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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.

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Facing the Reality of Fewer Priests

Gerard Condon

The priests of Cloyne Diocese recently completed an exercise on facing up to the reality of our declining presence in the parishes of north and east County Cork. That reality is plain to all, part of the national trend, but one we had not previously addressed as a group. Like most men, priests have quite the capacity for assuming that life will continue as it always has, until suddenly it doesn't.

The exercise began with the diocesan office compiling a facts sheet, setting out the evolving demographics of our diocese. The statistics were discussed at *deanery* meetings in Kanturk, Mallow, Midleton, Fermoy and Macroom; the first time in some years that this forum was convened. The deanery reports were then reviewed at the annual assembly of priests in Killarney, last November, at a session led by Martin Kennedy. Finally, the Council of Priests distilled the discussion into a series of responses, which are summarised here.

STATISTICS

The Diocese of Cloyne has a Catholic population of about 150,000 in 46 parishes and currently has 75 priests in ministry within the diocese. That ratio of one priest for every 2,000 people happens to be the current international standard. It compares well with other Catholic countries such as France (1:2,800), Brazil (1:8,500) and the Philippines (1:10,000). One to 2,000 is also the traditional ratio for Ireland, once the surge in vocations of the mid-Twentieth Century is excluded. However, we stand at the edge of a precipice, the dimensions of which are revealed on examination of our age profile and reliance on priests already in their retirement. No ordinations for Cloyne are expected for another six years. We anticipate that, by 2028, one-third of our priests will have reached the age of retirement (at 75). By 2038, without a renewal in vocations, there may be just 34 priests in active ministry in Cloyne, almost all of them over the age of 65.

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CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

The most obvious challenge presented by the current situation is that more is being asked of fewer priests. The parishes of Cloyne Diocese traditionally had one or more curates. Single priest parishes are fast becoming the norm. Being the only priest "on call" creates the impression that the parish cannot manage without you, even for a weekly day-off. The fear of becoming ill, without any backup, itself creates a sense of anxiety. The advent of Pastoral Councils, Safeguarding Children Committees, Finance and Liturgy Councils, do help to share the burden of responsibility, but also add to the monthly round of meetings.

Most of the Catholics, who present for marriage papers, baptisms, confirmations, etc., are not familiar to us from Sunday Mass. This has a demoralising effect on the priest. Even if the grace of the sacraments works in ways we can only imagine (*ex opere operato*), liturgical celebrations lack the ring of authenticity (*ex opere operantis*) without an ongoing participation in the life of the Church. Priests would prefer to be known as familiar faith friends rather than occasional service providers.

Parish boundaries have become less relevant. The larger towns and cities are popular Mass venues for rural parishioners who combine Sunday shopping with Sunday Mass. As is typical for an institution in decline, the Catholic Church in Ireland is less homogenous nowadays, with liberal and conservative groups attracting committed adherents, who are not necessarily linked to their local parish.

As our numbers decline, the priest's feelings of isolation can increase. Loneliness stems not so much from living alone (many priests relish their retreat from the whirlwind of each day), but from the perception that our way of life does not matter much to society anymore. Given that the cultural milieu can be so critical of the Church, we may be tempted to retreat to our clerical bunkers, emerging each Sunday to fire off a salvo of counter-criticism. Our congregations have come to hear the Good News, not a harangue! Too much of our time is spent maintaining existing structures and ministering to those already proficient in faith. We can feel under-resourced and helpless in finding ways of making Christ relevant to young adults, the disaffected and those who have drifted away from their Church.

With all these challenges comes the danger of losing confidence and becoming cynical. The generosity of spirit with which we offered our lives to God and the Church might be replaced by a "creeping selfishness", as one priest called it. We might prefer to think just of our own patch of the Lord's vineyard, forgetting our responsibilities to the wider Church and her future.

ADVANTAGES

In other ways, there has never been a better time to be a diocesan priest in Ireland. While it is regrettable that Irish society is turning away from Gospel teachings, a clearer distinction from the State will make for a humbler, nimbler Church. We can again take a stand with those on the margins, the latter day *anawim Yahweh*. Some priests report that the atmosphere at Sunday Masses has become more vibrant in recent years, thanks to the greater proportion of *intentional* as distinct from *cultural* Catholics in the assembly. The years of opprobrium by the commentariat has, on the ground, only created a climate of sympathy and goodwill.

There was a time when Irish dioceses had too many priests for their own needs. Now that we are more scattered and busier, there is less time for petty, personal rivalries. No longer does the local priest have to cope with the pressure of being on the community pedestal, *mar fear i lár an aonar*. Information technology has made administering parishes more efficient and effective.

Most crucially, our reduced presence is creating the climate for a more inclusive Church. Many of the roles previously played by the priest are not essential to the priesthood and can be better carried out by suitably prepared lay and religious women and men. That, I think, is the reason why, in our discussions, there was no motion for changing the Church's teaching on an all-male and celibate-only priesthood. No radical or "curve ball" suggestions emerged from our discussions. Our responses to the emerging reality are based on current Church teaching and practice.

Promote vocations to the diocesan priesthood: Among the commonly stated causes of the crisis in vocations, is the requirement of celibacy, smaller family sizes in the Western world and the sexual abuse scandals. To this list we added our failure to promote and lead public prayers for vocations. Where this has happened, in parts of the United States, an increase in vocations has followed. The personal example of priests is also inspirational. If we present as selfish, tired or over-busy, we are hardly making the priesthood an attractive option for young men. Conversely, the witness of a prayerful, wholesome and compassionate life itself invites vocations.

Invite priests from abroad:

There were views for and against this response. The principal argument for inviting clergy from other countries is that, without priests, the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Church's life, cannot be celebrated. Priests from other cultures and nations would be a reminder of the "catholicity" of the Church, and parallel the

welcome Ireland is extending to migrants from around the world. *Against* the suggestion is the argument that it is the responsibility of the local Church to nurture its own vocations. Non-Irish priests might fail to connect with the peculiar expression of Catholicism in Ireland. The presence of many priests from abroad might stymie the emergence of a new Church, one that is less clergy-centred.

Promote priests' wellbeing: Our discussions noted that fraternity among priests is not as strong as it was in the past and that our houses are often untidy! We can be so busy that, all too easily, our accommodation can become badly kept and forbidding.

In the days of yore, it was the housekeeper who kept the priest in good stead. She was not just a cook and a gatekeeper, but also a companion. Cardinal Basil Hume once observed the most biting sacrifice of being celibate to be, at the end of each day, having no one to share his problems before being told to, "Come off it, Basil!" So, who can replace "Mrs. Doyle"? Or would we really want her to be replaced? Her role in the priest's life is now taken by multiple others: such as a visiting housekeeper, the parish secretary, as well as lay and clerical friends. Several priests referred to the role of their own family as a cornerstone in their lives.

The role of the bishop as shepherd to priests was also aired. Priests would welcome a personal visit from their bishop, or his vicar for clergy, at times other than parish events. The vow of obedience (from "ab audire", meaning "to hearken"), properly involves mutual listening to the concerns of both the priest and of the diocese, as expressed by the bishop. The ongoing back-up of the diocesan office in matters of everyday pastoral practice is much appreciated. We called for the greater provision of recommended pastoral supervisors, therapists and spiritual directors, as a way of encouraging priests to seek help, when needed, and as an ongoing support.We suggested that, even in times of fewer priests, opportunities for sabbaticals and for postgraduate qualification should continue to be encouraged. Without continuing formation, we risk becoming time-locked and anachronistic. Diocese-wide and regional meetings are other opportunities for learning, as well as building consensus and fraternity.

We noted that fraternity among priests cannot be legislated. Being sensitive to the personal space and idiosyncrasies of fellow priests is a form of Christian respect! On the other hand, we have a duty to the common good and should avoid becoming lone rangers. That balance between being true to oneself (the *intrapersonal*, to use Howard Gardner's term) and being true to others (the *interpersonal*), is not just good for the Church, but also for personal wellbeing.

Create Pastoral Areas: Our discussions took a view against the practice of amalgamating or "clustering" parishes. It was felt that, where possible, each priest should have a "home" parish and each parish have a priest or priests it can call its own. However, a looser cooperation between parishes, based on shared responsibilities, would help. These might include sick call and holiday cover and coordinated Sunday Mass times. Regular meetings between the priests of each area would plan for inter-parish events such as adult faith development courses, liturgical ministry training, and shared Advent or Lenten reconciliation services.

In Cloyne Diocese, as in most of rural Ireland, medium sized towns are flanked by rural parishes in their hinterland. The 'hubs' might provide secretarial services to the outlying parishes. The priests in outlying parishes could assist with chaplaincy in the second-level schools and nursing homes, which are generally located in the larger towns. One suggestion was that priests regularly "rotate pulpits" at weekends. The late editor of *The Furrow* liked to point out that each priest, no matter what the Sunday, drew on a repertoire of just five sermons, variations on his favourite themes. Making available an alternative celebrant for Sunday Mass would bring a welcome variety for parishioners.

Review Sunday Mass times: The news of the cancellation of a Sunday Mass is received in much the same way as the closure of a village shop or post office: even if it is poorly supported, the announcement is seen as a diminishment of community life. In an effort to explain our changing situation, we recommended a diocese-wide statement on *Sunday Mass in a Time of Fewer Priests*. This would point out that the frequency of Sunday Masses, depends on the number of available priests. Each priest should normally celebrate two Sunday Masses, and no more than three, including the Vigil Mass.[1] The statement would note that there is seldom need to replicate the number of Sunday Masses on a holyday of obligation, and that our policy is not to schedule separate funeral or wedding Masses on Sunday. It might be suggested that some weekday Masses would be cancelled in order to give greater attention to Sunday Eucharist. In this event, the appropriate moment from the Liturgy of the Hours would be celebrated.

The statement would appeal for parish unity. Having fewer, but better prepared Masses could be seen as a good move in itself, but only if parishioners continue to worship in their local church. A half-empty church is not the optimal setting for Sunday Eucharist, which is meant to gather together, not fragment, the local community of faith. A fuller Church itself creates a joyful

1 Cf., *The Code of Canon Law, Can*. 905.

mood and atmosphere of encounter, with one's neighbours as well as the Lord.

Active participation of all the baptised: The participation of the laity in liturgical ministries and parish stewardship is one of the most visible outcomes of Vatican II. Priests have learnt that it is neither effective nor justifiable to "run" the parish on their own. Within the past decade, many parishes have appointed part or whole-time secretaries, building caretakers and finance officers. A lay pastoral worker can add much to the parish's faith formation activities, among adults as well as children. However the limited financial resources available to parishes restrict the development of these posts. We suggested that the diocesan office draw up model job descriptions for the emerging roles. We also called for duly accredited courses in Pastoral Theology for lay-people preparing to take up the positions.

Confining the participation of parishioners to liturgical ministries and the administration of the parish runs the risk of clericalizing the laity. The priest's roles could be replaced, but parish life might not be reformed and continue to be administered along "clerical" lines. The Church could well show greater imagination in acknowledging what being a Catholic means to the average worker or student or homemaker, and integrate that experience into parish life.

Assistance to Education: Jesus blessed the children and taught adults. We have tended to do the opposite. In the early Church, evangelisation generally preceded catechesis, but our custom is to teach the faith (in schools), even before it has been received. The priest's primary function, we proposed, is as chaplain, both to the school's staff and students. His traditional responsibility, as chair of the parish's Board of Management can easily be taken up by suitably qualified lay people. (On the other hand, the view was expressed that our role in school management is a service to society. Teachers, in particular, appreciate the impartiality of the priest.) We also welcomed the growing focus on the parish (rather than the school) as the animator for Communion for the First Time and Confirmations.

The local priest's relationship with secondary schools is less well defined, and varies greatly. We regret that so few young people, even those who enjoy Religious Education, are involved with their local parishes. The *John Paul II Award* is an example of ways that parish-school links can be created.

Wider Conversation: The declining numbers of priests has created a new context for the Catholic Church in Ireland. We recommended

that our conversation be extended to involve a wider cross-section of the *pobal Dé* in Cloyne. This would take up the call of Pope Francis for "an entirely synodal Church".[2] While the Holy Father commends the traditional "organs of communion" within dioceses, such as the council of priests and the chapter of canons, he believes that it is "only to the extent that these organizations keep connected to the 'base' and start from people and their daily problems, (that) a synodal Church can begin to take shape." The conversation could take the form of a regional pastoral council, or convention or the more formal diocesan synod envisaged by Canon Law. The process itself would be an opportunity for renewal: all that is admirable in Catholicism would be more widely known; the local Church would better appreciate what is positive in society.

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In *The Second Curve*, Charles Handy uses the mathematical concept of the sigmoid curve (a horizontal "S") as a metaphor for the cycle of growth, decay and reinvention in "all things human", be it the Roman Empire, the career of Alex Ferguson, or the Apple Corporation. Before the pattern of decline becomes irreversible, the individual or the organisation has an opportunity to restore itself by sending out a second upward curve.

"The real problem," Handy writes, "is that the change has to be initiated while the first curve is still going. … Those who have been in charge … have to begin to think very differently about the future or let others lead the way up the new curve. That is something that does not come easily. … Change is easier to deliver when crisis looms, but harder to implement with resources and time running out."[3]

While Handy does not cite the Catholic Church as an example, his insight clearly applies to our situation. The traditional Church, that assigned a central role to priests and religious, is in obvious decline. It is up to our generation, who have inherited the strengths of the previous upward curve, to play a constructive, but not exclusive, part in the next.

