

Personal Update

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Dear Friend of Family & Life,

Let's begin with Pope Leo XIV who is the first pope to address the full parliament of Spain.

He began his week-long visit to Spain, flying to Madrid on June 6. On June 7 in the city of Madrid, he celebrated the feast of Corpus Christi with a solemn Mass and a Eucharist procession, attended by 1.6 million people in the Plaza de Cibeles.

On June 8, Pope Leo addressed the joint session of the Congress of Deputies and the Senate in the Spanish Parliament. His fluent grasp of Spanish must have immediately pleased his audience, who gave him a seven-minute ovation at the close of his address.

He challenged the legislators with this question: "Every legislative task ultimately confronts a decisive question: what conception of the human person inspires laws, and what kind of society do those laws build?" As Pope Leo said in Spain, "Can a community that casts into the shadows the unborn child, the elderly, the sick, those who suffer in silence, or those who depend entirely on the care of others be called fully just?" He spoke of human dignity, which "cannot be subordinated to shifting social consensus or majority opinion", recalling Pope Benedict's address to the British Parliament in 2011.

Pope Leo was well aware of the hostility of Spain's governing party. Since 2018, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party led by Pedro Sanchez has governed Spain, and is without doubt a party which has never changed its opposition to the Catholic Church since it was

founded in 1879. It has followed a Marxist agenda, based on economic utilitarianism, legislating for abortion, gender identity, same-sex marriage and assisted suicide. In other words, it does not recognise the sacred nature of man, created in the image and likeness of God.

The Pope warned Spanish parliamentarians against the “throwaway culture” and, with considerable courage and charity, brought together the unborn, the elderly, the sick and the migrant within a single account of human dignity.

On the same day, the Pope met six victims of abuse, committed “by members of the clergy and the Church”. During the hour-long meeting, he listened to their “painful personal experience” and their proposals to make the Church’s response to such scandals more effective. In his own words, “Every wounded person must be able to find sincere listening, welcome, protection, and real paths to healing.”

Fulfilling Gaudi’s Dream

On June 10, the Pope consecrated the Sagrada Familia Basilica in the city of Barcelona. After 144 years of construction, the Cross on the central Jesus Christ Tower reached the height of 172.5 metres (566 feet), making it the world’s tallest church. It is also a hundred years since its architect, Antoni Gaudi, died after been hit by a tram on his way to pray at a local church. The cause for sainthood of “God’s architect” is proceeding in Rome where he has been declared “venerable”.

During the Spanish civil war, Gaudi’s drawings and designs were destroyed, leaving future architects with serious problems. Yet with fragments of documents and drawings as well as the collective experience of dedicated workers, the project continued. This year was the expected date to complete the buildings, but thanks to the Covid-19 emergency which stopped the flow of visitors and halted the building’s construction, there still remains work to be completed by about 2035. The basilica with its 18 towers is the most visited church in Spain, and has mainly relied on the entrance fee to find the money to pay the builders. In 2025, nearly five million people from near and far visited the church.

Pope Leo’s visit to the Canary Islands was focused on the thousands of migrants who make the 10-day boat journey from West Africa to the port of Gran Canaria; many died on the voyage, while others suffer from criminal assaults and thievery. The Pope pray at the dock with and for migrants, denouncing human trafficking, especially of women and children. “Repent while there is still time”, he said, “for God’s mercy can reach even the most hardened sinner, but it enters only through the narrow gate of truth, justice, and conversion.”

F & L Supporters: Your Impact in Washington, D.C.

Dear Pro-life Friend of Family & Life,

Thanks to your generosity, a strong, pro-life delegation travelled to Washington D.C. from Ireland last March, and ensured that the truth about Ireland was heard at the highest level. This was not a social call or a courtesy visit. It was a focused and planned engagement with senior policymakers, their advisers, and influential organisations who are shaping opinion and policy across the American world.

Representing you and me were Deputies Carol Nolan and Ken O’Flynn, two of the most consistent pro-life voices in Dáil Eireann, joined by two experienced Northern Ireland representatives.

Speaking truth into power

The week began with a meeting with the America First Policy Institute, where the delegation outlined the real situation in Ireland, particularly on immigration, free speech, and the erosion of Christian values. These were frank discussions, and American counterparts listened carefully to what we said.

At the Conservative Working Group on Capitol Hill, the delegation addressed Senate staff on the growing challenges facing pro-life advocacy, restrictions on free expression, and the cultural direction of Ireland. Deputies Nolan and O’Flynn spoke about:

- The ongoing reality of Ireland’s abortion regime,
- The chilling effect of buffer zone laws on even peaceful and silent prayer,
- The increasing pressure on those who speak out on matters of conscience.

The discussions with the audience were serious and substantive, with clear concern expressed and proposals offered to tackle some of these problems.

A key highlight of the visit was the meeting with the Senate Values Action Team, hosted by Senator Katie Britt, in a room filled with Senate staff and delegates of leading political organisations like the Heritage Foundation and Susan B. Anthony List. For many in the room, this was the first time hearing such a clear and unfiltered account of what is happening in Ireland.

A voice that could not be ignored

One of Family & Life’s delegation was Ryan Casey. His presence brought particular weight to this meeting. His experience and advocacy of issues of justice, accountability, and community safety added a deeply personal dimension to the discussions about immigration, law enforcement, and the protection of ordinary citizens. His contribution ensured that these issues were not discussed in abstract terms, but grounded in real-life consequences, something that resonated strongly with those listening.

Building relationships that matter

Alongside formal meetings, the delegation attended a number of key events where connections were made with senior American political figures.

At a private reception in Washington, attended by representatives from across political and policy circles, meaningful conversations took place about the challenges faced in Ireland, including lessons from past referendums and plans for the future.

A Speaker’s Lunch, otherwise known as the Friends of Ireland Luncheon, was hosted by senior U.S. political leaders, and provided further opportunities to engage directly with decision-makers in an informal setting. Such moments are critical. They build trust, open doors, and create the friendships that lead to real progress in the future.

At the heart of power

The delegation also attended the White House St Patrick’s Day event, where they heard President Trump’s address for the Day, and met with senior officials, including the Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy.

While many Irish representatives attend such events, your delegation ensured that they did more than simply observe, they engaged. They spoke. They made sure that pro-life,

pro-family, and pro-freedom issues were part of the conversation at the very centre of political power.

Strategic engagement behind the scenes

Throughout the week, members of the delegation briefed senior members of the administration on the Irish Government's position on abortion as well as other issues of concern. A common response of these senior officials was their amazement at how far Ireland and Europe has travelled down the road of dismantling freedoms, which they see as central to a functioning and free society. European and Christian values have been systematically eroded, and as Vice President Vance's speech at Munich in 2025 made clear, the US sees this trend as the undermining of stability and cultural cohesion across Europe.

The Crisis in Our Classrooms

Dear readers, as we survey the state of schooling across these islands in 2026, a troubling picture emerges. What do we see? Gross Misbehaviour, Teacher Shortages, and the Erosion of Education in the UK and Ireland. Classrooms, once places of order where teachers were respected, if not feared, have too often become arenas of disruption, where persistent misbehaviour undermines the interaction of teaching and learning, and drives dedicated teachers out of the profession. Teacher shortages are acute, particularly in Ireland where one in five second-level schools has dropped subjects due to unfilled vacancies, and in England where vacancies, though fluctuating, remain stubbornly high amid record suspensions of children from the age of six upwards.

This is no mere administrative hiccup. Schools exist to transmit knowledge, encourage thinking, instil virtue, and prepare the young for responsible adulthood. When chaos reigns and those called to teach flee in exhaustion, the very purpose of education is thwarted. We cannot allow this to continue.

