

A dilemma at
the ballot box
– pg 8

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Cardinal wants a vote for families

**Young Catholics urged
to help create a society
that has the family
as its bedrock again**

Andy Drozdziak

Cardinal Vincent Nichols is calling on young Catholics to make sure they vote in the upcoming General Election, saying it is their chance to create a society where Catholic values are valued and families can flourish.

He said: "How do we seek to construct a society in which families can flourish? That's the bedrock – many positive things flow from that."

"My view is that our next government should strive to create the circumstances in which families can flourish. So please get ready to vote on 4th July."

The cardinal is also urging young people to make sure they vote in the election, and to tackle issues that are central to the Catholic view when they talk to prospective candidates.

He said: "I want to encourage all Catholics, especially young adults, to be active and engage with their candidates

to learn their views on the key issues.

"You want to know what your candidate will think and say on your behalf when they get to Parliament."

Calling the opportunity to vote in a general election a 'privilege', Cardinal Nichols has recorded a video message highlighting resources that offer guidance on seven key topics of interest to Catholics. The information, which can be found on the Bishops' Conference website, covers key election topics including criminal justice, poverty, family life and taxation, education, environment, international relations, human rights and peacebuilding, life issues and migration.

"I ask you to look at these resources, explore them, become a bit more familiar with them so that when it comes to 4th July, you've got in your mind what you want to see the next government strive to achieve," Cardinal Nichols said.

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales said: "Throughout this election season we will be seeking answers which will help the poor, the marginalised, and the vulnerable.

"We seek, therefore, political leaders who can reflect and share these values."



Rob with his wife
Lynsey, pictured
when he received
an MBE for his
charity work

Tributes paid to lion-hearted rugby star and MND sufferer Rob Burrow

Universe columnist Dr Colm Hickey has penned a moving tribute to rugby league star Rob Burrow, who lost his brave fight against motor neurone disease (MND) last weekend.

Rob was, Dr Colm says, the epitome of courage, someone who refused to ever take a step back, no matter what the adversity in front of him.

Dubbed too small to play the gladiatorial sport he loved, he defied sceptics and his 5ft 5" frame to

become one of the game's finest players, winning every honour possible during a stellar career.

But it is for his post-career fight against MND, and his fundraising alongside his best mate, fellow rugby league legend Kevin Sinfield, that he will best be remembered, refusing to allow the disease to define him as he raised millions in a bid to find a cure and help his fellow sufferers.

Dr Colm Hickey - see pg 38

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Election winner must commit to new homes

Growing waiting lists for affordable housing makes it top priority, says charity

Christian charity Housing Justice has backed a renewed call for all political parties to commit to building 90,000 social homes a year to end the housing emergency.

In an open letter to political parties, Grenfell United and the Health Equals campaign, among others, called for a “mass social house building programme” to be introduced whoever wins the general election.

Bonnie Williams, chief executive of Housing Justice said the current housing situation “is the worst we’ve ever seen... at the moment, we’ve got 300,000 people experiencing homelessness, so living in temporary accommodation, across England and Wales, and of that there’s 135 thousand children. We’re in desperate need of more social homes.”

Williams said the situation was now urgent and action could not wait: “All of the evidence says that the way out of homelessness for governments is to build more social homes... We’ve got millions of households on local authority



waiting lists as it is, and without more housing being built, the position will only get worse.”

A poll, carried out by YouGov for the homeless charity Shelter, suggested that more than two-thirds (69 per cent) of parents said social housing had given their children a stable home, while 43 per cent of social tenants said it had meant they could live close to their support networks.

Shelter’s chief executive Polly Neate said: “Now that a general election has been called we cannot afford to waste any time. All politi-

cal parties must commit to building genuinely affordable social homes – we need 90,000 a year, over ten years, to end the housing emergency for good.”

In response, a Conservative Party spokesperson said: “Thanks to our clear plan and bold action we have delivered one million homes this Parliament,” but Liberal Democrat housing spokesperson Helen Morgan said there had been “nowhere near enough affordable housing built in this country because the Conservative Party is in the pockets of greedy developers.”

Sad day for Glasgow as church made notorious by killing to close

A Catholic church in Glasgow where serial killer Peter Tobin hid the body of one of his victims is to close.

St Patrick’s Church shared the news on social media, citing operational costs and a shortfall in the number of people attending the congregation as the main reasons behind the decision.

“Unfortunately the numbers attending the parish, the financial challenges of rising bills, the falling number of priests, and the repair bill of almost £2 million that we are facing means that we cannot carry on much longer,” the Facebook post said.

In 2006, the building was the site of a murder scene following the disappearance of 23-year-old Angelika Kluk. The Polish student, working as a cleaner and staying at the church over the summer, was reported missing after several days of no contact with her family.

Kluk had befriended Peter Tobin, a handyman at the church using the alias Pat McLaughlin. Tobin, who had been recently released from jail for sexually assaulting two 14-year-old girls, became a suspect after An-



gelika disappeared the same day she agreed to help him paint a shed.

Tobin was found guilty of her murdering and raping her and hiding her body under the floor of St Patrick’s church.

He was sentenced to serve a life-time sentence at HMP Edinburgh, which is where he was until he died in hospital on 8th October, 2022, at the age of 76.

The church’s statement continued: “We expect this process to take

a couple of years, and in the meantime parish life will continue as normal. We need time to be sad that this is happening, time to mourn, but also time to celebrate the good that has been done in our parish and the faith that has been shared, and time to make the transition partnership with our neighbouring parishes.

“Please keep praying for each other that we can keep the hope of Christ alive in our hearts.”

JRS says migrants deserve our compassion as election priority

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic groups are calling on political parties to prioritise compassionate immigration policies and care for the environment in the run up to the election on 4th July.

Catholic justice charity the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) UK has set out three priorities for candidates.

The first is calling on all parties to support the repeal of anti-refugee laws, ending immigration detention and lifting the ban on work for asylum seekers.

Director Sarah Teather is urging voters to engage candidates on these issues. She said: "Over a number of years we've seen a shocking rise in hostility, scapegoating and cruel policies targeting refugees and asylum seekers. But so many of us want a different approach: one that welcomes women, men and children who come here in search of safety, treats them with dignity and celebrates the gifts they bring."

"During the next few weeks, we have a crucial opportunity to let our politicians know that we stand with refugees."

JRS UK has previously called Ri-



Left, the Bishops' Conference 2023 document *Love the Stranger* echoes many of the points made by JRS UK regarding welcoming migrants.

that considers asylum claims fairly, ensures people have the legal support they need to navigate the process, and treats everyone in search of sanctuary as human beings."

JRS UK is also calling for an end to immigration detention. Sophie Cartwright, JRS UK's senior policy officer, said: "Through JRS UK's extensive work with those who are detained, we know that detention destroys lives. It is very harmful to people's physical and mental health. People who have survived torture and then been detained say it's like being tortured again. Abuse, neglect, and humiliation of detained people are prolific."

JRS UK is renewing its call to lift the ban on work for asylum seekers. Sophie Cartwright again: "People often wait for years in the asylum system, and lose the skills they once had, so it's harder to work later."

"For people trying to rebuild their

lives, work can be an opportunity to contribute, participate, and support themselves and their families. It is cruel and destructive to deny them this."

Meanwhile, Virginia Bell from Catholic environmentalist group Laudato Si' Animators is urging voters to call candidates to account with regard to environmental issues. She told the *Universe* that voters should "demand policies aiming for zero greenhouse gas emissions, not net zero, which allows pollution to continue, and may involve greenwashing and problems in developing the technologies required."

She added: "At this point in time, we should prioritise the natural environment as our survival, the survival of other species and the survival of civilisation as we know it is dependent on its health."

Virginia Bell also echoed CAFOD's call for the Government to end its use of fossil fuels. She said: "The Government must end all new fossil fuel extractions, and fully fund a transition to sustainable energy systems."

Warning over deadly cocktail on planes

Falling asleep on a plane after drinking could be deadly, scientists have warned, after finding alcohol, sleep and low cabin pressure combine to create a toxic mix that puts a strain on the heart.

A few drinks causes oxygen levels in the blood to drop, forcing the heart to beat faster to compensate.

The higher the alcohol consumption, the greater the effects might be, researchers believe, and called for restrictions on alcohol on long-haul flights.

Although the elderly and those with heart or lung conditions are likely to be at the greatest risk, effects were seen even in young, healthy people.

Melanoma vaccine halves risk of death

A vaccine being trialled for melanoma skin cancer halves the risk of death or relapse.

It is the longest study yet into the pioneering technology and puts the vaccine in pole position for widespread use. Patients were given a personalised vaccine with an immunotherapy drug called pembrolizumab and followed for at least three years.

The trial results revealed that the vaccine cut the risk of cancer returning and death by 49 per cent.

Tax hailed 'a blessing' that's welfare for all

Andy Drozdziak

A group of Christians have described tax as a 'blessing' and have urged the main parties to use state taxes in order to "seek the welfare of the nation."

The JustMoney Movement's letter, whose signatories include former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams, urges party leaders to shift the narrative on tax, so it is seen as a blessing and a vital tool for shaping a better society, and not a burden.

They say: "Political leaders and media commentators often portray tax as a burden, something to be avoided at all costs, but we see tax as a blessing."

"As Christians we are called to 'seek the welfare of the city', the society where God has put us in. We see your role as elected leaders as seeking the welfare of the nation where you have been elected."

The letter goes on to call for a more equal system of paying tax. They write: "The wealthiest in society often don't contribute their fair share towards the common good, for example: the richest 10 per cent pay just 34 per cent of their income in taxes, but the poorest 10 per cent pay 42 per cent; council tax is regressive, with the poorest 10 per

cent paying 8 per cent of their income in council tax, while the richest 40 per cent pay 2-3 per cent; and often the very wealthiest are able to avoid paying the taxes they should be using 'tax havens', passing on assets through family trusts, or using various exemptions built into the system."

The JustMoney Movement describes itself as 'the go-to organisation for Christians and churches who want to connect faith, money and justice.'

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams also called for a "fair and effective" system.

