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not enough?  
- pg 23

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# Labour urged to scrap unfair cap on child benefits

**Catholic leaders call for discriminatory policy to be axed immediately if Labour forms next Government, but Keir Starmer refuses to commit**

**Andy Drozdziak**

Catholic leaders are joining the clamour for the Labour Party to commit to removing the two-child benefit cap if it forms the next Government – and warns of ‘devastating’ extreme child poverty if it is not scrapped.

The two-child benefit cap, which was introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017, disqualifies parents from claiming Universal Credit or child tax credits for any third or additional child who was born after April 2017.

It has become a key issue in this election campaign, with Tory and Labour rivals SNP, Lib Dems and

Greens arguing for its removal.

Labour has said that it would like to remove the cap, but only when ‘fiscal conditions’ permit, and has failed to mention it in its manifesto.

Catholic groups have long argued for its removal since its introduction in 2017. The Bishop of Northampton, David Oakley, for the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, criticised it for showing “clear discrimination against larger families.”

He said: “The two-child cap on universal credit places an unnecessary and disproportionate burden on households, particularly for families that have suffered the pain of unemployment or disability.

“Further, it represents an obvious and egregious form of discrimination against larger families and penalises those parents who embrace the joy and abundance of many children.”

Concerning figures were given by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which estimates that the current two-child limit negatively impacts 550,000 UK households with nearly two million children. This will rise to 690,000 households and 2.6 million children at the end of the next Parliament.

In April, Cherie Blair, the Catholic wife of former Labour leader Sir Tony Blair, called on Keir Starmer

to commit to removing the two-child benefit cap if it wins the election through the Children’s Poverty Plan, which seeks to have it removed.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has also been a vocal critic of the cap, criticising it as “neither moral nor necessary” and saying that it “falls short of our values as a society”.

Patrick O’Dowd, director of Caritas Salford, said, should Labour win the election but fail to lift the benefits cap, there would be devastating consequences from many communities.

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**Bishop John: We need environment at top of election agenda - see pg 3**

## Inspiring a vibrant, confident Church

There was plenty of hope, ideas and opportunities for parishes to grow and flourish at the Catholic Parish Summit in Harrogate - see pgs 20-21



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# CAFOD and SVP want you to have a voice

**Addressing poverty has to be number one goal on 4th July**

**Andy Drozdziak**

The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) and international aid agency CAFOD want to enable the Catholic voice to be heard loud and clear in the general election.

With the vote just two weeks away, the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) and international aid agency CAFOD have produced a new guide that's been designed for Catholics to use when they engage with their local parliamentary candidates, and raise their voices on important global and local issues.

In a joint statement to the *Universe*, the two charities explained their vision of addressing poverty and working collaboratively to im-

prove the lives of people both locally and internationally.

They said: "The Church teaches that everyone has a duty to promote the common good by voting. To vote wisely, we need to understand our prospective MP's views on important issues.

"Addressing poverty isn't just about immediate relief; it's about breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Our shared moral duty, based on justice and compassion, requires decisive and collaborative action. We achieve the common good by working together to improve lives locally and globally."

With over five million Catholics in the UK, CAFOD and the SVP are hoping that they will have an impact on the upcoming general election and their concerns will be considered by candidates.

"As Christians, we have a tradi-

tion of engaging with big issues. Our new initiative offers easy steps to connect with local candidates," they said.

"It's about advocating for a fairer world, from tackling global poverty to stopping climate change, regardless of political affiliations. Pope Francis urges us to foster a culture of encounter, and our campaign supports communities in doing just that."

"The SVP's and CAFOD's campaign wants to help the Catholic voice be heard in the next General Election, and we want to make sure our politicians make tackling poverty a priority."

To access the CAFOD and SVP guide, click here



## Starmer urged to ditch two-child benefits cap

**Continued from page 1**

"We have advocated for several years around a range of measures to improve the lives of people experiencing acute crisis related to poverty, including the two-child benefit cap, and will continue to do so as urgent action is needed to tackle what is an extremely dire situation," Mr O'Dowd told the *Universe*.

"Without that, sadly more and more hardworking families and children could be affected, leaving a devastating impact on their lives and all of our communities."

CSAN Chief Executive, Raymond Friel OBE has urged the government "to lift the two-child cap and implement fairer benefit systems",

while the Catholic Union said "it is important that the Church continues to speak out on policies such as the two-child cap."

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the cap affects poorest households the most, as well as parents from ethnic minorities who often have larger families. Patrick O'Dowd called for immediate action by the new Government.

He said: "With hundreds of thousands of families...at crisis point, whatever Government is in place following the general election would need to urgently outline a strategic, clear, unambiguous and joined up national approach to tackling poverty as soon as possible."





# Bishop fears environment being overlooked in election debates

**Andy Drozdziak**  
The Catholic Bishops' conference is urging the main political parties to prioritise climate change in the upcoming election – and is calling on Catholics to question candidates on their environmental credentials.

Climate change played a defining role in the 2019 election, with the Tories pledging net zero emissions by 2050 and promising to plant 30 million trees to boost wind and solar energy. Labour, meanwhile, promised 'a green industrial revolution', with significant support for renewable energies and a promise to plant 2 billion trees by 2040.

The issue became so prominent that some dubbed it the 'climate election.'

But this time around, the environment has featured less prominently in interviews and TV debates, and the Lead Bishop for the Environment at the Bishops' Conference, Bishop John Arnold, told the *Universe* that neglecting to address key environmental issues will have "dire consequences."

"Our political leaders need to demonstrate that they have grasped the urgent need to address the climate crisis by demonstrating how



they will reach net zero by 2050," Bishop Arnold said.

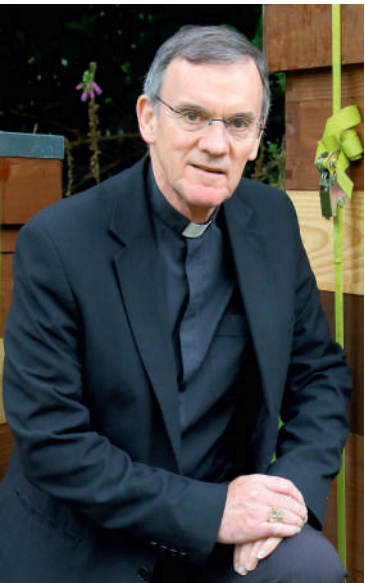
"I urge party leaders to commit to environmental pledges, especially reducing carbon emissions, as failing to address this crisis will not only have dire consequences for the environment but also disproportionately impact poorer communi-

ties who have contributed the least to this crisis."

The present moment is key for critical global climate action, as the UK struggles to meet its target of net zero by 2050 and the limit of 1.5C of global heating increasingly appears a pipe dream.

The Tories have underlined their

commitment to delivering net zero by 2050 through a 'pragmatic' approach to ensure that families will not be forced "to rip out their existing boiler and replace it with a heat pump." Sir Keir Starmer, meanwhile, has spoken of having the "largest investment in clean energy in our history"



Bishop Arnold asked voters to question candidates about the environment. "As Catholics, we have a duty to care for our common home," he said. "When deciding who to vote for, ask candidates about their plans to deliver net zero, promote biodiversity and protect the natural environment."

Bishop John issued a letter to the leaders of the main political parties immediately after the election was announced, urging them to take environmental issues seriously.

The Bishops' Conference has provided General Election guidance on key topics, including the environment. Click for details

## Grab your Catholic guide to the election

The Catholic Union has published an election guide ahead of the General Election on Thursday 4th July.

The new document, which featured in last week's *Universe*, contains suggested questions for candidates, as well as quotes from Church teaching to provide context.

The questions are based on the results of a General Election survey carried out by the Catholic Union earlier this year. It found that the top five issues of greatest concern to Catholics ahead of this election were:

- Care for the vulnerable
- Religious freedom
- Family life
- Education
- Dignity of life

The survey also found that over 90 per cent of Catholic Union members and supporters were

planning to vote in the election – significantly higher than the national average. It also revealed a strong link between politics and religion, with 92 per cent saying that their faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church "help to influence" how they vote.

The Catholic Union is encouraging people to read the guide and put the questions it contains to their parliamentary candidates – either at hustings or by contacting them privately.

Catholic Union interim director, Tristan Feunteun, said: "Catholics are the largest – and one of the most politically- and socially-minded – religious minorities in the country. For the 4.5 million Catholics in Britain, the election is an opportunity to elect people who recognise the importance of faith to society and will work towards the common good.

"We hope that this guide provides a valuable resource for people as polling day approaches. The Church has much to offer our politics and society and it is right that candidates engage with the interests and concerns of Catholics in this campaign.

The guide is available to download for free [HERE](#)



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## In Brief

## Johnson gives date for 'unrestrained' memoir of No 10

Boris Johnson has announced the release date for his "unrestrained" memoir in which he will give his account of his time in Downing Street.

*Unleashed* will be published by William Collins on 10th October this year, with Harper releasing it in the United States five days later.

*Unleashed* will cover Mr Johnson's political career from his eight years as mayor of London, to the 'Brexit wars' in parliament and his premiership.

His three years in power saw him win the 2019 general election with a majority of 80, lead Britain through the pandemic and end up ousted by Tory MPs in summer 2022 following a series of scandals.

It will also convey his thoughts on the role he played in Britain's departure from the European Union and the "sea change" that followed in the nation's politics, as well as his experiences as Mayor of London.

## UK cancer care behind Europe

Candidates in the general election have been urged to focus on improving cancer care in the UK after a new report revealed how far this country lags behind Europe.

Cancer care in the UK lags 20 years behind other European countries, analysis shows.

Survival rates for prostate, bowel, breast and cervical cancer are only just reaching levels that other nations achieved in the early 2000s.

Experts at Macmillan Cancer Support, which produced the analysis, warned that survival rates were "stuck in the noughties", trailing decades behind countries such as Denmark and Norway.

Improving cancer care has become a key political issue ahead of the general election, with both the Tories and Labour outlining how they plan to tackle mounting NHS backlogs as the health service struggles to meet patient treatment targets.

## Acid attacks up by 75 per cent in a year

Acid attacks and threats have increased by 75 per cent in a year. The number of offences involving corrosives rose from 701 in 2022 to 1,244 last year.

More than a third consisted of physical attacks against an individual. The remainder involved threats to attack. Victims were mainly women.

## Catholic Daughters call for a sharper focus on adult care

Andy Drozdziak

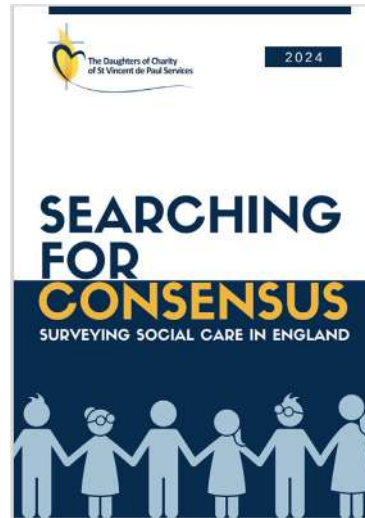
The Daughters of Charity Services (DCS) has highlighted the challenges confronted by the adult social care sector in England in a new report.

Based on the findings from the DCS's survey in 2023 of 205 social care providers, the report, *Searching for Consensus*, analyses the sector's views on challenges with recruitment, retention, and funding within the sector and outlines the policy solutions needed to tackle them.

The report notes that 66 per cent of social care providers report difficulties in recruiting care workers since January 2022. This is seen as a concern, as the sector will need an additional 440,000 care workers by 2035 to meet projected demand.

The report comes at a controversial moment on funding for social care. When Labour Shadow health secretary Wes Streeting was asked why there were no manifesto plans in Labour's manifesto to raise funds for social care, he told the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg: "I make no bones about it, of course on social care I would have wanted the manifesto to be more ambitious."

The Daughters of Charity Services is a group of charities which is dedicated to improving the lives of people experiencing the effects of poverty, as inspired by the life of St Vincent de Paul. Its members in-



clude three social care organisations: Vincentian Care Plus in Westminster, the Marillac Neurological Centre in Brentwood, and St Joseph's in Midlothian.

The DCS seeks to build on the legacy of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, seeking out those in poverty and providing services to them in the UK.

The DCS' report calls for a significant state-supported recruitment drive to meet future demand, and underlines the need for all political parties to commit to supporting international recruitment, as well as reviewing challenges regionally.

Mark Corea, research and policy officer at DCS, called for immediate



and substantial intervention from the Government – and warned of dire consequences if warnings were not heeded.

"People in care deserve a system that is robust, well-funded, and capable of meeting growing demand," Mr Corea said.

"Our findings clearly show that without significant and long-term Government intervention, the adult social care sector will continue to struggle. We must act now to ensure that care providers and frontline workers are at the heart of these reforms."

The DCS welcomed the Level 2 Care Certificate and workforce development measures introduced in

January but argues that more free training resources are necessary.

The sector requires substantial investment, aiming for the £18.4bn figure recommended by the Health Foundation by 2032/2033 to meet future demand, improve access, and raise care standards.

It raises concerns that much of the £7.5bn funding pledge in the 2022 Autumn Statement has yet to be delivered.

The survey results show that 41 per cent of organisations said they would be unable to increase pay for care workers without increased government funding, compared to 23 per cent who would be able to find the funds.

## Right To Life boost as 200+ candidates sign pledge

In the biggest response to a Right To Life UK election campaign ever, 200 candidates from around the country have already signed the Both Lives Pledge since it was launched last Monday.

Featuring on the front page of last week's *Universe*, the campaign is a large-scale initiative encouraging candidates to sign the pro-life Both Lives Pledge.

The Both Lives Pledge outlines three policy changes that are designed to increase protection for babies in the womb and end pregnancy discrimination for women.

The policies will save lives of both, Right To Life says.

The 200 candidates who have signed the Both Lives Pledge have committed to stopping discrimination against baby girls by supporting a law change to clarify that sex-selective abortion is illegal; bringing UK law closer to the laws in the majority of EU countries by voting to lower the gestational time limit for abortion; and supporting women in the workplace by backing policies designed to stop pregnancy and maternity discrimination.

Independent polling by ComRes

shows that all three policy changes are strongly supported by the public. 89% of the general population and 91% of women agree that gender-selective abortion should be explicitly banned by the law, while 70% of women in the UK want to see the time limit for abortion reduced to 20 weeks or below.

In addition, 79% of the general population and 84% of women

agree that women who want to continue with their pregnancies, but are under financial pressure to have an abortion, should be given more support.

Ending pregnancy and maternity discrimination would help provide many women across the country with the financial support they need to care for their children and themselves.



The campaign is backed by publicity featuring the most prominent politicians featuring in this election

An analysis by the Right To Life UK Public Affairs team of the voting records of the 132 MPs that have decided not to stand again for election shows that 92 (70%) had a predominantly pro-abortion voting record during their time in parliament.

Only 23 (17%) of those MPs standing down have a predominantly pro-life voting record.

Spokesperson for Right To Life UK, Catherine Robinson, said: "This is the biggest response we have seen to any election campaign we have run ever."

"Since we launched the Vote For Both Lives campaign, tens of thousands of emails have been sent from constituents throughout the country asking their candidates to sign the Both Lives Pledge."

"200 MP candidates have now signed the Both Lives Pledge making it clear that, if elected, they will be supporting important measures to increase protection for babies in the womb and end pregnancy discrimination for women."

Ms Robinson added: "These are policies that will save lives by protecting and supporting both mother and child".



## Public backs candidate ousted over faith

A poll has revealed that 75% of people questioned disapprove of the Lib Dems' decision to deselect parliamentary candidate David Campanale, who is a Christian.

The poll was organised by Whitestone Insight.

Former BBC journalist Mr Campanale was the Lib Dem prospective candidate for Sutton & Cheam, until he was ousted after a campaign from local activists because of his Christian faith and Biblical views on abortion and euthanasia.

Mr Campanale is suing the Liberal Democrats for discrimination, and Catholic peer Lord David Alton was again critical of the Lib Dems' approach, saying: "The quiet majority – 'the secret people who have not spoken yet' – disagree with political elites because they have a faith (along with 80% of the world's people!). Liberal or democratic?"

A Lib Dems spokesman rejected the criticism, however, saying that the party is "home to people of all faiths and none, including many Christians."

"This complex case about David Campanale which began during Covid, resulted in him being deselected and the local party overwhelmingly voting for a new candidate," the Lib Dems said.

# Scotland takes step back on civil liberties as buffer zones come in

**Andy Drozdziak**

Pro-life groups have blasted the introduction of buffer zones around abortion clinics in Scotland as 'a colossal step backwards for civil liberties.'

The Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill, introduced by Gillian Mackay MSP, passed Stage 3 by 118 to one. It will be the most extreme of its kind in the world and will criminalise any action aimed at persuading someone not to access abortion or to consider an alternative, within 200 metres of premises carrying out abortions.

Pro-life group SPUC Scotland told the *Universe*: "Today marks a dark day in Scotland's history as MSPs have voted in favour of implementing buffer zones around abortion facilities."

"Scotland has taken a colossal step backwards for civil liberties and has established itself as the most illiberal and anti-free speech nation in the Western world."

It will be illegal to act in a way designed to influence decisions, hand out leaflets, hold up banners or



Gillian Mackay MSP

placards or pray-either audibly or silently. It also criminalises causing harassment, alarm or distress to a person accessing abortion services.

SPUC Scotland also questioned the legality of the legislation, pointing to rights of freedom of speech. The group said: "The Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill will stifle freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom of as-

sembly, effectively criminalising compassion by denying pregnant women the opportunity to learn about practical help available, leading to the lives of more unborn babies being lost."

John Mason MSP, who was the only MSP to vote against the Bill, said: "There is very little evidence of harassment or intimidation near abortion facilities."

Right To Life UK pointed out that the legislation is more extreme than similar legislation in England and Wales, where the limits of the buffer zones is limited to 150m and the Government does not have the power to extend this limit. In Scotland, the 200m is a minimum. Abortion providers can apply for an extension, whilst the Scottish Government can extend the distance beyond 200m.

Spokesperson for Right To Life UK, Catherine Robinson, pointed out that the new legislation will mean mothers considering abortion will not now be offered alternative solutions.

She said: "Many women have been helped outside abortion clinics

by pro-life volunteers who have provided them with practical support, which made it clear to them that they had another option other than going through with the abortion."

"The passing of this Bill will likely mean that the vital practical support provided by volunteers outside abortion clinics will be removed for women and many more lives will likely be lost to abortion."

Gillian Mackay said everyone should be able to access healthcare with dignity and free of harassment.

She said: "For far too long women and health care staff have been forced to run a gauntlet of intimidation, judgment and fear in order to access or deliver treatment at what can often be the most emotional of times." H

However, this reasoning was rejected by SPUC Scotland. "The legislation is deeply flawed. It seeks to police areas of our private lives, which the state has no right to interfere with, namely private thought and prayer," SPUC Scotland said.

SPUC added that it will explore "every option available" to repeal the law.

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## COMMENT

## Putin's latest overseas trip is a sign of desperation

Vladimir Putin's journey to Pyongyang to meet fellow dictator Kim Jong-un is a sure sign of his growing isolation.

Just 10 years ago, he was attending meetings of the G8 (now the G7) and rubbing shoulders with the leaders of the world's richest nations. Now he has to go cap in hand to the pariah state of North Korea to seek both support for his war in Ukraine and the weapons he needs to pursue it.

The old Soviet Union nurtured a partnership with North Korea, but modern Russia had kept this weird dynastic dictatorship at arm's length until it became one of the few allies willing to send arms, along with Iran. President Putin has not visited Pyongyang in 24 years, but has now signed a new strategic partnership to deepen trade and military ties between the two countries.

Russia has already been supplying oil to North Korea in exchange for ballistic missiles and artillery shells to be used on the battlefield in Ukraine. But this might now go further, with suggestions that Moscow would offer Pyongyang nuclear-powered submarines and satellite technology, a possibility that has understandably alarmed South Korea.

Putin has made some major strategic blunders over the past few years, but would he be unwise enough to give Kim Jong-un the wherewithal to be more threatening than he has been already? Moreover, would China let him?

It is not Putin who is the big player in this region but Xi Jinping and he will not look kindly on the Russian leader trying to muscle in on Beijing's sphere of influence.

Putin may try to present himself as a major world figure but fawning to the leader of such an odious regime merely diminishes him and his country even further than it has been already.

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# Election may deliver seismic change, but many won't feel it

**This is billed as a 'change' election – but Britain's electoral system means hardly any seats are true multi-party contests, say Chris Kirkland and Thomas Lockwood**

With all polls pointing in the same direction, the 2024 election will deliver seismic change.

It is being seen as a contest that will practically wipe out one party and deliver a large majority to another. But the reality for most of the voting public will feel quite different, at least at the constituency level.

The Electoral Reform Society has estimated that more than 100 of the UK's 650 parliamentary seats haven't changed hands for 100 years or more. Millions of voters, therefore, reside in what the society describes as 'one party fiefdoms'.

The data shows that 28 per cent of constituencies have been held by the same party since the Second World War, and that 38 per cent have remained under the same party's control for 50 years or more. The Conservatives dominate in 94 of the seats which have not changed hands for over a century; Labour holds 17 of them.

Prior to the dissolution of parliament last month, Labour held over 200 seats. It is highly likely that very nearly all of these seats will return a Labour MP again.

Meanwhile, opinion polls have suggested that the Conservatives are currently on track to win between 66 and 140 seats. These "wins" are more than likely going to be seats the party already currently holds.

Strong polling trends also indicate that the Liberal Democrats will retain the 12 seats they won in 2019 and any SNP seats are likely to be among the 48 they won in 2019.

Given these figures, it is not difficult to see how almost half the seats are likely to be represented by the same political party as before the election was called.

## When is a marginal not really marginal?

Even though 13 parties were represented in the Westminster parliament when it was dissolved for this election, and even though many more parties will be listed on ballot papers, barely any



Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves with the Labour slogan, Change

constituencies are truly what can be considered multi-party contests.

Under first-past-the-post, the majoritarian electoral system used for British general elections, voters' choices are limited at the ballot box.

Sometimes that's because not every party is standing in their constituency – for example, the SNP only stands in Scottish seats, Labour doesn't stand in Northern Ireland, and the Greens are concentrating on target seats in 2024. More often though, the limitations are indirect – voters appear to have a choice between many parties, but only one or two have a realistic chance of winning.

For too many people in the UK, voting is not a true choice between parties. Thanks to the first-past-the-post voting system, much of the electorate resides and votes in safe seats – constituencies where certain parties have consistently and repeatedly won with quite substantial majorities. Even so-called "marginal constituencies" are often contests between no more than two parties; the one defending it and the one most able to replace the incumbent.

In these circumstances, voters can feel cornered into tactical voting, supporting a viable party in their local constituency to defeat a party that they dislike, rather than

casting a vote for the party they genuinely prefer.

## 2019's record

In 2019, in what was described as an 'earthquake' election which gave the Conservatives the largest parliamentary majority since Tony Blair in 2001, just 81 seats (12.5 per cent) changed hands. Only 37 seats – 5.7 per cent of all those contested – were three-way marginal races in which the vote-share gap between first and third place parties was less than 20 percentage points.

Ynys Mon was the closest, where just 7 per cent separated the Conservatives, who won the seat, and Plaid Cymru, who came third behind Labour.

