a space for women to empower women in the Church. The association was recognised and approved by the Vatican in 2016.

7   Lorenzi-Cioldi, Fabio, and Ciara Kulich. "Sexism." *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition)*, 2015: 693–699.
8   Pope John Paul II. "Letter to Women." (1995).
9   Ossevatore Romano. *Women in the Vatican.* 1 December 2016. http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/women-vatican.

The terms "antisemitism" and "sexism" have become a part of public discourse in Church and society. The words do not resolve the issues to which they refer but the discourse expands reflection and gives space for social and political transformation. The term "gypsy" is used in documents and in translations among other terms such as Roma, Sinti, Traveller, Tziganes and others. In the European context, policy documents refer to "Roma" which is used as an umbrella term for nomadic groups throughout Europe. Many of these names are contested. Irish Travellers would strongly assert that they are not gypsies. A name may be used by outsiders to refer to a people or social group that the group itself does not use. "Gypsy" is used here in that way; as it is used to identify those who are not truly known by our mainstream societies throughout Europe. Travellers commonly use nicknames within their community. It is an inclusive way of naming others. The opposite is name-calling: the use of abusive names to belittle or humiliate another person usually in an argument. Sadly, Travellers are too familiar with name-calling at all levels of society. Terms such as "itinerant", "settled traveller" and "gypsy" arose when society in general constructed a public discourse that supported policies and programmes that devalued Traveller identity and culture. In the 1980's,[10] Traveller organisations, such as Dublin Traveller Education Development Group (Pavee Point) emerged where Travellers and settled people worked in partnership. They adopted a human rights framework and sought to redress the devaluation of Travellers and their culture. However, for decades, the government refused to acknowledge their efforts to have the ethnic identity of Travellers recognised. Despite these developments, the social exclusion of Travellers and Roma persisted.

So, names can be used to categorise others in a demeaning way or to fail to recognise another who is different. The recognition of the ethnic identity of Travellers by the State was to begin to see them and know them truly. However, in addition to names, grammar provides rules. In 2009 the EU invited Member States and the Commission to apply 10 Common Basic Principles[11] as a framework for the successful design and implementation of actions to support Roma (Traveller) inclusion. These principles are the fruit of experience. They are offered as a guide to policy-makers to overcome antigypsyism that preserves forms of implicit assimilation and on-going exclusion. In 2017, the Irish State

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10 Crowley, Una. "Outside in Dublin: Travellers, Society and the State, 1963-1985." *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies,* 2009: 17-24
11 Permanent Representatives Committee. "Inclusion of Roma." *Council of the European Union.* 28 May 2009.

published its *revised National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (NTRIS).* Prior to its publication, the former Taoiseach Enda Kenny made a statement that recognised the ethnic identity of Travellers. Ethnicity is about recognition of the presence of the other who is different. It is not the categorisation that was part of racial theory. The Traveller community welcomed the statement wholeheartedly, but some were concerned that the government repeatedly asserts that the recognition is only symbolic, as noted in the Foreword of the NTRIS document. The strategy does refer to the 10 Common Basic Principles of Inclusion, but has the vocabulary and the institutional discourse changed yet?

ANTIGYPSYISM

The word "antigypsyism" is first found in a resolution of the EU Parliament in 2005.[12] It addresses the lack of progress at the level of European society to address the persistent social exclusion of Roma. The leadership of the EU asserted that the on-going level of exclusion of Roma throughout Europe was incompatible with their social and economic values. So, Europe gave itself a decade to transform that reality. In 2011, the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* was adopted. Responding in 2015 to the failures of member States to reach their target groups, the EU Parliament repeated its call and the Commission used the term "antigypsyism" throughout its report on the *Implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.* The EU parliament repeated its call yet again in October 2017 and it called on the Commission to "place anti-Gypsyism in the focus of the post-2020 EU Framework … as anti-Gypsyism undermines the successful implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies".[13]

The emerging institutional discourse has been informed by the Council of Europe (CoE) when Its independent monitoring body, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) expanded the understanding of the term. It stated that "antigypsyism" is,

> a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination; [and] an especially persistent, violent, recurrent and commonplace form of racism

12 European Parliament. "Roma in the European Union." 28 April 2005.
13 European Parliament. "on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism." *European Parliament.* 11 October 2017.