Roots of the Disorder since 1970

The decline did not begin yesterday. The cultural upheavals of the late 1960s and 1970s — the rejection of traditional authority, the “opening to the world” that followed the Second Vatican Council and parallel shifts in secular society — reshaped education profoundly. Corporal punishment, once a clear (if sometimes blunt) instrument of order, was phased out, and fully banned in schools by the 1980s in the UK and Ireland. In its place came progressive ideals of teaching, emphasising child-centred learning, self-expression, and a reduced emphasis on external discipline.

What followed was a gradual but unmistakable erosion of the “social contract” between schools, parents, and pupils. Swayed by the liberalism and individualism of the day, many parents were unwilling to say “No” to a child, and in many cases failed to enable a child to have the social skills needed in school life. Too often both parents were happy to let a child spend the day with his smart phone or tablet but later to become a critic of teachers for invoking the rules and discipline in the school. Parents treated any evidence of physical force as the cause of a complaint, which could end a teacher's career.

The net result of these trends was the lack of preparation of children entering school. Many came to school, unable to dress themselves or use a toilet properly, unable to hold a knife and a fork at meals, and with little ability to ask a question, form a coherent sentence or take part in a discussion. Is it surprising that such children found school deeply frustrating? Parents, usually both working full-time, handed over these pre-school tasks to the teachers.

In the 1980s and 1990s, children became aware of their “rights” in the classroom, and no longer respected teachers as in the past. A rise of reports of disruptive behaviour and backchat emerged. By the new century, low-level misbehaviour — defiance, persistent talking, disrespect — had become normalised in many classrooms. The pandemic exacerbated this, but the trends predated Covid: family breakdown, absent fathers, the dominance of screens, and a therapeutic culture that often reframes misbehaviour as “unmet needs” rather than a moral failure requiring firm correction.

In Ireland and the UK, surveys consistently reveal the toll. Persistent disruptive behaviour accounts for the record number of suspensions in England. Teachers reported violence or threats monthly; many faced verbal abuse weekly. In Northern Ireland and the Republic, burnout, that quiet despair born out of chronic stress, affects over 85 percent of teachers, with workload, pupil behaviour, and lack of parental support cited as the primary drivers. In some surveys nearly half admitted thinking of leaving the profession.

The Human Cost: Teachers Driven Out

Experienced educators speak of unsustainable conditions. Excessive paperwork, administrative burdens, and the emotional labour of managing “special needs” children without adequate support compounded the chaos of unruly classrooms. One in seven secondary teachers in England has faced physical violence.

The result is a vicious cycle. Shortages lead to larger classes, non-specialist teachers, and further disruption. In Ireland, 75 percent of schools recently advertised positions with no applicants; subjects are dropped, opportunities narrowed. Pupils who wish to learn are robbed of an orderly environment. The common good of education is sacrificed to a false compassion that tolerates the intolerable.

Disadvantaged areas suffer most, widening gaps and storing up social problems in the future. The majority of the chronic disruptive children come from homes where drugs and alcohol abuse is common, and where they are the subject of verbal and physical violence. If parents think school is a waste of time, is it surprising that their children imitate their opinion?

Restoring Order: A Moral Imperative

This crisis cannot be permitted to persist. Education is not merely training to pass an exam or find a job; it is a sacred trust. As Pope St John Paul II reminded us, the young are entrusted to us for the sake of their eternal destiny as well as their temporal flourishing. A society that fails its children in the classroom, fails its own future.

Restoration demands courage. Schools must reclaim clear behavioural policies with consistent sanctions. Teachers require robust support from their leaders, the parents, and the state — including the right to teach in safety. Teacher training must once again emphasise classroom management rooted in authority and respect, not endless therapeutic interventions. Parents must be held accountable. Above all, we need a cultural recovery: the rediscovery that discipline is an act of love, that order opens the mind for truth, and that education serves the formation of the whole person in the image of God.

The evidence from history is clear. Periods of strong discipline correlated with higher attainment and social cohesion. The progressive experiment of recent decades has delivered exhausted teachers, disrupted learning, and a generation ill-equipped for life. We owe it to our young people — and to the common good — to reverse this course.

Let us pray and work for schools to be worthy of their noble vocation: places of ordered beauty where minds are illuminated, characters forged, and souls prepared for eternity. The Resurrection of Christ that we celebrate teaches us that renewal is always possible through

grace and resolute human effort. But grace builds on nature — and nature, in the classroom as elsewhere, requires structure, authority, and truth.

The current situation must not continue. Our children, and the future of these nations, depend upon it.

Addendum: A new book, available at the end of May, could not have come at a better time. *(Un)educated: My Life as a Teacher, and Why You Should Never Become One* (Constable, £22). Written by Francis Foster, the book is an account of his experience as a “supply teacher” in a London area for some years. Foster makes clear that teaching in some schools was a joy, but he knows that this is not what interests the reading public.

A supply teacher, a substitute teacher or a relief teacher describes someone who is fully qualified to teach in state schools, but, instead of being employed at one school, is on call to replace a regular teacher for a limited period in different schools. Although supply teachers are paid more per day than the regular ones, there are good reasons for this disparity. A supply teacher is trained in one or two subjects, but he never knows what subject he will be asked to teach. Some London schools are notorious for unruly pupils, all too ready to pounce on a supply teacher, having sent their regular one on an extended sickness leave.

The author found the secondary school, which looked like a prison, and he soon found that the pupils behaved liked inmates. The school secretary gave our friend a label with the word “supply” written on it. That means “kick me” to the truculent kids, who know that supply teachers are collateral damage for the school authorities, and they will suffer no consequences for bad behaviour. Foster’s expertise was English language and drama, but the secretary handed him a plan for a physics lesson, a subject about which he knew little or nothing.

The awaiting class of teenagers were well aware of such contradictions, and asked him if he was a physics teacher. When he was truthful, they ask the devastating question, “Why, if you are a drama teacher, are you teaching physics?” There is no good answer. What makes it worse is the regular teacher’s long-term absence on sick leave, and a succession of supply teachers who have come and gone, leaving the teenagers deeply resentful of the system.

Once a teacher shows any weakness, it is a signal for complete chaos. In his own words, “I did not look cool. You’re finished. The class knows it, you know it, the teaching assistant knows it, even the photocopier knows it.”

Soon after, Foster was sent to a troubled primary school. His first reaction was self-confidence; since he had managed with teenagers, why not with 10-year-olds? There’s a big difference between teaching in a primary and a secondary. In a primary school, you teach the same class of kids all day; in a secondary, if one class is “challenging”, it ends after an hour, and the next one may be more respectful.

Foster’s optimism soon evaporated like a morning mist. His class was described as “challenging” with one individual named Jaimie having “behavioural difficulties”. He had assaulted various members of the staff and terrified his own classmates, and had been allowed to get away with doing whatever he wanted.

In Foster’s own words, “I hated seeing this type of weakness from adults who should know better. It is sacrificing every other pupil’s education because you are too scared to deal with the consequences. However, the teaching staff had also been failed by the school authorities, because this type of student shouldn’t be in mainstream education. He needed to be in a special-needs school that could deal with his violent behaviour.” Foster’s experience with Jaime proved to be every bit of “challenging” as predicted, but I will leave you to read the details of his entangle with this unfortunate boy.

That episode and others soon showed Foster that teaching was not his vocation, and today he makes a living as a successful comedian, but not without lifting the veil on some of the “challenging schools of London”.

America’s 250 Years since Independence

On July 4, the United States celebrates the Declaration of Independence, the signing of which 250 years ago cut the umbilical cord with the Throne of George III, King of England and Ireland. The Continental Congress was the provisional government of 13 colonies during the American Revolutionary War, that lasted from 1774 to 1783. As the reconciliation of Great Britain and the colonies had become all but impossible, the Congress set about unifying the colonies into a new nation, organising an army under George Washington, and making the colonies an independent sovereign state by the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Read more below in *News from America*.