"It's time to challenge the narrative about tax as some sort of irrational imposition by a distant and greedy government and connect it again with our basic responsibility for one another in society," he said.

Sarah Edwards, executive director of the JustMoney Movement, said: "A fairer tax system could address inequality and raise revenue towards strengthening our public services and tackling the breakdown in our climate and nature."

"That's why we are calling for fairer taxes – to get us closer to the kind of just, compassionate society we see in the biblical Jubilee and in Jesus's kingdom values."

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In Brief

Lewis criticises Labour on spending

Money-saving expert Martin Lewis has accused Labour of living “in fairy-tale land” over how it intends to tackle public spending.

Mr Lewis clashed with Jonathan Ashworth, the shadow paymaster general, on ITV’s *Good Morning Britain* about how Labour will approach the UK’s finances in government.

The MoneySavingExpert founder said: “When you have a black hole in the public finances, you know, I know, and Rachel Reeves [the shadow chancellor] knows, there are only four ways you can deal with that.

“You can increase debt, which you’ve said you won’t do; you can print money, which would be inflationary; you put up taxes, which you’ve said you won’t do; or, you could cut spending, which you’ve said you won’t do, which means if you can’t do any of those, we’re living in fairy-tale land.”

Asylum seeker stalked Labour MP

A Labour MP was stalked by an asylum seeker enraged at the lack of support for his immigration application.

Stephen Morgan, the shadow minister for rail, said he was “disturbed and intimidated” by Yaser Ahmed, 41, who loitered outside his constituency office for a week watching him.

Ahmed, an Egyptian man who uses a wheelchair, was angry that Mr Morgan, who was the Portsmouth South MP at the time and is currently the Labour candidate for the constituency, could not help advance his asylum application.

He was convicted of stalking at the city’s magistrates’ court on Tuesday.

Bishops say one last push and we can scrap this education cap

Andy Drozdziak

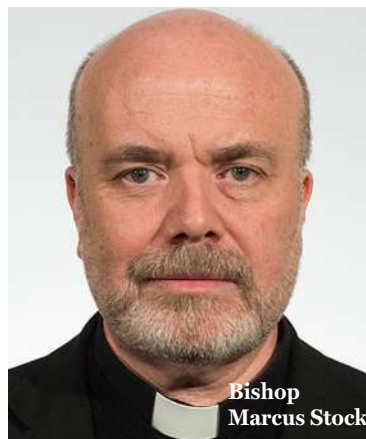
The Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales is urging Catholics to make a “final push” before a key education consultation concludes.

Education Secretary Gillian Keegan’s decision to lift the cap on new free schools in England at the start of May was made subject to a seven-week consultation, which runs until 20th June.

Now the Bishops’ Conference wants to ensure this vital step is completed, even though the cap will not be removed before the General Election on 4th July.

They said: “It is essential that there is a strong response to this consultation, so that the Church can continue to play its part in the provision of schools in all parts of the education sector on an equal footing with other groups.

“We therefore encourage as many people as possible to respond posi-



Bishop Marcus Stock

tively to this consultation.”

The removal of the 50% cap on faith admissions will enable all faith groups to apply to open new faith free schools. Bishop Marcus Stock, Bishop Chair of the Catholic Education Service (CES), explained the effects of Gillian Keegan’s decision for Catholic schools.

Bishop Marcus said: “Dioceses are well placed to respond to differing local educational demands around the country, including the provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Parents can welcome this also.

“Catholic education not only provides a high performing school sector and promotes the formation of children in values and virtues; it is more ethnically diverse than other schools, educates more pupils from the most deprived backgrounds, and builds social cohesion within our communities.”

The Bishops’ Conference explained how the lifting of the cap will benefit schools and education throughout the country.

“Catholic schools are more diverse than any other type of school,” they said. “Even with higher levels of pupil deprivation, they achieve better results. Removal of the cap

will help to sustain that diversity in the longer term.

The proposals will also allow the Catholic Church to establish special academies alongside our existing special schools.”

“We encourage Catholics in England and Wales to respond positively to this consultation.”

Bishop Marcus Stock’s Diocese of Leeds backed the bishops’ call, saying: “The consultation is running until 20 June and it is essential that the DfE receives more positive responses than negative ones to have any chance of the cap being removed in the future.”

The Catholic Union, who were behind the ‘Scrap the cap’ campaign, said: “We urge members and supporters to encourage their parliamentary candidates to give a commitment to faith schools and complete the consultation on faith school designation reforms.”

Catholic social teaching in focus at Pub Talk

Andy Drozdziak

The Catholic Union’s next ‘Pub Talk’ will take place this Monday, on 10th June, with Lord Glasman as the guest speaker.

In what is a highly appropriate topic the run up to the next General Election, Lord Glasman will talk about what Catholic social teaching has to offer politics.

This Pub Talk will take place in the upstairs room of the Windsor Castle pub in Victoria, London. Doors open at 6pm. More information can be found on the Catholic Union’s website.

Lord Maurice Glasman is a political theorist, academic, social commentator, and Labour life peer in the House of Lords. He is also the director of the Common Good Foundation.

In 2019, Lord Glasman gave the Catholic Union’s inaugural Cragmyle Lecture, which deputy director James Somerville-Meikle described as ‘one of the best talks’ he has heard on how Church teaching can impact the world.

Mr Somerville-Meikle said: “I am delighted that we are able to host Lord Glasman for another Catholic Union event. His Cragmyle Lecture in 2019 on Catholic Social Teaching is still one of the best talks I have heard on what the teachings of the Church have to offer the world.”

“With a General Election on the horizon, it is a good moment to revisit this topic and consider what Catholic social teaching has to offer our politics today.”

Launched last year, and sponsored by the *Universe Catholic*

Weekly, the Catholic Union’s Pub Talks have grown in popularity and become a firm favourite in the calendar.

The last event saw popular Catholic actor Alex Macqueen speak about his career on and off and the impact of his faith before a sold out audience.

Pub Talks are aimed at people with a background or interest in politics and public affairs. They provide an informal opportunity for networking and discussion, and the chance to hear from a guest speaker.

The Catholic Union is encouraging people to book, since this is an informal event with limited spaces.

For more information and to book, click this panel



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Lord attacks Lib Dems over Christian's axeing

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic peer Lord David Alton has blasted the deselection of would-be Lib Dem MP David Campanale for his Christian beliefs as a “shocking decision” and called for his immediate reinstatement.

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

The move, according to some, falls foul of the equality law, and campaign group CitizenGO – which is a group of active citizens who seek to defend and promote life, family, and liberty – has started a petition to reinstate Mr Campanale, saying: “We want to give the party one last chance to correct its recent pattern of discriminatory behaviour towards Christians – something it can only do by reinstating David as an election candidate.”

Former Lib Dem MP Lord Alton has backed this call, saying: “I have signed this petition against appalling treatment that is neither liberal nor democratic (and) hope others

will do so too,” he said, adding a call for Lib Dem leader Sir Ed Davey to “reverse a shocking decision.”

Condemning the move to oust Mr Campanale, Lord Alton said: “It smacks of the same prejudiced intolerance that increasingly disrespects conscience and has infected too much of politics and our national life.”

“Faith was the bedrock of many of the old Liberal Party's founders and luminaries.”

Local party members grilled Mr Campanale about his faith after he

Lord Alton has attacked his former party for their handling of the issue



was selected to contest the Sutton and Cheam seat in 2021. He said that there was an “anti-Christian faction in the Sutton Liberal Democrats” which he described as “a lynch mob that were determined to root me out.”

He was told at one meeting: “We had no idea we were selecting an-

other Tim Farron.” He was also told: “I suppose you think you're being persecuted, like Jesus was?” and was branded a ‘liar.’

A decision by local party members was eventually taken to deselect him at an extraordinary general meeting in November 2022.

CitizenGO condemned the discriminatory behaviour shown to Christians, which includes Catholic former Labour MP Rob Flelo being deselected in 2019 as a Lib Dem candidate within 36 hours due to his socially conservative views.

The group believes the decision to oust Mr Campanale sends a message from the Lib Dems that Christians are not welcome in their party.

CitizenGO said: “Failing to reinstate David will send a chilling message to Christians. It tells them they're not welcome and pushes them away from the party and from engaging more widely in politics.”

The Anglican Bishop of Winchester, the Rt Rev Philip Mounstephen, denounced the decision to deselect Mr Campanale as “shockingly illiberal”.

• See panel right

Anglican bishop offers support to ex-candidate

The Anglican Bishop of Winchester has offered his support to David Campanale, saying his rejection as a candidate on the basis of his Christian faith “meant William Gladstone wouldn't have been allowed to stand in Sutton and Cheam.”

Rt Rev Philip Mounstephen said former BBC and Premier Christian News journalist Mr Campanale deserved his chance in the election, and to deny him it on the grounds of his faith was “appalling”.

Mr Campanale has pioneered reporting of the persecuted Church over the years, particularly in the Indian state of Manipur. He is an experienced politician and spent eight years as a Lib Dem councillor in Kingston, south London, becoming vice-chairman of the constituency association of Sir Ed Davey, the current party leader.

He was elected as the prospective parliamentary candidate (PPC) for Sutton and Cheam in January 2022 but deselected because of his faith.

Toby Price from the Liberal Democrat Christian Forum (LDCF) said: “David gave up his job as a BBC reporter, to take on the role of PPC and try to win a winnable seat. You can understand how upset he would be, having been subject to a de-selection process and then watching while no action is taken about the allegations.”

“This alleged bullying and discrimination followed shortly after a tweet... which drew attention to David's past affiliation with the Christian People's Alliance – information David disclosed to the PPC selection panel.”

The LDCF, which represents around 400 Christian activists within the party, is urging the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to carry out an independent investigation into “multiple alleged breaches of equality law and our party constitution”.

The Lib Dems have dismissed the claims and say all their London MPs including leader Sir Ed Davey are practising Christians.

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COMMENT

In Normandy this week, 80 years after D-Day, the remaining veterans remembered the greatest seaborne invasion in history. The youngest participant was 97; many were centenarians. The march of time means that this is likely to be the last major event of its kind.

