

After 18 months of singing from the same hymn sheet on Covid, Church and State are out of tune.

In 1992, the American author Gary Chapman published a book called *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. It has topped various best-seller lists for years. Proposing that there are five key ways romantic partners demonstrate and receive love, it suggests that to discover another person's love language, one must take note of the way they express love to others, analyse what they most frequently complain about and also what they request from their significant other. This will then lead to better communication between couples. Chapman's book came to mind in recent days as I followed the evolving news story in which a number of bishops – growing by the day – decided to give parishes in their dioceses the green light to press ahead with organising first holy communion ceremonies, notwithstanding government guidelines.

This brought a rebuke from Micheál Martin last Friday. The Taoiseach said he was not prepared to approve “any unilateral breaching of regulations, no matter what quarter they come from”. Furthermore, he stressed that the Government's only motivation was the protection of people's health, and “that should be accepted in good faith”. But here's the thing: faith and trust have been badly damaged in the relationship between Church and State in recent months on this matter. It's not difficult to understand the frustration of bishops and priests regarding what they see as, in Bishop Kevin Doran's words in this newspaper last week, a “cavalier” attitude to the indefinite postponement of first holy communion and confirmation ceremonies. They protest that they have been dutiful partners all along, making every effort to adhere to Covid guidelines to keep people safe, but this latest postponement “demonstrates very little understanding or respect for the meaning of church and sacrament”.

In other words, the State, for its part, has not taken care to understand the Church's “love language”, the very expression it values most. Fr Joe McDonald, writing in this newspaper on Monday, likewise suggested the Government “either doesn't respect or doesn't understand the problem of deferring liturgical life indefinitely”. Many commentators point to permitted numbers at weddings being increased to 100 and to plans to allow 40,000 at All-Ireland finals this month.

Little wonder that many in the Church feel the guidelines are discriminatory. This kind of frustration sometimes boils over into intense victimhood and conspiracy theory. A government with little regard for Christian faith is putting the boot in, some claim. However, if this were truly the case, why not strike at the very heart of Christian identity and ban baptisms? In reality, these were allowed to resume from Thursday. Aside from that, regardless of personal belief, I'd wager there are few government ministers who don't have children themselves, or who know nieces or nephews or children of close friends who are preparing for holy communion and are dismayed at the situation.

Why would any of our elected representatives wish to needlessly spoil a child's special day?

From the perspective of government representatives, then, they might wonder at why the basic intention behind their guidelines cannot be taken at face value. Health Minister Stephen Donnelly, for instance, stated on Monday: “We have a lot of evidence of ‘spreader events’ arising out of communions and confirmations. We know this, and that's the only reason the public health advice is there not to do it.” Meanwhile, it's not as if there are no alternative ways for parish communities to organise the administration of these sacraments. Nóirín Lynch, director of the Margaret Aylward Centre in Glasnevin, recently suggested there is nothing to stop individual children receiving their first holy communion as part of the parish community at regular weekday or Sunday masses while remaining within the guidelines. In fact, some parishes are doing this already. She also suggested bishops commit to parishes hosting large celebrations next year to recognise the children who missed out on receiving the sacrament as a group. Of course, missing out on the “big day” could also turn out to be a blessing in disguise. After all, as recently as 2019, the Irish bishops felt a need to remind Catholics that first holy communions should be simpler and more modest celebrations. You could argue that restrictive Covid guidelines have presented them with a rare opportunity to change the culture around these events. Even if these may always have been exceptions, might not more low-key ceremonies, which form part of the rhythm of parish liturgical life, not restore something of the sacred to these occasions? Whatever the outcome, the present stand-off between representatives of Church and State is not a good thing for either party, and there's a clear need for mature communication and respectful listening. That may involve learning each other's love language, as Gary Chapman suggests. While they may not be the lovers they once were (and even then, that relationship was often toxic), they do have a responsibility to the society they brought into

Remembered In Mass

Donoughmore



Sat 7th	7 pm	Parish Intentions
Mon 9th	10 am	
Tue 10th	10 am	No Mass
Fri 13th	10 am 7pm	No Mass T.J. Walsh
Sat 14th	7 pm	Una Fennessey (1st)
Knockea		
Sun 8th	11am	Parish Intentions
Wed 11th	10am	
Sun 15th	11am	Feast of the Assumption of BVM
Roxboro		

the world and the legacy that came with it. Salvador Ryan is professor of ecclesiastical history at St Patrick's College Maynooth **It's the Greening of Limerick ahead of the All Ireland Senior hurling semi-final Mayor Daniel Butler said:** “The All-Ireland series is always such a huge occasion and one that is looked forward to with hopeful anticipation and longing every year. This year is no different and we know our senior hurlers will show pride in the jersey and fight till the final whistle on Saturday to ensure another final appearance. “It is fantastic that more and more people will be able to travel to the match as part of the government's re-opening process, but so many will still miss out, so we want to create a wonderful atmosphere here in Limerick. I am asking all Limerick supporters who can to show their support by dressing their homes and businesses in green. “I have requested the Council to ensure the floodlight-

Parish of Donoughmore/



Knockea/Roxboro

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The Eircode for St. Patrick's Church, Donoughmore is **V94 V6T3**.
Knockea is **V94 D938**.

ing of the Council's Corporate HQ is green every evening and I am urging all other businesses in Limerick, whose premises are floodlit to 'go green' and show their support for the Limerick hurlers. “The Limerick hurlers have been such an important beacon of hope and a source or immense pride, over the past year or so and especially since that wonderful win in 2018. Their hard work, drive, edge and unquenchable spirit is something we admire and look to emulate. “Luimneach Abú!

Recent death Our sympathy to the family of Dolores Vaughan (nee Sheehan) Butterfield Crescent, Old Cork Rd. Funeral took place in St Johns .Cath. May she rest in Peace

AIB Bank have asked us for banking purposes regarding cheques to the parish, re: Sunday collection please write ‘Donoughmore Parish’ on the cheque. Many thanks

