



33rd Sunday Ordinary Time – 17 November 2024

I TICKED THE BOX FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC



On Sunday April 3rd, 2022, I was one of the 3.5 million Irish people who ticked a box marked “Roman Catholic” on an official census form. I don’t remember filling the form out. I probably didn’t think much of it. It was April: exam season was around the corner and I probably didn’t feel like doing the internal work needed to interrogate my religious beliefs. I did what I have been conditioned to do, growing up in Ireland. I ticked “Roman Catholic” and moved on with

my life. Almost 70 per cent of the people in Ireland claimed to be Catholic on their census forms back in 2022. This number seems impossible. How can more than two-thirds of the country claim to be Catholic when the Church in Ireland is battling dwindling attendances, a reduction in the number of dioceses and a crippling lack of vocations? The maths doesn’t add up. The answer is simple: people like me are the problem. I am part of what I would call Ireland’s “culturally Catholic” generation. I was born at the end of the 1990s and grew up in a country that was completely distinct from the Ireland of the previous millennium. Between the Celtic Tiger, the rise of neoliberalism, the advent of the internet and the unprecedented economic crisis of 2008, a huge amount changed in a few short years. While these cultural factors certainly influenced my childhood, I believe that my peers and I have been most shaped by the fact that we grew up in the wake of the Catholic Church abuse scandal. Whereas generations of people in Ireland had been connected by their shared faith, their shared commitment to the Church and their shared Christian values, I was raised in a state of semi-secular disconnect. My parents, like most of their peers, recoiled from the Church after the scandal broke. The tether that connected my family to the Catholic Church broke and nothing else took its place. As such, we never stopped “being” Catholic despite the fact we stopped attending church, praying, reading scripture or essentially acting like Christians in any meaningful way. This experience, unfortunately, is the rule rather than the exception among my peers. This upbringing has left me in a strange state of limbo. I don’t feel like a Christian but I know how I am supposed to act in church; I know when to stand, when to kneel, what to say and how to dress. I’ve been conditioned to be comfortable in church but I’ve never been taught to take religion seriously. Ireland’s primary schools, institutions that claim to be couched in the values of the Catholic Church, teach children how to “be” Christian in the broadest sense. My peers and I were taught how to create the appearance of faith and devotion without ever being encouraged to connect meaningfully with this faith. Religion was part of the curriculum. You learned the stories, you practised the lines and you sang the songs. You did all this not out of devotion or passion but because it was part of your homework. This has led to me developing a strange relationship with lived religion. Going to church, attending Mass or engaging with the Catholic Church in any meaningful way has always felt, to me, like acting. Since I was a kid, I have been taught how I should perform. Over years of dedicated practice, I committed my lines to memory. My choreography: excellent. Everyone knows that my sign of the cross was crisp and convincing. Attending Mass, for me, was like taking part in a local theatre production, one that takes place weekend after weekend. During adolescence, I enjoyed the thrill of these feelings, this deceit. I was above the shackles of organised religion and by making the movements of faith convincingly, I was fooling those around me; Catholicism was silly, it was frivolous and mockable. Mass was boring and priests were worthy of ridicule (I was old enough to have learned about the horrors that had taken place in schools like the one I attended). The older I got, the more I performed and the more I performed, the more convincing my performances became. I wish I could say that the more time I spent in Mass, the less cultural my Catholicism became or that my story includes a moment of transcendent revelation. It doesn’t. In fact, I’ve stopped attending Mass. I’ve stopped going to church altogether. I spent this last year pursuing a Master’s degree in Theology, an experience which surrounded me with incredible people, Christians with rich faith and a deep connection to God. Their earnest and authentic faith was inspiring to see and convinced me of one thing: I am not a Catholic. And, if we’re being honest, most of the people who ticked the box marked “Roman Catholic” in 2022 aren’t either.

*Courtesy Alex Connolly a recent graduate from Trinity College
& The Irish Times*

Remembered this Weekend

Thomas Grendan (21st A)
Mary Seale (14th A) & husband
James Seale
Mary, Henry Molloy Sr & Jr
P.J., Helen Macken
Patricia, William Ryan
Patricia & Michael Daniels
Anthony Malone (11th A) &
Margaret Malone
Malcolm Dixon (23rd A)
Carmel Mennella
Brigid Gannon
John Fitzpatrick



Christmas Services

The timetable for Christmas Services in James’s Street, Meath Street, Francis Street and John’s Lane is available at the back of the church. Some of the Services will be shared between parishes. Download [here](#)



Christmas Tree Cornmarket

On Tuesday 26 November @ 6pm the Christmas Tree Lights will be switched on by Cllr. Michael Pigdeon on behalf of the Lord Mayor James Geoghegan. All are welcome to attend.



Culwick Choral Society

Wed 27th November 8pm St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Christmas choral music from the time of Jonathan Swift along with contemporary pieces. Special guests: St. Patrick’s Cathedral Girls Choir. PS Fr. Colin is a member of the Choral Society.



AWARE

If you or those with whom you work wish to connect with people in relation to your mental wellbeing, consider using Aware’s phone-in and Zoom support and self-care groups, support line or support mail. For more info www.aware.ie

33rd SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

As we begin our celebration, rejoicing in the Lord, let us remember God's hopes for us.

You challenge us to let our light shine.
Lord have mercy

You challenge us to be the salt of the earth.
Christ have mercy

You challenge us to share our bread with the hungry and shelter the homeless poor.
Lord have mercy

May our loving and creative Lord, give us confidence in his generosity and mercy, forgive us our sin and bring us to life everlasting. Amen

Daniel 12:1-3

At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds," he also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Alleluia, Alleluia
Stay awake, and stand ready, because you do not know the hour when the Son of Man is coming. Alleluia

Mark 13:24-32

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from

heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Prayer of the Faithful

Father, Son and Spirit, you bless us with the gift of life. Praise be to you. Lord hear us

Lord, help us to use our lives for the good of others but especially those suffering because of poverty, hunger and violence. Lord hear us

We call to mind all those who have died, and all who mourn for them. May we find hope and consolation as we look to the time when we will be united again in the Heart of God. Lord hear us

Each day, Lord, you grant us opportunities to live our lives to the full. Help us to realise that even the difficulties and challenges of life can be an opportunity. Lord hear us

Lord, make us hopeful, in the face of hatred, violence and war. Give us courage to challenge the world to abandon that way of living. Lord hear us

In quiet, we put aside our own needs and remember all who need our Prayer and Support.....Lord hear us



Reflection

"Calamities can bring growth and Enlightenment", said the Master. And he explained it thus: "Each day a bird would shelter in the withered branches of a tree that stood in the middle of a vast deserted plain. One day a whirlwind uprooted the tree, forcing the poor bird to fly a hundred miles in search of shelter—till it finally came to a forest of fruit-laden trees." And he concluded: "If the withered tree had survived, nothing would have induced the bird to give up its security and fly.

'One Minute Wisdom' by Anthony De Mello