

# WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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## Steely courage

THERE WAS an outpouring of affection and sadness following the death earlier this month of the Dominican Sister and pioneering Irish historian Dr Margaret MacCurtain at the age of 91. President Michael D. Higgins led tributes to Cork-born “Sr Ben” (she never took to the “very charming but very silly” Italian name she had been given when she entered – Benvenuta), recalling her campaign for the abolition of corporal punishment in schools and advocacy for the rights of children with special educational needs.

MacCurtain highlighted the often neglected role of women in Irish history in a series of books and monographs, and was a key figure in feminist scholarship at a time when it was viewed with scepticism by the male-dominated academic establishment. One of her many former students was our own Sarah Mac Donald, the *Tablet* Ireland correspondent. Sarah remembers not only her sharpness and extraordinary energy but her humility, kindness and generous mentorship.

“There was also her steely courage,” Sarah tells us. “Margaret once described her youthful self as ‘a dinosaur and a novelty, wearing a Dominican habit but teaching very radical



stuff”. When the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, protector of traditional proprieties, got wind of something unsound Margaret had said in a lecture, he demanded that she submit her lecture notes to him for vetting. She refused, and he backed down.”

IN AN interview for the BBC, Emma Mellor explained that when she was 38 weeks pregnant, “the doctors made it really, really, really clear that if I changed my mind on the morning of the induction to let them know. I was told that until my baby had started travelling

down the birth canal, I could still terminate.”

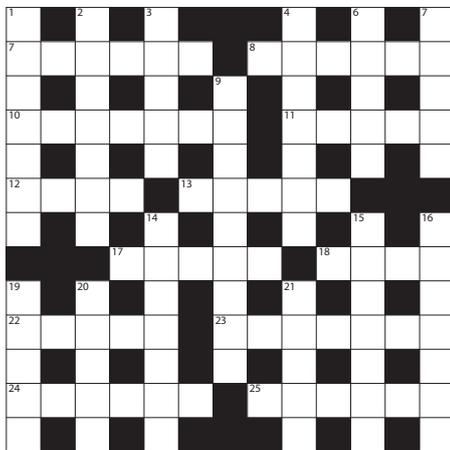
Six weeks earlier a test had showed that Emma’s daughter had Down’s syndrome, like Sister Marie-Ange de Saint Chamas, the woman photographed by Théophile Trossat for this week’s front cover. Aged 24, Emma already had a young son, Logan. He was on the waiting list for surgery, having been born with a hole in his heart. The recommended termination method after 22 weeks is by an injection into the heart. Emma could not imagine ending her daughter’s life with an injection to stop her heart beating while she was waiting to fix her son’s. “We decided to carry on and hope for the best.”

Five years on, Jaimie attends a mainstream school in Lincolnshire. “She lights up the room and people just gravitate towards her,” Emma says. “She will undoubtedly face some challenges as she gets older but she is continuously proving that she shouldn’t be underestimated.”

Earlier this month, Heidi Crowter, a woman with Down’s syndrome, won the right to challenge the abortion law at the High Court on the grounds that it discriminates against people with disabilities. She told Gabriella Swerling of *The Sunday Telegraph*: “The current law is unfair. It makes me feel like I shouldn’t exist, and that I’d be better off dead in the eyes of the law.”

## PUZZLES

### PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 730 Enigma



### Across

- 7 A break between two vowels coming together (as in “cooperate”) (6)
- 8 The disciples chose Matthias, in preference to him, to replace Judas (6)
- 10 *The Man in a Case* is a short story by this Russian playwright (7)
- 11 Uncle -----, storyteller in Disney’s *Song of the South* (5)
- 12 In Ancient Egypt; a symbol of life (4)
- 13 Type of poem written by Catullus and Propertius (5)
- 17 Surname of main character in James Thurber’s first short story (5)
- 18 Perform two or more notes legato (4)

- 20 Jewish holy book (5)
- 23 He built the world’s largest privately owned shipping line (7)
- 24 He prophesied “The lion will lie down with the lamb” (6)
- 25 St -----; Irish abbot and missionary (AD 515-600) (6)

### Down

- 1 Native American tribe honoured by Ireland for their help in the Great Famine (7)
- 2 American fitness coach, well known on TV and the internet (7)
- 3 In *The Fairies*, by William Allingham, the glen is thus described (5)
- 4 *Mother* -----, 1939 play by Brecht (7)

- 5 Bacteria, viruses, fungi and protozoa (5)
- 6 *The ----- Train*, 1923 play by one of the cast of *Dad’s Army* (5)
- 9 2001 film in which a meteor brings aliens to Earth (9)
- 14 In *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye imagines life as this (4,3)
- 15 A troublesome organic polymer (7)
- 16 The eyelash gecko is also called the -----gecko (7)
- 19 Zeno of Citium, in the third century BC, founded the school of ----- philosophy (5)
- 20 Last king of Troy (5)
- 21 Abraham’s wife (5)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 31 October, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Paul, Theology and Christian Ethics – from the OUP’s Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

■ We cannot process entries or prizes at present. Please keep entering. Winners will be notified and prizes awarded as soon possible.

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### SUDOKU | Beginner

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

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

### Solution to the 10 October puzzle

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

### Solution to the 10 October crossword No. 727

Across: 7 Avowal; 8 Waiver; 10 Rossini; 11 Hoist; 12 Weld; 13 Esher; 17 Doors; 18 Cana; 22 Atlas; 23 Plumber; 34 Theses; 25 Ethnic.  
Down: 1 Barrows; 2 Fossils; 3 Basic; 4 Cashier; 5 Ovoid; 6 Tritite; 9 Pinstripe; 14 Bolster; 15 Lambent; 16 Barrack; 19 Waltz; 20 Flees; 21 Quote.