

A tide of thanksgiving – pg 27

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# Priest calls on Christians to resist new vagrancy Bill

Proposals to fine and jail rough sleepers dubbed ‘horrific’ by cleric serving some of London’s poorest communities

A Catholic priest working in some of the poorest boroughs of London has warned that the Government’s proposed changes to the Vagrancy Act risks “criminalising and jailing” homeless people and rough sleepers, and has vowed to lead resistance to it.

Fr Dominic Robinson, Chair of the Diocese of Westminster Justice and Peace Commission, expressed his “horror” at the proposals, which are set out in the Government’s Criminal Justice Bill.

Part of the Bill replaces the Vagrancy Act 1824 with a new measures which give the police and local authorities extra powers to “address” rough

**‘Simply locking people away in prison where they can be forgotten by society must be resisted strongly by the Christian community’**  
Fr Dominic Robinson (right)



sleeping which is considered a “public nuisance.” These powers include fining homeless people up to £2,500 fine or threatening them with up to a month in prison, which is something Fr Dominic says is “in no way proportionate” and would target

“some of the most vulnerable people in our parishes.”

The priest is part of a cross-denominational group of clergy, which has vowed to contest the Bill strongly as it returns to Parliament after the Easter recess.

The Catholic Union is helping the clerics raise their concerns, which they set out in a letter to local MPs, Nickie Aiken and Sir Keir Starmer, who is also the Labour leader.

There are particular concerns about the lack of consultation with relevant groups and stakeholders before these changes were announced as part of the Bill. The proposals were announced in a policy statement from the Home Office earlier this year without a public consultation.

Fr Dominic Robinson SJ said: “When this new legislation to criminalise the homeless was proposed the clergy across the West End of London were of one voice in expressing their horror and disbelief and demanding to be consulted.

“It is clear to us all, who serve on the ground in parishes and churches of different traditions, that rough sleeping is a complex matter which deserves an integrated response.

Continued on page 2



A message of love and hope from a brave nun on Ukraine’s frontline

Basilian Sister Lucia Murashk knows what fate awaits her if the Russians break through Ukrainian defensive positions in Zaporizhzhia: “If the Russians come – we are terrorists for them, because we are the Catholic Church... God knows, if the Russians come to Zaporizhzhia, none of us Catholic nuns would like to be in Russian hands.”

But despite the intense threat, “we are not planning to leave. It is important to be here, to be a Church among the people who pray, who trust God. The future is in God’s hands ... we have to be here. The people need us.”

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Catholic heroine of the Holocaust  
COMPANION



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# Abbey superior backs independent review into sex abuse claims

## Safeguarding experts called in by Caldey Abbey to lead investigation into allegations against monk who died in 1992

**Andy Drozdziak**

The Cistercian Abbey on Caldey Island has announced that an independent review into historical allegations of child abuse will be undertaken, which an alleged victim hopes will create momentum for a full public enquiry.

The independent review will be led by Jan Pickles, a former assistant police and crime commissioner at South Wales Police.

The news comes as Kevin O'Connell from the Caldey Island survivors campaign revealed a story of abuse with the *Daily Mail*. Mr O'Connell shared how he and his sister suffered sexual and physical abuse at the hands of Fr Thaddeus Kotik and other monks when visiting the island as a child in the 1970s.

Kevin O'Connell, who has been calling for a public inquiry since 2019, told the *Universe* that, although the review has "no legal standing", it may help towards a public inquiry.

He added that, since his story broke, more victims have come forward with their own accounts.

The independent review comes after the appointment of Fr Jan Rossey as the abbey's new Superior. Fr Rossey vowed to take the allegations "very seriously."

"In common with many other or-



ganisations, Caldey Abbey has, in the past, received disclosures and allegations involving members of the monastic community about their behaviour towards children", he said.

"We take these allegations very seriously and, in order to uphold our commitment to safeguarding, we have commissioned a leading independent safeguarding consultant, Jan Pickles OBE, to conduct a thorough review."

Fr Rossey said he hopes the review would help create a safe environment 'by "learning from the past." "This review is about taking responsibility, learning from the past, and building a safe environment for everyone," he said.

Maria Battle, the former deputy children's commissioner for Wales, has been appointed as the abbey's new safeguarding lead.

Fr Rossey said: "Maria is reviewing our safeguarding policies, practice and training to ensure all visitors to Caldey are safe."

"As we prepare to welcome visitors back to Caldey Island, we re-

main dedicated to providing a secure environment with effective procedures for safeguarding all who visit, live on, or work on the island."

Maria Battle is encouraging people to come forward, as Fr Rossey wants to "hear from anyone affected."

Fr Thaddeus Kotik died in 1992.

Mr O'Connell told the *Universe* that victims who come forward are directed to Operation Hydrant, which was set up in 2014 "to deliver the national policing response, oversight, and co-ordination of non-recent child sexual abuse investigations concerning persons of public prominence, or in relation to those offences which took place within institutional settings."

Mr O'Connell added that he did not "trust... Dyfed-Powys Police," the police force which oversees Caldey Island.

He said that he hopes the review will result in "every child and vulnerable adults being safe to go visit and stay on Caldey Island."

"With an inquiry the victims will finally get a voice."

**Continued from page 1**

"This response needs to see the homeless we serve in our parishes not as people to be punished for begging but which treats the poorest of our flock with care and respect for their human dignity."

Fr Dominic added that the new law should be "resisted strongly" by Christians.

"Any policy or law needs to get to the roots of the issue in trafficking and find ways to help people get back on their feet," he said.

"All this requires funding for dignified accommodation and professional help rather than fining those who have nothing to give.

"It is clear to all of us who work with the street population that the proposed law will simply result in locking people away in prison where they can be conveniently forgotten by the rest of society. And that must



*"This response needs to see the homeless we serve not as people to be punished but treats the poorest with care, respect and dignity..."*

be resisted strongly by the Christian community and by anyone who cares about creating a civilised society."

Catholic Union Deputy Director, James Somerville-Meikle, said: "We are pleased to have played a very small part in helping clergy in the West End of London to raise concerns about these proposed changes. Churches are at the coal face in efforts to support the homeless

and rough sleepers. It is extraordinary that these changes are being proposed without first consulting groups and charities involved in supporting people rough on our streets. It is increasingly clear that the Criminal Justice Bill risks doing more harm than good in a whole range of areas. Hopefully this letter will add further pressure to the Government to think again before pushing forward with this Bill."

# Scotland in shock as popular priest dies just days before ordination as bishop

**Andy Drozdziaik**

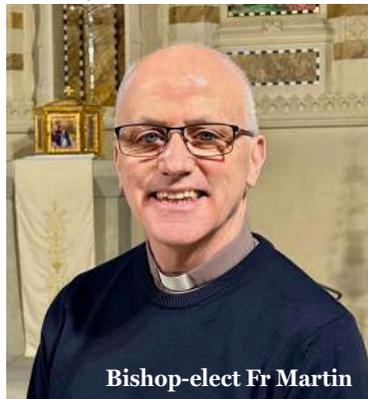
The Catholic Church in Scotland has been left in shock and in mourning after the sudden death of Fr Martin Chambers, who was due to be ordained as the new Bishop for the Diocese of Dunkeld on 27th April.

Fr Martin's passing was announced by the current Bishop of Galloway, Bishop Frank Dougan on 10th April.

Pope Francis elected Fr Martin as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Dunkeld on 2nd February 2024.

Bishop Dougan said: "It was with a heavy heart and the deepest sadness that I learned today of the death of Fr. Martin Chambers, a priest of the Diocese of Galloway

and the Bishop-Elect of the Diocese of Dunkeld. I know his family and the people of Galloway diocese who knew him and loved him will be deeply shocked and dismayed at his untimely death."



Bishop-elect Fr Martin

Fr Martin was well known for his work in Ecuador, setting up The Martin Chambers Ecuador Trust in 2006 to support those who live in the poorest conditions in Ecuador. It was established to support the work of Fr Martin while he worked on the missions in Ecuador's largest city, Guayaquil from 2004-2009.

Since Fr Martin returned to Scotland in 2009, the work of the Trust has continued. Bishop Dougan referred to this work in his statement. He said: "Together we give thanks for the selfless service he gave to our diocese; we recognise the enormous contribution he made to support some of the poorest communities in Ecuador and we pray for the repose of his soul."

"To know Martin was to know a man of love, enthusiasm, humour and a deep faith which enlivened all that he did."

Bishop Dougan promised prayers and condolences to Fr Martin's family, adding: "We give thanks to God for the great service of a selfless priest and pray for his eternal rest."

His most recent appointment was at Our Lady of the Assumption and St Meddan's, Troon, which he served between 2023-2024.

Tributes soon poured in for the bishop-elect. Dundee MSP Michael Marra posted: "Such dreadful news. May he rest in peace. Our local Catholic community were awaiting Fr Martin's arrival with joyful anticipation.

"His loss is heartbreaking."

Scottish media company Sancta Familia paid their own tribute to "a lovely man." Sancta Familia said: "We are deeply saddened to learn of the death of Bishop Elect of Dunkeld Fr Martin Chambers. We have worked with him over the years and he was a lovely man. We were looking forward to seeing his ordination as Bishop in 17 days time in Dundee. Let us pray for the repose of his soul."

A tribute was also made at Parkhead, the home of Celtic FC, with the words 'Your light shines on' accompanying a picture of Fr Martin on a screen in the ground.

Funeral arrangements will be announced in due course.



# Catholic doctor wins leading pro-life award

**Andy Drozdziaik**

Leading pro-life Catholic doctor Dermot Kearney said he was "overwhelmed" after receiving a prestigious award for his pro-life work.

Dr Kearney was awarded the Anton Neuwirth Prize for the Protection of Life award in Slovakia 'for providing medical care and for testifying to his courage in helping women avert pharmacological abortion.'

A regular contributor to the *Universe*, Dr. Dermot has given many women abortion reversal pills to help them continue with their pregnancies, and frequently speaks out against telemedicine abortions in articles and at rallies.

The ceremony for the Anton Neuwirth Prize for the Protection of Life took place at the gala dinner of the international conference Choose

Life in Rajecké Teplice on 12th April. The prize is named after Anton Neuwirth, a prominent Slovak doctor, diplomat and thinker who was a founding member of the Forum of Life.

The Anton Neuwirth Prize is awarded annually by the Forum of Life to persons or organisations who have significantly contributed to the protection of human life.

Dr. Dermot said: "I am overwhelmed by the love (and) kindness demonstrated by the beautiful pro-life people of Slovakia at this weekend's Forum for Life (Fórum života) Conference in Rajecké Teplice, for honouring me with the Anton Neuwirth Award (and) inviting me to deliver a presentation on APR."

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce from March For Life UK said the award was "well deserved".



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## In Brief

### Conference row concerns No. 10

Downing Street has said the decision to shut down a conservative conference in Brussels featuring Nigel Farage and Suella Braverman on Tuesday was “extremely disturbing”.

Mr Farage was on stage at the National Conservatism Conference in Brussels when officers entered the venue to serve a court order demanding its closure with “immediate effect”.

The Mayor of Brussels claimed that speeches at the event could cause public disorder, be homophobic or offend minorities.

### Sofa snacks fuelling obesity, says TV star

Being a couch potato has become a British pastime that needs addressing, Gregg Wallace has said. The *MasterChef* presenter, 59, suggested there was “more than enough time in your day” to cook a proper dinner, while lamenting the growing takeaway culture and the “British pastime that’s got to be addressed” – sitting on the sofa eating chocolate and crisps.

The TV presenter said his day was broken down into 30-minute chunks and suggested people do the same to leave enough time to cook dinners. He said “everybody thinks they’re busy” but said the real problem was that “nobody in the country knows how to cook any more”.

### Pop-up shops can help domestic abuse

The Queen has suggested young domestic abuse campaigners host pop-up shops in schools.

Queen Camilla told young women working with the SafeLives charity that she thought it would be brilliant if they could encourage children to speak about their experiences and promote healthy relationships.

# Report criticises toxic debate on children’s gender confusion

**Michael Kelly**

A landmark report says that UK children struggling with their gender identity have been “let down” by a lack of research on the use of puberty blockers in the NHS.

The Cass Report also said clinicians had been deeply affected by the “toxicity” of public debate around transgender identities.

“There are few other areas of healthcare where professionals are so afraid to openly discuss their views, where people are vilified on social media, and where name-calling echoes the worst bullying behaviour. This must stop,” Dr Hilary Cass wrote.

Addressing children and young people in her foreword, Cass stated: “I have been disappointed by the lack of evidence on the long-term impact of taking hormones from an early age; research has let us all down, most importantly you.”

In March, the NHS announced that children experiencing issues with their gender identity will no longer routinely be prescribed puberty blockers, saying there is “not enough evidence” the drugs are safe or effective.

Puberty blockers pause the physical changes of puberty as children grow, such as the development of breasts in girls and facial hair in boys.

Health Secretary Victoria Atkins welcomed the pause and said an urgent update on the practice of hormone prescription must now follow. She also praised clinicians who spoke out about their concerns.

She also criticised what she described as a “culture of secrecy and ideology” around health care for children experiencing gender identity confusion.

The Cass report revealed that six of seven adult clinics had refused to take part in the study – meaning that the outcomes for approximate-



A person walks on a pedestrian crossing decorated with the pattern of the transgender flag on a street in London.  
Photo: Isabel Infantes  
Inset, Dr Hilary Cass

ly 9,000 people who were moved from child services into adult care were not included in the report.

Cass described this as “hugely disappointing”. The reasons adult clinics gave for not taking part included ethical considerations and concerns about funder motivation and political interference.

Many children were treated at the Tavistock Clinic, which was NHS England’s only specialist gender clinic for children and young people. It closed in the first weeks of April, four years after it was rated as “inadequate” by inspectors.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the findings “shine a spotlight” on the need to “exercise extreme caution” when it comes to gender care for children.

Advocacy group Christian Concern welcomed the Cass Report, saying it “makes clear that vulnera-

ble children have been failed by clinicians who have followed an affirmative approach to treating children with gender dysphoria and prescribed powerful drugs which lack evidence to support their use in such ways.”

Andrea Williams, CEO of Christian Concern, said: “The Cass Review makes clear that children have not been told the truth by clinicians and other adults.”

The Cass report comes as the Vatican’s recent declaration, *Dignitas Infinita*, reiterated that being a Christian means defending human dignity and opposing gender transition.

It condemned gender theory as “extremely dangerous since it cancels differences in its claim to make everyone equal.”

Gender theory, the document said, tries “to deny the greatest pos-

sible difference that exists between living beings: sexual difference.”

Quoting Pope Francis’ exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, the declaration said gender ideology “envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family.”

Dicastery members said it is true that there is a difference between biological sex and the roles and behaviours that a given society or culture assigns to a male or female, but the fact that some of those notions of what it means to be a woman, or a man are culturally influenced, does not mean there are no differences between biological males and biological females.

“Therefore,” they said, “all attempts to obscure reference to the ineliminable sexual difference between man and woman are to be rejected.”

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# Police called to protect pro-lifers after mob attacks Manchester University debate

**Andy Drozdziak**

Pro-life speaker Madeline Page was verbally abused and police were called to protect her after a 'Grill the pro-lifer' session at the University of Manchester.

Madeline Page, the CEO of APS, the Alliance of Pro-life Students (APS), delivered a short presentation last Thursday on the arguments against abortion, followed by an opportunity for students, both pro-life and pro-choice, to ask questions about the issue.

Right To Life UK reported that, as Madeline left the talk with a police escort, "a large mob of students followed her down the road screaming abuse at her," forcing her to change her travel arrangements because it was "too dangerous".

The incident is not the first of its kind this year, as hundreds of pro-choice supporters shouted intimidating language and spat on members of the Manchester Pro Life Society after its first meeting on 29th February. A female committee member also received a rape threat.

These incidents, according to a statement given to the Universe by the University of Manchester, amounted to "serious disruption and intimidation."

Madeline Page explained how the volatile evening unfolded. "There had been a concerted hate campaign about me before I had even arrived at the university," she said.

"Before the event I knew there were going to be problems. The talk



was scheduled for 7pm but the university had cleared the building two hours before, advising staff to leave for their safety."

By the time Madeline arrived, a group of protesters were already shouting vulgar swear words towards her. "Police had to intervene to force the protesters to let me inside the building," she said.

"The actual talk was fine," she said. "Three pro-choice students attended to ask questions and were perfectly respectful".

"When we left the event, the police were really helpful but the mob still did their best to intimidate those present. I was separated from the rest of the group and swarmed by students hurling verbal abuse. The police had to form a physical barrier between the mob and me for my protection."

"I had to change my pick-up location because the police advised that the initial one was not safe and it also would not have been safe to go

directly to my hotel".

"I eventually found a corner location where the police could stop the pro-abortion students getting any

closer to me. They left shortly afterwards because the mob realised this was making them look really bad".

Reacting to the incident, spokes-

person for Right To Life UK, Catherine Robinson, called on the University of Manchester to take action against the protestors.

"It is astounding that the university apparently does so little in the face of the physical intimidation and vile verbal abuse that the pro-life students, and Madeline in particular, had to face," she said.

"The University of Manchester must make suitable provision to ensure that this does not happen again (and) will soon have to do much more to protect the rights of students to speak freely about their beliefs, including about abortion and other pro-life issues".

## CARE welcomes deepfake penalties but calls for ban on websites and apps, too

A plan to punish people who create deepfake sexual images has been welcomed by CARE.

The Ministry of Justice has announced that creating a sexually explicit "deepfake" image is to be made an offence under new legislation.

Under the proposal, anyone who creates a sexually explicit deepfake without consent will face a criminal record, a fine, or even jail.

Christian Action Research and Education (CARE) said it welcomed the proposals, which challenge dehumanising behaviour. "The creation and sharing of deepfake images and videos of a sexual nature can have a profound impact on victims' mental health, relationships, and employment."

However, it also called for a ban on apps and sites that allow deepfakes to be created. "Outlawing AI software used to create vile content must be part of the response to this harmful trend. Polling commissioned by CARE shows broad public

support for such a move."

Polling for CARE ahead of Safer Internet Day 2024 found that a ban on AI tools that allows users to digitally undress women and children is supported by almost 8 in 10 Brits.

Whitestone Insight asked 1,203 GB adults if: 'Websites and apps that use AI to simulate sexually explicit content such as undressing women and children should be banned by the government.'

Seven in ten respondents strongly agreed (69%) and one in ten (10%) somewhat agreed. The number of respondents who strongly agreed rises to almost 8 in 10 (75%) discounting those who preferred not to answer.

CARE also pointed out that this technology is even being weaponised to undermine the political process. "During the campaign for last year's Northern Ireland Assembly election, two female candidates were subjected to deepfake porn hoaxes."



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Mon 28<sup>th</sup> Oct – Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov at Mullaghmore, Ireland

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**COMMENT**

**Brussels chose the wrong way to shut down a dissenting voice**

Nigel Farage has probably spent more of his life than he cares to remember in Brussels, from when he was a Member of the European Parliament.

But he can hardly have had a more dramatic day in the Belgian capital than the one he experienced on Tuesday. Mr Farage was addressing a conference of right-wing parties in Europe whose speakers were to include Suella Braverman, the former home secretary, and Viktor Orban, the prime minister of Hungary. But the two-day gathering of the National Conservatism movement had hardly got under way before police were sent to shut it down. Mr Farage managed to take to the stage, describing the action of the authorities as “monstrous”.

It is hard to disagree. Whether he is loved or loathed, Mr Farage has always promoted his politics through the democratic process. Mr Orban is the democratically elected leader of Hungary. It is however typical of the quasi-autocracy operating out of the Brussels that it should seek to shut down an event that might be critical of the EU.

While there is no suggestion that Mr Orban proposes to take his country out of the bloc, his Government is evidently considered beyond the pale by the EU elites. The police said they feared a counter-protest but were acting under orders of the local mayor. This was straightforward censorship, however it is dressed up.

Shutting down meetings taking an opposing view is more like something that we have come to expect from Vladimir Putin. What the authorities fail to appreciate is that, if they want to curtail the popularity of insurgent parties among voters unhappy with the mainstream, such foolish actions are likely to have the opposite effect.

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# Tories can't ignore poll wipe-out claims: they could be accurate

POLITICS

**Stephen Barber**

A spate of recent opinion polls has led to fevered speculation that the Tories won't just lose the next election, they will be wiped out.

In one projection doing the rounds, the Government loses 250 MPs and is left with fewer than 100 seats. Among high-profile casualties will be the Prime Minister himself, as well as his Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt.

The spectre of a 'Canadian-style' wipe-out is in the air – a reference to the plight of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada (PCP), which went from being in Government to losing all but two of its seats in the federal election of 1993 – including that of the prime minister, Kim Campbell.

Third in vote share at 16 per cent, the CPC nonetheless came bottom of the five parties represented in parliament. New parties had emerged, challenging the PCP for core support, and the party would never recover. It later merged with its rival to form the Conservative Party of Canada. Sound like a familiar scenario?

The comparison is interesting because it shows that there is indeed precedent in a Westminster system (which Canada operates) for a governing party to experience complete collapse. Canada also operates a majoritarian electoral system similar to the one which has long been the friend of the Conservatives in Britain, delivering majority governments on minority votes for a century.

Britain's first-past-the-post voting system tends to heavily favour the winner. For instance, by dividing the number of votes cast with the number of seats won, it can be seen that in 2019 it took on average 38,000 votes to elect a Conservative MP, but almost 51,000 to elect a Labour MP – and a whopping 336,000 votes to elect a Liberal Democrat.

And the real outlier, the SNP, received one-third of the votes of the Liberal Democrats but secured almost four-and-a-half times the number of seats. Thanks to its geographic concentration and its position as the 'winner' in Scotland, it took on average just 26,000 votes to return an SNP MP.

**Worse than losing an election**

So, if the polls are right, Labour can expect its vote share to be magnified in terms of seats won when the ballots are counted. First



past the post is a winner-takes-all system where candidates do not have to secure 50 per cent of the vote to become the MP. If Labour wins 45 per cent of the national vote, as indicated in recent polls, that would likely translate to a considerable majority in the House of Commons. At the 2019 election, under Boris Johnson, the Tories won 43 per cent of the vote but 56 per cent of the seats. Remember, under the UK electoral system most people vote for losing candidates.

But the British electoral system has also saved losing parties in crisis. It bailed out Labour in 1983 when, divided and undisciplined, it was challenged by the breakaway SDP. The SDP/ Liberal Alliance came within 2.2 percentage points of Labour's vote share but won only 23 seats to Labour's 209. This meant Labour remained as the official opposition and was able to regroup, eventually returning to government.

It is said that the Tory party exists in one of two states: complacency or panic. Complacent Conservatives resigned to defeat will be hoping the 1983 trick is repeated this time, cushioning their loss so that they survive to fight another day.