NEWS FROM AMERICA

[By Brendan Gleason] As we have always stated here, this column concerns itself only with President Donald Trump’s pro-life actions, policies and statements. All else, whether in domestic or foreign policy, is outside our scope and our conversation.

Pope Leo: Protect Everyone!

On June 8, Pope Leo XIV, history’s first American pontiff, addressed Spain’s Congress of Deputies, and emphasised everyone’s right to life from conception to natural death. He also stressed freedom of conscience and the Church’s right to religious freedom, as well as migrants’ rights and the inviolability of the Seal of Confession.

The Holy Father forcefully defended unborn babies and all vulnerable people:

“If life ceases to be recognised as a fundamental value, what future can our societies have? Can a community that casts into the shadows the unborn child, the elderly, the sick, those who suffer in silence, or those who depend entirely on the care of others be called fully just?”

The defence of human life is neither a partisan issue nor a confessional interest: it is a goal of civilisation. Every human life must be recognised and safeguarded from conception to its natural end, in every circumstance of its existence.”

He continued, “every truly just society is built upon the recognition of the inviolable dignity of the human person... The moral greatness of a nation is manifested, above all, in its capacity to accompany, protect and love those lives that are most fragile.”

Spain’s parliament gave Pope Leo a seven-minute standing ovation. America’s pro-lifers hope our politicians as well as Spain’s heard the Holy Father, and for once will heed him.

America’s 250th

The United States of America will celebrate our 250th anniversary this July 4. On that date in 1776, the Second Continental Congress, assembled in Philadelphia, unanimously ratified the Declaration of Independence—each delegate knowing well that his vote for liberty and independence was an act of high treason to the British Crown and punishable by execution.

Authored principally by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia with some help from his fellow Committee of Five members John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman and Robert R Livingston, the Declaration proclaimed America’s 13 colonies to be free, sovereign and independent states, in defiance of the British Parliament’s four *Coercive Acts* of 1774—

which Americans called the Intolerable Acts—and of the *Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition*, which a furious King George III had issued on August 23, 1775.

On August 27, 1776, seven weeks after the Declaration's ratification, General George Washington addressed the Continental Army and uttered this exhortation:

The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army. Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us only the choice of brave resistance, or the most abject submission. We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die.

Our Founding Document

The Declaration of Independence is America's founding document. It is also the bedrock of America's pro-life movement—and is especially relevant to it today. That is because when the Declaration proclaims, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”, it affirms two sacred principles: that we have a Right to Life, and that God and no other is the Source and Bestower of that Right and all rights.

Democrat: Government Grants Rights!

Believe it or not, many Democrats repudiate these sacred American principles. For example, last September 3, pro-abortion US Senator Tim Kaine (Democrat-Virginia) berated a nominee for a presidential appointment who approvingly quoted an affirmation by pro-life Secretary of State Marco Rubio that our rights are God-given.

Kaine erupted. He bellowed, “The notion that rights don't come from laws and don't come from the government but come from the Creator—that's what the Iranian government believes”. You could not find a statement any more in opposition to America's founding creed than likening our Declaration of liberty to the mindset of a dictatorial regime. Pro-life Senator Ted Cruz (Republican-Texas) said he nearly fell off his chair when he heard Kaine.

Lest we forget, Kaine was his fellow abortion fanatic, Hillary Clinton's vice-presidential running mate in 2016. Had Donald Trump not won, Kaine would have become vice president of the United States and would have been, as they say, just a heartbeat away from the presidency—despite believing that Americans have no rights except those that mere politicians give them, condescendingly, arbitrarily, arrogantly and most of all, by usurping Almighty God.

Pro-lifers observe that the notion that men, not God, are the originators of our rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as well as to other rights, is an atheistic construct and a totalitarian one, too, because it leaves people entirely at the mercy and whim of the statist—as hapless and defenceless subjects, not as independent, free citizens.

Deep Misunderstanding

At a patriotic prayer rally in Washington, DC, in mid-May, pro-life Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (Republican-Louisiana) referred to the Declaration's acknowledgment that our rights come from God. After learning of that, reporter Katy Tur asked a panel of journalists, “What about this passage from Mike Johnson declaring that our rights do not derive from government; they come from our Creator... Is this him putting God above the Declaration of Independence?” Apparently she did not know that Johnson was quoting the Independence document itself.

Pro-lifers note that Speaker Johnson recently and pointedly remarked that the Declaration of Independence says, “created equal”, not “born equal”. There is a difference.

Lurking for a Long Time

The notion that governments are the source of rights surfaced in 1991 when the US Senate was debating the naming of Clarence Thomas to the US Supreme Court. Democrats were upset that he had said God is the Source of our rights. Their objection looked serious—until pro-lifers proved that civil rights martyr Dr Martin Luther King Jr used to say the same thing.

Kamala Harris Omitted ‘Life’

Failed 2024 presidential candidate Kamala Harris is another flaming pro-abortion Democrat, who has spurned the Declaration of Independence and its affirmation and guarantee of our God-given rights. She did so on January 22, 2023, in Tallahassee, Florida, when she intentionally misquoted the Declaration of Independence and its sacred pledges.

She was speaking on what would have been the 50th anniversary of the US Supreme Court’s *Roe v Wade* 1973 diktat that nullified all state law protections of unborn babies. Would have been the 50th anniversary, that is, had not the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* ruling the year before, on June 24, 2022, overthrown *Roe* and declared that the US Constitution has never contained any “right” to kill babies by abortion. She said this:

We collectively believe and know, America is a promise... it is a promise of freedom and liberty. Not just some, but for all. A promise we made in the Declaration of Independence that we are each endowed with the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

As pro-lifers note, Kamala Harris had to omit the Declaration’s immortal guarantee of the God-given right to life. If she had quoted its proclamation of the right to life, she would gotten in huge trouble with the Democrat Party—and she would also have forfeited her lifelong pretension that there is a right to kill babies. So, dishonesty and deceit were her only options.

Whiffs of Totalitarianism

Pro-lifers thank God and rejoice that Kamala Harris never achieved the presidency. Here is why. As we have reported before, her idea of smart political campaigning included bringing 10 abortionists on stage with her at a rally in Houston late last October, just days before the November presidential election. Her abortionist pals sported white coats, masquerading as normal doctors—healers—rather than as baby-butchers.

That level of affection for abortionists, coupled with her willingness to jettison the right to life from the Declaration of Independence, is a clear indicator that as president Kamala Harris not only would she have continued Joe Biden’s support for mass abortion and his persecutions of pro-life activists, she would have increased them.

The proof of that, say pro-lifers, is her obvious belief that our rights as affirmed in the Declaration are baseless, arbitrary and subject to the whims of politicians like herself. And that in turn is a harbinger of curbing and trampling the human and civil rights of her opponents.

Recall, after all, the shocking insistence by Hillary Clinton—lately echoed by other Democrats—that President Trump’s supporters need “formal deprogramming”. That is incipient totalitarianism, and it is completely alien to our Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson and Human Lives

Unlike the abortion enthusiast Kamala Harris today, back in the days of the early American republic, Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration of Independence, affirmed and cherished the Right to Life. Witness this excerpt from a letter of his in 1809:

To the Republicans of Washington County, Maryland

The affectionate sentiments you express on my retirement from the high office conferred on me by my country, are gratefully recieved, & acknoleged with thankfulness... the care of human life & happiness, & not their destruction, is the first & only legitimate object of good government. I salute you, fellow citizens, with every wish for your welfare, & the perpetual duration of our government, in all the purity of its republican principles.

Th: Jefferson Monticello Mar. 31. 09. [*spellings as in the original*]

Pro-life analysts point out that today's pro-aborts have twisted the Declaration's pledges of rights exactly around, by insisting that its guarantees of liberty must include a "right" to inflict death—to abort babies. Not what Jefferson had in mind—nor today's pro-lifers, either.

