



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

Surveying Ireland after the Pope: Grounds for Cautious Optimism?

Ganiel, G. (2019). Surveying Ireland after the Pope: Grounds for Cautious Optimism? *Studies*, 108(431), 257-271.

Published in:
Studies

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

Publisher rights
Copyright 2019 Studies. This work is made available online in accordance with the publisher's policies. Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.

Open Access
This research has been made openly available by Queen's academics and its Open Research team. We would love to hear how access to this research benefits you. – Share your feedback with us: <http://go.qub.ac.uk/oa-feedback>

Surveying Ireland after the Pope: Grounds for Cautious Optimism?

Gladys Ganiel

The contributions in *Studies*' special issue, 'Goodbye to All That? Ireland after the Pope', offer valuable insights on Francis' visit and what it reveals about the future of the Catholic Church in Ireland. They share three common assumptions, two of which I wish to challenge based on my own research on Francis' visit. The assumptions I will challenge are that the media's preoccupation with the abuse crisis was excessively negative and, as this implies, unfair; and that the visit has been largely inconsequential in the life of the Church. In contrast, my data suggest that taken as a whole, the contributors have offered an assessment of Francis' visit and the future of the Church that is bleaker than may be warranted. I will not challenge the third assumption – that there are signs of vitality still within the Church – because I also have found such signs in my previous research.

I begin with a methodological description of my research: a systematic narrative analysis of *Irish Times* coverage of the visit between 1 May-1 September 2018; and a nationally-representative survey about the visit. I then address the two underlying assumptions in turn, explaining how my research challenges or confirms them. I conclude with brief reflections on the future of the Church. While my research challenges the somewhat pessimistic tone of the special issue, my more optimistic reading of the visit is a cautious one that leaves no room for complacency among those who wish for the Church in Ireland to *have* a future.¹

Surveying the Papal Visit

A few months before Francis' visit, I was invited to contribute a chapter about Ireland to a special section on the 'Francis Effect' in *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*.²

I immediately realised that given the attention Francis' visit would generate, this represented a unique opportunity to attempt to measure the Francis Effect, an international phenomenon that has credited Francis with renewing Catholicism and improving the image of the Church globally.³ In 2017, the *Irish Times* had reported that the Irish ranked Francis as their 'favourite world leader', so it seemed Ireland was potentially fertile ground for the Francis Effect.⁴ I chose two methods for investigation. The first was a narrative analysis of the *Irish Times*' coverage of the visit. I chose the *Irish Times* – second in circulation nationwide to the *Irish Independent* – because it is acknowledged as Ireland's 'newspaper of record'. I started my analysis on 1 May and continued until the weekend edition on 1 September, one week after the visit. I accessed the *Irish Times* through a searchable database in my university's library, using the term 'Pope Francis'. This turned up only a few stories that were not about the visit. Over the four-month period, there were 314 stories that mentioned Francis (21 in May, 21 in June, 16 in July, and 256 in August and on 1 September). I identified six main themes in the stories: the abuse crisis (in Ireland and internationally), the role of women in the Church, LGBTQI people and the Church, the logistics of the visit (what the Pope was doing, how to get to events, etc.), citizens' personal perspectives on the Pope and his visit, and the Pope's personality. Abuse was the dominant theme, featuring in 46 percent of articles, including letters to the editor.⁵ I even went so far as to claim that 'the national conversation became dominated by the issue of abuse – so much so that the visit seemed to have become an unofficial referendum on the papal response to abuse.'⁶ But this conclusion is not quite the same as implying that the media's coverage of abuse was excessive or unfair, as explored below.

My second method was a nationally-representative survey designed to evaluate evidence of a Francis Effect.⁷ I considered the Francis Effect measurable in terms of changes in people's perspectives on the Church or changes in their religious practice since Francis

became Pope; and since Francis' visit. I asked questions about changes in perspectives on the Church and about specific religious practices. Because the coverage around the visit had focused so much on abuse, I also asked about Francis' handling of abuse during the visit and if abuse had been a reason for not attending events. Some of these questions echoed those of an opinion poll carried out by the *Irish Times* the day after the visit. My questions were included in a regular, monthly omnibus survey conducted by Amarach, mid-to-late September 2018. Amarach considers questions about religion 'sensitive', so people could opt-out of my questions. Amarach's sample was 840 with quotas set on gender, age, social class and region, aligning with the national population in the Republic; Northern Ireland was not included. The survey was completed online, a valid approach given the reach of the internet in Ireland.