Most true electoral battles are concentrated in a few highly competitive areas, leading parties to focus their resources on these seats. In 2019, the overwhelming majority of seats saw just two parties hold a realistic chance of winning – and 100 of them had a two-party vote share of over 90 per cent.

If we exclude the five constituencies where an independent candidate came second (no independent won any seats) and the Speaker's seat (which is traditionally uncontested by the other main parties), the average vote share of the top two parties in the remaining 644 constituencies

amounted to 83.67 per cent. Only 158 had a two-party vote share of less than 80 per cent, meaning that, at best, the third-place candidate in each of these seats, received half the votes of the winner. If that sounds like an unwinnable seat, it's because it probably is.

The number of very safe seats – seats won by a margin of between 45 and 50 per cent – increased from 29 to 31. Of the 30 safest seats, Labour holds 20 and the Conservatives ten.

None of this means that change cannot happen, and shocks do occur at a local level. But drastic changes are generally limited to a small number of constituencies. Even in Tony Blair's landslide election victory in 1997, fewer than a third of seats (181 out of 650) changed hands.

Many voters will feel bypassed in this election, as they often do. This perhaps helps explain why, despite talk of a seismic shock at the national level, there seems to be a very low level of enthusiasm for this election and the people running in it.

**Christopher Kirkland is a Senior Lecturer in Politics, York St John University**  
**Thomas Lockwood is a PhD Candidate, York St John University**

*"In 2019, in what was described as an 'earthquake' election, just 81 seats (12.5 per cent) changed hands. Only 37 seats – 5.7 per cent of all those contested – were three-way marginal races..."*



# Problem gamblers left at mercy of big betting during the Euros

**Andy Drozdziak**  
CARE has called on the next Government to take action to end the “toxic” relationship between gambling and football as Euro 24 continues.

CARE (Christian Action Research and Education), which provides social policy analysis from a Christian perspective, is arguing that high-profile competitions like Euro 24 are a particularly dangerous time for fans struggling with gambling because they are faced with an onslaught of betting adverts.

Tim Cairns, CARE’s senior policy officer, said there was now a “toxic relationship between football and betting.”

“The message screaming from television screens and advertising hoardings will be ‘gamble, gamble, gamble’. While the majority of fans will do so proportionately, a significant minority will not. They may be experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, addiction,” Mr Cairns said.

“Amidst the excitement of the Euros this summer, we will again witness the toxic relationship between football and betting. Commercial breaks will be filled with the latest



odds and celebrities urging us to part with our money, implying that ‘football is better if you bet’.”

Mr Cairns warned that Euro 24 is “big business” for the gambling firms. “Sports fans are disproportionately at risk of problem gambling. A 2021 parliamentary report estimated that 60 per cent of betting industry profits come from ‘high risk’ gamblers. A major tournament like the Euros is big business,” he said, adding that, for some, gambling debts can “wreak a heavy toll on their mental health, physical

health, and relationships.”

Universe sports columnist Fr Vlad Felzmann condemned gambling advertising as ‘cruel’ and ‘deadly.’ “Sport, at its best, is beautiful and life enhancing,” Fr. Vlad told the Universe. “When taken over by advertisers to promote gambling, it becomes more than ugly. (It’s) cruel and even deadly.”

Fr. Vlad warned of the destructive power of gambling from his own experience and called on the Government to take action.

“Over the 50-plus years of being a

priest, I have met so many families destroyed by those addicted to gambling,” he said. “If the Government is trying to lower national obesity levels by controlling food content, and has done its best to start eliminating smoking, it ought to do its best to reduce gambling.”

Mr Cairns also called on the next Government to take action on the ‘unjust situation’. “The health of fans must always come first,” he said. “Tougher regulation is required so big betting cannot prey on vulnerable fans.”

## Grandfather ‘held hostage’ over bill

A British grandfather has been ‘held hostage’ by a Turkish hospital over an unpaid bill of £41,000 after being hospitalised with food poisoning, his family claimed.

Malcolm Stocker, a 68-year-old retired pub landlord, has been in intensive care in Icmeler for almost a month after being diagnosed with pneumonia while on holiday with his girlfriend.

His family say he had several pre-existing conditions and was refused medical insurance before the two-week trip, but decided to go anyway.

They claim they have now been told by medics at the Ahu Hospital in Marmaris that they must pay half of the £41,000 bill before he can be discharged.

## Private pupils have healthier later lives

Children who go to private school are more likely to be healthier in mid-life, research suggests.

A new study found that, by age 46, those who went to private school were more likely to be a healthy weight, have lower blood pressure and have better cognitive skills than state school pupils.



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## COMMENT

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

## Saying nothing for now

**Sir John Battle**

Still two weeks to go until the General Election, and rather than escape into the Euros entirely I turned back to the poetry of the great Seamus Heaney from Northern Ireland who, at the height of The Troubles wrote his collection *North* (1975).

It contained the four stanza poem *Whatever you say, say nothing*, fiercely critical of the media and all parties to the conflict in the context of the shootings and bombings.

He himself acknowledges criticism for not being sufficiently explicit in support of the Irish Catholic cause while at the same time for hardly condemning the violence. In particular he fiercely laments the enforced silencing and the lack of freedom to speak out and protest. The ‘bad news’ language is singled out as ‘expertly civil tongued with civil neighbours/ on the high wires of first wireless reports/ sucking the fake taste, the stony flavours of those sanctioned old elaborate retorts’. ‘One side is as bad as the other’, never worse, he cites, in times ‘Where to be saved you must only save face/ And whatever you say, say nothing’; not least in ‘a land of password, handgrip, wink and nod, of open minds, as open as a trap’.

Appeals for open debate and honesty in political discussions, a lack of humility about the limits of political action, coupled with a media-driven debate which is ferociously binary in intent, reduces political exchanges to fearful cynicism and despair far from sceptical questioning.

Yet the ‘air war’ in the media feels disconnected from what might be termed the localised ‘ground war’ of ordinary domestic and community real life concerns.

Much later Heaney wrote in his version of *The Cure of Troy*, a translation in verse of a play by the Greek dramatist Sophocles, ‘History says don’t hope/ On this side of the grave./ But then once in a lifetime/ The longed for tidal wave / of justice can rise up/ And hope and history rhyme/ So hope for a great sea change/ On the far side of revenge/ Believe that further shore is reachable from here/ Believe in miracles and cures and healing wells’.

An election is the tempestuous start of a process of transformation and renewal, not the conclusion, despite manifestoes written in stone. The harder work of rebuilding and reconnecting begins the day after the vote, and is one in which we should all participate from the ground floor in order to meet the huge challenges we face and shape a different future together.

## There’s only one way to vote this election - and it’s a vote for life

CATHOLIC COMMENT

**Caroline Farrow**

The UK is currently in perilous waters as, for the first time in history, both main candidates in a general election have stated that they are in favour of what is disingenuously titled ‘assisted dying’.

Sir Keir Starmer has already pledged that if elected, Labour will debate and offer a vote on the laws surrounding euthanasia. However, when asked by reporters what his views on the topic were at the G7 summit in Italy last week, the current Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, stated that he “wasn’t opposed in principle, and it’s just a question of making sure that the safeguards are in place and effective” (see page opposite).

It ought to beggar belief that giving people the ability to end their lives should be at the forefront of political debate at a time when the world is more unstable than it has been for a generation, thanks to the current conflicts in Ukraine and the Holy Land, but no, instead of working for peace, or to improve people’s health, wealth and overall security, our would-be leaders are thinking of allowing you to top yourselves, if it all gets too much.

I ought to state, for the sake of balance, that none of the other parties, the Liberal Democrats, the Green Party, or the Reform Party, oppose assisted suicide either.

There is, of course, no need to re-state the Catholic position on assisted suicide; there is a wealth of Catholic resources outlining why the Church is so vehemently opposed, but in short, it is morally wrong to intentionally end one’s own life or assist another person to do so, even if it is at their own request.

There are, for those who will not find the theological reasons persuasive, a whole host of other compelling secular and philosophical arguments as to why the introduction of assisted suicide would be such a retrograde and dangerous move, such as, for example, the reasons why people may feel compelled to ‘chase’ to end their own lives.

The talk of safeguards may be reassuring, but we only need to look to the examples of every other jurisdiction that has legalised assisted dying to realise that the ‘robust safeguards’ melt away before the ink has had time to dry on the statutory instrument.



Australia introduced euthanasia in 2017 with the same talk of safeguards. Yet, just this week, a prominent media publication complained that many of the 68 safeguards which had assured citizens in the state of Victoria that euthanasia was safe are now ‘obsolete and limit access’.

In Canada, another Commonwealth country which has sadly gone down the same path, assisted suicide is routinely offered to patients as an alternative to costly medical treatment. There are many documented cases of people opting for death purely for economic reasons when the Government safety net has failed. They have been left without access to basic human needs such as housing, food and money for necessities.

The Canadian Government is still considering whether to extend its assisted suicide scheme to patients with mental illness and underage children.

Even in Oregon in the US, which campaigners like to point to as a paradigm example of how proposed legislation should look, the minimum period between the patient’s request for suicide and the patient’s death, was reduced from 14 days to 48 hours. In Colorado, patients have been euthanised on request because of anorexia and in

the Netherlands last month, a physically healthy 29-year-old woman was ‘allowed to die’ because of severe depression.

As soon as euthanasia is legally permitted, it quickly becomes enshrined as a right, which ‘equality’ demands that all people should have access to.

While the media’s election focus is on the economy, the health service and immigration, it is staggering that this fundamental issue of life and death, which could have such a detrimental effect on society and massively endanger our vulnerable loved ones, is being treated as nothing more than an issue of conscience.

This week, the Catholic Union has come up with a specific list of questions that voters should be asking candidates, and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference has also attempted to steer voters, with Cardinal Nichols saying that we need to vote for policies that help families flourish. For me, however, the right to life has to be the most critical issue that we consider when we cast our vote. I don’t care where someone stands on Brexit or a free market economy, education or even immigration and refugees, if they cannot vote the right way on the right to life, the most fundamental human right of all.

While we can, of course, argue

that parties need to enact policies that don’t put people in the position whereby they think they have no other feasible choice than to opt for an abortion or prematurely end their own lives, the legislation is the current line in the sand that prevents atrocities from happening. The burgeoning abortion statistics, and indeed, terrifying statistics of the women who bear lifelong physical and emotional scars as a result of being legally permitted to choose to end their baby’s life, is a stark example of what happens once the barrier to the slippery slope is opened, in the name of compassion.

My only advice is this. If you want to prevent the horror of euthanasia from becoming a reality in the United Kingdom and to save lives, please do not vote tribally. Even though all the political parties are led by people who want to introduce this measure, there are candidates who have the courage to vote for what they know is right. A recent example is the Labour MPs who voted against their party’s amendment to further liberalise the abortion law, despite Labour’s attempts to whip the vote.

It is tough to vote in favour of a party that may have social and economic policies that you find objectionable. But as lay Catholics, we are called to participate in civil elections and advance the common good. If you know that if elected, your representative will do all that they can to block any euthanasia legislation and uphold the dignity of human life, then you have a responsibility to give them your vote.

*“I don’t care where someone stands on Brexit or a free market economy, education or even immigration and refugees, if they cannot vote the right way on the right to life, the most fundamental human right of all...”*



# Save the date – and we can save lives!

## March for Life, London, Saturday 7th September

**Andy Drozdziak**  
Prolifers are being encouraged to save the date for the biggest pro-life event of the year – the annual March for Life in London on Saturday 7th September.

This year will be especially significant as it marks the March for Life's ten year anniversary.

The theme will be 'Abortion isn't Healthcare'. March for Life UK said: "The damage abortion inflicts on women alone should be enough to make us pro-life. Around 90 per cent of abortions are through pills



and studies have shown as many as 1 in 17 women using them end up in hospital due to complications.

"If this doesn't sound like healthcare to you, that's because it isn't, and that's why we march. Pregnancy isn't a disease and pre-born chil-

dren aren't disposable.

"There are many reasons why abortion isn't healthcare, the primary one being that healthcare doesn't kill."

The morning events at London's Emmanuel Centre will include a

'Pro-life Health Summit', with various doctors and health professionals running sessions exploring how abortion affects women, men, healthcare workers and the pre-born child.

As ever, the event will be supported by the clergy. A Mass will take place at St George's Cathedral, Southwark and at least three bishops will be part of the day: Bishop John Sherrington, the Lead Bishop for Life Issues at the Bishops' Conference; Bishop Peter Collins; and Bishop John Keenan.

Keynote speakers will include ex-abortionist Haywood Robinson, and Claire Culwell, whose mother had an abortion at age 13 when pregnant with twins, and only

Claire survived.

March for Life is hoping to build on last year's event, when 7,000 pro-lifers, many of them young people, gathered to march peacefully through London, despite a national rail strike.

Co-director of the event, Ben Thatcher, told the *Universe*: "This will be our official tenth anniversary and we are hoping to have 10,000 present to mark the day."

Ben added that he would welcome prayers for the event preparation and that if any readers are interested in promoting the event in their own area to get in touch by emailing [info@marchforlife.co.uk](mailto:info@marchforlife.co.uk)

Full details and timings can be found at [marchforlife.co.uk](http://marchforlife.co.uk)

# Pressure grows for assisted suicide vote as Sunak admits he's not opposed 'in principle'

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said he is not opposed to assisted suicide in principle, ahead of an anticipated vote on the topic in the next parliament.

Sunak said: "I'm not against it in principle. It's just a question of having the safeguards in place," during a conversation with journalists in Puglia, Italy, during the G7 Summit.

This issue is likely to see a Commons vote within the next five years, as Labour leader Keir Starmer, whose party is leading in the polls, has pledged to allocate time for a vote and supports a change in the law.

Speaking with broadcaster, and assisted suicide advocate, Esther Rantzen, Starmer said: "I'm personally in favour of changing the law. I think we need to make time. We will make the commitment."

His commitment is not in the Labour manifesto, however, and it is believed it will remain a conscience issue.

Sunak emphasised that the Conservative manifesto also treats assisted suicide as a matter of conscience, with a commitment to follow parliament's decision.

Dr Gordon Macdonald, chief executive officer of the campaign group Care Not Killing, which opposes assisted suicide, argued that legalising assisted suicide would place "huge pressure" on sick people.

"It would place huge pressure, real or perceived, on terminally ill and disabled people to end their lives exactly as we see in the handful of places that have legalised assisted suicide or euthanasia. The more important debate is how to extend

high-quality palliative care to all those who need it," he said.

Assisted suicide remains illegal in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with penalties of up to 14 years in prison. Scotland prosecutes euthanasia as murder or culpable homicide.

In 2015, a bill to legalise assisted suicide was defeated by 330 to 118 votes, though it had support from Starmer and several Conservative cabinet members.

Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting voted in favour of the bill in 2015 but has more recently expressed conditional support for changing the law.

Streeting shared with Times Radio that he would "need reassurance that no one would feel coerced into ending their life sooner, that no doctor would be coerced or forced to take part in ending someone's life in that way."



Prime Minister Rishi Sunak



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6 pm	Mass of Reception (Veneration/petitions)
7pm	Forty hours of Adoration of Jesus
	in the Blessed Sacrament begins
7pm	Refreshments (available throughout weekend)

Saturday 29th June 2024

12	Divine Mercy, Rosary for Life,
midday	Prayer reflections
3-4 pm	Private baptism (church closed)
4 pm	Exposition
5 pm	Confessions
5.30 pm	Mass followed by continual Exposition

Sunday 30th June 2024

10 am	Forty hours of Exposition ends
10.30 am	Mass
11.30 am	Veneration/ petitions/departure

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## COMMENT

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## In Brief

**Just Stop Oil shake off mistake**

Just Stop Oil activists targeted a private airfield where they claim Taylor Swift's jet landed hours earlier.

Jennifer Kowalski, 28, and Cole Macdonald, 22, entered Stansted airport on Thursday as part of their latest stunt. It is understood the pair attempted to target Taylor Swift's jet, claiming they knew the plane's tail number, but couldn't find it.

Instead they painted two jets at random using fire extinguishers filled with orange paint.

**Artwork dubbed fly-tipping eye sore**

An art installation at a historic cathedral which is designed to highlight the impact of climate change looks like "fly-tipping", residents have claimed.

The wooden sculpture depicts a house perched on top of a cliff edge and is supposed to remind passers-by of how homes can be affected by coastal erosion and harsh weather.

But the "timber pile" in front of 900-year-old Salisbury Cathedral and near the city's historic Cathedral Close has angered locals, who have asked for the "monstrous debacle" to be removed.

One resident told the *Salisbury Journal*: "When I first saw the pile of wood in front of the cathedral I thought it had been visited by fly-tippers."

**Post Office in dock over Horizon - again**

Names and addresses of hundreds of Horizon scandal victims have been published on the Post Office website.

On Wednesday, the *Daily Mail* reported that the Post Office published on its corporate website a list of 555 wronged sub-postmasters, who won a High Court battle against the organisation in 2019, in a fight led by Sir Alan Bates.

The dossier showed their full names and home addresses, many of whom are set to receive significant sums of money in compensation.

**Judge backs Covid fines amnesty**

A former Supreme Court judge has backed calls for an amnesty for people given criminal convictions for breaking Covid rules. Lord Sumption said the criminalisation of more than 29,000 people for breaches of rules during the pandemic was "ridiculous" and a "miscarriage of justice."



# UK needs to lead the world in making fossil fuels taboo

**Greg Muttitt, Fergus Green and Steve Pye**

North Sea oil and gas has become a battleground issue in the UK general election. The Labour party's manifesto promises an end to issuing new licenses for finding oil and gas. The Conservatives, meanwhile, propose a law that would require the next government to hold a licensing round every year.

Our recent study found that new fossil fuels are not needed, and that stopping the extraction of new coal, oil and gas is among the best ways to tackle the climate crisis.

Scientific assessments tell us that global warming above 1.5°C will mean escalating danger to the environment, human health and the economy. We found that, in a world that limits warming to 1.5°C, remaining global demand for fossil fuels could be met by assets that have already been built.

This means that Labour's plans do not go far enough. Even under existing licences, new oil and gas fields need not be opened, nor new platforms and pipelines built.

**Surplus to requirements**

Our research confirms an earlier finding of policy experts at the International Energy Agency (IEA): that no new fields are needed to meet energy demand as the world attempts to achieve net zero emissions. However, our analysis goes further by demonstrating that no new fossil-fuelled power stations are needed either.

If governments stop new projects, the production and consumption of fossil fuel will gradually decline over coming

decades as existing assets reach the end of their lifespans. This gradual transition will give time to plan the process, to protect and create jobs and to build solar and wind farms that meet energy demand as fossil fuels are phased out.

A stop to new fossil fuel projects is essential to 'transitioning away' from coal, oil and gas, which is what governments agreed to do in December 2023 at the COP28 climate summit in Dubai. This is a necessary commitment, but since it is expressed as a vague and collective goal with an indeterminate end point, it is easy for governments to pay lip service to it while maintaining business-as-usual.

The IEA recently reported that global investment in fossil fuels has increased every year since 2020, even as governments announced net zero emissions targets. An investigation by campaign group Global Witness found that the United Arab Emirates signed over US\$100 billion of oil deals in 2023 while it presided over climate negotiations.

Commitments to no new fossil fuels, such as Labour's plan to end new licensing, are less prone to obfuscation because they are specific and immediate. What's more, it is clear for everyone to see if a new fossil fuel project is being built. Making commitments that are easily verifiable is a proven recipe for building international

trust and cooperation around a shared goal.

There are also political advantages to stopping new fossil fuel projects. Coalitions that support fossil fuels, including oil firms and their employees, are more capable of organising against the closure of existing assets than the cancellation of those yet to be built. Opposing coalitions, including communities living with the pollution and disruption of oil and gas extraction, tend to be more successful when mobilising against planned projects.

**The new norm**

By making a 'no new fossil fuels' commitment, governments can help establish a new norm.

A norm is an expected standard of behaviour, like the norm against smoking in indoor public places, or the international norm against slavery. The more states and global institutions adopt a norm the more social pressure it places on others to follow suit. Once a critical mass has adopted the norm, its spread is self-sustaining.

Arguably, this process is well underway for coal – the dirtiest fossil fuel. The Powering Past Coal Alliance, a group of governments committed to phasing out coal power, was founded in 2017 by the UK and Canada. Already the alliance has expanded to include 60 national governments, including

major coal consumers Germany and the US.

The process of norm-building is gathering pace for other fossil fuels too. Governments that become core members of the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance, which so far numbers 15, commit to issuing no new licenses for oil and gas exploration on a path to the total phase-out of fossil fuel production.

The Clean Energy Transition Partnership, comprising 41 governments and financial institutions, commits to ending international lending for fossil fuel projects. And in the private sector, 22 financial institutions have pledged to stop financing new oil and gas projects.

Were a future UK government to commit to stopping new oil and gas fields, it would lend considerable momentum to the norm, given the UK's role in the history of the oil industry and the fact that it is home to BP and Shell, two of the world's five 'supermajor' oil companies.

The UK Climate Change Committee, the government's independent advisers, has noted stopping new oil and gas projects would send an important signal to other countries. Such a move would also restore the UK's reputation as an international leader on tackling climate change, at a critical time when the climate-denying far right is making inroads.

**Greg Muttitt is an Honorary Research Fellow, Energy & Climate Change, UCL**  
**Fergus Green is a Lecturer in Political Theory and Public Policy, UCL**  
**Steve Pye is an Associate Professor in Energy Systems, UCL**

*"By committing to 'no new fossil fuels', governments can help establish a new norm. The more states and global institutions adopt a norm, the more social pressure it places on others to follow suit..."*



# Cardinal offers sage advice as new bishop begins duties

Monsignor James Curry was ordained as Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of Westminster at Westminster Cathedral on 18th June.

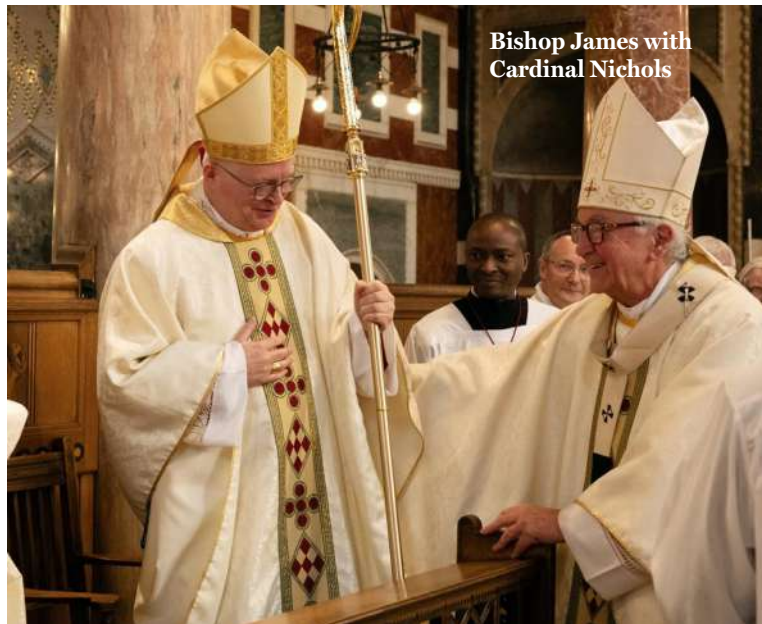
Cardinal Vincent Nichols was joined by principal co-consecrators Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP and Archbishop George Stack at the ordination Mass for the former parish priest of Our Lady of Victories in Kensington.