Chesterton Saw It Correctly

GK Chesterton understood the Declaration. In *What I Saw in America* (1922), his account of his lecture tour in the United States the year before, he had this to say:

America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence; perhaps the only piece of practical politics that is also theoretical politics and also great literature... it clearly names the Creator as the ultimate authority from whom these equal rights are derived.

Justice Thomas Understands

Pro-life Clarence Thomas, the US Supreme Court's longest-serving justice at 35 years, gave a speech at the University of Texas on April 15 this year that revealed his profound understanding of the Declaration—and of the American people and their devotion to it. In recalling his childhood in then-segregated Savannah, Georgia, he said that the Irish immigrant Catholic sisters in his elementary school taught him and his classmates that "we are inherently equal; that equality came from God; and that it could not be diminished by man. We were made in the image and likeness of God. That proposition was not debatable and was beyond the power of man to alter".

Justice Thomas also movingly credited his grandparents and the other grown-ups in his black neighbourhood with transmitting the Declaration's truths:

Somehow, without formal education, the older people knew that these God-given or natural rights preceded and transcended governmental power or authority... Though not a literate man, my grandfather often spoke of our rights and obligations coming from God, not from the architects of segregation and discrimination... We knew that life, liberty, and property were sacrosanct. These truths were self-evident to the adults in our lives and were taught to us as undeniable truths. Those around us could endure with dignity the insults of segregation because they knew that, in God's eyes, they were equal.

Fighting for the Declaration

There would be no Declaration of Independence today, of course, no security for our God-given rights and no United States of America, either, if the Continental Army had not fought, sacrificed and died for them over nearly a decade of unimaginable hardship.

Few Americans today know that Irish immigrants and their sons constituted around 40 percent of the Continental Army, as testified by the army's records. Too many believe the myth that few Irish people were in America before *An Gorta Mor*. Thousands of Irishmen and their families, both Catholic and Presbyterian, had fled English persecution, especially in the 1770s—and many men decided to come to the aid of their new home during the Revolution.

Irish surnames were plentiful on the Continental Army's muster rolls, some of which list recruits' birthplaces. A century ago, Michael J O'Brien (1869-1960)—a citizen historian, true, but a tireless researcher nonetheless—found some 695 Kellys in the American army, along with 494 Murphys, 331 McCarthys, 327 Connors or O'Connors, 322 Ryans and 248 Doughertys.

The point of this brief seeming digression from this publication's pro-life focus is that all fair-minded people surely must admit that not a single Irishman in the American army, or for that matter any other of George Washington's soldiers, could have imagined that the Declaration for which they were risking and giving their lives was not from God or was about aborting babies.

Harris: It's All about Abortion

In her speech discussed above, Kamala Harris did indeed refer to the Declaration as being about aborting babies. She asked, "...can we truly be free if so-called leaders claim to be, quote—I quote, 'on the vanguard of freedom', while they dare to restrict the rights of the American people and attack the very foundations of freedom?"

Citing God Four Times

As we have seen above, pro-abortion Tim Kaine is not just certain, but indignantly so, that it is not Almighty God but governments of creatures like himself who somehow get to grant other people their rights. Yes, creatures like himself; conveniently, he thinks himself one of the privileged few overlords who get to decide about something as precious as humanity's rights. What did he do to qualify for that exalted position? Pander for votes and bargain with donors?

But in order to persuade himself that he and his political cronies are worthy to hand out rights, Kaine has to get himself past what the Founding Fathers penned with such eloquence and elegance in their Declaration of Independence: the four times that Jefferson and his Committee of Five colleagues invoked the Name of God as the Bestower of all rights.

The first instance explains that Americans now seek independence and sovereignty:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them...

The second and most significant mention heralds universal truths for all mankind:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The third asks God's blessing:

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions...

And the fourth and final mention follows shortly—and nobly:

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Pro-life activists have remarked that every American pro-lifer can subscribe to the Declaration of Independence but that the same cannot be said of anyone who ignores and even contradicts its fundamental reliance on God and its conviction about the right to life.

She Chooses God Over Party

On March 2, Michigan Democrat State Representative Karen Whitsett announced that she would not seek re-election. She said this:

I do have God's unwavering Word to stand on, and I can no longer compromise it to fit a party platform or to please people. For me, it is impossible to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ while remaining a member of the Democratic Party as it exists today... That conviction includes the issues I cannot reconcile with Scripture: abortion, the normalisation of the gay lifestyle and the push to redefine gender.

Mrs Whitsett, who is black, called abortion in the black community “black-on-black crime”. For part of her decision to leave politics, she credited counsel from another state representative, a Republican: “Bradley Slagh said something that convinced me: ‘You’re to vote your district, but you’re not to sell your soul’. In the end, I have to answer to God.”

Shockingly, but perhaps not unexpectedly, Michigan Democrat Party Chair Curtis Hertel said in response to her: “Good riddance”. (Mrs Whitsett’s fellow Democrats also criticised her attendance record, but clearly what really gripped them was her defence of unborn babies.)

Bishop Brings Eucharistic Jesus to PP

On March 31, Tuesday of Holy Week, Bishop James Conley of Lincoln, Nebraska, led a Eucharistic procession to the local Planned Parenthood abortion centre. Then, on Good Friday, April 3, he followed longtime diocesan custom by leading the Stations of the Cross at the same facility. At the modern-day Golgotha in his city, he and his pro-life flock stood and prayed, as it were, at the foot of the Cross, where mankind put to death the innocent Lamb of God.

The bishop says, “To be pro-life is not optional for us Catholics.” He also says, “We as Catholics must always be here to lovingly serve women and to help them welcome new life.”

‘Which Abortion Is Your Favourite?’

At a House of Representatives hearing on April 23, pro-life Republican Congressman Brandon Gill of Texas evidently got tired of hearing a witness using the same clichéd euphemisms that pro-aborts always utter to try to mask the wickedness of aborting babies.

Gill asked her, “Do you have a preferred method of abortion that you like”? She kept refusing to answer and trying to change the subject, so he said, “You don’t want to talk about abortion itself, why is that?... It’s uncomfortable to hear this, isn’t it?... It’s barbaric and evil.”

The professor never did answer Gill's questions. She couldn't, without admitting that she supports atrocities. But to everyone in the room, her evasions and silence spoke volumes.

Baby Death Toll

The pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute, which used to be a wing of Planned Parenthood but now purports to be independent, provides month-by-month estimates of how many babies are aborted in the United States. Their total for January of this year, released in early June, was 99,470 infants put to death—adding to our country's ever-growing national shame.

Longtime pro-life leader Chuck Donovan, who was a writer in President Reagan's White House, and later founded two major pro-life research groups, notes that the Guttmacher Institute's estimated toll for all of 2025 was 1,126,470 dead babies, for a monthly average of 93,872 babies slain per month. This year's baby death total might well surpass last year's.

Taxpayer \$\$ for Abortion Giant

Last year, pro-life legislators in Congress managed to stop the massive flow of taxpayers' dollars to Planned Parenthood for 12 months. But that hiatus will expire automatically this July 4 unless Congress and President Donald Trump get it renewed. Dozens of pro-life groups are lobbying the president and their senators and representatives, but the issue is not resolved.

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (Republican-Louisiana) promised a month ago to work for renewal of the funding halt. We will have more news about the funding next time.

Abortion Drugs by Mail

No one quite knows for sure, but estimates are that at-home abortion drugs now account for as many as two-thirds of all the babies aborted in the United States. The drugs are easy to get by mail, thanks to a large and not exactly scrupulous internet market. They are also obtainable by telehealth but also without medical supervision, because in 2023 the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) eliminated an in-person doctor visit as a requirement to receive them.