2 Pope Francis, "Address to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops" (Vatican City: October 15, 2015).

3 Charles Handy, *The Second Curve. Thoughts on Reinventing Society* (London: Random House, 2015), 7-8.

Faith in Sport

Kevin O'Gorman

2018 was a remarkable year in Irish sport. Limerick's success in winning the All Ireland hurling final after forty five years crowned what for many spectators and pundits was the best season in living memory. (The introduction of a new provincial format intensified interest on and off the field.) The homecoming celebration for the victorious Limerick team expressed the social capital of sport in the city and county. This capital also found expression in financial terms and was expressed with the gift of Euro 100,000 by JP McManus to each of the thirty-two counties in the Association. Colm Keys celebrated this goodwill gesture: 'Touched by the "extremely heart-warming" reaction across the country to Limerick's 45-year Mac-Carthy Cup famine ending and the "elevated spirits" the win provided, McManus noted in his letter that "the whole hurling year had been a 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience".[1] Limerick's rivals are hoping this line is prophetic! In Gaelic football the development of the Super 8s Qualifying series and the dominance of Dublin in winning their fourth consecutive All-Ireland Championship gave rise to talk about the elusive Drive to Five. The joy of sport was not confined to winning as scenes from the women's hockey team at the World Cup throughout the group and knockout stages of the competition testified. The response of the losers with their families and fans lifted the emotional level well beyond the usual spectrum of shock and sadness shown by those who come second. On the rugby front Ireland's success in winning the Grand Slam in Europe, an away series against Australia and their first ever victory on home soil over New Zealand augurs well for the World Cup in the autumn. Gold medals for both the O'Donovan brothers and Sanita Puspure at the World Championships in Bulgaria offer the prospect of further success in the forthcoming Olympics. These cameos, albeit confined to the achievements of Irish sports men and women, capture something of the passion and pride of sport and its place in today's world. Listing success in Paralympic sport

1 Colm Keys, 'Equality of McManus act gives GAA food for thought', *Irish Independent*, 25th September, 2018.

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and junior athletics among the many achievements to date, an aptly named piece in August communicated this sense of community and collaboration: 'Athletes from different backgrounds united in sporting excellence for their new Ireland'.[2]

GIVING THE BEST OF YOURSELF

This the title of a *Document on the Christian perspective on sport and the human person* published by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life on June 1st 2018.[3] Divided into five chapters the first details the motive and purpose for the document which 'attempts to help the reader understand the relationship between giving our very best in sports and in living the Christian faith in every aspect of our lives'. The intention is to integrate sport into Christian life for 'the Church approaches the world of sports because it desires to contribute to the construction of an increasingly authentic, humane sport'. This perspective is premised on a theological anthropology which takes its tone and themes from *Gaudium et spes*, Vatican II's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. The first quote in this document is drawn from the opening paragraph of the conciliar text: '"Nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo" in the hearts of the followers of Christ'. This is underscored by the statement that 'sport is a human universal' which 'has taken on a new level of importance in our time'. The ecclesial echo of this experience is both an imperative and an invitation for evangelical, ethical and ecological reflection(s) and response(s). This interest (and involvement) in sport issues from the place of the person at the heart of the Church and its interpretation 'that sports activity affects the formation, relations and spirituality of a person'. This quote is taken from Pope Francis' Address to the Italian Tennis Federation in 2015. Its identification and insertion of 'the whole person' at the innermost level of the church informs its thinking and talking about all types of sporting activity.

Intending 'to be a brief presentation of the views of the Holy See and the Catholic Church on sports' the document dismisses the idea that 'the Catholic Church has only had a negative view of and impact on sport'. This view is due 'in part because of the way the history of sport has been written' with 'a misunderstanding of Catholic attitudes towards the body especially in the medieval and early modern periods'. Decrying any *fuga corporis* (flight from the body) approach, the Church situates its attitude to sport alongside 'the other expressions of the person's natural faculties such as science,

2 *Sunday Independent*, 12th August 2018.

3 http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bolletino/pubblico/2018/06/01/180601b [accessed June 3rd 2018)

learning, work, art, love and social and political commitment'. Thus, athleticism is part and parcel of the anthropology to which the Church attaches respect and adopts 'an attitude of redemption'. Quoting Francis' *Address to members of the European Olympic Committee* in 2013, the document describes 'the bond between the Church and the world of sports [as] a beautiful reality'. Identifying sport as 'a powerful instrument for the integral growth of the human person' he states that involvement in sports 'raises us to go beyond ourselves and our own self interests in a healthy way; it trains the spirit in sacrifice and, if it is organised well, it fosters loyalty in interpersonal relations, friendship and respect for rules'. This linking of the spiritual and bodily aspects of athleticism gives the lie to any accusation of dualism in the Church's attitude to sport and its structures in the world.

Addressed 'to all people of good will' the Church is interested in engaging in dialogue with those 'who have been developing programs to defend the human values that are inherent in sport practice'. While also addressed to all in the Church who are interested in and involved with sport the laity are identified as 'those most in contact with sport as a lived reality'. Among 'those who love and value sport' specific mention is made of 'players, teachers, coaches, parents [and] those for whom sport is a job as well as a vocation'. An ecumenical dimension is expressed in extending 'these thoughts to our brothers and sisters in faith who have been evangelising and promoting Christian values in sport'. A footnote here to 'sport chaplaincy' underscores the importance of ministerial involvement with sports people, both individually and institutionally. The accent on both human and Christian values underscores the underlying anthropology through which the Church analyses sport.

'How could the Church not be interested?' With this rhetorical question from Pope Pius XII to Italian sportsmen in 1945 the Church's involvement in sport is considered inevitable and indispensable. Referring to the Church's sponsorship 'of the beautiful in art, music and other areas of human activity throughout its history' the arena of sport today is seen as a canvas where beauty can be both acted out and appreciated. Accessing the aesthetic in and through the athletic not only affords us 'a chance to take part in beautiful moments or to see these take place' but also 'to remind us that beauty is one of the ways we can encounter God'. As a universal phenomenon today with 'its communicative and symbolic strength' sport is a global experience which 'fully resides in contemporary culture and permeates the styles and choices of many people's lives'. For these reasons the Church feels a need to

be present and active in the world of sport, 'considered as a modern Courtyard of the Gentiles and an Aeropagus where the Gospel is announced'. Reference to Aeropagus recalls Saint Pope John Paul II's mention of 'the modern equivalents of the Aeropagus' in Athens where Paul 'proclaimed the Gospel in language appropriate to and understandable in those surroundings'.[4] While sport is not singled out as a specific field or frontier for the Church's missionary activity its spread *ad gentes* is a sign of the times that calls for attention and apostolate. Indeed mention of 'international organisations and meetings proving increasingly important in many sectors of human life' could include sporting bodies and competitions. The Church's engagement with such entities and events is not only ethical but evangelical.

In '*The Church and Sport until now*' the history of dialogue with sport is described briefly. Beginning with Paul's predilection for sporting metaphors drawn from the Greek world to proclaim the Gospel through Thomas Aquinas' application of virtue to games to 'the inclusion of play and sports in educational institutions in the Western world' (and beyond through missionary activity), the Church's perennial interest in and involvement with sport is pointed to. Indicating the indexical relation between modernity and sport the hope is expressed that, in the rapidly changing environment of sport, 'sport experts not only "manage" change but also do so by seeking to understand and hold firm to the principles so dear to ancient and modern sport: education and human promotion'. This humanism is the hinge on which 'a Christian vision of sport' hangs. Given his own engagement (at different stages of his life) with soccer and skiing it is not surprising that Saint Pope John Paul II established 'the Church & Sport office, which since 2004 has been studying and promoting a Christian vision of sport that emphasises its importance for the building of a more humane, peaceful and just society as well as for evangelisation'.[5] After the hosting of a youth gymnastics event in the Vatican in 1904 a priest posed the question of where it was going to end to which Pope Pius X replied 'in Paradise'. (Hopefully there will be hurling in heaven!)

Chapter One closes with a statement of the purpose for the publication of the document. Reference to sport 'as an arena of human activity' where virtues can be both represented and realised at all levels and across the world means that it is 'something the Church is passionately interested in'. This passion seeks both to

4 *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, par. 37(c).

5 The publication of papers from conferences organised by the Pontifical Council for the Laity are worth noting: *The World of Sport Today – A Field of Christian Mission* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006); *Sport, Education, Faith – Towards a New Season for Catholic Sports Associations* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011).

promote the positive value(s) of sport and protect it 'from the drifts that threaten it every day, particularly dishonesty, manipulations and commercial abuse'. This brief reference to 'the bright spots and shadows'[6] for sport today raises the need for discernment by all those involved. A useful list indicates many of those 'who work in sport in paid roles or the vast majority who are involved as volunteers, as officials, coaches, teachers, administrators, parents and the athletes themselves'. Owners of and investors in sports clubs and franchises, sports commentators, pundits and writers could be added to this. The chapter concludes with the acknowledgement that 'there are more topics related to the possibilities and challenges of sport that are not discussed in this document'. The goal is not to give 'an exhaustive summary of the theories and realities pertaining to sport', rather seeking 'to articulate the Church's understanding of the sport phenomenon and its relationship to faith'. Theologically this method of correlation aims to treat the intrinsic value of sport and how 'it speaks to our greater search for ultimate meaning' which 'from a Christian understanding is the ultimate happiness that is found in the experience of the all-encompassing love and mercy of god as realized in a relationship with Jesus Christ in the Spirit which takes place in and is lived out in the community of faith'. This raises the question: are there sporting saints?

THE SPORT PHENOMENON

The 'universal phenomenon' that is sport is a feature of human exercise and enjoyment 'in playing games', through people 'perfecting their physical abilities or in competing with each other, fascinating 'so many people as athletes or spectators'. This phenomenology of sport is the preface to Chapter Two which is divided into three parts. '*The Genesis of Modern Sport*' traces the emergence of sport as a 'typical phenomena of the modern era… [a] "sign of the times" spread to every corner of the world', in the words of Pope John Paul II. While acknowledging that 'of course, still local forms of sport exist and they rightly enjoy a growing popularity' (one can think of hurling in Ireland and talk of 'a game that still gives', especially after the majestic matches of summer 2018), the focus here is on '*global sport* which – like a global language – can be understood by almost every human being'. A feature of this globalisation of sport is its compatibility 'with almost all cultural settings [which] has overcome older demarcations of culture and nation'. The nexus between nationalism and sport needs both historical analysis and actual attention. Thus the comment of Eamonn Sweeney is both a celebration and a caveat: 'Why do

6 Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1981), par. 4.

these Irish triumphs mean so much to me? I'm not a great fan of nationalism because I know the damage caused by the creed's more virulent political manifestations. Sporting nationalism, on the other hand, seems largely benign when applied to those sports which don't attract huge crowds. Victories in rowing and eventing don't engender a flag-waving orgy of national self-congratulation'.[7] The evolution of sport in the modern era expresses its globalisation, evident especially in the case of the Olympic Games which for its re-founder Pierre de Coubertin enjoyed the status of a '*religio athletae*'. Due to its high levels of performance and achievement, especially at 'events such as the Olympic Games or World Championships' sport 'is often used to communicate political, commercial or ideological messages'. As 'a highly expressive but at the same time highly-undetermined sign which cannot serve for its own interpretation' sport is in grave danger of being hijacked to serve interests and interpretations which 'can be ideological or even amoral and inhuman'. These comments serve as a stark reminder that sport should not be seen, shown or spoken about simply in sentimental terms.

'*What is Sport*?' looks at sport as ludic and legislated activity. Sport is primarily ludic and if it loses this 'intrinsic purpose we would no longer speak of play but simply would call it work or labor'. As the 'human body in motion' sport is not random activity but ruled by norms governing the game or goal. Reference to game/goal raises the 'competitive element of sport' which in many cases is 'developed so that we may state that competition is also an indispensable characteristic of sport'. This element demands an '*equality of opportunities*' so that competition is not completely one-sided. While the competitive nature of (much) sporting activity is acknowledged here, there is a need to complement it with communion. If prizes are promoted at the expense of participation will sport be seen increasingly as a province of the elite? Is excellence achieved at the expense of elimination, especially of others? For those outside the actual field of play sport invites insights and comparisons with other human aesthetic and artistic activity. The 'multi-interpretability' of sport is, how ever, double-edged, involving the danger of its meaning being manipulated for ulterior and underhand ends. '*The Contexts of Sport*' identifies the '*sport system*' as the structure for organising and overseeing sport from playgrounds to stadia. The reliance on this system for finance brings up issues of public and private funding. Sport can be seen as a product sold to the highest bidder where 'potential benefactors can use sport to communicate their particular messages'. Dependence

7 'Heroes measuring up on world stage', *Sunday Independent*, 23rd September 2018.

of sport on outside resources for its maintenance can result in its meaning being manipulated to serve these 'particular messages'.

The first two chapters of the document are devoted to a historical and hermeneutical presentation of sport. While at times this may appear detailed and dense (with many footnotes) there is no denying the desire of the Church to dedicate itself to the support and service of those involved in sport, particularly on the ground. This ethical interest and evangelical involvement is explored and expanded and deepened in the remaining three chapters.

Christ and the Word. Not only is Christ speaking when we articulate the Scriptures, but his person is rendered truly present as in the holy Eucharist, though in a different way, one appropriate to the form and manner of language. Hence just as he is on the altar as the real heavenly manna in the form of ordinary bread and wine, so he is there at the lectern as divine Wisdom in the form of ordinary human speech. As truly present indeed as when he appeared as Lord and Saviour of the world in the form of ordinary human flesh.

– Oliver Treanor, *Speaking on God's Behalf,* (Dublin: Veritas) p. 31.

Evolution and Incarnation: a Franciscan Perspective[1]

John McEvoy & Jim Malone

'Does an evolutionary perspective bring any light to bear upon theological anthropology, the meaning of the human person as the *imago Dei*, the problem of Christology – and even upon the development of doctrine itself?' Pope St John Paul II (1920-2005)[2]

INTRODUCTION

For centuries the dominant Western Christological position has been that the incarnation occurred because Jesus came to repair Adam's sin, by dying on the cross, to appease God's displeasure. A significant alternative Christology, associated, though not exclusively, with the Franciscan tradition, is presented. Its essential feature is that creation was made for Christ and not Christ for creation, and in turn suggests that Christ has a cosmic dimension we often fail to grasp. This perspective resonates with modern evolutionary theory. It is evident, for example, in the writings of Teilhard de Chardin who adopted a Cosmic Christ Christology, using the same biblical texts as the Franciscan school. In addition, we will also see how the alternative Christology resonates with modern ecumenical and ecological considerations.

1 A shortened version of a Chapter, of similar title, in a forthcoming publication by the authors titled, *Mystery and the Culture of Science: Personal Insights for the 21st Century*.

2 Letter of Pope St John Paul II to Reverend George V. Cloyne, SJ, Director of the Vatican Observatory, June 1, 1988, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/1988.

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EVOLUTION, THEOLOGY AND THE CHURCHES

There is, among mainstream Churches, acceptance that evolutionary theory gives a reasonable account of the biological origins of humankind and its connection to the rest of nature. However, this is not a real acceptance, as there has been little engagement with our understanding of the origins and nature of humankind in theology, doctrine, the Catechism, liturgical texts and most other aspects of the life of the mainstream churches. Hence the late Pope's observation.

While a small number of individuals are seriously and creatively investigating the theological and religious implications of the life sciences, it is hard to disagree with Haught who writes,

> "Ecclesiastical institutions and most religious education still cling at least tacitly and sometimes literally to ancient and medieval images of a fixed universe, primordial human innocence, an historical fall, and a creator who watches over the natural world from up above."[3]

Surely part of the reason for the fall-off in the number of Christians committing to traditional Churches in the West, particularly among the young, is that the Churches' narrative, and surrounding teachings, are difficult to connect with. For many individuals, even those moved toward faith, there is a disconnect with the perspectives of the rest of their lives. For others, Churches are simply out of touch and unbelievable. Church teachings need to be re-thought, re-presented and anchored in our hard-won understanding of the sciences, as well as revelation. This is perhaps a more assertive statement of Pope St John Paul II's observation.

