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Welcome to the latest edition of the IACI e-news.

Founded in 1962, the IACI is the leading Irish American cultural organization. The IACI is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit national organization devoted to promoting an intelligent appreciation of Ireland and the role and contributions of the Irish in America.

Guest contributors are always welcome! Please note, the IACI is an apolitical, non-sectarian organization and requests that contributors consider that when submitting articles. The IACI reserves the right to refuse or edit submissions. The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the original authors and other contributors. These views and opinions do not necessarily represent those of the IACI or any/all contributors to this site. Please submit articles for consideration to [cbuck@iaci-usa.org](mailto:cbuck@iaci-usa.org).

*To continue reading articles contained in this latest e-news, please scroll through the following pages.*



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December 1, 2017

The holiday season is upon us and I hope that yours is filled with family, friends, and traditional holiday joy. Because we share an enthusiasm for Irish culture, I also hope that you will join me during this season of giving and consider contributing to the Irish American Cultural Institute.

The Irish American Cultural Institute has served as a leader in the Irish cultural community for more than five decades, and continues to be the only Irish American organization that has as its patron, The President of Ireland. Through the years, the financial support of individuals like you has enabled the Institute to accomplish great things, and your support is needed to continue its fine work on behalf of the artistic and cultural communities of Ireland and Irish America.

Programs such as the Irish Way and Irish Perceptions (annually supported tours of performers and lecturers from Ireland presenting to our chapters and local community programs); awards and grants such as the Muriel Gahan Arts award, O'Malley Art Award, NUI-Galway Fellowship and the Irish Research Fund; and initiatives such as Irish American Kids, would not be possible without the generosity of individuals like you.

Each year we receive countless requests for funding to support worthy and deserving projects. We regret that too many of these requests go unfulfilled for a lack of available funding. One hundred percent of your year-end donation will be used to fund programming and projects.

*How will your tax-free contribution be used?*

- Educational initiatives that will provide teachers, students, and parents the tools necessary to better understand the culture and history of Ireland and Irish America.
- Expanded financial support for the work and presentations of historians, artists, musicians, local community groups and institutions that actively promote, preserve, and enhance our cultural legacy.
- Scholarships and financial aid for Irish Way students that might otherwise never have the opportunity to experience studying abroad.
- The expansion of our national network of organizations and institutions working together to promote and celebrate Irish culture at a local community level.

When you encounter the music, theatre, language, art, and history of Ireland and Irish America, you can take comfort in knowing that your gift has directly contributed to the preservation and promotion of our culture. Your donation is fully tax-deductible, as we are a 501(c) (3) charitable organization. We must continue to preserve the cultural traditions of Ireland for the coming generations.

Please consider making a gift today in support of the Irish American Cultural Institute.

Happy Holidays,

F. Peter Halas, MD  
Chairman

# Can Irish Catholicism Return to its Previous Glory?

by

**Raymond D. Aumack**

Last month I wrote an explicit analysis of the Spiritual decline of Catholic Ireland. To my surprise, the article was well received on both sides of the Atlantic. The Irish Republic, only a few years ago, was hailed as the brightest star in the Catholic world. There was greater number of practicing Catholics in Ireland than there was at the Vatican. The fall from grace was steep and sudden. Having delved so deeply into the crisis, I felt that I should make some attempt to both research and articulate possible solutions to the problem.

The problem is far more complex than appears on the surface. One dear friend said that they need a few strong bishops to make them tow the mark. Good luck with that thought. Church hierarchy is fashioned after the feudal system. The feudal system is long dead. The Church just hasn't realized it yet.

The episcopacy was never a royal appointment. Pope Frances wants bishops to get their hands dirty with God's work and to work closely enough with the rest of us that we can share the smell of our sweat from our labor. The bishops felt that the problem was the creeping secularism from Europe. I felt the problem was clericalism rather than secularism. That is not to say that secularism is not an influence. It certainly is if we only fear it and try to hide from it. Part of the mission of Pope Francis is to engage with the secular. From Vatican II the mission of the Church is to sanctify the secular. He has given us his personal example on how to do that. No pope can do everything. He needs his bishops to get on the same page he reads from.