Bishop James Curry was appointed in April by Pope Francis and named titular Bishop of Ramsbury.

In his homily, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, praised the gift of a new bishop and pointed to those who had gone before – from martyr saints in recusant times, like St John Southworth, to bishops who ministered when Catholics were harassed and threatened, like Bishop Richard Challoner in 1741.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols pointed out that the role of a bishop in contemporary times is not without its challenges. He said: “Our challenge is to find the right words and actions to speak to the hearts of so many in our society whose only pre-occupation is with the troubling realities of each day, who have lost a ready openness to the presence and reality of God, and who have only the most tentative understanding of the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus, with his gifts of compassion, forgiveness and hope.”

Cardinal Nichols offered his prayers and support to Bishop Curry and offered a template for his



Bishop James with Cardinal Nichols

ministry. “The bishop is the one sent to see, encourage, guide, correct,” he said.

“But he must do so in the same manner in which our Heavenly Father watches over us, with eyes first trained on our need for compassion, understanding and forgiveness,” said Cardinal Nichols.

“This aspect of episcopal ministry can only be fulfilled when the bishop is truly attentive to those over whom he watches, accompanying them step by step. The routine of the bishop, then, of visiting parishes and deaneries, schools, hospitals and prisons, is important.”

Bishop James thanked all those

in attendance, particularly his friends and family, for their support and prayers. He expressed gratitude for the presence of many members of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, drawing attention to the plight of those suffering in the Holy Land.

Referring to previous Westminster bishops Cardinal Basil Hume and Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, he said: “It was a privilege to serve with them and now to be part of that great service that they rendered.”

He pointed out that his initial reaction to his new role was “shock and surprise.”

“When I received news of my appointment to serve in this new way my first reactions were of shock and surprise,” he said.

“Then the words of St Paul came to mind: ‘Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.’”

# Fr Mykola on King’s birthday honours for work with refugees

**Andy Drozdziak**

A Ukrainian Catholic leader in London who helped beleaguered Ukrainians take refuge as the war raged has been awarded an MBE in The King’s Birthday Honours list.

Fr Mykola Matwijewskyj, Vicar General of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy (Diocese) of the Holy Family of London, was given the award for services to refugee resettlement.

He helped set up the Ukrainian Welcome Centre in London in February 2022, providing much-needed help to Ukrainian families.

Fr Matwijewskyj called the MBE an ‘honour’. “It is an honour to be awarded an MBE in The King’s Birthday Honours list. I am humbled by this recognition,” he said.

“I see it as my pastoral duty and a part of my priestly ministry to support Ukrainians in the UK – especially those who have fled war.”

The Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy, led by Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, welcomed the announcement.

“It is with immense joy we received the news,” the Eparchy said, adding that they “are delighted” for Fr Matwijewskyj.

“Fr Mykola was instrumental in setting up the Ukrainian Welcome Centre, a joint project between the Eparchy and AUGB, to help displaced Ukrainians in London, and has dedicated his life to the Ukrainian community. To see this recognised is a great reward for our Eparchy.”

Other Catholics honoured included The Provost of the Brompton Oratory in London, the Very Reverend Julian Large, who was awarded an OBE for services to faith and integration.

Meanwhile, Coatbridge parishioner Antoinette Parr was also recognised in the King’s Birthday Honours list for services to NHS Scotland, to the Scout Movement, to her parish (St. Augustine’s Catho-

lic Church, Coatbridge), and to the Diocese of Motherwell.

Having worked in the NHS for over 40 years, Antoinette has volunteered much of her free time in various roles through her parish, diocese and the Scouts movement.

On hearing the news, Antoinette said: “This award is so special because it combines my day job in the NHS with where my heart lies in the Church and volunteering with young people who are our future.”

Antoinette underlined the importance of her Catholic faith. She said: “My faith is my life and inspires me to do so much; without it, I would not be who I am. My parish is my extended family, and the time I give to it breathes energy into me. It’s ex-



Fr Mykola

citing, busy, uplifting; it’s a living community.”

Bishop Toal of Motherwell Diocese added his congratulations, saying: “Antoinette has made an exceptional contribution to our diocese over many years, especially in the important and evolving work of safeguarding.”

Fr. Michael Kane, parish priest of St. Augustine’s Church, Coatbridge, shared that the parish is “incredibly proud of Antoinette.” He said: “Her dedication to our parish over so many years is an inspiration to us all and a real witness to faith in action. We hope her example will inspire others to share their gifts and talents for the benefit of others.”



The ordination ceremony

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# Armed Forces service marking liberation of Rome blessed by special papal message

**Edmund O'Sullivan**

Bishop of the Armed Forces Paul Mason delivered a Papal message of thanks to a special service in the Catholic Forces Cathedral Church of St Michael & St George on 15th June to mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Rome, and the end of the blockade of Vatican City.

The message read: 'His Holiness Pope Francis, informed of the commemoration service to mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Rome to take place in the Cathedral of St Michael & St George, Aldershot, has asked me to convey his greetings of good wishes to all gathered for this occasion.'

It added: 'The Holy Father cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing to all those gathered for this anniversary and, through the intercession of the Mother of God, invokes an abundance of Divine Grace.'

The message was sent on behalf of the Holy Father by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendia. The archbishop attended the service to deliver his own statement in person.

The service was led by Bishop Mason with support of the Cathedral's dean, Fr Nick Gosnell.

Accounts about the events leading to the liberation of Rome on 4th June were delivered by Edmund O'Sullivan, son of London Irish Rifles Colour Sergeant Ted O'Sullivan; David Sands of the Hugh O'Flaherty Memorial Society; Andrew Deakin of the Monte Cassino Society and Jenny Grant, the granddaughter of a II Polish Corps soldier who served in the Italian campaign. This was read in her absence due to sickness by Andre Adamson, the



Bishop of the Armed Forces Paul Mason, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendia and Fr Nick Gosnell with honoured guests at the service to mark the liberation of Rome in 1944. Inset, the special message from His Holiness the Pope to mark the occasion.

son of Polish Corps veteran.

Rome was liberated on 4th June by Allied armies led by US troops. It ended Nazi occupation of Italy's capital which had begun in September 1943 and broke the blockade imposed on the Vatican for seven months.

On 5th June, Pope Pius delivered a statement at St Peter's basilica, declaring that 'Rome has been saved from the horrors of war.'

Italy had been disastrously involved with the Second World War from June 1940. After huge loss of life in Africa and the Eastern front and increasingly intense Allied bombing of its cities, the Italian people were ready for peace when Allied troops landed in Sicily in July 1943.

The capture of Rome in June 80 years ago this month proved to be a false dawn, with the war in Italy continuing for 11 more months.

But there was a brief moment of celebration. Dan Kelleher, a Catholic padre serving in the British Irish Brigade, who would be awarded the military cross for bravery, worked with the Irish ambassador to the Holy See to enable 150 men of the Irish Brigade to be the first Allied troops to be granted an audience by Pope Pius after the liberation.

And so, at 9 o'clock on 12th June 1944, the Irish Brigade was in the Apostolic Palace when Pope Pius spoke the following words: "Dearly beloved sons, we bid you welcome. We are well aware of the good

which the Irish have done in spreading the faith from the shores of their green isle... into many nations. We greet you and bless you with all our hearts' affection and your dear ones at home."

The Irish Brigade then played for the pope, and the men from the brigade were given a papal blessing document and rosary beads.

80 years to the hour since Pope Pius greeted the Irish Brigade in the Vatican, Pope Francis entered St Peter's Square for the general papal audience attended by a delegation representing today's Irish Brigade



and the Royal Irish Regiment.

And like their predecessors in June 1944, the bugles, pipes and drums of the Royal Irish Regiment played after the audience for the Pope, to his obvious delight.

## Refugee Week message is one of respect and dignity

To mark Refugee Week (17th – 23rd June,) Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) has released a statement calling for politicians to uphold human dignity when considering migration policies in England and Wales.

The statement encourages Catholics and the wider society to advocate for a 'just and humane asylum system that upholds the human dignity of migrants, protects refugees, and defends their right to seek asylum.'

Bishop Paul McAleenan, the lead bishop for Migrants and Refugees, welcomed the statement by saying: "CSAN's open letter serves as a timely reminder that we must stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers who flee wars and seek sanctuary. We call upon our

politicians to ensure that their dignity is upheld and their rights to asylum are respected."

He added: "I have been fortunate to hear so many heartwarming



Bishop Paul McAleenan

stories about the tireless work that the Catholic community here, in England and Wales, has done to help and welcome refugees in their communities. Our response to migrants and refugees must be firmly rooted in Catholic social teaching and the innate worth of every human person."

Reflecting on the upcoming general election, Bishop Paul urged Catholics and people of goodwill voting "to think about the policies candidates are proposing regarding migration and to ask whether they keep human dignity at the heart of our immigration system."

*"Our response to migrants and refugees must be firmly rooted in Catholic social teaching and the innate worth of every human person."*

Meanwhile, to mark World Refugee Day on 20th June, a new report by international children's charity World Vision revealed that refugees and other vulnerable families are receiving just a fraction of their monthly required food intake or are being cut from aid distributions altogether, leading to a drastic increase in child marriage, child labour, and mental health risks.

The report, entitled *Ration Cuts: Taking from the hungry to feed the starving*, showed that 68% of people affected by ration cuts said someone in their family had gone

to bed hungry in the past month because there was not enough food. 41% of refugees thought both girls and boys are now subject to more violence, neglect or abuse at home. More than one in ten adults said the felt so hopeless that they no longer want to carry on living. Half (50%) of adults said they felt that way most or some of the time.

"These findings should instantly ring an alarm bell," said Mary Njeri, director of World Vision's global hunger response.

"We must urgently increase the essential lifesaving aid that children and their families so desperately need to survive. Long-term support is also essential so children can go back to school and families can once again farm, find jobs and support themselves."



# Confirmation Day mementos and cards

from The Universe Catholic Weekly

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## Confirmation Holy Spirit Dove key-ring

Holy Spirit Pewter Keying, with Dove image, and Bible extract from John 3:24 on reverse: "And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit He has given us."

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Confirmation Card, with image of Bible, candles, dove and cross.

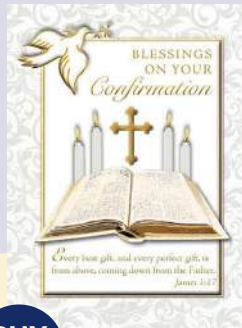
Size: 4.5" x 6.25"  
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Message inside:  
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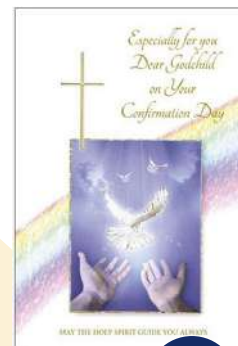


## Godchild Confirmation Card

Confirmation card from a Godparent with rosary and dove symbolic design. Inside text: 'On this your Confirmation Day may God in heaven bless your heart with inspiration, Your life with happiness.' Size: 6.75" x 4.5" (17 x 11.5 cm).

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## Boy Confirmation Card – Especially for You

Confirmation card for a boy. With praying boy with rosary and prayer book image. Front text: 'Especially for You on Your Confirmation'. Inside text: 'On your Confirmation Day May God be there beside you and may The Holy Spirit always be a light to guide you. Congratulations.'

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Confirmation card for a girl. With praying girl, with rosary, dove and church window image. Front text: 'To Celebrate the Special Occasion of Your Confirmation.' Inside text: 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.' Size: 6.75" x 4.5" (17 x 11.5 cm).

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## In Brief

### There's a prayer for every mood

There is a prayer for every state of mind and spiritual need in the Book of Psalms, Pope Francis told the faithful gathered for his general audience this week. "There are many psalms that help us forge ahead. Get into the habit of praying the psalms. I assure you that you will be happy."

"If there are psalms, or just verses, that speak to our heart, repeat them and pray them during the day. The psalms are prayers 'for all seasons': There is no state of mind or need that does not find in them the best words to be transformed into prayer," the pope added.

### Jesuit priest abused hundreds in Bolivia

A Spanish Jesuit abused hundreds of Indigenous girls while serving as a missionary in Bolivia, a newspaper has said.

Jesuit Father Luis María Roma kept a diary in which he recorded his abuse, Spanish newspaper *El País* claimed.

The report also claims that the Jesuits knew about the abuse, and were investigating it when Fr Roma died in 2019, but never made the investigation known to the authorities.

Bolivian prosecutors have now obtained a copy of the priest's diary and the Jesuit's investigation.

*El País* published a notarised confession by the priest signed in May 2019 in which he admitted to the abuse.

The Jesuits issued a statement in which they expressed "deep regret" that those in charge at the time did not address "the complaints of sexual abuse from girls, boys and adolescents" and did not put the victims first.

# CEOs told to focus businesses on caring for the environment

**Carol Glatz**

Today's businesses must focus their innovation in caring for the environment, Pope Francis told a group of leaders of major companies and banks.

"It is no longer enough merely to comply with the laws of states, which are proceeding too slowly: we need to innovate by anticipating the future, with courageous and forward-looking choices that can be imitated," he said.

"We are living in a time of serious environmental crisis that depends on many individuals and factors, among which are the economic and business choices of the past and present," he told the group during an audience at the Vatican June 15.

The group included 25 CEOs who are part of the Sustainable Markets Initiative. Established in 2020 by King Charles III, the initiative brings together leaders from different sectors to commit to concrete action that supports sustainable economic growth and caring for the environment.

The pope urged the leaders to pay attention to and critically discern the impact of their businesses so as to "fully exercise responsibility for the direct and indirect effects of

The pope issues a cheery welcome as he enters St Peter's Square for his weekly audience



your choices."

He gave them three tasks: to help care for the environment, the poor and young people.

"I urge you to place the environment and the earth at the center of

your attention and responsibility," he said, adding that "the innovation of the entrepreneur nowadays must first and foremost be innovation in caring for our common home."

"Do not forget the poorest and the

discarded," he said. Just as people seek to recycle materials and waste, "we have not yet learned -- allow me to use the expression -- to 'recycle' and not discard people and workers, especially the most vulnerable, to whom the culture of waste often applies."

He warned against a kind of "meritocracy" that is used to legitimize excluding the poor, "who are judged as undeserving, even to the point of viewing poverty itself as their fault."

"And let us not settle for merely a little philanthropy, that would be insufficient. The challenge is to include the poor in businesses, to make them resources for the benefit of all," he said.

"I dream of a world in which the discarded can become protagonists of change," he said, pointing to Jesus as someone who did just that.

Lastly, he said, young people are often among today's poor, in that they may lack resources, opportunities and a future.

He urged them to practice "corporate hospitality, which means generously welcoming young people even when they lack the required experience and skills, for every job is learned only by doing it."

## Vatican bank reports increased profit, costs and donations

The Institute for the Works of Religion, commonly known as the Vatican bank, reported a net income of €30.6 million for 2023, a modest increase from the €29.6 million in profit reported in 2022.

It distributed €13.6m "to support the work of religion and charity," a big jump from €5.2m in 2022, with a further €3.2m to various charitable cause. Most direct financial aid went to for destitute

families, missionary and charity projects or contributions to young student priests for the completion of university studies.

Admin costs rose but cost control measures aimed at improving customer services and increasing digitalisation were paying off.

The Vatican bank services more than 12,300 clients linked to the Catholic Church.

Client assets rose by 5.4% in

2023 to €5.4 billion; nearly half belong to religious orders, while 28 per cent belong to departments of the Roman Curia.

An independent auditors' report produced by Mazars said the financial statements "give a true and fair view" of the bank's financial performance. It also noted the bank's commitment to follow 'faith consistent investment' and ethical principles according to the

social teaching of the Church.

"It is critical that the Vatican be considered as a reference in these matters," they said.

The report stated that 100% of asset management products were in line with Catholic ethics and it had a "well-tested proprietary methodology that uses very strict selection and monitoring criteria" to ensure compliance with modern sustainability standards.



Members of the faithful display the flag of the Democratic Republic of Congo as the pope condemned violence in their homeland

## Modern martyrs are seeds of Christian witness in Church

Pope Francis has condemned the killing of Christians in the Democratic Republic of Congo, saying the sacrifices of modern martyrs are seeds that grow into examples of Christian witness for the Church.

After praying the Angelus in St. Peter's Square, the pope referenced the "painful news" of violence in eastern DRC where over 120 people were reported to have been killed by suspected Islamist rebels in recent weeks.

Local officials have said the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group affiliated to the Islamic State, were responsible for the attacks.

"Among the victims, many are Christians killed in 'odium fidei,' in

hatred of the faith, Pope Francis said. "They are martyrs. Their sacrifice is a seed that germinates and bears fruit, and teaches us to bear witness to the Gospel with courage and consistency."

Open Doors International, a non-denominational organisation supporting persecuted Christians worldwide, said that at least 80 Christians, Catholics and members of other Christians churches, were killed in the attack on North Kivu province of Congo.

Pope Francis called on Congo's leadership and the international community to "do everything possible to stop the violence and safeguard the lives of civilians."



# Pope swaps jokes with comedians at Vatican audience

Pope Francis had a wise-cracking session with some top comedians after they were invited to an early morning audience at the Vatican.

“We’re in this beautiful, beautiful space in the Vatican and for some reason they’ve let comedians in, which is always a mistake,” US comedian Conan O’Brien told reporters after meeting the pope last Friday.

He was just one of 105 comedians from around the world who travelled to the Vatican for a papal audience and to “establish a link between the Catholic Church and comic artists,” according to the Dicastery for Culture and Education, which organised the meeting. The majority of the guests were from Italy, but British comedy writer and actor Stephen Merchant and Irish funnyman Ardal O’Hanlon were among the troupe, as were top US comics Stephen Colbert, Chris Rock, Jimmy Fallon and Whoopi Goldberg.

Fallon provided most of the entertainment before the audience, cracking jokes from in front of the pope’s chair. But he moved to one side once the pope entered, joining his fellow stars in taking photos of the pontiff.

Pope Francis made his own gag, saying that since smiling is good for one’s health, it would be better for him to just make a funny face for the crowd rather than to read his lengthy speech.

Yet he told the comedians that “in the midst of so much gloomy news, immersed as we are in many social and even personal emergencies, you have the power to spread peace and smiles.”

“You are among the few who have the ability to speak to all types of people, from different generations and cultural backgrounds,” he said.

The pope highlighted the unique role of laughter in bringing people together in the face of conflict, stressing that humour “is never against anyone, but is always inclusive, purposeful, eliciting openness, sympathy, empathy.”

He also encouraged them to remember a prayer often attributed to St. Thomas More, which he said he prays every day: “Grant me, O Lord, a good sense of humour.”

Julia Louis-Dreyfus, the star of hit shows *Seinfeld* and *Veep*, said after the meeting that Pope Francis’ words were “gorgeous,” and praised the pope’s message for highlighting that comedy “has a sacredness to it.”

Each comedian greeted the pope individually at the end of the audience.

Colbert, a Catholic, said he told the pope in Italian that he gave his voice to produce the audiobook version of the pope’s recently published autobiography. He later told reporters that after reading the book, he thought he would love to interview the pope on his late-night TV program, “but I really want to do a cooking segment with him, because he talked a lot about cooking: evidently he makes a great ‘tortellini in brodo.’”

Jim Gaffigan, another US comic, told reporters after the meeting that being Catholic and a comedian is “the most punk rock thing you can do,” since believing in God in the comedy business is just “asking for trouble.”



Stephen Colbert, Chris Rock and Jimmy Fallon clown around for the pope, and left, Fallon meets the pope

As the event ended Chris Rock, seated near the front row, jumped up behind Pope Francis to put his face right by the pope’s for the photo. Other comedians couldn’t resist following suit and soon enough a group swarmed around the pope for the picture. Pope Francis encouraged the fun, chuckled and gave a wave as he walked out.



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# Francis in papal first as he addresses West's most powerful nations at G7

Pope Francis met individually with several world leaders during the G7 summit in southern Italy last weekend, including US President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

He also had a brief encounter with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, though it was a more informal greeting than face-to-face meeting.

It was the first time a pope has attended the annual summit, which brings the leaders of the world's wealthiest nations together to discuss current issues.

The focus of last weekend's summit was migration, climate change and development in Africa, artificial intelligence and the situation in the Middle East and Ukraine.

The White House said Biden and the pope talked about "the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire and a hostage deal to get the hostages home and address the critical humanitarian crisis in Gaza."

President Biden also thanked Pope Francis for the Vatican's work to address the humanitarian impacts of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, including his efforts to help return kidnapped Ukrainian children to their families, it said.

The Vatican has not commented on Pope Francis' encounters with the leaders, but a clip released at the end of his meeting with Biden showed him saying, "Pray for me. I pray for you." The president replied, "I promise I do."

In addition to the G7 members – the United States, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, Italy and Great Britain – the host nation, Italy, also



Pope Francis pictured with the leaders of the G7 nations plus heads of state from other invited nations.

Inset, he enjoyed a 15-minute chat with President Biden, while his meeting with Rishi Sunak was little more than a friendly handshake and greeting

invited the heads of state from Argentina, India and Brazil, as well as Ukraine.

The pope's bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the summit included talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy; French President Emmanuel Macron; and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Zelenskyy told the pope, "Thank you so much, for your prayers for Ukraine, for Ukrainians, for peace in Ukraine, for Ukrainian children."

Later he also thanked the pope for "his spiritual closeness to our people, and humanitarian aid for Ukrainians."

"I informed the Pope about the consequences of Russian aggres-

sion, its air terror, and the difficult energy situation. We discussed the Peace Formula, the Holy See's role in establishing a just and lasting peace, and the Global Peace Summit," Zelenskyy said.

"I thanked the Holy See for its participation in the summit and highlighted its efforts aimed at bringing peace closer, particularly returning Ukrainian children abducted by Russia."

Canada's prime minister said, "I thanked His Holiness for taking up the work of reconciliation, and I advocated for the next step – returning cultural belongings from the Vatican to Canada's Indigenous Peoples."

Macron said on X that in his

meeting with the pope, he reaffirmed France's "shared commitment to have a world of greater solidarity and justice for people and the planet. Let us all work together to create the conditions for lasting peace."

The pope then delivered a speech to the G7 meeting and guest on the dangers of AI and the importance of political leaders making sure AI technologies always be at the service of humanity.

After delivering his speech and listening to the talks of other invited heads of state, the pope held further bilateral talks with: Kenyan President William Ruto; Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi; Brazilian

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva; Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan; and Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Modi said on X that he invited the pope to visit India. "I admire his commitment to serve people and make our planet better."

Lula said on X that "We talked about peace, the fight against hunger and reducing inequalities in the world," while Kenyan president Ruto said: "Kenya joins Pope Francis in calling for (an) urgent end to violence in all parts of the world including Sudan and DRC."

"We are confident that the warring groups will agree to stop the fighting and give peace a chance."

## Carefully does it on AI, pope warns world leaders

Political leaders have a responsibility to create the conditions necessary for artificial intelligence to be at the service of humanity and to help mitigate its risks, Pope Francis told world leaders at the G7 summit.

"We cannot allow a tool as powerful and indispensable as AI to reinforce such a (technocratic) paradigm, but rather, we must make it a bulwark" against the threat, he said in his address.

"This is precisely where political action is urgently needed," he said.

Many people believe politics is "a distasteful word, often due corruption and inefficiency of some politicians – not all, some. There are also attempts to discredit politics, to replace it with economics or to twist it to one ideology or another," he said.