*“Those panicking will envisage a scenario where the electoral system works against them, maximising the anti-Tory vote, whether that be for Labour, the Lib Dems, Reform UK or another”*

But those panicking will envisage a scenario where the electoral system works against them, maximising the anti-Tory vote, whether that be for Labour, the Lib Dems, Reform UK or any other challenger. This has certainly been reflected in recent by elections. And again, there is a precedent. John Major's Conservatives were roundly beaten, by Tony Blair's New Labour, when he went to the country in 1997. They survived in England but were completely wiped out in Scotland, despite securing half a million votes there. And that was one-third more than the Lib Dems, who returned ten MPs.

**When the system turns against you**

The Conservatives, of course, have been wedded to first-past-the-post, even cynically changing the (proportional) supplementary vote electoral system ahead of this year's mayoral elections. And so, it is ironic that the Conservatives only survived north of the border thanks to another part of the constitution – proportional representation operating in the Scottish Parliament giving them a continued voice there after 1999.

Perhaps as a marginalised force, they will come to see the benefits of

a system where representation reflects votes.

There is, though, one place where the Conservatives will undoubtedly survive – for a time at least. With 278 peers, the Conservatives represent the largest group in the House of Lords and that will not change quickly. Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak have all, controversially, appointed a considerable number of new peers including party donors. For the next Government to rebalance the upper house would require either flooding the chamber with even more members, bloating what is already the second biggest legislature in the world after the National People's Congress of China, or consider serious reform.

Labour has so far backed away from the latter, hinting only at an abolition of the remaining hereditary peers. It could be that this is where we will find Conservatives clinging to power, whether it's worth much is another matter.

Historically, the British Conservatives are the most successful political force in the democratic world. They have dominated British politics and occupied Downing Street for most of the past century.

The question now is whether a constitution that has facilitated this dominance for so long will this year turn against the Tories.

**Stephen Barber is a Professor of Global Affairs, University of East London**

# New poll shows public support for assisted suicide falling in Scotland

Polls published in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* shows that support for assisted suicide in Scotland has dropped significantly.

Three polls conducted by the pro-assisted suicide group Dignity in Dying Scotland found that the number of Scots who 'strongly supported' legalising assisted dying fell from 55% in 2019, to 45% in 2023, and to 40% in 2024.

A similar pattern was seen in a YouGov bimonthly trackers which asked the same question 31 times over five years: 'Do you think the law should or should not be changed to allow someone to assist in the suicide of someone suffering from a painful, incurable but NOT terminal illness?' By April 2024, agreement had decreased to 41%.

Professor David Albert Jones, director of the Anscombe Bioethics Centre, Oxford, said: "People might imagine that Liam McArthur's Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill would apply only to people with a terminal illness, but in fact the Bill makes no reference to being close to death. It would cover anyone with an advanced progressive condition that would be expected to shorten life if not treated. This would include long-term chronic diseases like diabetes. Many people would not think of these as terminal illnesses."

The Anscombe Centre also states that another opinion poll in March 2024 'found that only 47% of Scots wanted their MP to vote to change the law. That figure dropped to 26% among Asian and 16% among Black cohorts...It is simply not a priority for voters.'

Meanwhile, campaign groups have raised concerns with MSPs that the controversial Bill poses a significant threat to disabled people.

The Bill aims to allow people with advanced terminal illnesses to end their lives. But the Better Way Campaign, Disability Equality Scotland, the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living and others, have urged MSPs to oppose the Bill.

They claim the Bill 'poses a major threat to a much wider population of people, notably those with long-term conditions and disabilities.'



**Professor David Albert Jones:**  
**'Support is diminishing rapidly for assisted suicide'**

The groups emphasised the importance of supporting disabled people to live independently and fully, rather than creating a legislative environment that could compromise their security and well-being.

"The fear that AD (assisted dying) as an individual choice will evolve into a societal pressure to make that choice, is real and justified," the groups add. "Changes in the type of people seeking AD show that over time, there is an increase in AD among those who are less well-off and for whom the cost of living actually means the cost of staying alive."

"The priority for disabled people is to secure the support they need to live independent and full lives like any other citizen."

"Our Parliament ought not to create an environment in which that priority – and the security that goes with it – is prejudiced now, or in the future."

Liam McArthur has defended the Bill, highlighting the specific and limited circumstances it addresses and the inclusion of safeguards.



New polling shows Liam McArthur's claims of widespread support are proving inaccurate

# Bishop delivers stark warning as Guernsey looks at euthanasia

Andy Drozdziak

Bishop of Portsmouth Philip Egan has delivered a hard-hitting message to Catholics in Guernsey: Beware – your life is in danger.

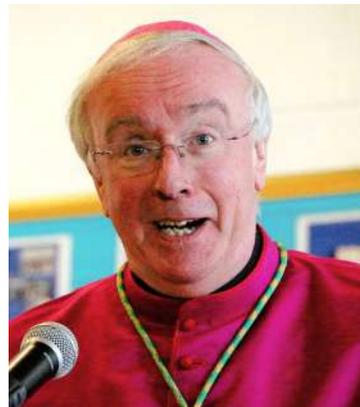
As the island prepares for elections next year, the legalisation of assisted suicide and euthanasia have become key issues, with Bishop Egan describing the issue as a "dark cloud" over Guernsey.

In a letter to Canon Christopher Rutledge, the Dean and Parish Priest of churches in Guernsey, and parishioners, Bishop Egan wrote: 'Dark clouds are threatening the beautiful island of Guernsey. There are now dark forces at work in the media and public life. I refer here to the campaign to legalise euthanasia, or mercy-killing, and assisted suicide.'

Campaign group Dignity in Dying said that 70% of respondents to a survey in Guernsey believe assisted suicide should be debated this political term, but Bishop Egan outlined four reasons why it is 'gravely wrong' and why Catholics should oppose its legalisation.

First, it places an 'intolerable and immoral demand' on medical staff, doctors and nurses. Second, to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide 'would undermine palliative care and the work of care-homes'.

Third, assisted suicide 'puts intolerable pressure on the sick and the elderly'. Fourth, the bishop said that



the legislation would 'gradually keep creeping forward, expanding to cover more and more categories', citing examples of Belgium and Canada, where almost five per cent of deaths are now by lethal injection.

He ended by calling on Catholics to reject the 'alarming proposals' and to take steps to combat the pro-

posed laws. "This is chilling stuff. Let there be no death-clinics in Guernsey. Don't let Guernsey become a destination for suicide tourism."

"The right to die would inevitably become the duty to die – and the right to make another die," he wrote.

"I appeal to Catholics to mobilise. Don't be persuaded by emotional pitches in the media. Speak out against this sinister proposal. Raise it with the candidates in the forthcoming elections. It is never permissible to use an evil means to do good."

"Suicide is a mortal sin and helping someone commit suicide is a mortal sin. For we believe in assisted living, not assisted dying. Death is not pain relief; it is the transition to a glorious new life in heaven with God our Father and Creator."



The Guernsey Parliament

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good

## COMMENT

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

## Family friendly work needed

Sir John Battle



Worryingly, an economic approach focused on the need to increase productivity at work and that is particularly insistent on ensuring all adults work full time, can undermine social support for growing families.

Already the tax system is weighted against married parents but increasingly the key neglected questions of who looks after children is left to two struggling working parents to resolve.

Catholic social teaching has long been strong on the dignity of work, but for far too long the template was large scale factory or institution provision of work with a notable neglect of unpaid housework and caring usually done by women. The Covid interruption led to a rediscovery of working from home. But as traditional home working (rife for years in the exploitative edges of the textile industry) revealed, home working generated family caring strains and exacerbated domestic inequalities.

Today the pressure is to get people back out into the workplace and the key is assumed to be to provide out of home independent childcare. The problem is despite claims by the Government, affordable childcare places are not available to all, are limited to term time and provide too few hours.

Inadequate government funding of the scheme demands parents pay huge top-up fees for expensive support after school and during holidays. There is a drastic shortage of childcare places and even fewer affordable ones for those on below average incomes. So much for '15 hours free childcare for all two-year-olds'! Far from an incentive to get everyone out to work, the impact so far is that 22% of working parents eligible for the current childcare scheme are contemplating giving up their job or reducing their hours.

Furthermore there are only places for 6% of children with disabilities. The plans to extend the scheme in the autumn to younger children simply puts the provision beyond the reach of those working parents who need the most support. It couldn't be further from the child wellbeing and education that was central to the now dismantled Surestart programme.

Refocusing the real 'work' issue on personal and family growth as key to economic prosperity may take some time, but in the meantime perhaps our Catholic schools and parish halls could perhaps give a visionary lead with new local "social enterprise" arrangements.

# Damning report pulls no punches over NHS's gender identity crisis

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



The publication of the Cass Report last week confirmed what so many people have been sounding the alarm about for so long, namely, that children who have been given transgender 'treatment' on the NHS have been set down a path of irreversible harm.

The report is the culmination of a four-year independent review of Gender Identity Services for children and young people in the UK, which was headed up by Hilary Cass, a retired consultant paediatrician and former President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

It was already clear that the findings were unlikely to be positive, as the interim report published two years into the review expressed misgivings about the lack of data regarding outcomes for children who had been given puberty blockers and cross sex hormones, and led to the closure of the infamous Tavistock Clinic, the country's main point of reference for gender-confused children, but certainly nobody dared to hope that the final report would be quite so damning.

As suspected, there is a dearth of evidence suggesting that medicalising children or allowing them to socially transition, is the right thing to do. In what is likely to turn out to be the greatest medical scandal of our age, thousands of children have been given drugs and also in many cases, radical surgery, when they were far too young to be able to give informed consent, and which will require a lifetime of medical intervention.

Just as over sixty years ago, thousands of pregnant women were given thalidomide without the drug having undergone any kind of testing to see if could potentially affect the unborn child, similarly, thousands of children have been given puberty blockers without any kind of robust data or evidence to suggest that it is safe to do so.

Furthermore, the Cass Report has revealed that we do not have any follow-up data on the 9,000 children who passed through the Tavistock Clinic into one of the seven adult gender clinics based around the UK. What happened to them in later life? Did they experience any chronic health problems as the result of years of exposure to cross sex hormones,



The Tavistock Clinic was the country's main point of reference for gender-confused children until it was stopped from offering the service

which are known to significantly increase the risk of cardiac conditions and cancers? Did any of them attempt to de-transition? What effect did puberty blockers have on their bone and brain development? What about future fertility issues? An extremely recent study has reported that the use of puberty blockers in boys can cause mid to severe testicular atrophy, in other words, withering, and lead to fertility problems and even cancer. Similarly there are cases of vaginal atrophy amongst girls who have taken testosterone.

One might have thought that clinicians might have asked themselves what the potential effects might be before undertaking such a drastic intervention as to stop puberty, and prevent the body from developing naturally, especially as it known that puberty is a time of enormous growth where bones grow denser, muscles develop and crucial brain matter is laid down. As the Cass Report laid bare, not only did clinicians not seem to ask these questions, they also crucially sought to cover up, ignore and actively bully other members of staff who were sounding the alarm.

Concerned about how quickly young people were being transferred onto a medical pathway, Sue Evans, a former nurse at the Tavistock, first blew the whistle in 2005, but despite writing a report and recommendations to improve the service, these were not acted upon until it was uncovered by a *Newsnight* investigation in 2020, during which time, another generation of whistleblowers had emerged. Keen to find out what had happened to these young people, the Cass Review was

dismayed that six out of the seven adult gender clinics refused to co-operate with her investigations or pass on any information and various clinicians had actively sought to sabotage her work.

Unsurprisingly the Cass Review also describes their research being affected by the toxicity of the public debate, which is currently being described and re-written as though both sides were as bad as each other. Certainly I came in for some extremely harsh criticism and even being deserving of arrest because of my trenchant campaigning and strong vocabulary, describing supposed sex change surgery as 'castration', but honestly, what other words were there to use, when just as the abortion lobby, transgender lobbyists were attempting to obscure the reality with twee euphemisms.

Anyone who attempted to speak up or issue warning about what we might be doing to extremely vulnerable children was branded either a hateful, intolerant bigot, a raving lunatic, a paranoid conspiracy theorist, or all of the above. While it has been immensely satisfying being proved right and seeing politicians being forced to backtrack on previous statements and pledge to take concrete measures to stop children from being harmed, it is also deeply frustrating that it took so long to make people listen.

The Cass Review is the watershed moment that I've been campaigning for, for many years. Within the space of a week, the Government has promised to take measures to force the adult gender clinics to co-operate, so we can find out what happened to children who transitioned. The Health Secretary

has also proposed a ban on private clinics and children, and young people are not going to be allowed to socially transition, without first having serious therapy.

Nobody under the age of 25 is going to be rushed into transition, but instead of being referred to an adult clinic, will attend follow-through services and be offered holistic therapy, recognising that despite being legal adults, the brains of young people are not fully developed.

Not only will puberty blockers be banned for under 16s, but the NHS has said they are now considering banning cross sex hormones for the under 18s.

In total, the Cass Report has made 32 recommendations all of which are very welcome, but being an evidence-based medical document, does still not go quite far enough, in that it still gives scope for children to be given this life-changing medication as part of a clinical trial. No child should be thought of as a guinea pig.

There are also many questions to ask and a reckoning to be had, given the deleterious effect gender ideology has had on society, with even some Catholic schools pandering to this dodgy doctrine. There is much work still to be done and it is regrettable that this is a debate that apart from the pronouncements of Pope Francis, that Catholic leaders have largely stayed silent on, preferring to leave it to the experts.

The main thing is that at least now society is finally waking up to what has been done to vulnerable children in plain sight, under the guise of liberal progressivism.

It is, not the end, but praise God, the beginning of the end.

# Pro-lifers to show their opposition on abortion act's 56th anniversary

Andy Drozdziak

On the 56th anniversary of the implementation of the Abortion Act, a leading pro-life group is calling on Catholics to ask for God's "strength and guidance" as the movement faces the possible legalisation of abortion until birth for any reason.

On Saturday 27th April, at 7.30pm, March For Life UK will be holding a candlelight prayer vigil on Westminster Cathedral Piazza (the pedestrian area right outside the front doors of Westminster Cathedral) to mark the implementation of the 1967 Abortion Act.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, co-director of March For Life UK, told the *Universe*: "There is a greater need than ever to turn to God to ask for His strength and guidance."

Parliament is currently considering amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill, potentially altering abortion legislation for the first time in over three decades.

One amendment, championed by Labour MP Diana Johnson, seeks to stop women from being prosecuted for terminating pregnancies past the 24-week mark, and has garnered the support of 35 MPs across various parties.

If successful, this would mean



The scene at the vigil in 2023. With pro-abortion groups pushing for an even more extreme policy on abortion, it is vital pro-lifers make their opposition to such policies clear

that abortion would be available until birth.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce underlined the importance of responding to such challenges.

"There are many concerns for the pro-life movement at the moment, with the push for so called 'decriminalisation' (which in practice will mean abortion till birth for any reason), national buffer zones, pills by post, free speech at universities and

even freedom of thought near abortion centres," she said.

"We also need to pause and reflect on the impact the last 56 years has had on our nation and pray for God's mercy.

"This is what March for Life UK will be doing on the anniversary of the implementation of the Abortion Act, Saturday 27th April, 7.30pm."

Isabel outlined the content of the vigil, encouraging attendees to have

a 'heart ready to pray.'

"We would like Christians of all denominations to join us outside at the Westminster Cathedral plaza for a time of prayerful witness by candlelight," she said.

"We will have speakers from the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Evangelical and Orthodox churches sharing some words with us as well as it being an opportunity to pray together.

"Candles and posters will be provided so there's no need to bring your own - just have ears ready to hear and a heart ready to pray.

"It would be great if we had a large crowd to solemnly and prayerfully mark this day."

For further information, visit the March For Life website: <https://www.marchforlife.co.uk/>

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## In Brief

### Police ignore most car thefts

Police failed to attend more than 70 per cent of car thefts last year despite an increase in incidents, official figures show.

Some 30,900 car thefts had no police officer attending the scene in 2023, accounting for 72 per cent of all cases, according to the figures obtained by the Liberal Democrats under freedom of information laws. The number of unattended thefts has risen dramatically compared to previous years, up 32 per cent on 2021, which saw 22,979 unattended car theft incidents.

### Hate crime claims not followed up

Police Scotland have admitted that only two out of more than 7,000 alleged hate crimes reported to them under Scotland's new laws that outlaw the "stirring up" of hatred are being pursued.

While Police Scotland identified 240 offences in the first week of Humza Yousaf's hate crime laws coming into force, only nine of these were being investigated as "stirring up" offences. The rest related to "aggravators" for existing crimes.

It has now emerged that all but two of the nine investigations have been dismissed as hate crimes by Police Scotland.

### Yousaf has 'contempt for women' - Rowling

JK Rowling has accused Humza Yousaf of showing "absolute contempt for women" over his plans to ensure men identifying as female are protected by a new misogyny law.

The Harry Potter author said that males were set to receive "double protection" as a result of legislation that the SNP claims is to protect women, after the First Minister said transgender women fell within its scope. Trans people, including cross-dressers, are already protected under the SNP's hate crime laws, though it rejected calls to include women in that legislation.

### 'Early-warning' skin patches offer hope

Lung transplant patients are to be given "skin patches" from their donor in the hope it could cut organ rejection rates by half.

The trial by Oxford University and NHS Blood and Transplant will investigate whether the patches can be used as an early warning system to identify lung rejection, as the skin rejects earlier than other organs.

Rejection shows as a rash on the donated skin patch, often before the body has started to reject the lungs.

# Compromise pact ushers in a tougher EU line on migration

CATHOLIC COMMENT

**Simon Usherwood**



## What are the EU's new migration rules, and why did they take so long to pass?

The European Parliament has passed a landmark package of laws to overhaul its rules on borders and migration. The Pact on Migration and Asylum comes after nearly a decade of deadlock on migration policy, kicked off by the tumultuous migration crisis of 2015.

That year, roughly a million people made hazardous journeys across the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas to reach the presumed safety of Europe. That volume of migrants, mainly refugees and asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East, overwhelmed several EU member states. Italy and Greece in particular found themselves hosting many thousands of people in temporary camps, with insufficient support for people often suffering from their journeys.

At the time, the EU's policies to limit those seeking asylum from moving from one state to the next, making a series of asylum applications, proved inadequate. These arrangements were put in place in the late 1990s, after the end of the Cold War led to a significant volume of migration into and around Europe. In contrast, 2015 impacted many countries that previously had not experienced any significant immigration.

States like Hungary that didn't have these migrants arriving on their shores either felt a lack of responsibility or even claimed there was a threat to European civilisation. This resulted in (not so) temporary reintroductions of border controls with neighbouring EU states to stop the flows of people trying to reach places like Germany or Sweden.

The European Commission first proposed a Pact on Migration and Asylum later in 2015. This package of measures – much amended but still following the original intentions – has only just now been signed off, following a vote in the European Parliament.

The pact is essentially a trade-off between the different interests of member states. The countries where migrants first arrive, such as Italy and Greece, are given more



A boat crowded with migrants is intercepted in the Mediterranean

powers to remove people unlikely to be eligible for asylum.

For other states, there is a choice between agreeing to host people or – if they are unwilling to do that – making a financial contribution to those that do.

While this might appear to be a reasonable compromise between where migrants arrive and where they end up, in practice every element of the pact has been controversial. In the end, the centre-right European People's Party and some of the centre-left Socialist and Democrat group backed the pact. The Greens and various leftwing MEPs led opposition that nearly defeated parts of the legislative bundle. This explains the slow progress.

Human rights groups and academics have been consistent in their criticism of the pact throughout the past nine years, deeming it an undermining of the international system of asylum. They argue the pact puts refugees at higher risk of being effectively detained and denied a fair processing of their asylum claims, in contradiction with international law on treatment of refugees.

Another criticism is over the pact giving member states the option to work around much asylum law in exceptional circumstances, which might well be at those periods when need is greatest.

### Domestic concerns before international rights

Member states themselves have

found it very hard to agree on a number of key elements. The pact gives states a mechanism to remove those who fail to secure asylum, sending them either to their country of origin or to a third country.

For states such as Germany, the onus was to ensure that any such removals should be to places that are safe, fully respecting human rights. However, others, led by Italy, wanted more flexibility, driven by a desire to maximise the number of places that they could make use of.

### A classic EU compromise

The compromise in the EU ultimately broke mostly towards this latter camp. The EU maintained a commitment to destinations being safe, but has given member states the power to make individual determinations about which countries meet that requirement.

Another controversial aspect was the proposal of mandatory quotas of relocations across the EU. This was intended to avoid over-burdening states of first entry, and to make more solid demonstrations of European solidarity in the face of shared challenges.

For member states in central and eastern Europe which had been the most vociferous about keeping out migrants in 2015, this was the main sticking point. The resulting compromise was a *quid pro quo*, allowing states to pay for someone else to host more asylum seekers.

But the amount of that payment also proved difficult, since the countries involved are among the poorer parts of the union.

### From 'crisis' to welcome

As these negotiations dragged on for nine years, the numbers of migrants using the routes from the south and south east have dropped back to levels well below those of 2015. In their place, the past two years have seen the EU accept and welcome several million Ukrainian refugees.

There is a stark contrast between 2015's panic and talk of a 'migration crisis' and 2022's rapid and very comprehensive programme for Ukrainians fleeing Russia, without the need for the tools set out in the new pact. This highlights how the debate has been bound up in a wider political question of how to handle the rise of populist and radical-right politics in Europe – and who is and isn't welcome.

As much as anything, the pact is a product of centrist politicians not wanting to be outflanked on the question of migration.

The long process to get to this week's decision seems to have been driven much more by local political considerations, than by what might be best for those who have risked everything to find a place of safety.

**Simon Usherwood is a Professor of Politics & International Studies, The Open University**

# Sir David's respect for all remembered at unveiling of statue in Southend

**Andy Drozdziak**

A statue has been unveiled in Southend-On-Sea in honour of murdered Catholic MP Sir David Amess.

Catholic Conservative MP Sir David Amess, 69, was stabbed to death on 15th October 2021 while meeting constituents in Leigh-On-Sea. He was repeatedly stabbed by Ali Harbi Ali, who was given a whole-life sentence.

A large crowd gathered last Thursday to witness the unveiling, including Catholic peer Lord Alton, Catholic former MP Ann Widdecombe and former Home Secretary Dame Priti Patel.

The statue, which was designed by British sculptor Andrew Lilley, was blessed by Catholic priest Fr Jeffrey Woolnough of St Peter's Catholic Church in Eastwood, Southend, close to the spot where Sir David was murdered.

Lord Alton, who was a close



friend of Sir David, praised the former MP for his work striving to uphold human dignity during the unveiling ceremony.

Lord Alton said: "Sir David's belief was that every person is of infinite worth; that human dignity must be upheld; and whatever our politics we must unite against injustice."

Lord Alton also praised the 'wonderful' music from Music Man Project.

Sir David was a practising Catholic who led the All [Party] Parliamentary Group to the Holy See and met the Pope several times. He also undertook pro-life work.

