

# WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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## Locked down, spirits up

WE HAVEN'T heard from our occasional contributor Kevin Whelan, the poet and roadsweeper from Moycullen, a Gaeltacht village seven miles outside Galway City, for a while, and I was wondering how he was weathering the covid storm.

"I have traded my brush for a mop," he tells us. "Yes, your correspondent is now a *hero*." How so, Kev? "Six weeks ago I was hired by the regional hospital to work as a cleaner. A case of all hands on deck. I was assigned the cardiac day ward. *Serious* work and often exhausting. There are five different kinds of binliner, all contained in a large plastic trolley with many mop heads and different coloured cloths for different surfaces and locations. The war against germs is unending. Once more unto the bleach!"

He's teasing me. "None of us is caught up in all the 'hero' codology. We are just fairly ordinary people quietly going about our jobs. Doctors, nurses, porters, cleaners ... all of us. It's the so-called 'ordinary people' who are doing much of the heavy lifting during this nightmare, especially the students, teens,



foreign workers – Brazilians, Spanish, Romanians – who have stepped up to the plate. They are stoic and cheerful and bloody good workers, and just crack on. People say, and it's very kind of them, 'Good for you, Kev. Great work' but I'm just glad I have a job that pays quite well and am for the time being no longer broke."

PAT GAFFNEY, who stepped down last year after 29 years as general secretary of the English and Welsh branch of Pax Christi, the international Catholic movement for

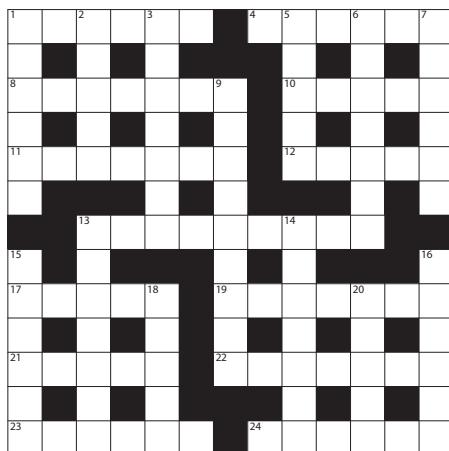
peace, has been arrested 11 times and imprisoned four times. She lives alone in a small flat in south London. "I thought I had cracked social distancing so was taken aback when I was challenged to 'get out of the way' when I was out for my hour's exercise in my local park. Usually, I am drawn to people like a magnet but now I have to keep my distance while trying to maintain some kind of humanity." As Pat put its it, in these strange times, "Our bodies and emotions don't seem to be synched."

Pat's weekly vigil with Women in Black – a world-wide network of women committed to peace – has been put on hold after many uninterrupted years. "But our stand against violence, war and their impact on women continues. Our 'solidarity at a distance' vigil reaches many more people via social media. We share an image and call for action each week: stopping arms sales to Saudi Arabia; remembering the impact of war and sanctions on the people of Iran; highlighting domestic and military violence towards women. There has been a frightening increase in domestic violence since the lockdown started."

Like many of us who treasure the look of a friendly face, social media platforms have become a lifeline for Pat. "They allow me to be outward-looking at this inward time."

## PUZZLES

### PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 705 Axe



#### Across

- 1 Really strange place in which Paul gets stoned (6)  
4 They believe in India, hard work, less tax (6)  
8 RC teachers sit awkwardly in Roman deity's clutches (7)  
10 Head for monastery after seaman throttling bishop needs to be reflecting (5)  
11 Hi, Tracy: new hope's in place after Faith's lead! (7)  
12 Bishop in Nantes of 20's 51, and regularly rides in an odd vehicle (5)  
13 Variety of pi anthems points to a belief in many gods (9)  
17 Son of Abraham's church one returns to first (5)  
19 Where David sheltered on a leaden morning (7)

- 21 Credit wartime spies for finding religious symbol (5)  
22 Writing *The Crucifixion* he's one that leaves an indelible mark (7)

- 23 He prophesied, in dividing bread, hard time to return (6)  
24 False god's brief is to dishonour yours truly for abandoning the usurper (6)

- 6 Gomer's dad, indomitably composed, dismissed poor Tony (7)

- 7 Roman god's body, adorned with rings (6)  
9 NT people north of the Black Sea use a short sharp blade to subdue the Scotsmen (9)  
13 For and against East German for role in the college church or the cathedral (7)  
14 With old 3 government interference in Swedish business the king abdicated to somewhere biblical (7)  
15 Cleric's firm, collected, for a second-in-command (6)  
16 Northerner abandons frontiers to find a place around Assisi, in Italy (6)  
18 Book a little house on the ocean (5)  
20 Nothing upsets our lot when meeting the Pope (5)

#### Down

- 1 One of Cain's descendants is handicapped by the church (6)  
2 Biblical country songs reverberate around the Fourth of July (5)  
3 Two boys join part of the Orthodox Church (7)  
5 Ancestor's almost given up on account's savings plan (5)

### SUDOKU | Challenging

			2	5		8
	4		5		6	
6			9			3
			5	1		
7		8		2		
5	3	4				
7		2	1		8	
	9					
4	8					

Solution to the 11 April puzzle

8	2	6	9	7	1	5	4	3
7	5	3	6	8	4	2	1	9
9	4	1	3	5	2	6	7	8
1	8	4	7	6	9	3	5	2
2	9	5	4	1	3	7	8	6
6	3	7	5	2	8	1	9	4
3	1	2	8	4	7	9	6	5
5	7	8	2	9	6	4	3	1
4	6	9	1	3	5	8	2	7

Solution to the 11 April crossword No. 702

- Across:** 1 Pascal; 4 Bagoas; 8 Islam; 9 Abishai; 10 Susanna; 11 Edrei; 12 Arthaveda; 17 Achan; 19 Assyria; 21 Syrians; 22 Leper; 23 Ridley; 24 Oswald. **Down:** 1 Priest; 2 Salt Sea; 3 Ammon; 5 Abilene; 6 Ophir; 7 Spirit; 9 Aramaeans; 13 Tyndale; 15 Caesar; 16 Sacred; 18/14 Herod Agrippa; 20 Silas.

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