The King began the British commemoration in Portsmouth, from where many of the ships left to cross the Channel, arriving on the French coast as dawn broke on 6th June 1944.

He said: “As we give thanks for all those who gave so much to win the victory, whose fruits we still enjoy to this day, let us, once again, commit ourselves always to remember, cherish and honour those who served that day and to live up to the freedom they died for by balancing rights with civic responsibilities to our country.

“For we are all, eternally, in their debt.”

As we worry today over what, by comparison, are largely trifling matters, it was a humbling experience to watch the old soldiers gather in France. Almost until they boarded the ships, and maybe not even then, few knew where they were going or what they were doing, such was the secrecy surrounding Operation Overlord.

D-Day was an exceptional feat of arms, logistics and leadership. As the King said, it was a collective effort that included men and women back on shore involved in the meticulous planning, intelligence gathering, and disinformation operations like Operation Mincemeat that still fascinate and resonate to this day.

It also serves as a reminder of the dangers of turning a blind eye to territorial incursions masquerading as national self-determination.

So, when the leaders of the wartime allies, met together in France, there was one notable absentee.

Vladimir Putin, who came to the last major commemoration in 2014, was not invited because of the war in Ukraine – a reminder that Europe's peace is never guaranteed.

Those who do not learn from their history are doomed to repeat it.

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Tune in to find out what your next prime minister has to say

POLITICS

Jen Birks



Election 2024: will Sunak and Starmer facing off in televised debates make a difference to voters?

The first televised debate of the 2024 general election took place on Tuesday, putting Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer head-to-head on ITV.

ITV has also announced they will hold a multi-party debate later in June.

The first BBC debate will be a multi-party one tonight (Friday, 7th June) and there will be other televised debates before 4th July.

If voters are hoping to hear party leaders respond spontaneously and authentically to questions, they're likely to be disappointed. For those who tune in (6.7 million in 2019, down from 10.3 million in 2010), it is not necessarily because they expect to learn anything new about the candidates or their policies. Rather, they are likely intrigued by the spectacle of adversarial conflict.

The parties know this. Sunak's enthusiasm for having a debate every week of the campaign is probably less to do with any benefit he expects to gain from putting his case to the public than a desire to maximise the opportunities for Starmer to make some kind of gaffe. He can also use the knowledge that Starmer will decline to such a schedule as a way of painting the Labour leader as scared of confrontation.

YouGov data suggests that those who voted Labour in 2019 are almost twice as likely as Conservative voters to be very interested in watching the debates. Given the current polling, this perhaps reflects the expected enjoyment of seeing their side win.

Do debates influence how people vote?

Research generally finds that debates, as with other election coverage, have very little impact on those with a firm party preference, and only slightly more on floating and undecided voters.

But YouGov's polling indicates that almost half of voters expect the debates to have at least a “fair amount” of influence on the result. Here, we should remember the phenomenon known as the third-person effect: we often expect others to be more susceptible to



Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak in the first ITV debate

media influence than ourselves.

The perception that debates influence voting outcomes may also be tied, as YouGov's analysis suggests, to ‘Cleggmania’ – the well-received performance of relatively unknown Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg in the first televised debates in 2010.

While it is acknowledged he did well on TV, it did not translate to the ballot box. Although the Lib Dem share of the vote rose by 1%, the party won five fewer seats than in 2005.

Throughout the debate, then Prime Minister Gordon Brown recognised common ground with Clegg: “I agree with Nick.” The press interpreted this as evidence of Brown's weakness and a Lib Dem resurgence. This narrative may have encouraged those leaning towards the Lib Dems to vote for them, on the basis that rising support meant it was less likely to be a ‘wasted’ vote.

While it did not help the party much on election day, it does provide another lesson about debate performance. Brown's “agreeing with Nick” showed an aspect of constructive politics that voters have expressed a desire to see more of in debates.

The perception that debates influence voting outcomes may also be tied to ‘Cleggmania’ – the well-received performance of relatively unknown Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg in the first televised debates in 2010. But what many people miss is that the Lib Dem won five fewer seats...

What do voters want?

Research in the UK and elsewhere in Europe has shown that viewers are very aware of (and frustrated by) politicians' tendency to dodge questions and give rehearsed answers during debates. We know that voters tend to feel alienated by this, and see debates as ‘a lot of going round in circles’.

This is where moderators could have more of a role to play. Participants in audience research have suggested that moderators should interfere more when debaters use straw man arguments, and encourage more constructive agreement and disagreement: “They should ask debaters to recognise points of agreement and openings for collaboration or compromise, without expecting consensus,” is one view.

Debates are most influential when it comes to personal impressions of the candidates' character, rather than their policies. Unlike the popular media personalities who have made celebrity politicians in recent years, both Sunak and Starmer are wonkish politicians whose strengths lie in appearing

competent rather than especially likeable.

Voters will already have seen Sunak and Starmer butt heads in prime minister's questions. Such adversarial battles are not well suited to generating positive impressions from the debate stage. The Conservative party discovered this when they decided to cancel the final debate for their party leadership election in 2022 amid concern that the bruising clashes could damage the party's image as a whole.

In the social media age, debates and interviews can be especially dangerous paths, where a single meme-able gaffe, slip-up or unflattering insight (Theresa May's running through fields of wheat, for example) can undermine the credibility of a leader. Starmer may be tempted to a defensive and controlled campaign that avoids opportunities for such moments – but that too, as May found in 2017 when she ditched the debates, can be dangerous.

In whatever debates materialise in the coming weeks, we can enjoy the drama, share notes (or memes) on Sunak and Starmer's best and worst moments, and roll our eyes at the already well-rehearsed soundbites.

But for a democratically useful discussion of the relative merits of the policy agendas, we should probably look elsewhere.

Jen Birks is an Associate Professor in Media and Political Communication, University of Nottingham

Jersey moves to bring in assisted suicide

Jersey's States Assembly has approved plans to allow assisted suicide for terminally ill individuals experiencing unbearable suffering.

This decision follows extensive debate on two potential routes for assisted dying, ultimately approving the option for terminally ill patients by a vote of 32 to 14. However, a proposal to include those with incurable, non-terminal conditions was rejected by 27 to 19.

The assembly's vote initiates an 18-month period for drafting the law, with a debate expected by the end of 2025. If passed, implementation could begin by summer 2027.

Chief Minister Lyndon Farnham emphasised the inclusion of "robust



Jersey's States Assembly

safeguards" in the legislation, but Patrick Lynch of Caritas Jersey said the state would be better spending public money on "addressing poverty and issues in other areas of health-

care rather than assisted dying."

Deputy Barbara Ward, who worked as a nurse for 45 years, stood against the proposal and says the bill should be known as the "as-

sisted suicide bill", rather than 'assisted dying'. The Dean of Jersey, the Very Reverend Mike Keirle highlighted worries about "external pressures" on vulnerable people.

"It would be fantastically naive to think that people won't come under some kind of indirect societal pressure," he said.

Deputy Sir Philip Bailhache raised concerns over the impact on disabled people. He said that, if approved, Jersey risked becoming a society that told disabled people their lives are not as valued as those of non-disabled people.

However, Jennifer Bridge, leader of the Jersey Assisted Dying Action Group, and Sarah Wootton, CEO of

Dignity in Dying, praised the decision as a compassionate move aligning with public sentiment.

A majority of members supported an opt-out for health professionals and a minimum 14-day period between a formal request and the assisted death being carried out.

The debate was marked by emotional personal testimonies and serious concerns over the need for urgent work to be made on protections in order that vulnerable people were never pressured into assisted dying.

The assisted dying scrutiny panel have requested a palliative care strategy to be published at least two months before final legislation is approved.

Rise in Down babies aborted is an echo of previous genocides

Andy Drozdziak

Pro-life parties have condemned the rise in abortion numbers of babies with Down's syndrome in England and Wales in 2022 as "disgraceful."

Right To Life UK reported that, according to the annual abortion statistics for 2022 released by the Department of Health and Social Care, 799 abortions took place where a baby had Down's syndrome in England and Wales in 2022. This was a 17% increase from 2019 when there were 685 abortions.

The statistics also showed there were 19 late-term abortions at 24 weeks gestation or over where the baby had Down's syndrome for residents of England and Wales, a 58 per cent increase on 2019 where there were 12.

A SPUC spokesperson said: "The is targeting of unborn babies with disabilities, especially Down's syndrome, up to the point of birth; it is disgraceful. The continued under-reporting of such cases suggests that abortion providers seek to cover up this shameful reality.

"Abortion enables a fatal discrimination against individuals deemed 'undesirable' by society, which sends the message that the lives of the disabled are not worth living.

"While this targeting is not yet systematic, this wiping out of the weak by the strong is reminiscent of some of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. This cannot be allowed to continue."

Former cabinet minister Sir Liam Fox is campaigning for the abortion time limit for babies with Down's syndrome to be brought into line with the time limit for babies who do not have disabilities – 24 weeks. Currently abortion for Down's syndrome is legal up to birth which, according to Liam Fox, treats babies with Down's syndrome like



"second-class citizens".

Sir Liam said: "There is considerable cross-party support to remove an anomaly in UK law which allows those with Down's syndrome to be aborted up until 40 weeks.

"Many of us believe this is utterly against the purpose of our equality legislation and treats those with Down's syndrome as second-class citizens when it comes to their rights."

"My campaign wants to remove an anomaly which many were not aware even existed and send a signal about the values we share across the political system in our country."

Spokesperson for Right To Life UK, Catherine Robinson, called the increase in numbers "a cause of great concern" but shared her hopes for Liam Fox's plans.

She said: "Sir Liam Fox's ongoing attempt to change the abortion law for babies with Down's syndrome will act as a step towards changing attitudes in a more positive direction for babies with Down's syndrome".

Plans to reform the UK abortion law were suspended when Parliament rose for the General Election.



