



NEWSLETTER

**No 108**

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Family Solidarity

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## EDITORIAL

This year, our AGM will feature a special address by His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland. The meeting will take place on Saturday, 29th November 2025, beginning at 10 a.m. with Mass. Following Mass, the Nuncio will speak on *The Christian Family in Contemporary Society*. The Nuncio's talk will be open to the public, and I warmly encourage

you to attend and to invite non-members to join you. Further details about the event can be found in this newsletter.

As always, this bulletin also includes updates from Ireland and abroad, along with news from FAFCE, the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations.

Angelo Bottone

## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

- Ireland's terrible combination: more abortions and fewer births
- UN agency finally realises falling births a big problem
- Another study highlights how divorce can harm children
- A very strong critique of all forms of surrogacy from the United Nations
- The dangerous lesson from Switzerland's assisted suicide
- Introducing organ donation euthanasia
- FAFCE Conference on protecting children from online threats
- A new book on Luke Warding
- Baby Talk, a poem by Maolsheachlann Ó Ceallaigh

## IRELAND'S TERRIBLE COMBINATION: MORE ABORTIONS AND FEWER BIRTHS



Since the 2018 referendum repealing the Eighth Amendment, the number of abortions in Ireland has continued to rise. According to the annual report produced by the Department of Health recently the number rose to 10,852 in 2024 compared with 6,666 in 2019. This represents a 63pc increase. Additionally, 201 Irish residents had abortions in England, based on the most recent UK statistics (referring to 2022), and 10 Irish residents had abortions in the Netherlands (in 2023).

The upward trend is clear. Abortion has become more socially accepted, and the legal framework introduced after the referendum has significantly increased requests. One measurable outcome of this shift is the abortion ratio, i.e. the number of abortions compared to births. In 2024, there were 201 abortions for every 1,000 live births, meaning approximately 16.8pc of known pregnancies (excluding miscarriages and stillbirths) ended in abortion.

To put this in context, let's consider the figures from when abortion was legal in Ireland only to save the life of the mother.

In 2018, 2,879 Irish women had abortions in England, equivalent to 47 abortions per 1,000 live births, or 4.5pc of known pregnancies. Pro-choice campaigners told the Oireachtas Committee on abortion in 2017 that around 5,000 Irish women were having abortions annually at that time, between women travelling to England, and women buying the abortion pill illegally. This would be an upper estimate of the total number. This upper estimate means that at most there were about 82 abortions per 1,000 live births in 2018.

This means that since the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, the proportion of pregnancies ending in abortion increased hugely from 7.6pc (taking the pro-choice claim at face value) to 16.8pc. This sharp increase is one of the most striking consequences of the 2018 referendum. Setting aside for a moment all moral considerations, let's see how the growing number of abortions has an impact on the future population.

The current fertility rate in Ireland is just 1.5 children per woman, well below the replacement level of 2.1. At this rate, assuming no emigration or immigration, Ireland's

population would decline to around 3.05 million in 50 years-time from 5.3 today. Of course, there will surely be lots of net immigration, but we can still see what a low birth rate can do.

Fertility rates reflect only live births because they are calculated as the average number of children a woman would have in a lifetime, but if abortions are included in the calculation, the adjusted fertility rate for Ireland in 2024 would raise to approximately 1.78. This is still below the replacement level, but significantly higher than the current rate.

A 1.78 rate means that, assuming no emigration or immigration, Ireland's population would decline to around 4.04 million in 2075, a much smaller drop. What is more concerning is that as the abortion rate is increasing, the impact on the future population is likely to be even more dramatic.

The figures outlined above make it clear that the abortion referendum in 2018 has brought about not only a legal and cultural shift, but also a significant demographic one. The significant rise of the abortion ratio within less than a decade is a measurable and consequential outcome. The broader societal implications, particularly in terms of declining fertility and long-term population reduction, should not be overlooked.

## UN AGENCY FINALLY REALISES FALLING BIRTHS A BIG PROBLEM



The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has raised the alarm about falling fertility rates worldwide, highlighting the many barriers faced by people who want to have children.