There was a time when *Roma locuta est, causa finite est*. Rome has spoken; the situation is solved. It appears as if those days are gone forever. The many bishops consecrated during the 26-year reign of St. John Paul, were selected because they had the same mentality and world view as the pope did. It was a very conservative mentality that empowered the institutional church while it seemed to marginalize the billion plus of worshipping Catholics across the face of the earth. Trickle-down spirituality seems to be just as sterile as trickle-down economics.

The fact that the Catholic Church in Ireland has been considered the state church of Ireland is a mixed blessing. The numbers that were reported for the Vatican ledgers were outstanding and this was something the bishops could point out with great pride. What they didn't realize was that the faith of the people reflected in the practices of the Church was eroding. Bishops were very distant from the people. The priests were badly trained for pastoral work. Seminary training was barely adequate until it became inadequate. The expectation was that the lives of the people

of Ireland would continue as it had for the previous two centuries. Change was not anticipated and where it was recognized, it was not tolerated.

The world of western Europe was dramatically changing and that carried over into Ireland. The “Celtic Tiger” represented unparalleled wealth in the country. This was followed by the disappointment and hardships related to a precipitous financial crash. There was a long period of planned dependence on the European Union while Ireland recovered from financial disaster. Contrary to all expectations Ireland endured the draconian expectations of the EU and was restored to financial stability. Change was the order of the day. Europe had changed. Ireland was changing with the will of the people leading the way.

The theocracy that was Ireland was also changing and the bishops had established themselves as an opposition party far too late. Change had already been made in the hearts of the people and the Church, represented by the bishops and clergy, failed to recognize that it was happening. Pope Francis has referred to this as the infantilization of the laity with the false understanding by the clergy, that the people could not live without their guidance. For better and for worse in some cases, the people of Ireland had overthrown the emotional enslavement of the church before the clergy even knew they were escaping. The people abandoned the only Church they knew and there was nothing to replace it. They overthrew the Church of the Irish clergy, the church of obey, pay, and pray, in that order, and there was no one to teach them about the Church of Jesus Christ.

I will present in this article some steps that can be taken to possibly restore the full beauty of Irish Catholicism. I will organize my thoughts in three categories, The Bishops, The Priests, and the people of Ireland. As with almost every problem, the solutions are as complex as the problem. I noted, the problem ties into the national culture, the continually evolving political situation, always struggling to keep up with the people of Ireland; the spiritual vacuum resulting from the attitudes of clergy that were never trained to deal with the dramatic changes that were taking place in Ireland, and in the lives of the faithful. The leadership of the Church seems to have been caught by surprise. The people were victimized by what Pope Francis called “the infantilization of the laity.” Yet the rest of the world acknowledged that the Irish people of the last four decades provided the best educated and trained workforce in Europe. The younger population was far better educated and were well capable of leadership roles in the workforce and in society at large. For them, the Irish Catholicism of the previous 100 years did not relate to the experience of their lives. In fact, it wasn’t the Catholicism that was proclaimed by the Church. Christ was not the center.

Following is a series of quotes from an article the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Rev. Dr, Diarmuid Martin.

### **The Role of the Bishops**

Dr, Diarmuid Martin was one of the few among Ireland’s twenty-three bishops that had an accurate insight into what was happening in the world of Irish Catholicism. He had his finger on the pulse of the people and his heart was breaking at the fleeting possibilities of a vibrant faith among the people. The more he tried to alert his fellow bishops, the less tolerance they had for him. He was the outlier and for all practical purposes, they kept him isolated. This is from an

article he wrote for the Irish Times. The article was republished in just about every major newspaper in the world within a few weeks.

THE Vatican Council was without doubt one of the most significant cultural events of the 20th century for Irish culture taken as a whole, especially through its documents on the Church, the Church in the Modern World and on Religious Freedom, and thus on the concept of pluralism.

Was Irish Catholicism ready for radical change? Not only was the Church culture of the time inadequate to face the challenge of change, but that culture was, in itself something that made real and realistic change more difficult.

