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Deoise na Gaillimhe
Chill Mac Duach & Chill Fhionnúrach

Diocese of Galway
Kilmacduagh & Kilfenora

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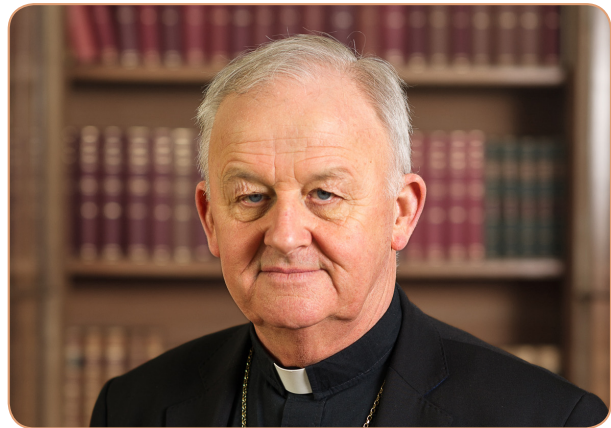
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I heartily welcome this diocesan e-newsletter. Staying in touch is vital for us – it really does keep us alive. Thank God for the technology that enables us to stay in touch. What a blessing! Especially now that physical distance is so necessary.

In an interview back in April, Pope Francis was asked how did he see the mission of the Church (the parish, the people) in the context of Covid-19. His response is simple. 'Take care of yourselves for a future that will come,' he said... 'take care of the now, for the sake of tomorrow'. The present moment, the 'now', asks creativity of us, the Holy Father said, 'a simple creativity capable of inventing something new each day'. If this is our focus, then we will really be alive and give life. As Pope Francis says in his Apostolic Letter to young people: 'Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive.'

We have seen a lot of creativity in our parishes. People coming forward not just with ideas, but action. Action with others and action for others. And taking responsibility. Coping with Covid demands self-discipline and personal responsibility. It also demands working together, being community. That is exactly what Jesus Christ wants, for he wants his church to be: creative communities, his people working together to give life, ensure life, restore life. And not just life for ourselves, but for the whole earth and all that is in it. Being creative, working together, to achieve and ensure health and life for all, all people, all God's creatures, all growing things, the whole atmosphere. Now we take care of ourselves for others' sake. There is no other way through and out of this crisis. It is the way forward, now and for the future.

Now things are different, and will be different. There is no going back. But we are not afraid. We remember Jesus' last word to us in St Matthew's Gospel: 'I am with you always, yes, to the end of time' (Matthew 28:20).

Feedback is welcomed on this e-newsletter initiative.
Tel. 091 563566 or email info@galwaydiocese.ie

Pastoral Outreach during the time of Covid 19



GALWAY DIOCESAN PASTORAL CENTRE

Like all of you we have had to make adjustments with the arrival of Covid-19. This pandemic presents us with huge challenges in the practice of our faith. At some time in the future we will need to reflect on the impact this has had, and is having, on our journey as people of God. With this in mind, we are preparing scriptural reflection evenings to help interpret the events we are now living through. This Covid-19 is going to be with us for quite some time; but it is a time we have to live in now. Even though we are limited, there is still something we can do. We will launch in October a programme of reflections to enable us as Christian communities to discover where we are right now and where the Spirit is leading us. We don't know what the "new normal" will be like, but our faith assures us that God is with us.

Of course, behind closed doors, our normal work has continued: revamping our training programmes for Eucharistic Ministers and Ministers of the Word, preparing new programmes for Baptismal Teams, and updating our support for Pastoral Councils.

All other offices within the Outreach Centre, in line with Government regulations, are operating as normal.

Fr Gerard McCarthy SVD, Pastoral Outreach Co-ordinator



Fr Michael Griffin Centenary

Bishop Brendan Kelly will celebrate a Memorial Mass in St Joseph's Church, Presentation Road, Galway on 22nd November to mark the centenary of the death of Fr Michael Griffin. Fr Griffin was curate in St Joseph's parish from 1918 to 1920. He was abducted by Crown forces on 14th November 1920 during the War of Independence, and was murdered sometime between that date and 20th November, when his body was discovered in Bearna. His funeral drew national and international attention, and became a focal point for expressing anger against crown force brutality. On 22nd November 1920 his reposal took place in St Joseph's Church, where his body was laid out in the sacristy. His Requiem Mass took place in Loughrea Cathedral on 24th November 1920. His grave is located in the grounds of Loughrea Cathedral. As part of the centenary, an exhibition is on display in Gorteen Church, Ballymacward, from where Fr Griffin originally came.