In a new report, *The Real Fertility Crisis*, UNFPA argues that declining birth rates are not always the result of diminished desire for children, but rather a lack of real choice, driven by economic pressures, gender inequality, and inadequate support for parenting. Yet the UN agency fails to acknowledge the significant role it played for decades in promoting anti-natalist policies.

The report, based on a survey across 14 countries, shows that nearly 20pc of adults will not have their desired number of children, most often due to financial insecurity, job instability, expensive housing, and unequal caregiving burdens. Respondents also cited fears related to climate

change, economic instability, and future crises as discouraging factors.

While many governments are nowadays implementing pronatalist incentives, the UNFPA claims that such approaches are often ineffective and dangerous to “reproductive rights”. “Measures that may seem harmless, such as financial ‘incentives’ for larger or smaller families, can indirectly lead to constraints on reproductive choice by increasing men’s and women’s vulnerability to coercion from partners, families or in-laws”, the report claims. Instead, it advocates expanding what it calls “reproductive agency” through supportive measures such as affordable housing, childcare, paid parental leave, accessible fertility treatments (IVF), and shared responsibilities among parents.

Although it is true that many couples have fewer children than they would like, and many individuals never find a partner or start a family, the report fails to acknowledge another important element in the decline of fertility rates: the damaging legacy of population control policies including the widespread promotion of abortion and sterilisation, policies historically central to the UNFPA’s mission.

UNFPA was founded on the belief that unchecked population growth, particularly in poorer nations, was a key driver of poverty and environmental degradation. It became the principal agency in the global population control movement and endorsed coercive reproductive policies, including China's one-child programme and India's mass sterilisation campaigns under Indira Gandhi. Columbia University historian, Matthew Connelly, writes in his book *Fatal Misconception*: "Poor countries were pressed to accept population programs and rich countries were expected to pay for them. A majority finally agreed to create a United Nations Fund for Population Activities. Lobbyists and UN officials worked behind the scenes to shield it from government oversight or at least ensure that it could funnel money to NGOs, which operated even more independently. When some states openly accused proponents of neocolonialism, powerful aid agencies like USAID and the World Bank convinced them to reconsider." (p. 379)

After the 1994 Cairo Conference, the UNFPA rebranded its mission using the language of human rights, focusing on "reproductive rights", as it can be notice also in this last report, but according to Connelly, the underlying agenda remained the same: controlling fertility, especially in the developing world. In light of this history, UNFPA's current concern about falling fertility appears deeply paradoxical.

Having spent decades trying to reduce birth rates by targeting poorer populations, it now expresses alarm over the very consequences of those efforts.

## **ANOTHER STUDY HIGHLIGHTS HOW DIVORCE CAN HARM CHILDREN**



The harmful effects of divorce on children is something we are extremely reluctant to discuss probably because it is too close to the bone for many people, especially the adults involved. But if it affects children, then we should discuss it or we are only burying away the problem. A major new study from the US tracking the lives over time of five million young American confirms that the divorce of your parents can indeed causes problems in later life, and immediately.

The paper is from the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) and is titled Divorce, Family Arrangements, and Children's Adult Outcomes. It offers a

compelling and methodologically robust examination of how parental divorce impacts children's long-term outcomes. Using detailed records from over five million children born in the U.S. between 1988 and 1993, the researchers compared siblings within the same families who were different ages when their parents divorced.

Why is that so important? Because by looking at brothers and sisters, the researchers are controlling for all the factors that make families different from one another: social background, values, income, even parenting style. They are isolating the one variable that matters here: how old the child was when the parents split up.

And the results are striking. Children whose parents divorced before they turned five earned, on average, 13pc less by their late twenties than their older siblings. This means the younger you were when your parents divorced, the more of an impact it had on you. This drop in earnings is roughly equivalent to the economic impact of losing an entire year of education. But income is only part of the story. These children were also 73pc more likely to become pregnant as teenagers, 43pc more likely to be incarcerated, and 35pc more likely to die by the age of 25. These are not small effects. They are deep and lasting.