That the once-conformist Ireland changed so rapidly and with few tears, was read as an indication of a desire for change, but perhaps it was also an indication that the earlier conformism was covering a shallow faith and a faith built on a faulty structure which people no longer really endorsed.

The good old days of traditional mid-20th century Irish Catholicism may, in reality, not have been so good and healthy after all. (The Irish Times, Nov. 2017)

Archbishop Martin goes on in the article to describe how the clergy sex abuse scandal was the body blow that so negatively impacted the Catholic Church in Ireland. The sexual abuse scandals have affected the faith of many and at the same time they were an indication of an underlying crisis of faith where the self-protective institution had become in many ways decoupled from the horror which ordinary people rightly felt.

The emerging post Vatican II new religious culture, with its stress on the role of the laity, found itself, once again betrayed by a culture of clerical self-protection.

All of this indicates how Ireland needs to do much more to incorporate a broad spectrum of activity of laymen and women in the life of the Church and to be witnesses to their faith in the emerging Irish culture. The Church of Irish Catholicism was totally unprepared for the Vatican Council basically because the clergy was unprepared. In fact, the council was a threat to the power the clergy wielded over the people.

The Church in Ireland is very lacking precisely in "keen intellects and prolific pens addressing the pressing subjects of the day".

Many of the reform movements are still clerically led and still fundamentally clerical in their vision of the Church. They represent an older generation.

Martin goes on to tell the story of how he was received by Pope Benedict on the occasion of first *ad limina* visit (a presentation together with an official report about the state of the Archdiocese) 10 years ago, He was well prepared with all the statistics and analysis of the bright spots and the shadows of Catholicism in Dublin.

The Pope, in his wisdom, started the conversation immediately by asking: "Where are the points of contact between the Church in Ireland and those areas where the future of Irish culture is being formed?"

Instead of asking about the number of parishes, he quizzed me about the relationship between faith and universities, and media, and politics, in art and literature, as well as fundamental ethical issues on economy and society.

Pope Benedict also had his finger on the weakening pulse of Irish Catholicism.

Pope Benedict's question is still today a vital one for the Church in Ireland to address and on which to reflect.

The Catholic Church in Ireland will have to learn a new manner of being present in society. A Protestant leader from Northern Ireland told Martin recently that some years ago, he would have spoken of change in Church culture "from management to mission". Now, he said, we have to move "from monuments to movements".

The Catholic Church in Ireland has to avoid wasting time and resources in keeping in place and maintaining monuments: physical, structural, institutional, and financial.

The Irish Church in the future must become be a much more monument-less one, but rather one which reaches out into hearts and becomes heart-driven through the conviction of those who feel touched and inspired by the message and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Faith is not about establishment. It is about taking the risk of abandoning one's own security in order to be like the God who did not cling to the trappings of power and authority, but who gave himself totally for our sakes.

This is a message which is difficult to comprehend and realize especially by those who have a leadership role in the Church and who are open to the perennial temptations to defend and even to abuse the power which was given into our hands to be servants.

The Church has to become less narrowly institutional and allow other forms of charismatic presence to animate the Church.

Many of the attempts to address the question of the drop in the numbers of priests are still priest-centered, rather than focusing on the role of the wider believing community in different forms of leadership.

This, of course, cannot be inspired by trying to replace priests through laymen and lay women becoming substitute priests.

It requires new ways of ensuring that every member of the Church becomes a missionary disciple of Jesus.

## **Leadership**

This search for different forms of leadership is not a question of the sociology of leadership, but a form of trying to follow Christ whose concept of leadership though service was revolutionary in its time and remains revolutionary today.

We need flexible interaction which can address the future. Above all, we need new ways of reaching out to and involving young people actively in the Christian life.

How do we move towards institutional reform and achieve a less monumental Church structure? Where are the focal points which will foster such a move?

Institutions have an innate resistance to change and a tendency to self-preservation.

Some of the attempts at Church reform have only increased bureaucracy and bureaucracy is even more resistant to change.