EVOLUTION, SUFFERING AND DEATH

In *Genesis*, death is a consequence of *the fall* (Genesis 2:17). On the contrary, death within evolutionary theory is an essential step in the processes that facilitate effective natural selection. The theological structure surrounding the redemptive narratives is challenged, and weakened, in the light of this striking but essential fact of human existence. Death is not a punishment for disobedience, it is an essential component of the processes by which life evolves and we have come into existence. Thus, the mechanics of evolution suggest that to explain death it is not necessary to construct the myth of Adam and Eve and the surrounding theological elaborations. Death is not the consequence of sin; pain and suffering are not punishments from God.

3 John F. Haught, "Teilhard de Chardin: Theology for an Unfinished Universe," in *From Teilhard to Omega: Co-creating an Unfinished Universe*, ed. Ilia Delio (New York: Orbis Books, 2014), 9.

Evolution is now considered to be broader than the Darwinian thesis and is often taken as the story of how *all life* came to exist from the big bang to the present and beyond. The cosmos is an ongoing cosmogenesis, and creation is a continuous, current process rather than a distant past event. Our thinking on the nature of the world is less abstract and preoccupied with existence, history, matter and energy. The person is defined as a bio-historical being living in a world full of contingency, relationship, paradox and mystery. Contingency may suggest a pessimistic or an optimistic outlook on the future. Emphasising the optimistic, John Haught discusses the import of our re-discovering eschatology, i.e. concern with future fulfilment for the *whole of creation*.[4] Thus, reflection on evolution and creation moves us beyond anthropomorphic considerations and so resonates with contemporary ecological concerns. The divine promise to Abraham (Genesis 15) is relevant not only to the 'people of God' but also to the whole of creation. St Paul expects, '… that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God' (Romans 8:21). In traditional Christian theology only humans have a place in the divine plan of redemption but, Pope Francis adds a forgotten dimension to this thinking in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* (No. 100), when he writes that at the 'end of time … the Son will deliver *all things* to the Father.'

PRE-EVOLUTIONARY PARADIGM FOR REDEMPTION/SALVATION

Biblical scholar Kieran O'Mahony draws attention to a long-held narrative, central to Western Christianity, namely the powerful *atonement* story of our redemption. This deals with the origins of humanity, sin, evil, the incarnation, the cross, the Church, baptism and so on. For centuries, 'this narrative reached into the existential experience of the individual and was immensely successful in Western churches.'[5] The story of *the fall* of Adam and Eve in the Old Testament is the starting point for this and shapes it strongly. It was consolidated in the writings of St Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) and St Anselm of Canterbury (c.1033-1109 CE) which were highly influential. These perspectives held sway through the sixteenth century Reformations and the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and are found even in the recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992).

EVOLUTION AND A NEGLECTED PARADIGM

The Franciscan school held that Christ did not come to repair Adam's fault. Rather, Christ was at the centre of God's plan in

4 John F. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 38-39.

5 See K. J. O'Mahony, *Do We Still Need Paul?: A Contemporary Reading of the Apostle* (Dublin: Veritas, 2009), 58.

creating the universe–it was through Him, with Him and for Him that the whole universe was created. Duns Scotus (1266-1308 CE) was in line with a long Franciscan tradition which held that the primary reason for creation was Christ.

Prior to Duns Scotus, there was a minority view that Christ's humanity is the climax of creation and that, therefore, Christ would have become incarnate regardless of Adam's fall. Benedictine Rupert of Deutz (1075-1129) was the originator of this point of view. Duns Scotus agreed with this minority view and uses, in particular, St Paul's epistles (Colossians and Ephesians) and St John's gospel, to show that Christ was the centre of God's plan, willed for His own sake, and through Him the whole universe. Three of the major sources supporting this Franciscan Christology are:

- Scripture, particularly the New Testament
- Early and modern Franciscan writings
- The writings of Teilhard de Chardin

SCRIPTURE, PARTICULARLY THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel according to St John takes Jesus back to 'the beginning' into the mystery of God. Consider this short extract from the prologue to St John's gospel where Christ is seen to have a cosmic dimension:

> *In the beginning was the Word:*
> *and the Word was with God,*
> *and the Word was God*
> *He was in the beginning with God.*
> *All things came into being through him,*
> *And without him not one thing came into being (Jn 1:1-3).*

American Franciscan Zachary Hayes lists the main biblical texts which emphasise the Franciscan position, 'There is a rich form of cosmic Christology in the Christian tradition which, for the most part, has been forgotten …'[6] or neglected.

EARLY AND MODERN FRANCISCAN WRITINGS

St Bonaventure (1221-1274)[7] writes, in line with the cosmology of his day,

6 Z. Hayes, *The Gift of Being*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 101. Here Hayes lists I Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 1:3-14; Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians. 2:6-11; Hebrews 1:1-4; John 1:1-14.

7 St Bonaventure, a Doctor of the Church, was the ninth Minister General of the Franciscan Order.

> "All things are said to be transformed in the transfiguration of Christ, in as far as something of each creature was transfigured in Christ. For as a human being, Christ has something in common with all creatures. With the stone he shares existence; with plants he shares life; with animals he shares sensation; and with the angels he shares intelligence. Therefore, all things are said to be transformed in Christ – since in his human nature – he embraces something of every creature in himself when he is transfigured."[8]

Hayes points out that here St Francis' love of creation is expressed by Bonaventure in a theological way, with the implication that in the final analysis the 'world' would not be destroyed.[9] Creation has a destiny that is anticipated not only in the incarnation but also in the resurrection. The following quotation from Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, No. 48, is almost a paraphrase of Bonaventure,

> "Then will come the time of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). Then the human race as well as the entire world, which is intimately related to man and achieves its purpose through him, will be perfectly re-established in Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:10; Colossians. 1:20; 2 Peter 3:10-13)".

Franciscan, Leonardo Boff, writes in a similar vein,

> "The goal toward which human beings and the cosmos marched was manifested in Christ: total cosmic-human-divine realization and fullness. We discover in him, glorified in his material reality, the future destiny of human beings and matter. In overt and covert form he is present in cosmic reality and human realities, both personal and collective".[10]

Christ, from this perspective, was the very centre of God's plan in creating the universe and not just a 'fixer' of humanity's failure. Creation then exists for the incarnation and resurrection; creation is seen as a receptacle for God's self-communication and resurrection the final goal. Jesus of Nazareth is the historical figure; Christ is the eternal cosmic figure.

8 Quoted in Z. Hayes, "Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity," *The Cord* 46, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 1996): 13. By the transfiguration of Christ is meant the resurrection of Christ.

9 Ibid.

10 L. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, trans. Patrick Hughes (London: SPCK, 1980), 206.

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN (1881-1955)

Teilhard was a French Jesuit priest, a scientist (geology and palaeontology), theologian and a mystic. He spent his life trying to reconcile theology with modern science, particularly the implications of evolutionary theory for the former. John Haught rightly suggests that, even today, if one wishes to dialogue with Darwin about God then one should start with Teilhard's synthesis of evolution and faith.[11]

In Teilhard's view evolution is a continuous, unfinished process, and the 'cosmos' is really a 'cosmogenesis,' in which the universe is still in a process of being created. In practice, this 'process of becoming' is also a 'process of union where union differentiates'– giving rise to a unity-in-diversity.[12]

TEILHARD'S SCIENTIFIC MODEL OF EVOLUTION

The main elements of Teilhard's scientific model of evolution can be illustrated as follows:

Cosmogenesis = geogenesis ⟶ biogenesis ⟶ anthropogenesis ⟶ Omega Point.

The energy driving the whole evolutionary process to some end point, which he calls the *Omega Point*, he defines as love. It is this energy, a cosmic energy, that gives rise to a universal impulse, at every level of creation, to form a unity-in-diversity. Thus, while the evolutionary process produces enormous diversity, this diversity tends towards a final 'unity-in-diversity' at the Omega Point.

TEILHARD'S THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF HIS SCIENTIFIC MODEL

From a Christian perspective the cosmic energy that drives evolution to a unity-in-diversity is seen as divine love and the Omega Point for Teilhard is Christ; cosmogenesis becomes Christogenesis.

Cosmogenesis = geogenesis ⟶ biogenesis ⟶ anthropogenesis ⟶ *Christogenesis.*

This resonates with the classic Franciscan Christological model; creation was made for Christ. Christ is the true Omega Point and "…in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:17) Christ is the centre in which all opposites converge; in Him there is a genuine union while preserving difference.

11 John Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010), 141.

12 T. de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: Collins; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 262.

Teilhard sees the creative call of divine love as the foundation of evolutionary history. Hayes draws attention to an important consequence, noting, 'The Gospel command to love, then, is not merely a moral principle. It is the ontological principle of the development of creation.'[13] Vatican II makes the same point when it states, 'He taught us that the new command of love was the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world's transformation.' (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 38).

REFLECTIONS

1 Sin

From the above, it may appear that there is no place for sin or the cross in the suggested 'new' paradigm. Of course, this is not the case. Sin is real but the universe is not ruled by it. Likewise, the importance of the crucifixion is not displaced, even if understood differently. It is, as we note below, an act of self-emptying love though not atonement. From it we can learn much, including something about the consequences of sin.

With respect to sin, the traditional approach to the incarnation can, and does, give rise to an obsession with it. This contrasts with Dominican Herbert McCabe's view. He writes, 'Sin matters enormously to us if we are sinners; it doesn't matter at all to God.'[14] McCabe adds, '… it is very odd that Christians should think this, that God deals out to us what we deserve.' Sin alters, resists or distorts the law of love, our attitude to God, but never God's unconditional love for us. Acknowledging personal sin is very important and can be transformative (See Lk 18:9-14). Knowledge, and acceptance, of our shadow selves is important in any spiritual journey. St Paul writes (2 Corinthians 12:7-10),

> "Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh … three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I am content with weaknesses … for whenever I am weak I am strong".

Once the Prodigal Son acknowledges his sinfulness, the rest of the story is not about the father forgiving his son, it is rather about the father celebrating, welcoming his son with joy and feasting. 'This is all the real God ever does…'[15]

13 Hayes, *The Gift*, 110.
14 H. McCabe, "Self-confessed sinners," *The Tablet*, March 5, 2011, 14-15.
15 Ibid.

2. The cross and resurrection

Chance and its consequences can leave creation appearing disordered, chaotic and messy. The messiness in creation may suggest a God, who having created the universe, takes a hands-off approach. But, it is also consistent with a God who accompanies us, respecting the inherent freedoms in nature, as we journey through the various stages of evolution. If there was only a law-like system operating in the evolutionary process, with no chance or contingency, God could be seen to simply be a divine puppet master. On the other hand, chance can be suggestive of a self-emptying God who humbles him/herself out of love. This is powerfully suggested in, for example, the very act of creation, the incarnation and the crucifixion.

Such is the depth of God's love for us–being in solidarity with us even through death.[16] From this perspective the crucifixion is an act of supreme unconditional love (Jn 15:13) and of self-emptying. It can also be seen as both transformative and didactic, in that it graphically demonstrates the consequences of human failure to listen, to take responsibility, to risk working against power, and to be open to goodness from unexpected sources. These perspectives give us much to reflect on with respect to the cross, and don't, for their validity, require atonement to an angry God.

3 Christ: all in all

St Bonaventure used the circle as a metaphor for the Cosmic Christ embracing *all* of creation; he described Christ as the centre and circumference of an infinite circle. This vision coheres with creation, animate and inanimate, as expressed by St Francis in *The Canticle of Brother Sun*. He writes, referring to the four building blocks (air, water, fire and earth) from which, for the medieval world, the whole of creation was made,

> *Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind …*
> *Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water …*
> *Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire …*
> *Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth…*

In this he, with uncanny foresight, celebrates his kinship with all of creation, in short, giving an ecumenical and ecological theology centred on the Cosmic Christ.

CONCLUSION

Teilhard de Chardin created a synthesis of evolution and faith that drew on his scientific perspectives, theological reflection, biblical

16 See O'Mahony, *Do We Still Need St Paul?* 60.

texts and mystical insights. This synthesis had antecedents, not only in the Franciscan tradition, but also in the approach of Eastern Churches. Thus, the proposed vision finds convincing support in history, tradition, biblical texts, and a real consistency with modern science at a level of detail.

Camino Questions. In medieval times, as now, every individual pilgrim had their own motivations and their own understanding of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. It was personal to them, part of their own journey of life. There was no single path, no fixed route, no rigidly prescribed way of engaging with the phenomenon that was and is the pilgrimage to Santiago, its spirituality or its history. No two pilgrim stories were the same. Yet, those who walk the Camino de Santiago in the twenty-first century become very conscious of the shared experience of walking in the footprints of others from earlier times. For the more than 5,000 people annually from Ireland who have walked at least 100 km of a pilgrim route to Santiago in recent years, the question inevitably arises – did Irish people travel to Santiago in medieval times? If so, who were they? Why did they go? How did they get there? Why Santiago?

– Bernadette Cunningham, *Medieval Irish Pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela.* (Dublin: Four Courts Press) p. 11.

Christian Unity

David Hodges

Recognised and seen,
designed to be,
a single garment
whole and undivided;
disunity and division
destroy the vision,
become a rent
in the seamless garment
of Christ's love.

A single witness,
like the cross
that made us one,
that unites
and not divides;
united, seen as one,
one with God
and with each other.

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Remembering Charles Davis

Owen F. Cummings

Some bishops, many priests and religious left their canonical situations in the years following Vatican II for a complex nexus of reasons. It seems to me utterly reductionist to find some entirely common factor for this exodus. Without a doubt some felt that the Council did not go far enough, or were disappointed that the discipline of clerical celibacy was not abandoned, or encountered a new-found freedom of personal expression that they had not experienced before. The reasons, circumstances and situations are many and complex, but what is clear is that, in many cases, their going impoverished the Catholic Church, not only numerically and pragmatically but also in terms of theological leadership. This is certainly the case with the English priest-theologian, Charles Davis. Hans Küng in the second volume of his memoirs writes of Davis: "Davis would have helped the Catholic Church community most had he stayed in it."[1]

Ordained in 1946, Davis moved on to the Gregorian University in Rome for two further years of theological study. He taught systematic theology at St. Edmund's College, Ware from 1952 to 1965, and then at the Jesuit Heythrop College, Oxfordshire, the latter not yet having moved to London as a constitutive college of the University of London. He was also the editor of the respected journal, *The Clergy Review.* Many of the popular yet substantive essays Davis contributed to this journal later were drawn together in a successful book, *The Study of Theology,* published in 1962. In the interface between systematic theology and liturgical theology he wrote two influential books, still cited, *Liturgy and Doctrine* (1960) and *The Making of a Christian* (1964), a study of the sacraments of initiation and their theology.