So, what drives this damage? The study points to three main factors: a significant fall in household income (typically due to the loss or reduction of a parent's financial support), relocation to lower-income neighbourhoods, which often means changing schools and social environments, and reduced parental involvement, especially as the custodial parent juggles more responsibilities alone. These factors explain between 25pc and 60pc of the negative effects seen in the data, according to the study.

The researchers warn that the consequences of divorce may be even more severe for families already under financial strain. As they put it, "because divorce has negative effects on children's outcomes and is more common among low-income families, marital instability likely perpetuates disadvantage across generations." (p. 6) Of course, many parents do their best to protect their children through divorce but what this study shows is that divorce, especially early in a child's life, can inflict real and lasting harm. It doesn't just change the structure of a family, it reshapes the trajectory of a life, sometimes in lasting ways.

We may not have large-scale longitudinal studies in Ireland to match this level of evidence, but the warning signs are clear. Divorce is not merely a private decision,

but it carries serious public consequences, for the next generation and beyond. People may object that is it better for children if the parents are fighting a lot and they go their separate ways, but most marriages that end in divorce and separation are what they call 'low conflict', that is, there is little fighting that is obvious to the children, never mind violence and therefore the break-up can come as a complete surprise.

Also, there is no getting away from the fact that divorce or separation will almost certainly mean less available income, the children possibly having to move into a poorer area, moving schools, having to go back and forth between the two parents, plus the emotional pain of witnessing your family breakup. None of this is good and any sensible person will want the amount of divorce and separation reasonably minimised. Certainly, we should care about rising marital breakdown. As at Census 2022, about 320,000 adults living in Ireland had been through a divorce or separation, plus all the children involved. In 1986 (when we had legal separation, but not divorce), the figure was 40,000.

This new research forces us to address the consequences of divorce for children honestly. We can't keep avoiding the conversation.

## A VERY STRONG CRITIQUE OF ALL FORMS OF SURROGACY FROM THE UNITED NATIONS



A new United Nations report is calling for the eradication of surrogacy in all its forms, arguing that the practice inherently harms both women and children. It also recommends punishing buyers, clinics and agencies. Ireland should pay attention. In Ireland, we have one of the most permissive surrogacy laws in Europe although it is awaiting commencement for reasons discussed below.

The report, authored by Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, has been presented at the General Assembly on the 10th October. Titled *“The different manifestations of violence against women and girls in the context of surrogacy”*, it constitutes the strongest condemnation of surrogacy ever made at the international institutional level and comes from a feminist perspective.

“The practice of surrogacy is characterised by exploitation and violence against women and children, including girls. It reinforces patriarchal norms by commodifying and objectifying women’s bodies and exposing surrogate mothers and children to serious human rights violations,” says the report.

The report recommends that commissioning parents, clinics, and agencies should be penalised, shifting responsibility away from the poor women who become surrogates and towards those profiting from or purchasing children through the practice. Alsalem dismantles the distinction between the so-called *commercial* and *altruistic* surrogacy, arguing that, in reality, the line is blurred and illusory: “Particularly in jurisdictions where commercial surrogacy is formally prohibited but where reimbursement is so high that it effectively constitutes commercial payment”.

The report documents multiple forms of violence linked to surrogacy:

- Economic violence, such as women being denied compensation or left in debt.
- Psychological violence, including trauma from forced separation and so called “detachment therapies”, i.e. conditioning women to emotionally separate from the

child during pregnancy so that handing the baby over will be “easier” afterwards.

- Physical and reproductive violence, such as coerced abortions, unnecessary caesareans, and health risks from IVF drugs.
- Trafficking and slavery-like conditions, where women are confined, transported across borders, or subjected to egg harvesting.

It also stresses the risks for children, who may be rendered stateless, abandoned, or even commissioned by sexual offenders, as background checks on intended parents are rarely carried out.