### **Religious Education**

With the exception of Catholic Schools Week, the Irish religious education establishment is fixated on questions of ownership and management and too little on the purpose of the Catholic school and the outcomes of Catholic education in terms of faith formation.

It is stressed that Catholic schools are most welcoming of people of different faiths and of social background and of educational disability. That is indeed true.

This is not, however, a reason for maintaining patronage of most of the primary schools in the country, when more and more people want something else.

Christian doctrine is taught text-book style in both the Catholic schools and the state schools. There is very little movement to incorporate religious education as part of the parish ministry. While there is a fairly good grasp of textbook learning, there is minimal experience of what it means to follow Christ. There is little if any faith experience. There is very little experience of what it means to be part of a Christian Community. If enrollment policies become more diversified, equality and non-discrimination legislation will be used to challenge any exclusive denominational character in the ethos of a State school, except where necessary to protect the rights of minorities.

The risk now looms large that it will become more and more difficult to maintain a true Catholic ethos in Catholic schools.

The move towards parishes undertaking more effective faith formation of young people is minuscule.

Archbishop Martin fears that much of the debate about schools fails to address the real challenges about the religious education of our young people.

The bishops are not on the same page. What is written above is the opinion of one bishop. The other twenty-two bishops seem to have nothing to say. The Church in Ireland is a feudal system. There are a number of fiefdoms, twenty-three of them, one for each bishop. Each bishop is responsible for a number of parishes in his allotted territory each of which has a pastor in charge. The pastor rules the parish following the model of the feudal system. He is absolute in authority and usually lets everyone know that. In many areas of the country, there is one priest for several parishes. The average age of the parish priest is 57. However, only two candidates have entered the seminary this year. We'll touch on some ideas for priestly formation later in the article.

### **The Role of the Laity**

Ireland needs to do much more to incorporate a broad spectrum of activity of laymen and women in the life of the Church and to be witnesses to their faith in the emerging Irish culture

The principal contribution of Church institutions in an increasingly secular society is, as Pope Benedict put it, "to witness to God in a world that has problems finding Him... and to make God visible in the human face of Jesus Christ, to offer people access to the source without which our morale becomes sterile and loses its point of reference".

Christian faith is not just a faith about doctrines or about rules and regulations or about ethical standards against which we have to measure our own moral behavior. It is not just about reforming structures. It is about the ability to preach and witness to the message of Jesus.

Reform in the Church is not in the first place about the redistribution of power, but about the redefinition of power in terms of the way in which Jesus revealed who God is.

The attitude of the laity is amply documented by the referendum on gay marriage. The fear Martin read in an Irish Times article is that that Irish Society is not one that will condemn new law but will establish competing societies. While that is a valid argument on paper, that kind of positioning is not characteristic of the Irish people. The state now guarantees that persons with a homosexual orientation will not face a prison sentence. Society may have become more confusing than it was in the 1960s, but it is probably far more kind. It is less keen to throw stones at people which, lest we forget, Jesus himself opposed.

There are two stories of the Irish Catholic Church. One is the story of the powerful institution that became unhealthfully intertwined with the state, a state dominated by one party.

Neither model was conservative in the worse sense: authoritarian, entrenched, and out of touch with the needs of the people. *Covering up the sex abuse scandal was the sickest manifestation of its ethos.*

The other story of the Church is an institution that realized the need to reach beyond the dictates of doctrine to lurch toward progressivism. In many ways it has become a church of social service that gives and gives without asking anything of its congregants. It creates a sense of dependency and doesn't treat the laity honestly, as mature souls. While it promotes healing, it does not promote the healing ministry of Christ.

Neither model reflects the Church of the centuries past with Jesus Christ as the center. Neither Church seems to have an interest in molding either the clergy or the laity in the rich traditions of the church of history or the lofty goals of the Vatican Council. The land of saints and scholars no longer had the tools to produce great saints. Spiritual enrichment was measured by adherence to the rules and the keeping of traditions. Obedience to the pastor and the bishops became the key to salvation.

Archbishop Martin has pointed out that there is a need to reach out to young people, who seemed to be totally lost in the shuffle. He rightly thought that if this generation is lost, the people of Ireland would be lost for decades.