During the unveiling, Ann Widdecombe read out a statement on behalf of Sir David's family.

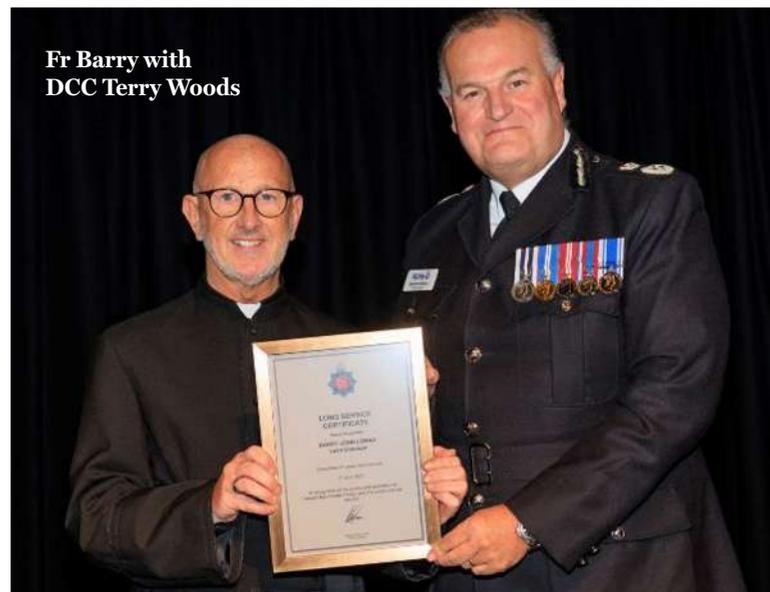
"David is hugely missed and as a family we are devastated by his loss, but events like today make us feel that he is with us forever and that his light remains. I and all my family thank you so much."

Also in attendance was current Southend MP Anna Firth, who said: "What an honour it was today to welcome all these wonderful people to Southend for the unveiling of the statue of Sir David Amess to honour his memory and his lifetime of service to the city of Southend-On-Sea.

"People smiled, the sun shone and the sea sparkled, just how Sir David would have wanted it."



Lord Alton speaking at the event.  
Photo: Andrew Rosindell MP on X



Fr Barry with DCC Terry Woods

## Police force honours long-serving chaplain

A Salford priest has received a special award after more than 20 years of service with the police.

Fr Barry Lomax, previously based at Salford Cathedral, has served as a chaplain for the police for the past 23 years, providing a listening ear and support for force officers.

Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Terry Woods, said 'Fr B' is "one of our most well-known chaplains." "He's always there to see how you are with a completely impartial listening ear."

Fr Barry became a volunteer chaplain with GMP in 2001, with Q District Oldham. He recalled: "We have enjoyed some great times, but I remember only too well sad events. Sadly, a few months prior to my joining, PC Alison Armitage was killed while making an arrest. Some years later, PC Nichola Hughes and PC Fiona Bone were also killed on duty and I remember well, like so many others, that terribly sad day.

"These tragedies had a devastating effect on the GMP and the community, but it highlighted the ministry chaplaincy could offer."

Fr Barry Lomax was awarded the Long Service Certificate in a celebration event. Last year, he took up on a full-time position with the force in order to head up and grow the chaplaincy service at GMP.

Fr Barry's aim is to "bring chaplaincy back to where it once was" as the number of chaplains has drastically decreased.

Fr Barry said: "I'm passionate about Police chaplaincy and my aim as Force Lead Chaplain is to try and bring chaplaincy back to where it once was by being a presence around the force, and by recruiting ministers from the many faiths that serve our various communities who are pleased and able to give support to our officers and staff."

Fr Barry meets new recruits at the GMP training school, Sedgley Park, meets new officers in their first week and attends their attestation on day two.

Reflecting on his chaplaincy journey, Fr Barry said: "Being GMP's Lead Chaplain has allowed me the privilege of being part of the lives of our officers and staff, too."

## Cornerstone thanks TV star after quiz show success

**Andy Drozdziak**

An *Emmerdale* star has raised funds for Cornerstone Salford by winning on BBC One show *Bridge of Lies*.

*Emmerdale*'s Chris Bisson announced at the start of the show that he was looking to raise funds for Cornerstone Salford.

He was joined by *EastEnders* Danielle Harold, *Hollyoaks*'s Lucy-Jo Hudson and *Coronation Street*'s Simon Gregson in the celebrity version of the popular quiz show, which is hosted by ex-*EastEnders* hard man Ross Kemp.

Chris told Ross: "I'm playing for a homeless refuge where I grew up called Cornerstone, which is run by Caritas Salford."

*Bridge Of Lies* requires a group of contestants to individually take turns to cross the 'Bridge of Lies', a digital floor which shows both cor-

rect and incorrect answers in a chosen category, and build up a prize fund which contributes toward a final cash prize.

The quartet managed to win £6,900 for their respective charities.

Cornerstone is a day centre run by Catholic charity Caritas Salford, supporting those in Manchester who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

Writing on X, formerly known as Twitter, Cornerstone Salford thanked Chris. "Thank you to the amazing @ChrisBisson who took part in *Bridge of Lies* on BBC One tonight in aid of our Cornerstone Centre. Well done Chris. Thanks for choosing our charity to support," the charity wrote.

Chris is pictured right with his fellow contestants





## Volunteering quality mark delight for Pact

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic prisoner support charity Pact has attained the Investing in Volunteers (IiV) quality mark for the first time, demonstrating its commitment to volunteering.

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for all organisations involving volunteers. It aims to improve the quality of the volunteering experience and demonstrates that organisations value their contribution.

Pact – the national Catholic charity supporting people in prison and their children and families – was assessed against six quality areas, and excelled in all aspects of working with its volunteers. Pact 'demonstrated a real commitment to volunteering; its policies and procedures meet nationally recognised standards.'

In particular, assessors praised Pact's understanding of the value of volunteering and demonstrating the difference volunteers make to people in prison and their families.

Pact's head of volunteering, Stuart Lynch, said: "We are thrilled to attain the IiV Quality standard. This is the result of a tremendous team effort spanning nine months, with 39 volunteers and 16 staff members participating in the final assessment.

"We extend our gratitude to everyone who contributed their time and support, enabling us to receive this remarkable recognition. Thank you."

Meanwhile, Professor Jim McManus has been appointed as the new Chair of Pact.

Jim is the National Director of Health and Wellbeing at Public Health Wales and has previously held several senior posts in the health sector, including roles at Hertfordshire County Council and as President of the UK Association of Directors of Public Health. He has also been a pro-bono public health advisor to Pact.

Professor Jim said: "This is a great time to be joining Pact as the charity continues to grow and provide its crucial services to ever greater numbers of people. It's an honour to represent an organisation whose staff work so tirelessly to support prisoners and their families to make a fresh start.

He paid tribute to his predecessor, Phil Taylor, for "steering Pact through a period of significant change and growth."

# Charity says strain starting to show on Ukrainian seafarers

Catholic Seafarer charity Stella Maris is warning that Ukrainian seafarers are experiencing increased levels of loneliness and depression amid fears of conscription if they return home as the war continues.

Stella Maris regional port chaplains for Southampton and Southern ports, Charles Stuart and Gregory Hogan, who make multiple daily ship visits, say Ukrainian seafarers are under increasing strain.

Gregory said: "At first there was the shock of the invasion for Ukrainians and real worry about whether family and friends could get out of dangerous areas. Now there is dealing with the compounded pressure of more than two years of war. It is a deeply depressing and worrying situation with no end in sight.

"In addition, there is the very real fear of being conscripted into the army if they return home."

UK charity Stella Maris is the maritime agency of the Catholic church. Stella Maris chaplains and ship visitors provide seafarers and fishers with pastoral and practical support, information and a listening ear.

Gregory noted that improved WiFi access can create more anxiety and feelings of helplessness when seafarers access media and war reports. "I met a captain who came in and then started crying," he said.

"His mother-in-law was in one of the areas being bombed and he hadn't heard from her, yet he was also having to take charge of his ship. We see that many of the sea-



Charles Stuart and Gregory Hogan with a group of seafarers during a ship visit

farers can be exhausted. They can access so much information online now, more than ever before, and have access to distressing, often graphic, news reports.

"But while they can access the latest news, they feel powerless to do anything about it. The ability to stay in touch can also lead to anxiety. We have seen seafarers deeply distressed because they haven't heard from their wife or partner or parents in 24 hours. They might worry about this all night and then have to work the next day in an exhausting role."

Gregory reports growing fears of conscription among younger seafar-

ers. "We speak to many who feel they have no option but to keep working," he reveals. "They feel they cannot return to Ukraine for fear of being conscripted yet some still have relatives in Ukraine, who they dearly want to visit, but again there is that fear of conscription should they go back. They have no option but to work continually in a challenging, often lonely role."

Charles, meanwhile, pointed out that the need to keep working and being confined to ship for lengthy periods is taking a huge toll.

"We regularly meet seafarers who may not be able to go ashore for many weeks or even months," he

said. "We must all, as an industry try and tackle this pattern. Shore leave is essential. And having someone independent from the ship to talk to in confidence, like Stella Maris, is equally vital."

Gregory added that there are no winners in the conflict, with Russian crew members facing challenges too.

He said: "One captain took me aside and on his computer showed me how his pension had been destroyed, and he blamed Putin.

"He was incredibly angry that the savings on which his parents' healthcare relied had been wiped out."

## You little imp: Medieval drain shocks couple

A couple from Lincoln believe they have discovered a 14th century relic in their bathroom.

Rory Vorster, who lives on Vicar's Court in Lincoln in the grounds of Lincoln Cathedral, found a trap-door styled opening above their toilet. Opening the trap-door, Rory saw a large slab of stone with what appears to be the head of a Lincoln Imp. Rory discovered it as he was cleaning the bathroom and called out to his wife, Tracy. "I shouted up to my wife and said 'I've found a thing!', he said.

According to the Civic Trust, it is an "elaborate drain" from the mid-to-late 14th century. Lincoln Cathedral was built in the late 11th century, while the medieval Bishop's Palace was built in the 12th century, meaning this relic dates a couple of hundred years later than the palace next door to Tracy and Rory's home.

Situated in the Minster Yard to the south of Lincoln Cathedral, Vicar's Court was founded by a college of priests in the 13th century, and



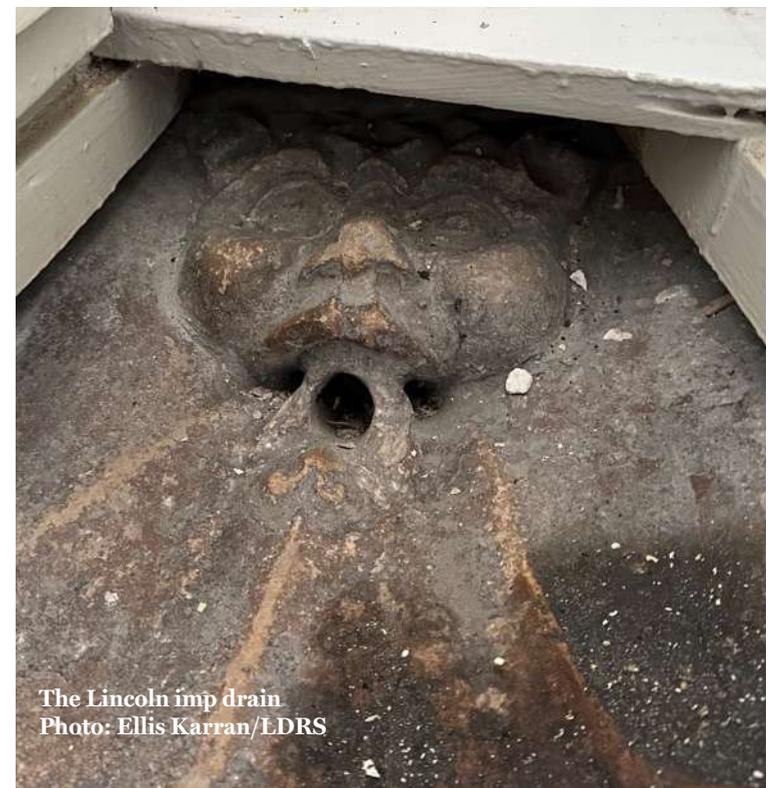
was partly demolished by the English Civil War.

A Grade I listed building remains, along with some houses which have been lived in ever since. These houses can only be rented since they belong to Lincoln Cathedral.

Mrs Vorster said: "You look at the outside of the house and that is historical enough but to now find something inside is amazing."

Mr Vorster said: "The whole of the house has kind of a hollow walling, so we immediately thought there could be more. In fact, we're almost certain now."

"The previous occupant had been here for over 20 years, so surely they knew. But we had absolutely no clue it was there."



The Lincoln imp drain  
Photo: Ellis Karran/LDRS

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## In Brief

### Catholics need to channel passion towards works of common good

While intense feelings or drive – passions – are natural, Christians know they must be tamed and channelled toward what is good, Pope Francis said.

The virtue of fortitude, “the most ‘combative’ of the virtues,” helps a person control their passions but also gives them the strength to overcome fear and anxiety when faced with the difficulties of life, the pope told visitors and pilgrims at his weekly general audience.

Continuing his series of talks about virtues, the pope quoted the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions.”

Fortitude “takes the challenge of evil in the world seriously,” he said, and that is increasingly rare “in our comfortable Western world.”

### Marginalising the disabled is evil of ‘throwaway culture’

Today’s “throwaway culture,” driven by “profit, efficiency and success,” marginalises people with disabilities and threatens their God-given dignity, Pope Francis said.

Utilitarian and functional criteria which decides the value of a human life leads to “serious violations of the rights of the weakest” and creates “great injustice and inequality,” he told the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

Today’s culture erodes the value of disabled persons in the eyes of society, he said: “We see the tendency that leads one to consider their own existence a burden to his- or herself and to his or her loved ones.”

“The spread of this mentality transforms the throwaway culture into a culture of death,” he said, condemning the idea that certain lives are “not needed,” such as the unborn who are aborted or the elderly who pursue assisted suicide.

To combat a “throwaway culture,” Pope Francis proposed promoting a “culture of inclusion” which removes the barriers that impede all people from accessing basic rights and freedoms.

# Vatican confirms pope will make Asian trip in autumn

Pope Francis is planning to make the longest trip of his papacy in September, visiting Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Singapore, the Vatican press office has announced.

During the 12-day Asian tour, he will visit Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, from 3rd-6th September; Port Moresby and Vanimo, Papua New Guinea, from 6th-9th September; Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, from 9th-11th September; and Singapore, from 11th-13th.

It will be the first papal trip since Francis made the short hop across to Marseille in the south of France

in September 2023, so unless another visit is organised before he travels to Asia, he will have gone nearly 12 months between overseas visits.

It had been planned for him to visit the UN climate conference in Dubai in December, but he was forced to pull out after going down with a bout of bronchitis.

Despite his sometimes failing health, the Asian trip will be the longest of his papacy. In September 2015 he spent eight days in Cuba and the United States.

In the official confirmation of his Asia trip the Vatican made no men-

tion of including Vietnam in the itinerary. However, it is known that the pope is keen to visit the country, and speculation that he may add Vietnam to this trip intensified after Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, the Vatican foreign minister, visited the country last week. The Vatican said that during talks with Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Foreign Minister Bùi Thanh Sơn and Home Affairs Minister Pham Thi Thanh Trà, a possible papal trip was discussed.

Pope Francis would be the third pope to visit Indonesia, by population the largest Muslim nation on

the planet. St. Paul VI visited in 1970, and St. John Paul II went to the country in 1989 on a trip that also included Timor-Leste, when it was part of Indonesia and known as East Timor.

St. John Paul II made two brief visits to Papua New Guinea in 1984 and 1995.

The Polish pope, who set an absolute record for both the number of countries he visited and the number of trips he made, had spent five hours in Singapore in 1986 during a trip that included Bangladesh, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia and the Seychelles.



Left, Pope Francis offers a high five to young people while on a surprise visit to a catechism class at St. John Vianney parish in the east of Rome.

The pope met with about 200 children, talking to them about prayer and answering their questions on faith. He also brought them chocolate Easter eggs and rosaries. The visit was part of the pope’s ‘School of Prayer’ initiative, which itself is part of the Holy Year 2025. The schools project is like the pope’s ‘Fridays of Mercy’ initiative during the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2015-2016, when the pope visited people on the peripheries including babies in a neonatal unit, a centre for the blind and a housing project.

## I’m on your side says pope as he blesses Peruvian farmers caught up in land row

### Justin McLellan

Pope Francis expressed his support for peasant farmers in northern Peru threatened to be evicted off what they claim is their ancestral territory by companies associated with a Catholic movement.

“I know what is happening to you. Defend the land, don’t let it be stolen,” the pope said in a video message to the farmers that was widely circulated online. The video was posted the next day on X by the office of Archbishop Carlos Gustavo Castillo Mattasoglio of Lima.

Pope Francis directed his message to the peasant farming communities of Piura in northern Peru, which have accused companies associated with the Catholic movement Sodalitium Christianae Vitae of expropriating their ancestral

lands and harassing the farmers with threatened legal action.

The land dispute is still being considered by a Peruvian court.

“Thank you for what you do,” the pope told the farmers in the video message. “From here, I pray for you and I gladly give you my blessing.”

In July 2023, Pope Francis sent the Vatican’s top abuse investigators, Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta and Spanish Msgr. Jordi Bertomeu, to investigate the Sodalitium in Peru, which had been accused of systemic spiritual, psychological and sexual abuse among its ranks as well as financial corruption.

During their investigation, the pair met with members of the peasant community of Catacao near Piura. The community’s leader, Marce-

lino Ynga, said he told the Vatican delegation about the harassment and abuse suffered at the hands of Sodalitium-associated organisations, such as the St. John the Baptist Civil Association, which he said had slandered and threatened the farmers in order to drive them off their land.

Responding to Pope Francis’ video message, Ynga thanked the pope for launching the investigation into the Sodalitium, which he called a “criminal organisation” that attempted “to slander us, interrogate us and imprison us.”

He also said two members of the peasant community were killed in efforts to remove the farmers from their land.

The Vatican said at the start of April that Pope Francis had accept-

ed the resignation of Archbishop José Eguren Anselmi of Piura, a professed member of Sodalitium since 1981.

The Sodalitium was founded in Peru by lay Catholic Luis Fernando Figari in 1971 and was acknowledged as a society of apostolic life; it later grew to operate across Latin America and Italy. Although the movement was first accused of abuse, a 2015 book detailed its alleged psychological and sexual abuse. A 2017 internal investigation found that Figari and other high-ranking members of the movement abused 19 minors and 10 adults. In 2017, the Vatican banned Figari from living with a Sodalitium community, participating in Sodalitium activities or contacting any Sodalitium member.

# Prayer is cure world needs to indifference and individualism

**Justin McLellan**

Today's "growing culture of indifference and individualism" must be countered with prayer and adoration, which inspires solidarity with those in need, Pope Francis said.

Charitable efforts guided and inspired by the Catholic faith "must be continually nourished by participation in the life of the church, the reception of the sacraments, and time spent quietly before the Lord in prayer and adoration," the pope told members of The Papal Foundation and their families.

The foundation describes itself as the only charitable organisation in the United States dedicated to fulfilling the pope's requests for the needs of the Catholic Church. Donors to the foundation, known as Stewards of St. Peter, make annual pilgrimages to Rome and have an opportunity to meet the pope.

Pope Francis reminded the group that the pilgrimage this year is taking place during the Year of Prayer in preparation for the Holy Year 2025, and he encouraged them to "not forget to adore the Lord" in silent adoration. "We have neglected this form of prayer and we need to take it up again: adoring the Lord in silence."

"Through our perseverance in prayer, we gradually become 'a single heart and soul' with both Jesus and others, which then translates into solidarity and the sharing of our daily bread," he said, referencing a passage from the Acts of the Apostles.

The pope noted that although the donors may not personally meet the beneficiaries of their generosity, "the programmes of The Papal Foundation foster a spiritual and fraternal bond with people from many different cultures, languages and regions who receive assistance."

The foundation will spend \$14.74 million in grants, scholarships and humanitarian aid linked to the Church in 2024.

Close to \$10 million will be distributed to grant recipients identified by the Vatican, supporting 118 projects in more than 60 countries, from basic needs such as access to clean water to renovating schools, churches, convents and seminaries.

In their meeting, Pope Francis thanked the group for helping the successors of St. Peter "to build up many local churches and care for large numbers of the less fortunate."

Cardinals O'Malley, Blase J. Cupich of Chicago and Wilton D. Gregory of Washington attended the meeting as trustees of the foundation, as well as Archbishops Samuel J. Aquila of Denver and Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans and Bishop James Checchio of Metuchen, New Jersey.

According to the foundation's website, it has awarded more than \$200 million in grants and scholarships selected by the popes since its founding in 1988.

The foundation prioritises the needs of the poor and vulnerable "in a society where the divide between rich and poor continues to grow."



Pope Francis blesses a pregnant woman's child during a meeting with members of The Papal Foundation and their families at the Vatican

## Reading the Bible purifies our faith

In the Bible, Jesus never explains suffering, but he reaches out to those who are hurting, heals them and ultimately, on the cross, shares and redeems the suffering of all humanity, Pope Francis said.

Jesus "does not approach pain with generic encouragement and sterile consolation, but he embraces the drama, allowing himself to be touched by it," the pope said during

a meeting with members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

Pope Francis said the Bible "is illuminating" on the topic of sickness and suffering, because "it does not leave us a handbook of nice words or a collection of feelings, but shows us faces, encounters and stories – concrete ones."

Studying scripture and praying with the Bible, the pope said, helps

people "purify their religious imaginations of mistaken attitudes."

"The Word of God is a powerful antidote to any closure, abstraction and ideologisation of faith," he said. But "read in the spirit in which it was written, it increases passion for God and human beings, triggers charity and revives apostolic zeal. Therefore, the Church has a constant need to drink from the Word."



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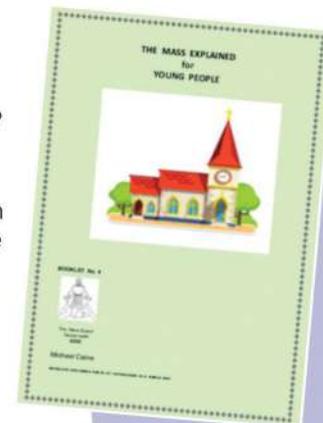
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## Tit-for-tat response has to end

Catholic foreign policy experts in the US have called on the White House to do all it can to prevent further escalation in the region.

The Iranian aerial attack on Israel over 13th-14th April followed a suspected Israeli strike two weeks prior on an Iranian consular building in Damascus, Syria, killing 16 people including two Iranian generals.

Iran launched over 300 drones, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles at Israel in retaliation, and although 99 per cent were shot down and little damage was caused, Israel vowed to respond.