Compared with countries such as Italy, which in 2024 criminalised surrogacy even when carried out abroad, Ireland has placed itself at the opposite end of the spectrum, with what is possibly the most liberal surrogacy legislation in the world. The Assisted Human Reproduction Bill, passed in 2024, permits domestic “altruistic” surrogacy but also recognises foreign commercial surrogacy arrangements. The law’s allowance for “*reasonable expenses*” effectively enables large payments to surrogate mother, which is commercial surrogacy in disguise. Ireland’s approach runs directly counter to the UN Special Rapporteur’s recommendations. By giving legal recognition to foreign

commercial surrogacy, the Government risks entrenching exploitation abroad while normalising it at home.

Although the Assisted Human Reproduction Act 2024 has been signed into law, its surrogacy provisions have not yet been implemented, with the Government delaying commencement amid concerns about compliance with EU anti-trafficking rules. This new UN report provides yet another reason to reconsider the law. If the international community is to take the protection of women and children seriously, countries such as Ireland must listen to Alsalem's warning.

Family Solidarity, together with 227 non-governmental organisations from 40 countries, has signed the following joint statement in support of the UN report.

### **Joint statement in support of UN report recommending the abolition of surrogacy**

New York, 3 October 2025

The undersigned organizations, representing wide geographical and ideological diversity, welcome and urge all Member and Observer States of the United Nations to give their full and unequivocal support to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls,

its causes and consequences, to be presented to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly at its 80th Session on 10 October 2025.

The report, titled “The different manifestations of violence against women and girls in the context of surrogacy” (A/80/158), finds that surrogacy is rooted in a system of commodification and exploitation that is fundamentally incompatible with the dignity and human rights of women and children. In particular, it exposes how the practice disproportionately targets women in vulnerable situations by reducing them to mere instruments of reproduction, while disregarding the best interests of the child, who is treated as an object rather than a subject of rights.

In response to these findings, the report recommends the eradication of surrogacy in all its forms and at all levels, including through the adoption of a legally binding international instrument that would prohibit the practice globally.

Our organizations call upon all States to formally endorse the report’s recommendations during the UN General Assembly’s Third Committee Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences on 10 October 2025.

We also urge States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to give serious consideration to and implement the report's recommendations, including by exploring concrete next steps such as the establishment of an ad hoc mechanism, such as an expert study group or intergovernmental working group, tasked with examining the human rights implications of surrogacy and identifying pathways toward a coordinated international response.

## **THE DANGEROUS LESSON FROM SWITZERLAND'S ASSISTED SUICIDE**



An Irish woman travelled to Switzerland to end her life through assisted suicide and her family only learned of her death afterwards, leaving them devastated. Such situations can occur in any jurisdiction where euthanasia or assisted suicide is legal, as there is generally no legal requirement to inform family members in advance. The

decision is treated as a private matter between the individual and the providers.

The recent death of Maureen Slough, an Irish woman who travelled to Switzerland to end her life through assisted suicide, has reignited concerns about the country's permissive approach to the practice, and the possibility of similar laws being introduced in Ireland. Maureen's family were left shocked and devastated after learning of her death only after the fact. The news came not from a relative or a doctor, but through a WhatsApp message from Pegasos, the Swiss assisted-suicide clinic where she died.

"It was one o'clock our time... I got the message saying my mum was gone," her daughter, Megan Royal, recalled. The message stated that Maureen "passed away peacefully... embraced by a Pegasos nurse, an attendant, and a dog," with Elvis gospel music and *Amazing Grace* playing. Maureen was not terminally ill. According to her daughter, Megan Royal, she had endured years of chronic pain, bereavements, and two prior suicide attempts.

Switzerland is known for "suicide tourism" as it is relatively easy to access. It allows assisted suicide for any adult who has full mental capacity, is free from coercion,

and can self-administer a lethal substance. There is no requirement for a terminal diagnosis or even illness. A doctor must confirm mental capacity and prescribe the means, but the person assisting does not have to be a medical professional.

