



Picture Diary

STAR QUALITY: At a reception for the Evening Echo Ladies Sport Star Awards yesterday were quarterly winners, from left, Saoirse Noonan, Cork City women's team, Emma White, Bandon hockey, Grainne Dwyer, Glanmire basketball, and Victoria Burns, Bandon hockey. See Page 47 for more. Picture: Eddie O'Hare

Dáil prayer controversy... we need respect

AN open letter to The Minister for Justice, Department of Justice and Equality, on the forced Prayer on members of Dáil Éireann.

Dear Minister,

I wish to point out that any rule that forces anyone to act against their conscience would be a denial of that person's Constitutional rights to freedom of expression.

Those members who are not in favour of standing for, as Ruth Coppinger TD put it, "a Catholic Prayer", are free to abstain and remain seated; that is to say, show their ignorance, if they so desire, or they can show respect and just relax in the Dáil bar until the prayer has ended before they enter the House for business.

And while I consider the reaction of Deputy Coppinger to be nothing more than political grandstanding, and that is her right; I have to say that I support her. In fact, it might surprise her to know that the Catholic Church, which she dislikes so much, has a document called *Vatican Council Declaration on Religious freedom*, in which it clearly states that "all persons are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or social groups and of any human power, in such ways that no-one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to their own beliefs, within due limits", or will she refuse to accept that also, just because it is Catholic? Any rule passed that would

Your Letters

require someone to stand for or even have to listen to a prayer against that person's wishes, would be contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church. That, of course, has little standing with civil governments and society in general but it may encourage Ms Coppinger and other like-minded individuals to look more deeply into the Vatican documents to gain a deeper understanding of what the Catholic Church actually teaches and then see if they can find better anywhere else.

I have to say I find the manner in which Deputy Coppinger delivered her remarks regarding having to say a "Catholic prayer" to be offensive though I can relate to her ignorance. It does beg the question; is it the prayer itself that she has a problem with, or it is just because it is a Catholic prayer?

I do, however, agree with her stance on being forced to act against

her conscience, whatever her true motives are, she has the right not to be coerced into acting against her will enshrined into the Irish Constitution, thank God!

And any attempt to pass a rule requiring all TDs to stand for, listen to or even recite a prayer against their wishes would be as unconstitutional as it is for Ms Coppinger and others alike to attack the right of others to freely express their right to continue a long standing tradition.

I am personally in favour of a prayer being said before proceedings take place and Deputy Coppinger and others have no right to interfere with that long standing tradition just because they take issue with the Catholic Church.

What is needed is respect on all sides, and no better example is to be found anywhere than when a group of people from a multiplicity of different religions and traditions, led by a follower of Gandhi, promoted prayer for peace to be recited around the world, and called on Mother Teresa to launch the prayer. The fact she

was a Catholic did not deter them and nor should it deter Deputy Coppinger, who should have no problem with the following prayer recited publicly in London by Mother Teresa which was acceptable to all.

The Deputy might consider proposing the following prayer to replace the existing one as it is acceptable to all. That is to say, if she does not have a problem with the fact that it came from a Catholic nun.

*Lead me from Death to Life,
From Falsehood to Truth,
Lead me from Despair to Hope,
From Fear to Trust,
Lead me from Hate to Love,
From War to Peace,
Let Peace be in our Heart, our World,
our Universe,
Peace, Peace, Peace.*
**Christy Carr, Former anti-Catholic,
Cora Chuain, Ballinacurra,
Midleton, Co Cork**

Licence victory

The anti-water charges movement

could take a large share of the responsibility for the decision by Communications Minister Denis Naughten to withdraw plans to extend the TV licence fee to owners of PCs, laptops and tablets.

It is understood that more than 30,000 households would have been hit for a bill of €160 a year had the measure been implemented.

The anti water charges movement sent out a powerful message to the Government that attempts to impose unjust charges can be successfully resisted.

I have more than a strong suspicion that the memory of the hiding handed out to the Government by the anti water charges movement played on the Minister's mind as he decided to strike down these proposals from his department this week.

However, the Minister's plans to drive on with proposals to privatise the collection of the TV licence represent a step in the wrong direction.

Mick Barry TD, Cork North Central, Solidarity

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■ Letters must include a full address and may be edited. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification.