Examples of Online Ministry

Since the start of Covid-19 restrictions, parishes across the country have sought new ways of ministering. Reflecting St Paul's instruction to Timothy to "preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Tim. 4: 2), the new normal presents challenges and possibilities to priests and pastoral workers.

Each parish is different, and what works in one place may not be easily replicated somewhere else. That being said, some initiatives in the Cathedral may be of interest to you. This time last year we introduced a Taizé Holy Hour. The format for the holy hour is very simple. Each Monday evening the blessed sacrament is exposed and the sanctuary is decorated with candles. The Cathedral lights are dimmed to create an atmosphere, and a CD of Taizé chant is used for background music. Three to four reflections are read during the hour, and it concludes with Benediction.

The Taizé Holy Hour initially enjoyed modest success: approximately 40 people attended weekly. However, it has come into its own since the lockdown. Using two pods, 60 people now attend it regularly, but the main following is online. The service is streamed live each week, and at least 1,000 people watch it. Some weeks we can have up to 2,000 followers. We have received very positive feedback from people, especially from people who are still too anxious to attend liturgies. The streamed holy hour is very easy to organize.



Getting the right sacred music is important. We tried a number of styles, including Gregorian chant, but Taizé chant was what resonated best with people. It keeps people mentally and emotionally engaged with the adoration and reflections. If you decide to do something like this in your own parish, be sure to have copyright on the CD, especially if you are going

to stream the service. *Laudate*, a Taizé CD produced by Veritas and the Archdiocese of Dublin, has an open copyright, and is what we use in the Cathedral.

The Cathedral also introduced a podcast series on the Irish Catechism for Adults, produced by the Irish Bishops' Conference. The podcasts are still available on the Cathedral website and Facebook page, and the diocesan website. Each podcast attracted 40 to 60 listeners, most of whom were our own parishioners. Producing this podcast was the biggest learning curve for us. The best lesson learnt from producing the series, and the other streamed services, is that people like to hear their own priest and see their local church, especially if they are in lockdown. The effort invested in producing a podcast may not produce the next Fulton Sheen or Robert Barron, but it will be listened to locally.

You may decide to produce a series for people in your parish preparing for the sacraments. Here are some tips: get someone in your parish who can look after the technical side of things. Each podcast should be six to seven minutes – anything longer than seven minutes puts people off. Do not *ad lib* the content! The text must be prepared in advance of recording. I found that it took me around two hours to write and edit six minutes' worth of material. You do not need to buy specialized equipment. The Cathedral podcasts were recorded on an iPhone.

Finally, be conscious of the fact that your words, once streamed, are out there for all to hear. Horace once said: *vox audita perit litera scripta manet*. [The spoken word vanishes, the written word remains.] That's not entirely true anymore.

*Fr Martin Whelan
Galway Cathedral*



Social Media Guidelines

The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more St Paul's exclamation: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel'. (1 Cor 9:16)
 — Pope Benedict XVI, 44th World Communications Day message (2010)



We are all becoming universal communicators as our online presence reaches across the world. Social media is faster, cheaper and more widely available than any other means of communication. The most commonly used platforms are websites, blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and YouTube channels. All these provide opportunities to invite people to events, share the life of your parish, and encourage people to pray, reflect, and stay in touch. However, it's important to think about how we can best communicate in this way and to manage the risks which can arise. Confidentiality, safeguarding, separation of personal and parish boundaries, and internet security are all issues which play a major role in social media use. The diocese is presently drafting guidelines to help parishes operate successfully online: these guidelines will be adopted by the Western Province.