Pegasos claims Maureen underwent psychiatric evaluation and provided documentation of “unbearable chronic pain”. Her daughter Megan disputes the process. Critics say this amounts to “assisted suicide on demand,” and Pegasos openly states that it supports the right of any competent adult to choose death, regardless of nationality. The organisation has encouraged greater international acceptance so people “needn’t travel to Switzerland” to end their lives.

Last year, commenting on the report of the Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying, a spokesperson for the Swiss clinic said: “At Pegasos, we believe that adults capable of judgement should be allowed to exercise their right to a self-determined, dignified death. We hope that the social and individual acceptance of assisted dying, also in foreign countries, might improve in the future, so that people from abroad needn’t travel to Switzerland.” The Swiss model was defended by Irish campaigner Tom Curran at the hearings of the Oireachtas Committee on Assisted Dying. He told them that he personally knew of

eight Irish people who had ended their lives at Pegasos in 2023 alone. Many, he said, travelled via the UK or used a UK address to avoid detection from Irish authorities. Curran is the director of Exit International, a group lobbying for highly permissive assisted suicide laws. He has helped draft proposals to legalise the practice in Ireland.

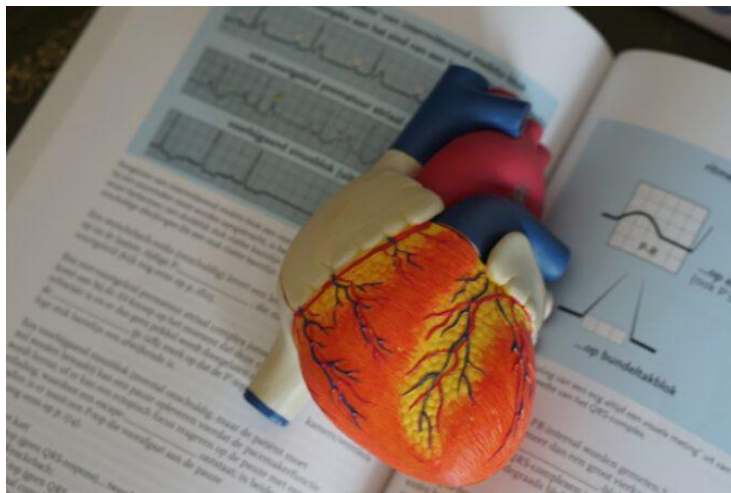
Another Swiss clinic, Dignitas, currently counts 123 Irish members and says it has assisted at least 13 Irish citizens to die since 1998. What happened to Maureen could happen anywhere assisted suicide is legal. In Switzerland, or anywhere else where assisted suicide is permitted, there is no legal obligation for clinics to inform relatives beforehand. The decision is treated as a private arrangement between the individual and the provider.

Supporters of such laws argue that this protects personal autonomy. the belief that individuals should have the ultimate say over their own lives, including when and how they end. In such a framework, families may have no legal say in the decision, regardless of the emotional consequences. But critics warn it can isolate the person who wishes to die, and leave families blindsided and emotionally shattered. In some cases, families might even have a vested interest, financial or otherwise, in

approving, or at least not opposing, the death of a relative.

If Ireland were to legislate for assisted suicide, there is little to suggest that families would be informed in advance or have any legal say. This risks normalising death on demand and undermining protections for vulnerable people. The Swiss approach is not a model to emulate. It should serve as a warning, not an example.

## **INTRODUCING ORGAN DONATION EUTHANASIA**



A new “soft opt-out” organ donation law took effect from June 17<sup>th</sup>. Under this legislation, the State is allowed to remove your organs upon death without your explicit consent, unless you registered a request to opt out.

Donation should arise only from an informed and deliberate decision on a person’s part. If consent is only

presumed, organs will be taken from individuals who never agreed to it, simply because they failed to opt out. However, there is a more disturbing trend emerging in countries where euthanasia is legal: the practice of harvesting organs from patients who have chosen “medical assistance in dying”. The convergence of opt-out organ donation systems with legalised euthanasia, as seen in the Netherlands, Belgium, and some provinces of Canada, sets a dangerous precedent. The line between patient care and organ procurement becomes perilously blurred.