The FDA also will not enforce federal law against sending abortifacients through the US mail across state lines. That allows the mailing of the death-dealing drugs from states where abortions are legal into states governed by pro-life law. Some pro-life states are suing to block anyone from mailing the drugs into their state, and court battles are ensuing. However, the Trump administration has tried to stay or dismiss three of the states' lawsuits.

All this is a major public health problem, given that, as we have reported in the past, almost 11 percent of users of the abortion drugs have suffered significant ill effects from them, according to the Ethics and Public Policy Centre.

Pro-life leader Jennie Bradley Lichter has found that abortion drug sellers use deceptive measures to avoid getting caught, including sending the drugs unlabeled and in little baggies, and handwriting the addressee's name, so the envelope looks like ordinary correspondence.

Danger from Overseas

In addition to the above problems, pro-life expert researcher Dr Rebecca Oas warns that, besides domestic American dealers of the abortion drugs, an international network is sending the drugs into the United States "with assistance from multilateral agencies,

governments, and other donors” regardless of any state laws. She urges pro-lifers to start focusing on this situation.

Supreme Court No Help

On May 14, the US Supreme Court issued one of its all too frequent unsigned and unexplained diktats. This one allows continued mailing of the abortion drug Mifepristone during the court battles about it. Pro-life Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas dissented from the diktat, pointing out that mailing the deadly drug circumvents and undercuts the *Dobbs* decision from 2022, that was meant to let pro-life states prohibit abortions within their borders.

Bishops Weigh In

On May 4, the US bishops’ pro-life chairman, Bishop Daniel Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, wrote to both the acting Attorney General and the FDA commissioner. He complained about the Trump administration’s moves against the states’ lawsuits about mailing abortion drugs. He urged the FDA to “proceed as expeditiously as possible with its safety review” of Mifepristone, something lay pro-lifers have also been demanding. (The FDA was stalling; but see below.)

Bishop Thomas reminded the officials that “vulnerable mothers in need do not deserve the isolation and danger of telemedicine chemical abortion.” He also said this: “All direct, intended abortions extinguish an innocent human life, and therefore are a grave evil. In the case of Mifepristone, we seek to prevent tragedy for both the baby and the mother.”

FDA Finally Acts

As we go to print, there is good news: the FDA has announced it is finally starting a safety review of the abortion drug Mifepristone. Pro-lifers believe the agency was stalling so as not to have to issue a report until after the mid-term congressional elections this November.

Pro-lifers think Bishop Daniel Thomas’s letter to the FDA (see above) has played a part in getting the agency to take action.

Bob Packwood Has Died

Former US Senator Bob Packwood died June 6 at age 93 in a hospice facility in Rancho Mirage, California. First elected as a US Senator from Oregon in 1968, he was the leading Republican pro-abortion and a favorite of the abortion giant Planned Parenthood and feminist groups. A sexual harassment scandal in 1993—“more than two dozen” women accused him of unwanted sexual advances—led him to resign in 1995.

Packwood, say pro-lifers, would be a good candidate for having been the first “RINO”—a “Republican In Name Only”. Liberals in politics and the news media always called him “a moderate” and “a centrist” for supporting baby-killings. Even before *Roe v Wade*, he became the first US Senator to introduce legislation to legalise abortions nationwide—but in those years no one in Congress would join him as a co-sponsor.

Senator Packwood also often voted with Democrats. He was an opponent of pro-life President Reagan, and in 1991 was one of just two Republicans to vote—unsuccessfully, it turned out—against pro-life Clarence Thomas for the US Supreme Court.

Learning of Packwood’s leaving this world, a pro-life activist reports that he once heard him refer to another activist constituent of his in Oregon as a “rabid” Catholic. That was on an airport shuttle at Dulles International Airport outside Washington, DC, in the 1980s.

Packwood predicted decades ago that the pro-life movement was a fire that burned too intensely and would soon flame out. So pro-lifers today wonder what he thought of the *Dobbs* decision in 2022 that overthrew *Roe*, and of the continued rise of thousands of pro-life pregnancy help centres, as well as the many student pro-life chapters in secondary schools and universities.

But more important, of course, now there are “rabid” Catholics praying that Bob Packwood came to repentance and praying for God to have mercy on his soul. Amen.

Bishop René Gracida, 102, RIP

Bishop René Henry Gracida died on May 1 in Corpus Christi, Texas, at age 102. He was the Diocese of Corpus Christi’s fifth bishop, 1983-1997, and previously the first bishop of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. He had also been an auxiliary bishop in Miami, which he had joined after transferring from the Benedictines.

Born in 1923, René Gracida was in the US Army Air Corps in World War II. With the 303rd Air Expeditionary Group of the Eighth Air Force, he survived 32 missions as a tail gunner on a B-17 four-engine bomber over heavily fortified priority targets in Europe. After the war, he studied architecture and then joined the Benedictines in 1951. He was ordained in 1959. As a bishop in Florida’s Panhandle area, he flew his own plane to confirmations and parish visits.

Pro-lifers loved Bishop Gracida because he befriended and assisted them. He spoke constantly, in season and out, about the unalienable right to life and the ever-pressing need for everyone to defend moms and their unborn babies from the abortionists. He never shied from controversy, especially in 1994, when he cited Canon Law to excommunicate three parishioners—two abortion centre directors as well as an abortionist who had bragged about winning a financial judgement against pro-lifers.

Bishop Gracida also once forbade a pro-abortion Texas state representative from receiving Communion. In response to complaints about how he did it, in 2004 he composed “A Twelve-Step Program for Bishops” to encourage his brother bishops to overcome their reluctance to take any action against the Catholic pro-abortion politicians in their dioceses.

Bishop René Gracida, pray for the babies and their moms, and pray for us all!

‘With Maximum Determination’

Pope Saint John Paul II wrote this in *Christifideles Laici* (December 30, 1988):

Above all, the common outcry... on behalf of human rights—for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture—is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.

God’s Command: Speak Up!

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.”

Proverbs 31: 8-9

In the End, We Will Remember...

“In the end, we will not remember the words of our enemies. But we will remember the silence of our friends.” Dr Martin Luther King Jr, 1957

More pro-life news from America for you next time. **God bless – Brendan**

The Scandal of the Synodal Study Group

After the Synod on Synodality in 2023 and 2024, Pope Francis set up 10 groups to report on various doctrinal and pastoral subjects. The Report of the Vatican's Synodal Study Group, number 9, was issued on the subject of homosexuality and gender theory. It includes a direct testimony from two "married gay Catholics", who spoke of "the solitude, anguish, and stigma that accompany persons with same-sex attractions and their families", and criticised "conversion therapy" and "the devastating effects of reparative therapies aimed at recovering heterosexuality."

As expected, the report did not recommend any change of doctrine, although it asked why there exists such a gap between "doctrinal firmness" and "pastoral welcome", and called on Catholics to have a more positive approach to homosexual people. In addition, the report urges the Church's authorities to discover a "deeper understanding of biblical anthropology on homosexuality, and a new look at same-sex unions, in order to sort out 'polarisation and division'."

The Report released on May 15 caused widespread controversy among the bishops of the world. Cardinal Eijk of Holland condemned the report, saying, "By elevating such testimonies without doctrinal commentary, the report effectively normalizes homosexual relationships within a Church context." Cardinal Gerhard Müller, the former Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, accused supporters of the Church's synodal process of succumbing to "prevailing ideologies" under a pretext of "pastoral discernment", while Bishop Athanasius Schneider from Kazakhstan judged it to be "a direct attack on Divine Revelation".

The Vatican's General Secretariat of the Synod showed little enthusiasm for the report, calling it "merely a working document", and emphasised that it had no part in its composition.