Davis left the church very publicly in 1966. His erstwhile colleague the Scripture scholar Hubert J. Richards notes that when Davis made the decision to leave the priesthood and the Catholic Church, it caused a great stir: "An announcement that Cardinal

1 Hans Küng, *Disputed Truth, Memoirs II* (New York and London: Continuum, 2008), 30.

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Heenan (the Archbishop of Westminster) was doing the same would not have been met with more incomprehension, shock and sadness."[2] A journalist for the English newspaper, *The Guardian*, compared Davis's leaving the Catholic Church to John Henry Newman's leaving the Church of England a century before.[3] Davis married Florence Henderson, a Catholic student of theology at Bristol University.

Within six months of leaving, in 1967, he wrote a book, *A Question of Conscience*, an apologia for his departure.[4] "Point by point he analyzed the malaise which, he now revealed, he had long felt about the Catholic Church. For him it was no longer a credible embodiment of God's grace, but a real obstacle to Christian truth and love. All he could recommend in such a situation was… 'creative disaffiliation'…"[5] This creative disaffiliation was described by Davis at the time in these words: "I remain a Christian, but I have come to see that the Church as it exists and works at present is an obstacle in the lives of the committed Christians I know and admire. It is not the source of the values they cherish and promote. On the contrary, they live and work in a constant tension and opposition to it. Many can remain Roman Catholics only because they live their Christian lives on the fringe of the institutional Church and largely ignore it. I respect their position. In the present confused period people will work out their Christian commitment in different ways. But their solution was not open to me; in my position I was too involved. I had to ask bluntly whether I still believed in the Roman Catholic Church as an institution. I found that the answer was no."[6]

Davis's apologia is wide-ranging, covering a host of issues that had become controversial in the immediate post-Vatican II period, for example, contraception, authority, papal infallibility. He never, so it seems to me, descends to acrimony and attack on individuals. The book is eminently respectful. At the same time, there is an honest recognition of the frustration felt by many Catholics. This is how he describes it: "The sad fact is that the pattern of doctrine, law, ritual and government imposed upon the Roman Catholic Church no longer corresponds to the genuine and ordinary sense of people today. Even inarticulate Catholics sense this, so that a hidden tension pervades their life. For the same reason many, especially the young, leave the Church, without being able to give

2 Hubert J. Richards, "Charles Davis, An Obituary," *The Tablet*, 6 February (1999), 190.
3 Geoffrey Moorhouse, cited in "A Theologian Defects," *Time*, December 30, 1966.
4 Charles Davis, *A Question of Conscience* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1967).
5 Hubert J. Richards, op. cit., 190.
6 Charles Davis, op. cit., 7.

any precise reason for doing so."[7] The question why Catholics leave the church is a huge question, involving many different factors. But Davis is surely pointing to something of enormous importance, indeed, the importance of which has only increased since 1967 when he penned these words, that is, the gap between the formal expression of Catholicism (doctrine, law, ritual and government in Davis's terms) and the ordinary experience of many Catholics. It is extremely difficult to talk with conviction in general terms about the experience of large numbers of people, but the gap between the church and experience to which Davis refers, has to do with existential freedom. "To anyone who acknowledges… the fundamental importance in personal development of a complete openness and fidelity to truth… (there is the challenge of) the crippling effect upon persons of the present institutional set-up… Prisoners of a narrow, intolerant system, they, too, become narrow and intolerant. Only those who shake off the pressure of the institution and manage largely to ignore it are able to release the full expansive dynamism of Christian love." [8]

Davis's real protest was about "institutional man… the total identification of the person with the institution."[9] Of course, people may become prisoners of their institutions, may become full of narrowness and intolerance, but there is no *a priori* need to shake off the pressure of the institution by leaving it. Many continue to find ways of struggling to remain within the institutional church even as they experience a certain pressure to conform in every aspect to the institutional demands, as it were. This becomes necessarily a matter of personal choice, however, and that choice must be respected. Davis, along with so many others in the years consequent upon Vatican II chose to leave. Others chose to stay as faithful but critical reformers. That choice too must be respected. Respect then as now is key. Where it is lacking polarization occurs, described by Davis in 1967 as follows: "That Catholics should turn upon one another, engage in continual bickering and complaining, and in calm debate can be difficult but it is not surprising. It is the normal effect of confinement. And the excessive noise and excitement raised by the present renewal is due to the narrowness of the mental environment." [10]

It needs to be pointed out that Charles Davis was not simply concerned with the externals of ecclesial reform. He recognized the absolute need for holiness if any reform was to be successful.

7 Ibid., 12.
8 Ibid., 79-80.
9 Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, "Interview with Charles Davis," *National Catholic Reporter*, February 28, 1997.
10 Charles Davis, op. cit., 14.

In the ferment of Vatican II he wrote: "(Ordinary Catholics) come to talks by speakers like myself. They hear about the new liturgy, about the new understanding of the layman's role, about collegiality, about the Church and the world, about a thousand and one new and exciting ideas. They are duly impressed. But who will speak to them quite simply about God, as of a Person he intimately knows and make the reality and presence of God come alive for them once more?… Before such need, how superficial, pathetically superficial, is much of the busyness of renewal. We reformers know so much about religion and about the church and about theology, but we stand empty-handed and uncomfortable when confronted with the sheer hunger for God. Holiness is less easily acquired than fluency in contemporary thinking. But people who after listening to our enthusiastic discourses, quietly ask us to lead them to God are, though they do not know it, demanding holiness in us. I fear they may find everything else but that…"[11] Interviewed by the American Benedictine, Sr. Joan Chittister in 1997, and asked for what he would wish to be remembered, Davis answered, "I want to be remembered for having had a spiritual influence."[12]

It would be all too easy to dismiss Charles Davis as a significant theologian because of his departure from the Catholic Church. His ongoing attempts to think through the claims of Christian faith in the context of modern philosophy and theology --- including especially Bernard Lonergan, Jürgen Habermas, George Lindbeck, Hans Frei, to name but a handful --- witnesses to his passion for God-in-Christ, and perhaps also his passion for the church, but from a position less located in its structures.[13] Davis had long admired Lonergan, had contributed a paper to the first Lonergan Congress in Florida in 1970,[14] and had absorbed Lonergan's view of cognitional structure. It could be argued that while he engaged with the philosophical thought of Jürgen Habermas and other critical theorists in his books *Theology and Political Society* (1980) and *Religion and the Making of Society* (1994), nonetheless it was Bernard Lonergan who provided him with the epistemological and foundational apparatus for his explorations in theology. This passage from Davis could have come straight from Lonergan's *Insight, A Study of Human Understanding* (1958): "If, as I should agree, objectivity is the other side of authentic subjectivity, then

11 Charles Davis, "A Hidden God," *America*, January 29, 1966, 173.

12 Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, op. cit.

13 See especially the final chapter in Charles Davis, *What Is Living, What Is Dead in Christianity Today?* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 106-127.

14 See Davis's essay in Philip McShane, ed., *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 60-75.

the requisite for genuine, objective knowledge is the purification of the subject, the unrestricted openness of the subject without inhibition or closure to reality." The following passage is entirely in agreement, even verbal agreement, with Lonergan's *Method in Theology* (1973): "Faith is the fundamental religious response. It is the orientation towards mystery or unlimited reality accepted or assented to in a self-transcendent response or movement of unrestricted love. This faith-love is divine revelation in the primary sense of the presence of the divine reality in our minds and hearts."[15] And, of course, the Lonergan influence in theology was well under way in Canada when Davis arrived.

Davis moved to Canada and taught theology and philosophy of religion first at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, and then at Concordia University, Montreal. He continued to publish as a theologian, although Hans Küng may well be right when he says that "his numerous new books by no means attract the same interest as his old Catholic ones… so that his publications hardly find any response in the Catholic Church."[16] In the main, this is probably true, but theologians of the caliber of the University of Cambridge's Nicholas Lash continued to read Davis and to refer to his later books: *Christ and World Religions* (1970), *The Temptations of Religion* (1973), *Body as Spirit* (1976), *Theology and Political Society* (1980), *What Is Living, What Is Dead in Christianity?* (1986), *Soft Bodies in a Hard World* (1987).[17] Lash also had a hand in having Davis appointed to the prestigious Hulsean Lectures at the University of Cambridge in 1978.

Davis returned to the United Kingdom after his retirement, and was living in Edinburgh, where his daughter Claire was pursuing a doctorate in theology. He returned to the Church. In retirement he produced, while suffering from Parkinson's disease, his final book, *Religion and the Making of Society* (1994). He died on January 28, 1999, the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, surrounded by his family and friends, after a final celebration of the Eucharist.

A MESSAGE FOR TODAY?

In the spring of 2018 to a gathering of several hundred Catholic priests from across the United States in Santa Fe (New Mexico) Bishop Robert McElroy, the Bishop of San Diego, said, "This is a wonderful time to be a Catholic." The bishop was fully aware of the raft of challenges and problems facing the Catholic Church and

15 Charles Davis, *What Is Living, What Is Dead in Christianity Today,* 114-118.

16 Hans Küng, op. cit., 30.

17 For a limited but helpful critical response to Davis's theology, see Marc P. Lalonde, ed., *The Promise of Critical Theology: Essays in Honour of Charles Davis* (Montreal: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1995), especially the essay by Lalonde.

especially in the United States. While he was entirely right to insist that this is a wonderful time to be a Catholic – the Holy Spirit is always with the church guiding us into the fullness of the truth – a large number of Catholics don't feel like this. Many Catholics are walking away from the church – I don't say "leaving the church" because I suspect that for many it is not an intensely reflective, deliberate decision to leave. For whatever reasons many do not experience a vital and health-giving correlation between their lived experience and the church. As I read him, that was more or less the situation of Charles Davis, that is, he no longer experienced the church as vital and health-giving. A growing number of younger Catholics, including theologians, find themselves in a similar situation. In their judgment, the vitality of the church is being sapped by retro trends such as the growing use of *Summorum Pontificum* (the Roman rite of the Mass before the Missal of Pope Paul VI), the rigidity and, in some measure, the clericalism of some younger priests, and the adversarial stance of some church leaders against change – think, for example, of the criticisms of Pope Francis's *The Joy of Love.* And it's not only the young. A senior priest, ordained in the 1960s and committed to the renewal of Vatican II, said to me recently in respect of these retro trends, "I'm not going to be pushed out or pushed aside, it's my church too." Perhaps remembering Charles Davis can be an encouragement to those who feel "pushed out" not only *not* to leave the church, but to stay and gently and patiently work for needed changes.

The distinguished church historian Eamon Duffy in a very fine sermon before the University of Cambridge in 1992, "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," makes the following point: "To name the significant dead is always to offer an account of ourselves. In a recognizable sense, every human community, from the family to the nation, chooses its own ancestors, or at any rate, chooses those whom it will remember and publicly acknowledge."[18] To remember the dead is a very Catholic thing to do. In choosing to remember Charles Davis among the significant dead may be saying something about myself, or about the church at this time, but it seems to me to be no bad thing.

18 Eamon Duffy, *Walking to Emmaus* (New York and London: Continuum, 2006), 19.

Tackling the root causes

Billy Swan

During the visit of Pope Francis to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families, the issue of the abuse crisis in the Church followed him everywhere. He addressed it at Dublin Castle, at Knock, during the closing Mass at the Phoenix Park, with the Irish bishops and of course when he met with victims of clerical abuse. Asking and praying for forgiveness and healing was both welcome and necessary in a Church and a country that has suffered greatly from this 'open wound' that came to light in the past number of decades. The timing of Pope Francis' visit to Ireland coincided with the eruption of the abuse crisis in other parts of the world, most notably in Chile and the United States. This led to a greater intensity and pressure on the Pope to address the issue and assure the faithful that this terrible problem was being acknowledged and addressed. When reports like those in Ferns, Dublin, Cloyne or Pennsylvania are published, they detonate a crisis that explodes with devastating effects. In the immediate aftermath, there is an understandable scramble to mange the 'field hospital' of the Church as people are justifiably angry, feel betrayed, look for scapegoats and demand action. Such emotion is to be expected but a short term management approach to the immediate fallout of the crisis is insufficient. A closer inspection of the deeper problems and their causes is required if the action taken is to be effective and just.

In the aftermath of the abuse crisis here in Ireland that peaked with the publication of the Ferns, Murphy, Ryan and Cloyne reports, I believe that the Church collectively managed the immediate fallout quite well. Good leadership was shown in acknowledging responsibility, asking for forgiveness, dealing with and caring for both offenders and victims, transparency, establishment of safe-guarding structures, support and compensation of those hurt. However, I also believe that a deeper analysis of the root causes of abuse by Church personnel never happened to the extent that it deserved. We didn't question seriously enough the primary roots of the tumour that is sexual abuse in the Church. A thorough

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conversation that involved both clerics and laity as to *why* this abuse happened in the first place never occurred. Here I offer six reasons why I believe abuse can occur and did occur in the Church. In the stories from victims in Chile, Ireland, America or wherever, there are a number of underlying issues that arise again and again, in one country after another. Patterns emerge that cannot be ignored. In going forward and for the sake of the Church we love, attitudes of 'this too will pass' or 'there will always be sin in the Church' are unacceptable. Yes, there may always be sin in the Church but this must not translate into complacency or a resignation that these sins will inevitably happen and so there is nothing we can do. As the Book of Proverbs says: 'My mouth shall meditate truth and my lips shall hate wickedness' (8:7). St Thomas Aquinas once said that this hatred of wickedness belongs to the virtue of charity (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1ff). After these terrible revelations in our Church, it can no longer be 'business as usual'. We need to identity the root causes of abuse, hate them passionately and with charity firmly address those causes that have wreaked so much devastation in peoples' lives.

A WORLD PROBLEM

The first step to appreciating the breath and width of the sexual abuse crisis is to acknowledge that it is a global problem, not a local one. Thirteen years ago I was studying in Rome when the abuse crisis hit hard in Ireland. At the College where I lived, there was an evening lecture to address the revelations of the Ferns report. Before the talk, I asked a non-Irish priest if he had plans to attend. I clearly remember his response: 'No. This is not a problem in my country'. He was wrong. It is a problem in his country and in every country. Sexual abuse is not a Ferns problem or a Dublin problem. It is not an Irish problem or an American problem or an Australian problem. It is not a Pennsylvanian problem or a Boston problem. To our shame it is a problem in the Church universal and in the whole human family. Because we now know that this is a cancer that effects the whole body of Christ then those directly responsible for the whole body of Christ have a grave duty to protect young people from potential and actual abuse within the Church and to ensure that Church communities are safe places for children and vulnerable adults. One suggested way of doing this would be to extend the *Ad limina* visit to Rome by the world's bishops where they would be advised on the best safe-guarding structures to protect the vulnerable of their dioceses. Surely the importance of such a visit to a properly resourced dicastery would be just as important, if not more so, than a visit to other dicasteries

that have been an established part of *Ad limina* visits for centuries. Because clerical abuse is a global problem, countries where the abuse crisis has yet to hit need to act as if it had arrived on their doorstep. Church leaders must not act only when they have to or when the bomb goes off. The time for action is now. The time for complacency is over.