Dr Darina McCarthy, Diocesan Office

The Galway Regional Marriage Tribunal's work is primarily focused on helping people whose marriage has broken down irretrievably and who are seeking a 'Decree of Nullity' (often referred to as a 'marriage annulment') in the Church. The process involves gathering the testimonies of the parties, along with their nominated witnesses, before the matter is judged by the Tribunal.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the work of the Tribunal but it has not completely stopped our work. As the office of the Tribunal at 7 Waterside, Woodquay, is small, it is not safe to conduct interviews in person at present. This has forced us to adapt to the current situation in a similar manner to the civil courts, namely by providing people with the opportunity to speak with Tribunal personnel via video link.

Although this method is not ideal, one of the benefits to those seeking an annulment is that it actually is making it easier for people to give their testimony as they do not have to travel. It has taken some time to develop new protocols in line with canon law and data protection regulations, but I'm glad to report that so far the feedback has been positive.



While the office is closed to the public, we continue to be available to clergy and parishioners via telephone or email. If you, or someone you know, has questions about seeking an annulment or about getting married in the church after having already been married in a civil ceremony, please tel. 091565179 or email 7waterside@eircom.net.

Fr Barry Horan, Judicial Vicar

Church Choirs and COVID-19

The last seven months have been very difficult, not least for church choirs, which have been unable to take their rightful place at the heart of community worship. While individual cantors and organists around the country have played heroic roles in leading liturgical music in both the presence and the absence of congregations, choir groups have found themselves unprecedentedly unable to play their part. Schools, universities and other institutions are returning in one form or another; but there is still not much in the way of good news for choirs. Choral groups can consider a return to singing when their area is at Level 2, but only where it is possible to do so in a controlled environment which allows for good ventilation, strict hygiene and a minimum of 2m social distancing, and only after a risk assessment has been carried out (more below).

Under the national framework *Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19*,¹ the guidelines which apply to church choirs are those under the headings *Organised indoor gatherings* and *Religious services*. Anyone considering a return to choir gatherings (which is possible only at Level 2 or below) should read this material carefully. In particular, the HSE guidance document for religious services says the following about choirs and music groups:

*Performance and practice by choirs and musical ensembles has been associated with spread of COVID-19. The importance of choirs and musical ensembles within the faith tradition should be considered carefully. If groups practice and perform it should be with very careful adherence to social distance and hand hygiene and an awareness of the potential risk in particular for vulnerable members.*²

Previous government guidance also says:

*Due to additional risks of spreading the virus linked to choir rehearsals and the playing of wind musical instruments (trumpets, trombones, flutes and so on), extra precautions are advised for groups involving these. Practice, teaching and performance should be outdoors if possible and with strict adherence to 2 metre physical distancing advice. Additional protective measures such as screens, instrument covers and face coverings may be used to help reduce the risk further for those taking part in these activities.*³

1 <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/resilience-recovery-2020-2021-plan-for-living-with-covid-19/>

2 HSE: COVID-19 Guidance for Religious Services, v2.1, p. 9

3 <https://www.theatreforum.ie/forum-notice/reopening-arts-centres-guidelines/>

According to clarification obtained from the government by Sing Ireland and published recently on its website,⁴ this guidance still stands; furthermore, choirs considering a return to singing must take individual responsibility for doing so safely, and must appoint an officer to carry out a risk assessment. Sing Ireland has published a sample risk assessment document which is a good starting-point.⁵

It should be remembered also that the Level 2 limit of 50 people at religious services must include the members of the choir, unless the choir sings from an area which is well isolated from the rest of the church and has an entrance separate to that serving the congregation.

COVID-19 is a highly communicable disease, and its long incubation period means that an infected person can easily pass it on to many others before realising that they have it. The fact that it can be transmitted by aerosol has obvious serious implications for choirs. There is a salutary lesson to be learned from the experience of the Skagit Valley Chorale in Washington, USA, where a single symptomatic person infected 53 of the 61 choir members attending rehearsal on 10 March (of whom two subsequently died): the case study published in an academic paper on this event makes for sobering reading.⁶

As singing groups, we have a duty of care – both legal and moral – to each other and to the faith communities which we serve, and so it is only in the light of a comprehensive risk assessment that we can make any decision on returning to singing.