Mary Ellen O'Connell, a professor at Notre Dame Law School who specialises in international law and conflict resolution, said Israel's success in countering nearly all of Iran's aerial strikes "is a dramatic demonstration of the true legal and moral meaning of 'self-defence,'" meaning "to 'halt and repel' incoming attacks."

O'Connell said "the tit-for-tat retaliatory cycle needs to end" and that President Joe Biden should ensure the US and its allies abide by the standard of "lawful, moral and effective" self-defence it put in action.

Robert Kennedy, a professor of Catholic studies at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, agreed that the US is "facing some very difficult choices" in the broader conflict, but among them "is simply to take steps to make it clear that those who want Israel to disappear cannot win."

The attack marked Iran's first direct military assault on Israel, raising concern the conflict could spread through the region.

# Pope's appeal for peace ignored as Middle East on knife edge

One day before Iran launched missiles and exploding drones at Israel, Pope Francis sent a message to viewers of Saudi Arabia's Al Arabiya Network pleading for peace throughout the Middle East.

"The light of life, which shines all around us and embraces us from on high, calls us to leave behind the dark night of hatred, so that, in accordance with the Creator's will, stars may shine brightly upon our world, rather than the glare of missiles lighting up the heavens and raining down fire to devastate the earth," the pope said in the message released on 12th April.

The very next night, Iran launched hundreds of missiles and

drones at Israel; most were intercepted, with remarkably few injuries on the ground.

Pope Francis urged the people of the Middle East to think of the children.

"Let us all look to the future with the eyes of children," he said. "They do not ask who is the enemy to be destroyed, but who are the friends with whom they can play. They need homes, parks and schools, not tombs and mass graves."

Pope Francis said the recent celebrations of Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan and of Easter call believers to "lift our eyes to heaven and to worship the Lord, 'merciful and almighty,'" an attitude that "stands in

sharp contrast with the sorrow we feel for the blood presently being shed in the blessed lands of the Middle East."

"God is peace and he desires peace," the pope said.

Believers in God must oppose war, which does not resolve problems but only increases hostility, he said. "It does not open new vistas but stifles all hope."

Peace is possible, he said, but people must set aside their hatred and prejudices and instead respect the beliefs of others and recognize their right to exist and to live in security and that includes the right of both Israelis and Palestinians to have their own nations.

Pope Francis again called for "an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, where a humanitarian catastrophe is ongoing. May aid be allowed to reach the Palestinian people who are suffering greatly," and he repeated his call for Hamas to release the hostages kidnapped in Israel in October.

But he said he also was worried about Syria, Lebanon and the entire Middle East.

"Let us not allow the flames of resentment to spread, fanned by the baleful winds of the arms race," he said. "Let us not allow war to spread!"

"Let us put an end to the inertia of evil!"

## Candidates unite in talks with Church over Mexico violence

Claudia Sheinbaum and Xóchitl Gálvez, the two candidates most likely to top the poll in Mexico's forthcoming general election, have met with bishops during their conference's semi-annual plenary assembly near Mexico City to discuss ways to combat the increasing lawlessness in the country.

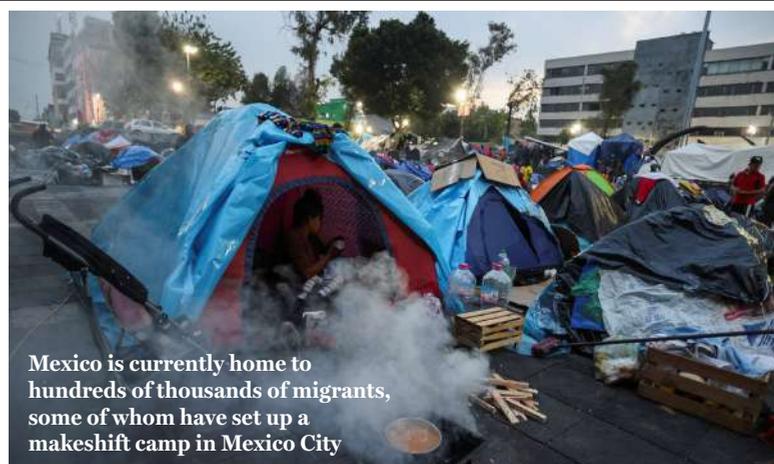
"Only through dialogue can we move ahead as a society," Gálvez said on X after meeting the bishops. "I'm convinced that churches play a fundamental role in the

construction of peace and the social fabric."

Her rival Sheinbaum, candidate for the ruling Morena party, agreed, adding: "We recognise Pope Francis's humanist thinking and the labour done by the bishops to attend to the causes that generate violence."

"Respecting religious freedom is a conviction of our movement."

The bishops' conference reiterated its call for pursuing peace in Mexico, where conflicts between drug cartels and criminal activity



Mexico is currently home to hundreds of thousands of migrants, some of whom have set up a makeshift camp in Mexico City

claimed more than 30,000 lives for each of the past six years and thousands more disappear annually.

"We continue to see that violence causes the ravages of pain, suffering and death everywhere. With sadness we perceive that impunity, corruption, injustice, poverty and

constant migration are social realities present in our communities," the conference said. "There are many Mexicans who long for a more united, safer, fairer, freer and more developed Mexico," added the statement from the bishops' conference.

## Kenyan Government stopping Church's mission claim bishops

**Fredrick Nzwilli**

Catholic bishops in Kenya have criticised what they see as Government interference in schools and hospitals owned by the Church, while underlining their right to manage the institutions.

The bishops made their claims during a conference during which they addressed a range of issues, including education, the unreasonable cost of missionary work permits and crippling debts of hospitals incurred through the National Health Insurance Fund.

The bishops expressed their concern about the changing dynamics of the relationship between the Church and the government. "We are concerned about the deliberate intent to reduce and undermine the role of the Catholic Church, and indeed all faiths, as safeguards of morality in society. We especially decry this

subversion in the fields of education and health," Archbishop Maurice Muhatia Makumba of Kisumu, the newly elected president of the Kenyan bishops' conference, said.

According to the bishops, the proposed Basic Education Bill 2024 breaches the original arrangement between the Church and the state on how education institutions founded by the Church were to be managed.

Church-run hospitals also are in trouble, with bishops saying they are being "crippled" by the Government failure to remit huge amounts they owe the National Hospital Insurance Fund. "As of now, this has accrued to \$16 million. The effect is that most of our hospitals are crippled and not able to operate optimally, and therefore offer services to the needy," bishops said.



# Church begs for calm after second knife attack

Australian religious and political leaders have called for calm and unity after the attempted murder of an Assyrian Orthodox clergyman at his church's altar in Sydney's western suburbs, just days after a separate knife attack claimed six lives in Sydney's Bondi Junction mall.

Assyrian Orthodox Bishop Mari Emmanuel, who rose to prominence during the Covid-19 pandemic for his fiery YouTube sermons in which he spoke out against lockdowns and vaccines, was stabbed on 15th April at the altar of Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Wakeley, an independent church he established in 2015.

In a now-removed livestream, a man in dark clothing could be seen approaching the altar and stabbing Bishop Emmanuel multiple times before congregants rushed up to stop the attack.

Terrified screams could be heard before the stream was ended and deleted.

The 16-year-old attacker was quickly restrained by the congregation, some of whom were injured in the attempt.

The attacker in turn suffered severe injuries from the angry crowd that quickly formed, with police later confirming social media photos and rumors that at least one of his fingers was severed.

Paramedics treated Bishop Emmanuel at the scene, later taking



Assyrian Orthodox Bishop Mari Emmanuel with his attacker

him to hospital where he was reportedly recovering well from non-life-threatening injuries.

New South Wales Police said the attacker had been restrained prior to their arrival, and was arrested and taken to an "undisclosed location."

An estimated 2,000 men quickly converged on the church after the attack, with police responding by deploying the riot squad.

Catholic Weekly photographer Giovanni Portelli was on the scene as the riot hit its peak and saw police, wielding shotguns and assault rifles, deployed to the church as tensions rose.

Batons and pepper spray were

used to disperse the crowd around 10.15 pm. Two police officers were injured, after being hit with bricks, fence pickets and other debris, and several police cars were destroyed.

Members of the community were still cleaning up broken glass, smashed cars and debris the following morning, with the church closed.

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns confirmed the stabbing was a "terrorist act" after convening a council of religious and community leaders overnight to call for calm.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said police believe the attack was "religiously motivated" and also called for calm.

Faith leaders worked hard to ease concerns in the community, with the Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney urging believers to respond with "prayer and peace" rather than fear or anger.

"Video footage of the attack has been especially confronting," the archbishop said, "as were the images of the violence that subsequently occurred outside the church."

Archbishop Fisher urged the faithful "to not respond to these events with fear, avoiding places of worship because they are worried about further attacks, nor with anger, engaging in acts of reprisal or revenge. The best response to violence and fear is prayer and peace."

Fairfield-based Syriac Catholic priest Fr Lenard Ina, who knows Bishop Emmanuel well, said he will forgive his attacker.

"I think Bishop Mari will forgive the person who did this but will also expect him to be judged under the law," Fr Ina said. "I know his personality and I think he will use what has happened to him to show the face of Jesus."

Bishop Robert Rabbat of Australia's Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy told *The Catholic Weekly* that many people in Sydney's multicultural community have come from places where innocent people, including priests, were killed in churches, "which is always hard to comprehend."

"Especially from Iraq, but also Syria, Lebanon and other places where they were hurt and were happy to come here, where it is safe to practice their faith with their leaders," he said. "We also have to try to understand the people who were praying with Mar Mari Emmanuel or waiting to listen to his spiritual talk," he added.

Bishop Emmanuel was a bishop of the Assyrian Ancient Church of the East, before establishing Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Wakeley, and is no longer listed among the clergy of the Assyrian Church's Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon.

He has been a controversial figure since rising to prominence during the pandemic, when he became a focal point for criticism of church closures, lockdown policies and the Australian vaccine programme.

The attack came just days after a knife-wielding man killed six people in a Sydney shopping centre before being shot dead has been identified by Australian police.

Joel Cauchi, 40, sent the crowded Westfield Bondi Junction complex into panic on Saturday when he began stabbing people with a long blade. Five women and a man died. Several others, including a baby, were injured.

Authorities said the attack was "related to the mental health" of Mr Cauchi.

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# Brave nun refuses to leave her flock, no matter what threat the Russians carry

*“If the Russians come – we are terrorists for them, because we are the Catholic Church... God knows, if the Russians come to Zaporizhzhia, none of us nuns would like to be in Russian hands. (But) we are not planning to leave ... we have to be here.”*

## Gina Christian

A woman religious based in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia has asked Catholic media to “tell all the world we suffer” as Russia’s 11-year war and atrocities intensify in Ukraine – and as Western aid is increasingly blocked by sceptical lawmakers.

In a call with Catholic news agency OSV News, Basilian Sister Lucia Murashko said she and her two fellow sisters have no intention of leaving Zaporizhzhia city, held by Ukraine and capital of the surrounding Zaporizhzhia region that is largely under control of Russian occupation forces.

“Everyone knows that the situation right now is more and more difficult,” she admitted. “I ask my sisters from time to time ... if someone wants to go to the western part of Ukraine (which has seen proportionally fewer direct attacks), and they say, ‘No, no, absolutely not.’”

The war, which continues Russian aggression launched in 2014, has been determined to constitute genocide, according to two joint reports issued by the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights.

Shortly after its full-scale invasion in February 2022, Russia seized the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Enerhodar, Europe’s largest such facility, located less than 40 miles from the convent – and the scene of what one nuclear energy expert has called “profound Russian irresponsibility” and “disregard for nuclear ... security.”

But for the sisters, personal safety is outweighed by pastoral need, said Sr Lucia.

“Here there are many people, many people (we serve),” she said. “So we don’t (want) to leave the place because now, in our parish and around our monastery (Ss. Peter and Paul), many young people are gathered ... new people, refugees, those who come to us to receive support. And now they



All smiles: Sister Lucia Murashko shows no sign of fear as she sends a message of love to Ukraine’s supporters in the west

come to pray with us too.”

Sr Lucia – who along with the entire order of Basilian Sisters recently received Catholic Extension’s Lumen Christi Award for their extraordinary efforts to bring Christ to the suffering – told OSV News she and the Zaporizhzhia sisters “hear the explosions” but “continue to do

what we are doing.”

That mission includes reaching villages devastated by Russia’s relentless attacks on civilian infrastructure.

She visited several communities a week earlier – returning for a second trip to one – “because there were many requests for help,” she said.

“We went there and we met the people,” said Sr Lucia. “We helped them, and we also brought 310 packages of detergent.”

Though under constant threat of death, “the people who stay there ... are full of life and hope,” she said. “They value life, that they are alive, and ... they care about the animals (too), dogs and cats.”

She added that “many, many people come now” to pray with the sisters and clergy at the monastery and at two Ukrainian Greek Catholic parishes in the city – St. Volodymyr the Great and the Mother of God of Perpetual Help.

Among those worshipping with the sisters are Ukrainian soldiers, she said.

“They come every Sunday, every feast to pray with us, those for whom it is possible to come,” said Sr Lucia. “If they have a chance, they come to pray with us. They also ask for confession from a priest.”

Sr Lucia said that as Russia has doubled down on attacks while Western aid has dried up, the soldiers are clearly “exhausted,” and “sometimes, some of them are desperate.”

“It is like there is no hope,” she said. “But they have no choice. They say, ‘There is no way we can choose.’ They have to be here, to stay with us, to protect us, even without weapons. ... They will not move from the front line. They will stay to the end.”

A righteous anger helps to sustain them, she said – even as Western politicians call for compromise with the authoritarian regime of Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who along with three other Russian officials is the subject of a war crimes arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court.

Ukrainian soldiers “hope that God will protect us, because they know they are doing the right thing,” said Sr Lucia. “They do not come to destroy anyone, they came here to protect life, our lives. ... They see a lot of deaths of their brothers on the front line ... but they choose to protect us even without weapons. They will fight with their hands. They will not move from their position.”

In the same way, she said, neither will the sisters – or the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which (along with the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic humanitarian organisation Caritas) was “banned” in December 2022 by Kremlin-installed authorities in the occupied Zaporizhzhia region.

The ban “does not affect us directly, but it affects the parishioners of the Greek Catholic Church in the occupied territory,” she said. “They suffer very much, because they cannot pray (publicly), and they have not been able to go to confession for more than a year already, since our priests were sent away from them.”

Two of those priests, Redemptorist Fathers Ivan Levitsky and Bohdan Geleta, have been in Russian captivity since November 2022 for refusing to leave their parishioners in Berdyansk. Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the worldwide Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, has reported both priests have been subjected to torture.

According to at least one human rights watch group, Fr Levitsky was recently moved to a prison in Russia.

Sr Lucia said that she had seen a video of Fr Levitsky that had been circulated online a few months after his capture.

“You could not recognise him,” she said. “He was absolutely a different person; so thin, and his face was so dark.”

His fate could easily become theirs if Russian forces – who have committed tens of thousands of documented atrocities, including rape and sexual mutilation – advance on the city of Zaporizhzhia and further into Ukraine, said Sr Lucia.

“If the Russians come – we are terrorists for them, because we are the Catholic Church,” said Sister Lucia. “God knows, if the Russians come to Zaporizhzhia, none of us Catholic nuns would like to be in Russian hands.

“(But) we are not planning to leave,” she said.

“It is important to be here, to be a Church among the people who pray, who trust God. The future is in God’s hands. ... We have to be here.”

Much of eastern Ukraine has been left in ruins by the Russian assault



# Catholics rise in protest as Europe's politicians looks to liberalise abortion

**Jonathan Luxmoore**

Tens of thousands of Poles have joined Church-backed street protests after legislators pressed ahead with plans to liberalise abortion in the traditionally Catholic country.

"As Poles responsible for our homeland's future and the rights of every person living under our republic's sovereign authority, we demand a halt to subversive actions by the current government and its parliamentary majority against the inherent right to life confirmed in our constitution," protesters said in a resolution.

"The foundation for rights protected by our republic is the natural, inalienable and inviolable dignity of man, whose protection determines the authority and dignity of state and nation."

The resolution was adopted during the National March for Life on 14th April, which was attended in Warsaw by over 50,000 people under the slogan *Niech Żyje Polska!* ('Long live Poland!').

Organisers said the rally – which began with Masses in the capital's two Catholic cathedrals and included the relaying of an unborn child's heartbeat over loudspeakers – was intended as "a social and civic event, but even more a moral event."

They added that the march, matched by a smaller mass demonstration in the northern port of Szczecin, would send "a very clear signal to act, concentrate forces and seek adequate answers" following a decision by Poland's Sejm lower house to refer four separate abortion-liberalising bills to an emergency parliamentary commission.

Speaking after a two-day Sejm debate, Poland's prime minister, Donald Tusk, said the bills reflected "fundamental rights" and would reassure Polish women "they are not the object of attack, contempt or disregard, but truly becoming subjects who decide about themselves."

However, Polish media said the tabling of separate bills by parties in Tusk's coalition highlighted Government divisions over abortion, adding that any liberalisation was certain to be vetoed as unconstitutional by Poland's conservative president, Andrzej Duda, who blocked a Government-backed law in March that would have allowed easy access to morning-after pills, without parental consent, for girls age 15 and over.

The president of the Polish bishops conference, Archbishop Tadeusz Wojda of Gdansk, backed the National March for Life and urged special prayers at all Sunday



Masses. he said: "Respect for life is one of the most important values and basic duties of every human being."

"Millions around the world are making constant efforts to protect human life, especially the most defenseless, conceived and unborn, and to show everyone its beauty and value. ... I trust the efforts of millions of people of goodwill will bring even greater protection," he added.

Poland's 1993 law allows abortions in cases of rape, incest and threats to the life or health of a mother, and was tightened in 2020 when the Constitutional Court removed a right to abortion in cases of "severe and irreparable fetal damage," sparking protests by women's groups.

Liberalisation of the law, which also requires "all necessary help" for pregnant women and single mothers, was promised before Poland's parliamentary election in October by Tusk's Civic Coalition, which also has pledged to restrict religious education, legalise same-sex partnerships and abolish state subsidies for churches.

The Polish protests came in the wake of an European Parliament resolution, calling for pregnancy terminations to be "completely depenalised" across the European

Union's 27 member-states, and for "access to safe and legal abortion" to be included as a fundamental right in EU treaties and conventions.

The resolution, which passed 336-163 with 39 abstentions in the 705-member Parliament, condemned "regressive attempts" to restrict "sexual and reproductive health and rights," and said democracy and the rule of law were threatened in Europe by "ultra-conservative religious and far-right actors" who sought to "undo decades of human rights advances

and impose a harmful worldview."

It praised a "landmark vote" by French lawmakers to make abortion a constitutional right, and deplored "backsliding on abortion rights" and "a pushback on gender equality" in Poland, the United States, Hungary and Malta, as well as continued restrictions in Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Romania and Slovakia.

The resolution praised the Tusk Government's commitment to propose new laws ensuring access to "abortion care," condemned the

right of doctors and healthcare facilities to opt out of abortions, and demanded "safe and free contraceptive methods and means" in all EU countries.

The Brussels-based Commission of EU Bishops' Conferences, COMECE, warned abortion could "never be a fundamental right," and said the resolution embodied an "ideological imposition" by failing to respect "the different cultures and traditions" of member-states, as well as their constitutions and "national competences."

"We work for a Europe where women can live their maternity freely, as a gift for them and for society, and where being a mother is in no way a limitation for personal, social and professional life," COMECE said.

"The EU cannot impose on others, inside and outside its borders, ideological positions on the human person, sexuality and gender, marriage and family etc. Nor can its Charter of Fundamental Rights include rights that are divisive and not recognised by all."

COMECE's Spanish secretary-general, Mgr. Manuel Barrios Prieto, told Vatican News the EU's bishops were "saddened" the abortion resolution had been backed by "representatives of parties referring to the tradition of Christian democracy," and would "appeal to the consciences of politicians and voters" in upcoming European Parliament elections.

The Brussels-based Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe accused members of the European Parliament of "using women as political pawns" and dismissed the Parliament vote as "cynical political posturing before the European elections," adding that no international court, including the European Court of Human Rights, recognised a "right to abortion."



Photo: Pawel Kula



*“The flames and the fall of the spire sent shockwaves around the world, but the firemen did an extraordinary job, and in the end we lost a frame, a roof, a spire, a few pieces of vaulting, but no more. Thanks to that, in the end, we will have an even more beautiful cathedral than before the fire.”*

# Five years on from disaster, France is ready to welcome back its finest church

**‘It will be breathtaking,’ says Notre Dame’s chief architect, as 8th December confirmed as iconic church’s reopening date**

**Caroline de Sury**

Philippe Villeneuve, Notre Dame Cathedral’s chief architect, learned about the 2019 fire 300 miles from Paris and rushed to the capital to help firefighters save the iconic monument.

For France’s top architect of historical sites, the evening of 15th April, 2019, was especially dark as Notre Dame Cathedral was already his passion when he was a little boy. Since the inferno, he has worked tirelessly to finalise major parts of renovations, all of which will come to a head when the cathedral is reopened on 8th December.

In fact, it was a fascination with Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, the French architect who restored the cathedral in the 19th century, that inspired Villeneuve to become an architect of historic monuments. A graduate of École Nationale Supérieure D’architecture de Paris Val-de-Seine, Paris’ architecture university, he has been entrusted with the renovation of many iconic monuments, including one of the most well-known castles in the Loire Valley – Chambord.

In 2013, he was asked to renovate part of Notre Dame in Paris – including repairing the stonework of the flying buttresses and the fissures in Viollet-le-Duc’s spire.

When the fire broke out, he was working on the spire.

The fire of 2019, the cause of which remains unknown, struck Villeneuve as a personal tragedy.

“Everyone was scared, and it went on for hours, getting worse by the hour,” he said. He was immediately asked to secure the site, and the Ministry of Culture confirmed him in his mission to repair the damaged cathedral. Since then, he has devoted all his time and passion to the challenge.

Today, the chief architect is confident of meeting the deadlines imposed on him. “Yes, the cathedral will be ready for its official reopening on 8th December. The framework is finished. The roofers are still working,” said. “There was a lot of wind at Easter, so we were a little behind schedule. But we will make it up. We have to hurry, but everything will be fine.”

The site of the Notre Dame reconstruction is still sealed off, with tourists patiently watching the front towers of the cathedral from the wooden steps installed in front of it. The steps are placed not far from the place where Villeneuve found the copper rooster perched at the spire’s top that was feared lost in the fire. However, on 16th April at dawn, Villeneuve found the battered rooster lying in the gutter of Rue du Cloître-Notre-Dame, a street right next to the cathedral square. The relics of Paris’ patron, St. Genevieve, were found intact inside.

After five years of intense work

and installation of a new rooster – one he designed himself – on top of the new spire, Villeneuve said they are now “preparing the most decisive phase of the project.”

