

# Straight talking



with 'The Duke'

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## Little real remorse in Rome

The papal letter read out at the weekend was a weak attempt by the Pope to atone for the child abuse allegations and I don't think that it was enough.

I said it here last week that I am not sure that Cardinal Brady's resignation would achieve anything, but from what I can gather from the

commentary at the weekend, there is little real remorse from the church in Rome at what happened here.

I listened to Fr Brian Darcy giving his opinion last Saturday on RTÉ Radio One and according to him the Vatican will now do the same thing in Ireland that they have done in the USA. It is

called "an apostolic visitation". Apparently they send in a team of heavy hitters from Rome that make sure that the Church will clamp down very hard on any sign of liberal views.

Nuns and brothers will return from the community and go back into convents etc and any word of women priests or

married priests or anything to do with homosexuality will be stamped out immediately.

### STRICT VALUES

Any enhanced role for women in the church will also be stopped. A return to very strict values will be the result of what has happened.

That approach is the right of the church to implement, but the fears of many that the church will be a much slimmed down and much smaller version of what we have been used to will be the result, if that's the way they are going to go.

One interesting thing about the papal letter was the con-

temptation that a loss of faith in Ireland led to the abuse of children. I would have thought that it was that people had too much faith was the big problem.

There was too much respect and faith in the clergy and that led to many of the problems we had. The church is closing ranks it would seem to me.

## New civic offices are a huge boost

The news that new civic offices are to be built in Roscommon town at a cost of €20 million has to be a welcome.

Regular readers of this column will know that I have been complaining ad nauseam about the waste of public money in recent years, but this development is badly needed. The County Council is renting several buildings around Roscommon town over the last number of years at a high cost, and the new offices will mean that practice will stop.

The fact that there will be hundreds of construction jobs involved in the building of the centre is also very welcome. Someone here in this office said this morning that there is now €40 million being spent on three major construction projects in the town. The private health centre development and the government offices on the Golf Links Road and now the proposed €20 million civic office project. It is most welcome indeed and credit where it is due in all three cases.

## Pub industry in freefall

There was a time when the pub trade and publicans were public enemy number one and there is no doubt that for several years, in common with many other businesses the pubs did a roaring trade.

However the industry is in freefall now. This week it was revealed that 1500 pubs have closed down in the country over the past five years and that 1100 more set to go the same way over the next few years. Anyone will tell you that except for Saturday night there is no one going out to the pubs now and most pubs are deserted during the week. How some of them are able to stay open at all is a miracle. I know that there is not much sympathy for publicans, but the costs of running a pub are huge and it is an industry that is really feeling the pinch. When you see the big supermarkets selling alcohol at a price that is cheaper than publicans are paying for it from the wholesaler, then it shows where the problem is.

The people the country are still drinking but it is being done at home now to a large degree. I was involved in the pub business up to two and a half years ago. I was lucky to have got out of it because it is a really tough business to be in now.

## Five-hour turnaround

Thanks to the many people who wrote, texted, and emailed us in praise of last week's edition, which carried a report and pictures of the U21 match between Roscommon and Mayo at Hyde Park last Wednesday. The game was not finished until 5.30 pm, yet Roscommon People was on the streets of the county at 10.30 pm on Wednesday night. We may not have the resources of the other local papers but we are still in there battling and intend to stay there too!

## Worthy fundraisers

There are two local fundraisers going on this Friday night and I hope that both are well supported. Roscommon Show Committee is running a 40th anniversary fund raising dance with Mick Flavin and his band in the Abbey Hotel starting at 10.30 pm. Tickets are €15 each and are available at the door. Earlier at 9.30 pm, also on Friday night in Regan's, there is table quiz in aid of Chernobyl Children. It's a general knowledge table quiz and the tables are €40 each. All are welcome.



Grand marshals at St. Patrick's Day Parade in Boyle, Carlo Cretaro, Boyle Person of the Year and Mary Flynn, U30 Boyle Person of the Year, pictured with members of Boyle Brownies and Cubs. Pic courtesy of realboyle.com

## Cabinet re-shuffle was a non-event

The cabinet re-shuffle was being talked about for the past three months and it took up acres of newsprint and hours of TV and radio time. When it happened yesterday it was probably the biggest non-event of the year.

It was ultra-cautious and a huge opportunity missed by Brian Cowen. How Mary Coughlan and Mary Harney held on to their jobs in the cabinet is mind boggling, given their abject performances over the past 12 months in particular and there are others who are there far too long in their jobs. Mary Hanafin was effectively demoted which is strange, because she seems to be one of the more competent ministers in the cabinet. It is clear now that the sole aim of Brian Cowen is to keep the Government together as long as possible because he knows that if

there was an election, Fianna Fáil would be decimated at the polls. That's why he bowed to The Greens and gave them another junior minister.

The Greens have done very well out of the whole deal. Only Paul Gogarty now remains to be given a big job out of their six TDs. There are several unelected senators and other Greens in big jobs and it would appear that Fianna Fáil will do anything now to keep them sweet. It is also significant to see that the word Employment has been dropped from the name of any department. It is a symbol of the priority – or lack of priority – given to the creation of jobs by the Government.

I have to say that this re-shuffle was a total damp squib and a totally political exercise designed to keep the Government in place for as long as possible.



## Leo has a lot to learn

Leo Varadkar, *top left*, has risen very quickly through the ranks of the Fine Gael party over the past few years. However, he has a lot to learn if he wants to aspire to high office.

His disgraceful performance in the Dáil on Tuesday last proves that the high profile that he has enjoyed over the past two years has gone to his head. When you hear his own colleagues totally distancing themselves from what he said and demanding that he apologise you realise that he has made a total fool of himself. To denigrate Garret Fitzgerald was a huge mistake and he may pay very dearly for it in the future.