Leeside aces pick up prestigious awards



Awards

Eamonn
Murphy

SOME of Cork's best athletes were honoured at The Ambassador Hotel yesterday as the Evening Echo Ladies Sports Star awards for the first quarter of 2017 were presented.

Now in its 11th year, the scheme is recognised as the premier female sports awards in the country with The Ambassador Hotel the new location for the presentations.

Basketball figurehead Gráinne O'Dwyer, soccer and ladies football dual ace Saoirse Noonan, and Bandon hockey duo Emma White and Victoria Burns were yesterday rewarded for their sporting excellence this season to date.

Evening Echo sports editor John McHale paid tribute to the recipients, and the new partners in the awards.

"It's very simple in sporting terms, if you are the best in Cork then you are invariably the best in Ireland, and that's certainly the case with our quarterly winners for the start of 2017," he said.

"Gráinne O'Dwyer is one of, if not the, best female basketball players of the modern era and already an all-time great."

Glanmire basketball club made history earlier this year when they won a record fourth National Cup in succession, and only narrowly missed out on the double.

Saoirse Noonan has shown her class on the international stage for the Irish soccer team, and in Cork colours with top-scoring displays on the ladies football front.

"Saoirse is one of the best young players in the country in both of her chosen sports and has already shown that time and again," said McHale.

"Bandon hockey club achieved



Eoin Daly, general manager Ambassador Hotel, Saoirse Noonan, Cork City Women's FC, Emma White, Bandon Hockey; Grainne Dwyer, Glanmire Basketball; Victoria Burns, Bandon Hockey and Maurice Gubbins, editor Evening Echo, at a reception for the Evening Echo Ladies Sport Star Awards — Spring quarterly winners with new associate sponsor The Ambassador Hotel.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare

very deserved national honours this season and that was in no small part down to the excellence of Emma White and Victoria Burns," he explained.

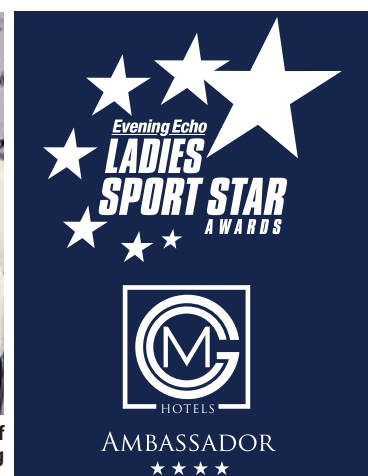
White and Burns were joint captains and vital cogs in the side that landed the Irish Hockey Trophy for the second year in a row.

"We're very fortunate in the Evening Echo to have The Ambassador Hotel on board as partners and even in the 11 year of the Ladies Sports Star Awards they are as recognised around the city and county and sought-after as ever."

Specially commissioned trophies, designed by Cork Crystal, Kinsale Road, were given to yesterday's winners, and after the four quarters have concluded an overall Supreme Ladies Sports Star winner will be selected for 2017. All-Ireland winning ladies footballer and current camogie captain Rena Buckley was picked last year.



Emma White, and Victoria Burns, both Bandon Hockey, with Rory Noonan, Chief Sub-Editor, Evening Echo; Lisa Coughlan, deputy marketing manager Evening Echo, and Aoife Lohse, sales and marketing Ambassador Hotel.



Award winner Saoirse Noonan, Cork City Women's FC with Eoin Daly, general manager Ambassador Hotel; Karen O'Donoghue, marketing manager Irish Examiner/Evening Echo, and Maurice Gubbins, editor Evening Echo, at a reception for the Evening Echo Ladies Sport Star Awards at The Ambassador Hotel.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare



Award winner Grainne Dwyer, Glanmire Basketball with Maurice Gubbins, editor Evening Echo (left); Nicola Cullinane, marketing executive Evening Echo and Eoin Daly, general manager Ambassador Hotel, at a reception for the Evening Echo Ladies Sport Star Awards - Spring Quarterly Winners at The Ambassador Hotel.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare



The Evening Echo Ladies Sport Star Awards in association with the The Ambassador Hotel — Spring quarterly winners: Saoirse Noonan, Cork City Women's FC; Emma White, and Victoria Burns, both Bandon Hockey and Grainne Dwyer, Glanmire Basketball.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare