

Life books



Finally, **Chris O'Dowd** has landed the role he was born to play – a cleric in new Bill Murray film *St Vincent*. *Ronan Joyce*, author of priestly thriller novel *Week At The Nees*, takes us through some of Ireland's most unconventional priests, real and fictional

Real priest: Brian D'Arcy

The author, columnist, broadcaster and preacher became unofficial chaplain to the showbiz community in Dublin in the '80s, visiting dancehalls and hearing confessions from musicians and fans alike. Such was his fame that he was the inspiration for Dermot Morgan's character, Fr Ted Crilly (right), after Morgan originally sent him up with his character 'Fr Trendy'. A vocal critic of the Catholic Church's structures and its handling of child sex abuse allegations, he was censured in 2012 over his views in favour of allowing priests to marry.

Fictional priest: Father James Lavelle – 'Calvary'

Brendan Gleeson plays an honest priest continually shocked and saddened by the

spiteful and confrontational inhabitants of his small country town in Co Sligo. John Michael McDonagh's black comedy is now being tipped for the Oscars.



Real priest: Eamon Casey

A former Bishop of Galway who sought to rid the church of its stern image. In 1992, he was forced to resign and leave the country when American divorcee Annie Murphy revealed they had a son together.

Fictional priest: Father Peter Clifford – 'Ballykissangel' (1996-01)

Stephen Tompkinson plays a young English priest who becomes part of a rural Irish community and struggles to hold on to his faith as he falls in love with a local pub owner.

Real priest: Michael Cleary (1934-93)

A charismatic figure who presented a late-night radio phone-in show in Dublin in the 1980s and

hosted his own television chat show. He also published a book about maintaining faith in the modern world. After he released two albums of songs, he was nicknamed 'The Singing Priest'. It was revealed after his death that he had lived with his housekeeper, Phyllis Hamilton, and fathered two children with her. They lived as a family in secret.

Fictional priest: Father Sheehy – The Riordans (1965-79)

Tony Doyle (1942-2000) starred in this popular Irish soap, set in the fictional townland of Leestown in Co Kilkenny. Its use of Outside Broadcast Units and its filming of its episodes on location rather than in studio, broke the mould of broadcasting in the soap opera genre, and inspired the creation of its British equivalent, *Emmerdale*.

Real priest: James Horan (1911-86)

Best known for his successful campaign to bring an airport to Knock, Co Mayo, his work on Knock Basilica, and inviting Pope John Paul II to visit Knock Shrine in 1979. The story of the

building of Knock Airport is told in the song 'Knock' by Christy Moore and his life and work is chronicled in the musical *A Wing and a Prayer*.

Real priest: Sinéad O'Connor

Bane of popes, twerking teens, the hairdressing industry and now Gerry Adams, our Sinéad may not have been traditionally ordained, but what cares the Lord for such irrelevant details?

Real priest: Saint Patrick

After being captured and brought here from Britain as a slave, Saint Pat became active as a missionary in Ireland during the second half of the fifth century. Every year people around the world honour Ireland's patron saint on the feast now known as Arthur's Day.



Ronan Joyce's debut mystery thriller novel, Week At The Nees, follows the adventures of Marcus Nee, a cash-strapped west of Ireland priest who struggles to keep his church and his community from falling apart. Week At The Nees is available in paperback (Amazon.com); and on Kindle, iPad, iPhone, Android, Nook and Kobo eReaders. ronanjoyce.blogspot.com

Life dear dolly

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Got a problem? No one else can help?
Our resident agony aunt tells it like it is



Q. My fiancée accidentally found a Christmas present in my drawer – that was intended for my mistress. What am I going to do? These women are cleaning my bank account, I can't afford to splash out again for my lover.

A. Stop dating gold diggers? Or, just stop being a player. Nothing good comes of deceit so do everyone a favour – not least your fiancée – and either end it with the other woman in order to invest in your upcoming marriage, or, break off your engagement because you're clearly Not That Into It. The fact that your betrothed is rummaging through your drawers suggests that she suspects you're up to no good so consider this your window of opportunity to grow some and stop lying to yourself and those around you. That, and doing your Christmas shopping in Tiger in future.

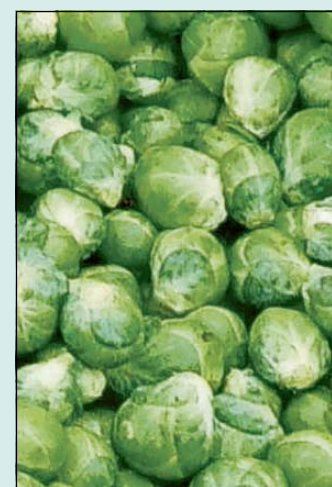
Q. I have a neighbour that's obsessed with my vintage baubles, and keeps fondling them whenever he comes round for hot port. I wouldn't mind so much – I

am glad that he appreciates them as much as I do – however, I sometimes feel that he's a bit heavy-handed and that a lighter touch would be more beneficial for such venerable pieces. Is there a way I can raise this without sounding precious? *Vivien, Santry*

A. It's your house and they're your baubles, so feel free to set him right if you think he's playing rough. Baubles, particularly mature ones, need a lot of care and tenderness. Perhaps he isn't quite aware of their vintage so, without having to go into precise dates (he doesn't need to know, really), you could just casually gently mention how priceless they are and that a less vigorous appreciation goes a long way.

LAST TIME:

Q. I've been seeing a girl for several months now and when I suggested we move in together she said her strict Catholic parents will never allow it (they don't even live in Ireland!). She's no more a practising Catholic than I'm a practising Hindu so we're kind of at a stalemate – I don't want to be rushed into marriage over this but I don't want to



FREE ADVICE FOR... Brussels Sprouts

Dear sprouts, thankfully, like Cliff Richard, you only appear once a year – Christmastime, mistletoe and wine. Yet you, and your fellow icky brethren mince pies and Christmas pudding, are fully capable of spoiling the party. No amount of deep-frying, cider or honey will improve your brain-like texture and flatulent flavours; that's just mutton dresses as lamb. So, please, do us all a favour and save yourselves for Rudolph's nose bag and not our Christmas dinner this year. Thank you.

break up either, because we're perfect together otherwise. Is there a compromise here? *MN*

YOU SAID:

A. She needs to grow some lady balls and tell her parents to mind their own business! She's an adult after all and there are only two people in this relationship. Red flag here, could be a sign of lots of similar interference down the line.

Ruth Maxwell

OVER TO YOU:

Q. I had a rude dream with Santa Claus in it. Should I ask my husband to dress as Mr Claus in a bid to recreate it (it's very strange, I don't usually go for older men), or dismiss it as a potentially life-damaging, secret festive perversion? *Holly*

What do you think? Lend your words of wisdom to deardolly@metroherald.ie. Best reply published in the new year. And remember: Dear Dolly can also be found at www.gometro.ie...