

## Drug-drive tests will help... but buckle up

WHETHER they are aimed at rooting out dangerous modern habits or tackling age-old bad behaviour, any measures that help reduce the terrible carnage on the roads in this country are welcome.

Early next year the gardai will address the growing scourge of motorists driving under the influence of illegal narcotics.

Roadside drug-driving test kits which can detect drugs such as cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy will be distributed to the gardai following a training period.

In time they will hopefully prove as effective a deterrent as the breathalyser and just as importantly, clear up the misapprehension among many drug users that driving while high on drugs is not as risky as driving under the influence of alcohol.

But whatever about the role of drink and drugs in the epidemic of road deaths, a review by the Road Safety Authority and the gardai shows that more than a third of drivers and passengers killed on the roads since the start of the year were not wearing their seatbelts. It seems extraordinary that such a simple oversight can still result in such widespread destruction. Some 40 years after the first Fasten Your Seatbelt campaigns, it seems motorists are as guilty as ever of an act of negligence that can only be characterised as irresponsible in the extreme. The Clunk Click campaign of the 1970s was instrumental in dramatically reducing road deaths in the UK. Perhaps it's time for another campaign highlighting how buckling up can be the single most effective factor in saving lives and preventing grave injury.

Perhaps it's also time for another Garda crackdown on seatbelt culprits.

## Cardinal's sin lives on

OF course there was enormous excitement at the arrival into Knock of the first charter flight packed with pilgrims from the US. The attachment of Irish-Americans to their ancestral home is well known but for practising Catholics, there is nowhere more redolent of faith and fatherland than the holy shrine of Knock.

The first transatlantic pilgrims to Knock were led off their flight by Cardinal Timothy Dolan. Tipped as a possible successor to the current Pope, the Archbishop of New York is a formidable Church figure but also a controversial one. When he took charge of the diocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 2002, he inherited a hotbed of paedophilia and child sex abuse. But according to records, much like our own ecclesiastical leaders, protecting the Church from further scandal was uppermost in his mind.

He professed sympathy for the young victims of the notorious Fr Lawrence Murphy who abused up to 200 deaf children in their school, but was later accused of denying them compensation. Just as damagingly, he authorised payments of up to \$20,000 to predatory priests to hasten their departures from their ministry.

By any stretch Cardinal Dolan is not the man to lead the drive to put Knock on the map of major places of pilgrimage, on a par with Lourdes and Fatima. In fact given our own appalling history handling clerical sex abuse, he has the potential to tarnish the project irreparably.

## A picture of positivity

AFTER the Berkeley tragedy, it's wonderful to see the photograph of Dubliner Clodagh Cogley, accompanied by her father at the magnificent Golden Gate Bridge. She is now back in Dublin undergoing rehabilitation while plans are afoot to have her home in Castleknock adapted for her wheelchair. She has come so far since the devastating accident in June that wiped out so many of her friends. The expression on her face at California's iconic landmark tells us everything about her positivity and unquenchable spirit.

## SATURDAY ESSAY



by Mark Dooley

**S**HORTLY before his arrest on suspicion of Elaine O'Hara's murder in 2013, I met Graham Dwyer at a social gathering. This man, who would soon become notorious for his demonic desires and depraved lust for blood, stood before me with little to say. As I discussed the merits of teaching children how to tie their shoelaces, he made his one and only comment: 'I just wear Velcro shoes. It saves all the bother.'

We looked down only to find that he was indeed wearing Velcro shoes. As the group burst into laughter, I noticed that Dwyer was also smiling. After that, he listened without contributing another word.

On the morning of Dwyer's arrest, I remember exclaiming: 'That's the guy with the Velcro shoes!' Ordinary, inconspicuous, banal and unremarkable, Graham Dwyer concealed his dark secrets behind a mask of normality. I had shaken the hand of a violent killer and I was none the wiser.

Last Tuesday, John Buckley stood with his family outside Glasgow High Court. He had come to pay tribute to his beloved daughter Karen, who was bludgeoned to death by Alexander Pacteau on April 11. Pacteau had just confessed to Karen's brutal murder and now it was time for her father to speak.

His heart obviously still in smitherens, Mr Buckley said that to have one's child taken in such a way is 'every parent's worst nightmare'. That nightmare was caused by Pacteau, of whom Mr Buckley had this to say: 'All Karen was doing was making her way home when she was randomly targeted by a cowardly vicious criminal.'

**N**O words of ours can do justice to our feelings towards him. He is truly evil and we hope that he will spend the rest of his life behind bars.'

Alexander Pacteau is only 21 years of age. You would easily pass him on the street and not take a second look. Yet, for no apparent reason, this individual murdered a beautiful young girl before attempting to dispose of her body in a most grotesque manner.

We are at a loss to describe such diabolical actions, which is why John Buckley reached for the only word that carries the full weight of our moral revulsion. 'Evil' is not a word that is used widely these days.

In a secular age, people are put off by its religious connotations. And yet, there is no other word that defines what it is that we confront in the face of such horror. Whenever I think of Graham Dwyer, I recall Hannah Arendt's famous expression 'the banality of evil'.

Arendt was a German-Jewish philosopher who reported on the trial of former Nazi Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961. Eichmann, one of the principal architects of the Holocaust, was

hanged for his crimes on May 31, 1962.

For her part, Arendt did not see Eichmann as a monster. There was nothing about his appearance or countenance which would indicate that he was a mass murderer. To her, he was a banal bureaucrat who appeared totally unexceptional.

We know, of course, that there is nothing unexceptional about people like Adolf Eichmann, Graham Dwyer or Alexander Pacteau.