Media Coverage

Tom Inglis has argued that the media has played a central role in the Church's decline, first by exposing the public to alternative, secular and materialistic lifestyles; and second, through its coverage of the abuse scandals.⁸ More than three decades after the first edition of *Moral Monopoly*, Susie Donnelly and Inglis wrote that the media had 'replaced the Catholic Church as the social conscience and moral guardian of Irish society'.⁹ Moreover, they claimed that the media depicted the church 'as evil' and 'as a public enemy'.¹⁰

The Editorial that introduced the special issue asserted a similar relationship between Church and media. It referred to the media's 'framing' of the visit in terms of the abuse crisis, arguing that, 'Such framing ... can distort what, in fact, is a much longer, much more complex history and it is only fair to say that it also distorted interpretations of and responses to the papal visit, before, during and after.'¹¹ The most thorough and compelling treatment of the media was Andrew McMahon's contribution, which lamented a prevailing media

‘groupthink’. He opened by citing a *Sunday Times* article from the weekend after the visit in which a writer referred to a ‘consensus’ that the Pope ‘did not go far enough in terms of outlining the steps he intends to take to ensure that abuse is eradicated from the church’. McMahon then observed that the article did not ‘offer specific evidence in support of so significant a conclusion’.¹² While McMahon is right to question unsubstantiated claims, an opinion poll published in the *Irish Times* on 28 August and my own survey confirm that the most popular opinion among people in Ireland was indeed that the Pope had not gone far enough. The *Irish Times* poll reported 55 percent of respondents said Francis had not gone far enough, with 31 percent saying he had gone far enough, and 14 percent with no opinion.¹³ I repeated the *Irish Times* question in my own survey, finding that 48 percent indicated he had not gone far enough, 30 percent said he had gone far enough, and 22 percent had no opinion. While it may be a stretch to say that either 55 or 48 percent is a ‘consensus’, in both studies it was the most popular opinion. However, in my survey there was a significant difference among practising Catholics (defined as those who go to religious services at least once per month): 50 percent said Francis had gone far enough, while just 28 percent said he had not.

McMahon also linked the *Irish Times*’ coverage of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report on clerical child abuse, which broke less than two weeks before Francis was due to arrive, with its interview with Ian Elliott, the former head of the Irish Church’s National Board for Safeguarding Children. The interview was conducted during the Pennsylvania coverage, and Elliott was critical of the Church’s safeguarding practices. McMahon claimed this was ‘an important piece of strategy by the *Irish Times* ... guaranteed to undermine, at a critical moment, whatever public confidence the Irish Church had garnered in this area’.¹⁴ But given his former position, Elliott is a reasonable choice for an interview; to attribute his inclusion as a malign strategizing against the Church may be going too far. Moreover, McMahon referred to a ‘panic’ about abuse in the press as Francis’ visit drew nearer.¹⁵ But he

didn't mention that the Vatican's refusal to confirm whether Francis would meet any survivors at all until only a few days before the visit had become a story in and of itself, which may have fed this 'panic' just as much or more than Elliott's interview.

Further, on several occasions the *Irish Times* pointed out that Dublin Archbishop Diarmuid Martin was internationally respected for his work on safeguarding. Patsy McGarry even presented Martin as a sort of super-hero who Francis could put to good use in reforming the Church.¹⁶

So what would you do if you were Pope Francis? Very simple. I'd bring Archbishop Diarmuid Martin back to Rome with me. I'd put him in charge of a new tribunal at the Vatican whose sole brief would be to hold bishops and religious superiors to account for covering up/facilitating the abuse of children and vulnerable people. I'd give him the power to remove the truly errant ones among them from office. Then I'd sit back and watch with pleasure as he kicked some very deserving ass.