Ray O'Donnell, Diocesan Director of Music



4 <https://www.singireland.ie/covid-19/sing-ireland-update-16-09-20>

5 <https://www.singireland.ie/content/files/Risk-Assessment-Questions-August-2020.pdf>

6 <https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/articles/n583xw008>



Links with Ethiopia

The Diocese of Galway enjoys links with the Catholic parish of Mekelle in Northern Ethiopia. Mekelle is a city of over 200,000 residents, and is the capital of the province of Tigray. Even though only 1% of the population is Catholic, the Catholic Church has an important role in providing education and health care. The parish priest of Mekelle, Fr Teum Berhe, worked in the Galway Diocese some years ago. Recently, he took part in a Interreligious Council for the city of Mekelle, which brought religious leaders together to help fight the Covid-19 virus.



Left: The Catholic church in Mekelle, Northern Ethiopia.

Above right: Fr Teum Berhe

Below: Interreligious Council, Mekelle 2020



Trócaire's Work Overseas: Facing the Challenges of Covid-19

Last year Trócaire supported 2.5 million people in 27 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Since 2018, volunteers from Trócaire in Galway have raised awareness and campaigned on global justice. They were busy speaking on behalf of Trócaire in parishes throughout the diocese when Covid-19 put a stop to all this. The Covid crisis has changed how we work here in Galway, having to communicate and reach out to people online; but it has also profoundly changed Trócaire's work overseas. Over recent months, our programmes have rapidly shifted to helping to stop the spread of the virus in countries that lack the most basic medical infrastructure to deal with an outbreak.



The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo are facing huge challenges. They have suffered conflict, violence, hunger, and devastating outbreaks of ebola and measles in recent years. In many villages, people do not have access to clean water, and the way of life is often based around marketplaces, large gatherings, and places of worship. They are now facing the challenge of Covid-19 and having to wash hands, wear masks and keep a social distance. To help prevent the spread of Covid-19, Trócaire is providing hand-washing stations, toilets, showers, and access to clean running water. We are also educating people with messaging through local radio stations, training sessions, and brochures, posters, and information leaflets for communities in

local languages. Thanks to all our loyal supporters, you continue to play a vital role in the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable.

If you would like to hear more about Trócaire's work or are keen to volunteer, please contact Marie-Anne at marianne.michel@trocaire.org or by phone on 091 392 791.

Our visit to India (2019)

Helen Mullarkey, Moycullen Parish

I first got involved with the Hope Foundation in 2016 when I took part in The Hope Foundation Himalayan walk. In November of last year, my husband, John, and I went with them to Kolkata, India.

The Hope Foundation is a registered charity set up in 1999 by Maureen Forrest to work with street and slum children in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India. They work to free children and poor families from lives of pain, abuse, and poverty. The Foundation operates over 60 projects specializing in child protection, healthcare, life skills, and education. Their vision is very simple: to have a world where it should never hurt to be a child.

Children living on the streets of Kolkata are exposed to horrendous physical and sexual abuse. Those who survive are left to fend for themselves, with no promise of a safe future. They are forced to work from as young as five years of age to earn money for food and have no chance of a proper education; they are simply stuck in a cycle of poverty with no way out. The Hope Foundation is working continuously to break this cycle. They achieve this through fundraising activities and initiatives, here in Ireland, England, Germany and the U.S.

My first impression on stepping outside Kolkata airport was the deafening noise from the volume of people and the continuous sounding of horns from relentless heavy traffic, traffic which seems to have no road-using laws. It's a free for all. The journey to our hotel is when you start to see the poverty, but this poverty was on a different level. You see people who own no more than what they are wearing, children sleeping on cardboard boxes, barefoot with a sheet of plastic to shield them from the weather: this is what they call home. The shocking reality is that there appears to be no end, just street after street of these makeshift shelters.

The majority of our time in Kolkata was spent visiting the many children's protection homes run by the Hope Foundation. We engaged in different activities with the children like play, dancing, singing, etc., and spent time talking to them about Ireland and our different culture. The time we spent in each protection home was precious to both the children and ourselves, and it was truly a magical experience seeing how happy those children are and knowing their lives really have been changed as they now have a brighter future.



We visited the Hope Foundation Hospital which was set up in 2008 by a Weight-Watcher group in Dublin. The equipment for the hospital has been donated by private companies from Ireland, England and Germany. The hospital has just undergone an extension last year which increased the ICU department from 4 beds to 10. We came across some heart-breaking stories, such as a 14-day-old baby boy who was abandoned because his mother had died and his father was an alcoholic. Now he has a real chance in life through the Hope Foundation.