Littleway is a Catholic Charity which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. We offer healing of memories prayer, which helps us to let go of unforgiveness and the 'baggage' of the past. Healing can take place emotionally, psychologically, spiritually or physically. As part of our Evangelisation Mission, we run Healing of Memory Foundation Courses in the UK, Ireland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

In addition, we organise Parish Healing Missions, Weekends of Healing and Outreach Days. We welcome an invitation to come to **your** Parish. Littleway also hosts regular Outreach evenings on Zoom.

Prayer Requests can be submitted through our website, alternatively you can call us for prayer on: **+44 (0) 7936 269 143**

All information on our events and our Zoom links are on our website:

www.littlewayhealingministries.com

Our Healing of Memories Course schedule for 2024 is as follows:

Mon 14th – Sun 20th October at Oblate Centre, Crewe

Mon 28th Oct – Sun 3rd Nov at Mullaghmore, Ireland

Mon 25th Nov – Sun 1st December at Briery Centre, Ilkley

Our courses provide foundation training for Healing of Memories Prayer and are intended for those who either already pray with others or are prepared to learn how to pray.

Each person will have the opportunity to receive Healing of Memories Prayer led by an experienced team member. Courses start at 5pm on a Monday and end after lunch on the following Sunday. You will need to be able to attend the whole of the course.

For more information before booking, please call us on: **+44 (0) 7936 269 143**



COMMENT

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

The gift of time

Sir John Battle



At a recent get-together of older people in Leeds, we reflected on the increasing dividing lines between young and old, and noted the paradox of the impatience of older people caught in traffic and shopping queues when the retired are not the ones desperately short of everyday time.

They generally have time on their hands to hold back and let others, younger (possibly working) go ahead. They of all people can actually afford to waste time.

Of course that classic psalm line 'make us know the shortness of our lives that we may gain wisdom of heart', may be interpreted as a spur to get on with it. But is that the wisdom we are meant to learn?

The recent death at 41 of the Leeds rugby league legend Rob Burrow of motor neurone disease has left us with a different message. He and his family, supported by the Leeds Rhinos and the wider Leeds community, spent all his remaining life championing the need for more support for the sufferers of his disease, despite his own terrible incapacity. As news of his death broke Prince William led tributes. His team mate Kevin Sinfield has been by his side throughout, a witness to real friendship and love. Together nearly £5 million pounds has been raised in events such as sponsored marathons and community fund raising, and the day after his death the first sods were cut in the ground for a new MND support centre to be built in Leeds.

But Rob Burrows's legacy was more than that centre. In a TV programme to be shown after his death, he left a final few words: "My final message to you is whatever your personal battle be brave and face it. In a world full of adversity we must still dare to dream," adding "every single day is precious. Don't waste a moment".

The French preacher and retreat leader Fr Jean Pierre de Caussade, in the 1730s, introduced the phrase "the sacrament of the present moment", through which he spelt out the "littleness and ordinariness of the daily routine in which God must be found".

He insisted that "God is now and God is here", not to be vaguely chased in over worrying about the unknown future or in futile regrets over the past. Rather the "gift of time" should be "the sacrament of the present moment".

Rob Burrows may not have been a Christian preacher but his personal witness was one of deep inspiring wisdom. Living for others in the present is a way of acknowledging God's presence in our world. May he rest in peace.

Church's voice is vital in election but it can't overstep the mark

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



As the election heats up, various Catholic lobby groups and, of course, the Catholic Bishops' Conferences in England, Wales, and Scotland are beginning to issue their thoughts to help guide the consciences of the faithful when we cast our ballots on July 4.

I was dismayed to see a Catholic priest launch into a deeply personal attack on Nigel Farage on social media this week. My concern is not, I hasten to add, because I hold any particular candle for Mr Farage, who, like many politicians, is an opportunist, but because this was unbecoming of the clerical state, against canon law and potentially brings the Church into disrepute.

The priest involved, who shall remain nameless, attacked Farage, among other things, because "he is a privately educated, very rich stockbroker who doesn't care about the working class", going on to state that Farage is a "fraud and charlatan". I'm not here to mount an impassioned defence of either Farage or the Reform party, but this type of comment would have been equally unacceptable if it had been levelled at any of the major party leaders, including Starmer, Sunak or Ed Davey.

I took issue with the comment because, first, it attacked Farage on account of his background and education, which nobody has any control over, and second, it constituted a deeply uncharitable attack on a person, as opposed to their proposed policies. Clergy have the potential to wield enormous influence and sway voters during election season, and as a result, they need to exercise extreme caution.

Gaudium et Spes, the document addressed to the whole of the world following the Second Vatican Council, lays out that the Catholic Church and the political community are autonomous and independent of each other, while both being devoted to the social and personal vocation of all individuals. They ought to foster mutual cooperation to serve more efficiently for the good of everyone.

If she is to remain true to her timeless mission of preaching and teaching the Gospel, the Church must maintain an appropriate distance from political activity. While I as a layperson, can wax lyrical about where I believe Catholics should cast their vote, a clergyman cannot because their statements can be interpreted as an



official endorsement, which then runs the risk of causing scandal and needless division. A Catholic can vote for any of the parties in good conscience; the key is prayerful discernment.

The problem with endorsing any one candidate is that it is rare in this day and age that any one candidate stands for everything that the Catholic teaches. You might have a candidate who is excellent on life issues but a member of a party with fiscal policies that will adversely affect the poor. If the Church or a clergyman endorses a candidate who might be at variance with Church teaching, they risk confusing the faithful. By staying out of telling people exactly who they should vote for, the Church also avoids any potential scandal should their preferred candidate or party change their position or refuse to fulfil their pledges once they have been elected.

Canon law explicitly prohibits clerics from becoming actively involved in politics; they are always to foster peace and harmony based on justice, whereas statements such as the one about Farage, certainly going by the responses on social media, foster division among the

faithful. If a priest endorses a specific candidate, it undermines their priestly ministry. If they give the impression of favouring or, indeed, hating a specific candidate, it could well deter a member of the faithful from approaching them for ministry.

That's not to say that the Church should have no role during election time and should remain quiet. Her role is to teach the timeless tenets of Catholic social teaching, which are rooted in the Gospel, and urge them to be applied to society's various challenges.

The role of individual clergy is to discuss moral issues and help ensure that Catholics are steeped in a deep understanding of Catholic social teaching so that they can cast their votes accordingly.

This is precisely why Cardinal Nichols is proposing a theme for Catholics to consider in this election: how we can construct a society that allows families to flourish. This encompasses economic policy (depressingly, all parties favour a policy that treats children as though they are a luxury item) and social, domestic, and educational policy.

As yet I'm undecided on my vote,

Would you like fries with that? Nigel Farage is doused in a McDonald's milkshake by a critic while on a pre-election walkabout in his target seat of Clacton

but even if I were, having re-read *Gaudium et Spes*, I'm wary of publishing it, lest it could be conflated and confused as representative of my husband, who keeps his vote between himself, the ballot box and his maker. The only piece of advice I do have is do not, if at all possible, vote tribally, to keep a particular party, or put another one in power.

Rather, quiz your local candidates on their stand regarding the Catholic issues that matter to you. For me, life is one of the definitives. So it doesn't matter whether or not they are a representative of a party with a terrible track record on life issues. If a candidate tells me they will vote against further liberalisation of abortion and introduction of euthanasia, if they tell me they will work to reduce the number of unborn children lost to abortion, then given that this is the most fundamental of all rights, they are far more likely to get my cross.

While it is difficult to vote for a candidate who may be a member of a party you have traditionally eschewed, if your MP is going to work for life, will support Catholic education, will support religious freedom, will oppose gimmick policies that dehumanise migrants, then that is one much-needed voice and representation in a place where it really matters.

"The problem with endorsing a candidate is that it is rare in this day and age that any one candidate stands for everything that the Catholic Church teaches. You might have a candidate who is excellent on life issues but his party has fiscal policies that will adversely affect the poor..."

UK politicians highlight abuse in Pakistan's brick kiln sector

Daniel Beurthe

A fresh parliamentary report has found evidence of women and girls working in Pakistan's brick kilns industry being subjected to physical, psychological and sexual abuse.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Pakistani Minorities said in a report that an estimated over one million people work in bonded labour in 20,000 brick kilns across Pakistan.

The report cited evidence from Human Rights Watch that claimed "there is a consistent pattern of sexual abuse at the brick kilns, including rape."

The report added: "Two women brick kiln workers interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Asia had been forced to have regular sexual relations with their employer or members of his family. Some women were raped by... local police officers."

"Women are often sold into marriage or prostitution if their husbands escape or are held as a guarantee for their husband's return."

UK Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) (UK) submitted evidence to the APPG showing the severity of the abuse faced by brick kiln workers: "Those trapped within the brick kilns are often subjected to the worst forms of physical and psychological abuse, with their most basic rights denied."

"The kiln owners regularly abuse the female workers, keeping them physically tied down in their homes as prisoners. They are not allowed to leave and are required to do manual labour around the home."

ACN said a disproportionate number of Pakistani Christians are affected by this situation: "A contact of ours on the ground in Faisalabad tells us that... in some cases, if there are 100 workers in a brick kiln, 80 of them will be Christians. In other cases, it's 40-50 per-cent of the

workers who are Christians."

According to ACN's most recent *Religious Freedom in the World* report, Christians account for just 1.9 per cent of the population of Pakistan.

Lord Alton of Liverpool, co-chair of the APPG for Pakistani Minorities, wrote in the foreword of the bonded labour report: "For too long a blind eye has been turned to owners who treat employees such as subhuman, as a throwback to the degrading inhumanity of the caste system and 'untouchability'."

"Too many of them are power brokers and some even hold political office. This may help to explain why good laws remain unimplemented."

"No one who reads this short report will be able to say they 'did not know.' What follows must be concerted, persistent and determined political and judicial action."

"The annihilation of barbaric debt bondage should be a priority for all right-thinking people."

ACN UK is also urging people to sign an open letter urging the Government to act to protect Christians in Pakistan. The charity said: "The UK Government has an obligation to act; to work with their Pakistani counterparts to protect girls like Laiba and ensure no one is harmed, oppressed or persecuted simply for being a Christian."