… inflicted on a large number of Roma, and by the too frequent impunity that the culprits enjoy.[14]

The fact is, society demonises the Traveller and justifies the conditions for his or her marginalization. So, the term "anti-gypsyism" (with a hyphen) is not used. That term implicitly maintains a focus on society's notion of a minority in its midst; the "gypsy". By removing the hyphen, the term "antigypsyism" dispels the demon and focuses on the disposition of mainstream society. The word refers to the settled ideology. The ideology cannot be described as "scientific" but it reflects a "mainstream" mindset that has been shaped by the discourse found in previous public policies. For Traveller inclusion to be really effective, it is necessary to address how mainstream society views and treats those they know as "gypsies" with the help of Travellers and Roma who have been disregarded for generations.

Antigypsyism harms Travellers. When it is not named, antigypsyism has the power to become invisible and to act out as the way things are done. It is normalised. It is familiar. In this way, antigypsyism creates poverty, poor accommodation, poor health, poor education, etc. Using the term "antigypsyism" is a step towards challenging that power. For social change that leads to the inclusion of Travellers, the new vocabulary needs a grammar that can adequately combat the dynamics of antigypsyism that preserve various forms of exclusion. If the *National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy* is to improve the lives of Travellers and Roma, the 10 Common Basic Principles of Traveller Inclusion need to be applied to professional practices along with the word "antigypsyism".

GOSSIP TO GOSPEL IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Sadly, the discourse within the Church often reflects the wider public discourse for good and for ill. However, the leadership has something to say about antigypsyism and it reflects some other conversations that are taking place in public discourse. Walk with others, learn from others, avoid complacency. Join the alliance. This is the message of the *Alliance against Antigypsyism*.[15] This resonates with the message of Pope Francis in his recent decree, *Gaudate et Exsultate*. He rejects gossip and its inherent violence, and he promotes expressions of love of God and of neighbour (112-147). He recommends us to accompany others in community "side

14   ECRI. "ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 13: On Combating Anti-Gypsyism and Discrimination Against Roma." *Council of Europe.* (24/6/2011), p. 3-4.
15   Alliance Against Antigypsyism. Reference Paper. 2017. http://antigypsyism. eu/?page_id=17.

by side" (141), "even though doing so may not bring immediate satisfaction"; to learn from others in small everyday things (143); to avoid complacency (137) and to learn to pass beyond what is familiar (135). Also, he includes to avoid "a subtle form of violence" (117) in the desire to teach others. Despite hardships hold on to "a spiritual fulfilment that the world cannot understand or appreciate" (125). Always "discern, in the light of the Spirit, the paths to which the Lord is calling us" (147) and do not be afraid to speak out (129).

We may welcome the State's recognition of the ethnic status of Travellers in Ireland in March 2017 as symbolic if it means moving beyond the gossip of hate speech or lip service towards a new narrative. Real change requires us to understand antigypsyism as an old narrative that persists in mainstream society. However, there may also be signs of hope that can provide encouragement for those in our schools and on pastoral teams.

For example, on the 11th July 2018, there was a debate in Seanad Éireann on the Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill (2018).[16] The Bill is the initiative of Senator Colette Kelleher who acknowledged the contribution of her fellow Senators and Travellers from the Irish Traveller Movement. The Bill seeks to amend the Education Act 1998 to provide for the inclusion of Traveller culture and history in the school curriculum. In supporting the Bill as an independent Senator, Michael McDowell made two points that are noteworthy in this context.