The Foundation also runs a Night Mobile Medical Service, set up in April 2017. The Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance patrols high-risk areas every night and provides immediate medical treatment for destitute women and children in crisis and dangerous situations on the streets. We had the opportunity to go out with the ambulance one night and again saw the dire living conditions of families living under bridges and busy city centre over-passes. Entire communities lived here, with each family trying to get the best spot for shelter and some sense of security. That night as the volunteers were handing out some basic clothes and bedding, a fight broke out

between two mothers for these basic supplies, and we witnessed just how desperate these people are. I chatted with quite a number of young girls living on the streets who were forced to get married at the age of 14 years old and had children of their own. While out on the night ambulance I was overwhelmed at how upbeat the street people were and the welcome we received from each one of them.

Even though the problems are big, the Hope Foundation is really making a difference. Since my first trip in 2016 it's so refreshing and reassuring to see the new projects and the positive effects they have on the children. Even at a young age with education you can see that it empowers them, when you talk to the children, they want to be the future teachers, nurses and doctors; their ambition is a delight to see. It shows where you can create happiness, it gives hope.

Finally, and most importantly, none of this would be possible without the help and support of the general public. Through all our fundraising such as the bag-packs, church gate collections, cake sales etc., the generosity of the Galway parishes is really



humbling. On behalf of myself, John and the Hope Foundation, a big thank you from our hearts! We had hoped to return to Kolkata again soon, however given the current pandemic we may have to wait some time.

For further information on the Hope Foundation visit: <https://www.hopefoundation.ie>

Opening the Garden of Remembrance Church of the Resurrection, Ballinfoyle

On Saturday 3rd October an extension to our Garden of Remembrance, which was created by Colie Sweeney and his family at the back of the church, was officially blessed by Fr Tony Horgan MSC PP and opened by Éamon Ó Cuív T.D. There was a small gathering for the occasion, including Colie himself, his family and a number of parishioners, in accordance with Covid regulations.



This garden, initially created by former parish priest Fr Kevin Blade MSC, was set up as a place to remember our loved ones, where people could come and plant a rose. Its extension now is due to the enormous efforts of the Sweeney family members during lockdown. The garden begins at the entrance to Ballinfoyle Park with an embankment of a variety of bushes and flowers and a place to sit and meditate, alongside which there is a walkway with strategically placed statues of Mary, Our Blessed Mother.

This is a place to come and pray, to remember and even plant a flower bulb in memory of our loved ones in anticipation of the month of November, when we

officially remember our beloved dead. Over the past few years many people have commented on how well the grounds around the church have been kept. In recent times the church won an award from the Galway City and Tidy Towns Garden Competition. It has always been a priority for us as a parish to keep the area surrounding our church as tidy as possible. Our new addition to the Garden of Remembrance will further enhance the enjoyment of our parish grounds for both parishioners and the community in general.

'Goodbye' from P.J. Callanan, retiring Diocesan Education Officer

I had the great good fortune to be chosen by the very foreseeing Bishop McLoughlin in 2003 to be the first lay Education Secretary in Galway diocese. It was a time when more and more onerous duties were being heaped on schools. Chairpersons and treasurers needed guidance, so training sessions had to be arranged especially for them but also for the remaining Board members. As years passed there was training for assessors for service on interview boards, for child protection, for GDPR (data protection), and for the new admissions policy. Despite the growing burden, our chairpersons successfully managed their Boards for the benefit of the pupils. It pained me when there were disputes between teachers, but thankfully these were very few in my time. On the other hand, it was a pleasure to be able to reposition teachers who were unable to cope for various reasons. Disputes can often be avoided simply by saying the little word 'Sorry' at the start. Boards should always be aware that they are entrusted with the duty and the privilege of promoting the Catholic ethos. All in all, it was a wonderful privilege for me to be in a position to support so many Boards and to make so many friendships. I am grateful to you all.

'Hello' from Patrick Kelly, newly-appointed Education Co-Ordinator

In these difficult times we must concentrate on including – as Jesus did – instead of excluding, which he never did!

The Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora has 85 Catholic primary schools. Each is unique in its own way, and it is only on visiting multiple schools that I realised this fact. This is because of the unique people, teachers and pupils who inhabit them.

Catholic schools are held in high esteem all over the world. What are people looking for who want their children to attend the local Catholic school? The ethos of the Catholic school means the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person is crucial. This development is only possible when there is a living relationship with God and with other people.

In Ireland because of the ubiquitous nature of Catholic schools we have largely forgotten the benefits they have bestowed on our people, our economy and our wellbeing as a nation.

Teachers and in particular teaching principals are extremely busy. Covid-19 has meant the schools have become even busier with constant cleaning, care and extra work! As an ex-principal teacher, I was amazed during the summer holidays at the amount of work I witnessed in the two schools of which I am Chairperson of the Board.

Principals bear most of the burden and are held responsible within their communities for the upkeep and welfare of the local school. From time to time things may be forgotten in the hustle and bustle but thankfully our Catholic ethos is ever present!

The work of the Diocesan Education Co-ordinator involves supporting our Patron Bishop and the local priests in managing the local schools. I also see the role as supporting the schools in their day-to-day activities. I hope I can eventually visit all 85 schools in the diocese and continue the good work of my esteemed predecessor, P.J. Callanan. P.J. has been a lifelong friend, colleague, mentor, coach and leader to my colleagues and me in the Craughwell community. I know I will never live up to his standards, rather I expect to be a temporary caretaker.

Please feel free to contact me. My email is education@galwaydiocese.ie

Fratelli Tutti

Pope Francis promulgated this social encyclical on universal fraternity, *Fratelli Tutti*, on the feast of St Francis of Assisi, 4th October. A review of the encyclical by Christopher Lamb in the *Tablet* has declared it to one of the three most important documents of Francis' pontificate, the others being *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'*. The springboard for this social encyclical on universal fraternity was the joint statement, *On Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, signed by Francis and the Grand Imam of Abu Dhabi, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb last year. However, do not be misled into thinking that *Fratelli Tutti* is a mere extension of this earlier document, and a simple call for global friendship.

Fratelli Tutti is a serious theological document, and it is not an easy read. It is obvious that Francis has drawn on the assistance of many theologians in writing this encyclical. The bibliography is impressive, drawing on scripture, patristics, and the whole corpus of Catholic social teaching. I was impressed by Francis' reference to St Augustine's argument against the death penalty in paragraph 254; an argument I had never come across before, and very progressive.



The encyclical begins with the question; what does it mean for humanity to be all children of the one God? This simple question opens up a whole universe of ethical thinking on issues as diverse as migration, social integration, racism, free-market economics, refugees, property rights, politics, just war, and social media. This review can in no way do justice to the depth of the document. Francis draws upon the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas to emphasise people's duty of care towards refugees. Thomas maintained that the earth is the common heritage of all humanity. Therefore, there is no absolute right to private property. Whereas people have a right to property which has been developed and earned through personal effort, no nation can claim that a country or territory belongs exclusively to them.

If we truly belong to a universal human family then we have no right to refuse asylum to refugees. Refugees have a natural right to be received in host countries where they can be safe. Francis himself acknowledges how radical this view is, but he also acknowledges that politicians and community leaders can facilitate the right to asylum with due consideration to established communities and resources. The Good Samaritan is the paradigm Francis invokes for universal fraternity. The Good Samaritan is one who sacrifices his money, safety, time, and reputation to help his brother on the side of the road.

Francis addresses the "dark clouds" that have compromised universal fraternity. He criticises the cocooning effect of social media, where people only listen to opinions they agree with. He also addresses the cheapening of political discourse where strategies of "ridicule, suspicion, and relentless criticism" are used to manipulate and radicalise people. Francis calls politicians to the highest standards of leadership for the sake of the common good. Chapter 5 is inspiring reading for any sincere politician or community leader, where Francis says that charities may support the needy, but good politics creates jobs, which are essential for securing human dignity.