ABUSE OF POWER

On reading the reports of clerical sexual abuse and the specific stories of how abuse came to happen, one familiar dynamic emerges. Instead of priests empowering the young people involved, they overpowered them with emotional manipulation prior to abusing them sexually. This terrible sin enabled them, I believe, to go on to wreak such terrible damage in the lives of the vulnerable and the young who were not strong enough to say 'no' to their advances. Their elevated office in the priesthood and positions of authority within institutions and communities provided the perfect conditions for abuse to occur. In our seminaries, clergy conferences and parish safe-guarding training, the abuse of power needs to be met head on and discussed with courage and with repentance. As bishops, priests and religious, we are not about power but service of the needs of others in Jesus' name. Yes, we have authority but not as a plaything to aggrandise our egos but to build peoples' faith and the communities we serve. These are God's people to whom we are accountable, who we serve and whose needs come first.

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

In the Church's hierarchical system, every priest is meant to be accountable to his bishop or religious superior and every bishop/cardinal is accountable to the Pope. So if a cleric is a bully or abusive then it is up to the bishop, or Pope to call him to account. It is painfully obvious that this simplistic model has weaknesses and has not served to halt the actions of abusive priests or bishops. In this crisis, a burning question has emerged: to whom are we priests and bishops accountable? On the vertical scale, we are ultimately accountable to God who judges us now and on the last day (cf. Rom. 14:12). On the horizontal level, we priests are accountable to our bishops and bishops/cardinals to the Pope but this is not sufficient as we have seen. Natural justice demands that we be not only be accountable to 'the man upstairs' or the person who is 'our boss' but also accountable to those we serve. With this in mind, the importance of parish finance councils, pastoral councils and other collaborative structures is seen in a new light where we can transparently give an account of our stewardship. This is

a time to recognize that priesthood is not a licence for a private practise. Surely the time has come to commit ourselves to a *code of professional ethics* with at least some degree of *supervision* like other care-giving professionals. Many priests I suspect will find this an intrusion and a mechanism to find fault with their ministry. But this need not be the case. Structures of supervision can detect when there is a problem that needs to be addressed but can also serve to encourage good priests to become even better priests and to become familiar with best practise in all aspects of priestly ministry. For too long, priestly and episcopal ministry has suffered from a lack of accountability. History tragically proves that many abusers did not just abuse but abused over long periods of time, in some cases for decades. No one held them to account for their attitudes and actions until it was too late. We all need to be accountable to someone to prevent the abuse of power that we are all capable of.

BETRAYAL OF TRUST

St Thomas Aquinas once defined love as 'willing the good of the other' (*STh* I-II, 26, 4). When I was growing up, I automatically assumed that every priest willed my good and the good of all. Most did. But tragically, as the revelations have shown, some did not. Perhaps this has been the most painful aspect of the crisis to emerge – that the natural, child-like trust invested in people meant to represent Christ, was so horribly betrayed. Yet, I believe that this is a time when the message of love as 'willing the good of the other' is more important than ever and can be upheld as the standard of what loving service truly is. It is also an opportunity to realize the importance of trust in any meaningful relationship including our trust in God who assures us, at this difficult time, through the words of Christ: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God and trust in me' (John 14:1).

SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

In the flurry of media commentary on this crisis, priestly celibacy is one of the main scapegoats – 'if priests were married, then this would not have happened'. While this conclusion is understandable, it lacks the hard evidence that being celibate is directly responsible for sexual dysfunction. What the crisis does reveal is that we do need to look again at the sexual maturity of seminarians, priests and bishops in more detail and with more honesty. Being celibate for the sake of the kingdom of God is a noble ideal but still, real questions remain – how can seminarians and priests arrive at and be sustained in a healthy sexual maturity? What resources are there to

support us in this? Do we adequately address the issue of affective maturity in seminaries, at clergy retreats and diocesan conferences or is it still a taboo subject? Is it wise or healthy to send a celibate man into a large house to live on his own and tell him to simply 'get on with it'? What are the professional boundaries in place to ensure the best possible relations between the priest and his people? What are the appropriate sources of love and affection for us priests who are human like everyone else? These are just some of the sensitive but important issues that cry out to be addressed in order to learn from this crisis and move forward.

COVER UP

In the furore over the abuse crisis, the sin of cover-up seems to be almost on a par with the abuse itself. Any explanation that bishops offer for their actions or inactions are almost always interpreted as excuses and are not heard, even when they acted on inadequate or erroneous professional advice. What we can say now is that any genuine attempts that bishops or religious superiors made in the past to deal with abuse issues by keeping the problem secret and 'in house' has failed. The problem is too big and has exploded in our faces. What can we learn from this? That the protection of any pretence of holiness or respectability must give way to the truth, the protection of the vulnerable and the conversion of the person. This applies to all of our lives. Most of us worry more about what people know or think instead of what is true and what is real in us. The Italians have a saying that emphasises the importance of the '*bella figura*' - meaning that a fine impression or good appearance is all important, often at the expense of what is really beneath the surface. Anxiety to protect the '*bella figura*' of the Church under any pretence must give way to a humility and honesty where the roots of holiness and renewal are found in radical authenticity. This holds true even if the truth about ourselves and our Church is distasteful or dark. In the words of Christ, only 'the truth will set us free' (John 8:32).

In conclusion, if a doctor discovers cancer in a patient's body, he/she will not be content to treat the symptoms or the secondaries. The primary tumour must be found. In the Body of Christ that is the Church, there exists the cancer of sexual abuse that urgently needs treatment. Treatment of the secondaries or the symptoms is not good enough. We need to go to the root causes. This often involves more pain but unless the root causes are tackled, the problem will continue. We may feel that the Church is unfairly targeted and scapegoated by society because of sexual abuse when it is a sin that blights the whole human family. But remember the

words of St Peter: 'The time has come for the judgment to begin in the household of God' (1 Pet. 4:17). Judgment begins on this issue in the Church but doesn't end there. In time, the lancing of a boil in the Church can and does lead to a purification of society of the same disease.

I hope that together as the Body of Christ we will with God's grace, have the resolve and the courage to go deeper in order to tackle these six root causes of sexual abuse and excise this tumour from the Church. For if the tumour is not removed, the body will die. I believe that God will not allow that to happen which makes me believe that this is a time of hope, despite it also being a time of pain. Now is a time when Christ is applying a tight bandage and poultice around the body of his bride, the Church, to excise the tumours that arose in Ferns, Boston, Dublin, Cloyne, Pennsylvania and other places hit hardest by the tragedy of sexual abuse. 'Behold, I am making all things new' (Is. 43:18; Rev. 21:5). God is renewing his Church in these extraordinary and unprecedented times and through her will renew the whole world. Let us rejoice and be glad!

The Psalms. Saint Ambrose, the fourth-century Archbishop of Milan, cherished the Psalter and recommended it to the faithful in every situation. 'The Psalm,' he wrote, 'soothes anger, frees from care and drives away sadness. It is a weapon by night and a teacher by day: it is a shield in times of fear, an occasion of rejoicing for the holy, a mirror of tranquillity: it is a pledge of peace and harmony.'

– Oliver Treanor, *Speaking on God's Behalf,* (Dublin: Veritas) p. 66.

Children of Priests

Vincent Doyle

Coping International was launched to provide a pastoral and psychotherapeutic space for people that segments of our society would rather forget, children of priests and religious. Launched amid little fanfare, in December 2014, funded by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, www.copinginternational.com was left online for over 30 months without any marketing campaign and without media interference.

In August 2017, Coping International went public in the Boston Globe. In the interim period 2014 – 2017 the site data was closely monitored. How many people out there needed help and were actively looking for help? By the time the story was published in the Globe, www.copinginternational.com had received more than 400,000 hits in 175 countries, with 1.6% of the hits in 2016 coming from the following search-phrases, "I am pregnant, and the father is a Catholic Priest." That figure today is north of one million hits on *copinginternational.com*.[1] The question remains, why were and are so many thousands of people worldwide looking online for help, when some parts of society would have you believe that children of priests are so few in numbers that it does not merit attention? Today, Coping International speaks with children and grandchildren of priests as well as mothers of new-borns. We speak with children of nuns, cardinals and religious who have neither guidance nor care. Unacknowledged and hidden, Coping seeks to inform and educate these people showing them a way out of their imposed darkness.

My own interest stems from the fact that I am the son of a Catholic Priest. Blessed with a good upbringing, I knew my father well. Ordained a Holy Ghost in 1966, he was later incardinated to the Diocese of Ardagh & Clonmacnoise. Following his death in 1995, I would not be told the truth for sixteen years as to who he –

1 The figures indicate scope and need rather than individual children per se.

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my biological father – was, but more importantly who I am. When a child of a catholic priest has the truth veiled from them, you not only take the parent away, you eat away at the very identity of the child from birth until death.

THE RESPONSE OF THE IRISH CATHOLIC BISHOPS TOWARD CHILDREN OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS

On 4 June 2014 I handed a letter to Pope Francis on the issue of children of priests at the Vatican. He promised me that he would read the letter. He blessed me, handing me a rosary. *'…Si, Si, I will read',* holding the letter to his heart. He listened to my interpreter who explained the problems presenting and the solution proposed by Coping International. The following Monday, 9 June 2014, the Irish Episcopal Conference addressed the issue of children of priests and religious. I asked them for their initial thoughts on the matter and to make provisions for psychotherapy for mothers and children involved. Care provisions were granted. However, recognition of this as an issue - the church verbalising it - achieved so much more. It gave hope and gave traction to the issue. Over the years since Coping and the Irish Episcopal Conference have communicated in writing and there has been one on one meetings between Coping and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and former Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Charles Brown which helped push the agenda forward both at home and in Rome. I maintained open communication with Archbishop Eamon Martin who was always more than encouraging and continues to be.

In March 2015, the issue of the use of confidentiality agreements was first addressed.[2] The letter addressed to Coping from the Irish Bishops states in part, 'such an agreement is unjust if it compromises the consent of the parties involved. For example, if undue pressure is brought to bear on the mother'. The letter continues to state, 'systemic power can distort the workings of natural justice […] the power imbalance needs to be restored in such cases'. Episcopal condemnation of efforts that 'compromise consent' was ground-breaking. The Irish Episcopal Conference continued to dialogue with Coping International, with both parties growing in knowledge and trust over the years. In 2017, the *Principles of Responsibility toward Priests who Father Children while in Ministry* were published by the Irish Catholic Bishops, which was subsequently lauded by international media. These *Principles* were later ratified by the UISG and USG in Rome and have had momentous influence globally in terms of safeguarding children of male and female

2 Irish Catholic Bishops Conference (2015). *Regarding Confidentiality agreements and Children of Catholic Priests.* whttp://www.copinginternational.com/officialstatements/

religious. These guidelines are considered to me amongst the first of their kind in the history of the Church.

The Irish Position influenced Rome's position on the matter. The Pontifical Commission for Safeguarding of Minors contacted Coping International in October 2017 and later in September 2018.[3] The Commission stated, 'at the most recent meeting of the PCPM it was decided that the Guidelines Working Group should consider the development of guidelines on children of priests. […] We are just beginning that work. We will be looking at any existing guidance on this issue such as the recent statement by the Bishops Conference of Ireland and working with the various departments of the Curia in Rome which have responsibilities related to this issue'. This position was later confirmed and furthered by the new appointees of the Commission in September 2018. In my role as Coping Director I now consult with the Commission providing non-identifiable data to assist their growing knowledge of this issue.

In April 2018, the Irish Bishops would go even further and address what Coping considered to lie at the heart of the matter, assumed sociological default responses to the issue facing children of clergy. Coping in early 2018 asked the Irish Bishops, "if a priest fathers a child, is remaining in the priesthood one of the responses that may be considered as a response to this situation?" The Irish Catholic Bishops responded: "it is not possible to rule out, at the beginning, any possible responses to these situations, which involves a simple default position of insisting that a man 'leave the priesthood' or that he automatically be permitted to continue in active ministry." (Irish Catholic Bishops Conference., 2018.) The Irish Bishops struck new ground, a middle ground characterised by safeguarding of the most innocent and forgotten. This position was later adopted by the Bishops of England and Wales as well as Scotland.

WHAT PROBLEMS SURROUND CHILDREN OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS?

The psychological problems surrounding children of priests and religious germinate in society and are rooted in clericalism, thus psychosocial in nature. Imposed or assumed silence, masked as privacy becomes the hallmark of the child's life at conception. Out of this silent world emerges a child who is nervous and confused. Nervous at the imposed, domineering silence and confused as to why they must remain silent regarding something so natural. Anxiety plays a major role in the child's daily life, anxiety linked to expectant behaviour on behalf of the child. It is here that the

3 Pontifical Commission for Protection of Minors (2017). *Letter to Coping International, 2017.* www.copinginternational.com/holysee

phenomenon of conditional parenting may be identified. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs cites 'conditional parenting, in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions' as an example of emotional abuse. One does not have to go out of Ireland to find such examples. Prolonged exposure to the clericalist source of anxiety corrodes the psychological well-being of the child. Imposed silence can breed intense anger. Anger management is a vital to Coping's work, promoting healthy avenues to express the confused anger that has built up over time since birth. If the person experiencing the anger is an introvert, this can have damaging consequences in the long term if not treated properly. Implosive anger rooted in adverse childhood experiences that are difficult to understand, runs the risk of lasting personal damage to the person, psychologically, emotionally, even physically if manifested psychosomatically. Introvert anger can express itself as self-harm. If the person is an extrovert, their behaviour might appear odd, unexplainable. Addiction problems accompany both the introvert and extrovert as well as obsessive behaviour. Paranoia is a primary characteristic – mixed with fear, fear of the church, or distrust – of the silenced child; their nervousness can lead to behaviour that is distressing for their own persona and those around them. Introversion mixed with paranoia has debilitating effects on the natural development of the child.

'Emotional abrasion' exists when the interior, suffering self is stopped from emerging into the openness to heal by the exterior, socially acceptable self; one rubbing against the other, wearing down the inner walls of emotional stability, breeding nervousness and promoting anxiety, anxiety which cannot be expressed properly, thus the cycle continues.