Religious education is taught in all the schools, public and Catholic alike. Christianity is taught just like geography is taught. The Sacraments of the lay priesthood, Baptism, Confirmation, and

the Eucharist are taught in the same impassioned monotone as the location of Japan, Myanmar, and Honduras. You can imagine that pubescent youngsters are hardly interested. There is no relationship to the local parishes; there is no experience of Christian community; there is no opportunity to relate the healing Christ in service to the community. The celebration of the Eucharist for young people would be exactly the same as the no involvement activity that takes place in the Church each Sunday. The young people in the pews are as lifeless as the statues that surround them.

## **Ah, but there are signs of hope on the horizon**

### **The Initiative of the Laity**

Spiritfest is an initiative planned, organized, and implemented by the Parish Pastoral Council. It is an outreach to the entire parish go celebrate, explore and discuss our faith understanding of the Church in the world today. One of its aims was to be inclusive as possible with roles for the elderly as well as children. They designed varying experiences in the effort to appeal to everyone. This program is a relaxed family-like environment.

This an interactive effort to rebuild the Christian community that is the parish. It is similar to many practices in the United States both on the parish and Archdiocesan level. At one time, the Cursillo Movement and the Catholic Family Movement generated incredible enthusiasm among the faithful and, at the same time, educated and spiritually formed lay leaders in the parish community. It also formed leaders for the community. Similar programs are being developed for the parish level. A program in my own parish, St. Cassian's at Upper Montclair, called following Christ was outstanding and attracted a large number of parishioners each Wednesday for seven weeks. The following year we had a second-step presentation and it generated a lot of enthusiasm in the parish

These programs are developed and directed by lay people. The priest is the spiritual advisor as well as a participant. The shock in Ireland is that lay people planned, organized and implemented.

Spiritfest is too new to analyze its effectiveness. However, where it has been implemented, it is wildly successful.

### **Priests**

There is a serious division among priests of Ireland. There are approximately 1200 active priests though the retirement age is 75. The average age of the priest is 60 give or take a year or two. Only two men entered the seminary for the class of 2023. What is interesting is that they are over 60 men and women currently enrolled in the Theology programs at the seminary.

The clergy sex abuse scandal has placed a black cloud over all the clergy. Though less than 3% of clergy have been involved in sex abuse, anyone who wears a Roman collar is automatically suspect. The priest has lost his privileged standing as a leader in the community. This was a body blow to vocations to the priesthood.

As the churches empty, the priest becomes less relevant. That, combined being overworked in an indifferent environment, frequently leads to depression. In this case, the priest is less effective to minister to those who need him.

The division among priest goes back to the Vatican Council. The conservatives were those who did not buy into the dramatic changes of Vatican II, and there were those who did.

The ministry of Pope John Paul II was for 28 years. Seminary training was very conservative. Priest carried that conservatism into their parishes. For a while, there was no change. With the emergence of the “Celtic Tiger” the world of the people of Ireland changed. They adapted well to the changing world around them. The church did not. People were better educated, more aware of life around them, more financially secure, and their children were better educated. There were many professional opportunities that were very interesting, and priesthood was not among them.

Celibacy is an issue. The loneliness and isolation of the parish priest became apparent to young people who were otherwise good candidates for priesthood.

Ironically, the older priests, those who entered ministry before the reign of John Paul II were far more progressive than the younger priests and they do not relate well with each other,

While the Church is not changing doctrine, the development of existing doctrine projects what is considered as undermining the foundations of the Church.

The divisions at the Vatican, as they become known, also challenge the faith of the priest, especially those who live their lives enclosed in the cocoon of traditional values, authority, and older expressions of doctrine.

Losing the public referenda on abortion and gay marriage was a critical blow to the clergy who fought valiantly against the referenda, but lost to the will of the people. What was also lost was the authority they felt they had over the people.

They have to deal with the role of women in the Church. Our discrimination against women is unconscionable. Women are smart, talented, and capable. They can do anything a priest can do except celebrate sacraments. We may see a day when women will be ordained. We may see a day when married men can be ordained, or priests can marry after ordination.. Celibacy is a spiritual charism that doesn't seem to contribute much to building the Kingdom of God on Earth.