Ultimately, the whole document is driven by a concern for human dignity. This is the essential motivation for universal fraternity, the transcendent dignity of the human person as a child of God. Francis is passionate about the need for universal fraternity. Unfortunately, he says that he can see, at this time, the conditions for major wars in the not-too-distant future. Indeed, he labels current conflicts as a new War World, fought piecemeal. As an antidote to this crisis, Francis gives examples of heroes who can still inspire universal fraternity: Martin Luther King, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Mahatma Gandhi. However, he gives special mention to Blessed Charles de Foucauld, a Catholic monk who lived among the Muslim Tuareg people in Algeria. Blessed Charles did not seek to convert the Tuareg, but simply lived in peace with them until he was martyred by radicals in 1916. His memory as a holy man of God is still honoured by the Muslim Tuareg to this day. Francis concludes that all Christians, like Blessed Charles de Foucauld, can shine as a light for the nations in leading the way toward universal fraternity.

*Fr Martin Whelan
Galway Cathedral*

Scripturae Sacrae Affectus

On 30th September 2020, Pope Francis published his apostolic letter on Sacred Scripture: *Scripturae Sacrae Affectus* (devotion to Sacred Scripture). The letter was written to commemorate the 1600th anniversary of St Jerome. St Jerome is a giant in the history of biblical scholarship. He produced the first critical volume of the bible in Latin, known as the Vulgate. However, his real contribution was in setting the standard for biblical research: engaging with original texts, mastering the original languages, and applying the academic rules of hermeneutics in order to arrive at the true meaning of the text. This final point is particularly important. There are two extremes in reading scripture. The first involves taking everything literally. This can lead to some ridiculous and even dangerous applications of scripture. The second extreme approach involves reading scripture without any concern for objective truth. Francis shows how St Jerome used all the intellectual tools available to him to read and understand the scriptures with the mind of Christ.

One can view the apostolic letter as consisting of three parts. The first part gives a synopsis of the life of St Jerome, from his birth in Dalmatia, to his academic career in Rome, to his time as a monk in France, and his final years as a hermit and independent scholar in Bethlehem. The second

part explains St Jerome's unique contribution to the science of biblical scholarship. The final part explores the essential place of scripture in the life of all Christians. No aspect of our faith can be understood without reference to the scriptures. For St Jerome, reading and understanding the scriptures was the very same as receiving the Body of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. St Jerome saw no difference between the sacraments and the scriptures, for both come from God, and both bring us into communion with God. This is the critical point of the apostolic letter. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, many people are denied access to the sacraments. However, this loss can be compensated by a wholesome engagement with the scriptures. Francis quotes St Jerome, "for me the Gospel is the Body of Christ ... Christ's Body and Blood are truly the Word of Scripture, God's teaching". Of course, sacred scripture can be difficult for people to comprehend. This is why Francis calls upon people to engage with the various resources that help them understand scripture. Francis calls upon bishops, priests, and all in ministry to provide people with the resources they need to be nourished by the scriptures.

The full text for *Scripturae Sacrae Affectus* is available on the diocesan website.

Fr Martin Whelan, Galway Cathedral



Congratulations to Fr Martin!

Fr Martin Whelan, Diocesan Secretary and curate in Galway Cathedral, recently completed his Master's in canon law (Juris Canonici Licentiatius), and the office staff shared a celebratory cake to mark the occasion.

Fr Martin studied at Leuven University in Belgium, which has had a Faculty of Canon Law for almost 600 years. It provides opportunities for distance learning blended with intense attendance periods, and has a large number of international students. Fr Martin was able to study while carrying out his usual work duties.



COPE Galway

Let's help together

COPE Galway is a local charity with a vision of an improved quality of life, in a home of their own, for people affected by homelessness, women and children experiencing domestic abuse, and older people. We work together with community partners, groups, businesses and individuals, to help some of the most vulnerable and isolated men, women and children in Galway.

Homeless Services for individuals and families — Domestic Abuse Service for women and children — Senior Support Services for older people in need of support

Advocating on behalf of our clients is a key aspect of what we do. COPE Galway advocates for policy and social change on across a range of issues at local and national levels, including improved access to housing and accommodation, access to benefits and entitlements, and contributing towards debate and dialogue.

Visit www.copegalway.ie



Trocaire

Working for a just world.

Get Involved — Together we can create a just world. There are many ways to show your support for people affected by poverty and injustice.

See www.trocaire.org



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