“This involves dismantling the large scaffolding at the transept crossing. Removing it will enable us to rebuild the cross vault, replace the paving and install the altar. We are going to erect a new scaffolding, but this time detached from what is

below, to put the finishing touches to the work on the spire’s roof at this point,” he explained.

“This work, above the transept crossing vault,” he said, “is the most delicate part of the project. But everything is going well.”

Villeneuve emphasised that this magnificent project was made possible by the international outpouring of generosity and donations that followed the fire. “I

would never have imagined that Notre Dame could have aroused such emotion throughout the world, during and after the fire,” he said. “It was astonishing.” Those involved in the reconstruction emphasise that many overseas donors generously supported rebuilding of the icon of Paris and icon of the Catholic Church.

“Notre Dame shows France’s influence in the world, and its extraordinary heritage. But the fire was not just a national issue. Notre Dame is also a (UNESCO) World Heritage site, and during the fire, we really felt that it was humanity that was seeing its heritage disappear.”

Villeneuve added that “the flames and the fall of the spire sent shockwaves around the world” but “fortunately, the firemen did an extraordinary job, and in the end we lost a frame, a roof, a spire, a few pieces of vaulting, but no more. And thanks to all that, in the end, we will have an even more beautiful cathedral than before the fire. This is very stimulating.”

Since the rebuilding work began, all those involved on site have testified to the exceptional quality of the skills and spirit of Notre Dame’s craftsmen. “It is true that there is an extraordinary atmosphere,” Villeneuve confirmed. “If so far we were able to meet the deadlines, it is because the contractors and craftsmen trusted me. And I trusted them. The complicity and commitment were total, for the good of the cathedral,





and also for the pleasure and pride of working on this extraordinary monument”.

He said he also has “deep respect and affection for the totally anonymous people on the site, such as those who take care of the daily clean-up,” Villeneuve said. “It is thanks to them too that this project is progressing so well. I greet everyone in the same warm way.”

Eight months from the reopening, various teams are working on the process of equipping the cathedral with electricity, IT, heating, lighting, among other systems.

Villeneuve said every person working in the reconstruction has a symbolic task of passing on their knowledge and work for future generations. They “will spread out everywhere after the site is finished,” Villeneuve said, “Those who will have benefited from this project to perfect their craft, will pass on all this as (craftsmen did) in the Middle Ages. They will pass on all this know-how.” Villeneuve added, “Life is about transmission. ... We are passersby.”

Villeneuve doesn't treat the cathedral's reconstruction merely as a work project. He describes the cathedral as if it were a human being. “We are giving the cathedral all the elements that will bring it to life,” he said. “I would like to give people something that will touch them. I would like to help Notre Dame Cathedral speak to people, as

best as it can.”

He said, “Notre Dame speaks to me. ... Notre-Dame means a lot to me,” adding that this cathedral “is no ordinary monument. Everything we do has a strong mystical and religious significance. We cannot forget that. There is a mystical and religious dimension in our work.”

Villeneuve also confessed that he is already dreaming of seeing people's amazement when they enter the cathedral. “It will be breathtaking,” he said. “On the outside, it is now exactly as we knew it. But on the inside, it is more beautiful than we have ever seen it.”

“Even us. Even I, who knew it by heart, am amazed to finally see what this cathedral was really like inside (in the further past), in terms of architecture, light, care and quality. It is extraordinary. You will not recognise it.”

For Notre Dame's chief architect, this “project of a lifetime” will not end at the end of the year. “There will still be the restoration of the chevet,” or apse, he said. “And we are going to use the rest of the donations to restore the sacristy, the presbytery, maybe even the transepts. We will not stop work after 8th December. I will be here on a daily basis until 2028.”

He said for him the most important thing in life “is doing useful things for others,” Villeneuve added. “I am happy to be able to contribute something to the world.”

## Notre Dame's reopening can be ‘France's spiritual awakening’

Father Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, Notre Dame's rector archpriest, has admitted that the next few months will be a “whirlwind.”

“We will be doing everything in a hurry,” he said.

But Fr Dumas is looking to the future with optimism. A former rector of the Lourdes sanctuary, he was appointed Notre Dame's rector in 2022, three years after the fire. He has therefore not yet experienced the life of the cathedral in normal times.

“In 2019, I was spokesman for the French bishops' conference, and I spent the whole night of the fire responding to journalists calling me from all over the world,” he recalled. “Today, I am not interested in commemorating five years since the fire. What I am really looking forward to is getting everything in place that will allow us to celebrate Masses after the reopening.”

“For the moment, the large scaffolding structure is still occupying the place of the ‘liturgical stage,’ on which the altar, the ‘cathedra’ – the bishop's seat, and the ambo will be placed. And this bronze ‘furniture’ is just coming out of the foundry,” he said. In addition, the manufacture of 1,500 new wooden chairs is progressing, and at the same time the installation of the lights also is proceeding.

What electrified France in the weeks prior to the anniversary was the invitation to bid on the job of creating the new stained-glass windows for Paris' cathedral. New stained-glass windows are to be installed in six of the seven chapels on the nave's south aisle, on the side of the Seine River. Candidates must be pairs of a designer and a glass workshop.

The commission set up by the French government followed a request from Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris, for which President Emmanuel Macron gave his official approval. Critics however noted that the new art aims to replace what is newer than the cathedral itself, but still historic – the so-called ‘grisaille’ windows installed in Notre Dame in the 19th century by architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, who restored Notre Dame at the time.

The grisailles, personally designed by Viollet-le-Duc, are windows in which the glass is painted only by shades of a single neutral colour – and something that became a natural part of the cathedral throughout the years.

A petition signed by almost 140,000 people urging to save Viollet-le-Duc's project said his colourful windows “were created as a coherent whole. It is a



Father Olivier Ribadeau Dumas

genuine creation that the architect wanted to be faithful to the cathedral's Gothic origins.”

“Notre Dame has evolved over the centuries,” Fr Ribadeau Dumas said, defending the archbishops' idea to put contemporary artists' projects in their place. He explained the “idea was to signify how (the cathedral) had been wounded in the 21st century, and then resurrected.”

The archbishops' request, the rector said “is that these stained-glass windows be figurative and evoke joy, hope and peace, to bear witness to the exceptional atmosphere that reigned during the work of restoration.”

The winners will present a prototype closer to the cathedral's reopening. The stained-glass windows will be produced in

*“The restoration is a tremendous sign of hope. Paris is going to get its cathedral back, and that does not just concern Catholics. The hope it represents must inspire all those who will be thrilled by the reopening.”*

2025, and installed in 2026.

Tourists and Parisians are most excited to see, however, the 315-foot-tall spire back, rebuilt exactly the same way as the previous one was built, designed by Viollet-le-Duc. With the spire's scaffolding removed in mid-February, it is a visible sign that the end of restoration work on Notre Dame is approaching.

Since 2023, craftsmen of the family-run company Le Bras Frères, specialised in the restoration of roofs and frameworks of historic monuments, have been working on the cathedral's roof in their

workshops in Lorraine, in eastern France. The lead ornaments had to be made to measure, and match the shape of the roof timbers.

“We had built replicas of the spire's framework in the workshop, so we could start fabricating the lead parts even before the carpenters had finished their work on the cathedral itself,” company president Julien Le Bras said; “it was a real feat.”

For Le Bras, completion of the work is all the more important as his company had come close to a disaster after the fire in 2019. In 2017, Le Bras Frères had been proud to win a bid to erect the scaffolding, as well as to renovate the spire's timber frame and external roofing, in a planned conservation project. But the 2019 fire brought the project to an abrupt halt, and the company found itself at the centre of attention, suspected of being responsible for the fire.

“This tragedy has devastated everyone, especially us, who are passionate about our heritage, and whose job it is to save, restore and beautify,” Le Bras said, listing how the accusations affected their projects but also employees. “Our customers became reticent, our suppliers wanted to terminate contracts and our insurers no longer wanted to cover our projects,” he said. “This fire has weighed heavily on us.”

Le Bras Frères was found not responsible for the fire, with reports indicating that they had scrupulously followed precautionary protocols.

“My very deep desire is to be able to welcome visitors,” Fr Dumas confided. “Notre Dame is a place of worship that welcomes 15 million people every year. As a priest, I seek above all to enable these people to encounter Christ. This can be done through the witness of faith that is the Masses celebrated as visitors continue their tour of the cathedral.”

“It can also be through the beauty of the works of art, which say something about the presence of God,” he said. “So we prepare a lot of explaining, to help people who are unfamiliar with our faith to understand its meaning. That is what we are aiming at.”

“I would like the reopening to be a spiritual awakening for France,” Fr Dumas added. “Today, Western society is distraught, desperate. In this context, the restoration of Notre Dame is a tremendous sign of hope. Paris is going to get its cathedral back, and that does not just concern Catholics. The hope it represents must inspire all those who will be thrilled by the reopening.”

## FAITH THOUGHTS

EFFIE CALDAROLA



# Tulips are like the Easter season: a burst of love that lasts too short a time

At a family Easter morning brunch, one of my daughters brought me a beautiful bouquet of tulips.

They were so welcome, and so extraordinary, that I took extra good care of them. I changed their water, recut their stems and used the little packet of powder the florist sent. I placed them where I could see them at dinner time, and at the place where I pray in the morning.

And they began to open. One morning, I peered inside a bright yellow and orange tulip and saw the stamen reaching out toward me. At least, I think it was the stamen; not being much of a horticulturist, I had to look up what the reproductive parts of flowers are called.

The inner works of my tulip seemed to be bursting forth from the slowly opening flower. In the morning light, with the tulip nearly translucent, I suddenly saw in my tulip a tomb being opened, a little symbol of resurrection. The tomb was empty, and the stamen and pistil seemed to be radiating out from the empty tomb as if to proclaim that the Risen One, who had been held there so recently, had gone before us into Galilee.



It was a lovely, graced moment, a little gift.

But here's the thing. Easter Sunday is many days ago now, and tulips don't last forever. Mine began to open too broadly and fray a bit at the edges. They bent over and lost their lovely shape. Like our own lives on this earth, they were finite and passing. But they had done what they had come to do, proclaim a daughter's love and provide beauty and a moment of inspiration.

Would that we can say the same about our own passing lives.

The time between Easter Sunday and Pentecost is so special, but sometimes I fear we leave the Easter season behind us too quickly. Lent gave us something to "do." We gave something up, we tried to go to morning Mass, we experienced the incredible beauty of Holy Thursday and Good Friday services, something most parishes do well.

Even our secular culture

reminded us of Easter, with the chocolate eggs and bunnies popping up as soon as Valentine's Day was over. But on Easter Monday, stores immediately put the now unloved paraphernalia on sale. You want a discounted bunny headband? Go for it, we've got them cheap.

I think the time between Easter and Pentecost, the actual Easter season, is when the real Christian in us is challenged. Rather than "do" something, be silent. Reread

all the amazing readings from the Gospels of John and Luke. Walk into the garden with Mary and be amazed when the person you thought was the gardener calls you by name.

Take a long walk, and imagine you, too, are heading for a getaway in Emmaus. Talk with that man who walks beside you. Put your fingers, like Thomas, into the scars left on the body of Jesus. Rejoice in this incredibly tactile, bodily faith we live.

There won't be any adverts for Pentecost baskets, or Pentecost wrapping paper. You won't be hurrying to get your Pentecost letters out to all your friends. But Pentecost comes, with its fire and wind, to inspire us with the Holy Spirit. Imagine those in that room on Pentecost morning, some of them men who had fled during the crucifixion. Imagine Peter, who denied three times knowing Jesus, and then wept bitterly, becoming a man willing to be crucified himself.

Pentecost comes 50 days after Easter; that's Sunday 19th May this year. The days, like all our passing days, will fly. Let us use them to experience the hope and glory of Resurrection.

## It is the Lord – yet how often do we fail to recognise him?

Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

If there's one thing we can learn from those who encountered the Risen Lord during the 40 days between his Resurrection and Ascension, it's this: Seeing Jesus isn't the same as recognising him.

To Mary Magdalene, distraught at the tomb, Christ looked like the gardener. To the two disillusioned disciples on the road to Emmaus, he was a clueless stranger. To former fishermen returning to Galilee uncertain of what to do next, the Master was just a man hoping to cook breakfast on the shore.

The Gospel accounts are strange – maybe even troubling – to us. When we read or hear these stories at Mass, we can't help but wonder what in the world was going on. How is it possible that the people who knew Jesus best, those who were among his closest followers, didn't know him when they saw him?

But before we take a disparaging view of those very first Christians, perhaps there is another question



we ought to ask: How many times do we see Jesus and fail to recognise him?

Based on my own experience, I'll venture to guess that the answer is somewhere between countless and infinite. By faith, I know that Jesus keeps his promises, that he is always with me and that he never abandons me. But if I'm honest, I don't recognise Christ's presence with me most days – not even on the days when I go to adoration or Mass.

And yet, the Eucharistic encounter at adoration and Mass can show us how to see Jesus and know that it is Jesus when we see him. The impact of being able to say, "I have seen the Lord" is orders of magnitude greater than simply making a credal statement like "I believe in God" or "I follow Jesus," or even "I'm Catholic." It makes us far more convincing witnesses.

The faith formation we all need most can be found at the feet of the Eucharistic Lord. And like those

first disciples, we also come to know him in "the breaking of the bread" (Lk 24:35). The "school of the Eucharist," as it were, teaches us where to look for Jesus; where we are likely to see him at work in our own lives. We see him in presence, sacrifice and communion. We experience God's presence in creation, in scripture, in silence, in the presence of others, most especially the poor. We see him in the sacrifices that are made for us, those we value deeply but also those we easily take for granted. And we see him in the community he gathers, those who resonate with us in shared life experience and those who don't.

I think that's why St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata (Calcutta) made the daily Mass and holy hour a priority for her Missionaries of Charity. The Eucharist may well have been the secret to how she herself was able to see Jesus in the poorest of the poor.

It may also be the source of the prayer Mother so often shared, the one in which she recited the words

'You did it to Me' on her fingers.

This much is clear: if we are to become Christ in our world, we must see him there first. That shouldn't be as difficult as it often seems to us because he is there. In fact, he is everywhere. Christ Jesus is cultivating life among the dead and in all the cemeteries of our lives.

He is walking along with us on the road when we are confused and disappointed. He is explaining to us the truths we thought we understood, calling out to us from the shoreline, and preparing to feed us when we are hungry. He comes to us in shame and isolation, behind the locked doors we are afraid to open. He breathes peace over our souls, forgives our sins and shows us how to forgive one another.

And yes, he is with us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. And because he has never left us, because the Eucharist is his body, blood, soul and divinity, we can say with all those who came before us in faith: "I have seen the Lord."

## A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE

ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE



# Revenge and forgiveness

I was recently going through the Book of Romans in the Bible when I came across that famous statement 'Vengeance is mine' Romans 12:19. It made me think not only about revenge but about forgiveness.

Revenge results in us going against God's wishes, but forgiveness allows us to follow in God's footsteps. The following is just a simple look at what we should be aware of when we engage in these two areas of our human nature, which can be seen as opposites.

## Revenge

Revenge is the planned hurt we wish to inflict on a person, a group, or an organisation that has hurt us.

When we are hurt by people we love and trust, it can cause anger, sadness, and confusion. If we dwell on these hurtful events or situations, then grudges filled with resentment and hostility can take root.

All this can lead to people taking revenge, and to do so they must plan any retaliatory reaction, and then activate it against the people or organisations responsible.

What is the normal result of actions of revenge? It will probably hurt the people it was intended to, but this could make them angry

and want to seek revenge. It could all spiral into some feud between persons, families, groups, organisations, and even counties.

When looked at closely, planning and activating any type of revenge is a complete waste of time and energy. Just think about what could have been done to benefit the people involved if they had used this time to help people in need.

It's no wonder that God implied that we should leave vengeance alone when he said, "Vengeance is mine".

## Forgiveness

What is forgiveness? We can all be hurt by words or actions or a combination of both, and the decision not to retaliate against the perpetrators is what we call forgiveness.

If we do not forgive, this usually results in us being angry, bitter, irritable, and depressed, so why not forgive? It costs us nothing.

When we have been hurt by such actions, we tend to think of some ways to get even and take revenge, but letting the perpetrators know that you will not do so, is an act of forgiveness.

Forgiveness can result in the removal of hostilities between the parties involved and can even foster better relationships.



Many an act of forgiveness can start with the words "I'm sorry". How many people, groups or even countries have fallen out and all it needed to resume friendly relations was for someone to say these two words?

Marriages could be saved, because these two words remove that human passion called pride. Forgiveness through the words "I'm sorry" will always outperform

pride, unless one side is deliberately determined not to be reconciled. You can still forgive in these situations, even though it is not accepted, but you can now forget the incident and get on with your life.

Never let revenge spoil your life, because it can do so when it doesn't go as planned and never provides happiness.

Embrace forgiveness, it provides

many benefits; never lose them by not granting it or delaying it thereby not experiencing many good feelings such as better understanding, empathy, compassion and above all peace and contentment.

Always be aware of revenge and reject it because it can lead to hatred and conflict, but always use and accept forgiveness as it promotes peace, love and friendship.

## JOURNEY IN FAITH

# April, come she will

The names of the months of the year are in themselves evocative of mood, climate, event and experience. Yet depending on where you live on our planet, the same month can have diametrically opposite associations.

One of my favourite Simon and Garfunkel tracks from the 60s has to be "April, come she will", a simple four line, three verse song, whose lyrics are sung against the background of a single guitar. Quite beautiful.

A Northern hemisphere song that traces a relationship through from April - "come she will, when streams are ripe and swelled with rain", through the changing summer months till a conclusion is reached, and in "September I'll remember / A love once new has now grown old".

The cyclic pattern of life is ever present, it is part of our very experience on planet Earth. From a starting point to a conclusion, with its high points of joy and hope

through the inevitable troughs of despair and disillusionment, each of us makes a journey. We have to learn to accommodate different points of view, to be tolerant when it would be easier to be otherwise. April to September is a short time in song lyrics but a much longer time considered as a life experience.

It is the short term / long term aspect of the Church that we sometimes forget. We are deeply instilled with the ethos, practice and social culture of the late 20th, early 21st centuries and our focus is on immediate problems. In many ways, rightly so, for it is our responsibility to meet the needs and challenges of our time, but to do so in the context of faith. Indeed it is easy to experience "A love once new has now grown old". So we can look back on our experience and that of our fellow-travellers and gain sustenance from that to continue to live in the hope of the Resurrected Christ.

Let's be careful in the coming

post-synodal months in the way we approach disputed questions remembering that an over-riding motif of this papacy is one of mercy, not condemnation.

**Here is a link to the song - April**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5d54JYqXtt4>

Early this month, the retired abbess of Colwich in the Midlands of England went to her reward. I wrote these few words in memory of a good woman whose smile and good humour she shared with all who were fortunate enough to meet her, May she rest in the peace of the Lord.

**Night prayer**  
**"Remember that he loves you"**  
**In memory of Mother Gertrude OSB Abbess of Colwich Stafford.**  
**April 2024**

*At night, I would ring the doorbell and wait.*

*Wait for the rattle of the door catch*

*unlocking the heavy curved door giving access to the sparse space within.*

*Following a solitary black clothed nun*  
*I accepted entrance to the bare bulbed hall way*  
*and walked on towards the low-lit chapel.*

*Entering the silent chapel,*  
*I found other huddled,*  
*seated forms,*  
*settled deep in stillness,*  
*gathered together*  
*to share night prayer,*  
*until at the knock*  
*they stir and stand.*

*O God, come to our assistance*  
*O Lord, make haste to help us.*  
*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son*  
*and to the Holy Spirit,*  
*as it was in the beginning,*  
*is now, and ever shall be,*  
*world without end.*

*Back and forth*  
*in responsorial form*  
*The chant is taken up....*  
*.. until*

*Save us, Lord, while we are awake;*  
*protect us while we sleep*  
*that we may keep watch with Christ*  
*and rest with him in peace.*

*Now, Master,*  
*you let your servant go in peace.*  
*You have fulfilled your promise.*  
*My own eyes have seen your salvation,*  
*which you have prepared*  
*in the sight of all peoples.*  
*A light to bring the Gentiles from darkness;*  
*the glory of your people Israel.*

*The Blessing given, one by one they leave,*  
*with a smiled 'good night',*  
*save for one diminutive form*  
*to whose broad smile*  
*was added*  
*"Remember that he loves you".*

CHRIS MCDONNELL



# A pilgrims' journey on way to Emmaus

**Have you ever thought of life as a journey, and yourself as a pilgrim on that journey?**

The story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is a story of discovery (Gospel of Luke 24:13-35).

When these two disciples set out on their journey, they talked about their doubts and confusion concerning Jesus, who had just been put to an ignominious death. They were devastated by what had happened.

Along the journey, as they were pondering these things, they were joined by a mysterious stranger who was Jesus in disguise. He engaged them in conversation about the Messiah and the scriptures, and opened their minds to understand that the one they doubted had to undergo everything that happened to him.

They were so taken by the mysterious stranger's explanations that they invited him into their home for a meal. It was during this act of hospitality that they recognised him in 'the breaking of the bread.'

We are like the two disciples in this scripture. We are on a journey, not a linear journey of ease, but a sometimes painful journey of ups-and-downs, doubts and obstacles, joys and woes much like the two disciples who were tempted to give up. That was until the risen Christ came into their lives, and renewed their waning faith.

There are valuable lessons to be learnt from this journey of discovery on the road to Emmaus:

The two pilgrims learnt the importance of familiarity with the scriptures, the word of God, in their lives. The Lord continues to speak to us through the scriptures just as he spoke to the two men in St. Luke's gospel. Over and over again, the Lord blesses those who listen to his word, internally, and practice it. Reading the scriptures, especially



**Pilgrims Ascending the Stairs at the City Entrance to Portomarin, along the Way of St James, Camino de Santiago.**

the New Testament, every day should be a normal way of life for every Christian. It does not have to take long. Can you spare ten or fifteen minutes meditating on his word in the morning or in the evening?

Jesus was revealed to the two disciples in "the breaking of the bread." The early Christians referred to the Eucharist as the breaking of the bread for, in the Eucharist, Jesus becomes our spiritual food. We welcome him into our lives by receiving him in the Eucharist, and following him.

Hospitality opened the doors of Heaven's gates to these two disciples. In welcoming the stranger, which is expected of every Christian (Matthew 25: 35), the two disciples welcomed Christ. Always be hospitable to others. Welcome them into your home, be kind to them, and share your food and drink with them. Be a good neighbour.

The two disciples rushed back to tell the other disciples about their experience. They witnessed or shared the good news of the gospel with others. The gospel is good news, and should be shared with

those you meet in thought, word, and deed. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Try to be an example of his way, his truth, and his life to others.

You never walk alone. No matter how dark life gets, no matter what you're going through, you're in good hands. Jesus has your back and he walks beside you and before you. He is your forever friend, and will never let you down. Put your trust in him.