The primary difference between the child of a priest and he/she who is not the child of a priest is the ever-looming presence of institutional clericalism, whether in the mind of the mother or in the eyes of the child. Clericalism permeates the domestic environment of the child at birth and like a cancer, suffocates and stifles all that is natural.

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

We are in conversations with church authorities across the world, in terms of guidance and policy design, we also assist clients in coming to know their needs and help them to represent their needs to religious authorities with confidence. As Coping looks to the future, we envision a church that supports all children, and recognises all children, regardless of parentage, as having worth. It is my great hope that one day soon, we will hear from the Holy

Father these words, “children of priests and religious worldwide.” For when he does that, he automatically and at once, brings into the light, all those left blinking in a clericalist darkness that suffocates natural rights.

To conclude, I wish to openly thank the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference and the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, particularly Teresa Devlin for believing in this project. To Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, children of priests who have suffered abuses “of whatever kind” owe you a debt of gratitude. To Archbishop Eamon Martin and each Catholic Bishop of Ireland, thank you for caring for children of priests and having the foresight to do what is right.

Learning to be free. Seeking to be attentive in the presence of God: this way of praying may seem very simple, perhaps even too simple. Yet regular practice of such prayer is an amazing route to freedom. We can go far by going nowhere! Even when the time frame, the practical arrangements and the content of this prayer are very stable and regular, this does not lead to stagnation. How is that? By repeating the name of God inwardly, we advance, because we try to avoid everything that could hinder us, everything that would take the place of God

– Jean-Marie Gueullette, *How to Sit with God,* (Dublin: Veritas) p. 111.

Homilies for February (C)

Noel O'Sullivan

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time *February 3*
Jeremiah 1:4-5. Psalm 71:1-6, 15-17. I Corinthians 12:31-13:13.
Luke 4:21-31

If a survey were to be conducted at the doors of the church this morning on your way out from Mass and if you were asked: 'What is God? Give me one word to describe God.' What would you say: almighty, all knowing, all powerful, eternal, transcendent? All these answers are correct but there is one other word that expresses who God is, better than all of these. You've guessed it, having heard the readings: love; God is love. That is the word that best sums up who God is. He is love. Is it any surprise then that Jesus centred his entire message on love: love one another as I have loved you; love your neighbour as yourself; the whole law can be summed up as love of God and love of neighbour. No-one knew this better than St Paul. It is he who has given us that beautiful hymn to love that is our second reading today: 'Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited… it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.' We are very familiar with that reading because it is read at most weddings. Couples like to choose it for their ceremony because it is close to where they are at on their wedding day.

If someone were to come from another planet and spend a few months on earth observing and analyzing the world we live in, naturally part of what they would see would be religions and religious people. If at the end of their survey we were to ask them to sum up what Christianity is all about, I wonder how many of them would tell us that it is about love. Yes, the core of the Christian life is love: couple love, family love, neighbourly love, community love, parish love, universal love. True religion should make us more loving. Does it? We all have an answer to that question. If our religion doesn't make us more loving, then there is some blockage; there is a blocked artery that prevents us from loving. Instead of

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loving we are paralyzed by our own self-regard; we are turned in on ourselves; our religious practice has even becomes selfish; it doesn't extend to other people. Our visitors from another planet would be very shocked to find religious people who are members of the same family not talking to one another. Of course the root cause of the estrangement is some hurt but followers of Christ shouldn't hang on to a hurt as if it were a winning lottery ticket. Holding a grudge is a loser's game – understandable, even human but self-destructive. So we need something to free the blockages that imprison us in our own little world. That something is the grace of God. It is available to us at all times but especially in that intimate moment when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion. At the end of this mass today let us bring before Jesus someone from whom we are estranged, someone about whom we have said: I will never again talk to that person, it's finished, no more. Jesus, and only Jesus, can thaw out that hardened artery and allow the blood of love to flow again from our hearts. The stakes are high. St Paul in that second reading says, 'Without love I am nothing at all.' Imagine! I am nothing at all if I can't love. And remember of course we are not asked to like everybody, just to love them.

Sunday in Ordinary Time *February 10*

Isaiah 6:1-8. Psalm 137. I Corinthians 15:1-11. Luke 5:1-11

Almost everyone has an opinion about religion, irrespective of their own religious affiliation. They can wax eloquently on what is wrong with the Church and, more significantly, they have the answers. The solutions most often trotted out in response to the crisis in the Church are to ordain women and put an end to celibacy. Then all will be well. And this superficial analysis is not just emanating from social commentators but from priests and religious. The crisis in the Church is much deeper; it has its roots in the crisis of humanity itself. What does it mean to be human in the twentieth first century? Church structures and discipline are not foundational questions.

The major issues facing us have to do with the relationship between God and humanity. Who is God? What does that term mean? What does it mean to assert that God 'is'? To what extent does this God coincide with the living and personal God of the Bible, whom Jesus called Father and with whom he invites us to have a filial relationship? What is the relationship between the God of Jesus Christ and the historical world in which we live? The corollary question presents itself with even more urgency: what is the human person? The possibility of meaning against the background of suffering, evil, and death makes this task both

urgent and imperative. To what extent does faith in God reveal to us something about our own humanity? What difference does it make to believe in the God of Jesus Christ? Above all, who is Jesus who is called Christ? What does it mean to adhere to him?

All three reading today stand collectively as the answer to the big questions in life. The answer is to be found in a right relationship to God. When we put ourselves at the centre of our quest then we are erecting altars to false gods. The God of Jesus Christ must come first; then we will have the wherewithal to deal with such issues as, for example, meaning in the face of suffering. The gospel reading today from St Luke juxtaposes two ways of living. The first is life without God; the second is life with God. In the first case, the apostles are complete failures; their fishing exploits yield nothing. In the second case, they fill two boats to sinking point. What is the difference? In the second case, they rely on the help of God, not on their own power. This is the answer to the big questions in life. When God is our strength we can achieve great things; when we rely on our own power we don't get very far. That is the essential lesson in life. In a sense, it's simple but it comes up against a huge barrier, viz. our pride. We think we can go it alone. That is a huge lesson for the Church as a whole. The Church will be renewed only when she can go down on her knees like Simon and humbly say, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man'. This is the moment of truth; this is the turning point. It is only when we realise our own helplessness that we are in a right relationship with God. Paradoxically, it is then that we become truly human, truly great.

St Paul stands as the great witness to this truth. The persecutor of Christians becomes the most ardent follower of Christ. He knows where his strength lies; God's grace. Similarly, with the prophet Isaiah in the first reading. Crushed by the awareness of his own sinfulness, he is the last person one would expect to become a prophet. Yet, when he is touched by the grace of God he courageously offers himself: 'Here I am, send me' is his reply to God's invitation.

Let our focus, then, shift from preoccupations with structures to see what really matters, a right relationship with God. We adore the All Holy One and humbly receive the grace to live life to the full as an individual, as a family, as the Church.

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time *February 17*

Jeremiah 17:5-8. Psalm 1. 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20.
Luke 6:17, 20-26

The Beatitudes have been described as the Charter of Christians. Today we hear St Luke's version where he presents Jesus teaching

on level ground, unlike Matthew whose Jesus is the Jewish Rabbi proclaiming his core teaching on the mountain. In both cases we are given an insight into the paradox that is Christianity, in stark contrast to the Charter of the Worldly Wise. 'How happy are you who are poor … Happy you who are hungry now … Happy you who weep now …' Present deprivation is pitted against future fulfilment. The poor will be given the kingdom of God; the hungry will be satisfied; the tearful will laugh. For the worldly-wise things will be different. Doom and gloom await those who have plenty now: the rich, the satiated, the merry-makers, those esteemed by the world. All this will pass. The Latin tag is apposite: *sic transit gloria mundi.*

At one level Jesus seems to present the perfect balance: present suffering will eventually be followed by bliss; current comfort will end in deprivation. Poor consolation you might say to those who are going through great agony here and now. 'How happy are you who are poor.' I wonder how that comes across to someone who is homeless and hasn't enough to buy the next meal? Or, the family who is threatened with eviction because the mortgage payments are in arrears? Or, again, the child who has to pretend to go home after school but whose family is in direct provision? At best, the words of Jesus don't even register. At worst, they sound like a mockery of some people's straightened circumstances. His words probably sit more easily with those of us who are comfortable, even if they jolt our conscience a little, at least for a while.

So, what is the truth of the Beatitudes? Are they just simply a charter of consolation for one set of people and a warning to another? The Beatitudes cannot be used to encourage an attitude of passivity in the face of suffering and injustice, as has sometimes happened in the past. The hope of future glory has been used to silence the agony of humanity when the more Christian response should have been to call for a change of the economic, political and social structures of society, leading to equality and a fair distribution of the goods of the earth. Over the centuries Christianity has been blinkered by a rabid individualism. In other words, being Christian was seen as a matter of a private relationship between 'me and Jesus'. Greatly lacking was a sense of the communitarian nature of Christianity with implications for how we as a Church relate to humanity as a whole. Poverty, hunger and suffering are not good in themselves. They are the enemy of God and man. In so far as they are engrained in the structures of a society Christians have a duty to confront them. When vested interests are threatened by the prophetic voice of Christians they cry 'Marxist' or 'revolutionary'. Look at the fate of the recently canonised Archbishop Romero,

assassinated while celebrating Mass because of his stance against the injustices in El Salvador. That is the lot of the prophet.

As a community, we need to stand up to evil in all its guises no matter what the cost. So much concentration in the last couple of years in Ireland was focused on the introduction of abortion while glaring inequalities in our health system were just given scraps of platitudes from those who were elected to ensure justice and fairness. One example is a Cork medical card patient who had to make four trips to Belfast for cataract treatment; two trips for the preps and two for the procedures. The private patient, in contrast, could have all that done locally.

The Beatitudes assure us of future glory as well as demanding a stringent accountability for our stewardship of the goods of the earth. This is consoling and challenging. But the Beatitudes cannot be used to excuse the acceptance of injustice in any of its many guises. The prophetic charism of the Church is in urgent need of being at the forefront in our time. *St Oscar Romero, pray for us.*

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time *February 24*
1Samuel 26:2 ,7-9. Psalm 102. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.
Luke 6:27-38

The teachings of Jesus sometimes come across as impractical in today's world, even if we allow for Semitic exaggeration. The extract we have heard from Luke is a case in point: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you'. Our natural instinct is to give as good as we get. If someone has done us harm the baser side of our nature will want revenge. The road of revenge leads to a backlash and so the cycle becomes interminable. Unfortunately, this is a scenario we may find between neighbours and even between members of the same family. Transfer that dynamic to communities or nations and the result is war in its many ugly guises. The longer these disputes last the harder it is to find a peaceful solution. A term we find in Scripture is apt: 'hardness of heart'.

Some people are willing to pay enormous sums of money to acquire treatment for the psychological damage which results from conflict. Peace of mind doesn't have a price. And yet, the solution is in the teaching of Jesus: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you'. Not only does he tell us what to do but he also gives us the means necessary to achieve it. His own gift of forgiveness is available to us but we need to claim it. It sounds simple; is it too good to be true? How can we be sure it will work? The answer lies in the fact that we have been created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). That is not a pious platitude but, rather, a truth

which gives us a whole new way of looking at life. The psalm today tells us, 'The Lord is compassion and love'. If we are created in God's image and likeness then we are capable of compassion and love, even to heroic proportions. We have little difficulty accepting that some people have given their lives for the faith; we call them martyrs. But there is another kind of martyrdom; it is living in a way that the image and likeness of God become evident in the most practical details of ordinary living.

Jesus says, 'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate'. And he teases out what that implies: 'Do not judge … do not condemn … grant pardon'. The tendency to judge, to condemn, to withhold pardon is so much part of us. It is our original sin. But we are not locked into it. In fact, we have been freed from it at Baptism. What happens is that the old tendencies come to us disguised as justice. We say, 'But we must have standards; we cannot go along with such and such'. It is so easy to be sucked into self-righteousness.

One may object that this is all very desirable but how can it be done in a secular society in 2019? The answer lies in the grace of God. We cannot go it alone. We need the inspiration, the guidance and the strength of the Holy Spirit to exercise the Father's compassion, to allow ourselves to let go of the grudge, the hatred and the pride which have entrapped us. This is not to deny that at times we may need professional help to deal with addictions and blockages of a psychological nature. But the human sciences alone are insufficient to set us free in the full sense.

So, far from being impractical, the teachings of Jesus have to do with the cut and thrust of everyday life. And his advice is free! So is his grace.

News and Views

The Seal Of Confession and Canon Law. *Pat Courtney, 8 Na Crosaire, Kilmyshall, Bunclody, Co. Wexford, writes:*

I am intrigued with Patrick Manning's article on the 'Seal of Confession'. (*The Furrow*: September 2018). I am just a minnow in comparison to Patrick's erudite theology. His article is precise, theologically watertight and not open to dialogue. Then why should a minnow like me dare to respond to this article? I am just one of the vast 'vox populi' in the Church who want to ask questions and need answers.

Manning's approach is dogmatic, definitive and imposes a theological embargo on questioning the inviolability of the Seal. I have reservations about Canon Law and its apparent inviolability. Canon Law has been with us for centuries. It was developed and expanded by male clerics. This was the law which made the Church infallible, invincible and all powerful. This was the law which controlled the mores of the faithful. This was the law that gave birth to the Inquisition. In the new Code of 1983, there are over 1,700 Canons. They are cold, lacking empathy and full of complex casuistry.

Every institution must have laws for good governance. In good democratic governments, the vox populi was consulted through elections, debates and referenda. The Church was never a democratic institution. The old adage of pray, pay and obey is very much alive. Jesus was well aware of the Torah and the Mosaic Law. One of the truths of Christian practice today is that it fails to emphasise the full humanity of Jesus. He lived and breathed Judaism. He lived a Jew and died a Jew. He was well aware of the Torah and Judaic Law. He respected the Law but was never a slave to the Law. In his short life, he never wrote anything, never made new laws and never realised that his teaching would develop into the coercion of individual freedom. His whole life was based on his understanding of a loving God, a God who wanted to set people free, a God who cared for the anawim of society.

It might seem as heresy to say that Jesus did not institute any sacrament. Sacramental theology arose in the decades after Jesus. Confession was public. Penance was public. I agree with Manning that this practice evolved over the centuries to private confession. At the fourth Lateran Council in 1215, it was canonically set out

that the faithful should receive the sacrament at least once a year. This was the beginning of this sacrament as we know it.

In 1215, there were no records of clerical sex abuse, albeit there were sexual abuses in the confessional. Commission after Commission have set up safeguards. They are not working properly. The most comprehensive Commission took place in Australia in 2016. It was incisive, scathing and laid out a final solution to this appalling leprosy within the Church.