"The Prime Minister has called the General Election for 4th July. When the next Government comes in, a new Foreign Affairs Committee will be elected."

"We need your help to get the members of that Committee to take up our call and persuade the Government to take action against the systemic discrimination of countless Christians throughout Pakistan."

"We encourage you to sign our open letter to the next Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee."



Joanne honoured to be Catholic charity's first female CEO

Birmingham-based charity Father Hudson's Care has appointed Joanne Watters as its first female CEO.

Joanne Watters said: "I am proud as a Catholic to be the first female CEO for such an important and longstanding charity."

"I am committed to continuing the mission of our founder Fr George Vincent Hudson, working in partnership with the Archdiocese, parishes, schools and supporters."

Initially established by Father George Vincent Hudson in 1902 as the Birmingham Diocesan Rescue Society for the protection of homeless and friendless Catholic children, Father Hudson's Care today supports people with various needs throughout Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire.

Joanne, who started her new role on Saturday, 1st June, has been working for Father Hudson's Care for the last nine years as Head of Community Projects.

She has worked with partners to develop projects including Tabor Living, which accommodates individuals experiencing homelessness, Brushstrokes Community Project which supports refugees, asylum



seekers and migrants, and a refugee community sponsorship initiative.

Joanne has a passion for supporting individuals and families who are marginalised and in need. In 2023, together with Birmingham priest Fr Michael White, she led the successful capital fundraising appeal which enabled the charity to double its homelessness provision, based at St Catherine of Siena Church in Birmingham.

Chair of Trustees Fionnuala Hegarty welcomed the appointment. She said: "Joanne has an excellent understanding of the complexities of statutory and non-statutory fund-

ing streams and of the importance of effective governance. She is driven and sustained by her faith and is committed to continuing our mission of service aligned to Catholic Social Teaching."

Joanne will replace Andy Quinn, who was CEO for nine years. He reflected on the growth of the charity during his tenure. "Father Hudson's is now involved in supporting older people both residentially and in community groups, fostering, family support in schools, supporting those who currently have no home, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, individuals and families whose lives are affected by disability and adults who grew up in our care or who were adopted through us."

"I found this to be a place where it is possible to remain true to oneself and one's ideals."

Fionnuala Hegarty thanked Andy Quinn for his contributions. She said: "Andy has led and nurtured at FHC. Although he is now retiring, we know that Andy will continue to support the work of FHC and the emerging developments with parish 'clusters' – his wisdom will be welcome! Andy leaves us with our gratitude, love and our prayers."

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In Brief

Forbes dismissed over oil and gas

The SNP has been accused of attempting to “rewrite history” by claiming the party had never opposed new oil and gas drilling.

Kate Forbes insisted on Wednesday that the SNP was “not against new licences *per se*” and had “never said no” to exploring new fields.

However, Scottish Tories said she was “taking voters for fools” as both Nicola Sturgeon and Humza Yousaf had taken anti-drilling positions.

Ms Sturgeon said while First Minister in November 2021 that “I don’t think we can continue to give the go-ahead to new oil fields”, when she opposed the development of the Cambo oilfield off Shetland.

The SNP government then backed a “presumption” against new licences in a draft energy strategy published last year, despite powers over energy being reserved to Westminster.

Princess is on the mend, veterans told

The Prince of Wales has said the Princess would have loved to join him for the “very moving” D-Day anniversary event in Portsmouth as he said she was “getting better”.

The Prince, the King and the Queen chatted to D-Day veterans after the ceremony, shaking their hands and thanking them for their service.

He was asked by Geoffrey Weaving, aged 100, how the Princess of Wales was faring with her cancer treatment and replied: “Yes, she is getting better, yes. She would have loved to be here today.”

RCM courses on whiteness and race

Royal College of Music (RCM) students can take a course on the “whiteness and racism” of classical music.

The conservatoire offers an elective module titled Music and Racism, which aims to address a Eurocentric view of musical education and performance.

Students taking the course are taught about critical race theory and the ‘whiteness’ of classical music.

They are further educated on the whiteness and ‘hetero-normativity’ expected of classical musicians.

The module is one of a diverse suite of courses introduced in recent years on themes including ‘Music and Power’ and ‘Music and Empire.’

Course creators said the topics offered a balanced view.

Trump stays confident the US public will overlook his foibles

Eugene Chan and Ali Gohary consider what the fall-out will be after Donald Trump was found guilty in the Stormy Daniels fraud case

The jury in Donald Trump’s hush-money payments trial has found the former president of the United States guilty of falsifying business records in relation to payments made to adult film star Stormy Daniels. The guilty verdict marks the first felony conviction of an American president.

Speaking to reporters after the verdict, Trump called the trial a “rigged decision, right from Day 1.” He is likely to appeal the verdict.

Trump had been facing 34 felony charges stemming from his conduct in the lead-up to the 2016 US presidential election. He faces three other criminal indictments that won’t likely go to trial before the November election. And in 2023, he was found liable for sexual abuse in a civil suit involving writer E. Jean Carroll.

Despite these legal troubles, many Republicans still support Trump and would vote for him as president, even while acknowledging Trump’s faults outside public office or the courtroom. In fact, 56 per cent of Republicans say Trump’s sexual misconduct should not disqualify him from running for president.

Moral decoupling

Republicans typically offer various reasons for supporting Trump, even while recognising his sexual harassment of women. For example, some suggest that Trump is the victim of a political witch hunt, while others claim Trump’s current trials and charges are a form of election interference.

Why do many Americans continue to support Trump? And are there psychological reasons that explain why people remain supportive of politicians despite their moral or political failings?

“Moral decoupling” is a cognitive process that can explain why some people continue to support leaders in politics, media and sports even when they believe these leaders have significant moral failings outside of their professional vocation.

Moral decoupling is the ability to separate one’s judgments of a person’s moral character from their judgments of that person’s performance or abilities in public



Donald Trump: Will his guilty verdict come back to bite him? Possibly not...

Implications for the future of democratic politics

Moral decoupling poses challenges for the future of democratic politics. As voters increasingly separate their judgments of personal morality from political leaders’ effectiveness in office, this trend could normalise misconduct from public officials.

Electors may increasingly justify such misconduct by elected officials, with supporters focusing on the candidate’s stance on a particular issue rather than their ethical values or fitness to hold office. It also reduces the need to hold public officials accountable not just to their office but to the public they serve.

Indeed, effective political leaders are ethical leaders.

To address these challenges, it is crucial for members of all societies to foster a political culture that values both effectiveness as well as ethical conduct. Encouraging transparency, accountability and open dialogue about the moral implications of political actions can help mitigate the negative effects of moral decoupling.

Given the cognitive bases for moral decoupling, one way is to promote a more holistic approach to evaluating political leaders so voters can ensure that ethical considerations remain an integral part of the democratic process.

While moral decoupling helps explain why voters continue to support leaders despite their moral failings, it also highlights the need for a balanced approach to political judgment.

As democracies evolve, it is essential to recognise the complexities of moral decoupling and work towards a political environment where both ethical integrity and effective leadership are equally valued.

Eugene Y. Chan is an Associate Professor of Marketing, Toronto Metropolitan University
Ali Gohary is a Lecturer (Assistant Professor Equivalent) of Marketing, La Trobe University

office. In simpler terms, it’s the mental process of saying: “I don’t agree with their actions, but I still think they’re effective at their job.”

Moral decoupling can explain why, for example, Woody Allen continues to have a dedicated fan base and receives support within the film industry despite facing allegations of sexual misconduct. Many fans and professionals separate their appreciation for Allen’s movies, such as *Annie Hall* and *Midnight in Paris*, from his personal controversies, allowing them to continue supporting and valuing his work while disregarding the allegations against him.

There is some reason to believe that conservatives might be more likely to morally decouple than

liberals. People who identify as conservatives tend to think in more narrow terms. That is, conservatives tend to focus on particular issues, seeing them as separate from others, not representative of “who” the person is. Separating issues fulfills a psychological need to see the world in a more clear-cut and orderly manner.

Meanwhile, liberals tend to look at “the big picture.” This explains why, for example, conservatives support politicians like Ron DeSantis, who focuses on specific policies like education and handling of Covid-19, while more liberal people support politicians like Bernie Sanders, who strive for systematic change.

“To address these challenges, it is crucial for members of all societies to foster a political culture that values both effectiveness as well as ethical conduct. Encouraging transparency, accountability and open dialogue about the moral implications of political actions can help mitigate the negative effects of moral decoupling.”

Exhibition sheds new light on hidden lives

Rowan Morton-Gledhill

A new photography exhibition at Bradford's Cartwright Hall celebrates Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month, with insights into the lives and culture of these largely Catholic communities.

'Dreams, and Songs to Sing', a free exhibition by Bradford-based documentary photographer Cath Muldowney, created in partnership with members of Bradford's Gypsy and Traveller communities, opened on 17th May at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery and will run until 8th September 2024.

These communities are intrinsic to the story of Catholic Bradford, with strong links to churches, such as St Peter's at Leeds Road in Laisterdyke, going back generations. Across the diocese of Leeds, many Slovak parishioners are of Roma heritage and other lay faithful from Traveller backgrounds are also at the heart of their parish communities, attending churches such as Christ the King, Bramley, Holy Family in Armley and St Nicholas, Gipton.

The late Fr Frank McGrath of Holy Family Parish was renowned for his ministry to the Traveller community in West Yorkshire.



1 in over 100 people are Gypsy Roma or Traveller but many may not self-identify due to fears of discrimination.

Gypsy Roma and Traveller are each distinct ethnic groups protected by law with hundreds of years of rich culture and history.

Today at least 7000 Gypsy and Traveller people live across West Yorkshire with families in houses, sites and on the road.



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CELEBRATING GYPSY ROMA
TRAVELLER HISTORY
MONTH
JUNE 2024

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are often seen as one group, with so much about their heritage and lives unseen and unknown. The new exhibition showcases these communities' diverse traditions and cultures, and their place in the rich history of Bradford and West Yorkshire through to the modern day.