The story of these two disciples who encountered the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus is also our

story. Pilgrimage is a favourite theme of St. Luke's entire gospel. At the beginning, Jesus began his ministry by instructing his disciples along the road. On the road to Emmaus, this journey reached its climax when the two pilgrims finally got it, when they found what they were looking for, and understood the meaning of their pilgrimage.

The whole of God's intricate plan for people of faith, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, has been worked out in the life of Jesus who opens our eyes.

## I am the way, the truth and the life

The power of personal example is the best form of witness. Jesus witnessed by example, and encouraged his followers to do the same.

The early Christians took to heart the words of Jesus proclaiming himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life ( Gospel of John 14:6 ).

Is it any wonder that they grew from strength to strength in so short a time-span and attracted other followers from all over the known world to join them? These early Christians made the words of Jesus their own by imitating the Way he lived, by absorbing into their hearts the

awesome Truth of his teaching, and by transforming their lives into new people through the new Life of his gospel.

As the Way, Jesus shows us how to live our lives by imitating him. His whole life was an unbroken testimony to the power of God's love for all humankind, a love that embraced every man, woman and child: the lame, the blind, the deaf, the crippled, the back-sliders, the least among us, the good and the bad.

His love was boundless like the reach of the sun which shines on the "just and the unjust" alike.

This is the kind of love that lights up

our way in this world in our dealings with one another. Be gentle and humble, the way Jesus treated others. Be patient with everyone, forgiving shortcomings, and choose kindness over anger whenever you are put to the test. There is tremendous power in a simple touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, a well-meant compliment or any act of caring.

These practical examples of love can save a life, your life and the lives of others.

As the truth, the words of Jesus are words of wisdom. They flowed from the

purest fount of truth which He possessed as the Son of God. He taught by means of parables and conveyed the mysteries of his kingdom in language and images that even a child could grasp. People marvelled at his words and wondered where he derived such wisdom. He taught them about faith, a gift not reserved for "the wise and the clever" but for those who have "the spirit of the child."

In your life, get acquainted with the words of Jesus in scripture, not by giving lip-service, but by absorbing them into your heart and living according to them.

## SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



# No one can take away Christ's sheep

21st April 2024 – 4th Sunday of Easter (B)

**1st Reading: Acts 4:8-12**  
By the power of the risen Jesus we can be saved

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.

This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

**Responsorial: from Psalm 118**

*R./: The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone*

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
for his mercy endures forever.  
It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
than to trust in man.  
It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
than to trust in princes. (R./)*

*I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me  
and have been my saviour.  
The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.  
By the Lord has this been done;  
it is wonderful in our eyes. (R./)*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord;  
we bless you from the house of the Lord.  
I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me  
and have been my saviour.  
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
for his kindness endures forever. (R./)*

**2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-2**  
The love of the Father, lavished on all God's children

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet



Fresco Feed my Sheep by John Clayton jnr. End of 19th cent. St Mary Abbots Church, London

Article Published by kind permission of the Association of Catholic Priests

been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.

**Gospel: John 10:1-10**  
Christ is the true Shepherd; nobody can take away his sheep

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

**Pastors who care for people**

Jesus illustrates his teaching by referring to shepherds and sheep, seeing himself as the Good Shepherd foretold by the prophets. It's about the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. Though the imagery is old, the message is topical. It is relevant to us here and now. By faith we accept Jesus, and our relationship is a deeply personal one. The bond of

love uniting us is based on the love that unites the Father and Jesus. Our new existence is founded on God's unbreakable love and faithfulness.

In order to enter eternal life we must listen to Jesus and obey him. The alternative opening prayer puts this in practical terms. We have to tune our minds to the sound of his voice. Self-centredness can make us deaf to the voice of Jesus. Easy options can draw us into easier paths than the one he has traced. Pressure to abandon Christian principles is inevitable. But God is faithful and will not let us be tempted beyond our strength. No one can drag us away from him, the Father has entrusted us to his Son. The same God who kept faith with Jesus by raising him from the dead will also raise us by his power.

Paul and Barnabas "spoke out boldly" and made an impact. A courageous proclamation of the gospel to our contemporaries can be as fruitful now as it was in apostolic times. All the baptised, particularly those who are confirmed, are bound to spread the faith. Laity as well as priests and religious are in the service of the Risen Lord. Our faith urges us to take personal part in the work of evangelisation. Are we doing so? How many evils persist in our society just because good people say nothing and do nothing? A breviary hymn of Eastertide (no.25) spells out what is expected of us by the Risen Lord: *Now he bids us tell abroad/How the lost may be restored/How the penitent forgiven/How we too may enter heaven.*

'Good Shepherd Sunday' is an opportunity to think and pray about how priestly ministry the catholic church will fare into the future. In 2015 Ireland the average age of ordained priests is about 65,

a statistic that urgently calls for significant change in how we recruit priests for the future, and what is to be expected of them.

In a recent article about this impending crisis, Pdraig McCarthy invites us to remember that there is no such thing as a priest-less parish. "There may not be an ordained priest as is the practice at present, but the parish is a priestly people. How will this take flesh in the coming decades? Are there factors which had value in the past which now are an obstacle to the mission of the church? What new model of ministerial priesthood is called for?"

Fr. McCarthy divides the shepherding challenge into three questions that are worth examining by bishops, priests and laity:

- 1) Who will be the true shepherds in the coming years?
- 2) How will those shepherds carry out the mission to those outside the fold?
- 3) What needs to change in the Catholic Church, so that each local community can have a full Eucharistic celebration every Sunday?

**A very personal relationship**

When people go to Rome on pilgrimage, they usually try to include a visit to the Catacombs, the earliest Christian cemeteries in existence. The earliest Christian art is there in the catacombs, in images are very simple and unadorned compared to the art that would emerge in later centuries. Yet these pictures are very striking just because of their simplicity and directness. One of the images of Jesus most found in the catacombs is that of the Good Shepherd. One is in the Catacomb of San Callistus, showing a young beardless man with a sheep draped around his

shoulders and holding a bucket of water in his right hand. Clearly the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd that we find in today's gospel spoke to Christians from the earliest days of the church.

The shepherd image in the catacombs appealed to Christians from the start, because it conveys the personal nature of the relationship between Jesus and his followers; it portrays the close personal care that the shepherd has for the sheep. That is what Jesus conveys in today's gospel. He declares that he knows his own and his own know him, just as the Father knows him and he knows the Father. It is an extraordinary statement to make. Jesus is saying that the very personal relationship he has with his heavenly Father is the model for the equally personal relationship he has with each one of us. Jesus knows us as intimately as the Father knows him, and he wants us to know him as intimately as he knows the Father.

There is a great deal to ponder there. When it comes to the Lord we are not just one of a crowd, lost in a sea of faces. In a way that we will never fully understand, the Lord knows each one of us by name. He relates to us in a personal way and he invites us to relate to him in a personal way. He wishes to enter into a personal relationship with each one of us.

I am often struck by a line in Saint Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, where he says, 'I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me'. We can each make our own those words of Saint Paul. When Jesus says in today's gospel that, as the good shepherd, 'I lay down my life for my sheep', he is saying that he lays down his life for each one of us individually.

# Christ's 'three days' in the tomb makes sense if you counted as ancient Jews did

**Q.** We recently celebrated Easter, and I read Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel: "Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." But we believe Christ died on Good Friday afternoon and rose on Easter Sunday morning – that's only two days. Can you explain the discrepancy, or am I misapplying the Gospel passage?

**A.** The common belief of Christians since the earliest centuries has been that Jesus died and was buried on Good Friday afternoon and rose from the dead before dawn on Easter Sunday morning. The Gospel of Mark (15:42) confirms that Jesus was crucified on 'the day before the Sabbath,' and John's Gospel (20:1) says that 'on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb.'

In a forced attempt to match up with the passage to which you refer, occasional commentators have theorised that Jesus must have been put to death on a Wednesday. But the main body of scriptural scholarship rejects that thesis as unnecessary.

The accepted explanation of the text you quote is that ancient Jews counted any part of a day as a whole day. (For example, Genesis 42:17 states that Joseph held his brothers in prison for three days, but in the very next verse we are told that he released them 'on the third day'.)

So 'three days and three nights' in Matthew need not literally mean 72 hours, but is an idiomatic expression that could refer to parts of three days. More than a dozen passages in the New Testament agree with Matthew 17:23, which says that Jesus will be raised 'on the third day' – which, by Jewish reckoning, could have been as little as 26 hours (one whole day, 24 hours, with an hour the day before and an hour the day after.)

The consensus of Christian scholars is that Jesus was in the tomb for about 36 hours – from late afternoon on Friday until pre-dawn on Sunday.

**Q.** At Mass, can the female parish life director give the homily? With six priests sitting down? At one church, which I occasionally attend, this happens regularly. I feel guilty for being there to

Agnew's, Bridgeman Images: 'The common belief of Christians since the earliest centuries has been that Jesus died and was buried on Good Friday afternoon and rose from the dead before dawn on Easter Sunday morning.'



witness it, but sometimes it's my only option. I'm afraid to talk to my parish priest, as he might think I am being critical or judgmental.

**A.** The current guidelines of the Catholic Church on this matter are quite clear. The Code of Canon Law says: 'Among the forms of preaching, the homily, which is part of the liturgy itself and is reserved to a priest or deacon, is pre-eminent.'

Similarly, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which serves as the Church's liturgical 'rulebook,' says: 'The homily should ordinarily be given by the priest celebrant himself or be entrusted by him to a concelebrating priest, or from time to time and, if appropriate, to the deacon, but never to a layperson.'

In certain areas, where priests are not available to celebrate the

Eucharist every Sunday, services are guided by a Vatican document called 'Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest.' In such settings, a layperson can be delegated by the local bishop to offer an explanation and reflection on the biblical readings for the service.

Interestingly, *L'Osservatore Romano* (the semi-official Vatican newspaper) published in March 2016 a series of essays that advocated that women be permitted to preach from the pulpit at Mass, and noted that this was a regular practice during the first thousand years of Christianity.

**Q.** I am a Catholic woman who is planning to marry a Jewish man. He is uncomfortable with having a Catholic priest preside, adding

joint religious ceremony that would highlight the role of God in a marriage and seek the Lord's blessings? I have several times done such a wedding service together with a rabbi.

Only one – either the rabbi or the priest – would be designated as the responsible civil official to receive a couple's vows, but both the rabbi and the priest could offer prayers from their own traditions and appropriate blessings.

Two or three times, we have even used the chuppah, the traditional canopy under which Jewish couples pronounce their wedding vows accompanied by both sets of parents.

**Q.** Please help settle a discussion I have been having. Can a priest celebrate Mass (and, necessarily, take Communion) while in a state of mortal sin, if the Mass is already scheduled and people are waiting for it to begin? First, can he do so if confession is easily available to him? Next, if confession is not easily available, can he just try to make a perfect act of contrition and go ahead with the Mass?

**A.** If the priest in question has the opportunity to confess his sins before celebrating Mass, of course he is obliged to do so. (A priest is bound by the same requirement as other Catholics: to be in the state of grace to receive the Eucharist worthily.)

But what if there is no opportunity to confess before a Mass for which the priest is scheduled? The Church's Code of Canon Law speaks to that situation directly in No. 916: 'A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible.'

If a congregation is expecting a Mass and there is no practical opportunity to recruit a substitute-celebrant, for the good of souls the priest may profess his sorrow privately to the Lord ('perfect contrition' is based on the love of God rather than the fear of punishment), celebrate the Mass and go to confession later. Unfortunately, this column cannot accept questions from readers

that it would also be awkward for his family. Are there ways to have a 'neutral' presider celebrate the service and still have the marriage recognised by the Catholic Church? I have told my husband-to-be that my only 'requirement' is that the wedding be seen as valid in the Church's eyes. What would I need to do to make it happen?

**A.** Yes, in a situation like this, a diocese is able to give permission ahead of time for a marriage ceremony to take place in a non-sectarian setting, witnessed by a civil official, and have that marriage be recognised by the Catholic Church. You and your fiance should speak with a local priest to see that the proper paperwork is completed.

But how about, instead, doing a

## PRAYER AND SCRIPTURE

ALLEGRA MUTANDA



# Prayer teaches us how to say thank you to God – even when life is a battle

**Allegra Mutanda shares how thanking God regularly can bring a multitude of blessings and help us see how God is working in our lives.**

During Holy Week, a particular passage of scripture struck me, and its impact has continued beyond the Easter Triduum of a couple of weeks ago.

It was Jesus' 'silence' at the Last Supper, or should I say seemingly lack of interjection in exchanges that might have brought a different outcome. Let me explain.

Preparations for the Passover are being made and Jesus is sitting at table with his disciples and announces that one of them is about to betray him. All are distressed by his words and we read in Matthew's Gospel that even Judas asked: 'Not I, Rabbi, surely?' to which Jesus replied, "They are your own words" (Matthew 26:20-25). And, of course, we also know of the silence of Jesus before Pilate.

But, for the first time this year, as I was reflecting on this passage of the Last Supper, one thought kept recurring. Why didn't Jesus say something to Judas directly? Wake him up to what he was about to do and the wrong he was about to do and the wrong he was about to commit? Surely in that moment, Jesus speaking directly to Judas might have moved him to act differently.

Yet Jesus didn't. He knew what he was about and what needed to be done. It was not about saving his life; it was about saving ours – yours, mine, the whole of humanity. This was the plan of God for our redemption from the moment of the fall and that first pronouncement of the good news (*protoevangelium*) we read in Genesis where God puts



enmity between the serpent and the woman, his offspring and her own (c.f. Genesis 3:15).

In the film *'Risen'*, Pilate tells Clavius the Tribune who oversees Jesus' crucifixion that 'he'd never seen a death so wished for. It's as if he wanted to be sacrificed.'

Jesus did not wish for death but in his submission to the will of his Father, accepted death, even death on a cross. And so, he laid down his life of his own free will; no one took it from him (cf. Jn. 10: 18).

#### Thank you, Jesus

The above reflections left me in a place where I have no words. What

can I say? As I look at Jesus and what He has done so I can be free and be made righteous, all I can say is 'Thank you.' Nothing else; nothing more.

We can never fathom the

magnitude of what we have just celebrated and lived this Easter, nor can we fathom the extent of God's unconditional love for us. How could we when our love is finite, imperfect, and sometimes even conditional? And so, all I, we, can say is: 'Thank you, Jesus.'

My encouragement to us this Eastertide is for each of us to make 'thank you, Jesus' part of our daily prayer. I want to encourage us to cultivate this attitude of gratitude towards God for loving us-just because!

#### A chaplet of thanksgiving

Several years ago, whilst living in community, two Nigerian religious sisters came to live with us for two years. As a religious order, part of their prayer commitment was to pray, daily, a one thousand 'Thank you, Jesus' Chaplet. This enabled them to cultivate an attitude of gratitude to God for who He is, what He has done, and what He continues to do.

Learning to pray this chaplet – not a thousand but fifty using my

normal rosary beads – has helped me grow in my attitude of gratitude towards God. It has taught me and continues to teach me to thank God for all things, good and challenging. Saying thank you to God when life is great is easy. But learning to say thank you when life is a battle and a struggle is much harder! Praying in this way is really about trust. It is saying: God, I trust you even in this hardship, and helps us bring God in those situations. It teaches us to keep our eye firmly fixed upon Him and know that, in Him, all will be well.

It teaches us to bring God in. It pushes us to go from navel-gazing (looking at ourselves, our own problems, and situations) to heaven-gazing (looking up and knowing that God knows and sees the bigger picture even when it doesn't seem to make sense, or He seems to have gone deaf)!

So, join me on these 50 days of Eastertide (or however many days are left) in praying daily a 'Thank you Jesus' chaplet (50 beads). How?

#### Simple yet powerful

At the start of each decade, on the Our Father bead, pause for a moment and name as many things as come to mind for which you want to thank God for, whether a blessing or a struggle. Then, on the 'Hail Mary' beads, simply say: 'Thank you, Jesus.' Finish the decade with a Glory be and repeat by naming again more things you want to thank Jesus for and then pray your 'Thank you, Jesus' decade and so forth.

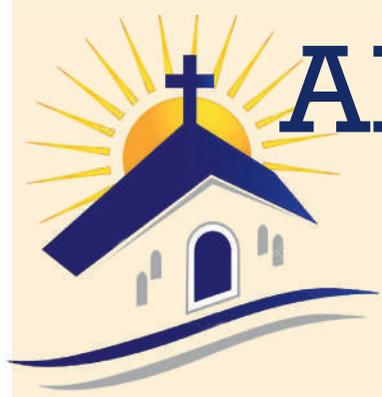
If wishing to pray it as a family, prayer group or amongst friends, keep the same format but on the 'Hail Mary' beads, have the leader lead with 'Jesus' and the response, 'Thank you.'

The beauty of this chaplet is that you can pray it any time anywhere; on your way to work, whilst out walking or waiting at the bus stop. You can pray it whilst whizzing round the supermarket or as part of your daily prayer routine. A most beautiful time I pray it is after receiving Holy Communion. What else is there to say then? And because it is so short and simple, you can even pray it several times a day.

So, this Eastertide, let us together send heavenward a chorus of 'Thank you, Jesus' as we thank God – just because.

*"Learning to pray this chaplet – not a thousand but fifty using my normal rosary beads – has helped me grow in my attitude of gratitude towards God. It has taught me and continues to teach me to thank God for all things, good and challenging."*





# AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

The Universe Catholic Weekly's guide  
to Catholic life in your neighbourhood



## St Cassian's to mark 50 years with a musical tribute to much-loved founder

**Andy Drozdzia**

St Cassian's, Kintbury, the Lasallian youth retreat centre, is celebrating its 50th anniversary by launching an appeal to write new music for its world-famous founder.

Damian Lundy FSC, who died in 1997, was well known for popular hymns such as *Walk in the Light* and *Laudato Si*.

He was also the founder of St. Cassian's Centre (with Joe Hendron and Dominic Green), and its first director.

Now, as St Cassian's prepares to celebrate 50 years of ministry to young people from across Britain and beyond, the retreat centre is inviting musical submissions to set the lyrics of a Damian Lundy composition to music.

Damian Lundy FSC is remembered with fondness for many things. Friends and family remember his kindness and fun; young people continue to experience his legacy through retreats. For many more people, he is associated with hymns - from *The Spirit lives to set us free (Walk in the Light)* to *Laudato Si*.

Emma Biggins, the director of St Cassian's Centre, explained the concept of the project. "We've taken the lyrics from three pieces from Damian Lundy's files that don't have accompanying music and are looking for contributors to bring life to these words," she said. "This isn't a competition, but a community project where we want as many people as possible to take part."

"It could be the first time you set words to music, or it could be your profession. You might do this alone, or work with friends and community to create something, just as Damian did."

This is one of several events planned to mark the Centre's golden jubilee. Brother Armin Luistro FSC, the Superior General of the De La Salle Brothers, will be taking part in a youth retreat for all the UK Lasallian schools, as well as young people from the wider province.

Nick Smith, the management committee chair for St Cassian's Centre Kintbury, shared his hopes for the project. "For many, Damian's songs have had an impact," he told the *Universe*. "I remember singing *Walk in the Light* as a small boy in the early



Over the past 50 years, tens of thousands of young people, teachers and chaplains have come to St Cassian's Centre to explore their faith and relationships with team members.

1980s and, just this Easter, we used *The Reproaches (O My People)* during the adoration of the Cross. The tunes are memorable and suitable for congregations and the lyrics are simple but often profound. We are hoping that the submissions capture some of those values."

### Appeal for support

To support the project, St Cassian's is making an appeal to past team members and retreatants. Over the past 50 years, tens of thousands of young people, teachers and chaplains have come to St Cassian's Centre to explore their faith and relationships with team members. The centre is very keen to reach out to those who have been part of that community, with Nick Smith encouraging them to get in touch.

He said: "The network of past team members is thriving, but we only have contact details for about a third of past team members."

"Most connections are through social media and we aren't in touch with as many people as we'd like from a pre-internet age."

"We would love to hear stories and reconnect with anyone who lived and worked at St Cassian's, especially those we have lost touch with."



Information about the song application is available on the Kintbury website [theKintburyexperience.com/song](http://theKintburyexperience.com/song)

To enter, simply email [office@cassians.co.uk](mailto:office@cassians.co.uk) with a music score and a recording of the individual playing the piece. The deadline for submissions is 26th July 2024.

Right, Damian Lundy FSC, who died in 1997,



"For many, Damian's songs have had an impact. The tunes are memorable and the lyrics are simple but often profound. We are hoping that the submissions capture some of those values."

# Seminarian humbled as he receives the Ministry of Acolyte

**Diocese of East Anglia seminarian Matthew Allen received the Ministry of Acolyte, along with classmates at the Pontifical College Beda in Rome, on Friday 22nd March. He explains below what it means to him.**

The Ministry of Acolyte is a significant milestone on the journey towards the sacred priesthood. It is the last stage of our priestly formation before ordination to the diaconate and presbyterate (priesthood).

So, what is an Acolyte? The word 'acolyte' derives from a Greek term, *akolouthos*, which means 'follower'. As an acolyte, it is our responsibility to assist priests and deacons in carrying out their ministry at the Mass, and as special ministers to give Holy Communion to the faithful at the Mass and to the sick.

At the rite of institution for acolytes, the candidate receives from the bishop (for us at the Beda, our Father Rector) either the

chalice of wine or a vessel containing the bread for consecration at the celebration of the Eucharist.

I am now in my third year of formation and, with the busyness of our lectures, essays, and exams, that time seems to have passed by so quickly and joyfully. When I was writing my formal request to become an acolyte to our Bishop, Peter Collins, I realised the next letter I will write (God willing, of course) will be for ordination to the diaconate.

Receiving the Ministry of Acolyte could be just another box to tick on a journey of discernment towards the priesthood. However, it is so much more. It is not just preparation for the priesthood, but a ministry of service to God and His Church. During the Mass, to help prepare and assist the priest, but also to help others to see the love that the Lord has for each one of us in the Eucharist, the "source and summit" of our faith (ccc. 1324).



Pictured above, Matthew Allen receiving the Ministry of Acolyte at a ceremony in the Pontifical College Beda, Rome.



## Medal honour for Fintan

A long-standing member of the St Vincent de Paul Society's (SVP) at Our Lady and St George Conference in Enfield has received the long service medal.

Fintan Gallagher has been a conference member for over 30 years, and his medal was presented by his parish priest, Fr Daniel Humphreys. The medal bears the image of the founder of the SVP Blessed Frederick Ozanam and a quote attributed to him: 'I would like to enclose the whole world in a network of charity'.

Expressing his delight at the award, Fintan said: "I was pleased to receive the certificate and medal in recognition of my time in the

SVP Enfield. Things have changed many times in the 30 years as the needs required have become more complex. I also appreciate the support from fellow members over the period."