Here are some extracts from the conclusion of the Royal Commission:

'This case study exposed a catastrophic failure in the leadership of the Diocese and ultimately in the structure and culture of the Church over decades to effectively respond to the sexual abuse of children by its priests. That failure led to the suffering and often irreparable harm to children, their families and the wider community. That harm could have been avoided if the Church had acted in the interests of children rather than in its own interests. It would be easy to feel overwhelmed by the vast 17-volume final report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. But it can be summed up by this single comment, which speaks to the experience of thousands of children whose innocence, future and prospects were taken from them by sexual predators, at institutions where they should have been safe'.

Pope Francis says the findings of Australia's child sex abuse Royal Commission 'deserve to be studied in depth,' after the Catholic Church was heavily criticised in the final report.

Among the report's recommendations was one especially controversial measure: the removal in such cases of the Church's "seal of confession," which requires priests to keep secret anything that they learn while administering the sacrament.

Since then, several Australian jurisdictions have passed laws that will soon require Catholic priests to break that seal. "Make no mistake, priests who have knowledge or suspicion of child sex abuse should report that to police, and failure to do so must be treated as a crime," said Simone McGurk, minister for child protection in the state of Western Australia.

This attack on the Seal, according to Manning, is attributed to the three-pronged plague of secularism, pluralism and relativism. All these cultures exist in the modern world. He refuses to recognise the parallel pronged plagues of clericalism, misogyny and the secrecy of multiple cover-ups. I am inclined to agree with Kevin Hegarty (*The Furrow*: October 2018: p 541). 'Church leaders in Ireland and throughout the world are inclined to blame secularisation for their woes. They fail to recognise that secularisation has helped create positive social and economic change. It has brought intellectual

and personal liberation. They seem to have forgotten that the Second Vatican Council promised respectful dialogue with the modern world'.

The said Royal Commission has rocked Australia and the wider world. The bishops have accepted 98% of the Commissions findings. They will not budge on the inviolability of the Seal. However, one bishop has spoken out to some extent. Bishop Paul Bird of Ballarat is in favour of the status quo, but has reservations about the abuse of the sacrament. Confession has been used by paedophile priests as a cloak of secrecy. Even though the confessor knows that remorse is not genuine, he cannot refuse absolution. Bird maintains that this is an abuse of the sacrament and 'basically lacks sincerity … it is simply a shell of a ritual, it has no substance'.

The Church is not above the Law. Canon Law is not divine law. It can be reviewed for the sake of the common good. I cannot visualise how God would condone the protection of a paedophile priest, all in the name of Tradition and the good name of the Church. When it comes to the exposure of crime, there should be no barriers. The abused deserve justice. Their lives have been destroyed. Does it matter to the Church whether they are destroyed or not? Is the Church serious about rooting out once and for all this horrible leprosy of clerical abuse?

Secrecy is part of Church culture. Every diocese has secret archives. Manning maintains that if 'one link in the chain is broken-then the chain is broken. If even one priest is allowed to reveal what he has heard in the confessional- then what is to stop the others'? (p.492). Unwittingly,he has used the word 'chain'. The chain binding people needs to be broken.

The bark of Peter over the last few decades has been buffeted by storms. Many have abandoned ship. Some officers have mutinied and were forced to walk the plank. There is still time for this ship to dock and have a complete overhaul.

There is a need for new charts, a new crew, new navigational skills. There is a need for new routes, new officers, male and female. Those who wrecked the bark must be decommissioned. There will be no fanfare for the new launch. Unchartered waters must be explored, even Canon Law. A Church that adheres to outmoded practice will not survive. Excommunication is the work of paper tigers. Will the Church collapse if Canon Law is revisited re the Seal of Confession? In Ireland, there is a need to 'decullenise' the Church (Furrow: October p. 540). There are no signs of this happening.

On that new bark of Peter, there is an invisible captain. For decades, he has been ignored. His wings were clipped and he has been caged. That is the frustrated Spirit of God.

Go back again, not to tradition or Canon Law, go back in humility to a nomadic Galilean preacher. We have lost his message even to the point of treating him as a puppet on a string. When will they ever learn? Sadly, not in my lifetime.

Faith and Science. *Brother Michael Heffernan, St. Aidan's CBS. Whitehall, Dublin 9 writes:*

The scientific method is but one of the many forms of human intelligence that provide a healthy balance between the cognitive and affective faculties. Science's description of the how of things is subject to increasing refinement and revision. The question of why anything exists needs to be addressed by insights from our multiple intelligences such as poetry, drama, music, philosophy, theology, appreciation of beauty and a sense of wonder, to name but a few. Focusing on one form of knowledge to the exclusion of the others runs the risk of tunnel vision as Darwin discovered to his cost. In his later life he observed that his mind had become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts. Were he to live his life again he would have learned to appreciate poetry, art and music. Loss of these, he believed, was injurious to his intellect and probably to his moral character by enfeebling the emotional part of his nature.

Everything has a meaning and without meaning nothing can exist; it is this belief that makes science possible. Furthermore, the meaning of any created thing transcends its being. For example, the overall purpose and meaning of the relationships between insects, plants and animals are interpreted by a human intelligence that transcends them. This concept is further developed when we reflect that the universe had a purpose and meaning billions of years before human intelligence appeared.

The difference between the *how* and the *why* of the universe was obvious to Fr. George Lemaitre, the pioneer of The Big Bang Theory. He clearly distinguished between how the universe, with the endless possibilities of its potential, came into being and the transcendent nature of why it exists. Such an understanding requires intelligence infinitely superior to human intelligence. The assumption that the universe of itself is sufficient to explain why it exists is to attribute godlike qualities to it that could lead to a form of pantheism common to nature religions. An assumption that the universe was due to irrational chance leads to the conclusion that rationality is just a by-product of irrationality and chance.

Christians believe that their faith in God is both a gift and a human act, conscious and free, corresponding to the dignity of

the human person. They believe that the ultimate meaning of the potency, order and intelligibility of the universe, of which we know but a tiny amount, transcends its being. They believe that it is only fully comprehended by an infinitely superior intelligence that we call the Creator God, in whom we live and move and have our being. Furthermore, a transcendent God cannot be regarded as an object subject to the limitations of the scientific method, otherwise God would not be God. In time, God is incomprehensible to human intelligence but not unknowable. Scientists such as Newton have recognised this and humbly confessed that they understood but a tiny amount of what is to be known about the physical universe.

Theists, atheists and agnostics discuss the topic of faith and science. However, people do not need to be highly educated to reflect on these matters. I am struck by the observation of the outstanding scientist and believer Pasteur, who wished he had the simple faith of the Breton peasant women he knew; a sentiment in keeping with the insights of Patrick Kavanagh in his poem "The One".

Since discussions between faith and science frequently lead to discussions about morality, it is important to note that neither belief in God nor atheism diminishes one's potential for good or evil. While the failures of believers are invariably discussed in these matters, balance requires acknowledgement that all, without exception, are equally subject to the same dissonance between good and evil in all aspects of their lives; between what they should do and what they actually do. Scientists, too, both believers or non-believers, who have pioneered and developed wonderful benefits for humankind also need to address in addition the morality of certain aspects of science such as ABC warfare, saturation bombing and the horrific wartime experimentations on human beings to name but a few. Some few scientists have courageously addressed these issues.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that, in the light of the many major challenges that face humanity today, the dialogue between faith and science as evidenced, for example, by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and other initiatives, will continue to be mutually beneficial and fruitful.

New Books

Five years to Save the Irish Church. Talks from the National Columba Books Conference. Dublin: Columba Press. 2018. ISBN: 978-1-78218-353-8

Described as 'a clarion call from some of the most respected and challenging religious commentators of our time … a game plan to revive the Irish Church [to] help it to transition into a more honest and open Church', this is a compilation of papers presented at the National Columba Books conference, held in Dublin in May 2018. Its brevity, comprising only 93 pages, should not imply that this is a quick or a superficial read.

Focusing on 'the version of Catholicism which we now see collapsing in Ireland', the collection suggests "to those in authority [that] 'more of the same' will end in tears". Recognising that 'there is still a lot of goodwill out there', it advocates 'a servant leadership that abandons clericalism and works in a collegial manner'. Reflecting the diversity of the authors, their backgrounds and areas of speciality, it constitutes a pocket guide, a contextual theology for why things are as they are.

Brian D'Arcy and Mark Patrick Hederman both reflect on the position of the Irish Church as a bastion of power and the dangers therein. D'Arcy criticises the determination to maintain structures at the expense of the Gospel message and relates reduced Church attendance to the refusal of the Church to engage with and relate to peoples' lives. Hederman decries the power enjoyed by the Church since the foundation of the Irish state, suggesting that after two decades of immersion in the "degenerate moral behaviour" of the rest of the modern world, "the openly acknowledged purpose of the Irish hierarchy in inviting John Paul II to Ireland [in 1979] was to halt or at least slow down the damaging inroads to the ancient Catholic faith of Ireland."

Offering an evaluation of the Irish Church which is bleak and brutal, Joe McDonald suggests that "death has gotten into the bones of the Irish Church" and that four conditions reflect the accelerating malaise: the Ostrich Church which hides its head in the sand; the Rollover Church whose confidence and moral courage has vanished; the Saltless Church which has lost its inherent humility and the Hemorrhaging Church, whose woundedness is its internal dysfunction. He proposes, in response to each, plans of action, which are both radical and innovative, including a call for inclusion, empowerment and declericalisation, with prayer, humility and service as the foundations of the church moving forward.

Sr Stan considers structural and systemic sin the source of our collective failure to respond to many of Ireland's most acute social

problems. Identifying our relationship with God and the Gospel message as our primary responsibility, she prioritises values over laws, rules and regulations. Obedience to Church law "does not define a good Christian", and while "laws crystallise values…if we emphasise the laws we are in danger of missing the values that the laws are intended to express." Focusing on laws, she suggests, is, "misrepresenting the nature of our relationship with God", rather than calling us to radical living of the Gospel message, and can make participation more challenging for all who struggle to comply with those laws. Change must therefore be a constant, evolving process if the Church is to fulfil its call to be "just, loving and compassionate."

The legal expertise of Mary McAleese underpins her examination of the spiritual implications of infant baptism and the obligations attaching to the membership which it imparts, or perhaps imposes. A whistle-stop tour of international legal rights and Vatican responsibilities accruing from them showcases fundamental tensions between what the Church says and what it does in the protection of its members rights. She considers the Church "at a crossroads" where it must choose to "turn this creeping existential threat into a disaster by ignoring it or [to] turn it into a spring tide by dealing with it."

Despite the diversity of focus and perspective of these papers, common themes prevail such as the urgency with which change must begin, the lack of institutional commitment to real inclusion and participation, and the desire to see Gospel teaching and values, rather than organisational maintenance, at the heart of the Church. These are themes which provoke serious questions about the priorities and values of the Church as an institution. Most striking though is the love for and commitment to their faith and their relationship with God which each expresses. This love and commitment underpins the authenticity of their calls for a change of mindset, approach and emphasis. In expressing such love and hope, these papers are testaments of faith in something more than an organisation or a structure; this gives them value, and the rest of us hope. With such a message, this book is the mustard seed, the treasure hidden in the field, and it can change your life.

Newry, Co. Down DYMPNA MALLON

The Quiet Revolution of Pope Francis: A Synodal Catholic Church in Ireland? Gerry O' Hanlon SJ (Dublin: Irish Messenger Publication) 2018. ISBN 97817880005

The most memorable moment for me of Pope Francis' visit to Ireland this year was walking the last nine kilometres through the Phoenix Park to the site where the papal Mass would be celebrated. We were tens of thousands of men, women and children, all walking in the same direction.

The authorities had banned all vehicles beyond a certain point, so we had to do what the ancient pilgrims did, going to Jerusalem, with all the intent and anticipated joy they had.

During that walk the cloud enveloping the pope's visit seemed to lift and the cries of anguish and anger were put into the context of the whole story of God's people. For a moment we realised that the Church transcends our current anxieties and the latest headlines aimed at dampening our joy at the visit of Francis.

When asked years ago why the Church was so slow in admitting married men to the priesthood Cardinal Hume replied, "the Queen Mary can't turn on a sixpence." Those of us old enough to remember being fired up by the opening days of Vatican II in 1962 can nod our heads. We have waited fifty years for the spark of the sixties to catch fire.

Now it seems to be happening but, as Gerry O'Hanlon tells us, it is happening quietly. For someone searching for a map of what exactly is happening in the Church today, expecially in Ireland, Fr O'Hanlon's book is a gift. He gives us the historical context setting out how the Church came to be where she is now. Then he explains the contemporary cultural context which the Church finds herself in, in words that are chilling: "Apart from outright and stiff resistance there is also present at many levels of the Church at the moment (not just in curial Rome) a kind of unconscious passive aggression that results in minimal compliance with the reforms of Francis – a sense that 'this too will pass' and before too long we can get back to 'business as usual,' the 'way we do things here.'" (p. 70). I found it particularly helpful to be reminded that every revolution – noisy or quiet – has to be received and accepted. Many of us can own up to having held for too long the facile view that the pope can simply get up in the morning and restructure the way the Church is run with a stroke of his pen. Maybe we think he can act like Napoleon who rewrote the thousand year old codes of French law in a couple of years. But O'Hanlon reminds us again and again that Francis understands so well his mission is to start processes, not to lay down structures. Processes are irreversible: structures on their own can crumble when some new idea comes along. But if the structures gradually emerge from the processes then they are built on rock.

The process – the subject of this book – is called synodality. It is an old word and an old practice in the Church. It means journeying together – something I had a taste of in my walk in the park.

A synodal Church is one where all the members – young, old, bishops, priests and religious – all walk together. That means, they listen to each other in a forum where the "joys and hopes, pain and anguish of the people of our time" are heard. Pope St Paul VI, following the desire of Vatican II, reintroduced synods into the life of the Church. But he and John Paul II were reluctant to allow them freedom to develop their re-found role in the Church. As a result the synods of the past fifty years have lacked teeth and have never gripped our attention.

Francis wants to change that. His idea of a synod is where all members of the Church – men, women and children – have a place to speak their mind and to listen to one another.

For anyone wanting to deepen their understanding of what is happening today in the Church this is their book.

Lusaka, Zambia DAVID HAROLD-BARRY, SJ

Defending Hope: Dispatches from the front lines in Palestine and Israel. Eóin Murray and James Mehigan (eds.). Dublin: Veritas, 2018. ISBN: 978 1 84730 833 7

In August 2018 the Trump administration cancelled over $200 million in aid for Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank. It followed a move earlier in the year when, in January, the US significantly cut its contribution to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA. Although cutting a combined $550m annual funding to Palestine, the US continues to give Israel $3.8bn each year. The head of the Palestinian General Delegation to the United States accused the Trump government of dismantling decades of US engagement in Palestine, and alongside moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem, of abandoning the ideals of a two-state solution in the region. Considerable international condemnation followed; some governments such as Britain increased their aid to the region by way of response.