First, Senator McDowell avoids the old narrative about Travellers by directing attention on the context given in statistics that "portray an exclusion and a sense of being an outsider and to some extent a determination on the part of the settled community to keep Travellers in an outsider status". Therefore, this initiative is for all schools, including those where Traveller children are not present. He argues that when the school curriculum reflects the value given to the history and culture of Travellers, it will follow that Traveller children may take their place in school "as of right" and experience it as a place of welcome. This is a challenge to all schools, including Catholic schools, and an opportunity, through an informed debate, to support structural changes that can be transformative. To recall the words of Pope Francis at the beginning, it is an invitation to rethink our usual way of doing things. It challenges our complacency. Secondly, in the debate the Minister for Education questioned the need for legislation. He suggested "a looser, less prescriptive approach" along with the support of other stakeholders in the wider school community

16 A copy of the debate can be found on the web at https://www.kildarestreet.com/sendebates/?id=2018-07-11a.181&s=speaker%3A179

would be preferable. This contrasts with the position of Senator McDowell who advocated for legislation because he anticipates resistance. It is also very significant that he acknowledges his own part in the failure of "an entire political generation" to create "a Traveller friendly and Traveller appreciative" service. Travellers would recognise Michael McDowell as the author of the criminal trespass legislation in 2002[17] which they assert criminalises their way of life. Now legislation is being proposed for change at a structural level that addresses antigypsyism in our schools. Again, recalling the Pope's invitation above to "open our eyes and ears, and above all our hearts", there is a call to metanoia rather than avoiding and shifting blame.

There are challenges for leadership teams and those in pastoral ministry if we are to provide a supportive context for an informed debate. The *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies*[18] call for "a profound conversion" and for awareness of sin "at the root of any situation of rejection and injustice". The term "antigypsyism" was never used in the text which in its English translation refers to "Gypsies". However, there is an understanding of the dynamics of antigypsyism which helps us to understand how these guidelines can encourage and support those in pastoral ministry. There have been failures in the past but there have been significant pastoral developments too since the renewal of the ministry to Gypsies, in 1965. These include the rejection of demeaning language to describe Gypsies prescribed in Canon Law in 1983, and the call by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1991 to Gypsies to join in political action to build a fraternal world. These developments became part of the renewed ministry and are incorporated into the guidelines. Mindful of the changes and the need for further change in public discourse, it is incumbent on those training for pastoral leadership and those in pastoral roles to reflect on the guidelines for the pastoral care of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. For example, the guidelines reflect the need to take Traveller history into account, otherwise we continue in an old narrative that fails to respect their human rights and their culture.[19]

These are examples of how antigypsyism is our issue and by understanding it we can work towards a new narrative that reflects the values of an inclusive society and the gospel. Antigypsyism

17 Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002
18 Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies*, *Vatican*, 8th December 2005.
19 Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies, 52. … "if Gypsy history is not taken into account, social action will tend to take the stance that it is a question of dealing with social deviation. After all, Gypsies may easily be considered as anti-social elements to be brought back as soon as possible within the fold of majority society. This would deny the discrimination that Gypsies have been subjected to for centuries and the recognition of the specific nature of their culture would not be achieved".

is a deeply embedded form of gossip that is commonly appealed to in order to discipline, oppress and violate others. Antigypsyism focuses on a minority community among us and fails to respect their dignity and human rights. Antigypsyism is our issue. It will require some difficult and unsettling conversations; and they need to begin now.

A rich legacy. Little is actually known about the historical figure, Patrick. Accounts of his miracles are legion; his connection with snakes and shamrock is retold on an almost daily basis, and his iconic image is instantly recognisable across the world. The dates of his birth and death are, however, contested by scholars, the date of his return to Ireland to begin his mission is problematic and the very nature of his mission has been questioned. The prominent Patrician scholar, Ludwig Bieler, aware of these issues, made a very simple and sensible suggestion in his 1948 publication, *The Life and Legend of Saint Patrick*: 'It is not the man that counts, however striking was his personality, but the faith that he brought'.

– JOHN KILLEN, *St. Patrick's Treasury* (Blackstaff Press) p.viii.