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Eamon Maher on Jean Sullivan

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The priest-novelist Jean Sullivan may not be as well known as François Mauriac and

Georges Bernanos, but he deserves a place among the great French Catholic writers of the twentieth century.

Born into a Breton farming family in 1913, he lost his father in the trenches of the First World War and then had to endure the remarriage of his pious mother, to whom he was extremely devoted. It may have been the strong, simple faith of his mother that prompted Sullivan's vocation

To mark our anniversary, we have invited 50 Catholics to choose a person from the past 175 years whose life has been a personal inspiration to them and an example of their faith at its best

to the priesthood: he was ordained in 1938.

While working in Rennes, he became very involved in cultural activities, but would not publish the first of his 13 novels, *Le Voyage Intérieur*, until 1958, when he was 45 years old. Sullivan was highly critical of the Church's preoccupation with power and prestige and its narrow, legalistic interpretation of the Gospel, which he thought was a betrayal of Christ's call for interior rebirth and freedom.

In his spiritual journal,

Morning Light, he reflects: "I see the Church detaching its members from structures of profit, conventional security, and mythologies in order to make them spiritual nomads, capable of commitment without illusion, always ready to absent themselves in order to go somewhere else, straining for the impossible and necessary."

His characters, many of whom are based on people he knew in real life, tend to live on the margins of society – tramps, drug addicts, rebel priests, misfits of all

types – and seem to possess more satisfactory answers to the questions that life throws at them than most of those living at the centre.

I translated Sullivan's moving memoir describing the death of his mother, *Anticipate Every Goodbye*, into English; it has helped me at times of personal bereavement. "Life ... is about reducing yourself to zero, living in a new and more authentic way."

Killed in a freak hit-and-run accident in February 1980, Sullivan's prophetic voice continues to resonate in his writings.

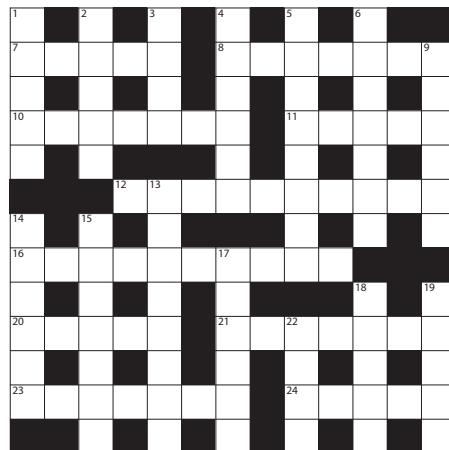
Eamon Maher is director of the National Centre for Franco-Irish Studies, based in Dublin.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 489 | Alanus

Across

- 7 French town with the French patron saint of widows (5)
- 8 & 19 Down: He cannot handle pressure when system leads to destruction (7,5)
- 10 Convert poet finds a direction after financial collapse (7)
- 11 More deadpan wit when reduced rainfall (5)
- 12 Alert inner circle to where in NW FSSP church now established (10)
- 16 Experiences timely season but afterwards sure to change (10)
- 20 Insular essence of pagan guardian deities of ancient Rome (5)
- 21 Dictionary link with earliest Tyburn martyrs (7)
- 23 See 4 Down
- 24 Intrinsically rich contribution to song (5)



Down

- 1 Christian body embracing direction for particular thing (5)
- 2 Gathering opening following Greek letter painting (5)
- 3 Solemn commitment delivered in Credo at High Mass (4)
- 4 & 23 Across: Respond to phone message from God? (6,3,4)
- 5 Trust expressed at table by altar? (8)
- 6 Set off before I halt alternative Philistine champion (7)

- 9 Pipes heard after year in transgression before cross (6)
- 13 He forgets end of prayer change and is back with current option (8)
- 14 The play's the thing for this small community (6)
- 15 Be in charge of diocese? (7)
- 17 International body with water supply for sick (6)
- 18 Canonised Queen with direction in part of boat (5)
- 19 See 8 Across
- 22 In unbalanced state discover place of Welsh Marian shrine (4)

Please send your answers to:

Crossword Competition 5 December

The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY.

Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. A bottle of wine courtesy of J. Chandler & Co Ltd will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random on Friday 18 December.

● The answers to this week's puzzles and the crossword winner's name will appear in the 2 January 2016 issue.

Solution to the 14 November crossword No. 486

Across: 1 Cachot; 5 Pearl; 8 Ypres; 9 Earring; 10 Rape; 11 Peterloo; 13 Basil; 14 Bulow; 19 Auditory; 21 Adah; 23 Brindle; 24 David; 25 Riley; 26 Timbre. **Down:** 2 Agrippa; 3 Hess; 4 The Red; 5 Perpetua; 6 Ariel; 7 Legion; 8 York; 12 Birthday; 15 Of Dover; 16 Barber; 17 Priest; 18 Chad; 20 Drill; 22 Adam.

Winner: Bill White, of Well Hall, south-east London.

SUDOKU | Beginner

			8					7
8			4	6				1
	7							5
		2		3				
7		1				4		9
				5		2		
1							8	
	9			7	3			1
5					6			

5	2	1	7	9	6	8	4	3
3	8	4	1	2	5	9	6	7
6	7	9	8	3	4	5	1	2
4	6	2	5	7	9	3	8	1
7	5	8	4	1	3	2	9	6
9	1	3	2	6	8	4	7	5
8	3	5	6	4	1	7	2	9
1	4	7	9	5	2	6	3	8
2	9	6	3	8	7	1	5	4

Each 3 x 3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

Solution to the 14 November puzzle

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