Their outward banality belies a menacing inner realm where wicked plans are concocted and tightly concealed.

They may walk and work unnoticed in our world, but inside they scheme to bring their fatal fantasies to fruition.

Not for a single moment could I have guessed that Graham Dwyer was a bloodthirsty

psychopath. Not for a second did I think this seemingly uncomfortable man was possessed of such an evil alter ego. Like so many, I was impervious to the heart of darkness that his benign smile concealed.

The problem with explaining away evil is that we find ourselves defenceless against it. In religious societies, most people have a clear conception of what constitutes good and evil. All the great religions clearly define the nature of moral corruption and the deadly consequences of repudiating the sacred in favour of the profane.

However, while it is easy to identify evil in the likes of Adolf Hitler or Pol Pot, it is almost impossible to recognise it in those like Pacteau or Dwyer. We could agree with Ronald Reagan's assessment of the Soviet Union as an 'evil empire', simply

because it was obvious that this was a system designed to suppress, torture and enslave. But what can we do when evil comes with a smiling face or a charming veneer? What can we do when, as Bob Dylan says, 'Satan comes as a man of peace?'

Even in our age of technological sophistication, evil can exist virtually undetected.

In fact, it has greater potential now than ever before, and that is because it can skilfully use technology to achieve its heinous objectives. Think, for example, of how Graham Dwyer used social media to full advantage, and how those who would abduct and abuse children use similar means to groom their victims.

Still, the question arises whether evil actually exists, or is it simply a case of someone having gone terribly wrong in life? Is it right to call Pacteau evil, or

We live in a world of unparalleled sophistication. We value technology over superstition. And we question faith and piety as never before. Even so, argues this moral philosopher – who once met killer Graham Dwyer – there IS still such a thing as...

**PURE**



# EVIL

can his actions be explained on the basis of a bad upbringing, poor choices or a lack of affirmation and recognition?

In using such a highly charged theological term, aren't we in danger of failing to understand the true causes of a person's wickedness, and thus the means by which he might be redeemed?

It is certainly true that not all people who commit appalling actions are evil.

Last week, for example, Savério Bellante was found not guilty of journalist Tom O'Gorman's murder by reason of insanity.

What initially appeared as an episode of pure evil was subsequently explained as the deranged act of an insane man.

Likewise, we can seek reasons to explain why certain youths in some American cities join gangs and commit random murder. In

1995, 14-year-old Tony Hicks was ordered by a gang leader to shoot Tariq Khamisa as he delivered a pizza. Moments later, Hicks fatally shot Tariq in the heart.

Inspired by his Muslim faith, Tariq's father Azim came to realise that his son's slayer was not evil, but a fatherless boy raised in abject poverty.

He visited Hicks in prison and they spoke to each other about their lives and the loss of Tariq. Through their tears, Tony Hicks and Azim Khamisa saw beyond the violence to something deeper, something that inspired Tony to dedicate the rest of his life to working with Azim for an end to youth violence.

There is no moral equivalence between Tony Hicks, on the one hand, and Graham Dwyer and Alexander Pacteau on the other. Tony truly was a victim of dire

circumstance. However, there are simply no mitigating reasons for why Dwyer and Pacteau killed as they did.

The stark reality is that there are people who live alongside us, people who dress, talk and behave like us, but who are, deep down, cruel, callous and cold.

When they look at others, they do not see human beings animated by heart, soul and mind. All they see is a thing to be used, hurt and, in the worst scenarios, erased.

Such people are not insane, are not products of a dysfunctional home or victims of injustice. They are simply those who desire destruction for its own sake. They take pleasure in the agony of others, in their humiliation and in their senseless suffering.

The Nazis were, of course, a



'Banality of evil': Pacteau, main, and Dwyer, above

classic case of this condition. They not only inflicted appalling brutality, but relished the prospect of doing so.

Yet, at day's end, they would return to their families, play with their children and eat dinner to the soothing sound of Mozart.

We can grope for all sorts of reasons as to why people would act in this way, why they would degrade people past the point of death.

Sometimes, however, there are no reasons that can help us make sense of the senseless.

Sometimes we simply must concede that we have seen the face of evil, even when that face appears benign or banal.

To relish in someone's misery, misery that you yourself have inflicted, is a sadistic attempt to please oneself through another's pain.

This is clearly obvious in cases of sexual crime, where the perpetrator denies the humanity of the victim, reducing her to an object without dignity.

Despite all her problems, Elaine O'Hara did not wish to be treated or thought of like that, which is why, I suspect, she sought in vain to push Graham Dwyer away.

**E**VIL is indeed a loaded word, one with a history that stretches right back to Cain and Abel. However, it is the only word that can help us explain the inexplicable.

The murder of his daughter Karen was, for John Buckley, inexplicable, which is why he readily used the word 'evil' to make sense of what happened that night in Glasgow.

As I say, there is little we can do to prevent evil from moving in next door. Only in the most spectacular cases does it appear strutting in a jackboot.

More often it lurks online, in our homes, on our streets and, sometimes, even within our own families.

However, it is also true that evil flourishes most when people refuse to believe it exists.

It thrives when we don't take the necessary precautions to protect our children or when we don't take those extra steps to ensure the safety of our friends.

This does not mean that we must be suspicious of everyone, but it does mean accepting the fact that we share our world with those for whom the moral law is no barrier to the worst forms of cruelty and brutality.

As I shook his hand, I could not have known what Graham Dwyer had done.

That incident, however, did convince me that the most dangerous manifestation of evil is not in the demonic zeal of a demented Nazi.

More generally, it appears where we least expect, such as in the benign smile of the guy in the Velcro shoes.



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