But the world cannot function without healthy politics, the pope said, and effective progress toward

"universal fraternity and social peace" requires a sound political life.

The pope addressed leaders at the G7's special "outreach" session dedicated to artificial intelligence.

Because of time limits set for speakers during the session, the pope read only a portion of his five-page speech, although the full text was made part of the official record. The Vatican provided a copy of the full text.

In his speech, the pope called artificial intelligence "an exciting and fearsome tool." It could be used to expand access to knowledge, to advance scientific research rapidly and to give "demanding and arduous work to machines."

"Yet at the same time, it could bring with it a greater injustice between advanced and developing nations or between dominant and oppressed social classes, raising

the dangerous possibility that a 'throwaway culture' be preferred to a 'culture of encounter,'" he said.

Like every tool and technology, he said, "the benefits or harm it will bring will depend on its use."

While he called for the global community to find shared principles for a more ethical use of AI, Pope Francis also called for an outright ban of certain applications.

For example, he repeated his insistence that so-called 'lethal autonomous weapons' be banned, saying 'no machine should ever choose to take the life of a human.'

Decision-making "must always be left to the human person," he said. Human dignity itself depends on there being proper human control over the choices made by artificial intelligence programs.

Humanity would be condemned to a future without hope "if we took away people's ability to make

decisions about themselves and their lives, by dooming them to depend on the choices of machines," he said. He specifically criticised judges using AI with prisoner's personal data, such as their ethnicity, education, psychological assessments and credit rating, to determine whether the prisoner is likely to re-offend upon release and therefore require home jailing.

The pope also cautioned students against "generative artificial intelligence," which compose a text or produce an image on any theme or subject.

However, he said, these tools are not "generative," in that they do not develop new analyses or concepts; they are merely "reinforcing" as they can only repeat what they find, giving it "an appealing form" and "without checking whether it contains errors or preconceptions."

Generative AI "not only runs the risk of legitimising fake news and strengthening a dominant culture's advantage, but, in short, it also undermines the educational process itself," he said.

"It is the ethos concerning the understanding of the value and dignity of the human person that is most at risk from AI," he told the leaders. "We must remember that no innovation is neutral."

In order for AI programs to be tools that build up the good and create a better tomorrow, he said, "they must always be aimed at the good of every human being," and they must have an ethical inspiration, underlining his support of the Rome Call for AI Ethics launched in 2020.

It is up to everyone to "make good use" of AI he said, "but the onus is on politics to create the conditions for such good use to be possible and fruitful."





Cardinal Parolin and President Zelensky



# Peace only comes with talking, cardinal tells peace summit

The only way to achieve true, stable and just peace is by having all sides of a conflict involved in dialogue, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said at a peace summit in Switzerland that aimed at bringing an end to the fighting in Ukraine.

"The Holy See expresses its hope that the diplomatic effort currently being promoted by Ukraine and supported by so many countries will be improved, in order to achieve the results that the victims deserve and that the entire world is hoping for," he said.

Switzerland organised a Summit on Peace in Ukraine, inviting more than 160 heads of state and other government leaders to kick-start a peace process by developing "a common understanding of a path towards a just and lasting peace."

About 100 delegations, including 57 heads of state and governments, attended the conference, but Russian was not after it had indicated multiple times it had no interest in participating. China, which has repeatedly been asked to use its leverage to bring Russia to the negotiating table, was also absent.

Cardinal Parolin said, "It is important to reiterate that the only means capable of achieving true,



stable and just peace is dialogue between all the parties involved."

"In the face of war, it is important never to give up, but to continue to seek ways to end the conflict with good intentions, trust and creativity," he said, praising Ukraine for working "continuously on the diplomatic front, eager to achieve a just and lasting peace" all while it is "making enormous efforts to defend itself from aggression."

The Vatican is deeply concerned about "the tragic humanitarian consequences" of the war "and is especially committed to facilitating the

repatriation of children and encouraging the release of prisoners, especially seriously wounded soldiers and civilians" by maintaining direct contact and communication with both Ukrainian and Russian authorities, he said.

"The reunification of minors with their families or legal guardians must be a paramount concern for all parties, and any exploitation of their situation is unacceptable. It is therefore imperative that every available channel is strengthened to facilitate this process," he said.

The Vatican "remains prepared to

assist in potential mediation initiatives," he said, encouraging all nations and members of the international community "to explore ways of providing assistance and facilitating mediation, whether of a humanitarian or political nature."

A final joint communiqué on a peace framework to end Russia's two-year war was agreed, but a number of participants refused to sign it, including India and South Africa, both of which have refused to follow Western nations' policy of trade embargoes and sanctions against Russia.

## China's Jimmy Lai trial dubbed a sham

The president of the Committee for Freedom of Hong Kong, Mark Clifford, has called former media magnate Jimmy Lai's trial a "sham", but said the 76-year-old Lai has the "strength to persevere" due to his Catholic faith.

Lai, the Chinese-born founder of the anti-Government newspaper *Apple Daily*, entered a not guilty plea to the charges of conspiring to collude with a foreign power. The prosecution has rested its case and the trial has adjourned until next month.

"He's charged with subverting state power, but all the prosecution seems to have shown during this lengthy trial that started last December is that he was a newspaper owner who believed in fighting for democracy, and if anything, acted as a moderating force, counseling non-violence and restraint on the part of younger protesters," Clifford said in an interview with *EWTN News Nightly*. "There's no case to offer."

Lai was arrested in August 2020 and has been imprisoned ever since, largely in solitary confinement.

His current trial "another sham set of charges brought against a man who they've proven only that

he believes in nonviolence, and he wanted to put much of his considerable fortune where his mouth was for democracy and for freedom," Clifford said of the Chinese authorities.

But his Catholic faith will keep Lai strong, Clifford said.

"Jimmy has the strength to persevere, really, against Xi Jinping," Clifford said.

When asked if Lai could get a fair trial in Hong Kong, Clifford said: "Absolutely not."

"I think it's a shame," he said. "I think it's wonderful that he's willing to show the Hong Kong system for what it is and how unfair it is."

Lai has requested to have leading British human rights lawyer Tim Owen as his barrister in the trial, but the Chinese refused permission for a foreigner to attend the trial.

It was another decision that highlighted how Lai will struggle to get a fair trial.

"No, he can't get a fair trial," Clifford continued. "It's a joke for the world to think otherwise. But dictatorships like to play this game. They like to pretend that they're doing everything legally, when in fact, they're just trying to silence a very forceful and ineffective critic."

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# European church leaders welcome assisted-suicide ruling, but worry it will be a human right in the future

**Jonathan Luxmoore**

Catholic Church representatives have welcomed a ruling by Europe's top human rights court that countries have no obligation to allow physician-assisted suicide.

However, they also voiced concern at suggestions that it could be recognised as a human right in the future.

"This judgment largely concerns procedural questions – but it's a very good result," said Fr Marco Ganci, the Holy See's permanent representative to the Council of Europe. "It was suggested refusal to permit assisted suicide violated the right to private family life set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. This has now been rejected."

The Italian priest was reacting to a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, that the Hungarian Government had not violated human rights by refusing to allow a terminally ill patient to be helped to die.

In an interview with Catholic news agency OSV News, Fr Ganci said the Holy See, although represented at two dozen Europe-based international organisations, was not part of the European court system, and would not speculate on details of this latest court judgment.

But in Britain, where new legislation to allow 'assisted dying' is under consideration, there was praise for the latest ruling – although there was also caution about its long-term implications.

"I welcome the judgment that there's no right to physician-assisted death – as well as the Court's recommendation that high-quality palliative care, involving access to effective pain management, is essential to ensuring a dignified end to life," said Auxiliary Bishop John Sherrington of Westminster, lead for life issues at the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

"However, the view that the European Convention has to be interpreted and applied in light of the present day, with appropriate legal measures kept under review, is disturbing," he said.

It could open the door for future interpretations to be more positive towards assisted suicide and euthanasia, is the belief.

*"I welcome the judgment that there's no right to physician-assisted death – as well as the Court's recommendation that high-quality palliative care, involving access to effective pain management, is essential to ensuring a dignified end to life" – Bishop John Sherrington*



European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has confirmed there is no 'right' to access assisted suicide, but has opened the door on it becoming one in the future

The European Court of Human Rights judgement came in a ruling on a case brought by Daniel Karsai, a lawyer who suffers from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a neurodegenerative disease usually fatal within three to five years.

The Hungarian, 47, argued that criminalisation of physician-assisted suicide in his native country violated privacy and family life clauses in the 1950 European Convention.

But in the 6-1 ruling, the European court's judges said that while Karsai had been entitled to bring the case, fearing his future existence would "consist almost exclusively of pain and suffering," they ruled that Hungary's ban on assisted suicide had helped secure the lives of "vulnerable individuals," while also "maintaining the medical profession's ethical integrity and protecting the morals of society."

This subject continues to raise "extremely sensitive moral and ethical questions, and one on which opinions in democratic countries often profoundly differ," the judgment continued.

The choice of "means that are

appropriate in order to protect the right to life ... will need to be made in full appreciation of the local conditions and institutions in a given society," the judgment said.

The court said relevant international documents did not "advise, let alone require," the Council of Europe's 46 member-countries to "provide access to PAD (physician-assisted death)."

In a follow-up statement, the European Center for Law and Justice, or ECLJ, which lobbies on moral issues, said the ruling would disappoint those hoping for a Europe-wide right to assisted suicide.

However, it added that the court's decision to keep the issue under review as public attitudes evolved also risked compromising "intangible principles" underlying human rights since World War II.

"It is dangerous for human rights to have their content and protection dependent on changes in mentality and legislation," a rule that "makes them variable and relative," said the ECLJ, which holds special consultative status at the United Nations.

"The evolutionary approach embraced by the Court suggests assisted suicide is a human right according to the number of countries that have legalised it, which is philosophically absurd."

Meanwhile, the president of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe, Vincenzo Bassi, said the ruling from the human rights court was a victory for the "European founding principle of subsidiarity" – that European institutions "must not over-reach beyond the national competencies of member-states."

However, he warned there also were "ominous signs" that a public "impression of consensus" was forming around new human rights.

"When assisted suicide is



proposed as a right, we reiterate that this would be incompatible with human dignity," Bassi said.

"The answer is to make it easier not to die, but to choose life – and this is done by providing care, intergenerational solidarity and protagonising family networks," he said. "This way, we'll have a chance to combat the pandemic of loneliness gripping our societies."

Several European countries, including Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, allow some form of assisted suicide despite a 2012 Council of Europe resolution condemning it.

Paragraph 2325 of the 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church says suicide is forbidden by the Fifth Commandment and 'seriously contrary to justice, hope and charity,' while paragraph 2324 brands euthanasia as murder 'whatever its forms or motives.'

However, legislation to allow "aid in dying" is currently being debated in traditionally Catholic France and is under consideration in Britain, Finland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden.

Fr Ganci said the European Court was right to state that palliative care was always "the better alternative," adding that he was studying its motivation in suggesting the right to assisted suicide "remained open."

Meanwhile, Bishop Sherrington said "compassion and hope at the end of life" had been the theme of this year's Catholic Day for Life, which is devoted annually to "raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life in every stage and condition."

"I thank all those healthcare professionals and family members who support those dying with dedication and provide the best possible care," he said. "The Catholic Church teaches that the moral prohibition against assisting suicide is based on revelation and natural law and cannot be changed. It calls for high-quality palliative care and a legal framework which protects the weakest and most vulnerable."

Meanwhile, Bassi said his Catholic family federation would continue stressing there was "no consensus" on assisted suicide, which should "remain within the competence of member-states."

"While we understand the desperation and pain, we nevertheless maintain that life is a gift and must not be subjected to any kind of disposal," the federation president added.



# Church backs new Biden move to let migrant families stay together in USA

**Kate Scanlon**

The Church in the US has welcomed an executive action by President Biden that allows certain non-citizen spouses and children of US citizens to apply for lawful permanent residency without first having to leave the country, as they were previously required to do.

It is the first major move to normalise the status of millions of immigrants living in the United States without documentation since President Obama's 'Dreamers' bill, which allowed children without visas to stay in the country and apply for citizenship.

The White House said the action, would keep thousands of families together, protecting from deportation approximately half a million non-citizen spouses of US citizens, and approximately 50,000 non-citizen children under age 21 whose parent is married to a US citizen.

In order to be eligible, non-citizens must have resided in the United States for 10 or more years and be legally married to a US citizen, while also meeting all other relevant legal requirements.

J. Kevin Appleby, senior fellow for policy at the Center for Migration Studies of New York and the former director of migration policy for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, said that the decision by President Biden "is an important action that maintains and strengthens American families, as opposed to deporting them and ripping them apart."

"It is perfectly aligned with Catholic teaching, as well, as it promotes marriage and family unity," he said. "The only downside is that he did not extend the benefit to all immigrant families in this situation."

Prior to the order, marrying an American citizen could provide a pathway to US residency or citizenship, but people who crossed the southern border illegally rather than arriving with a visa were



Migrants queue while waiting for their entry into the US to be processed by Border officials

required to return to their home countries to complete the application process for a green card. Critics of that process argued it separated families and created a deterrent to pursuing legal avenues as it could result in lengthy separations – sometimes for several years.

The announcement came during the anniversary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA and better known as the 'Dreamers' legislation. It was created in 2012 under the Obama administration to offer protection from deportation to certain immigrants brought to the country as children.

Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, chairman of the US bishops' Committee on Migration, said the Church welcomed the news, adding that it would bring "hope to thousands of American families who have grappled with the fear of separation for a decade or more."

He added: "As we commemorate the 12th anniversary of DACA, we've seen the positive impacts such programs can have, not only for beneficiaries themselves but for

the families, employers, and communities that rely on them. This new programme is sure to yield similar benefits," Bishop Seitz said.

"However, as the fate of DACA hangs in the balance, we also know how insufficient these programmes are," he continued. "Legislators have a moral and patriotic duty to improve our legal immigration system, including the opportunities available for family reunification and preservation."

"A society is only as strong as its families, and family unity is a fundamental right."

"For the good of the country, Congress must find a way to overcome partisan divisions and enact immigration reform that includes an earned legalisation program for longtime undocumented residents."

The election-year move by Biden could shield hundreds of thousands of people from deportation and may appeal to voters in key constituencies in battleground states such as Arizona and Nevada, where large populations of so-called 'mixed status' households

exist. The move also is an olive branch to the president's progressive critics, who objected to his executive order of 4th June aimed at reducing unauthorised border crossings by asylum-seekers.

However, there was an immediate pushback from Republicans. Karoline Leavitt, national press secretary for the Trump campaign, said Biden's order will give "mass amnesty and citizenship to hundreds of thousands of illegals who he knows will ultimately vote for him and the Open Border Democrat Party."

A spokesman for the Republican Party in Washington said it would oppose the plan, "as it is a green light to anyone currently thinking of crossing into the US illegally, that ultimately, after a period of time, the authorities will let you stay. It effectively kills all migration controls."

But Anna Gallagher, executive director of Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., or CLINIC, said the plan was "a breath of fresh air and a dose of hope for many of our immigrant brothers and sisters."

"We welcome these measures, knowing the enormous impacts they will have for our network's clients," Gallagher said.

"Catholic social teaching supports policies that promote family unity, recognizing family as society's primary building block."

"The Church has consistently advocated for DACA recipients, who are vital to our community. These actions align with the values of our faith and will provide welcome relief to immigrant families."

But Gallagher reiterated her group's opposition to Biden's previous order limiting asylum.

"While we celebrate these wins for immigrant families, we remain mindful of recent executive orders restricting asylum access," Gallagher said. "We advocate and pray for measures that recognise the dignity of all people, regardless of status."

"Robust asylum protections are essential for safeguarding human dignity and promoting family unity. We urge the administration to boldly champion the rights of all immigrants."

## Lawyer dubs threat to Catholic agency an attack on religious liberty



A family of migrants is dropped off at a shelter run by Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas

A lawyer representing El Paso's Annunciation House, a Catholic non-profit organisation working with migrants, said moves by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to shut it down were an "attack on religious liberty".

Paxton's office alleges that Annunciation House runs 'stash houses', facilitates illegal border crossings, conceals 'illegally present aliens from law enforcement,' and did not turn over documents in their investigation.

Annunciation House attorneys denied wrongdoing or illegal conduct and said Paxton's office did not adhere to appropriate legal processes for requesting documents from them.

Annunciation House has asked Judge Francisco Dominguez to block the attorney general's effort to shut down their ministry, with the judge saying he would rule on the matter within two weeks.

Jerome Wesevich, a lawyer for Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, which is representing Annunciation House, said, "We do believe it's an attack on religious freedom."

Paxton's attempt to close Annunciation House, Wesevich said, is an "obvious attack on Annunciation House's practise of the Catholic faith and its command, simply love one another." Paxton's office has said Annunciation House is "facilitating illegal migration."



## FAITH ALIVE

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

There was plenty of hope, ideas and opportunities for parishes to grow and flourish at the Catholic Parish Summit in Harrogate, writes Universe News Editor Andy Drozdziak. Here's his report from what was a superb and inspiring event

# Let's bless this summit's vision of a missionary, vibrant Church



The vision of the Catholic Parish Summit, which took place between 12th-14th June, was to “send disciples, equip leaders, and launch the transformation of our nations.”

A series of talks and seminars were given on themes of mission, vision and being filled with the Holy Spirit and building community.

Fr. James Mallon is the parish priest of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Ordained in 1997, Fr. Mallon is the founder of Divine Renovation Ministry and best-selling author of *Divine Renovation: From a Maintenance to a Missional Parish*, which is a guide for parishes seeking to cultivate vibrant and dynamic parish communities centred on missionary discipleship. He believes strongly that priests are key to transforming parishes and empowering parishioners to step into their baptismal calling.

Fr. Mallon told the *Universe*: “If the priest is not supportive, it's never going to happen. The priest has to be supportive and humble for it to happen.”

“It only works if everyone has the same vision and you're able to manage conflict in a healthy way. You have to be able to navigate all this and, ultimately, if you have a priest who is not on board with this, it's never going to happen.”

## New hope, new life

Fr. Mallon spoke of the origins of Divine Renovation and the inspiration behind his book, *From Maintenance to Mission*. “I saw so many of my brother priests getting the life crushed out of them. There's a series of small deaths that will happen and you see guys who were vibrant and passionate become shells of themselves. It broke my heart,” he said.

Describing the approach of Divine Renovation as “theologically conservative and methodologically liberal”, Fr. Mallon is convinced that the models used and the way that mission is carried out “has to change” – even though “we cling so tightly to the way we do things.”



Nicky Gumbel, pioneer of Alpha; Fr James Mallon, founder, Divine Renovation; Dan O'Rourke, president, Divine Renovation Ministry; and Dr Hannah Vaughan-Spruce, executive director of Global Mission, Divine Renovation Ministry. All photos Toni Cop/Divine Renovation Ministry

On the back of the influence of his book, since 2016, nearly 1,000 priests from 39 countries have benefitted from coaching, while over 5,000 parishes from 95 countries have benefitted from events and other resources.

As a donor-funded ministry, supporters from around the world ensure that parishes have access to coaching and accompaniment at no cost.

The organisation said: “By the

grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, Divine Renovation's goal is to catalyse the tipping point of renewal in the Church by equipping 33,000 mission-focused parishes by 2033 — the 2,000th anniversary of the Great Commission.”

Fr Mallon marvelled at the sight of around 140 priests vesting for Mass on the Thursday of the Summit. In fact, it took so long for the priests to enter the auditorium

that the worship band had to repeat verses of opening hymn Amazing Grace. “When I see priests coming to life and getting a sense of dream and excitement and saying that this has changed my life – I just feel so much joy,” Fr Mallon said.

## A sense of the global Church gathered

Dr Hannah Vaughan-Spruce, executive director of Global Mission for Divine Renovation, was very encouraged by the gathering in Harrogate, which drew delegates from 19 countries. She told the *Universe*: “There's been a real sense of the global Church here – it is quite prophetic in a way.”

“As the Church moves into this new apostolic age, it kind of gets smaller because all the different countries are learning from each other and the need is similar in every country, so there's a beautiful missionary network of parishes around the world. We get a real sense of an international feel.”

“There's an openness and hunger among the participants for change. There's so much that doesn't work anymore. I have a vision for something that is extraordinary

and that is possible because of the Holy Spirit.”

At a time when the Church faces declining attendance, parish amalgamations, and a rise among the religiously disaffiliated, CPS underlined a vision of a Church that is missional and apostolic at its core — helping parishes set off on a journey of renewal. “There is already a growing number of parishes across Britain seeing transformation, and we would love to open and share these learnings with hundreds more,” said Dr. Hannah Vaughan-Spruce.