After reading the above quotes, there should be no surprise at the welcome of Fr James Martin SJ, who was a member of the Study Group since he is the founder of Outreach, an LGBTQ ministry. No doubt, this was a golden opportunity to have his views of homosexuality expressed in an official document, as well as the testimony of two homosexuals. Joined with a fellow campaigner, DignityUSA, he acclaimed the report a "big deal".

It should be absolutely clear that the Church in no way approves of homosexual behaviour or gives any recognition to homosexual unions. At the same time, she acknowledges the dignity of every person, and does not define a child of God by one's inclinations or behaviour. As has so often been repeated, the Church hates the sin but loves the sinner. "The Church] refuses to consider the person as a 'heterosexual' or a 'homosexual', but insists that every person has a fundamental identity: the creature of God, and by grace, his child and heir to eternal life."

The problem facing bishops and priests is the current demand for total acceptance from the LGBTQ lobbies. Pastoral outreach too often is turned into approval of the homosexual ideology, and this would be a disaster, as has happened in the secular world and in parts of the Church.

German Bishops Continue the Synodal Conference

The 56 bishops and auxiliary bishops elected a new president for the German Bishops' Conference on February 24 this year. It was a tight contest which needed three ballots between the moderate Bishop Heiner Wilmer of Hildesheim and the "progressive" Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen, who failed to win.

Bishop Wilmer opened his address by quoting from the *Gloria in Excelsis*, "and on earth peace to people of good will." He gave the impression that he wished to return to a

peaceful relationship with the Vatican, unlike his predecessors Cardinal Marx and Bishop Bätzing as well as the militant ZdK lay group.

While Bishop Wilmer acknowledged Rome's anxiety about the proposed Synodal Conference, saying "It was right not to adopt the statutes of the permanent Synodal Committee. It was right to take seriously the concerns of the three cardinals and thus also the concerns of the Holy Father." Yet, he has a firm record of supporting the Synodality project, and probably was one of the majority of the bishops who voted to accept the statutes of the Synodal Conference, which will now commence its task. This decision of the bishops will not please Rome, since the Synodal Conference will supervise the actions of the bishops, something unheard of in the life of the Church.

When asked about his understanding of synodality at the press conference, Bishop Wilmer replied: Synodality is the "journeying together, sharing responsibility, and bearing decisions together" in the Church, then added, "Christ stands at the centre," something rarely heard from other bishops.

Bishop Wilmer's record since he became a bishop in 2018 has some bumps. In 2021, he published guidelines about gender-sensitive language in the liturgy, promoting less masculine speech and a "diverse address" to God.

He had caused controversy when he described Greta Thunberg, the young prophet for climate change, and commended her movement, Fridays for Future. Since then, enthusiasm for this woman has declined, and the bishop made no allusion to climate change in his opening address. In the meantime, Pope Leo appointed Bishop Wilmer to be the new bishop of Münster, a German diocese with the largest number of Catholics.

Addendum: Last year, the German bishops used the interregnum between the death of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo to introduce an official blessing for couples in irregular relationships or same-sex unions. Cardinal Reinhard Marx introduced it in his diocese to give an example to be followed by his fellow bishops, a move described by Cardinal Sarah as a "heresy".

India's Turn to Sectarian Nationalism

Narendra Modi was born in 1950 in the small town of Vadnagar, in the state of Gujarat, north-west India. At the age of eight, Modi was introduced to the [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh](#) (RSS), an active Hindu and nationalist paramilitary organisation. The story of his rise from being an itinerant tea seller in a city train station is more a "founding myth" than an historical fact. His father ran a small shop close to the station in Vadnagar.

As was the custom, his family arranged his marriage, and he and Jashodaben Modi were briefly united in 1968, but he left her after a short time, and travelled for two years across North India, visiting the main Hindu centres, especially the Belur Math of Swami Vivekananda. Although the couple were not divorced, Modi presented himself as a single man. His estranged wife worked as a school teacher until she retired in 1990. For 46 years he concealed the fact of his marriage until 2014 when a new law about election candidates required him to officially acknowledge it.

After 1971, Modi became a fulltime activist of the RSS and its political arm, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), where he quickly rose in the ranks, and distinguished himself during Indira Gandhi's Emergency in 1975-77 when he had a price on his head. In October 2001, Modi became the chief minister of his home state of Gujarat.

Shortly after in February 2002, a train carrying Hindu pilgrims from the Babri temple at Ayodhya caught fire and some 59 pilgrims died. The fire was most probably accidental but was quickly blamed on the Muslim population of Gujarat, and was confirmed by Modi when he declared that the fire was “an act of terrorism”. The riots against Muslims continued up to May, and were one of the most savage communal violence since 1947, the year of Independence. With few exceptions, the authorities and police stood aside and watched, not for the first or last time.

In the aftermath, Modi was accused of encouraging the riots, even though a series of investigations cleared him of any complicity. The complicity of the Modi administration was widely accepted, and in December 2002, his BJP party improved its position in the state parliament elections by winning a majority. Modi was barred from travelling to the US, the EU and the UK until 2014 when he became prime minister of India.

If Modi's BJP party had won 400 seats in India's parliament, the Lok Sabha, he could have rewritten the Constitution and converted it from Nehru's secular document to a Hindu one. Modi's approval rating in two general elections in 2014 and 2019 was close to 80 percent. So, how did his magical touch desert him in 2024?

Demonising the Muslims is a Vote Catcher

Modi's slanders of the Muslim minority, some 200 million, resonate with the less educated population of the Northern States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, areas with a block of 120 of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha, and where demolishing mosques is more important than building schools and hospitals. However, his promise of boundless progress did not solve the problems of unemployment and rising prices for the poor farmers and the Dalits, the lowest caste of so-called Untouchables in India's traditional hierarchy.

India's economic surge did not benefit the poor farmers and the landless labourers. The gap between them and the wealthy has widened to such an extent that you have to go back to the 1920s to find a comparison. Modi's economic policies favour the wealthy of Gujarat and since 2014 across the whole of India.

In 2024, despite exit polls predicting a huge majority for the BJP, Modi received a mighty slap from the voters. The most dramatic losses were in the largest state, Uttar Pradesh, where voters from the Dalit or “Untouchable” castes, deserted Modi and the BJP. His ambition for 400 seats was reduced to a foolish dream; in fact, the BJP lost some of the 303 seats which it had won in 2019, ending up with 240, and had to form a coalition with small parties, known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), to continue to govern the country. Even in his own seat of Varanasi (Benares), Modi's previous majority of 500,000 votes was reduced to 150,000.

The Congress Party, which Modi predicted would cease to exist, has become the leading member of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), the opposition parties in the Lok Sabha, and doubled the number of its seats from 52 to 99.

Addendum: In the first general election in 1952, 21 Muslims were chosen for the 543-member Lok Sabha, less than five percent of India's Lower House Parliament, even though their number was close to 15 percent of the population. Since 2014, when the BJP replaced the Congress Party of Gandhi and Nehru, they never achieved more than five percent in the Lok Sabha. The BJP bars any Muslim from standing in an election, and this has led to a decline of Muslims in both the capital and the state legislatures. Other parties

followed suit because they wanted to avoid “minority appeasement” and accusations of being pro-Muslim.

The End of Life Bill is Not Dead Yet

The legalisation of assisted suicide in the UK seemed to have hit a roadblock when the debate in the House of Lords ran out of time on April 24 this year, and the bill lapsed. The *Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life)* bill would allow adults in England and Wales with less than six months to live to obtain an assisted death, after the approval of two doctors and an expert panel.

Now, a Labour MP, Lauren Edwards, intends to re-introduce the bill as a private members’ bill in the House of Commons in September, and to invoke the *Parliament Acts* of 1911 and 1949 to pass the law without the support of the House of Lords.

The Catholic bishops protested at this unjustified decision, and called on MPs of all parties to reject the bill. Archbishop John Sherrington, the spokesman for life issues for the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, pointed out that Catholics “join with many other people of faith and none in arguing that we should not cross this watershed.”