We are at a stage in our history where we should build a lay ministry to support the work of priests in our parishes.

### **What to do**

The twenty-three bishops should read from the same page. The disunity among priests and people begins with them. They have a responsibility to bury their differences and find a way to function together and speak with one voice. Rethinking what it means to be a bishop may give them new insights into their role. Part of that role is to lead, not control. They have to get out and

meet with the people. The conservative and liberal each have gifts that can benefit the other. They will never know them unless they learn to respect and communicate with each other.

Rethinking seminary training can have revolutionary results. We can't train a priest in a 19<sup>th</sup> century semi-monastic atmosphere and expect him to function in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

The same is true of the priests. The bishops will lead the way. Workshop retreats where they can work and pray together will go a long way to reduce barriers and bury divisiveness. There are issues with which they have to deal and one of them is to rethink the role of the priest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ministry is the work of the whole community. The priest is the shepherd and leader of that community. We can learn much from the laity. They see the world differently. One of the structures that helped priests in our diocese is the priest support group. Four priests will meet every couple of weeks to share their lives, ministry, hopes, dreams, as well as the issues that can help with specific parish problems. Priests who speak together, pray together, eat and drink together in an atmosphere of trust where they can share the mysteries of their lives, find themselves spiritually renewed.

Is there hope for the Church in Ireland? Yes,!! It is going to take a lot of work, and a lot of soul searching and interpersonal dialogue. The national Priest Association is a help, but each priest needs more intimate support such as the priest support group.

Involve the laity in the ministry of your parish. A Pastoral Council helps but involve as many parishioners as you can. Lay people will help priests to think creatively, encourage their leader to be daring, and renew the parish in a dramatic fashion. You are their leader, the president of their assembly. A pastor not their boss. A pastor does not control or dominate them.

These articles were written because the problem of the decline of Church in Catholic Ireland raised. It was felt that there was a need to research some solutions. It is a good thing to think about because the Church in America is experiencing. This author doesn't pretend to have all the answers or to even know the complexity of the problem. I feel badly for Irish priests and I feel badly for American priests as well. We need our priests and we need them to be Spirit filled. God gave us the Church, and, a human institution filled with problems and challenges us to find solutions. It may require long reflection on what it means to be a Christian community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# The Times that Try Men's Souls

## Good Intelligence Needed

### John Honeyman – Washington's Man in New Jersey

Washington also utilized individuals as spies for single, specific missions. One such agent was personally recruited by Washington to report on enemy capabilities at Trenton, New Jersey. **John Honeyman**, an Irish immigrant and a weaver by trade, had previously informed the American leader that he was willing to assist the Revolutionary cause. In autumn 1776, Washington asked Honeyman to move to New Brunswick, New Jersey. Honeyman did so, entered the cattle business there, and supplied meat to British forces in the area. Washington arranged for him to be publicly denounced as a British sympathizer.

Through his business dealings with the British and their Hessian mercenaries, and by underscoring his service on the British side in the French and Indian War, Honeyman was able to develop close relationships with - and elicit intelligence information from - British officers in Trenton, including their commander. In mid-December 1776, Washington directed American forces to seize Honeyman. The "arrest," on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, enabled Washington to debrief Honeyman on enemy activities and intentions in the Trenton area without compromising the fact that he was an American agent. He was also given false information to pass to the British after his "escape" from the Americans.

Honeyman reported that British troops had been sent to New York City for the winter, leaving only Hessian forces in Trenton. He also noted that the Hessian commander, Colonel Rall, though courageous, was an arrogant individual, contemptuous of American forces. The commander was lax about defensive preparations, had not ordered his men to build fortifications, and had a serious drinking problem. Honeyman also provided a map showing all enemy locations around Trenton.