The exhibition has been created in partnership with Bradford District Museums and Galleries and the community and members organisation Leeds GATE (Gypsy and Traveller Exchange). Led by Gypsy and Traveller people in partnership with others across West Yorkshire, Leeds GATE's work has an award-winning track record of com-

munity activism, social action, and member-led innovation.

Photos are included from iconic fairs and drives such as Lee Gap, as well as at people's homes and events. Personal objects are shared by some of the community members photographed, offering a glimpse into the lives and culture of Gypsy and Traveller communities in Bradford.

Kathleenanne Boswell lives on a site in Bradford and works at Leeds GATE as a senior youth worker, engaging with many young people through education and activities in the region. Her family, like many others on the site, have lived there for four generations and are deeply connected to the region.



She said: "As a Leeds GATE staff member and from the Traveller community, I'm privileged we get to do this exhibition. I hope it's going to raise awareness for our communities across Bradford and give people a clearer understanding of our heritage."

Rachel Trafford from Leeds GATE said: "This exhibition is about finding and sharing Gypsy and Traveller hope, joy and beauty, opening in time to celebrate Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month in June. It is a truly inclusive piece of work with our members."

Photographer Cath Muldowney

said it was a 'privilege' to take part and complimented those she met as 'warm and welcoming, honest, and funny'.

James Steward, Head of Bradford District Museums and Galleries Service at Bradford Council, said: "This exhibition has been created with a shared belief that it is important to work in partnership to increase awareness and respect of the variety of community cultures and heritage in our city."

For more information on the exhibition, click this panel.



St Mary's set to ignite UK theological debate

St Mary's University, in partnership with the Aquinas Centre for Theological Renewal at Ave Maria University, is hosting a conference at the end of June aimed at reigniting theological dialogue in the UK and engaging a wider audience.

Scheduled from 20th to 22nd June, the conference will examine the theme of the Royal Priesthood and its significance for the renewal of the Church. Drawing from the first letter of St Peter, 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession', this event promises both deep theological insights and practical applications.

The Royal Priesthood is a rich scriptural theme which draws together God's work of creating and saving humanity in Christ. With implications for the Church and the sacraments, the theology of nature and grace, and many other central Catholic doctrines, it has great potential to aid the renewal already well underway in contemporary Catholic theology, and, more concretely, to direct this renewal towards an awakening and revival of the Church in our times.

Supported by Bishop Richard

Moth, the conference will feature renowned academics and scholars from across the world, who will be coming to speak on topics close to their heart. During the conference, world-renowned academics will deliver speeches addressing the relevance of theological concepts for daily life.

Adding an extra layer of depth will be the presence of Bishop Erik Varden, Bishop of Trondheim, as the spiritual father of the conference. He will be present throughout the three days, celebrating Mass and enriching discussions with his unique insights.

In addition to established scholars, the conference will also provide a platform for early-career academics and theologians to present their research.

Tickets for the conference are now available to purchase, with full-price priced at £350, covering accommodation and meals for all three days. Day tickets are also available starting at £90, which includes access for a single day of your choosing and all meals.

For more information on the conference, click this panel.



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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good

Letters to the Editor

The Universe Catholic Weekly welcomes letters from our readers. Send them to Michael Winterbottom, at michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk. Please endeavour to keep your letter short and provide a name and address, though we are happy to anonymise your thoughts in print. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for length when space is at a premium.

No ill in the Pill

Married Catholics who, in all good conscience, use pharmaceutical contraception within the sacrament of Christian marriage, could and should be permitted and encouraged to receive Holy Communion provided they are (in all other respects) in a “state of grace”.

Unless people go to church on Sunday, they will not hear the Gospel (the Good News) proclaimed, and we should not therefore discourage them.

A married lady swallowing a tablet to prevent conception within the sacrament of Christian marriage is a minor fault compared to the firing of a Trident nuclear missile or (for that matter) threatening to do so.

I suggest this matter be placed on the agenda of the next session of the Synod in Rome later this year, provided his Holiness, Pope Francis is agreeable.

Christopher Harrison-Sleigh
By e-mail

No clues from my candidates

Now the election campaign is in full swing, I thought I'd test out the Catholic/life stance of my three main candidates, as suggested by the *Universe* last week.

One helpfully knocked on the door, the other two I sought out in my local market where they were canvassing.

“Where do you stand on abortion,” I asked. Current situation is fine, came the reply, though one was edging towards decriminalising later abortions.

“What about assisted dying,” I asked. Muttered answers around caring for the individual but a right to choose.

Not much help there, then. Looks like I'll stick to the NHS, education and the economy!

Tony Wright
Manchester

Why not do it earlier?

Jeremy Hunt has described inheritance tax as “profoundly anti-Conservative, and Rishi Sunak now says that the state pension will never be taxed under the Conservatives.

If memory serves me right, Rishi Sunak has been Prime Minister for the last few years and Jeremy Hunt Chancellor. Wouldn't it have been marvellous if they had realised all this earlier? Or is there a general election on?

Alfred Bamford, Manchester

God has a plan

I have noticed of late that many people's woes stem from ‘Needing’ what they want but not wanting what they need. It creates a lot of tension, pressure, disappointment and often broken relationships.

Sometimes it seems that God gives in to the whims of some of His children, others not, but which is the greater blessing?

Most people realise quickly that God is not like Santa Claus; even if each Christmas morning I check the drive for an ocean blue Aston Martin DB5. Even the next step in prayer, negotiating for a second hand, high mileage car, did not meet with success. To the bus queue I go...

It's time like this that we can feel some people are jumping the queue when it comes to blessings, and that our prayers are stuck in God's spam folder somewhere. But if you take a long view what is revealed can be quite unexpected.

A friend of mine, a prayerful man, was given the opportunity to have a business in his chosen field. He did everything in prayer, from applying for contracts, to suppliers, to staff; each meeting or letter he wrote would be under God's guiding hand. He did well. From being an employee he was catapulted to success as contracts flowed in like a river and profits with them.

At which point he changed. He acquired property, wealth and luxuries and entered into ventures without seeking God's guidance. Things started to fall apart. Bad payers squeezed the cashflow, unexpected tax bills arrived, and his integrity in money matters was compromised.

He periodically turned back to God, who bailed him out, but then he would repeat his folly and back to repentance and so on. It's an old story of lacking the character to rule the kingdom. Perhaps it's part of his learning curve.

So as I stand at the bus-stop with my new top-notch umbrella I can measure things differently. It's been 15 years since I had to change a tyre, receive an insurance renewal, bought diesel or had trouble parking. Despite this I have travelled thousands of miles to some of the most beautiful places in the country and rather enjoyed the challenge of planning adventures with logistical obstacles. I've been on a bus, train, walked and hitched. I am blessed because He disregarded my prayers.

Would we rather have God's gifts and troubles or God Himself and peace of mind?

Stephen Clark,
Manila, Philippines

Take a tour with a Python around rescued church

Andy Drozdziak

Monty Python star, comedian and writer Sir Michael Palin and his son, Will Palin, are offering to show one lucky person and up to three guests around Sheerness Dockyard Church in Kent.

The 19th Century Grade II* listed church on the Isle of Sheppey was gutted by a devastating fire in 2001, but has now been completely restored. Will Palin oversaw the restoration of the church, so the lucky winner will hear first-hand about this project during the tour and over lunch with them both afterwards.

This prize is one of more than 50 being offered to help church heritage charity, the National Churches Trust, to raise funds to help keep churches across the UK open and in good repair.

The ‘Going, Going, Saved!’ online auction opens today (Friday 7th June) and will run until 5pm on Friday, 28th June. People can bid online at any point for one of the prizes. See the website at the end for more details.

Other prizes include joining TV host of *Pointless* Alexander Armstrong in the Classic FM studio as he presents his radio show, and a private tour and lunch with *Outnumbered* and *Mock the Week* star Hugh Dennis around St Bart's church, London's oldest church.

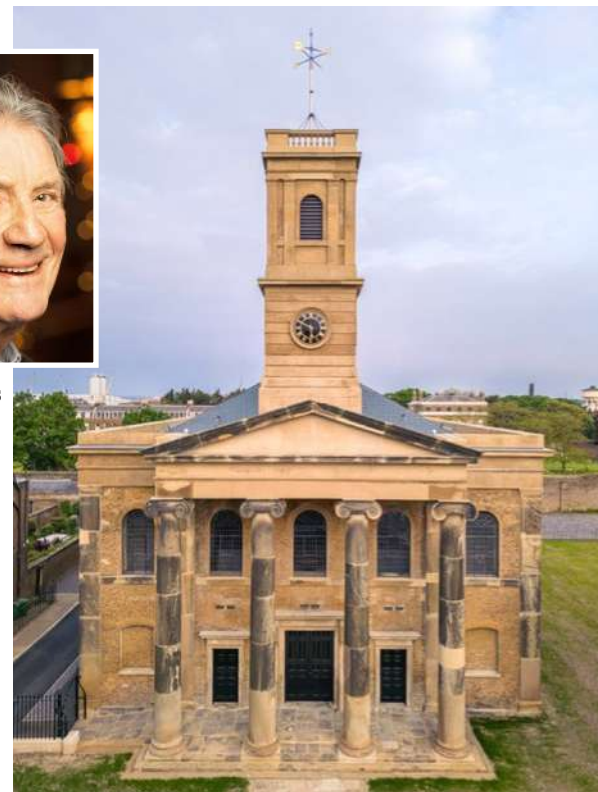
There will also be a chance to win a tour of Sheffield Cathedrals and lunch with *Songs of Praise* presenter Richard Taylor, and a private tour of the Houses of Parliament with Lord Chartres GCVO.

Sir Michael Palin, who has been Vice President of the National



Kent Sheerness Dockyard Church
Photo: Dirk Linder and Hugh Broughton Architects.jpg

Inset, Sir Michael Palin.
Photo: Andy Silett and National Churches Trust



Churches Trust for many years, called the nation's churches “an archive of hopes, dreams, fears, skills, talent and troubles which should surely be available to as many people as possible.”

He said: “There must be a recognition that the local church still means something to the community. A recognition that English churches remain an enormously valuable part of our national heritage.