He also drew attention to the concerns of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of Physicians as well as the legal problems raised in the debate of the House of Lords, which at no stage had been addressed by the bill’s supporters. Disability rights groups were deeply unhappy about the lack of clear definitions of the requirements for an assisted suicide.

The Archbishop added that the bill would threaten the freedom of conscience for medical professionals and care workers, as well as force nursing homes and hospices to carry out assisted suicides, despite their ethical and religious objections. He called on the government to help the terminally-ill by improving the supply of high-quality palliative care rather than by promoting assisted suicide legislation.

Progressive Left in Dáil Éireann want more Abortion

First it was the deputies of People Before Profit, seizing the opportunity to appear “progressive” by attempting to cancel the required three-day waiting period before a woman has an abortion. They had offered a bill amending the 2018 abortion law, which was voted down. Then it was the turn of the Social Democrats in May. Their leader, Holly Cairns, described the 3-day wait as “patronising and paternalistic” and lacking a “scientific basis”, without supplying any explanation or data. This party introduced the *Reproductive Rights (Amendment) Bill 2026* in April, which would abolish the 3-day wait and widen the grounds for late abortions. The bill was defeated on May 14.

In response, Senator Sarah O’Reilly of [Aontú](#) pointed out that the 3-day wait provided women with a “vital space for reflection at a time of immense pressure and vulnerability... The reality is that some women are unsure, some feel overwhelmed, and some feel they have no real alternative. That short pause can be the only moment they have to breathe, to think, and to reconsider.” It is estimated that, thanks to the 3-day wait, some 10 thousand women decided to continue with their pregnancy and not have an abortion.

Finally, on June 17, it was Sinn Féin’s turn to scrap the 3-day waiting period before an abortion takes place. Mary Lou McDonald claimed that this condition should never have been part of the law, and it has had “serious consequences”, which she did not reveal. She assured us that women always give an abortion “deep thought” and the wait condition is a “barrier to healthcare”. Changing the abortion law’s mandatory wait would be “a move towards compassion” to women.

The obligatory wait for women seeking an abortion up to 12 weeks was added to the abortion bill in 2018, to encourage those uncertain about removing the pro-life amendment to vote in favour of the referendum. Removing this important condition displays a measure of arrogance about many voters in 2018.

The Sinn Féin bill received the support of the Taoiseach Micheál Martin and the Tanaiste, Simon Harris, even though most of the TDs of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael voted against the bill. The bill was passed by 86 votes to 70, and will move to the Committee stage where it is open to amendments.

I have no doubt that the two government ministers and three parties are firmly in favour of decriminalising abortion, as has happened in Britain. To end the life of an unborn human is for them “compassion for women” and “healthcare for women”. Note that they do not call it “maternal healthcare” because to call a woman seeking an abortion a “mother” would let the cat out of the bag.

Family & Life will not sit back at this perverse act against mothers and babies. We shall work on a project, not just to restore the 3-day wait but to make it a Five Day Wait.

China's Illusion of Religious Freedom

China's President Xi Jinping's drive to “sinicise” the Christian churches continues to “convert” Christians into servants of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The various Protestant churches and communities have been gathered into the Three Self Churches, established in 1954 and strictly controlled by the CCP, which appoints leaders and pastors and expects every Protestant to join this church. Many perceive the distortion of their faith and form secret house churches, incurring persecution from the local authorities.

On Easter Sunday this year, the police raided a house church in the city of Binshou in the Shandong Province. The 30 or so Christians were confined near the house, which was effectively demolished before their eyes. The armed police confiscated the furniture, the religious books and a piano, then smashed the doors and windows of the building and disconnected the electricity.

Catholics have fared no better. Under the secret Vatican-China agreement of 2018, the Catholic Underground Church is meant to merge with the official Catholic Patriotic Church, and somehow be loyal to Rome and Beijing. Not surprisingly, the regime continues to harass Catholics who rightly refuse to become members of the Patriotic Church.

In the city of Fuzhou in the province of Fujian, around 100 Catholics had gathered at a house to celebrate the Easter Eve Eucharist. The police arrived and dispersed the believers. At the Halyan House of Prayer, some 30 police and security ensured that nobody entered the chapel, and guarded the building overnight to prevent any celebration of Easter.

The ‘Red Revolution’ to Eliminate Religion

The CCP is forcing the churches to place love of country above love of God, and has posted four obligatory practices, known as “must tasks”, for local churches to carry out at meetings for worship, and so to avoid being closed down. The first is to raise the national flag in the building while singing the national anthem. The second is to have a large notice of the “12 core socialist values”, about which the pastor will preach and promote. The third is to catechise believers about China's Constitution, laws and the Regulations on Religious Affairs. The last is to promote “China's excellent traditional culture”, no doubt as interpreted by the CCP.

The Red Revolution is directed at constructing a catechetical and theological message which contains Socialism with Chinese features. It will be a guide to sermons, Bible study and the church's life, transmitting an ideology through religious language.

Christians of all persuasions have no doubt that the purpose of the CCP is to eliminate all religious belief, be it Catholic or Protestant, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism or any derivation. All that will remain will be the theory and practice of Chinese Socialism.

The Suicide Industry on the Internet

In the United States, under the constitutional right of freedom of speech, there is nothing to stop a website from celebrating suicide and offering viewers the choice of different ways to kill oneself. One such website is Sanctioned Suicide, an internet forum for open discussion of suicide.

Its two founders claim that the forum is about free choice, but most people call it a "pro-suicide website". It also promotes the use of sodium nitrate as a method of suicide. While the food industry uses sodium nitrate with salt to give meat the right taste and colour and preserve it, taken in concentrated form can lead to death.

The above forum was started in 2018 and by 2024 had 50,000 members and 10 million viewers. Since then, the *New York Times* and the BBC have discovered a number of suicides directly connected to this forum. The parents of the deceased have blamed it for being the "deciding factor" in a son's or daughter's suicide, and called for it to be shut down. While assisted suicide is a crime in most countries, the legal silencing of a website is neither easy nor clear. The NYT identified 45 people in the US, UK and Australia who took their own lives after contact with Sanctioned Suicide. The administrators of this website decided to block Australian viewers in protest at what they called "authoritarian attempts" to stifle its message.

One person who made use of the discussion forum was a Canadian chef named Kenneth Law, whose little business venture was selling packages of lethal poison through the Internet. He was unmasked in 2023 as the source of the deadly poison, after he had sent it to 1,200 people in more than 40 countries, and now faces many years in jail. In May 2023, he was arrested and tried in a Canadian court. He has since pleaded guilty to assisting the suicide of 14 persons in Ontario, Canada, and will be sentenced in September.

When contacting prospective customers, Law pretended to be a retired doctor called Greenberg. His victims were aged between 16 and 36. In the UK, out of 286 persons who received Law's package, some 79 victims have been identified as consuming his poison, one of whom was a boy of 14. In the words of one legal expert, Law was "a serial offender who callously exploited many vulnerable and innocent people, exchanging their lives for his financial gain". Law earned £160,000 from his poison business.

One suicide website, probably Sanctioned Suicide, has been fined one million pounds by the UK's Office of Communications (Ofcom) for grooming people to commit suicide, which is contrary to the *Online Safety Act*. Ofcom found that this website was linked with 130 suicides in the UK, and its illegal content of encouraging and assisting suicide had been consistently present on the platform between March 2025 and April 2026. The role of the suicide forum was also noted in many coroners' reports.

Campaigning parents of suicides have called for a new law which would allow criminal charges to be brought against such websites.

Applause in Church?

What frequently happens in churches today is applause in the form of hand clapping, which raises the question: is it appropriate to clap in church? How does being at the Eucharist differ from the theatre or the circus? The custom may well go back to the ancient Greek theatre and Roman “spectacles” in the Colosseum, but today is associated with the entertainment world, and there’s the clue.