The *Irish Times* also included stories about citizens' personal perspectives on Francis, and the Pope's personality, which presented more positive images of the Church. These stories may have become lost alongside the emphasis on abuse; indeed, one could read the special issue without realising that such coverage existed. My analysis of the *Irish Times* coverage recognises that more positive perspectives were not entirely absent and its coverage was somewhat more nuanced than the special issue implies. At the same time, while my analysis was systematic, it was limited: I examined the coverage of just one print media outlet. I am not aware of any studies that have systematically analysed a wide range of media coverage of the visit.

It may be the case that the Irish media have been more critical of the Church than of the State when it comes to handling the abuse crisis. That is my personal impression, albeit one I cannot back up with systematic data. So to some degree I sympathise with the

assumptions about the media in the special issue. But to make such a claim with confidence would require systematic analysis of widespread media coverage of Church and State both during the visit and over many years. In the absence of such research, the Church should heed Gerry O’Hanlon’s advice in the special issue: a ‘contrite’ Church ‘should not over-complain (considering its own considerable guilt)’.¹⁷ Indeed, in an Irish context where many survivors still feel abuse has not been adequately addressed, it would have been unthinkable for the media *not* to focus on this issue when the Pope was in town.

Finally, we must remember that the failure of the Church to adequately address abuse remains a pressing problem worldwide. If this were not the case, Francis would not have called a special summit on abuse in February 2019, summoning to Rome the president of every Catholic bishops’ conference in the world, as well as religious superiors. Abuse in the Church was and is a crime; in the worst cases, it could be argued that the Church committed widespread human rights violations, with the support or acquiescence of the State. Without the hard work of investigative journalists in many countries over the years, that abuse might remain hidden.

Francis’ Visit has been Inconsequential

Some quotes from the special issue will suffice to illustrate the assumption that Francis’ visit has been inconsequential in the life of the Church (or the wider country). Michael Kirwan wrote: ‘Memorable as it was, it has left no apparent disturbance or alteration of the trajectory we are getting used to: that Ireland is a secularising, if not already secularised, society, in which Christian faith is increasingly marginal.’¹⁸ Stephen Collins concluded: ‘There is a general consensus that the visit of Pope Francis to Ireland last summer failed to make any serious impact on the country.’¹⁹ Brendan Hoban was perhaps most dramatic:²⁰

The jury is out on whether the Irish Catholic Church has a discernible future, apart from a ceremonial presence on the official side lines of Irish life or a refuge for those ill at ease with the modern world. Because its presence as such, apart from being a convenient scape-goat for the ills of Irish society, has virtually disappeared in the media, in public debate, in modern Irish writing, in the lives of the young.

It is certainly true that the Church is not the social and political force it once was, but to claim it has ‘virtually disappeared’ is going too far. A wide range of sociological research has confirmed that Ireland remains one of the most religious countries in Europe.²¹ And although Breda O’Brien cautions that ‘although those statistics are high by European standards, the faith is being hollowed out from within in a way that the statistics fail to reveal’²², I am not convinced that the situation is quite as extreme as suggested, or the visit as inconsequential as claimed. Bearing in mind O’Brien’s caution about statistics, my survey shows that people’s perceptions and experiences of the visit were not solely dominated by abuse; and that there is some evidence for a modest ‘Francis Effect’ in Ireland, especially among practising Catholics and those under age 35. Below, I pay particular attention to 18-24-year-olds, because of their obvious importance if the Church is to have a future.²³

In the survey, 64 percent of respondents identified as Catholic –14 percent lower than the 78 percent recorded on the 2016 Census. The next largest category was ‘no religion’ at 19 percent –higher than the 10 percent on the Census. This figure rose to 29 percent among 18-24-year-olds. It is possible that the difference between the figures on religious identification on the Census and the survey is because people of ‘no religion’ were more likely to opt to complete the survey, perhaps to express their dissatisfaction with religion.