Founded in Britain in 1844, the SVP has over 10,000 members across England and Wales. The Diocese of Westminster has over 60 conferences (groups), committed to seeking and finding those in need. Membership is open to anyone. All that is required is that members accept the SVP's Christian ethos. Members help all people, irrespective of their background or religion, the only criterion being their need.

## Plymouth CAST, one of the largest Catholic Multi Academy Trusts in the country, is seeking to appoint an experienced headteacher as its new Executive Headteacher



Salary: L17-24 and appropriate pension scheme  
Based: St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, Exeter  
& St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Exmouth  
Start date: 1st September 2024



Plymouth CAST is a Multi-Academy Trust comprising 34 schools plus a nursery situated within the Catholic Diocese of Plymouth with whom there is a close working relationship.

This is an exciting time to join a forward thinking and committed team, to both embed as well as shape working practices for the future. As headteacher you will need diplomacy, openness, approachability, and a personable style of leadership, as well as the ability to converse confidently with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders.

### Essential requirements

- Practising Catholic with a strong understanding of the structures and values of the Church
- Qualified to degree level relevant to the post and/or equivalent through professional experience. PGCE (or equivalent) – Qualified to Teach in the UK
- Recent, substantive and successful headship experience
- The ability to manage change through bringing innovative ideas to traditional approaches to teaching and learning
- Understanding and/or experience of managing finances and ensuring financial sustainability
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills – an attentive listener and team builder.

**PLUS A wide knowledge of current and proposed education policy and the legal framework within which schools must operate, particularly in relation to safeguarding, when part of a Multi Academy Trust.**

*If you feel that you have the necessary skills and competencies, and the passion to make a difference to our children and young people, we would love to hear from you!*

Download the application form at [https://www.plymouthcast.org.uk/web/current\\_vacancies/485131](https://www.plymouthcast.org.uk/web/current_vacancies/485131)





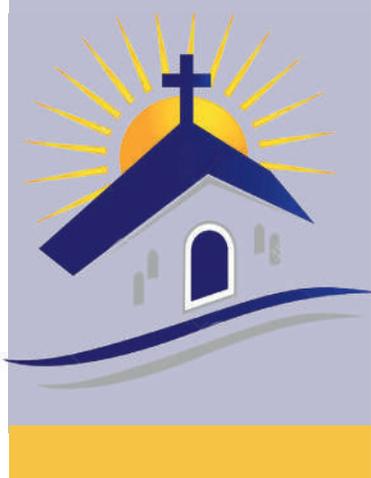
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**And we love great photos – so send them, too!**



# New RE qualification offers all students chance of progression

**Andy Drozdziak**

A new RE qualification has been introduced to provide a qualification for all students in Catholic secondary schools.

While Catholic schools require all students to study RE, and the vast majority are then entered for GCSE, some students are unable to access the GCSE. This leaves around 2,000 young people leaving Catholic secondary schools each year without a qualification in Religious Studies.

RE teacher Andy Lewis, deputy headteacher at St Bonaventure's school in London, wanted to address this issue and has helped develop an entry level course.

Mr Lewis told the *Universe*: "We estimate that around 2,000 young people leave Catholic secondary schools each year without a qualification in religious studies.

"This means they have participated in RE lessons, for 10

per cent of their timetable, and leave with no qualification or recognition of their five or possibly 13 years of Catholic education.

"This is because they either get U grade, or do not get entered into the GCSE."

Mr Lewis was personally invited to work with a team to develop the qualification, with support from the Catholic Education Service and "many within Catholic education".

"Once we looked at the numbers that this effects each year, it felt like something that had to be done," he said. "We felt there was both a practical and moral call to address this. The Catholic Christianity & Judaism Entry Level course is the first RS course to be released and was a priority for Pearson due to the high number of schools doing the current Edexcel Spec A RS course."

The Entry Level Course (ELC) can be used as a progression course



Andy Lewis

prior to GCSE, or students could be entered for both ELC and GCSE, or it could be offered as an alternative to our GCSE qualification.

Mr Lewis explained that the new course is a simplified version of the GCSE course, appealing to those who would normally not pass or not be entered for the GCSE.

The aim, he said, is that every single student who leaves a Catholic school can now have a qualification in RE - some a GCSE and some the Entry Level certificate.

He added: "While studying for the course, students can stay in the same lessons as their peers, but then get entered for this course, it is inclusive as well as being genuinely accessible."

Andy Lewis has already authored foundation workbooks for Oxford University Press for GCSE RE, helping make the course more accessible to all students in Catholic schools.

The first cohort of students to gain this qualification will be in the summer of 2025.

**To find out more about the new Entry Level for RS, visit <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/subjects/religious-studies.updates.html>**



## Award puts St Gregory's in top league

St Gregory's Catholic Science College's excellent outcomes have been recognised by the Schools, Students and Teachers Network (SSAT) in this year's Educational Outcomes Awards. The award recognises St Gregory's for being among the highest performing secondary schools in the country, based on 2023 performance data and information from Ofsted.

The school was recognised in two categories, receiving awards for being in the top 20 per cent of schools nationally for student progress and in the top 10 per cent of non-selective schools for student attainment in the 2023 end of KS4 exams.

The SSAT Educational Outcomes database compares all state-funded schools in England. To be recognised with an Educational Outcomes Award is a significant achievement and a testament to the work of the whole school community.

Andrew Prindiville, headteacher and CEO, said: "These awards are recognition of the diligence and hard work of our amazing pupils, the support of parents and governors and the outstanding work of our dedicated staff who are committed to enabling every child at St Gregory's be the best they can be in everything they undertake."

Sue Williamson, chief executive of SSAT, congratulated St Gregory's

Catholic Science College on the two awards. She said: "This success is down to the superb learning and teaching, outstanding support and inspirational leadership of students, staff, parents and governors. You have made a huge difference to the lives of the young people in your school."

SSAT, the Schools, Students and Teachers network, is a membership organisation of schools and academies that has been working with leaders, teachers and students for over 30 years to drive school improvement and innovation and support their members through networking opportunities and school improvement programmes.

## Ubi Caritas honours for deserving parishioners

**Miriam Cunliffe**

On Monday 8th April at Saint Ambrose's, Kidderminster, two parishioners were awarded with Ubi Caritas medals for their dedication and service to the church.

The presentation took place during the Mass of the Solemnity.

The two parishioners, Christina Geraghty and Lyndon Whatley, were presented with their Ubi Caritas awards by Bishop David Evans.

They are worthy recipients who contribute significantly to the church and parish community.

The Archdiocese of Birmingham recognises those who have made a significant contribution to its work by granting its Ubi Caritas Award.

The awards were granted by Archbishop of Birmingham Bernard Longley, as a symbol of the gratitude of the clergy and people of the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

*'Ubi caritas et amor Deus ibi est'* means where there is love and kindness, God is there.

After the Mass, parishioners, family and friends were invited into the Adams Lounge for a buffet, provided by Mick and Mary Preston, with cakes baked by the wonderful ladies of the UCM.

A lovely evening was enjoyed by all.

# St Gabriel's embraces pope's Holy Year call

Children at St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School in Tamworth have embraced the Year of Prayer.

Pope Francis has asked Catholics around the world to observe 2024 as a "Year of Prayer" in preparation for the Holy Year.

As part of the school's Year of Prayer work, each year group took a different part of the Our Father and responded to it through art.

The display involved all year groups at the school, from Reception to Year Six.

The teachers and children have been working on their artwork over recent weeks as part of trying to

pray more deeply during Lent.

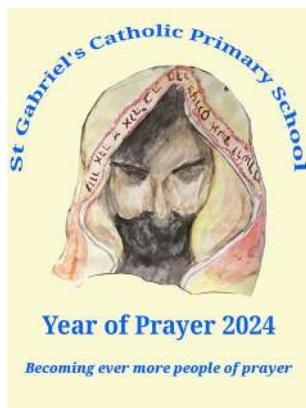
To showcase the work, the school has produced a PowerPoint presentation, and when viewed as a slideshow, you can hear the school's Ministers of Faith praying the Our Father.

The Ministers of Faith are Year Six children who help to organise and lead prayer and liturgy opportunities in school. They also meet with visitors to school and talk to them about how pupils are living as disciples of Jesus.

Additionally, the school has created a St Gabriel's Year of Prayer logo, based on a piece of artwork created by a Year Six pupil. The logo is to be developed into a prayer card.

Schools across the Archdiocese of Birmingham have developed a variety of initiatives to mark this Year of Prayer.

Some have displayed the words of the Our Father to reflect the languages spoken in their school; creative displays express what is meant by the petitions, and Stay & Pray sessions with parents to explore the Our Father have taken place.



# Prayers for the Holy Land



Peace in the Holy Land was the focus of prayers and reflection at a special Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Liverpool.

The Mass, celebrated by Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, was organised in response to Cardinal Vincent Nichols' call for a day of prayer for peace and his accompanying appeal for a ceasefire amid Israel's ongoing war with Hamas in Gaza.

The Mass, which started at 5pm in the Blessed Sacrament

Chapel, was preceded by silent adoration from 3pm. During the Mass, Archbishop Malcolm spoke of the connections between the Abrahamic faiths and referred to the significance of the presence in the cathedral of the sculpture 'Abraham our Father in Faith' by the late Sean Rice.

He also cited the Jewish and Muslim traditions in the city and the important contribution that both of those faith communities have made to Liverpool life.

Bishop Tom Neylon and several

priests and deacons from the archdiocese concelebrated the Mass whose congregation included a contingent of Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre.

Archbishop Malcolm, a member of that order, thanked them for their work with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and offered good wishes to Michael Byrne, the lieutenant of the order who was present, regarding a forthcoming visit to the Holy Land alongside Canon Mark Madden.

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**GARDENING**

## Top tips for tip-top turf this summer

In late Spring, your lawn grass, depending on the type, will either be coming into its prime, or on its way to decline. Each type has a preferred growing season. In either case, these simple guidelines will help ensure the best chance of looking it's best this summer.

**Mowing height**

Become familiar with the ideal mowing height for your type of lawn and keep it cut to the appropriate level. Avoid cutting off any more than 1/3 of the grass blade each time you mow. More aggressive mowing can add stress to the plant, contribute to turf disease and increase thatch build up.

**Proper irrigation**

All grass types do best when the amount of water applied in one week is between 1 and 1½ inches. In the absence of sufficient rainfall, you'll need to irrigate.

Best long-term results are achieved when water is applied all at once or no more than twice each week. In this way, deep soaking encourages grass roots to grow deeper, making them more drought tolerant.

Grass that is watered more often keeps grass roots from having to grow deeply to find moisture. Shallow rooted turf does not hold up as well to hot dry weather and will decline more quickly in the absence of water.

Over watering is also a major factor of turf disease. An easy way to monitor the amount of water being delivered by your irrigation system is to set out several tuna cans and see how long it takes to fill. When the can is full, one inch of water has been applied to that area.

However, be sure to note that not all areas of your lawn will be watered at the same rate, so conduct this test through all your zones.

Water your lawn between 10 pm and complete by 10 a.m. This will coincide with the time that dew is present on your grass. You do not want to prolong the period of time that grass stays wet, due to the increased risk of disease.

**To fertilise or not**

Turf grass should be fertilised only during the period of active growth. Although fertilisation can really green up your lawn and stimulate new growth, too much is not good.

When fertilising grass, many turf diseases are promoted by excess nitrogen, the primary chemical in lawn fertilisers combined with fertilizing too late in the season.

For cool season grasses, it's either too late or becoming too late to fertilise from the end of April until Autumn.

For warm season grasses, mid to late Spring is the first time of the year when you can effectively start fertilising.

Also, never apply more fertiliser than the instructions call for. There is too much of a good thing when it comes to grass fertiliser; you'll risk killing off healthy grass.



**Grass cycle**

Mulching grass clippings back into the lawn is known as grass cycling. Most modern mowers have this feature. Rather than discharging the clippings into a bag, the clippings are chopped again before falling harmlessly into your lawn. The small clippings left behind are virtually invisible, but do promote the long-term health of your soil by adding organic material.

Grass cycling can return as much as 30 per cent of the nitrogen required by grasses for proper nutrition.

The key is to not cut more than 1/3 of the grass blade's total height each time you mow. Otherwise, you can increase the chances of

thatch build up and cause undo stress on your lawn as well.

**Other tricks**

Many lawns start to decline due to excess shade. No grass is happiest growing in shade but some are more tolerant than others. If turf decline is apparent in your lawn due to shade, consider limbing up overhanging tree branches as much as possible. This allows more light to the surface of the lawn, and can make a big difference.

Another trick for cool season grasses in shady environments is to cut the grass at the highest setting on your mower. This increases

"Mulching grass clippings back into the lawn is known as grass cycling. Rather than discharging the clippings into a bag, the clippings are chopped again before falling harmlessly into your lawn. Grass cycling can return as much as 30 per cent of the nitrogen required by grasses for proper nutrition..."

the amount of blade surface available to absorb sunlight and photosynthesise.

For warm season lawns, dethatching and aeration may be in order. Thatch is the build up above the soil of grass stems, runners and roots and breaks down more slowly.

Excess thatch layers are unhealthy to a thriving lawn, and can contribute to drought problems.

Dethatching removes this unwanted layer and aerating stimulates thatch decomposition. Aeration has the added benefit of relieving soil compaction and improves air circulation and water availability in the soil.

## HEALTH



# Hints of Alzheimer's: it's all in the eyes

## New study shows how your vision can predict dementia 12 years before it is diagnosed

The eyes can reveal a lot about the health of our brain. Indeed, problems with the eyes can be one of the earliest signs of cognitive decline. Our latest study shows that a loss of visual sensitivity can predict dementia 12 years before it is diagnosed.

Our research was based on 8,623 healthy people in Norfolk, England, who were followed up for many years. By the end of the study, 537 participants had developed dementia, so we could see what factors might have preceded this diagnosis.

At the start of the study, we asked participants to take a visual sensitivity test. For the test, they had to press a button as soon as they saw a triangle forming in a field of moving dots. People who would develop dementia were much slower to see this triangle on the screen than people who would remain without dementia.

### So why might that be?

Visual issues may be an early indicator of cognitive decline as the toxic amyloid plaques associated with Alzheimer's disease may first

affect areas of the brain associated with vision, with parts of the brain associated with memory becoming damaged as the disease progresses. So vision tests may find deficits before memory tests do.

There are several other aspects of visual processing that are affected in Alzheimer's disease, such as the ability to see outlines of objects (contrast sensitivity) and to discern between certain colours (the ability to see the blue-green spectrum is affected early in dementia), and these can affect people's lives without them being immediately aware of it.

Another early sign of Alzheimer's is a deficit in the "inhibitory control" of eye movements, where distracting stimuli seem to hold attention more readily. People with Alzheimer's seem to have an issue ignoring distracting stimuli, which may show up as eye-movement-control issues.

If dementia makes it harder to avoid distracting stimuli, then these problems could increase the risk of driving accidents – something we are currently investigating at Loughborough University.

"Another early sign of Alzheimer's is a deficit in the 'inhibitory control' of eye movements, where distracting stimuli seem to hold attention more readily. People with Alzheimer's seem to have an issue ignoring distracting stimuli..."

### Recognising faces

We have some evidence which suggests that people with dementia tend to process new people's faces inefficiently. In other words, they don't follow the usual pattern of scanning the face of the person they are talking to.

In healthy people, this would be from eyes to nose to mouth. We do this to "imprint" the face and remember it for later. People can sometimes sense when the person they are talking to does not do this.

In fact, some doctors working with people with dementia will recognise that someone has dementia when they meet them. People with dementia can sometimes seem lost, because they do not purposefully move their eyes to scan the environment, including that of the face of the people they have just met.

It would follow that you would then later be less able to recognise people as you have not imprinted their features. So this early issue in not recognising people you have just met could be related to ineffective eye movement for new faces, rather than being a pure memory disorder.

### Can eye movement improve memory?

However, as visual sensitivity is related to memory performance (even using non-visual tests), we are also testing whether getting people to do more eye movements helps to improve memory. Previous research on the matter is mixed, but some studies found that eye movement can improve memory. Perhaps that explains why we found that people who watch more TV and read more have better memory and less dementia risk than those who

do not.

While watching TV or reading, our eyes flick back and forth over the page and TV screen. However, people who read often also tend to have been in education longer. Having had good education provides brain reserve capacity so that when connections in the brain are damaged, the negative result is less.

In other studies, eye movements from left to right and right to left done quickly (two eye movements per second) were found to improve autobiographical memory (your life story). However, some studies suggest this beneficial effect of eye movement only benefits right-handed people. We are not sure why this is.

Despite these exciting findings, treatment for memory problems using deliberate eye movements in older people has not been done that much yet. Also, using deficits in eye movements as a diagnostic is not a regular feature, despite the possibilities in eye movement technology.

One of the bottlenecks may be access to eye-tracking technologies, which are expensive and require training to use and analyse. Until cheaper and easy-to-use eye trackers are available, using eye movements as a diagnostic tool for early-stage Alzheimer's is not possible outside the laboratory.

**Eef Hogervorst is a Professor of Biological Psychology, Loughborough University**  
**Ahmet Begde is a PhD Candidate, Neurorehabilitation, Loughborough University**  
**Thom Wilcockson is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Loughborough University**

## FOOD

# New clinical egg study reveals egg-cellent results

People are increasingly aware of the impact of cholesterol on heart health and overall well-being, but it's not always easy to know which foods will truly have a positive effect. To add to the confusion, it can feel like research is always revealing something new, so it can be difficult to keep up.

Eggs, for example, have often received negative press related to cholesterol. However, new clinical research by a leading academic medical centre showed eating fortified eggs, like Eggland's Best eggs, did not negatively affect cholesterol levels.

Additional findings suggest that eating 12

Eggland's Best eggs a week can be part of a healthy diet, even for more high-risk individuals.

Research also suggested that consuming Eggland's Best eggs could potentially reduce levels of 'bad cholesterol' (LDL cholesterol) in older individuals and those with diabetes, and may help increase levels of "good cholesterol" (HDL cholesterol) in older individuals. The consumption of Eggland's Best eggs may also increase Vitamin B12 levels, helping to support a healthier lifestyle.

Registered dietitian and nutritionist Dawn Jackson Blatner said this clinical study helps

Research also suggested that consuming Eggland's Best eggs could potentially reduce levels of "bad cholesterol" (LDL cholesterol) in older individuals and those with diabetes



clarify the confusion regarding the nutrition of eggs and can help people feel more confident about including fortified eggs as part of a healthy diet, even for people who are at high risk for heart disease.

Dawn also shared additional tips for people who may be looking to lower their cholesterol levels:

## 1. Eat more fibre

Fibre-rich foods are key for a healthy heart and lipid levels. Fiber-rich foods include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds.

## 2. Swap your fats

Switch to more heart-smart fats to add flavor such as olive oil, nuts, seeds, avocado and fish. Strive to decrease foods higher in saturated fat like butter, cheese, fatty meats and fried foods.

## 3. Choose eggs wisely

Not all eggs are created equal. Eggland's Best eggs have more than double the omega-3s and Vitamin B12, 25% less saturated fat, 10 times more Vitamin E, and six times more Vitamin D compared to ordinary eggs. To learn more about this study from a Leading Academic Medical Centre, visit [EgglandsBest.com/EggStudy](http://EgglandsBest.com/EggStudy).

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## Salmon and avocado toast

Jackson Blatner shares her favourite recipe for a delicious toast that contains healthy fats and wholesome ingredients like salmon, avocado and Eggland's Best eggs.

Prep Time: 5 minutes  
Cook Time: 5 minutes  
Total Servings: 2 avocado toasts

### Ingredients

2 Eggland's Best eggs, large  
1 teaspoon olive oil  
2 slices whole grain bread, toasted  
1/2 avocado  
1 cup raw spinach or arugula  
2 ounces smoked salmon  
Black pepper, to taste

### Method

1. In a skillet over medium heat, add olive oil, crack in Eggland's Best eggs, and cook until eggs are over-medium.
2. Top each piece of whole grain toast with equal amounts of (in this order): sliced avocado, spinach, salmon, and top with a cooked Eggland's Best egg and sprinkle of pepper.

Allergy Info: no added sugar (can be gluten-free if gluten-free bread is used)



## FILMS

# Irena's story deserved to be told

**John Mulderig**

An inspiring but once little-known chapter of history provides the basis for the Holocaust drama *Irena's Vow* (Quiver). The humane basic values of the story could potentially make it appealing for older teenagers as well as grown-ups. However, a plot development involving an objectively immoral situation requires careful assessment.

Sophie Nélisse plays Irena Gut, a young Catholic Polish woman swept up in – and left homeless by – the Nazi occupation of her homeland following the outbreak of World War II. Irena is eventually put to work as a waitress in the local Wehrmacht officers' mess.

She is also placed in charge of the group of Jewish laundry workers who tend to the officers' clothing.

Overhearing that all Jews in the area will be transported and liquidated in the near future, Irena resolves to act quickly. A lucky but unlikely opportunity to rescue her new friends arises when Major Rugemer (Dougray Scott), one of the soldiers who dines at the mess, decides to make Irena his personal housekeeper.

Rugemer has requisitioned a large villa with a multi-room basement. As Irena gets the dwelling ready for its new occupant, but before he moves in, she smuggles the launderers into the cellar and arranges to keep them safely concealed there.



Sophie Nélisse stars as Irene Gut, left, alongside members of the ensemble cast in a scene from *Irena's Vow*.

The perils of the precarious situation uphold viewer interest in director Louise Archambault's generally uplifting adaptation of screenwriter Dan Gordon's play. But the film is not free of challenging content.

In addition to scenes of brutality, Irena has to confront an unforeseen problem when one of her proteges – who, with the arrival of a newcomer, now number 12 – becomes pregnant and announces her intention to terminate her baby's life. Though this subplot has a happy ending, and shows Irena in a still more favourable light, it obviously constitutes mature content.

So, too, does the turn the relationship between Irena and Rugemer takes as the movie nears its end. While revealing the specifics would constitute a spoiler, it's fair to say that it's a

complicated development.

This aspect of the picture shouldn't necessarily bar mature adolescents from watching it. But a family discussion might be needed to unpack its ins-and-outs.

The real-life Irena survived the global conflict and went on to marry United Nations worker William Opdyke. She resisted telling the tale of her wartime activities until provoked to do so, beginning in the 1970s, by a Holocaust denier.

Having been honoured both by the State of Israel and by St. John Paul II, she died in 2003 at age 85.

Remarkably, this is Sophie Nélisse's second role as a young wartime hero. Her first was as Liesel in *The Book Thief* (2013). In that film, her fictional German character – a member of the

female equivalent of the Hitler Youth, who is shown singing anti-Semitic lyrics in a choral number – steals books to share with the Jews taking refuge in her basement.

Nélisse insists this was never her career plan. Still, she enjoyed the evident parallels between the protagonists – in this world but not of it, and being caught up in a milieu of unspeakable evil, yet finding the inner courage to remain moral.

Both the fictional Liesel and the real Irene "put others' needs in front of their own," she said. *Irena's Vow* went beyond a Holocaust movie, I think. It helped me grow as a human being, and brought me so many values."