## Divine Renovation – A growing influence

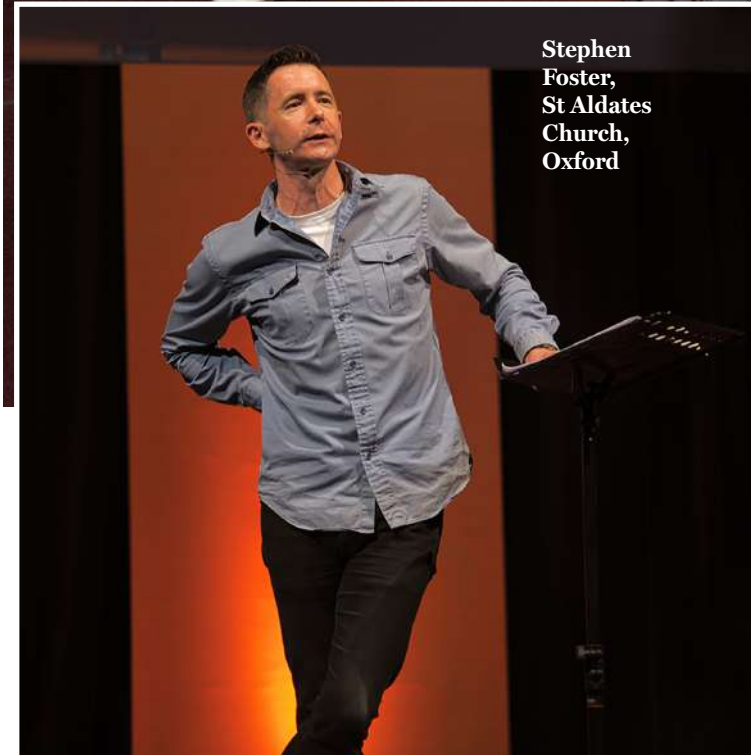
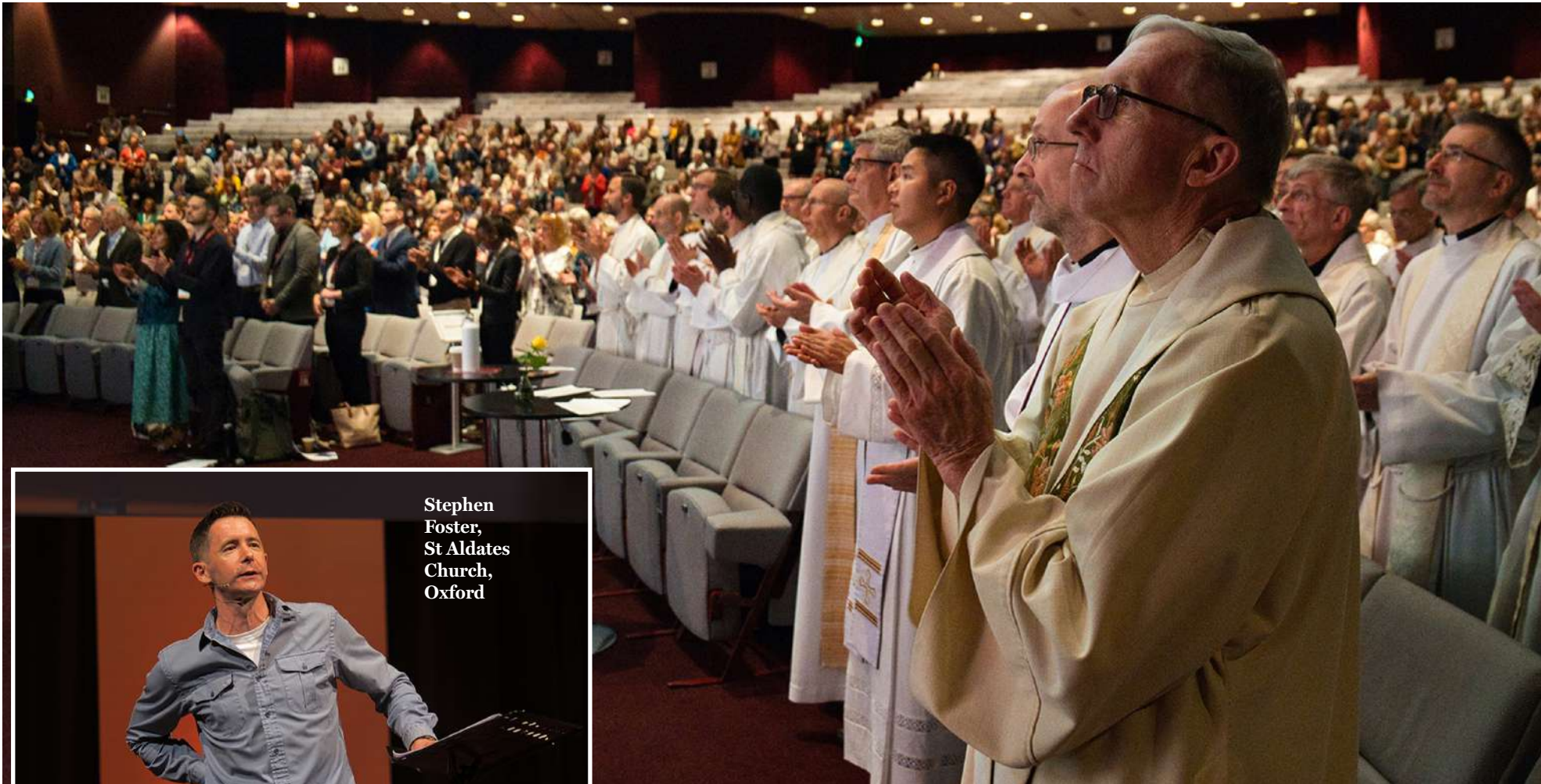
In an impressive turn out in Harrogate, there were 850 parish leaders representing 19 countries, 230 parishes, and 71 dioceses — including 11 bishops and 140 priests. This number is particularly eye catching when it is considered that the event took place during the week, between Wednesday and Friday, on weekdays.

The influence of Divine Renovation is growing among UK parishes, with St Elizabeth of Portugal parish in Richmond an example of a thriving Divine

Sr Miriam James Heidland, SOLT







Stephen Foster,  
St Aldates Church,  
Oxford

Renovation parish. Dr. Hannah Vaughan-Spruce explained the aims of the mission and model. “Our goal is to equip leaders with the vision and tools needed to transform our parishes into communities where people encounter Jesus in a life-changing way,” she said.

“Every parish has the opportunity to see new life and become a centre of evangelisation, a beacon of hope in a world longing for Jesus.” Many individuals and parishes who were inspired by the vision of Divine Renovation in Harrogate would agree that the beacon of hope is growing brighter by the day.

Above, the event attracted 850 parish leaders representing an impressive 230 parishes, including 11 bishops and 140 priests. The numbers caused delays to the Mass on Thursday as they vested up for the service

Right, Fr Mathias Thelen, parish priest, St Patrick’s Parish, Michigan, USA

Below right, Fr James Mallon  
Below, Bishop Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds





# Brave priest murdered by communists was an inspiration for all priests

Fr Michal Rapacz, an early victim of Poland's communist regime, was beatified in Kraków on Saturday.

While not outspokenly political, his zealous faith and energetic pastoral work proved a threat to the communists, who sought to eliminate religion and reduce man to the material dimension.

Pope Francis signed a decree recognising his martyrdom in January, clearing the way for his beatification.

The story behind his death is still shrouded in secrecy, given Poland was under the rule of the Communists in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. But what is known is that he was kidnapped and killed by a group of unknown armed men in 1946 during the Communist Government's anti-religious campaign.

For a martyr, the Catholic Church does not require a verified miracle through his or her intercession for this step toward sainthood.

Fr Rapacz was born to a farming family in the village of Tenczyn in 1904, near Myslenice, home to a shrine and miraculous image of Our Lady where the future martyr frequently prayed. In 1926, he entered the Kraków seminary and was ordained a priest five years later.

In what is believed to be a unique situation in Church history, Fr Rapacz's graduating seminary class included two other priests who went on to become blessed: Fr Wladyslaw Bukowski, a former Gulag inmate who would later spread the Gospel in Soviet-ruled Kazakhstan; and Fr Piotr Dankowski, a priest killed in Auschwitz for his work with the wartime Polish resistance.

Fr Rapacz's first assignment as a parish vicar was in the village of



Fr Michal Rapacz's faith and devotion to the Church made him a threat to the communists who ran Poland in the wake of the Second World War, and while he never spoke out on political matters, it was his positive witness to Christ that led to his death

Ploki in western Lesser Poland, a working-class community where many locals were employed in mining and industry. During the Great Depression of the pre-war 1930s, many of Fr Rapacz's parishioners lost their jobs and turned toward communism.

His response was to share his zealous faith by catechising particularly among the young. In Ploki, he started a Catholic Association of Male Youths, which tried to spread his own piety. Fr Rapacz prayed the stations of the cross daily; he was known to often spend entire nights in Eucharistic adoration.

In 1933, Fr Rapacz was sent to a parish in Rajcza, and in 1937 he became the apostolic administrator

of his previous parish, Ploki. While there, World War II broke out, during which Nazi Germany murdered 3,000 Polish priests. The area around Ploki was directly incorporated into the Third Reich, the German Nazi state, and harsh restrictions on religious life were imposed. In the first weeks of the war, Fr Rapacz was arrested by the Gestapo on false charges of owning firearms but later released.

During the war, Fr Rapacz at risk to his life, provided shelter to a Polish man from Bydgoszcz whose wife and three children had been killed by the Germans, provided food from his own modest acreage to impoverished parishioners and gave food to Polish partisans. The priest also defied a Nazi order to fly



a swastika flag on parish grounds; this act of disobedience endangered execution or deportation to a concentration camp.

As the Soviet Red Army entered Ploki in the spring of 1945, Father Rapacz would directly experience a new wicked ideology. Unlike other great men and women of the Church who experienced the worst of communism, such as Blessed Jerzy Popieluszko, murdered by the regime in 1984, Fr Rapacz did not explicitly or even indirectly speak out against the Marxist-Leninist regime.

Fr Pawel Ptasznik, the rector of the Church of St. Stanislaus in Rome and the postulator of the Vatican phase of Fr Rapacz's sainthood cause, said that the priest did not write down his homilies; however, according to witness testimonies, he never even alluded to political matters.

Additionally, Ploki and its environs were a major hotbed for the communist Polish United Workers' Party; Fr Ptasznik said that local party activists even postulated making Poland the 16th Soviet republic.

"Blessed Michal wasn't a declared anti-communist," he explained. "He was simply a good pastor with a deep prayer life who was inclined to help those in need, even if they were indifferent or even hostile towards the Church."

"Without opposing communism directly, he had a positive witness and tried to show people the way, the beauty of life in the Church."

This positive witness was too much for Poland's communists,

Ploki, where Fr Rapacz had his parish, was over-run by the Red Army in 1945.

however. What happened next is unclear but it is thought most likely that the Workers' Party in Trzebinia issued a death warrant for the priest. Some parishioners got wind of this threat and informed Fr Rapacz, begging him to flee the area, but he refused to abandon his parishioners. After all, he told them, this was not the first time his life was in jeopardy due to an anti-Christian ideology.

But this time the threat was real, and took his life. On the night of 11th-12th May, about 20 masked men stormed into the presbytery in Ploki, beat and tortured Father Rapacz for about an hour, and led him into a nearby forest, murdering him.

Devotion to Fr Rapacz was and remains strong in Ploki, but for obvious reasons his cause for beatification could not be opened until after the fall of communism in 1989.

In today's world, Fr Ptasznik sees Fr Rapacz as a model for priests, who often get little respect in a world increasingly removed from God.

"His example is relevant and can help us priests to notice what is most important in our ministry: rather than fighting against anti-Christian ideologies, we should show a concern for the spiritual needs of those we are sent to serve, for their good conscience and to help them to implement the Christian values embodied in the Gospel," Fr Ptasznik said.

*"Blessed Michal wasn't a declared anti-communist, he was simply a good pastor with a deep prayer life who was inclined to help those in need... without opposing communism directly, he had a positive witness and tried to show people the way, the beauty of life in the Church."*





## A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE  
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

# Crowning of Our Lady

When I was between 8 and 12 years old, one of the annual things I enjoyed was the May procession of our parishioners from our church to a nearby convent, about 200 yards away.

The nuns had made a grotto at the end of a huge lawn, where we all gathered. In it was a statue of Our Lady, and it was here that a girl between eight and nine years old would crown Our Lady with flowers using May blossoms.

This was all just after the Second World War in the South Yorkshire mining town of Wath-on-Dearne. I always remember it as a truly spectacular event.

I have not seen or heard of this example of faith since our family moved from that village in my late teens. I'm now in my 80s, and I still remember that wonderful hymn *Bring Flowers of the Rarest* and especially that chorus:

*O Mary we crown thee with blossoms today,  
Queen of the Angels, and Queen of the May,*

*O Mary, we crown thee with blossoms today,  
Queen of the Angels, and Queen of the May,*

Unfortunately, I can only remember the first two verses, which are:

*Bring flowers of the rarest, bring flowers of the fairest,  
From garden and woodland, and hillside and vale;  
Our full hearts are swelling, our glad voices telling  
The praise of the loveliest Rose of the dale. [Chorus]*

*Our voices ascending, in harmony blending,  
Oh thus may our hearts turn, dear Mother, to thee;  
Oh thus shall we prove thee how truly we love thee,  
How dark, without Mary, life's journey would be. [Chorus]*

I remember the parts of this ceremony, but they can change slightly from parish to parish. What

I remember was a procession of parishioners from the church to the convent, where we would find the grotto made by the nuns. During the procession, a young boy carried the crown of May Flowers on a white cushion. At the grotto, while the above hymn was being sung, the young girl took the crown of flowers from the cushion and performed the actual coronation on Our Lady's statue. The boy and girl were always dressed in white clothes made by the nuns. It is a truly wonderful memory.

I was reminded of all this when my wife recently told me a story about it. She ran an art shop for a charity she worked for in Warrington, where paintings of unknown local artists of all ages were displayed and sold. An elderly woman had brought in some paintings for consideration but was late for a date with her granddaughter, who was crowning Our Lady, the Queen of the May, that afternoon.

My wife said the comment made her remember the ceremony, and



she could not help but sing the above chorus. However, she told the woman she'd forgotten the verses.

Later that afternoon, the elderly lady returned and presented my

wife with a printed copy of all the verses that had been given out at the ceremony to all present.

I've wondered if this beautiful ceremony to Our Lady is still practised in parishes nationwide.

## JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



# Gaza left feeling too much pain: is it not enough now?

The attack by Hamas on Israel is less than a year distant, but the havoc of those weeks and months is immense. Tens of thousands of Palestinians killed and injured, as have been many of the Israeli hostages taken on 7th October, countless homes destroyed leaving piles of rubble on the streets, wrecked vehicles twisted and torn by the roadside, their work life over. A huge cost, all for what?

There have been openings of hope, when talking began, times when hostages and prisoners were exchanged, but it was all too little, too late. Recently in a raid to free captives, the Israeli Defence Force brought out four adults, three men and a young woman. The cost of their freedom? Over 200 Palestinians. And the war drags on.

Although the song recorded by Donavon relates to the conflict on Vietnam from the 1960s, the second verse could be applied with equal directness to Gaza city of our present time.

*...Found himself involved in a sea of blood and bones  
Millions without faces, without hope and without homes  
And the guns they grew louder as*

*they made dust out of bones  
That the flesh had long since left  
just as the people had left their homes*

*What can justify carnage such as this, and the loss of so many lives,  
the destruction of so many homes.  
And the war drags on...*

Gaza city is reduced to a state of near famine as promised aid fails to materialise.

What of the future? How do we

begin to rebuild after such devastation? Rebuild lives families and homes, shops and markets?

Even hospitals have not been spared attack from the air and land. Toleration exercised through the two-state solution is the only realistic option.

It is tragic that such violence becomes the regular pattern of life for so many. The words of Christ on the cross apply to both sides.

"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

To continue in the present manner offers little hope of realistic resolution. We must ask serious questions about the supply of munitions and hardware, the very substance that fuels this conflict.

Only then can we begin to remake a world that has been so degraded, lives so torn by circumstances not of their own choosing.



Left, Gaza citizens inspect the result of an Israeli air raid on Gaza City. The Palestinian state has suffered colossal damage that will cost billions to repair



# Path to God's kingdom resides within us, if we only know how to find it

## What is the Kingdom of God, and how do we enter it?

Jesus came among us to establish the kingdom of God on earth. He insisted that we seek first 'the kingdom of God and His approval' (Matthew 6:33) because all good things flow from this. In the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6) we cry out: 'Thy kingdom Come, Thy will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.' Thus, the kingdom of God and doing God's Will, are one in the same.

Jesus taught at length about the kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 and 7). This kingdom is to be distinguished from the kingdom of this world which is marred by sin and greed. The Lord's kingdom is no earthly kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom within you. There are two important components to the Kingdom of God: an internal and an external one. These two are interconnected because you can't have one without the other.

Let us deal with the internal component first.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, Chapter 5), Jesus outlines the internal qualities necessary to enter into His kingdom. They are called the Beatitudes. These beautiful ways of behaving backtrack to the condition of the human heart. They are called Beatitudes because they are blessings, and are at the heart of Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and they ensure that the right means be adopted in following Christ. It's possible for someone to do the right thing but in the wrong way.

A prime example of this is Jesus's story of the Pharisee and the publican who went up to the



Jesus taught at length about the kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount. 'This kingdom is to be distinguished from the kingdom of this world, which is marred by sin and greed.'

temple to pray. The Pharisee kept all the commandments in the wrong way because he was self-righteous and judgmental and looked down on the publican who he despised.

The publican, on the other hand, knew he was a sinner, saying, "Lord have Mercy on me a sinner."

He left the temple more justified than the Pharisee because of his humble attitude which we find in the first Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

The Beatitudes challenge us to change our internal dispositions, to move away from self-righteousness and harsh judgments to cultivate a heart of purity, humility, peace,

compassion, courage, mercy, and love. They invite us to let go of our pre-conceived notions and to see the world the way Christ sees it, to be filled with joy and peace, even in the face of persecution and to be peacemakers, spreading God's love and hope to all those around us. If you want to appreciate a life based on the Beatitudes, look to the example of Jesus Himself who embodied them all.

Let us now deal with the external aspects of the kingdom of God.

God's kingdom, though it resides within you, is not a kingdom divorced from everyday reality. We are called to be a light to the world by the performance of "good deeds" and by following the Golden Rule

laid down in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do unto others what you wish them to do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). The parable of The Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) emphasizes the importance of doing good deeds for those in need. The love that Jesus talks about is no pie in the sky feeling or sentimental mood or self-congratulatory lip service. It is the real thing and consists in helping others: The sick, the lonely, the hungry, the stranger, the homeless, the jobless, and the needy in whatever form that takes. People will forget what you said, but they will never forget what you did for them when they were hurting or in need. By doing these good deeds of love, the Lord assures us, we will enter into His kingdom.

Love is at the core of God's Kingdom on earth. It comes in all shapes and sizes, and goes by many names: Kindness, decency, forgiveness, gentleness, graciousness, compassion,

hospitality, and sharing. It consists in treating others with respect and dignity, and recognising the inherent worth of every individual. It is about putting the needs of others ahead of your own, and extending yourself to meet those needs in whatever way you can. It manifests itself in small gestures and in grand gestures. What matters most is the attitude or disposition behind those gestures, whether great or small.

Ultimately, your decision to put the kingdom of God first in your life is a personal one that requires courage and the willingness to take risks. The reward of sharing the blessings of the Beatitudes and doing good deeds for others in need far outweigh any potential discomfort. By embracing the blessing of the Beatitudes within, and by reaching out to others through good deeds will bring joy to your life and create a more compassionate, understanding and connected world.

*"Love is at the core of God's Kingdom on earth. It comes in all shapes and sizes, and goes by many names: Kindness, decency, forgiveness, gentleness, graciousness, compassion, hospitality, and sharing."*

## The Holy Trinity, and the mysteries it offers us

The mystery of the deity is so profound it can only be described by the word, Trinity. It is God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Scripture does not mention the word, Trinity, to explain the deity. This actual word derives from the Church's tradition. The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly found in the New Testament Bible, and nowhere more clearly than in the Gospel of John, chapter 16.

First, God as Father embraces all of God's children whether they be Catholic,

Protestant, Jew, Muslim or even agnostic. As believers in the Fatherhood of God, we are urged to respect and love all peoples irrespective of religious denomination, creed, social origin or background. God as Father, reveals himself to us in nature, in the wonderful cycle of the seasons, in the gift of humanity, in the discoveries of the human intellect, in the divine light shining within us which we call our conscience.

Second, the second person of the Trinity which we are privileged to read

about in the new testamen is Jesus, the son of God. Christ enables the Christian to offer genuine witness of his or her love of God. Since the Christian believes in Christ, he or she will be impelled to give expression to that belief by example modelled on the life of Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. To follow Christ is to enlarge our appreciation of the Trinity by relating to each other in the best possible way as followers of Him.

Third, the Holy Spirit raises our appreciation of the Trinity to another

level. The Holy Spirit has been described by Christ in the gospels as the spirit of Truth, who will teach us those things that we still must know. The work of the Holy Spirit among the people of God leads to a more profound appreciation of the faith. We do not know everything there is to know about God because He is a mystery. The Holy Spirit is there to enlighten us whenever the need and occasion arises.

May our lives continue to reflect a deeper appreciation of the mystery of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



# Jesus calms our hearts during a storm

**23rd June 2024 – 12th Sunday (Year B) Job 38:1, 8-11**  
**Job's pride is curbed by awe**  
The Lord addressed Job out of the storm and said: "Who shut within doors the sea, when it burst forth from the womb; when I made the clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling bands? When I set limits for it and fastened the bar of its door, and said: Thus far shall you come but no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stilled!"

**Responsorial: from Psalm 139)?**  
*R./: I praise you, for I am wonderfully made*

*O Lord, you search me and you know me,  
you know my resting and my rising,  
you discern my purpose from afar.  
You mark when I walk or lie down,  
all my ways lie open to you. (R./)*

*For it was you who created my being,  
knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I thank you for the wonder of my being,  
for the wonders of all your creation. (R./)  
Already you knew my soul,  
my body held no secret from you,  
when I was being fashioned in secret  
and moulded in the depths of the earth. (R./)*

**2 Corinthians 5:14-17**  
**Paul's spiritual outlook: A life prompted and sustained by the love of God**  
The love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died. He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.  
Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer. So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.

**Gospel: Mark 4:35-41**  
**Calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee**  
When evening had come, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"  
He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one

another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

**Overwhelming force**  
In good weather it is lovely to live near the sea, especially when we have such a lovely promenade. Yet, for all the attractiveness of the sea, we know too that the sea can be treacherous. Even our sheltered stretch of water can sometimes look quite choppy, never mind the open sea beyond the lighthouse. Those who spend time on the sea learn to treat it with respect, because they know it can be a destructive force as well as a benign one.  
The Sea of Galilee was a very large inland lake more than a sea, yet, like a sea, it could turn very nasty due to winds suddenly blowing down onto it from the surrounding hills. Something of the fear that a storm at sea can evoke is very well captured in the way that the disciples address Jesus, 'Master, do you not care? We are going down!' They could have been forgiven for thinking that Jesus did not care because, according to the gospel, he was asleep as the storm raged. There is a striking contrast between the relaxed demeanour of Jesus in the storm and the great agitation of the disciples. Jesus was clearly coping with the storm better than they were. Having been rebuked by his disciples, Jesus goes on to rebuke them, 'Why are you so frightened? How is it that you have no faith?' They had been with Jesus for some time and had witnessed God powerfully at work in and

through him. That experience should have been enough to reassure them that, in spite of the raging storm, all would be well, because Jesus was with them. He had said to them at the beginning of their journey, 'let us cross over to the other side.' They should have trusted that, with Jesus with them, they would make it to the other side, in spite of the storm they were encountering.  
The Church's reputation has gone through stormy waters in recent times. Unlike the storm on the lake, the storms the Church has been battling are, to a large extent, of our leaders' own making, by covering up cases of abuse in order to safeguard reputation. Perhaps, in the midst of these storms some of us may have been tempted to cry out with the disciples in the boat, 'we are going down.' We may be asking, like those disciples, where is the Lord in all of this? Like them, we may find ourselves fearful and losing faith as the Church lurches from side to side in the stormy waters.  
One of the messages of the storm story is that the Lord remains with the Church in the storm. The Lord is present to his fearful and faithless disciples. He may rebuke us as he rebuked those disciples in the boat. However, his presence to us in the storm is not just a rebuking presence. It is ultimately a creative and life-giving presence. Jesus brought calm out of the chaos; he tamed the storm and saw to it that the boat reached the other side. The Lord remains stronger

than the storms that threaten the church, whether those storms are self-inflicted or brought on by others or a combination of both.  
Like the apostles, we need to trust that Our Lord works to bring his church through the storm to a new place where, as in their case, fear gives way to awe and their rebuking question, 'Master, do you not care?' gives way to amazement, 'Who can this be? Even the winds and sea obey him.' This conviction (that the Lord of the church is stronger than the storm) should not make us complacent. Yet, it keeps us hopeful and faithful, even when so much seems under threat. Today's responsorial psalm assures us that if we cry to the Lord in our need he will rescue us from our distress. Our need and distress can open us up more fully to the Lord's life-giving presence among us.  
St Paul makes a wonderful statement at the beginning of that second reading, 'the love of Christ overwhelms us.' Another translation would be 'the love of Christ urges us on.' The love of Christ for us was revealed above all in his death on the cross. As Paul says in his letter to the Romans, 'God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.' It is that remarkable love of God in Christ for us that urges us on, even when we are battling against a headwind. It urges us on until we reach what the gospel calls 'the other side', the place towards which the Lord is guiding the Church — the place where he wants us all to be.



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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

JENNA MARIE COOPER



# Anger is sin, but even Jesus lost his cool

**Q:** I recently got into an argument with another parishioner during a meeting away from church on a matter unrelated to church business. Shortly after the meeting, I received an email from our priest saying that rage was a sin and I needed to go to confession. During confession, that priest told me that getting angry was not a sin and that God and Jesus both got angry. Was my priest correct in sending me such an email?