People were asked if they attended events associated with the visit, and their reasons why or why not. Twenty percent of all respondents attended events. Both practising Catholics (37 percent) and 18-24-year-olds (29 percent) were more likely to attend events than the

general population.²⁴ For the general population, the most popular reasons for attending were ‘to be part of a big national event’ (51 percent), ‘to express my faith’ (47 percent), and as a guardian or carer (16%).²⁵ Among practising Catholics the figures were ‘to express my faith’ (63 percent), ‘to be part of a big national event’ (51 percent) and as a guardian or carer (10 percent). The 18-24-year-olds were the age group most likely to attend to ‘to express my faith’ at 65 percent; 55 percent attended to be part of a big national event and 23 percent as a guardian or carer. This question can be compared to one asked by the *Irish Times*, where the overall figures on reasons for attending were 59 percent (national event), 66 percent (express faith) and 18 percent (guardian/carer). The biggest difference between the surveys was among those attending to ‘express faith’ – it was 19 percent higher in the *Irish Times* poll. This may be due to the timings of the surveys. People who have recently attended an event, in some cases less than 24 hours previously, may still feel uplifted by it, and may have been more likely to cite faith as a factor. But I cannot claim this explanation is conclusive.

Of the 80 percent who did not attend events, 51 percent did not because ‘I was not interested’ and 30 percent did not because ‘I disagree with how the Catholic Church has handled child sex abuse.’ For practising Catholics, the top reason they did not attend was because the travel/walk was too difficult (39 percent), followed by lack of interest (22 percent) and disagreement with how the Church has handled abuse (18 percent). Among those with ‘no religion’, 73 percent were not interested and 40 percent disagreed with the handling of abuse. For 18-24-year-olds, 64 percent did not attend because they were not interested and 32 percent because they disagreed with how the Church had handled abuse.²⁶ So for everyone except practising Catholics, indifference seems to have trumped anger about abuse as a reason for not attending – although abuse is still the next most significant factor (Table 1).

Table 1: Reasons for not attending an Event (% respondents)

I did not attend because:	All N = 676	Practising Catholics N=129	Other Catholics N=301	Non-Catholics, N=85	No Religion, N=153	18-24 year-olds N=53
I was not interested	51	22	52	52	73	64
I disagree with how the Catholic Church has handled child sex abuse	30	18	31	27	40	32
The travel/walk to the venue was too difficult	17	39	17	9	2	11
I disagree with the teachings of the Catholic Church	14	2	9	18	34	25
I was not in favour of the Pope's visit	12	2	10	15	24	23
I disagree with how Pope Francis is leading the Catholic Church	7	2	4	13	15	9
I was unable to get a ticket to the event	4	5	4	6	1	6
I was at work/out of the country	3	8	3	4	1	5
I attended an event protesting Pope Francis' visit instead	1	0	1	1	2	3
The weather was poor even though I had a ticket	1	1	1	1	1	0

I gauged people's perceptions of the visit by asking if they agreed or disagreed with seven statements about it (Table 2). The statement about Francis' handling of abuse has been discussed above. Again, practising Catholics differed from everyone else in that they reported much more positive perceptions about the visit; however, 18-24-year-olds were in line with the general population on these questions. For example, when asked whether the visit was 'a

healing time for victims and survivors of clerical sex abuse’, overall 36 percent disagreed and 31 percent agreed; when asked whether it was ‘a healing time for LGBTQI people and their families’, 40 percent disagreed and 23 percent agreed. But among practising Catholics, 54 percent agreed that it was a healing time for victims and survivors (23 percent disagreed); and 37 percent agreed it was a healing time for LGBTQI people (21 percent disagreed). When asked if the visit was ‘good for Ireland as a nation’, 48 percent agreed, with just 26 percent disagreeing. A further 50 percent agreed that the visit ‘was good for the Catholic Church in Ireland’, with just 21 percent disagreeing. Almost one-in-four, 24 percent, agreed that the visit ‘will revive faith in Ireland’. Practising Catholics differed again: 75 percent thought the visit was good for Ireland and 73 percent thought it was good for the Church; 47 percent thought it would revive faith. It is worth repeating that a full 50 percent of the general population and 73 percent of practising Catholics thought the visit was good for the Church. If the situation of the Church in Ireland was/is in any way as dire as some writers in the special issue suggested, these are quite astounding numbers. (However, it must be admitted that some respondents could have interpreted the question to mean that it was ‘good’ that the Church was held to account for abuse during the visit rather than it was ‘good’ for faith or the public image of the Church, or any other way this statement could be interpreted.) Likewise, it is quite astounding that 24 percent of the general population thought the visit would revive faith. This is not an insignificant minority; nor is the 47 percent of practising Catholics who thought the visit would revive faith.

Table 2: Perceptions of Francis' Visit (% respondents)²⁷

	Disagree	Agree	Neither/ nor	No opinion
It was good for Ireland as a nation, Overall, N=840	26	48	23	3
It was good for Ireland as a nation, Practising Catholics, N=206	8	75	16	*
It was good for Ireland as a nation, 18-24 years old, N=75	33	40	21	4
It was good for the Catholic Church in Ireland, Overall, N=840	21	50	26	3
It was good for the Catholic Church in Ireland, Practising Catholics, N=206	7	73	18	1
It was good for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 18-24 years old, N=75	24	47	25	5
The Pope went far enough during his visit to address child sex abuse in the Catholic Church, Overall, N=840	48	30	19	3
The Pope went far enough during his visit to address child sex abuse in the Catholic Church, Practising Catholics, N=206	28	50	21	2
The Pope went far enough during his visit to address child sex abuse in the Catholic	45	34	15	6

Church, 18-24 years old, N=75				
It was a healing time for victims and survivors of clerical sex abuse, Overall, N=840	36	31	21	3
It was a healing time for victims and survivors of clerical sex abuse, Practising Catholics, N=206	23	54	21	2
It was a healing time for victims and survivors of clerical sex abuse, 18-24 years old, N=75	50	27	20	3
It was a healing time for LGBTQI people and their families, Overall, N=840	40	23	32	5
It was a healing time for LGBTQI people and their families, Practising Catholics, N=206	21	37	37	6
It was a healing time for LGBTQI people and their families, 18-24 years old, N=75	53	21	20	4
It will revive faith in Ireland, Overall, N=840	46	24	28	2
It will revive faith in Ireland, Practising Catholics, N=206	20	47	32	*
It will revive faith in Ireland, 18-24 years old, N=75	51	25	23	1
It was as important as the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979, Overall, N=840	45	32	19	4

It was as important as the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979, Practising Catholics , N=206	29	54	16	1
It was as important as the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979, 18-24 years old, N=75	45	31	13	9

Four of the questions were designed to gauge a Francis Effect. First, ‘Has your opinion of the Catholic Church changed since Francis became Pope in 2013?’ There was no change for 66 percent of the general population; although 22 percent said that their opinion had become more favourable. Among practising Catholics, 39 percent said their opinion had become more favourable, with 57 percent unchanged. Among those 18-24, 27 percent were more favourable and 54 percent were unchanged. The 25-34 age group was the only one more changeable than the 18-24, with 32 percent more favourable and 53 percent unchanged. In the *Irish Times* poll, a similar question revealed that overall, 38 percent had a more positive view of the Church with Francis as Pope (51 percent of practising Catholics), with no change among 58 percent (47 percent of practising Catholics). Second, ‘Has your opinion of the Catholic Church changed since Pope Francis visited Ireland?’ Seventy-four percent (66 percent of practising Catholics and 64 percent of 18-24-year-olds) said their opinion was unchanged; the figure was 80 percent unchanged in a similar question on the *Irish Times* poll. Sixteen percent (30 percent of practising Catholics and 19 percent of 18-24-year-olds) indicated that their opinion of the Church had become more favourable since the visit; 11 percent (4 percent of practising Catholics and 17 percent of 18-24-year-olds) indicated their opinion had become less favourable. Again the 25-34 age group was the only one more changeable than the 18-24, with 62 percent unchanged, 19 percent more favourable and 12 percent less favourable. There are not comparable more/less favourable figures for the *Irish Times* poll.

The other two Francis Effect questions addressed changes in religious practice: ‘Has your religious practice changed as a result of Francis becoming Pope in 2013?’ and ‘Do you anticipate that your religious practice will change as a result of Pope Francis visiting Ireland?’ For both questions, people were given a range of options and could tick all that applied. Overall, most people indicated their practice had not changed (63 percent) and would not change (63 percent) – figures similar to practising Catholics (64 percent since Francis became Pope, and 62 percent after the visit). However, younger people were more likely to report changes in practice: just 47 percent of 25-34-year-olds and 46 percent of 18-24 year-olds said there were no changes. For practising Catholics, the top three ways in which religious practice had changed or would change (ranging from 16 to 12 percent) were praying more often, being more kind and merciful to family and friends, and attending religious services more often. Francis’ visit also prompted eight percent of practising Catholics to say they would give more of their time and money to helping the poor, and seven percent to go to confession more often. Among the two youngest age brackets, the most popular change was praying more often (15 percent of 25-34-year-olds and 12 percent of 18-24-year-olds). People in these age brackets also anticipated going to religious services more often (10 percent in both age brackets versus 5 percent overall) and going to confession more often (10 percent of 18-24-year-olds and 6 percent of 25-34-year-olds versus 3 percent overall).