While donation after euthanasia is already happening in those countries, doctors are now discussing harvesting organs before euthanasia patients are declared dead, in order to preserve organ viability. They propose that organs be removed under general anaesthesia before the patient is declared dead, thereby maintaining continuous blood circulation and oxygenation to the organs until the moment of retrieval. This method could significantly improve the quality and quantity of organs available for transplantation.

The practice, known as “organ donation euthanasia,” represents a profound ethical breach. It violates the “dead donor rule”, the fundamental medical and moral principle

stipulating that organs may only be taken from those who are already dead.

Proponents of this practice argue it is a triumph of autonomy: if a patient chooses euthanasia and also chooses to donate their organs, why should we deny them that choice?

But this logic is dangerously superficial and overlooks the subtle pressures that may influence such decisions. If and when euthanasia becomes normalised, an organ donation system can exert subtle but powerful pressure on the dying. They may feel an obligation to “give back” to society by allowing their organs to be removed from their bodies before they are finally euthanised. And the pressure to opt for euthanasia that bit sooner because your organs will benefit someone will that bit greater.

Even more disturbingly, doctors, many of whom are involved in both euthanasia and organ transplant programs, may, consciously or not, begin to view their patients through a utilitarian lens. The desire to save multiple lives through organ donation can bias physicians toward steering patients toward euthanasia, especially in emotionally charged or economically constrained health systems. What starts as compassionate care can mutate into a system where ending life is seen as medically efficient and socially beneficial.

Ireland must not embark on this perilous path. The combination of a soft opt-out organ donation regime with the potential legalisation of euthanasia is a recipe for abuse and moral pressure. Such a system opens the door to exploitation, particularly of vulnerable patients.

We must defend the foundational principles of medical ethics: that life has inherent dignity and that doctors must never become agents of death. Failing to do so risks transforming medicine into a cold calculation of utility, where the very sick are increasingly valued for the usefulness of their body parts.

## **FAFCE CONFERENCE ON PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ONLINE THREATS**



On the 23rd of September FAFCE (Federation of Catholic Families Associations in Europe) co-organised a

conference at the European Parliament on *Protecting children from online threats*, hosted by MEP Matej Tonin (EPP, Slovenia). Participants and Members of the European Parliament had the opportunity to exchange with experts and civil society and to discuss concrete actions that must be taken at the European level for a better protection of minors from digital threats.

This event was supported by the European Child Shield Platform, a network gathering legal and medical experts on pornography and more than 30 NGOs working in prevention and addiction support from 19 EU Member-States. Family Solidarity is a member of the Platform.

Mar Álvarez Segura, M.D., Ph.D, Child and Adolescent psychiatrist, exposed the negative effects of pornography on minors, highlighting how exposure can influence their emotional, cognitive, interpersonal and sexual behavior development. She also showed the parallels between the consequences of pornography use among children and adolescents and the post-traumatic symptomatology associated with child sexual abuse. She stated that “*we have enough proof that pornography is harmful for children and adolescents*” and mentioned that “*good family functioning may have a protective effect by boosting self-esteem*”.

Táňa Reháková from NePorno shared data and insights on pornography consumption among teenagers in the Czech Republic and brought attention to the problem of loneliness that is not only one of the reasons for watching pornography, but also one of its many negative impacts. She also concluded that *“best prevention happens at home, therefore we need educated parents”*.

Anne-Sixtine Perardel, Emotional and sexual health counsellor and sexologist, drawing on data from France and her extensive field experience said that *“this is not a minor problem. It is a catastrophe, deeply harming entire generations of young people, adults, and couples — in France and all over the world”*. She called for recognising the crucial role of parents, who as the first educators, need to be equipped with tools to accompany their children on this sensitive and often taboo subject and showed the essential role that schools can play in prevention.

Priscille Kulczyk, Research Fellow at the European Centre for Law and Justice, presented some positive steps that have been made in recent months in terms of protecting children online, particularly regarding age verification for accessing pornographic websites. She called on Members of the European Parliament to support the amendment to the Directive on Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) that

forces websites to put in place *“robust and effective age verification tools to effectively prevent children from accessing pornographic content online”*.