“For my part, I feel very strongly that if the idea of a community is to mean anything at all, then we must value the churches that are at their

centre. They are a precious expression of our past. And it is the duty of our present generation to deliver them intact for the future.”

Claire Walker, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust, said: “It is great to see so many people want to donate their time and prizes to help support us in our work to keep churches open and in good repair so that their communities can use and enjoy them.”

To find out more about National Churches Trust, and bid for a prize, click the panel.



Listening to the world's young and their hunger for change is good news, says Carrie

Andy Drozdziak

TV star Carrie Grant MBE has partnered with international children's charity World Vision for the podcast series Raising Changemakers to inspire young people and to shine a light on inspirational young people.

World Vision UK is a Christian



Carrie chats to a changemaker

charity which helps all children of all backgrounds. Each podcast sees Carrie speaking with children from Sierra Leone, Bangladesh and the UK to see how their campaigning is transform theirs and others' futures.

The most recent episode is called ‘Encouraging Youth Activism’, when Carrie Grant spoke with young people driving change in their communities and beyond.

“This desire to campaign doesn't come from wanting to make it hard for the adults; it comes from a recognition that the situation we're in can't be put off any longer, and it can't afford to wait until we're adults or professionals in our fields,” said Amy Meek, founder of Kids Against Plastic.

“It's not something that's young versus old, it's just young people trying to inspire change in their

own way to try and make a wider difference on these issues.”

Carrie, who is best known for TV singing contests *Fame Academy* and *Pop Idol*, and is currently training to be a minister, said: “World Vision UK is helping equip young people to stand up in front of their peers, communities, and governments to share their personal stories and advocate for change,” she said.

“Some of the issues we discuss on the podcast are historic, but listening to the young people, I feel like the world is in safe hands if young people are leading the charge for change. I hope everyone listens to the podcast to learn more about their incredible stories.”

To listen to the Raising Changemakers podcast, click here



Confirmation Day mementos and cards

from The Universe Catholic Weekly

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Confirmation Holy Spirit Dove key-ring

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

Ref: F0539

Price: £6.50 + P&P

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Confirmation Card – Blessings

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

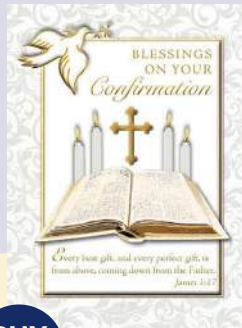
Size: 4.5" x 6.25"
(12 x 16 cm).

Message inside:
'Blessings on your
Confirmation.'

Ref: F0608

Price: £2.50 + P&P

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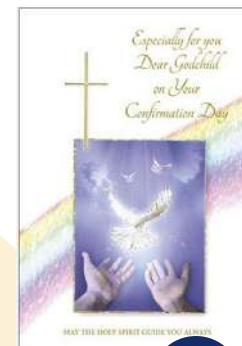


Godchild Confirmation Card

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

Ref: F0603 Price: £2.50 + P&P

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Confirmation pen

Confirmation gift – boxed commemorative ball-point pen, red with dove/bible motif.

Ref: F0586

Price: £5.95 + P&P

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Boy Confirmation Card – Especially for You

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

Ref: F0620 Price: £2.50 + P&P

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Girl Confirmation Card – Special Occasion

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

Ref: F0619 Price: £2.50 + P&P

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Black Wood Carved Bead Rosary

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ROME

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

Gay would-be priest says pope told him to keep trying after seminary's rejection

Pope Francis has told a young gay man to "keep going" with his vocational search after he told the pope he felt called to the priesthood but was turned away by an Italian seminary after he told them he was gay.

Rome newspaper *Il Messaggero* reported that Lorenzo Michele Noè Caruso had written to Pope Francis after seeing reports that the pope had used a homophobic slur when telling members of the Italian bishops' conference to exercise caution in admitting gay men to seminaries.

Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, said the pope "never intended to offend or express himself in homophobic terms, and he extends his apologies to those who were offended by the use of a term, reported by others."

And, Bruni added, "as he has had the opportunity to state on several occasions, 'In the Church there is room for everyone, for everyone! No one is useless, no one is superfluous, there is room for everyone. Just as we are, everyone.'"

Caruso told *Il Messaggero* that he wrote to the pope May 28 asking him to revise a 2005 instruction from the then-Congregation for Catholic Education, approved by Pope Benedict XVI, that said the

Church 'cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called "gay culture".'

The policy, Caruso told the pope, forced him and others like him "to hide their identities."

"Many young people feel lost in a Church that seems to have become tied to a toxic clericalism, where only some deserve to be accepted and where others are excluded as false Christians," Caruso wrote.

He told *Il Messaggero* that he was shocked to then receive an email on 1st June containing the scan of a handwritten response from the pope. In it Pope Francis said he appreciated Caruso's description of clericalism, which he called "a plague."

"As a great theologian says, 'Spiritual worldliness is the worst thing that can happen,'" the pope wrote, according to the paper.

"Jesus calls everyone, everyone. Some think of the Church as a customs office and that is bad," the pope continued. "The Church must be open to everyone. Brother, keep going with your vocation."

The Vatican did not confirm the authenticity of the note.

Disillusioned youth urged to look to Jesus for the answers

Young Catholics who feel that society is adrift should find inspiration and encouragement in their Christian calling to advocate for the poor and marginalised, Pope Francis said.

Across cultural and ideological backgrounds, modern people "sense there is something wrong with humanity and the world, that we cannot simply go on as we have been doing, that there is a need for a conversion, a new effective orientation," the pope said in a message to German Catholics

meeting at 'Katholikentag,' or 'Catholic Day,' a five-day gathering in Erfurt, Germany, that brings together lay Catholics and political and religious leaders to debate the Church, faith and a theme.

The pope told participants that Christ's teachings indicate that there is new direction to be taken, and one sought by those in humankind who reject the rising threats to human rights due to "rising antisemitism, racism and other ideologies that tend toward extremism and violence."



Pope Francis gives a cheery thumbs-up to a child as he arrives for his general audience in the papemobile

Francis planning new document on Sacred Heart to renew Church

Carol Glatz

Pope Francis is preparing a document on the Sacred Heart of Jesus to "illuminate the path of ecclesial renewal, but also to say something significant to a world that seems to have lost its heart."

The document is expected to be released in September and will be part of ongoing celebrations marking the 350th anniversary of the first apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.

The pope made the announcement during his general audience in St. Peter's Square. The Catholic Church traditionally dedicates the month of June to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the solemnity of the Sacred Heart will be celebrated today, (7th June) this year.

The document will include reflections from "previous magisterial texts" and it will aim to "re-propose to the whole Church this devotion laden with spiritual beauty. I believe it will do us much good to meditate on various aspects of the Lord's love," the pope said.

Pope Francis said it was important to remember that the Holy Spirit leads God's people to meet Jesus, the source of Christian hope.

The Biblical name of the Holy Spirit is 'ruach' in Hebrew, which means breath, wind or spirit, he said. The image of wind expresses the power of the divine Spirit, he said, and Jesus highlighted its freedom to blow and go where it wants.

"The wind is the only thing that cannot be bridled, cannot be 'bot-

tled up' or put in a box," he said. "To pretend to enclose the Holy Spirit in concepts, definitions, theses or treatises, as modern rationalism has sometimes attempted to do, is to lose it, nullify it or reduce it to the human spirit."

A similar temptation in the Church is the attempt "to enclose the Holy Spirit in canons, institutions, definitions. The Spirit creates and animates institutions, but he himself cannot be 'institutionalised' or turned into an object, the pope said.

The freedom Jesus offers with his Spirit is special, he said. It has nothing to do with the selfishness of being free to do what one wants, but it is "the freedom to freely do what God wants!"



Inter-religious friendships end wars 'and are good for the Church'

Pope Francis began a meeting with participants in a Focolare-sponsored conference by telling the movement's president, "I pray for your homeland; I pray so much for your homeland, which is suffering at this time."

The president, Margaret Karram, is a Palestinian Catholic born in Haifa, Israel. She led participants in an international inter-religious conference to the Vatican for their meeting with the pope.

Pope Francis thanked Karram and Focolare members for continuing their dialogue "with people of non-Christian religions who share the spirituality of unity. It has been a revolutionary journey that is so good for the Church." Interreligious dialogue and friendship, the pope said, "is an experience animated by the Holy Spirit, rooted, we can say, in the heart of Christ, in his thirst for love, communion and fraternity."

The foundation of dialogue with Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs and others is "the love of God expressed through mutual love, listening, trust, hospitality and fully respecting each other's identities," the pope said. "Over time, friendship and co-operation have grown in seeking to respond together to the cry of those who want peace."

The Focolare movement's long focus on promoting unity and dialogue has led many members of other religions to associate themselves with the movement's spirituality or values and to live them in the midst of their co-religionists, the pope said. "With these men and women we feel like brothers and sisters, sharing the dream of a more united world, in the harmony of diversity."

Pope reinforces message of support for world's migrants

'Every encounter with refugees is a meeting with Christ'

Every encounter with people on the move as migrants or refugees is an encounter with Christ, Pope Francis said.

"It is an occasion charged with salvation because Jesus is present in the sister or brother in need of our help. In this sense, the poor save us, because they enable us to encounter the face of the Lord," the pope said, in a message that will be centrepiece of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on 29th September.

"Do not let us become possessive of the land God has offered as a temporary home. Help us to keep walking, together with our migrant brothers and sisters toward heaven," the pope added.

He linked the message with this autumn's Synod, saying that by emphasising its synodal nature, the Catholic Church can rediscover its "itinerant nature, as the People of God journeying through history on pilgrimage, 'migrating,' we could say, toward the Kingdom of Heaven," the pope said.

"Migrants often flee from oppres-



The Angels Unawares by Timothy Schmalz in St Peter's Square

sion, abuse, insecurity, discrimination and lack of opportunities for development. They are tried by thirst and hunger; they are exhausted by toil and disease; they are tempted by despair," he said.

Yet, with every exodus, the pope said, "God precedes and accompanies his people and all his children in every time and place."