**A:** It looks like your question has multiple layers. One level is the technical theological question of whether or in what circumstances anger might be a sin; another is a more pastoral question of whether this situation was handled appropriately.

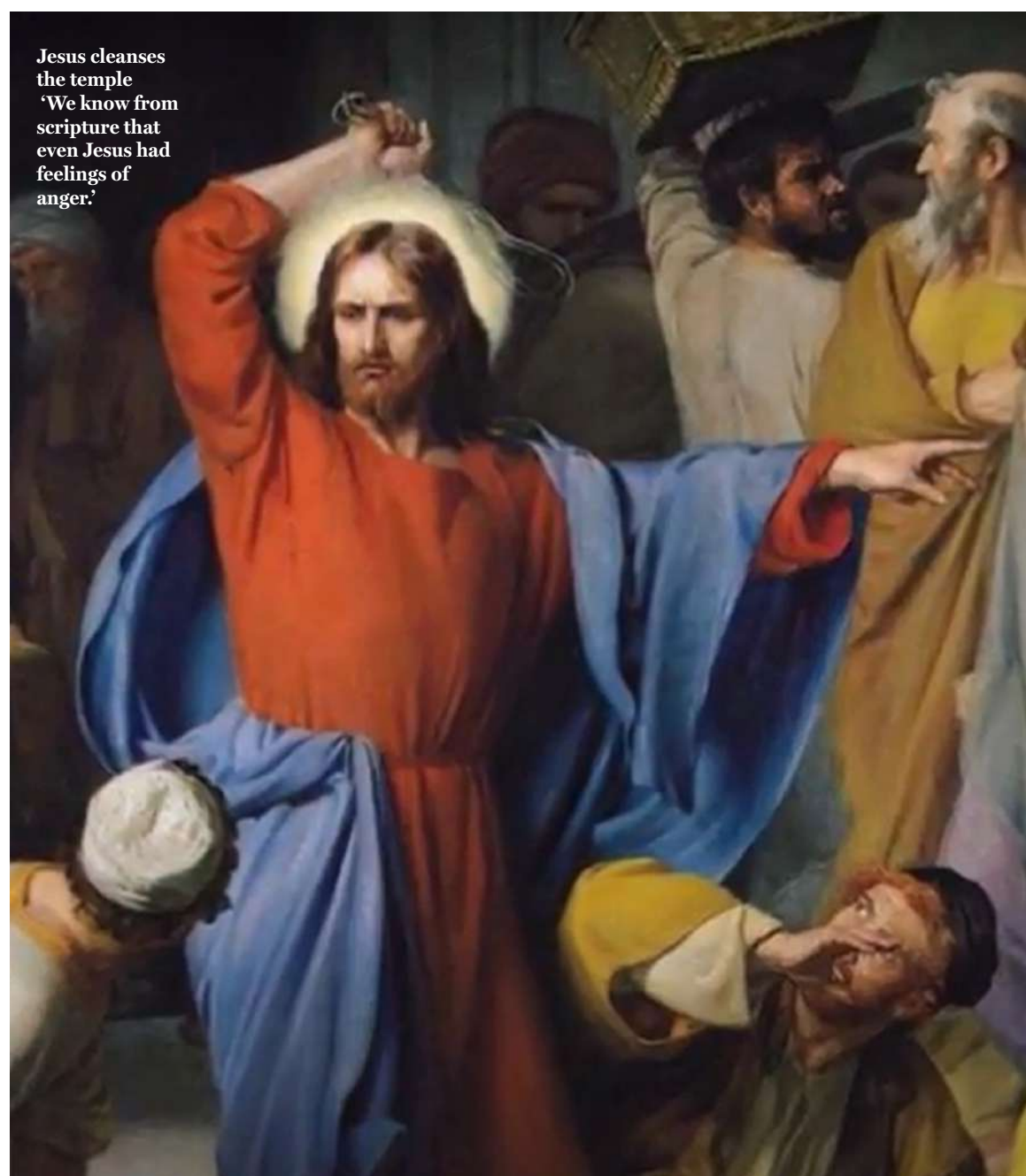
Theologically, we know that the Church considers sins to be either mortal or venial. A mortal sin is a spiritually deadly sin. For a sin to be mortal, it must be an act which is seriously wrong in and of itself (called 'grave matter'), and this act must be freely, deliberately and knowingly chosen.

If a sin does not involve grave matter, or if it's committed in a less intentional way, then it is not a mortal sin but is rather what we could call a 'venial' one.

'Anger' or synonyms such as 'wrath' or 'rage' are often included in traditional lists of sins. However, whether anger is mortal or venial sin-or even a sin at all-depends on the circumstances of a given situation. For instance, simply having an emotion is morally neutral experience, so merely feeling angry is certainly not a sin. As your priest noted, we know from scripture that even Jesus had feelings of anger. (See Jn. 2:13-17)

Still, our reactions to our emotions, and the behaviour we choose to exhibit as a response to them, do have the potential to be either sinful or virtuous. For instance, choosing to express our feelings of anger by physically harming another person would likely be a mortal sin; a cutting personal remark prompted by feelings of annoyance might be venially sinful. Yet again, context is important and it's difficult to make judgements about what responses to anger are or are not sinful in the abstract.

Even in your example, getting into an argument might be sinful if the conversation demonstrated a lack of respect for the other person or was filled with cruel accusations. But an argument that is more like a lively debate, or a difficult but necessary conversation, might not be sinful at all, even if there are



Jesus cleanses the temple  
'We know from scripture that even Jesus had feelings of anger.'

feelings of anger involved.

Pastorally, there are some instances where pastors have an obligation to correct a person exhibiting outwardly sinful behaviour. If a Catholic is openly involved in promoting Government policies which seriously contradict the Church's moral teaching, for instance, it would be very appropriate for that person's bishop to reach out and admonish them personally.

For the most part our personal journeys to overcome sin and grow in virtue – including when and how often to approach the sacrament of penance – are something which the church's law treats with respect and discretion. Catholics are required to make a sacramental confession at least once a year if they are conscious of having committed any mortal sins, and it might be helpful to ask advice (from priests who know us well) about how frequently we should go to confession, given

our individual strengths and weaknesses. But the discernment of whether a person would need to go to confession after engaging in a heated argument is ultimately something which should be left between God and the individual's conscience.

**Q:** John 6:54 states the following: 'Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you".'

**I met a sister in Christ who has a problem. She has a common law spouse and children, but only she has come to the faith. The others (especially her husband) are atheist. There is no holy matrimony in sight. She attends Mass but does not receive the holy Eucharist. She loves the Church and is devoted. But she feels ashamed, and claims that in the eyes of the Church she is dead, based on the above**

**scripture. Could a priest or bishop allow a dispensation where somebody like my friend could receive the holy Eucharist? If not, is she 'dead'? I've just met her, and am trying to help her out of the feeling that she is 'dead'.**

**A:** Practically speaking, the best advice you can give your friend is to encourage her to find a local parish priest with whom she feels comfortable sharing her situation.

Scenarios like your friend's will not seem surprising or scandalous to a parish priest, or to the many non-priests who serve in other forms of pastoral ministry. While your friend might feel a little nervous about approaching a priest, you can remind her that there really is no reason for her to feel ashamed. The Church is always happy when someone seeks a closer relationship with Christ in the sacraments, no matter what roadblocks might need to be resolved.

There are ways to work out complicated irregular marriages so that a person can regain a full sacramental life in the Church, but every situation is unique and comes with its own set of concerns and nuances.

For example, was your friend baptised Catholic as infant, but is just now returning to a more fervent practice of the faith? Or is she a non-Catholic who wishes to become Catholic?

If your friend is not technically Catholic, and if her common law marriage is one that has secular civil effects, then it is possible that her marriage might already be considered a valid one in the eyes of the church (though in that case she would still need to complete a process of Catholic initiation before receiving the Eucharist).

If your friend is Catholic but her common law husband is not, there could be other ways to regularise her marriage. For instance, perhaps your friend's legal husband might be willing to exchange matrimonial consent in a very quiet, simple Catholic ceremony. Or if there was already some sort of deliberate legal exchange of consent or marriage vows in their 'common law' union, it may be possible to request something called a 'radical sanation' from the local bishop, which is somewhat like retroactively declaring the marriage vows valid in the eyes of the Church.

But again, it is not possible to give your friend concrete advice without being there in person to get the whole story and clarify all the details – your friend would need to work all this out with someone who is familiar with the Church's marriage law and able to apply it to the specifics of her own situation.

Regarding the concerns about being 'dead', the Church and sacred scripture often speak in terms of life and death when describing the sacraments and the spiritual life, eg, in baptism we die with Christ so as to share in his Resurrection; and serious sins are called 'mortal' because they cut us off from God, the source of all life.

But this sort of language does not mean to imply that the spiritually 'dead' are dead in the sense of being beyond the Church's love and concern. Even if your friend does not yet enjoy the fullness of life found in the Eucharist, she is still precious and valuable in God's sight. **Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears bi-weekly in the Universe.**

Send your questions to [CatholicQA@osv.com](mailto:CatholicQA@osv.com).



## PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE

ALLEGRA MUTANDA



# Making space for grace

**Allegra Mutanda explains how sitting in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament enabled her to deal with painful experiences and how making space for God in prayer can help us develop a personal relationship with Jesus.**

In the lead up to the Feast of Corpus Christi, we held Quarant'ore in our parish; a 40-Hours prayer vigil before the Blessed Sacrament. There is great strength, power, and grace when people come together in this way to petition and adore the Lord as 'one', and this gathering was no different.

Our purpose was two-fold. First, to help us grow in friendship and intimacy with Christ by setting time aside to be with the Lord whether as individuals, families, or parish groups. 'Time out' with God is necessary spiritual food if we want to grow in our faith. Through our Adoration – as we "pray, watch, wait, listen" – Jesus calls us to a personal relationship with him. In this friendship, we are inspired and transformed. He opens our eyes to seeing ourselves and others with a more 'divine' perspective and he teaches us love, grace, and mercy. Forgiveness and healing. Patience and compassion. Service and sacrifice.

The second reason we came together was to pray and intercede for others. Asking the Lord to show us the burden on His heart and how He might be calling us to stand in the gap for our brothers and sisters, for society, for the Church, for the world?

## 40 Hours

I first attended a time of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in 2001 in my then parish in Harold Hill, Essex. For a Catholic newly back into my faith, I was confused. What were we meant to do? Sit still for an hour looking at Jesus? I was encouraged to bring a Bible just in case. For what? Yes, I could look up a passage, but what about the other 57 minutes? It was hard! And then the prayer group held an all-night vigil. Not just one hour but several hours of continuous prayer. I was bemused. This was a whole new way of praying and, though apprehensive, I was looking forward to it. We sat in silence or reflected on scripture. We worshipped God in song. We interceded for the needs of others, bringing before God people or situations that came to mind. I was exhausted by morning, but what an amazing experience. And progressively, since that first time, I have learnt the beauty of sitting in adoration before God.

The Quarant'ore in my parish was a very moving and beautiful experience. From the moment we



started the 40 hours with Mass and throughout, it felt like there was a 'coating of grace' permeating the atmosphere; a certain stillness and peace in the busyness of a city-centre parish.

My favourite time of prayer during such vigils are the early hours of the morning, when all is asleep. There is beauty and grace in 'sneaking' out in the middle of the night to get to church. There, in the silence and peace, simply looking at Jesus as he looks at us. No words needed.

## Sneaking into church

But there is something about holding silence before God when nothing is said yet everything is said. My youngest brother passed away at the age of 37 at the beginning of the year. For one who is accustomed to journaling, I knew I had not journalled since February. I did not want to have to write down about the saddest and most painful day of my and my family's life. The day our world was turned upside down; the day we would never be the same again. And so, I stopped journaling. How could I

write about 'lesser' things when I was ignoring the biggest? Being aware of this meant being unable to add new entries into my journal. Yet, that first night, in that silent, quiet church, as I was looking at Jesus and he was looking at me, I felt ready. In that church, as I sat before the Lord, I felt His love and His presence, His embrace and encouragement, as I finally put into words what I had been incapable of doing and saying for four months. For an hour, I just wrote. It was painful, and it was hard. Yet, in doing this, it gave me the opportunity to surrender everything about that day and the last months to God.

## A space for grace

I didn't know this would happen that night and I certainly couldn't have planned it even if I wished. But the unfathomable love of God means that He is always going to be more generous with us than we are with him. I gave Him time; He decided how best to use it-for my good. I received more than I could have imagined.

The silence created space for grace to happen. Sometimes, we may feel like silence speaks of God's absence. On the contrary, it is the most intense way in which we can encounter God. Robert Cardinal Sarah, in his book, *The Power of Silence* says that in that place of silence, we meet God who will manifest as the most intense

*"My favourite time of prayer during such vigils are the early hours of the morning, when all is asleep. There is beauty and grace in 'sneaking' out in the middle of the night to get to church. There, in the silence and peace, simply looking at Jesus..."*

presence of all presences. As I sat in that church that night, journaling, the intensity of God's presence was most palpable.

It may be that some of you do not belong to parishes that hold Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Perhaps you could ask your parish priest to start, even if it is only for one hour a week. But even if that is not possible, consider taking time out in the week to go to church – not because there is a service, but simply to spend time with the One who knows you best. Not an hour, but longer than a few minutes.

Plan the time; God will do the rest. It may even feel like it was 'wasted' time where nothing happened. But nothing is ever wasted with God. In His generosity, in His grace and mercy, He will honour the time you committed to Him in ways that you may not even know in the moment.

Make space for grace to happen – and let God do the rest.

**Allegra Mutanda is Director of Evangelisation and Leadership at The Parish of St Peter and the Winchester Martyrs, Hampshire**







Canon Dáithí Foley  
with Bishop  
Richard Moth

## Bishop leads tribute as Canon reaches diamond milestone

People from across the diocese of Arundel and Brighton journeyed to St John the Baptist Church in East Brighton Parish on Thursday, 13th June to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Canon Dáithí Foley.

The chief celebrant at Mass was the Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, Richard Moth, who was joined by fellow priests from across the diocese. The homily was given by Fr Daryl George.

Speaking after the Mass, Bishop

Moth thanked Canon Dáithí for being a “wonderful gift.”

“Thank you, Canon Dáithí, for sharing your jubilee with us,” the bishop said. “Today we celebrate the wonderful gift that you are to our diocese and give thanks for the many years of service that you have given to God’s people.

“You are a real source of encouragement to priests across the Diocese and your long service is a wonderful example to us all.”



## St Wilfrid’s pilgrims feel true presence of Our Lady at Knock

A group of 50 parishioners from St Wilfrid’s parish in Widnes have enjoyed a wonderful four-day pilgrimage to Knock.

“The whole experience was truly magnificent,” said parish priest Fr Mark Moran. “The opportunity to celebrate Mass in the Apparition Chapel was so wonderful and moving.”

Most of the parishioners had never been to Knock previously, so it was a wonderful opportunity to touch for the first time the stone

wall where Our Lady appeared, visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Knock, and the many other holy places at the Knock shrine.

“The pilgrimage was a unique chance us to celebrate Mass at the sacred shrine but also to see the magnificent artwork at the basilica and to learn in great detail the story of Knock at the wonderful museum,” said Fr Mark.

The pilgrims were also able to visit other local places such as Ballintubber Abbey, dating back to

1216, and with close connections to St Patrick. “The group had a great affinity to St Patrick, so it was wonderful for people to visit the abbey and also to see St Patrick’s Well,” Fr Mark added.

The whole pilgrimage was a huge success. Fr Mark concluded: “We left Knock with a great sense of awe and wonderment. Friendships were strengthened, and people felt the true presence of Our Blessed Lady as we left the shrine to the strains of *Lady of Knock our Queen of Peace.*”



## It’s ‘Good’ news for Douay Martyrs after the latest Ofsted inspection

The Douay Martyrs Catholic School, Ickenham, continues to be a ‘Good’ school says Ofsted following a recent inspection.

This achievement is testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone at the school, from students and teachers to members of staff, as well as the continuous support of parents, governors and the Trust.

The Douay Martyrs is a Catholic secondary school and sixth form for boys and girls aged 11-18, located in Ickenham, Hillingdon.

Headteacher Fiona McCloskey expressed her joy at the school’s achievements. She said: “We are thrilled to have maintained our ‘Good’ rating from Ofsted. One of the many strengths I must pick out from the report is that it is clear that students are both safe and happy in our care. We have always prioritised the mental health and



Fiona McCloskey with pupils: Delighted to be graded as a ‘Good’ school again

well-being of all in our community and the team were impressed with our systems and care. This recognition is a reflection of our collective effort to provide a Christ-centred learning community where every individual is enabled to fulfil their true potential.”

Other highlights praised in the

report included ‘pupils are safe and happy... their mental health and well-being is a high priority,’ and ‘the school promotes high ambitions for all pupils, and delivers a curriculum that enables pupils to learn effectively. Pupils attain high standards and are well prepared for their next steps.’



# Archbishop joins school to mark its 65th birthday

The Archbishop of Birmingham joined dozens of staff, governors and pupils to celebrate a landmark anniversary at a Coventry school.

Archbishop Bernard Longley celebrated Mass at the 65th anniversary of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, which is part of the Romero Catholic Academy, as members of the school community gathered at the school's Saint Charles Lwanga theatre.

The school on Potters Green Road opened in 1958, and the archbishop praised staff and pupils from its inception for their commitment to the community.

He said: "It's a great thing to come together to remember those pioneers 65 years ago who had a vision for Catholic education in this part of the city.

"I'm very grateful to all the staff for inviting me, and thank former members of staff and students for supporting the school community, not just tonight but on many occasions over the years.

"The Saint Charles Lwanga Theatre is a very fitting place for our gathering of the Eucharist, with a real sense of thanksgiving and gratitude as we move closer to the end of another academic year."

Fr George Bennett, parish priest of St Patrick's, Coventry, was a co-celebrant at the evening Mass, which saw former headteacher Angela Whelan, current principal Matthew Everett and sixth form student Ciaran Fawcett share readings and reflections. The school band provided the music, while Year 10 pupil Isabel sang the responsorial psalm.

Margaret Knight, daughter of Cardinal Wiseman's first headteacher Tom Hope, said the day brought back a lot of memories.

"I've been back to Cardinal Wiseman a number of times over the years but today has reminded me a lot of how things used to be and how much has changed," she said.



The school, which became part of the Romero Catholic Academy in 2015, also hosted a gallery complete with artefacts from across the decades, including the original school cap and crest designed by Tom Hope.

Margaret said: "I came to school here the year after my father started, and things were done very differently back then. It's been really interesting to see his name on the official documents and records, and lovely that people have had the chance to come together today."

Tom Scott-Machin, Lay Chaplain at Cardinal Wiseman, said: "It's been a real honour to host the Archbishop today as we celebrate 65 years of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, and both inspiring and encouraging to hear his comments about our staff and pupils and the wider community.

"We know this school means a huge amount to lots of people, with many reuniting after a number of years. It is an opportunity to share memories but also mark the anniversary in what has been a truly memorable occasion."



## Choir signs off with stunning performance at Rome's VEC


**John Rose**

St Mary's Choir, Hexham has returned home after a successful tour of Italy which included performances in Assisi, Trequanda and at the Venerable English College (VEC) in Rome. All the congregations and audiences were most welcoming and appreciative of the singing, with each performance ending in sustained applause.

The final singing engagement was at Mass in the VEC on 16th June, which was celebrated by the rector, Fr Stephen Wang. He was assisted by the previous parish priest of St Mary's, Fr Chris Warren, who is now vice-rector at the VEC. Among the congregation was a large party of senior pupils from the London Oratory School.

After Mass, St Mary's Choir was treated to a very interesting tour of the VEC by one of the young seminarians.

He ran through the fascinating history of the college buildings, with stories on some of the 44 martyrs who trained for the priesthood at this ancient college before returning secretly to England following the Protestant Reformation, and their grizzly fate.



### ST ANSELM'S COLLEGE

Edmund Rice Academy Trust  
Manor Hill, Birkenhead, Wirral CH43 1UQ

Required for September 2024 or thereafter

## FULL-TIME TEACHER RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

at Key Stages 3 and 4 and possibly in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form

This is an ideal opportunity for an enthusiastic graduate to join this high-performing Faculty, which contributes strongly to the overall success of the College. The ability to teach RE at A Level would be an advantage, but it is not essential. We are happy to consider applications from full-time qualified teachers across the pay scale. We seek to make a permanent appointment but would consider a temporary one for a suitable applicant.

'Good' Ofsted and Diocesan Reports 2019 (see panel)  
GCSE 2023 – Theology 30% A\*-B, 95% A\*-E  
RE positive value added at GCSE in 2023: 33% 9-7, 78% 9-5, 90% 4-9

St. Anselm's College is committed to the safety, protection and well-being of its students. The interview process will include questions on safeguarding children.

Job description and a CES application form can be downloaded from the College's website [www.st-anselms.com](http://www.st-anselms.com)  
Please either post your CES application form, together with a letter of application, or email it to [acook@st-anselms.com](mailto:acook@st-anselms.com)  
Closing date for completed applications: 4pm Friday 21st June 2024  
Interviews to be held thereafter.

"The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is highly effective. Teaching is now good."

"Pupils' outcomes are good. They make good progress during their time at the school and successfully move on to next steps".

"Leaders plan an effective curriculum for pupils. Pupils study courses which meet their needs." (Ofsted July 2019)

The College was last inspected by Shrewsbury Diocesan Inspectors in March 2019 and judged to be, "a good Catholic Grammar School with many outstanding features."



## AROUND THE PARISHES/EDUCATION

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

## St Cuthbert's caring attitude helps it earn inclusivity award

St Cuthbert's Catholic School in Egham, Surrey, has achieved the IQM Inclusive School Award.

Inclusion Quality Mark has been assessing and recognising schools for their hard work on making inclusion matter since 2004. An inclusive school gives all pupils regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, achievements or background the equal opportunities to succeed. In return, the Inclusion Quality Mark provides schools with a nationally recognised framework to recognise the efforts they are making to be inclusive.

IQM reports that "The Head, Alison Rainbow, has a clear vision for inclusion, supported by an Inclusion Action Plan. Staff and governors are fully supportive of this. The school's Golden Rule,

"Treat each other as you want to be treated," its FAIR values (Faith, Articulate and Appreciative, Independent Learners who use their Initiative, Resilient and Respectful), along with Catholic Life, ensure that all are included and valued."

Head of School, Alison Rainbow, said: "We are delighted at St Cuthbert's to have achieved this award for inclusion. I am so very proud of the children and staff and grateful for the support from our school community. The school is going from strength to strength, and we are all very excited about the future."

IQM also notes that pupils' behaviour is exemplary, that parents commended the school's communication as "a real strength".



## Pupils amaze LiveSimply judges with understanding of need for sustainability

St Bede's Catholic Infant School, Widnes, has achieved the Live Simply Award, showing that the pupils and staff are living simply, sustainably, and in solidarity with the world's poorest communities.

The award, championed by Catholic development charity CAFOD, was presented after the school successfully planned and implemented faith-inspired actions which highlighted the importance of caring for people and the planet.

Their actions have had a positive impact throughout the school, in their local community, and globally too, as they reached out to make a difference.

