



## Marilynne Robinson—a voice for our times.

Marilynne Robinson (b.1943) is a celebrated American novelist and essayist, a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2005, National Humanities Medal and the Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction in 2016, the year she was also named in Time Magazine's list of 100 most influential people. So she certainly qualifies as a voice of our times. She is best known for her widely read novels *Housekeeping* (1980) and *Gilead* (2004). These are largely based on both rural life and faith in that part of evangelical America from which she comes and is still in many ways attached to, but with which she has an uneasy relationship. Her chosen themes include the relationship between religion and science, nuclear pollution, John Calvin, and contemporary American politics. Time magazine says she 'is a dissident, though she may not sound like one.'

Her most recent book is a collection of essays entitled *What Are We Doing here?*, composed of recent lectures she has given in churches, seminaries and universities. It includes chapters like 'What is Freedom of Conscience?', 'Theology for This Moment', 'The Sacred and the Human', 'The Divine', 'Mind Conscience Soul' as well as reflections on contemporary America. It is not light reading but it is very much worth the effort.

Her chapter 'Theology for This Moment' is of particular interest in a pastoral context as she is very aware of the 'signs of the time' in which we live. Her view is on a grand scale, as she writes of 'this theatre of God's glory we share with those strangers, our neighbours'. Here, she writes, 'love means awe, and awe means love.' She calls for a Christian way of thinking, a theology that would address anything and any relation among things, and give the world a supple, inclusive language, far more adequate to what we know, less restricted in what we acknowledge, than any we have at present.' For many Catholics this reflects the theme that has emerged in much of Pope Francis' speaking and writing as he has struggled over the past several years to speak to the world and looks critically at the Church in our times and the inadequacies of her theological and pastoral approach..

At the same time, she is deeply critical of many modern 'systems and ideologies', which, she says, are 'simple and simplifying—the invisible hand, the survival of the fittest, the dictatorship of the proletariat,, superego, ego, and id.' She denounces them as 'antibiotics of the intelligence, killing off a various ecology of reflection and experience in order to eliminate one or two troublesome ideas.'

What is called for is a way of Christian thinking, a theology 'that would embrace rather than exclude'. Again one has the impression that is what we are so desperately seeking within the Church but not always managing to attain as we fight ingrained ways of thinking *from above* that are no longer responsive to the realities of people lives.. At the same time she calls for a departure 'from the narrowness and aridity of the secular thinking' that has to a large extent displace theology in our time.

It is here that she comes to the core of her argument and it is very eloquent when she speaks of the importance in Christian thinking of a language that speaks of "the beauty of holiness," "grace and peace: - phrases that evoke a particular experience , a synesthesia of thought and aesthetic response.' This is a language, she argues, that has been excluded in our time because it simply does not fit into the dominant scientific discourse that simply 'cannot acknowledge' such terms. 'Yet the celebration of holiness in every form of art has shaped civilisations.'

She emphasises the fact that despite its own mistakes and common misperceptions, 'Christian theology uniquely among the forms of Western thought need not proceed by exclusion. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Christ was in the beginning with God and without him nothing was made that was made. The categorical blessing put on all that exists raises the problem of evil, certainly, but more important it asserts a very broad, unconditional reality, a givenness that in its fullness reflects divine intent.....A theology for our time would acknowledge this reality along with the entire complex of subjective experience—love, generosity, regret, and

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**WHAT ARE  
WE DOING  
HERE?**

**MARILYNNE  
ROBINSON**

ESSAYS FROM THE PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING  
AUTHOR OF GILEAD

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all their interactions—without a diminishing translation into self-interest. It could create a conceptual space large enough to accommodate human dignity.’

This is certainly thinking outside a more traditional theological box but, I imagine, it will almost certainly resonate with the thinking of many contemporary Catholics living in that very modern and often troubling space that lies between belief and doubt.

There is much of interest in this volume that is certainly best read a chapter at a time and in a time when one has the leisure to think about it. Summer reading?



### PPC meets to discuss WMOF 2018 at St Mary's

Our parish is among sixteen Dublin parishes who have been asked to welcome visitors to the WMOF2018. These are from amongst these 12.000 who will be attending the three-day **Pastoral Congress for WMOF2018, from 22nd to 24th August, in the RDS.** Last Monday night the Pastoral Council met to discuss this.

We have been asked to host an evening event on **Friday 24 August at 7.30pm.** This will include a short prayer service around the WMOF icon, a short cultural programme and refreshments.

The visitors attending the Haddington Road event will be mostly from the **UK, Australia and New Zealand**, while another parish will receive our American visitors and other parishes will receive the different major language groups from across the world.

Fr McCarthy will coordinate and organise in the **prayer service** in collaboration with the WMOF organisers and probably some visiting prelates.

**Catering arrangements** have been put in place but we will be counting on the hospitality and generosity of parishioners to supply wines, some Irish treats and hospitality.

For the **cultural side** we will be calling on our own very talents musicians, Emer Barry, Catina Scullion-Fin and Paul McGough'

We would like to make this a very nice Dublin/Irish evening with a real sense of I welcome for those who have come to us for this important Church as Family event. This will be a great opportunity for all of us to experience the universality of the Church and the fact that we all belong to this one family.

The PPC realise that the timing is not perhaps ideal but your help and your participation in the evening will be much appreciated.

## Thoughts for a Day

No one compels you, traveller;  
this road or that road, make your choice!  
Dust or mud, heat or cold,  
fellowship or solitude,  
foul weather or a fairer sky,  
the choice is yours as you go by.

But here if you would take this path  
there is a gate whose latch is love,  
whose key is single and which swings  
upon the hinge of faithfulness,

and none can mock, who seeks this way,  
the king we worship shamelessly.

If you would enter, traveller,  
into this city fair and wide,  
it is forever and you leave  
all trappings of the self outside.

- Jane Tyson Clement

How easily we forget that the church was founded by disciples who betrayed their master. None was willing to stand by Jesus as the religious and political authorities condemned him to death. At his moment of greatest need, the disciples fled in the darkness. The boldest of the lot, Peter, was the very one who cursed and denied him three times before the cock crew. It was for traitors that Jesus died.

- Phillip Yancey

## Masses and Confession

**Sundays:** Vigil, 6pm (Saturday), 9.30am, 11am, 5pm

-Rosary daily after 10am mass

**Adoration Blessed Sacrament, Weds 10.30-12.40**

## Church Collections

**W/e 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2018**

1<sup>st</sup> Collection: €1,022

Share Collection: €735

Weekday collections: €380

THANK YOU

## In Memoriam

Recently deceased

Mary Columby

late of Mespil Rd, funeral took place on Wednesday

6pm, Nuala Valentine

11am, Jennie Orford (Anniversary)

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