To summarise and repeat a few figures, a sizeable minority of the general population (22 percent), practising Catholics (39 percent), and 18-24-year-olds (27 percent) have a more favourable view of the Church since Francis became Pope. There also have been changes in religious practices among a minority, in a direction that could be described as more devotional, especially among practising Catholics and people under 35. People under 35 were much more likely to report that their practices had changed or would change as a result of Francis becoming Pope or his visit. To some extent, this simply reflects the expected

volatility of youth; people may still be trying out religious practices before settling into lifelong patterns – or not practising religion at all, as indicated by 24 percent of 18-24-year-olds and 15 percent of 25-34-year-olds. I cannot put a figure on what percent of people would need to have changed their views or practices for a Francis Effect to be declared valid in Ireland. But all things considered, the survey results point to at least a partial Francis Effect despite dissatisfaction with the handling of abuse (and LGBTQI issues); and to an openness among the younger generation to change their views of the Church (for better or for worse) and to change their religious practices.

Concluding Reflections

In his contribution to the special issue, Collins wrote: ‘Only time will tell whether Ireland after the Pope will provide an opportunity for Church renewal but, if the right lessons are learned, it could mark a turning point.’²⁸ This was just one of the strands of optimism scattered throughout the articles, which overall painted a bleaker picture of the Church’s future.

While the abuse crisis dominated media coverage, this reflected concerns – in Ireland and globally – that the Church has not done enough to address abuse and to ensure that it does not happen again. One of the lessons that needs to be learned is that the Church must be more just and consistent in its approach to abuse, including cooperating with civil authorities around the world. The Church also must communicate more effectively about how it is addressing abuse, especially with the media. At the same time, it is important to recognise the perception, articulated in the special issue, that media coverage of the Church was and is excessively hostile or unfair. Last year, when I presented the initial findings of my papal visit research to a gathering of priests, they were surprised that abuse featured in ‘only’ 46 percent of the *Irish Times* stories. Many people in the Church feel they are under attack in the media,

and this perception must surely impact on their own identities and sense of self, and in the case of clergy, their ability to minister with confidence among the people. Feelings of beleaguerment may be coupled with a real and felt powerlessness to respond to the abuse crisis in their everyday lives and ministry.

At the same time, my survey revealed that sizeable minorities of the general population, and especially practising Catholics and people under 35, are open to a more favourable view of the Church, and more engagement with it through changing their religious practices, than might have been expected.²⁹ While the nature of survey research mitigates against evaluating the depth of such changes towards devotion, such figures may give cause for a more cautious optimism among those who wish for the Church in Ireland to *have* a future. It also may be that I overstated the special issue contributors' pessimism; after all, many of them listed small-scale, local initiatives that demonstrated religious vitality. I also have found such signs in previous research.³⁰

But my more optimistic reading of the papal visit is a cautious one. After all, much dissatisfaction with abuse remains, the under-35 age brackets are always more prone to change, and the Francis Effect is itself a rather ephemeral concept. The Francis Effect's positive perceptions about the Church are no substitute for the real and substantial changes in Church structures that are required for more lasting change, as Gerry O'Hanlon's urgent writings about the need for synodal Church have reminded us.³¹ It will take a long work of passion and creativity for new initiatives to capture the wider imagination, both inside the Church and without it. The window of opportunity for the Church in Ireland to capitalise on relative levels of positivity and openness may be small, and may close quickly without urgent and immediate action.

Gladys Ganiel is a sociologist at Queen’s University Belfast. Her latest book, *Unity Pilgrim: The Life of Fr Gerry Reynolds CSsR*, a popular biography of a peacemaking priest at Belfast’s Clonard Monastery, was published by Redemptorist Communications in 2019.