Jane Scragg, the Live Simply co-ordinator, said: "We were delighted to welcome Justine Silcock from CAFOD into school in April to speak to the children, staff and governors about our Live Simply journey.

"She was able to gain a very comprehensive understanding of the importance of the Live Simply actions to us; they are woven into the school's ethos.

"The whole school has played a part in this achievement. As an infant school, we are extremely proud of how the children have demonstrated a deep understanding of the need to live simply, sustainably, to look after and care for our common home, and in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in our own community and around the world.

"We were delighted that Justine was so impressed with the children and their dedication to all that the



award stands for, and it was wonderful when she informed us of our success."

On 24th May, the school held a special assembly to tell the children about the award. Local MP Derek Twigg joined governors and members of the local community to present the award to the children.

During the assembly, the school shared a powerpoint presentation to highlight some of their activities along with the CAFOD video showing how the Live Simply Award plaques are made.

Mr Twigg then presented the plaque and certificate to representatives from the CAFOD and Spirituality groups.

The celebrations continued into the afternoon, when the children enjoyed a special ice lolly treat and a variety of classroom activities.

The children were delighted to receive the award. A Year 1 student said: "We have loved working with the Faith in Action group from the High School to make our Peace garden look so good. The cross we designed is amazing."

A Year 2 student added: "It was brilliant when we went on a climate strike. We took action to protect our planet, our common home. The best part was our protest."

CAFOD's Live Simply co-ordinator for schools, Siobhan Farnell, said: "Congratulations to the pupils and staff on achieving the LiveSimply Award.

"Their actions are wonderful examples of caring for others and our common home, and we wish them well as they continue to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity".

## Archbishop looks to Our Lady to untie life's knots

**Suresh Abboodass**

The icons of *Theotokos*, in which Our Lady, Mother Mary, shows her tenderness, hope and joy while holding her little son Jesus close to her, display the symbol of maternal love.

This was the key point made by Archbishop of Southwark John Wilson while delivering the keynote address at the first Formation Fayre at St. George's Metropolitan Cathedral Southwark London on Saturday, 8th June. The event was organised by the Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis, Archdiocese of Southwark.

It was St. Luke who painted the first icon of Our Lady – "The Mother of God of Tenderness", said the archbishop. "In this icon our Lady is shown holding her baby Son cheek to cheek, which is a symbol of maternal love. She also does the same with us – the closeness and

tenderness which she desires for every disciple", he added.

Another icon called *The Yaroslavl Virgin of Tenderness* exhibits "a powerful image of evangelisation," he pointed out.

In yet another icon called *Hislighitria*, Our Lady seems to point the way to Jesus. "She is the Mother of God who shows the way. It clearly points to the presence of God as in the Exodus when God says 'I am who I am'", said Archbishop John.

Other icons shown included *The Virgin of Tenderness of Vladimir*, *The Belozersk Virgin of Tenderness*, *Virgin of the Incarnation* and *Our Lady of the Sign*.

"What do these icons of the Mother of God of Tenderness say to us?" asked the archbishop. "Mary causes the virtue of hope to grow in us. She is the Mother of God who shows the way to salvation. It is a

powerful image of evangelisation," he said.

The archbishop concluded with a final image which shows Our Lady adorned in a white knotty rope. This picture of Our Lady was given as a gift to him by none other than His Holiness Pope Francis on one of his visits to the Holy Sea.

When asked what it meant, Pope Francis replied that "when something is knotty, I take it to Our Lady to untie the knot."

"Let us celebrate and rejoice in the Marian Dimension' as she is the image of tenderness, and let us always pray the rosary," John Wilson concluded.

**Right, Archbishop John Wilson delivers the keynote address at the Formation Fayre at St. George's Metropolitan Cathedral Southwark London**





# Honouring a century of love and faith

**Con McHugh**  
Sacred Heart Church and school in Coventry celebrated its 100th anniversary with a day filled with joy, memories and festivities. The event honoured a century of love, faith, education, parish and community, and looked ahead to the next 100 years.

A Thanksgiving Mass was held on 9th June, with Archbishop of Birmingham Bernard Longley as the main celebrant. It brought the whole parish community together.

To mark the occasion, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School commissioned a decoration for the existing window in the sanctuary and it was unveiled just before the start of Mass.

During his homily, Archbishop Bernard spoke about love of the Sacred Heart and the heart being a universal sign of love with the balloons in the church and the new window decoration.

At the end of Mass, Archbishop

Bernard presented a Papal Blessing to the school on behalf of the parish to mark the centenary. This was presented to Paul Madia, one of the event organisers.

Following Mass, the Archbishop blessed the Anniversary Wall on which plaques stand that represent some of the many families and individuals who have been involved in the parish through the years.

The organising team at Sacred Heart were overwhelmed by the response, and the ticketed event in the school grounds was sold out, with all 1,500 tickets snapped up. The event began at 3.15pm and finished late at night with a firework display.

Visitors enjoyed fairground rides, an array of entertainment and food and drink.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the day a roaring success, bringing both the parish and the school community together in partnership.



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## NATURE

# AI could boost global food security – but we need to be cautious on the risks

**Farmers are increasingly looking to artificial intelligence to help boost crop yields, but as Asaf Tzachor points out, as with other sectors, allowing AI to run unchecked could create problems for this vital part of the economy**

As the global population has expanded over time, agricultural modernisation has been humanity's prevailing approach to staving off famine.

A variety of mechanical and chemical innovations delivered during the 1950s and 1960s represented what was known as 'the third agricultural revolution'. The adoption of pesticides, fertilisers and high-yield crop breeds, among other measures, transformed agriculture and ensured a secure food supply for many millions of people over several decades.

Concurrently, however, modern agriculture has emerged as a culprit of global warming, responsible for one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, namely carbon dioxide and methane.

Meanwhile, inflation on the price of food is reaching an all-time high, while malnutrition is rising dramatically. Today, an estimated two billion people are afflicted by food insecurity (where having access to safe, sufficient and nutrient-rich food isn't guaranteed). Some 690 million people are undernourished.

The third agricultural revolution may have run its course. And as we search for innovation to usher in a fourth agricultural revolution with urgency, all eyes are on artificial intelligence (AI).

AI, which has advanced rapidly over the past two decades, encompasses a broad range of technologies capable of performing human-like cognitive processes, such as reasoning. It's trained to make these decisions based on information from vast amounts of data.

### Using AI in agriculture

In assisting humans in fields and factories, AI may process, synthesise and analyse large amounts of data steadily and ceaselessly. It can outperform humans in detecting and diagnosing anomalies, such as plant diseases, and making predictions including about yield and weather.

Across several agricultural tasks, AI may relieve growers from labour entirely, automating tilling (preparing the soil), planting, fertilising, monitoring and harvesting.

Algorithms already regulate drip-irrigation grids, command fleets of topsoil-monitoring robots, and supervise weed-detecting rovers, self-driving tractors and combine harvesters. A fascination with the prospects of AI creates incentives to delegate it with further agency and autonomy.

This technology is hailed as the way to revolutionise agriculture. The World Economic Forum, an international nonprofit promoting public-private partnerships, has set AI and



AI-powered agricultural robots (called "agbots") at the forefront of the fourth agricultural revolution.

But in deploying AI swiftly and widely, we may increase agricultural productivity at the expense of safety. In our recent paper published in *Nature Machine Intelligence*, we have considered the risks that could come with rolling out these advanced and autonomous technologies in agriculture.

### From hackers to accidents

First, given these technologies are connected to the internet, criminals may try to hack them.

Disrupting certain types of agbots would cause hefty damages. In the US alone, soil erosion costs US\$44 billion (£33.6 billion) annually. This has been a growing driver of the demand for precision agriculture, including swarm robotics, that can help farms to manage and lessen its effects. But these swarms of topsoil-monitoring robots rely on inter-connected computer networks and hence are vulnerable to cyber-sabotage and shutdown.

Similarly, tampering with weed-detecting rovers would let weeds loose at a considerable cost. We might also see interference with sprayers, autonomous drones or robotic harvesters, any of which could cripple cropping operations.

Beyond the farm gate, with increasing digitisation and automation, entire agrifood supply chains are susceptible to malicious

cyber-attacks. At least 40 malware and ransomware attacks targeting food manufacturers, processors and packagers were registered in the US in 2021. The most notable was the US\$11 million ransomware attack against the world's largest meatpacker, JBS.

Then there are accidental risks. Before a rover is sent into the field, it's instructed by its human operator to sense certain parameters and detect particular anomalies, such as plant pests. It disregards, whether by its own mechanical limitations or by command, all other factors.

The same applies to wireless sensor networks deployed in farms, designed to notice and act on particular parameters, for example, soil nitrogen content. By imprudent design, these autonomous systems might prioritise short-term crop productivity over long-term ecological integrity. To increase yields, they might apply excessive herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers to fields, which could have harmful effects on soil and waterways.

Rovers and sensor networks may also malfunction, as machines occasionally do, sending commands based on erroneous data to sprayers and agrochemical dispensers. And there's the possibility we could see human error in programming the machines.

### Safety over speed

Agriculture is too vital a domain for us to allow hasty deployment of potent but insufficiently supervised and often experimental

technologies. If we do, the result may be that they intensify harvests but undermine ecosystems.

As we emphasise in our paper, the most effective method to treat risks is prediction and prevention.

We should be careful in how we design AI for agricultural use and should involve experts from different fields in the process. For example, applied ecologists could advise on possible unintended environmental consequences of agricultural AI, such as nutrient exhaustion of topsoil, or excessive use of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilisers.

Also, hardware and software prototypes should be carefully tested in supervised environments (called "digital sandboxes") before they are deployed more widely. In these spaces, ethical hackers, also known as white hackers, could look for vulnerabilities in safety and security.

This precautionary approach may slightly slow down the diffusion of AI. Yet it should ensure that those machines that graduate the sandbox are sufficiently sensitive, safe and secure.

Half a billion farms, global food security and a fourth agricultural revolution hang in the balance.

**Asaf Tzachor is a Research Affiliate, Centre for the Study of Existential Risks, University of Cambridge**



## HEALTH

# Warm up, cool down, watch what you lift: A simple guide to avoiding muscle tears

**Dan Baumgardt looks at why muscle tears happen – and what you can do to prevent them**

Muscles are biological powerhouses, capable of truly incredible feats. You only need to look at the world's strongest man, capable of dead lifting over 500kg, to see what they can accomplish.

While our muscles are capable of performing monumental tasks, asking them to do this can raise the risk of them tearing. Again, watch any episode of World's Strongest Man, and you'll see what I mean!

But it isn't just strongmen and powerlifters who may experience this problem. Even the average person can be at risk of a muscle tear, from playing sport or simple day-to-day habits – though some muscles are more prone to injury than others.

## Upper limb

Our biceps brachii is a muscle of twos. The name itself refers to it being the "two-headed" muscle of the arm – one head is long, the other short.

The bicep is an important muscle in flexing the forearm at the elbow, as anyone who spends their time doing curls at the gym can tell you. But this isn't its only role. Biceps also makes it possible to rotate our hands and forearms so that we can perform a range of simple tasks – such as holding a bowl of soup in our palms.

The narrow tendon of the long biceps head makes it the easiest part to tear. In elderly people, a tear can often happen without much force. This is because tendons typically weaken with age. Even something as simple as pulling up a stubborn root vegetable in the garden can cause a tear.

When the long biceps head tears, the arm can feel like it "pops". What is most noticeable afterwards is the odd appearance – a bulge in the upper part of the arm that makes it look like it belongs to Popeye. This injury is even called a 'Popeye deformity'.

A biceps tear won't heal by itself, so in young patients and athletes, surgery will be required. Luckily, since the short head remains intact to shoulder the burden, surgery is not often needed in elderly patients.

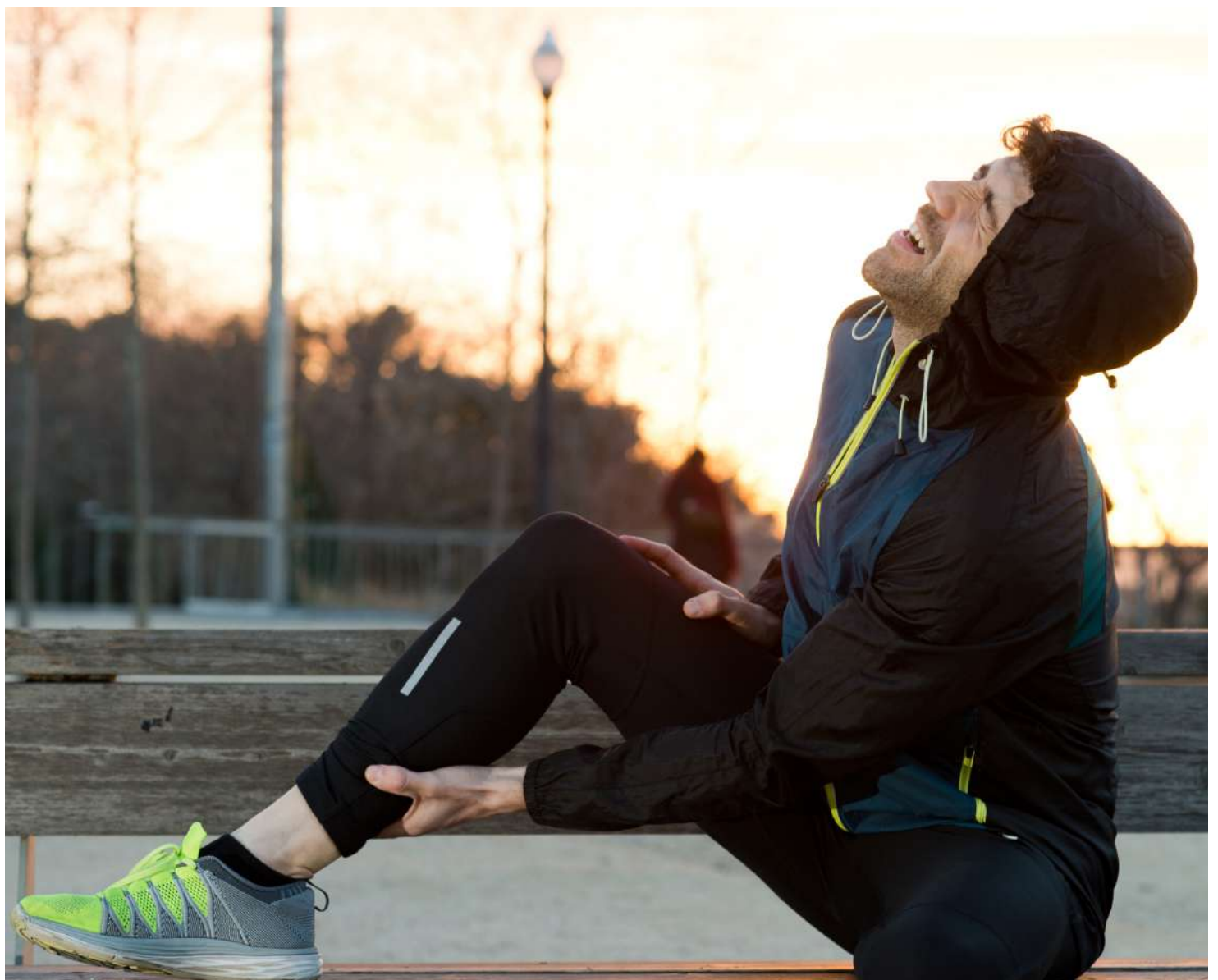
Other muscles that may tear from too much strain are the pectoralis majors, or pecs – the chest's largest muscles. These muscles are capable of many different actions, such as flexing the arms and bringing them together. The pecs make a press up possible, making it an ideal exercise to train them.

Many fitness enthusiasts want strong and prominent pecs, and may make the mistake of loading up too much onto their weights. Doing so puts the muscle under huge stress.

If this muscle tears, you won't miss it. There will be an obvious bulge as well as visible bruising afterwards. Surgery will be required to reattach it.

## Lower limb

The hamstrings are one of the more commonly damaged groups of lower limb muscles. The hamstrings are located at the back



of the thigh and help to bend the knee, while also extending the hips.

Hamstring tears are often caused by overstretching, particularly when the knee is straightened and the hip flexed out in front – like when a rugby player takes a kick, or in jumping over a hurdle.

For the average person, hamstring injuries typically happen when running – particularly as the front leg swings through. It may also happen while performing lunges, or leaping. Acute pain in the back of the thigh is noted. If this muscle tears, the loss of power in the leg will make walking difficult.

Sports such as squash or tennis, where you constantly change direction, can put other leg structures at risk of tearing. This is due to pushing forcefully off the ground to break into a run.

"A common injury in sports is rupture of the Achilles tendon. This is no mean feat – it's the thickest tendon in the body, attaching your calf muscles to your heel.

If it goes, again a distinct pop in your calf is noted – sometimes like someone has kicked you. In most instances there's pain..."

A common injury in these sports is rupture of the Achilles tendon. This is no mean feat – it's the thickest tendon in the body, attaching your calf muscles to your heel.

If it goes, again a distinct pop in your calf is noted – sometimes like someone has kicked you. In most instances there's pain. You'll also experience difficulty in walking and be unable to stand on tiptoe – which is the calf's main function.

Sometime Achilles tears are managed surgically, but in other cases the leg and foot are placed in a cast or rigid boot so that the tendon can repair itself.

## How to prevent muscle tears

Taking care of your muscles and tendons during exercise is important. You should especially take care when lifting weights and use

correct form. It's important to not overload weights initially, and instead add on weight slowly according to your ability.

Take five to ten minutes at the start and end of each workout to warm up and cool down the muscles you've exercised. A mixture of gentle aerobic, balancing and strength exercises appears to be best. Interestingly, the effect of stretching appears unclear.

If you're experiencing pain, don't ignore it. This is your body saying something is wrong.

Certain factors can also increase risk of muscle tears. Tendons tend to wear thinner when taking certain medications – such as ciprofloxacin (an antibiotic), as well as steroids used for instance to treat asthma and inflammatory bowel disease. Anabolic steroids taken against medical advice to enhance muscle mass can actually increase risk of muscles tearing.

Repairing a muscle or tendon is possible, but it's much easier to safeguard them so they don't tear in the first place. Warm them up, cool them down – and pay attention to how, and how much, you lift.

**Dan Baumgardt is a Senior Lecturer, School of Physiology, Pharmacology and Neuroscience, University of Bristol**



## LIFESTYLE

# Outdoor play each day will help to keep the screens away

It's difficult to distance ourselves from mobile phone and tablet screens; they follow us everywhere – in the car, into stores, at restaurants and all around our houses.

Children often become reliant on screens for entertainment, and parents sometimes use screens as a distraction. While there's high-quality, educational digital content available, even too much of a good thing can be detrimental.

It's important for parents to make sure their children are experiencing a well-rounded mix of free play, both inside and outside, along with technology usage.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends children under the age of 18 months have no screen time except for video chatting, and children ages 2 to 5 spend no more than one hour per day watching a device.

The harmful effects of screen time have been well researched. In fact, evidence suggests that even television shows claiming to be stimulating and educational are not as effective for infants and toddlers as face-to-face interactions. Too much screen time has also been linked to poor sleep, delays in language and social skills, obesity, behaviour problems and more. Allowing children to play in a setting that is unstructured, open-ended and encourages exploration is more beneficial than placing them in front of a device.

So, what can parents do to help their children escape the all-consuming screen? Get outside!

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), outdoor play is essential for the healthy development of



children. Not only does outdoor play promote physical health but it also helps children make connections to the real world and develops their STEM skills. Plus, fresh air and exposure to sunlight have numerous health benefits for children, including stress reduction and better sleep.

Children can sometimes be resistant to heading outside, especially if they're interrupted during screen time. Head off potential complaints by setting a timer and letting them know that, once they're finished, it will be time to play outside. Let them pick out their shoes and give them two choices of activity so they

feel empowered and in control.

Experts at Kiddie Academy® Educational Child Care recommend several outdoor activities developed from their proprietary Life Essentials® curriculum to help parents get children excited about spending time outside.

■ Infants can enjoy several outdoor activities like 'tummy time' on a blanket in the park, wiggling their toes in the grass and listening to bird sounds.

■ Toddlers benefit from going on nature walks and discovering items like pinecones and leaves and helping their parents or carers plant flowers, fruits and vegetables.

"Help your children develop a love of the outdoors at an early age and watch them flourish – emotionally, physically and intellectually..."

■ For active nursery age and older children, make an obstacle course challenge with chalk and other items like tactile discs, hula hoops, pool noodles and more. Older children also enjoy searching for bugs and creating art from things found in nature.

Unstructured outdoor play, like spending time in a sandpit or on a playground, includes fun activities that give children of all ages the opportunity to explore independently. Parents should feel free to sit back and just observe these times, making sure their children are safe while allowing them to discover the magic of outdoor play on their own.

"In addition to enhancing well-being, outdoor play helps children understand their role in the world so they can be good stewards of our planet," said Samina Hooda, co-owner of Kiddie Academy of Mercer Crossing.

Help your children develop a love of the outdoors at an early age and watch them flourish – emotionally, physically and intellectually.

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### Gluten-free red velvet cupcakes with vanilla icing

These delectable gluten-free cupcakes are sure to steal the show at any gathering. Customise them with sprinkles in any colour to suit the occasion perfectly.

#### INGREDIENTS

##### Cupcake Batter

2 cups gluten-free flour  
1/2 cup almond meal  
1/4 cup cocoa powder  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup butter at room temperature, can swap for vegan butter  
2 cups coconut sugar  
5 eggs, large  
1 cup plain yogurt can use Greek yogurt or dairy-free yogurt  
11 ounce bottle red food colouring  
2 teaspoon apple cider vinegar  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

##### Vanilla Icing

1 cup butter at room temperature, can use vegan butter  
1 tablespoon vanilla extract  
5 cups confectioners sugar

#### METHOD

■ Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line two muffin pans with cupcake liners and lightly spray them with nonstick cooking spray to prevent sticking.



■ In a medium bowl, combine the flour, almond meal, cocoa powder, baking powder, and baking soda.

■ In an electric mixer (or a large bowl and use an electric mixer) on medium speed, cream the butter and sugar together until fluffy, about 3 minutes.

On low speed, beat in the eggs, yogurt, food colouring, vinegar, and vanilla until combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Beat in the flour mixture until well blended. Divide the batter among the prepared 24 muffin cups

■ Bake until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean or the tops are set, about 18–20 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool for 5 minutes and transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely before icing.

#### Icing

For the frosting, in a large bowl, using an electric mixer on high speed, beat the butter and the vanilla until smooth. Beat in the sugar until smooth and whipped.

Add it to a piping bag with a tip and disperse onto the tops of the cupcakes.

From egglandsbest.com



FILMS

# Riley’s back to keep emotions in check – but this time, puberty’s in town to mess things up

**Inside Out 2: Cert U**  
It’s a notable phenomenon in contemporary Hollywood that some films aimed primarily at children, especially those produced by Pixar, prove both more substantive and emotionally resonant than many films aimed at a more mature audience. Such is the case with the animated psychological comedy *Inside Out 2* (Disney).  
This worthy successor to the outstanding 2015 original returns viewers to the mind of ice hockey-loving girl Riley Andersen (voice of Kensington Tallman).  
The first film saw 11-year-old Riley – and her personified emotions, led by Joy (voice of Amy Poehler) – trying to cope with her family’s move from Minnesota to San Francisco. Two years on in the franchise’s timeline, Riley and co.’s new challenge arrives with the onset of puberty.  
Wholesale disruption ensues as a wrecking crew (presumably made up of hormones, though this is not specified) remodels Riley’s mental HQ. This is done partly to make way for an ensemble of previously unknown feelings–Anxiety (voiced by Maya Hawke) foremost among them.  
As the newcomers displace the veterans, Riley’s previously upright moral core is in danger of being shunted aside in favour of a warped ethos based on the longing for popularity at all costs. All this unfolds as Riley attends a hockey camp and prepares for the transition to secondary school.  
As scripted by Meg LeFauve and Dave Holstein, keen insight and witty humour are the hallmarks of director Kelsey Mann’s sequel.