These events provide further evidence of the fragility and complexity of Middle Eastern relations. But as this political drama continues to be played out by government officials and diplomats, we must not lose sight of the human cost that is borne because of it. *Defending Hope*, edited by Eóin Murray and James Mehigan, is a provocative and challenging collection of essays which detail how the lives of Palestinians and Israelis have been shaped by the violence that has become part of their common home. The essays reflect a broad range of backgrounds, and are deeply moving, personal accounts of the injustices that are endured by these peoples.

Eóin Murray's opening chapter entitled "Under Siege" recalls his time living in the Gaza Strip. Murray describes the geo-political significance of Gaza dating back to ancient times, and considers, among other things, Gaza's long history of enduring siege warfare: "For Gazans, siege warfare is an integral part of the city's history. The Bible records that a little over one hundred and fifty years after Alexander's attack came the siege of the Macabees who also conquered Gaza. Over the course of the twentieth century no less that four major powers controlled the Strip: the Ottomans, the British, the Egyptians and the Israelis" (p.32).

Murray continues by examining the manner in which the Israeli siege/occupation has been conducted. Without being too dense or laden with historical detail, this chapter provides us with an excellent overview of

key political developments and their ongoing impact on the day-to-day life for Gazans. He describes the hardships endured by displaced refugees, the impact of military occupation on travel and on the acquisition of basic medical and food stuffs, of intifadas and the building of walls. Siege warfare leaves its mark: "every Gazan carries trauma within. They wear it in their eyes … The mindset of siege is that of shrinking so as not to be noticed, of closing down to the pain of the external reality where every move and gesture has to be considered lest it causes offence" (p.37).

Arik Ascherman is an American Rabbi and a human right's activist. He has been especially involved in efforts to protect Palestinian farmers from attacks and land confiscations. In Chapter Four he reminds us that the Hebrew word "teshuvah", meaning repentance, shares the same root as the word for "return". For Ascherman, it is through our commitment to social justice and human rights that we "return" to our truest selves. Ascherman describes here some of the many dangers that he has faced because of his support of human rights in Gaza. He believes that the power of positive human encounter is likely to bear far greater fruit than the alternatives. By way of illustration, he refers to an encounter with a young Palestinian boy who got caught up in violent demonstrations. The boy was taken by Israeli soldiers and tied to the front of an armed vehicle. Seeing him terrified and alone, Ascherman decided to intervene. He too was then arrested and tied to the vehicle. The boy was amazed and later spoke to a local NGO worker about how "a tall Jewish man in *kippah* came and saved me" (p.101).

Throughout the chapter we see that Ascherman's actions are driven by a deep commitment to social justice, as well as by an unrelenting sense of hope. He explains how "Israelis (and Palestinians) harden their positions because they don't believe that peace is possible. This is the role and importance of hope. It narrows the gap between what seems realistic and what seems possible" (p.108).

There are many more essays that one might mention which capture both the personal struggles of people and the human rights commitment of so many from all sides of the religious-political spectrum. If the reader is looking for an in-depth historical or political account of the region one may need to go elsewhere. That is not the purpose of the book. One finds here instead the words, lives, and hopes of ordinary people living in extraordinary circumstances. Human rights work is hard, and we are reminded throughout of the frustrations and failures encountered along the way. But the reader is also struck by the overriding sense of hope throughout the book. In the words of Sari Bashi: "the beauty of our struggle is pure and real because it is so deeply human. The halting progress we make is like a diamond shimmering within the dark cave of human frailty" (p205).

Maynooth, Co. Kildare SUZANNE MULLIGAN

Absolute Power. How the Pope became the most Influential Man in the World. Paul Collins. New York: Public Affairs. Hachette Book Group. Pp. 366. Price: $AUD 39.99. ISBN 978-1-61039-860-2.

This enormously readable book has two main arguments. The first is that too much power in the church resides in the Pope. The second is that we should not hold that the "deposit of faith" should pass changelessly down through the ages. Rather, the belief system of the church has been affected so much by its time and place of origin that it needs to be changed later.

With respect to the first argument, Collins maintains that the First Vatican Council created an intractable problem by investing the Pope with "the absolute fullness of supreme power". The Pope can act in the church without check or balance, other than the law of God and the defined teaching of the church. And, according to Vatican I, the pope is the final arbiter of both.

Moreover, modern media has given the papacy the ability to project its power outward and to identify Catholicism with itself, maintains Collins. Pius XII was a consummate communicator; he projected a persona, an image of an almost God- like figure. Later there was the "Polish Colossus" Pope Jean-Paul II . From his Polish background, he acquired messianic aspirations. According to them, Poland, after being tested by suffering, would cast off the shackles of Communism and be the source of salvation for the corrupt West.

John Paul II disliked the notion of a pilgrim church, the image of a people on a journey of discovery. He was convinced that the church had arrived there and was already perfect. He took a centralized model of church government for granted. The countervailing power of bishops, people and theologians was lost. Under him, argues Collins, the church became a corporate entity governed by a monarchical power.

There was even, writes Collins, a tendency for him to identify the church with himself. That, of course, is absurd. When the Pope dies, the church doesn't die as well. It elects another Pope. On this point, Collins makes a valuable suggestion. Why doesn't the Pope appoint some women as cardinals? That is an honorific title; cardinals don't have to be ordained. But they can vote for the next Pope. If the Pope were to do that, the public image of the church would be revolutionized.

Collins has no doubt about what else needs to be done. Power needs to be pushed out to the periphery. Bishops should be elected by their dioceses. Local synods should be given more power, over the liturgy, for example. The curia should be abolished. All attempts to reform it have failed, argues Collins. It should not be a mega – bureaucracy running the church; it should be a small secretariat for the Pope, perhaps staffed by qualified lay people. On the second main argument of the book, whether there is a timeless deposit of faith travelling through history, Collins has this to say;

> "once you develop a genuine historical sense and understand theology and doctrine in context, you realize that church teaching really makes sense only in its own time and place and that it must be constantly re – interpreted in each era for it to make sense in a new cultural context" [p181].

An example would be the Aristotelianism which swept Europe at the time of Aquinas. Then, the careful analysis of so many topics must have seemed like a revelation, but now, it seems very superficial. Some of Aristotle's categories got into theology. For example, it was argued that in the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the "substance" of the bread and wine are changed, though the "accidents" remain.

Collins' argument about continuity and change comes in the history he gives of the papacy from 1799 to Pope Francis. Included in this is the story of the modernization of the church, which is fascinating, with its advances and reverses. To take one instance, the case of the remarkable Abbe Henri Bremond [1865-1933], whose work on spirituality in France comes approximately seventy years before the world wide interest in spirituality. One of his books about St.Jeanne de Chantal as a spiritual theologian [1912] was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books on the grounds that it put too much emphasis on subjective religious experience. He was one of those regarded as a "modernist", which was condemned, although in its opening to the modern world, it anticipates Vatican II.
This book is timely and important.

Canberra, Australia REG NAULTY

Revolutionary Saint. Michael E. Lee. New York: Orbis Books, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-62698-226-0.

I am one those who remembers where in Lima, Peru I was the moment I found out that Archbishop Romero was dead. I saw the headline of a Lima tabloid which read: Obispo Asesinado. I bought the paper and read the first outlines of the martyrdom narrative.

In this very fine study author Michael E. Lee, professor of theology at Fordham University, presents the theological legacy of Archbishop Oscar Romero, martyred in 1980 and canonised this October 14. His canonisation has been long delayed due to the reticence of conservative churchmen to admit as possible a martyr who dies for a faith which does justice.

Only a Pope like Francis could canonise Oscar. John Paul II did not understand Romero and would not canonise him. Romero denounced US imperial politics in Central America. Wojtyla supported it even to the extreme of berating the US hierarchy for their lack of support. I still feel

upset when I remember the photo of Wojtyla placing the communion host on the outstretched tongue of murderer Augusto Pinochet. The Pope's politics was one of power, not of service.

The historical-cultural background to Romero's life and pastorate was *La Matanza*, the Slaughter. This occurred in 1932 when peasants rose up against the injustices committed against them by the agrarian oligarchy supported by its concubine the Church. This traumatic event shaped 20th century Salvadoran culture and society.

Change came in the person of Pope John XXIII who convoked Vatican Council II. At first, Romero's theological mindset did not synchronise or syncopate with the challenges of Vatican II. In 1968 the Latin American church met at Medellin, Colombia. There the bishops criticised the empire of money, announced an option for the poor, reflected on poverty as an ecclesial challenge and launched the theology of liberation 'at the service of the Latin American revolution'.

Romero balked. He feared a secular liberation and abhorred the thought of acting politically. He was timid and reserved in himself; authoritarian and rigid with his clergy; aloof and distant with his people; pious and abstract in his spirituality. He had a lot to learn!

Oscar became Archbishop of San Salvador in February 1977. Just eighteen days after his installation his friend 'Jesuit priest' Rutilio Grande was assassinated along with two laymen. The lead bullets in his body weighed almost as much as he did. Romero's learning process began as he made a fast turnaround. He became prophetically angry and announced a *misa unica* in honour of the victims for the following Sunday – only one Mass to which all were invited. Then he declared that he would not attend any official governmental ceremonies until there was a serious investigation of the murders. Nothing happened. Consequently Romero absented himself from the presidential inauguration of Humberto Romero on June 1. This was Romero's "High Noon", his Kairos. The stage was set. From then on he lived in rupture with the political and military authorities and with the conservative church which did not support him.

Of most interest to me personally is the chapter entitled Romero and Martyrdom. Romero's opponents strenuously denied that he was a martyr for the faith. Rather he was a victim of political violence whose political stance provoked the violent death he endured. Pope John Paul II was of that opinion. He did not allow his nuncio to attend Oscar's funeral, but sent a personal delegate instead. He did not recognise that unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground, it does not bear fruit.

Romero spoke truth to power. He wrote a letter to President Jimmy Carter, a born-again Christian, begging he cease sending arms to San Salvador. A US envoy went to Rome to see if he could prevail upon the Vatican to change Romero's stance. Oscar himself went to Rome, had an audience with the Pope, but left with tears in his eyes, whispering, "He does not understand". Finally, he wrote a letter to the Army saying, "No soldier is obliged to obey an order contrary to the law of God". The

following Monday Oscar died a Eucharistic death. Romero's martyrdom was of a new genre. Thomas a'Becket died defending the church. Oscar defended the poor. Martyrs have died for the faith. They have died defending virtue as did Maria Goretti. They have died sacrificing their lives that others could live, as did Maximilian Kolbe at Auschwitz. Oscar died for a faith which does justice in truth and solidarity.

This is a many-faceted book. It is theology and spirituality; it is biography and history; it is politics and sociology. It also has an Index and Bibliography. Anyone interested in Oscar Romero and who looked forward to his canonisation will read it with profit and pleasure.

Newton Abbey, UK FRANK REGAN

God Ever Greater: Exploring Ignatian Spirituality. Brian O'Leary SJ. Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2018. ISBN 978-1-78812-011-1.

In Chapter 64 of his Rule, St Benedict instructs the abbot to arrange all things in the monastery so that the strong may still have something to long after and the weak may not draw back in alarm. This gem of a book is a perfect example of Benedict's injunction put into practice. The book has two parts. Part 1, beginning with a general definition of spirituality, brings the reader through the history and practice of the Ignatian spiritual tradition. Part 2 suggests seven themes or areas in and through which the reader can shape a personal response to this spirituality. Wisely, the author suggests that novice readers might more profitably start with Part 2, the chapters of which have alluring titles such as *Learning from Daydreams* (Ch 3), *Three Things I Pray* (Ch 4) or *Freedom for Discernment* (Ch 5). Each chapter ends with a suggestion for prayer. Having, as it were, learned by practice, the novice can then move on to deepening his or her experience by drawing on the learning of Part 1. The literary style of the book is simple without being simplistic. At no stage does the writer patronise the reader but acts, rather, as a gentle guide.

Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick HENRY O'SHEA OSB

Sharing The Wisdom of Time. Pope Francis and Friends (Antonio Spadero, S.J. ed.). Dublin; Messenger Publications, 2018. ISBN 978-1-78812-007-4.

It is not very often that a Pope collaborates with scores of people to produce what can accurately be described as a coffee-table-book full of wisdom. This book contains reflections by elderly men and women from all over the world and are grouped under five main themes, work, struggle, love, death and hope. Each individual, some famous, most of them definitely

not, tells his or her story or offers a reflection and Pope Francis responds. By its nature the book is uneven but that is how it was intended to be. In a preface, Pope Francis explains what his purpose is: '…how wonderful is the encouragement that an elder can bestow on a young man or a young woman who is searching for the meaning of life! This is the mission of grandparents. It is a real and true vocation…For some time now, I have been carrying a thought in my heart. I feel that this is what the Lord wants me to say: that there should be an alliance between young and old people.' At a time of globalization when a spreading culture of everlasting youth tends to make the elderly invisible or relegate them to the status of inconvenient burdens, it is refreshing to hear this encouraging voice calling for a re-valorisation of the experiences and wisdom of the growing cohort of older people in our societies. The book is beautifully, even lavishly, produced and contain photographs of nearly all the 'friends' of Pope Francis that illustrate, sometimes poignantly, the circumstances in which they live.

Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick HENRY O'SHEA OSB

Awakening Inner Peace: A Little Book of Hours. Sister Stan. Dublin: Columba Books, 2018. ISBN 978-1-78218-344-0.

In the introduction to this book the reader is told that it is for everyone. Taking as its template the seven liturgical hours of offices of the monastic day it invites to a journey of listening to the sound of silence, to step out of clock time, to stop, reflect, listen, respond and come to a new understanding of the deep inner peace that silence and true listening can bring. (Cf. Introduction). Each of the seven daily 'hours' of the four-week cycle begins with a verse or two from a psalm, continues with a short haiku-like meditation and ends with a short phrase in bold type, usually from Scripture, which can act as a mantra. This is a perfect book for those too busy to pray the full Divine Office and could even serve as a gradual introduction to this practice. Equally, the book stands on its own and can provide an anchoring for those whose spiritual journey might be taking them beyond the boundaries of formal liturgy. At no stage is the reader forced. The distilled wisdom and quiet reflective spirituality it represents and to which it invites makes this book an invaluable resource for the busy as much as for the closet contemplative.

Glenstal Abbey, Co. Limerick HENRY O'SHEA OSB

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