Real heroes, she observed, "are often the most quiet ones," and operate, as both characters did, "in the shadows."

## LIFESTYLE

## Five expert tips for a refreshing 'everything shower'

Your shower can be more than just a way to get clean, and the viral 'everything shower' trend proved just how easy it is to build a head-to-toe self-care routine that provides physical, mental and emotional benefits.

Researchers have studied the effects of showering and discovered the science behind its rejuvenating powers. Hot showers can signal your brain to release oxytocin, a feel-good hormone that helps reduce stress and anxiety. The heat from a shower also relaxes your muscles, clears your nasal passages and clears your pores of dirt and oil.

Beyond science, showers are a rare opportunity to take a break from your busy life to focus on your well-being. Are you ready to elevate your shower into a self-care ritual? Dermatologist Joshua Zeichner, MD, and Dr. Karen Litzy, PT, DPT, helped curate these five tips to transform your shower into a relaxing and refreshing experience.

### 1. Ditch your phone

Your self-care shower begins before you even

step inside the bathroom. Leave your phone in your office, living room or bedroom to disconnect from the world and minimise distraction. This simple act helps you focus on yourself and your well-being, away from the stresses and responsibilities of your life. As you step into your bathroom, embrace a peaceful moment of solitude.

### 2. Create a relaxing ambiance

Harsh or bright lighting is counterproductive to relaxation. Set the mood by lowering the lights in your bathroom and lighting candles. Candles, whether scented or unscented, create a soft, glowing ambiance that can calm your racing thoughts and put your mind at ease.

Enhance your shower experience by playing soothing music. Play nature sounds like a tropical rain or bubbling brook, instrumental music, singing bowls or whatever sounds you associate with calmness and tranquillity. Guided meditations are also a fantastic choice for promoting mindfulness so you can stay present in this moment of self-care and gratitude.

### 3. Pamper your scalp and hair

Don't rush through your hair care routine. Use your shower time to pamper your hair and scalp. In addition to letting a hair mask or deep conditioner nourish your locks, give your scalp a little attention with a gentle scrub and massage.

Dermatologist Joshua Zeichner, MD, says: "Clogged pores and scalp flakes are two of the most common complaints dermatologists get from patients. Proper showering is important for skin health, both to remove soiling that builds up on the skin as well as shampoos and body washes. Your shower head is more important than you may realize, as it provides the action for effective rinsing."

### 4. Massage your muscles

Take advantage of the muscle-soothing power of a hot shower and give yourself a massage. If you haven't already, invest in a shower head with massage settings to unwind your muscles and release tension.

Dr. Karen Litzy, PT, DPT, recommends choosing the Waterpik™ PowerPulse

Therapeutic Massage shower head. "It is neither economical nor realistic to have a massage every time you have achy muscles. Although not quite the same as a hands-on massage, the Waterpik PowerPulse Therapeutic Massage shower head is the perfect alternative. With the handheld shower head feature, you can focus the massaging water stream directly over the muscles that need it most. It is an inexpensive way to get the benefits of water massage without the price tag of going to the spa."

### 5. Enjoy the post-shower glow

Rushing to get dried and dressed after your shower defeats the purpose of your relaxing routine. Take your time after your shower to towel off, moisturise your skin and dry your hair. Bask in the glow of your self-care practice and carry the calm and peace of your shower into the rest of your day.

Self-care isn't just about spoiling yourself. It's essential for maintaining your well-being. Using these five simple tips, you can elevate your basic shower into a luxurious self-care ritual.

# How science and religion came together to build a ‘new Pompeii’ from the ashes

HISTORY

**Jessica Hughes**

The history of how a new city of Pompeii was built in the 19th century is little known, but a new exhibit reveals its story.

The exhibition, held in the Catholic shrine of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary of Pompeii, sheds new light on the relationship between science and religion in the late 19th century.

The exhibition tells the story of the Meteorological-Geodynamic-Volcanological Observatory that was set up at the shrine in 1890 to monitor the activity of Mount Vesuvius.

This Pompeii isn't the famous ancient Greco-Roman city, which was destroyed by an eruption of Vesuvius in AD79, but rather the modern city down the road from the excavations. The city centres around the huge Catholic shrine, which was founded in the 1870s by an energetic lawyer called Bartolo Longo, on a plot of land next to the ancient Roman amphitheatre.

During his lifetime, Longo built a “new Pompeii” which attracted pilgrims and visitors from all over Italy and beyond. As well as the magnificent church with its treasured painting of Our Lady of Pompeii, the city was home to several charitable institutions and pioneering urban projects, including an orphanage for girls, a residential home for the sons of prisoners, an industrial-scale printing press – and the observatory.

The new exhibition is displayed in a room with high ceilings in the shrine archives. A neat display of antique photographs, documents and original scientific instruments tells the story of this important but little-known episode in the history of science.

The development of the new city all started with a miracle. In 1886, Francesco Denza (a Barnabite priest and eminent astronomer, who was the first director of the Vatican's Observatory) recovered from paralysis after praying to Our Lady of Pompeii.

Denza came to Pompeii to give thanks for this healing miracle, and asked what he could do for the shrine in return. Longo proposed setting up an observatory on site, with Denza as director. A tower was constructed above the girls' orphanage, and filled with state-of-the-art modern instruments.

Longo then organised a grand



The destruction of Pompeii

*“Longo saw the observatory as proof of how religion and science could exist in happy union – contrary to the widespread conviction that ‘science and faith must of necessity be in eternal disagreement’ ... the observatory itself was born from a scientist’s act of faith, that is, Denza’s prayers to God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.”*

festival of science to coincide with the observatory's inauguration on the Feast of the Ascension on 15th May 1890. Reports of the event suggest 20,000 people attended. They listened to speeches in praise of the observatory and the broader union of the science, faith and charity that it represented.

Longo's own speech contrasted the new Christian Pompeii with the ancient Greco-Roman city next door. It pointed to the bloody slaughter that took place in its amphitheatre, where brutal gladiatorial combats and staged animal hunts had been the favourite forms of entertainment in the ancient city.

#### The new observatory's significance

The new Pompeii observatory monitored the activity of Mount Vesuvius, keeping track of seismic movements and meteorological changes. Its regular data bulletins

south-eastern side the lava is flowing more abundantly ... The crater is emitting occasional flares and a calm jet of projected materials.’

Longo saw the observatory as proof of how religion and science could exist in happy union – contrary to the widespread conviction that ‘science and faith must of necessity be in eternal disagreement’ (to cite from his inaugural speech).

That is the driving message of the shrine's current exhibition as well. I spoke with the curator, Salvatore Sorrentino (himself both a mathematician and member of the Pompeian clergy). He explained that the observatory itself was born from a scientist's act of faith, that is, Denza's prayers to God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.



Vesuvius today, with Naples in the far background

Sorrentino also drew a comparison with the work of the great Pisan scientist Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), who saw his own experimental methods as a means of asking questions of God, and of discovering the footprint of the creator in the physical world.

The observatory is a landmark in the history of science, that changed the way that the land around Pompeii was understood at the end of the 19th century. Yet at Pompeii, as elsewhere, there was still room for older religious understandings.

An inscription chiselled into the shrine façade commemorates how Pompeii was delivered from the major eruption of April 1906. The inscription records ‘for posterity’ how the painting of Our Lady was taken out of the church during the eruption, and carried in a procession “in view of the fiery peak”.

The surrounding towns “were terrified by the darkness and ruins”, but at Pompeii “the sky became calm, and all souls were reassured”.

The news bulletin published by the shrine narrates how, by the end of this violent eruption, the new Pompeii had received only the gentlest sprinkling of ashes.

**Jessica Hughes is a Senior Lecturer in Classical Studies, The Open University**

# New definition in US of what constitutes death threatens to create rift between Church and medics

SCIENCE

**Gina Christian**

Catholic bioethicists in the United States have sounded the alarm about a critical lack of agreement on what constitutes brain death; and the implications for organ donation are “profound,” they said.

The National Catholic Bioethics Center, based near Philadelphia, made it views known in a statement called ‘Integrity in the Determination of Brain Death: Recent Challenges and Next Steps.’

The NCBC said there had been “a decisive breakdown in the public consensus on death and organ donation,” following “the failure of recent efforts to resolve an important dispute regarding the determination of brain death.”

Catholic teaching supports organ donation, which Pope St. John Paul II called “a particularly praiseworthy example” of “everyday heroism,” so long as the donation is made with free and informed consent, and the donor is truly dead. The act of removing the organs must not kill the donor.

But recent efforts to change the definition of death stand to erode those ethical standards, said the NCBC, whose statement was prompted by two key developments in the USA.

The first was a proposed revision to the 1981 Uniform Determination of Death Act, or UDDA, on the criteria for determining death. That change was put on hold in September 2023 after pushback from several organisations, including the NCBC and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The second was the publication last year of revised guidelines on

the issue by the American Academy of Neurology, the Child Neurology Society and the Society of Critical Care Medicine, which now enable clinicians to declare brain death despite evidence of neuroendocrine function.

The neuroendocrine system, which includes the part of the brain known as the hypothalamus, regulates a number of key activities, such as temperature, the balance between salt and water in the body, sleep and sex drive. The hypothalamus may also play a role in awareness and pain detection.

The UDDA states that a person can be declared dead following the ‘irreversible’ shutdown of circulatory and respiratory functions, or of ‘all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem.’

The determination of death must be made ‘in accordance with accepted medical standards,’ the act states.

In recent years, however, “a lot of people thought, ‘It’s a 40-year-old law; maybe we need to revise it,’” NCBC executive vice president John Brehany said. “But we think there were some bad proposals to do so.”

Those “bad proposals” relate to testing for brain death, he said.

“The law pretty much says that ... brain death involves all irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain,” he said. “And yet the guidelines of the most influential organisation (the AAN) were not testing for all functions ... of the entire brain. We think that’s very problematic.”

In July 2023, the NCBC and the USCCB submitted a joint letter to the Uniform Law Commission, expressing “serious reservations” about changing the UDDA text to read “permanent cessation of circulatory and respiratory



*“The proposed revision would replace the standard of whole brain death with one of partial brain death... allowing patients who exhibit partial brain function to be declared ‘legally dead’ when they are not biologically dead”*

functions; or permanent coma, cessation of spontaneous respiratory functions, and loss of brainstem reflexes.”

“The proposed revision would replace the standard of whole brain death with one of **partial** brain death,” thereby allowing “patients who exhibit partial brain function to be declared ‘legally dead’ when they are not biologically dead,” said the NCBC and the USCCB.

But the move by the AAN and its fellow groups to proceed with their own updates “represent(s) a formal breach in a longstanding consensus in law and public policy,” added the NCBC, pointing out that “these issues should be of profound concern to Catholics, in particular to Catholic health care institutions and professionals.”

Both Brehany and Charles Camosy, professor of medical humanities at Creighton University, said that lifesaving technologies have made a precise determination of death even more urgent.

Medical death was historically viewed from a cardiopulmonary perspective, said Camosy. In other words, “If your heart stops beating and you stop breathing, you’re dead,” he said.

But “things get a lot trickier

when (a patient is) in an intensive care unit,” said Brehany.

“We developed the ventilator, which kept people alive who otherwise would have died from a traumatic brain injury by helping them breathe,” Camosy said. “We developed the ability to transplant non-paired vital organs, like a heart, into another human being.”

Such advances led an ad hoc committee at Harvard Medical School to issue a 1968 paper on defining what was meant by an ‘irreversible coma.’

The UDDA “essentially used the language that the committee came up with,” Camosy said.

Even then, determining brain death can be fraught with uncertainty, he added.

Camosy pointed to the case of Jahi McMath, who in 2013 was declared brain dead following complications from surgery for sleep apnea. Her family fought to keep her on a ventilator due to their deeply held Christian beliefs and signs of life they had perceived in McMath, such as finger and toe movements. They eventually relocated to New Jersey, where state law allows religious exemptions for faiths that do not recognise brain death.

*“First, Catholics must restate and explain better a clear, philosophically coherent concept of death that is compatible with Catholic teachings and rigorous, consistent clinical testing.”*

McMath entered puberty, experiencing three documented menstrual cycles, and died in 2018 after intestinal surgery.

The AAN changes, based on a less than complete assessment of brain death, stand to hurt both potential organ donors and the more than 103,000 individuals in the US awaiting organ transplants, said both Camosy and Brehany.

“I’m not sure we should really be taking organs from people if we’re not sure that they’re dead,” said Camosy.

The NCBC called on Catholics to take three action steps regarding the issue.

“First, Catholics must restate and explain better a clear, philosophically coherent concept of death that is compatible with Catholic teachings and rigorous, consistent clinical testing.”

“A whole brain death standard has appeared to be compatible with Catholic teachings.

“A partial brain death standard can never be acceptable to Catholics.”

In addition the NCBC said: “Catholics must reaffirm and strengthen ethical standards and protocols for the determination of death. With regard to ethical standards, we must help to articulate and properly integrate the many goods and demands inherent in post-mortem organ donation.”

Lastly, widespread education on the issue is essential for “clinical and administrative leaders ... organ donors (current and potential), families, clergy and the public,” said the NCBC.

It added, “Completing the tasks outlined above will require timely action, focused attention, and the collaboration of individuals and institutions with the requisite expertise.”

# Generosity, and the noble art of doing the little things well

SPORT

## Fr Vlad Felzmann

Generosity – the word comes from the Latin *generosus*: of noble birth – is hugely attractive in sport as in life. Helping others feel better is Ubuntu – ‘enlightened self-interest’ or ‘humanity towards others.’ As you, dear reader, will have found out, while helping the beneficiary, generosity gives your own life a boost.

“Everything I know about morality and the obligations of men, I owe to football,” admitted Albert Camus, French philosopher (1913-60) author and journalist, winner in 1957 of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Sport is not just a metaphor, it’s also a school for life.

Muhammad Ali was very clear. “We can only be truly generous when we expect nothing in return,” he said. “With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.” Nicknamed “The Greatest”, Ali is widely regarded as the most amazing boxer of all time.

At the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, Germany’s Luz Long helped American Competitor and brilliant all-around athlete Jesse Owens win the gold medal in the long jump. The two men had met at the long jump, where Owens had inadvertently scratched his first jump, unaware it would be recorded as his first attempt, and not a trial. Unsettled, he scratched the second jump. As the story goes, Long suggested that Owens leap before the mark, ensuring that Owens would qualify to move on. In the spirit of competition, Long wanted the best from his opponent.

Owens did qualify, and the two went on to the finals. Long would beat the European record. But Owens would set a new world record that outdistanced Long. The two would best each other and the record five times before Owens finally won. What happened next is not the stuff of movie scripts but of real life.

Long took hold of Owens, and the two strode arm-in-arm for a victory lap. The crowd roared approval and shouted, “Owens! Owens!” Hitler promptly left the arena. The friendship between the two would continue for years until Long stopped writing to his friend in 1943. He had been conscripted into the German military and was mortally wounded in the Battle of St. Pietro. He passed away in a British military hospital, but not before penning a letter to his dear friend.



Luz Long and Jesse Owens

“Someday, find my son,” he said in his letter to Owens. “Tell him what times were like when we were not separated by war. Tell him how things can be between men on this Earth.”

Owens honoured the request and corresponded with the younger Luz for years. After the war, Owens returned to Berlin to walk arm-in-arm with Kai Long, the son of the great peacemaker and forever friend, remembering the moment in the stadium.

“It took a lot of courage for him to befriend me in front of Hitler,” Owens recalled. “I would melt down all the medals and cups I have, and they wouldn’t be a plating on the twenty-four-carat friendship that I felt for Luz Long.”

### Life is not important...

Jackie Robinson, the first African-American to play major league baseball, stated that “a life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives.” His conviction is backed up by Roberto Clemente, former Pittsburgh Pirates great and baseball Hall of Famer, who spoke these words: “Any time you have an opportunity to make a difference in this world and you don’t, then you are wasting your time on Earth.”

As Dmitri Shostakovich, Russian composer and pianist (1906-75) put it: “Football is the ballet of the masses.” If you put your heart into it, your love may convert the prose of your daily life into poetry: something beautiful you feel.

Talking of faith, Imran Khan said: “Spirituality does two things for you. One, you are forced to

become more selfless, two, you trust in providence,” Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan between 2018-2022, previously captained the Pakistan national cricket team, which won the 1992 Cricket World Cup.

Be grateful to providence. Thank God for all you have. Never take your gifts for granted. Use them as well as you can. “I once cried because I had no shoes to play soccer, but one day, I met a man who had no feet,” admitted Zinedine ‘Zizou’ Zidane, French international star footballer named FIFA World Player of The Year 1998, 2000 and 2003. Zidane also won the Ballon d’Or in 1998 and managed Real Madrid from 2016-18 and 2019-21.

“When you buy me, you are buying a Ferrari,” boasted Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Swedish professional footballer who played 2016-20 18 for Manchester United, 2018-2019 for LA Galaxy and 2020-20 23 for AC Milan. Widely regarded as one of the best strikers of his generation, having won 31 trophies in his career, he is the most decorated active footballer in the world. However, before you jump to any conclusion – as you may have heard, it is unwise to judge a book by its cover – within that Ferrari there beats a heart of gold.

I know for a fact that, while at Manchester United from 2016-18, without any publicity, he used to send half his monthly salary to support youth clubs in the deprived areas of Malmö where he had been brought up.

To encourage their peers to be generous, some stars are happy to publicise their generosity. Cristiano

Ronaldo has been named the world’s most charitable sports star, having donated millions of pounds of his fortune to worthy causes. The Portuguese star was named by ‘Dosomething.org’ as the most charitable sportsperson, topping the Athletes Gone Good list of 20 stars.

Then there is Bethany Hamilton, a surfer who survived a shark attack when she was just 13 years old. Despite losing her left arm, she went on to realise her dream of going pro in 2007. Hamilton is active in charity work. She has her own foundation, Friends of Bethany, which provides support to amputees.

### Empowering others

Lindsey Vonn, widely regarded as one of the world’s greatest female skiers after she won Olympic gold in Vancouver in 2010 and four World Cup championships, has her own foundation, the Lindsey Vonn Foundation, which focuses on community growth through the empowerment of girls. According to Kelley McMillan of the *New York Times*, Vonn has also done work with the Wounded Warrior Project and Wings for Life.

Tiger Woods – who passed through some very dark days in his life yet is arguably the world’s best golfer – has been involved in charity work and donations for some 20 years. His Tiger Woods Foundation provides money for deserving, impoverished students who want to go to college. It awards dozens of grants to improve under-privileged children’s health. Millions of young people have benefitted from his generosity.

*“I would melt down all the medals and cups I have, and they wouldn’t be a plating on the 24 carat friendship that I felt for Luz Long.”*

Jesse Owens

Serena Williams, with her 186 consecutive weeks stay on the summit of the WTA’s number one spot – she shared the spot with the German Steffi Graff – isn’t just a whiz on the court. She has been given many awards for her work with charities, such as the Young Heroes Award for her support of Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Family Circle and Prudential Financial Player Who Makes a Difference Award and the Celebrity Role Model Award from the Avon Foundation for her work fighting breast cancer.

“Life is like a game of soccer. You need goals. If there are no goals in your life then you can’t win.” (Author Unknown) Circumstances change, so will your goals. As they say, now is the start of the rest of your life. Your past has been a rehearsal for the present. Ask yourself: “What have I learnt from my life so far? How best to go forward?” Decide on a virtue to aim for. Maybe generosity? There are an increasing number of people in need.

Remember ‘Father Vlad’s five a day’? ‘Select, focus, commit, work and learn’ – perhaps to take another tack if that is what you need to do.

May you be inspired by these characters to do your bit. Maybe not with money but with your time and interest in the needy of your neighbourhood. Little things can mean a lot.

Towards the end of the last century – I keep the date vague to eliminate any possibilities of identification – a woman came to me to confess. She had thought of suicide. “But you look fine,” I said.

She responded: “That’s what I wanted to tell you about. Yesterday, standing in the checkout queue at my supermarket, a lady in front of me turned around and said: ‘Oh, luv, you look terrible. Come on, push your trolley in front of mine.’ I did. I burst out crying. Someone cared. I feel fine now.”

Generosity – as Jesus Christ broadcast through his Passion, Death and Resurrection – is a divine attribute. Worth acquiring while we have the time.

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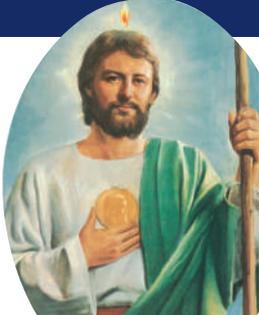
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### IN MEMORIAM



**Vivien Kloszek**  
Died 18 April 2018  
Six years since she passed away. It still seems like yesterday she was with us. Everyday is filled with memories, all from a happier time. A life well lived.  
Anthony and Ernie



With Grateful Thanks to Our Lady, St Joseph and St Michael.  
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### LITURGICAL CALENDARS

#### Ordinary Form

Ordinary Form Liturgical Calendar Sunday Year B, Weekday Cycle II  
Sunday, April 21: Fourth Sunday of Easter Acts 4:8-12; Ps. 118:1,8-9, 21-23, 26,28-29; 1 Jn. 3:1-2; Jn. 10:11-18

Monday, April 22: Acts 11:1-18; Ps. 42:2-3,42:3-4; Jn.10:1-10

Tuesday, April 23: St George, Solemnity Rev. 12: 10-12; Ps. 126 r. 5; Rm.5:1-5; Jn. 15:18-21

Wednesday, April 24: St Fidelis of Sigmaringen, Priest, Martyr or St Adalbert, Bishop, Martyr (E) Acts 12:24-13:5; Ps.67:2-3,5-6,8; Jn.12:44-50

Thursday, April 25: St Mark, Evangelist 1 Pet.5:5-14; Ps. 89:2-3,6-7,16-17; Mk.16:15-20

Friday, April 26: Acts 13:26-33; Ps. 2:6-11; Jn. 14:1-6

Saturday, April 27: Acts 13:44-52; Ps.98:1-4; Jn. 14:7-14

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## St George

Flourished 3rd century.

Died, traditionally Lydda, Palestine [now Lod, Israel]; feast day 23rd April.

St George was an early Christian martyr who during the Middle Ages became an ideal of martial valour and selflessness. He is the patron saint of England and of Georgia and is venerated as one of the 14 Auxiliary Saints (Holy Helpers).

Nothing of George's life or deeds can be established, but tradition holds that he was a Roman soldier and was tortured and decapitated under Diocletian's persecution of Christians in 303. His remains were taken to Lydda and were later transferred to the church that was built in his name there.

Various relics reportedly are housed in both Western and Eastern churches worldwide. St George's Chapel Windsor is said to have once held two fingers, part of the heart, and part of the skull of the saint.

St George, Circle of Domenichino, Oil on canvas, 1645-55, Italy  
The Bowes Museum