After his "escape", Honeyman told the Hessians that he had seen the American winter quarters and found no signs of any troop movements. Washington, acting on Honeyman's intelligence and having sown the seeds of deception through Honeyman's remarks to the Hessians about American inaction, moved his forces across the Delaware River on Christmas night and launched a surprise attack the next morning. The Hessians were hung over from their Christmas partying, had no time to organize, and were quickly forced to surrender. While a minor triumph in military terms, the victory at Trenton came at a critical time for the American side and was a strategic victory in political and morale terms--thanks in large part to excellent intelligence work by an Irish Patriot and his American Commander-in-Chief.

<https://www.cia.gov/>

## This Day in Irish History – December

**2nd** 1999 - Irish government ratifies changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution.

**3rd** 1925 - The Boundary Commission recommends no change to the border.

**4th** 1967 - The first independent computer in Ireland is introduced at Shannon Airport.

1971 - 15 people die in the bombing of McGurk's Bar.

**6th** 1890 - 44 members of the Irish Parliamentary Party walk out in protest at Parnell's leadership.

1921 - Treaty signed in London, allowing for the creation of a 'Free State' in a partitioned Ireland.

1922 - Irish Free State officially comes into existence.

1976 - Dr Patrick Hillery becomes the Sixth President of Ireland.

1982 - The INLA kill 17 people with a bomb attack on the Droppin Well Inn.

**7th** 1979 - Charles Haughey is elected leader of Fianna Fáil.

1933 - Blueshirts banned by the Irish government.

1980 - Margaret Thatcher becomes the first British PM to visit Ireland since independence.

9th 1973 - The Sunningdale Agreement.

10th 1974 - Seán MacBride wins the Nobel Prize for Peace.

11th 1920 - British forces set fire to the centre of Cork.

1979 - Charles Haughey becomes Taoiseach.

2000 - President Clinton arrives in Dublin.

12th 1928 - First Irish coinage issued.

1936 - Following the abdication of King Edward VIII, the Executive Authority (External Relations) Act is passed to abolish the crown and role of the king in constitutional law.

1955 - Cork Opera House is destroyed by fire.

13th 1867 - Attempted rescue of Richard O'Sullivan Burke from Clerkenwell Jail results in twelve civilian deaths.

1922 - Oireachtas meets for the first time.

1972 - President Éamon de Valera signs documents covering Ireland's entry into the EEC.

14th 1955 - Ireland is admitted to the United Nations.

15th 1844 - St. Malachy's Church in Belfast is dedicated.

1993 - Downing Street Declaration issued by Taoiseach Albert Reynolds and British PM John Major.

16th 1921 - The British House of Parliament accepts the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

18th 1946 - The Irish government announces the release of 24 internees, including Brendan Behan.

1953 - The Censorship Board bans almost 100 publications.

19th 1974 - Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh becomes the fifth President of Ireland.

1981 - The Dublin-registered Union Star sinks on its maiden voyage with sixteen casualties.

20th 1961 - Robert McGladdery becomes the last man to be legally executed in Northern Ireland.

21st 1916 - Announcement made at the British House of Commons that all prisoners from the Easter Rising will  
be released.

1948 - President Seán T. O'Kelly signs the Republic of Ireland Bill at a ceremony at Áras an Uachtaráin.

23rd 1895 - Opening of Grand Opera House in Belfast.

1939 - Ammunition is stolen from the national arsenal at Phoenix Park by the IRA.

24th 1889 - Charles Stewart Parnell publicly accused of adultery.

1895 - Fifteen people die in the Kingstown Lifeboat Disaster.

25th 1945 - In his presidential address, Seán T. O'Kelly calls on the young to support the Irish language.

27th 1997 - LVF leader Billy Wright shot dead in prison by the INLA.

28th 1821 - Four lifeboat men drown while rescuing the brig of the crew Ellen of Liverpool at Sandycove.

1918 - Sinn Féin win a landslide victory in the Irish general election.

29th 1908 - The Irish Transport Workers' Union is founded with James Larkin as general secretary.

1937 - The Constitution of Ireland comes into force.

1967 - A new redundancy payments scheme is announced.

31st 1909 - Harry Ferguson becomes the first person to fly in Ireland, using his own monoplane.

1961 - Teilifís Éireann goes on air.