¹ I wish to thank Gerry O’Hanlon and Vincent O’Sullivan for helpful comments on this research. I remain responsible for my interpretations and errors.

² Giuseppe Giordan, ed. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, special edition on the Francis Effect, V29 (Leiden: Brill, 2019 forthcoming).

³ Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, ‘Pew: No Pope Francis ‘Effect’ among US Christians’, *Christianity Today*, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/march/pew-Pope-francis-effect-has-failed-among-american-catholics.html>, accessed 4 July 2018.

⁴ Michael O’Regan, ‘Pope Francis is Ireland’s Favourite World Leader’, *Irish Times*, 29 December 2017.

⁵ Most stories included multiple themes.

⁶ Gladys Ganiel, ‘Negating the Francis Effect?: The Effect of the Abuse Crisis in Ireland’, in Giordan, *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, forthcoming.

⁷ Gladys Ganiel, ‘Surveying the Papal Visit to Ireland: A Francis Effect?’, Queen’s Policy Engagement Paper 2, October 2018, available at <http://qppl.qub.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Gladys-Ganiel-Paper-on-Pope-Francis.pdf>.

⁸ Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland*, 2nd Ed. (Dublin: UCD Press, 1998). The first edition was published in 1987, before the extent of the abuse scandals became known.

⁹ Susie Donnelly and Tom Inglis, ‘The Media and the Catholic Church in Ireland: Reporting Clerical Child Sexual Abuse’, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 25(1), 2010, 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 14.

¹¹ *Studies*, ‘Editorial,’ *Studies*, 108(430), Summer 2019, 118.

¹² Andrew McMahon, ‘“New” Ireland and Pope Francis’, *Studies* 108(430), Summer 2019, 138.

¹³ Pat Leahy, ‘Majority in Poll Say Pope Failed to do Enough on Abuse During Visit’, *Irish Times*, 28 August 2018.

¹⁴ McMahon, 142.

¹⁵ McMahon, 142

¹⁶ Pasty McGarry, 'Being Pope these Days Means Forever having to Say You're Sorry', *Irish Times*, 21 August 2018.

¹⁷ Gerry O'Hanlon SJ, 'After the Pope – the Catholic Church in Ireland', *Studies* 108(430), Summer 2019, 135.

¹⁸ Michael Kirwan SJ, 'An Abrahamic Journey: Ireland, Faith and the Papal Visit', *Studies* 108(430), Summer 2019, 162.

¹⁹ Stephen Collins, 'After the Visit: Re-Learning our Past', *Studies* 108(430), Summer 2019, 195.

²⁰ Brendan Hoban, 'Another Beginning?' *Studies* 108(430), Summer 2019, 157.

²¹ For a few examples, see Pew Research Center, 'Being Christian in Western Europe', 2018, available at:

www.pewresearch.org; Stephen Bullivant, 'Europe's Young Adults and Religion', 2018, available at

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2018-mar-europe-young-people-report-eng.pdf>;

Kristen Andersen, 'Irish Secularization and Religious Identities: Evidence of an Emerging New Catholic Habitus', *Social Compass* 57(1), 2010, 15-39.

²² Breda O'Brien, 'Young People and the Future of the Irish Church', *Studies* 108(430), Summer 2019, 187.

²³ See especially O'Brien, *ibid.*

²⁴ The most likely age group to attend events was 25-34, at 38 percent.

²⁵ Respondents could choose more than one option.

²⁶ Bear in mind that this age category contains 29 percent of people who identify as 'no religion'.

²⁷ The categories Disagree and Agree contain and combine the qualifiers 'slightly' and 'strongly'.

²⁸ Collins, 202.

²⁹ The overall sample of 840 included 75 age 18-24 and 147 aged 25-34, in line with national proportions. So caution also must be used when interpreting samples of 75 and 147. At the same time, other research indicates that Ireland's young people rank among the most religious in Europe, see Bullivant, 'Europe's Young Adults and Religion'.

³⁰ Gladys Ganiel, *Transforming Post-Catholic Ireland: Religious Practice in Late Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

³¹ Gerry O'Hanlon, *The Quiet Revolution of Pope Francis: A Synodal Catholic Church in Ireland?* (Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2018).