Joy (voice of Amy Poehler), Sadness (voice of Phyllis Smith), Anger (voice of Lewis Black), Fear (voice of Tony Hale) and Disgust (voice of Liza Lapira), play havoc in their host, Riley, in *Inside Out 2*. Photo: Disney/Pixar

Satirical jabs at video game characters and a send-up of children’s TV shows draw laughs while the screenplay’s celebration of kindness, loyalty to friends, teamwork and forgiveness will be appreciated by viewers young and old alike.  
Discreet mention of the transformation Riley is undergoing, together with scenes of danger, may debar little ones. But the absence of any genuinely objectionable elements makes the picture a suitable treat for all others.  
Amy Poehler spoke about helping audiences relate to her character, Joy, given the recent

worldwide shared crises of covid and war.  
“I felt like we’ve all experienced a complicated 10 years, and I loved that Joy felt a little lost,” she told *screenrant.com*. “Also, she’s such a parental figure in this, and the film is really about that tender and difficult moment when you have to kind of separate from your parents as a young person, your friends become important, and you start building your own self.”  
Meanwhile, Maya Hawke, who plays the emotion of Anxiety in the film, underlined the importance of understanding anxiety –  
especially as it has become so commonplace. She told *screenrant.com*: “I think learning how to have a healthy relationship with anxiety is something we’re all working on, especially as levels of anxiety are, at least reportedly, higher than ever before.  
“And it makes sense, because [we have] a deluge of things to worry about.  
“When you bottle up an emotion, it expands in the bottle until it breaks the glass. I am a metaphor-aholic, but that’s why I like Pixar so much.”

FILMS

## Five great tips for hosting your summer golden hour event

Summer is the season for spending nights outdoors, whether by a cosy bonfire, in the garden with a projector, or gathered out the front with family and friends.  
With a little forethought and some planning, your golden hour party can extend into the night and be the hit of the season. We may have to wait a little for sunshine, but it’s worth being ready when it comes.  
Here are five ideas for making your sunset soiree sensational.

**1. Plan ahead.**  
Summer calendars fill up fast. Get those invites out early so you can make sure your family and friends can attend. Bonus tip: Make it a weeknight! Summer is a great time to linger in the backyard during ‘golden hour’ and beyond, so giving people something fabulous to do on a day they might not usually take advantage of is always a treat. By opting against a weekend night, your guests are more likely to be available.



**2. Amp up the dinner party.**  
To give your guests a more thoughtful experience, transform your outdoor dining area with a seasonal tablescape, unique lighting and even a themed menu. You can add a magical feel to the evening by draping strands of lights in the trees and along your fence. Many lights are even

solar-powered, so they’ll flicker on in time for golden hour and add a fairy-like glow to your gathering. And about that menu ... setting up your meal as a “station” where people can serve themselves, like a salad bar, is an easy way to accommodate food allergies and preferences while still offering a variety of choices.

**3. Reclaim the golden hour from bugs.**  
Nothing puts a damper on an outdoor party like a swarm of mosquitos descending at golden hour, that period between day and night in which everything just seems to glow with soft light. It’s the most beautiful time of day, but it’s also a peak time for mosquito activity, which

causes many people to retreat indoors.  
Adding OFF!® Clean Feel products to your outdoor routine can help you enjoy sunset and the rest of the night longer.  
OFF!® Clean Feel aerosols and pump sprays are easy to use and provide long-lasting protection for up to eight hours from mosquitoes.

**4. Set up entertainment.**  
If you have the space for an after-dinner activity, you can drape a sheet along your fence or house for an easy projector screen.

**5. Draw the evening to a close around your fire**  
Everyone loves sitting around a cosy barbecue on a summer night. Add to the fun by stocking up a tray with ingredients for s’mores – treat-level marshmallows – or try using a grated top for your fire to grill peaches, watermelon or pineapple to serve with ice cream.  
Bonus tip: Have cosy throws or long-sleeved wraps on hand for any guests who might get chilly.  
Take back the golden hour and enjoy these balmy evenings with family and friends. By banishing the bugs, you’ll make the most of summer.



# King's eagerness to leave his bath says a lot about chaos of 11th century England

HISTORY

**Simon  
Trafford**


**What a bath, taken 1,000 years ago, can tell us about the conflicted English kingdom of the 11th century**

On 8th June 1023, 1,001 years ago, King Cnut took a bath. In itself this was not particularly remarkable. Contrary to the image of a ubiquitously grubby Middle Ages that dominates film and television, there is evidence to suggest that among the upper classes, at least, bathing was a regular pleasure.

What is unusual is that Cnut's bath seems to be the first in English history that a (fairly) reliable written source, Osbern of Canterbury, chooses to pin to a particular time and place. But why? What made this particular bath 1,000 years ago deserving of this honour? The answer lies in the complex world of 11th century national power politics.

First we need to go back to 1012 and the grisly fate of Ælfheah, Archbishop of Canterbury. Captured the previous autumn by a band of Vikings, Ælfheah was considered a valuable prize. By the spring, the leader of the band, Thorkell the Tall, was trying to negotiate a ransom for him from the English, while holding him captive at an encampment in Greenwich.

Disappointingly for the Vikings, Ælfheah refused to be ransomed. This courageous move placed the archbishop in a distinctly perilous position. He was a rapidly depreciating asset in the hands of a bunch of rowdy and bloodthirsty men, who were happy to take their amusements where they found them.

At a feast on 19th April 1012, his captors threw "bones and the heads of cattle" at him until eventually one of them, a Christian convert, took pity and despatched him with an axe-blow to the head. St Alfege's church in Greenwich supposedly stands on the site of the martyrdom.

Ælfheah's body was buried in St Paul's Cathedral, where it lay for the next 11 years. In the meantime, the Danes completed their conquest of England.

The Dane Cnut, crowned king in 1016, set about the business of



Contrary to the image of a ubiquitously grubby Middle Ages that dominates film and television, there is evidence to suggest that among the upper classes, at least, bathing was a regular pleasure. As monarch, King Cnut would have been a regular bather, surrounded by his entourage, as on this painting from the times

reconciling himself to his new English subjects. And as a dead man, Ælfheah gained more political power than he had had when alive. The corpse of the archbishop, casually slaughtered in a peculiarly gruesome way during a drunken binge, was a continuing reproach. It was a reminder of a version of the Danes that did not square with Cnut's aspirations to godly English kingship – particularly while it remained uncomfortably close to where the deed itself had occurred.

Cnut decided to have Ælfheah reburied in Canterbury with full honours. The move would at once acknowledge the enormity of the crime and hail the sanctity of the archbishop (harnessing it to his own regime). He hoped it would neutralise Ælfheah's power as a nexus of friction between his English and Danish subjects.

Putting his plan into effect, Cnut summoned Ælfheah's successor as Archbishop of Canterbury, a man named Æthelnoth, to London. He was to preside over proceedings so that they were seen to be carried out with the blessing of the Church.

At this point we can return to Cnut's bath. Barely had he entered it, Osbern tells us, when a messenger arrived to tell him of Æthelnoth's arrival.

Cnut – achieving the dubious honour of being the first person

recorded in English history to have been disturbed by something frustratingly urgent just as he had stepped into a bath – immediately arose, dried himself and embarked for St Paul's to take control.

The body of a martyr was a valuable spiritual, and perhaps also commercial, commodity. Cnut knew that any attempt to take it away from London would almost certainly be resisted.

Cnut ordered his men to create a distraction while the tomb was opened by a vigorous pair of monks named Godric and Ælfweard the Tall (who proved surprisingly adept at surreptitiously demolishing cathedral walls). The corpse of Ælfheah was retrieved and spirited away to a ship on the Thames (with Cnut himself at the helm) under the very noses of the citizenry of London.

Ælfheah was then taken on to Canterbury to be reburied, becoming the focus of a minor, but politically useful cult. Canonised in

1078, there are a scatter of churches dedicated to him (normally as St Alphege) in England. The document which tells us the story (*Translatio Sancti Aelfegi, Translation of Saint Aelphegus*), was produced at Canterbury by Osbern in the 1080s. He wrote it alongside a *Life of Ælfheah* as part of a campaign to ensure his recognition as a legitimate saint in the aftermath of the Norman conquest.

The Normans regarded most pre-conquest English saints with scepticism. So Osbern wrote these tracts to bolster Ælfheah's status and guarantee that the saint would continue to attract gifts, pilgrimages and benefactions to the diocese with which he was strongly associated. To the city of Canterbury, Ælfheah was a valuable piece of intellectual property and it was vital to protect it.

There is a great deal to unpack in this story, but the focus on Cnut's interrupted bath in Osbern's

account is an especially fascinating nugget. Writing some 60 or so years after the events in question and using sources that are entirely unknown, why did Osbern feel that this element of the story deserved attention?

It certainly brings the story alive and gives it – at least to modern eyes – a vividness, immediacy and interest it might otherwise lack. But for the medieval audience, the story of Cnut's immersion at this critical moment would have overtones of a spiritual rebirth akin to Christian baptism.

Osbern's implication is that as a reward for removing Ælfheah's remains to Canterbury and doing them proper honour, the saint will cleanse Cnut of his sins – and of any residual guilt for deaths during his conquest of England. This is represented in physical form by his immersion in water, awakening him through this baptism to a virtuous life in Christ as a godly English monarch.

Through the surprising medium of this first recorded English bath, the divided and conflicted English kingdom of a millennium ago opens up to us.

**Simon Trafford** is a Lecturer in Medieval History, School of Advanced Study, University of London

*"Cnut – achieving the dubious honour of being the first person recorded in English history to have been disturbed by something frustratingly urgent just as he had stepped into a bath – immediately arose, dried himself and embarked for St Paul's to take control."*



# Vatican remains sceptical about claims UFO secrets lurk in its archives

**Robert Duncan**

A worldwide group of scientists and researchers are seeking access to the Vatican Apostolic Archives to uncover information about UFOs and the paranormal, believing there may be stories and details of sightings amid the 50 miles of shelves holding everything from handwritten papal notes to presidential missives.

The decades-long effort to tap into what the Vatican knows about UFOs – or unidentified anomalous phenomena, UAPs, as they are better known nowadays – gained momentum in 2023 following former US intelligence official David Grusch's congressional testimony alleging the Vatican's involvement in an international cover-up of alien secrets.

Grusch claimed Pope Pius XII "backchanneled" information to the United States about a crashed UFO recovered by fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

It sounds amazing but the official Vatican response was blunt: "I don't know where (Grusch) got this information," Marco Grilli, secretary to the prefect of the archives, told reporters.

Grilli said the archives had received emails inquiring about the veracity of Grusch's claims but likened them to requests to read the personal letters of Pontius Pilate or the Virgin Mary.

"One can laugh at it," he said.

However, findings like those reported in Diana Walsh Pasulka's 2019 book *American Cosmic* suggest to UFO believers that the archives hold more than meets the eye.

Pasulka, a religious studies professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, said the archives are full of reports about paranormal events, such as nuns witnessing orbs entering their cells, flying houses and other aerial phenomena. She argues that these events might be better understood as UFO-type occurrences rather than miracles as Catholics traditionally understand them.

"The historical record is filled



This 2015 image shows an unidentified object that rotated as it flew along clouds, according to the fighter pilots tracking it. Photo by the US Department of Defense via AP

with these kinds of events," she said; "the people at the Vatican, they don't even know where to look; it's in their basements."

The Vatican's archivists are in a "mad rush to digitise what they have; they have to prioritise what they think is most important," she explained. "They aren't really prioritising orbs that are bothering nuns in the 1800s."

The interest in the Vatican's holdings extends beyond the realm of scholars of religion. Scientists like Garry Nolan, a professor of medicine at Stanford University, view the Vatican archives as a potential treasure trove for understanding UFOs.

"The Vatican is probably the oldest library system of paranormal or supernatural knowledge still extant," Nolan said. The archive "has an aura of both mysticism and a feeling of deep truth that if you just know how to read it, you can pull that information out."

Nolan believes that if an advanced species is showing up on earth, it means it might be possible for humans to survive threats like climate change, the energy crisis and war.

"The very fact that we think we

see something, to me, is hope," Nolan said of UFO sightings. "It says something has made it past the cliff, past the decision point that we feel we are on the edge of right now."

Nolan co-founded the Sol Foundation in 2023 to spearhead scientific research into UFOs and to initiate dialogue with religious institutions like the Vatican about the spiritual implications of discovering alien life.

The foundation is confident that at least some UFOs are genuine vehicles of non-human origin. Consequently, one of its primary objectives has been to initiate an interfaith dialogue to assess the potential impact on world religions.

Because the Vatican "facilitates interfaith dialogue and engages religious pluralism, it's always been

in our mind that it's an entity we want to engage," Peter Skafish, the foundation's director, said.

Interest among non-Catholic researchers in uncovering paranormal secrets in the Vatican has spanned decades and has roots in a culturally influential retreat centre in California.

Fr Francis Tiso, an expert on interreligious dialogue, said he discussed a plan to conduct paranormal research in the Vatican archives with the founder of the Esalen Institute over 20 years ago.

Esalen is a retreat centre in California known for its progressive and countercultural influence, particularly during the 1960s and 70s. It continues to play a significant cultural role in the United States by attracting Silicon Valley technologists, spiritual

leaders and innovators to explore new ideas in psychology, spirituality and personal growth.

Fr Tiso said that Michael Murphy, Esalen's co-founder, told him that someone should go to the Vatican archives, "do research, examine the documentation and try to classify it in ways that would be accessible to the scientific community."

Studying miracles attributed to the intercession of saints as possible paranormal activity, Fr Tiso said, could help "build another bridge in the direction of paranormal phenomena connected with the idea of (the UFO) narrative, that somehow we human beings are in some way in contact with other civilizations, other conscious beings in the universe."

Jeffrey Kripal, a member of the board at Esalen and professor of religion at Rice University in Houston, said the stories of Catholic miracles are of interest to UFO researchers because telepathic communication, levitation and other paranormal events often coincide with "close encounters."

"The whole gamut of religious phenomena appears in the abduction or the encounter experience," Kripal said.

Carlos Eire, a professor of history at Yale University, has studied the types of miracles that captivate researchers like Pasulka and Nolan. He published his findings in the 2023 book, *They Flew: A History of the Impossible*.

Levitations, UFOs and miracles are all on the "spectrum of, let's call it the impossible; things that are considered impossible or highly unlikely," he said.

The Vatican archives have a high value for paranormal researchers, he said, especially because, since the Renaissance, the Church has applied more rigour to alleged miracles by requiring witnesses to swear oaths that they are not lying.

While the staff at the Vatican archives acknowledge that their vast shelves contain accounts of miracles, they deny that any of their holdings pertain to aliens.

"The prefect wants to affirm that there is no document in the archives that regards extraterrestrial life," and scholars seeking such material at the Vatican should be "dissuaded from undertaking futile and unproductive attempts in this Apostolic Archive," Grilli said.

*"Vatican archives have a high value for paranormal researchers because the Church has always applied more rigour to alleged miracles by requiring witnesses to swear oaths that they are not lying..."*



A sign in the Nevada desert – a popular 'destination' for UFOs visiting Earth, according to some believers



# Everyone's a winner when the football's on

SPORT

## Colm Hickey

Here we go again. 'Football's coming home!' – or is it? Tournament after tournament, England supporters dream of winning a major international competition and bringing the trophy back to England to what they consider is its natural home. This is even though England have only appeared in one Euro final, (against Italy at Wembley in 2021) which it lost, and one World Cup final (against West Germany), also at Wembley in 1966, which it won.

22 World Cup final tournaments have been held since the event's inception in 1930. The trophy has been won by eight national teams. Brazil, the only team to have played in every tournament, have five wins. Germany and Italy have four; Argentina, three; France and Uruguay, two, and England and Spain, one title each.

The 16 European Championship tournaments have been won by ten national teams: Germany and Spain have each won three titles, Italy and France have won two, and the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Denmark, Greece and Portugal have won one each. Spain is the only team to have won consecutive titles, doing so in 2008 and 2012. Yet, for England, the wait, and the dream, goes on.

So, that is two finals in the country's total football history. Tournaments can be anxious, nervous and stressful. You might feel that you are helpless and can do nothing but wait for the almost inevitable heartbreak of another penalty shoot-out defeat. You might not be able to go to Germany. Yet, you can still play your part in making the tournament a great success for England. I'll tell you how.

### Is it coming home?

England is one of the favourites to win Euro 2024; it reached the final in 2020 and is hoping to go one better this time.

The country has always supported the team. The most-viewed match in UK history was England's iconic 1966 World Cup final win over West Germany, with an audience of 32.3m. The 2020 final (played in 2021 because of Covid-19) drew an astonishing 31m audience as England suffered penalty heartbreak to Italy. It was the second-most watched game in UK history. England's opening Euro 2024 win over Serbia also drew huge viewing figures. The BBC revealed a peak audience of 15m. It was also streamed 3.5m times on iPlayer, with an average audience of 10.5m.

Although England won, it was a



Jude Bellingham celebrates scoring the winner in England's opening game at Euro 2024 against Serbia.

hard match. Manager Gareth Southgate admitted: "We had to suffer a bit, which I think is really good for us. To defend the box the way we did was really good for us."

The outburst of national pride is undeniable and the staging of tournaments brings about real returns on investment. UEFA has pioneered a cost-benefit analysis that allows governments and national associations to evaluate the social benefits of Europe's most popular mass participation sport. The programme, called Grow, offers a range of strategic development services to help Europe's 55 national associations fulfil their potential for growth, on and off the field.

The model shows that 8.6 million registered amateur players across 25 European countries have generated a cumulative €39.4bn annually in direct and in-kind savings. In pure economic terms, they bring in €10.8bn through club membership fees, equipment, merchandise, travel, food and beverages and investment in infrastructure. They provide €12.3bn in-kind savings through the positive social impact of football on communities.

The model has found that football, with its emphasis on teamwork, discipline and equal access for everyone, regardless of ability, race or gender, strengthens and educates local communities increases earning potential by

creating volunteer / employment opportunities as well as reducing crime rates. Finally, there are considerable health benefits. Football delivers €16.3bn in healthcare savings due to football's role in reducing the risk of conditions, such as Type II diabetes and heart disease, and improving mental health and well-being.

These figures were calculated by nine European universities drawing on participation data from 25 UEFA countries as well as more than 100 peer-reviewed research papers across different disciplines, such as health, education, employment, sociology and sport. The European Union, Council of Europe, the World Health Organization and the United Nations have all verified the validity of the approach.

### Football's social value

A calculator that considers the social return on investment allows associations to measure the economic, social and health benefits of amateur football on local communities. For example: through spending on football kits in local shops; investment in football facilities (training equipment, pitches, etc.); the in-kind contribution of volunteer coaches to physical education. This model can help UEFA member associations secure long-term, regular funding for developing football by demonstrating a clear

return on investment, allowing them to make evidence-based cases to their governments.

These cost-benefit studies consistently show that amateur football generates greater added value for national economies than the professional game. However, 35% of UEFA member associations currently receive no government support for the development of grassroots football. Instead these countries tend to place greater emphasis on investing in elite-level football, at the expense of increasing overall participation rates. There is growing statistical evidence that the European football community recognises the long-term return in investment from amateur football. UEFA estimates that for every €1 of revenue invested in football development, national associations, governments and local authorities and clubs have contributed an additional €3.63.

The use of cost-benefit analysis to calculate the added value that football brings to nations' gross domestic product (GDP) is increasingly common among governing bodies. The English Premier League has conducted its own findings. Both amateur and professional football is big business and can be a major economic boost. Simply, put the better England does in this year's Euros, the better the economy will do with pubs, bars, club houses and restaurants

set to experience a massive increase in sales.

### Helping promote community cohesion

To put all of this in context, by playing football you are helping the nation. You are reducing the strain on the NHS, improving your physical fitness, helping your mental health and supporting the local economy through your membership fees and buying sports kit, shin guards, oils, bandages, plasters and so on. You are also helping promote community cohesion as you play teams made up of players from widely different backgrounds from you.

Yet, you might not be a player. You might like the game, but not play it. You might want England to do well for a host of reasons. You may not know the players, care about who is picked, not understand the formation or tactics used, or support any of the club teams that supply the England squad. That does not matter. What you can do is watch the games. By doing so, you help create a positive national atmosphere. It is always more fun watching the games with a group of friends. If you go to your local sports club, pub, or village hall you are contributing to your local community. You are keeping it alive. Everyone is sad when we see a much-loved local pub close, and so far, this year 239 have shut their doors. So, turn up, watch the game have a drink and a meal. You will help that business and generate the much-needed atmosphere that all hospitality venues crave.

It is quite simple really. Football gives us far, far more than we give it. It provides a rallying cry for the best and purest expression of social cohesion and pride in the country in which we live. It is a truly inclusive game that welcomes people regardless of colour, race, creed, religion, ability or disability. If you play it as a boy or a girl, as a man or a woman, as an amateur or a semi-professional, or even as an elite international, you are promoting physical fitness, improving mental health, and contributing to community activity. Football is a sport for all which, above all, is fun.

By watching the Euros you are literally playing your part in one of the greatest sporting tournaments in the world. So, even if the trophy does not 'come home', the country will be better for having played in it and the economy will be better because you have watched it. And that cannot be a bad thing at all. I hope you enjoy the tournament.

Finally, consider if that is what it is like when a tournament is held abroad, consider the impact it will have if it is held at home and the 2028 tournament will be held in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Just think about that – and start saving.



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Ordinary Form

Sunday Year B, Weekday Cycle II

Sunday, June 23: 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time Job 38:1, 8–11; Ps. 107:23–26, 28–32 r.1; 2 Cor. 5:14–17; Mk. 4:35–41

Monday, June 24: The Nativity of St John the Baptist, Isa. 49:1–6; Ps. 139:1–3, 13–15 r. 14; Acts 13:22–26; Lk. 1:57–66, 80

Tuesday, June 25: 2 Kgs.19:9–11,14–21,31–36; Ps. 48:2–4,10–11; Mt.7:6,12–14

Wednesday, June 26: 2 Kgs.22:8–13,23:1–3; Ps.119:33–37,40; Mt.7:15–20

Thursday, June 27: St Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop, Doctor of the Church 2 Kgs.24:8–17; Ps.79:1–5,8–9; Mt.7:21–29

Friday, June 28: St Irenaeus, Bishop, Martyr 2 Kgs.25:1–12; Ps.137:1–6; Mt.8:1–4

Saturday, June 29: Lam.2:2,10–14,18–19; Ps.74:1–7,20–21; Mt.8:5–17

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## The Nativity of John the Baptist

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century stained glass window depicting the Nativity of St John the Baptist in St George's Anglican church, Jerusalem. The Nativity of John the Baptist is celebrated on 24<sup>th</sup> June.