As Joseph Ratzinger wrote in his *Spirit of the Liturgy*, the celebration of liturgy is not a form of entertainment. “Whenever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of the liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment... Liturgy can only attract people when it looks, not at itself, but at God, when it allows Him to enter and act.” (See pp. 198-199)

The choir’s singing is first of all an act of worship, not a performance. The sound of the organ and the voice of the singer are intended to lift the congregation to praise the Almighty. It is not meant to direct your attention to other people but to God. The preacher’s purpose is to win souls for God by the words of his homily. The listener’s attention should be on the words and the message, not the preacher’s eloquence or lack of it, as the case may be.

Surge of Adult Baptisms in Secular France

In France, more than 13,000 adults were baptised during the Easter celebrations this year. Many of these catechumens come from families with no Christian background, and had discovered the Faith of their ancestors by a personal search for a purpose to their lives. Many were attracted by the silence and beauty of churches, in contrast to the noise and rush of modern life. The diocese of Paris led the way with 788 catechumens baptised this Easter in 94 parishes across the city. One in three were under 25 years.

A Request for a Bequest

Have you considered adding a bequest in your Will in favour of Family & Life? By remembering Family & Life in your Will with a bequest, your legacy will ensure that our work of bringing help to mothers and saving babies’ lives will continue.

As you know, we remain committed to defending the right to life of the unborn child in the womb, and rebuilding a Culture of Life in a country where the law and fashionable opinion accept abortion as a human right.

To learn more about how a bequest can safeguard the work of Family & Life, or to avail of our Solicitor’s free Wills Service, please call the office today.

The Importance of Standing Orders

Is a standing order a possible gift for you?

The amount of your monthly gift to save babies is entirely up to you, and it’s for you to decide if it is to be monthly or every two months, and you may cancel it at any time. Even a small monthly amount is more valuable than you might think. That’s because Standing Orders help us to plan with certainty, and maintain our most vital baby saving activities, year in year out.

A number of your fellow Family & Life supporters already have monthly Standing Orders for **€20, €25, €50 and €100**. Others, whose material blessings allow, have pledged regular gifts of **€150 and €250**. Unlike our opponents we **don’t** have a benefactor to bankroll our work, still less generous government grants. We do, however, have **you**! And for that we

are eternally thankful because without your prayers and financial sacrifices, Family & Life would have closed its doors long ago.

God bless you and your family,

PS **Have you ever witnessed a miracle, or received one yourself?** Many Christians have been blessed with miraculous healings or other inexplicable wonders, often in answer to prayer. And all Christians know about spectacular miracles such as Mary's apparitions at Lourdes and Fatima and the miraculous Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Why does God work miracles? The Bible tells us "these [miracles] are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in His Name" (John 20: 30-31).

But our cunning enemy, the devil, knows that. So he tries to make us question miracles. He also tries to deceive us with *false* miracles that can disillusion people or make them lose their faith. Even highly intelligent Christians can fall victim. Now, to protect, educate and inspire you, exorcism expert Adam Blai has written *The Catholic Guide to Miracles: Separating the Authentic from the Counterfeit*.

Mr Blai knows his subject: he serves as a consultant for exorcists in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and an auxiliary member of the International Association of Exorcists. For decades he's both studied and experienced the supernatural by helping in hundreds of exorcisms. Now he reveals what he's learned about miracles and their importance for you and me today.

This fascinating, eye-opening book explains what exactly a miracle is, the Catholic Church's process for approving miracles, incredible miracles we should know about, why Jesus is performing miracles now, and the telltale signs of demonic counterfeits. It's rich with quotations from the Bible, Church teachings and first-hand accounts. There's no other book like it.

Everything you always wanted to know about miracles

The author starts by exploring why people find miracles so fascinating (it's not the reason you'd expect). Next, he explains how they break down into three "ranks" or classes. He also gives his expert opinion on how often people receive miraculous cures.

Mr Blai relates how the miracles of Christ and His apostles differed from those of the Old Testament. He tells why the Church teaches that God never stopped performing miracles, and why we can ask the saints in Heaven for help. Speaking of saints, the author relates why the Church requires a certain kind of miracle in

canonisation proceedings, and the five rigorous standards that a miraculous cure must meet.

You'll be moved when you read how the Lord used such a healing to bring about the canonisations of little Francisco and Jacinta, to whom His Mother appeared at Fatima. So stunning was this cure that the Church made an exception to Her rule that children who weren't martyrs may not be canonised. Dazzling, too, were the miracles that led to the canonisations of other beloved saints. You'll read rivetting accounts of the cures that relics of St Padre Pio and other saints have brought about. The author himself describes a miraculous experience that St Thérèse obtained for him.

Little-known wonders of Mary's apparitions

You'll also encounter fascinating facts about history's first Marian apparition. After explaining the Church's demanding process for investigating reported apparitions of Mary, the author recounts her appearances in Tepeyac (Mexico), Rue du Bac, Lourdes, Fatima, Akita and Cairo—her visits rich in miracles, including spectacular cures.

Besides the Queen of Heaven, other saints have brought us miracles. Throughout history, St Michael the Archangel has waged war against evil, sometimes visibly. Mr Blai recounts his epic victories, cites a powerful role of his that few know of, takes us to places where he's appeared, describes what he does in exorcisms, and explains what certain tiny stones have to do with him.

Mr Blai also details the complex miracles called stigmata, and explains why God asks some holy people such as St Gemma Galgani to bear them. He explains that they're one of many "accessory phenomena" that stem from another miraculous experience that's beyond description. He includes a narrative of Christ's agony, which a present-day stigmatist (whom he knows) suffers every week, and he relates important advice of hers to you and me.

Incorruptibles, levitation, Eucharistic miracles, fake miracles and more

The author also provides astonishing descriptions of the bodies of great saints that have remained incorrupt, sometimes for centuries. He ponders God's reasons for working those miracles and for performing cures through them, for example, through the body of a saint who died in 1898. He cites the Church's teaching about venerating relics of the saints' bodies and describes the demons' reaction to them during exorcisms.

Mr Blai includes a delightful chapter on saints (including a nineteenth-century one) who levitated, and why God works such a wonder. His next chapter describes awe-inspiring miracles involving the "source and summit" of the Christian Faith—the Eucharist—and the heart-rending discoveries that science has made about them. He believes Eucharistic miracles "are perhaps the most direct indicators of the reality of God" and explains why He bestows them on us.

Distinguishing miracles from mental illness is a vital first step in verifying a mystical experience, and Mr Blai tells how the Church does it. He explains, too, how She tells a true miracle from a demonic "counterfeit", seven "parlour tricks" that demons fool people with; and three proofs of demonic activity. Also, he spotlights the sins that open people up to "almost all extraordinary demonic problems". He gives an eye-opening history of modern occultism that runs from nineteenth-century séances to ouija boards to contemporary demon-contacting kits for children.

Valuable, too, is his chapter on cult leaders who simulate healings, other miracles and Divine connections to ensnare the gullible. He reveals their techniques for exploiting people financially and sexually. He also reveals the truth about the healings, swoonings and other "miracles" seen at the "services" of "evangelists" and faith healers. Religious manipulators, he

warns, have the same personality traits as the sociopathic criminals he's met in his prison ministry.

The Catholic Guide to Miracles, says one reviewer, "is a well-documented analysis of the full spectrum of the miraculous, replete with history's best Church-validated miracle accounts as well as personal anecdotes from someone with legitimate real-world expertise and a direct line of sight into the world of the supernatural."

You can get this unique work online (Sophia Institute Press, 2021, paperback) or via your favourite bookseller. You'll learn things you never imagined about the miracles our Merciful Lord works for us, will love Him more, and will find your faith deepened and strengthened.