1998 - The punt is traded for the last time and the Euro is launched.

CHRISTMAS TRIVIA

The ilex and the hедера. Better known as ????? & ???	Holly and Ivy
What specific type of plant is mistletoe?	Parasitic
The three wise men (or three Kings) were traditionally Kaspar, Balthazar and	Melchior
What present is traditionally given at Chanukah to children?	A dreidl, or spinning top
On the 12th day of Christmas there were 12 what?	Drummers, drumming
Who sang Fairytale of New York?	Shane McGowan and Kirsty MacColl
"Nadolig Llawen" is "Happy Christmas" in	Welsh
Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and ??	Blitzen
Name a religion that celebrates Diwali.	Hinduism, Sikhism or Jainism
What is the name given to the patterns drawn outside homes at Diwali?	Rangoli
Which carol is this? "Lullay, lullay thou little tiny child, Bye bye, lullay, lullay"	The Coventry Carol
On December 13th, girls in Sweden dress as which saint?	St Lucia
What is Happy Christmas in Irish?	Nollaig Shona
Whose Christmas song is A Spaceman Came Travelling?	Chris De Burgh
What bird was once hunted on St Stephen's Day in Ireland?	The wren
The German cake eaten at Christmas is called a	Stollen
Black bun is eaten at New Year in?	Scotland
Befana brings presents in which European country?	Italy
The feast day of St Nicholas is what date in Dec?	December 6th
St Nicholas was Bishop of Myra. Where is Myra? (country).	Turkey

Who wrote the poem The Night Before Christmas?	Clement Clarke Moore
The first Christmas crib (Nativity scene) was made in Assisi by ????	St. Francis
Who sang The Christmas Song?	Nat King Cole
Where did The Carol of the Bells originate?	Ukraine
What is the English name of the Irish carol, Carúl Loch Garman?	The Wexford Carol
What is the winter treat, Gluehwein?	Mulled, or spiced wine
Carols from which Cambridge college are a Christmas tradition?	Kings
Which James Joyce short story is set at a snowy Christmas time?	The Dead
Who is credited with bringing the Christmas tree to Britain and Ireland?	Queen Victoria
What date is the winter solstice, usually?	December 21st
Which famous actor (The African Queen, Casablanca) was born on Christmas Day?	Humphrey Bogart
On what day are Christmas presents traditionally given in Germany?	Christmas Eve
Complete the line "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem how .."	"... still we see thee lie"
Star lights, or 'parols' are a feature of Christmas in which country?	The Philippines
What is the more common name of Picea abies, a Christmas feature?	The Norway Spruce (Christmas tree)
Loy Krathong is a festival of light from which country?	Thailand
What is myrrh?	A bitter-smelling ointment
The poinsettia is native to which country?	Mexico
Carp is a Christmas dish in which country?	Poland
Who established the Christmas tree as a counterpoint to the Catholic Nativity scene?	Martin Luther
What winter festival honours African-American culture?	Kwanzaa
Nos Galan' are New Year races held in which country	Wales

The first written record of a Christmas tree is from what Baltic state?	Estonia
One of Jesus' presents was gold. What is the chemical symbol for gold?	Au
Tom Smith invented what Christmas tradition	Christmas crackers
What is the chief filling of Christmas mince pies?	Dried fruit
"The Toy Show" is a special seasonal edition of which Irish TV programme?	The Late Late Show
Which German cathedral contains a shrine to the Three Kings?	Koeln (Cologne)
Which of the Gospels contain the Christmas story?	Matthew and Luke
When was the Christmas card invented?	1843
Where did turkeys first come from?	North America
What sauce is usually served with Christmas pudding?	Brandy or rum
When was Christmas banned in England?	1647
What coin was once placed in Christmas puddings?	A silver sixpence
Which company is said to have popularised Santa's red coat?	Coca Cola
What name do Pagans give to the Winter solstice?	Yule
What is New Year called in Scotland?	Hogmanay
Who sang "A Christmas Dream"?	Perry Como
Who was visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past?	Ebenezer Scrooge
James Stewart starred in which Christmas film?	It's A Wonderful Life