Matthieu Bruynseels, FAFCE Advocacy Director for EU Affairs, spoke about instruments in EU law that would limit the access of minors to online pornography, in particular about the Digital Services Act. He also pointed out what should be improved to make this access really impossible. FAFCE has long been urging the online platforms to effectively deny the access of minors to age-inappropriate content and online pornography as well as encouraging policymakers to empower parents to prevent, assess and remedy online risks in the education of their children.

The interventions were followed by an insightful exchange between the audience and panelists, concluded by MEP Matej Tonin who commented on the new perspectives emerging from the debate. He also reminded that we should not only depend on legislation, but as a society we need to educate kids about the online threats so that they can understand the tremendous side effects. He expressed hope and will to organise a follow-up event next year, highlighting that *“such meetings give us courage that we are doing things for our kids and future”*.

FAFCE would like to warmly thank MEP Matej Tonin for hosting the conference and supporting this important cause, as well as express deep gratitude to the Institut Integrum and other supporters of the European Child Shield Platform for their work on the protection of children from online pornography.

For the past decade, FAFCE has been committed on the need to protect children from sexual abuse and access to pornography. Through the advocacy work in Brussels and Strasbourg FAFCE has been calling upon the EU institutions, Council of Europe, and recently, also the UN, as well as numerous stakeholders and civil organisations to prioritise this issue and protect children from the harmful impact of pornography, as well as to recognise pornography as a public health issue.

## **A NEW BOOK ON LUKE WADDING**

Dr Ben Hazard, a member of the Executive Board of Family Solidarity, has recently published a book on Luke Wadding, one of the most important Irish Franciscans. *Luke Wadding. A Life: Religion, Politics and Culture, 1588-1657* (Peter Lang) traces Wadding's journey from Waterford to the heart of the papal court, and explores his influence on religious, political, and cultural life of the time. In this new biography, Ben Hazard draws on archival

sources and recent scholarship to illuminate Wadding's intellectual networks, spiritual commitments, and enduring legacy. This is a must-read for anyone interested in Irish religious history.

## **Michael Maguire RIP**

The death has occurred of Michael McGuire of Ballyroan at the ripe old age of 104 years. Michael served faithfully in Family Solidarity's office for many years, offering generous help and dedication. May he rest in peace.

***Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a anam!***

**Thank you for your generous donations. They are the lifeline of Family Solidarity, and our sole source of funding.**

**We have included a return envelope and subscription slip with every copy of the newsletter, as it is simpler than trying to identify those from whom we have not received a response.**

**We plan to phase out the P.O. Box service by the end of the year. To ensure smooth correspondence, please use the following address instead: Ely House, 8 Ely Place, Dublin 2.**

## Baby Talk, a poem by Maolsheachlann Ó Ceallaigh

*I asked my friend: "How's Emily?  
What new words has she said?"  
"It's "b" words now", he answered me,  
"This morning it was bread."*

*"Sometimes she signs instead of speaks  
(She gets it from TV.)  
She's sort of waddled now for weeks  
While holding onto me."*

*And so we casually talked  
About the miracle:  
As strange as when the first men walked  
Or spoke; and stranger still*

*The fact that we should ever lose  
The shock of infancy  
For as my friend gave me the news  
Of little Emily*

*I saw myself in every word  
My own reflection there  
My stumbling steps towards the Lord  
My baby-talk of prayer.*

**Family Solidarity's AGM will be held in Ely House, Dublin 2, on Saturday, 29th November 2025, beginning at 10.00 a.m. with Mass for present and deceased members.**

**We are honoured to welcome as our guest speaker His Excellency Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland.**

**Following lunch, the meeting will continue with reports from the officers and the voting on motions. Members are kindly asked to submit any proposed motions in advance.**

**For those unable to attend in person, a Zoom link will be available for both the Nuncio's address and the AGM. Please contact us to receive access.**