"Many migrants experience God as their travelling companion. "Thanks to him, there are good Samaritans along the way."

God "identifies with migrants on their journey, particularly with the

least, the poor and the marginalised. For this reason, the encounter with the migrant is also an encounter with Christ."

The pope asked people to unite in prayer "for all those who have had to leave their land in search of dignified living conditions. May we journey together with them, be 'synodal' together," he concluded.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said the "journeys of despair and hope" of migrants and refugees "could be ours."

"If we experienced similar pressures," such as war, poverty, natural disasters or other negative factors, "we would flee, too," he said.

He dismissed "propaganda" that a displaced person is on the move for pleasure, for an adventure. "This is false, false, false," he said, and "it is a shame we have to continue to insist" on the real "push and pull factors" people are faced with.

Loreto Sister Patricia Murray, executive secretary of the International Union of Superiors General, told reporters that educating young children "is crucial" and must be done by families, schools and society.

Some research suggests that "we learn our prejudices by age 7. At a very early age we learn who to include and who to exclude," she said.

The message to present is "our differences enrich us, rather than our differences divide us," she said. "We're presenting a vision of society which is multicultural and intercultural, where we learn from one another, where we are transformed and changed by one another."

People need to be reminded that immigrants are not "coming to take. They're coming to give, to give gifts, skills, language, culture and a whole way of living that will enrich all of us," Sister Murray said.

Italy to launch independent study on abuse

The Italian bishops' conference said a new commission recently set up will investigate all cases of abuse by clerics reported to the Church between 2001 and 2021, in a bid to better understand "the phenomenon" so it can improve prevention programmes and procedures for handling allegations.

Chiara Griffini, a psychologist and psychotherapist, who will head the commission, said it would be wholly independent of the Church.

The experts will conduct a multidisciplinary, quantitative and qualitative study and analysis of cases reported to diocesan bishops in Italy, with results expected by the end of 2025.

The bishops' initial plan had been to gather the information directly from the dicastery, which is where every diocese in the world is required by Church law to report allegations of abuse by clerics.

But now researchers will gather information directly from the bishops.

Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, president of the bishops' conference, said the Church wanted to get "a photograph" of all reported cases, then study and analyse who were the victims and how the Church responded to allegations.

"It will give us the data we need to fight this scourge better in the future," he said.

Pope cuts back on holiday time this year

Pope Francis usually takes July off, except for leading the Angelus on Sundays, but this year he will lead a consistory in Rome on 1st July for the final approval of the canonisation of several sainthood candidates, including Blessed Carlo Acutis. The date for the canonisations could be announced during the meeting.

The pope's schedule for June

through September also includes the feast of Ss Peter and Paul on 29th July, at which he will bless the palliums worn by archbishops named in the past year.

The Pope's trips include to Trieste in northern Italy on 7th July, before visiting Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Singapore from 2nd-13th September.



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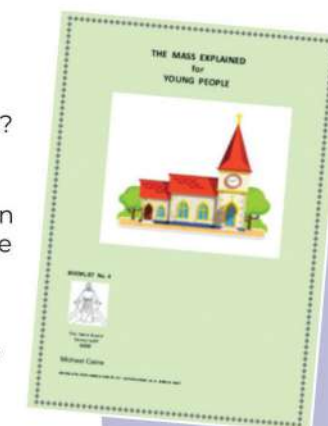
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- What's God's Grace?
- Why do we go to Confession – and Mass?
- What's Communion about?

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Arizona Republicans to take law into own hands over migrants

US bishops have criticised plans by legislators in Arizona to make unauthorised crossings of the state's international border a state crime separate from a federal one.

The measure, opposed by the state's Catholic conference, was rejected earlier this year by Democratic Governor Katie Hobbs, but lawmakers advanced the measure to the state's ballot to bypass her desk.

"I've said it before and I will say it again: HCR 2060 will hurt Arizona businesses, make it more difficult for law enforcement to do their jobs, and bust the state's budget," Hobbs said, "and it will not secure our border."

Arizona House Speaker Ben Toma, a Republican, backed the move, saying keeping America's border "wide open was unsafe, it's unsecure, it's un-American, and it's indefensible."

"Nothing good comes from open borders. Only crime, deadly drugs, violence, unsafe communities, and an unending financial drain on American taxpayers," Toma said. "Arizonans have had enough and want change. They want safe communities and a secure border."

The new law will go to a state ballot in the autumn.

Texas approved a law similar to the Arizona ballot measure last year, but it is currently facing legal challenges. Federal law already makes it illegal to enter the US without authorization.

Arizona Bishops John P. Dolan of Phoenix, Edward J. Weisenburger of Tucson and James S. Wall of Gallup, New Mexico, (whose diocese includes some of



An Arizona state trooper questions a local resident

Arizona) said they "want to again express our frustration about the ongoing situation at the border."

"The lack of a federal solution to the challenges faced by both vulnerable people and American communities is sorely needed and long overdue," they said. "The states and local communities along the US-Mexico border are shouldering much of the burden of the inaction by the federal government. This failure has resulted in not only an overwhelmingly large number of migrants wanting to cross the border, but also an unacceptable number of migrant deaths."

The bishops said they "believed that HCR 2060 will have painful unanticipated consequences, and that it is not the right solution."

"The possibility that this law could be enforced in communities throughout Arizona by local law enforcement officers is enough to undermine community trust of the police. Public safety will be threatened when crime victims and witnesses are afraid to report crimes. Moreover, the possibility of racial profiling and violations of civil liberties, while targeting the most vulnerable, is especially troubling."

Shot PM forgives gunman – but won't do the same for the liberals

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has said he bears no ill will to the man who shot him last month – but he couldn't say the same about the people he blames for inspiring his assailant, "liberals and foreign agents who dislike my pro-Russian views."

Mr Fico was critically injured on 15th May after being shot multiple times, but the gunman – known only as 71-year-old Juraj C – was a "messenger of the evil and political hatred" whipped up by Slovakia's "unsuccessful and frustrated" opposition, Mr Fico said.

Opposition parties have condemned the shooting and rejected all links with the attacker.

But Mr Fico, a populist-nationalist who has served as PM for 10 of the last 18 years, said the increasingly vicious attacks on him

in the media were the reason he had been shot.

He said "anti-government media" – which he claimed were linked to US philanthropist billionaire George Soros as well as foreign-funded NGOs – were trying to downplay the reasons for the assassination attempt.

He had warned for months, he said, that the likelihood of an attack on him was "a certainty".

The opposition in Slovakia and abroad has repeatedly criticised Fico for opposing military aid to Ukraine, and says Vladimir Putin has been "wrongly demonised" by the West.

Slovakian opposition parties were in league with EU nations in regard to Ukraine-Russia, creating an atmosphere of poison in his country. "It is no wonder this man flipped like he did," Fico added.



UN chief calls for ban on fossil fuel adverts

New research suggests world has only an 'even money chance' of keeping temperature rise below 1.5 deg C

The world's fossil fuel industries should be treated the same as cigarette companies and banned from advertising to prevent further harm to the planet, the UN secretary general has said.

UN Secretary General António Guterres dubbed the world's coal, oil and gas corporations as the "god-fathers of climate chaos", saying they had distorted the truth and deceived the public for decades.

Tobacco advertising was banned on health grounds, he said, and the same treatment was now needed for fossil fuels, he said. They had "shamelessly greenwashed" with lobbying, legal action and massive advertising campaigns.

His remarks came as the UN released new data showing the rate of global warming is increasing, and a number of national heat records have been broken.

Research by EU climatologists has confirmed that each month last year set a new global temperature record for the time of year. Human-caused climate change was blamed, although it was boosted by the El Niño climate phenomenon. It is hoped that as El Niño fades this year, global temperatures will fall.

Last year was the hottest on record but the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said it was likely the record will fall in 2024.

In a separate report, a group of around 50 leading scientists reported that the rate of global warming caused by humans has continued to increase.

Ongoing high emissions of warming gases mean the world is moving closer to breaching the symbolic 1.5C warming mark on a longer-term basis.

It was this data that led to Guterres making his dramatic call for a ban on fossil fuel ads in what was his most outspoken attack on the industry yet.

"We must directly confront those in the fossil fuel industry who have shown relentless zeal for obstructing progress – over decades."

He said many in the oil, gas and coal industries had. "I urge every country to ban advertising from fossil fuel companies," he told an audience in New York. "And I urge news media and tech companies to stop

taking fossil fuel advertising."

Mr Guterres stressed that action was needed now, pointing to the recent deadly heatwave in Asia or the floods in South America as examples of extreme weather events becoming commonplace. Northern Brazil has just seen its worst flooding for decades, while unseasonal heavy rains led to deadly mudslides in Papua New Guinea.

In response, representatives of fossil fuel groups said they were committed to reducing their emissions.

However, average temperatures over the past 12 months have been 1.63C above "pre-industrial levels" of the late 1800s.

This does not constitute a breach of the Paris climate agreement, in which nearly 200 countries pledged to try to keep temperature rises below 1.5C. This is because the Paris agreement takes a 20-year average of temperature rises, to smooth out natural variability. The past decade was about 1.2C warmer than pre-industrial levels.

But Prof Piers Forster, director of the Priestley Centre for Climate Futures at the University of Leeds, said new research was pointing to a long-term breach of the 1.5C mark.

He estimates that to have an even chance of keeping warming to 1.5C, the world can emit only 200 billion more tonnes of CO₂. Previously it was thought the world had a 'carbon budget' to use up of around 500 billion tonnes.

At current rates of emissions, this "carbon budget" could be exhausted by 2029.



António Guterres

New claims disappeared Ukrainian priests being held in labour camp

Two disappeared Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests seized by Russian forces from their church in Berdyansk in November 2022 are possibly in a Russian-operated labour camp in occupied Ukraine, according to a human rights information service.

Redemptorist Fathers Ivan Levitsky and Bohdan Geleta, who served at the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos in Berdyansk, may be in detention at Russia's Kalinin Labor Camp in Horlivka, located in Ukraine's Donetsk region, which is currently under Russian occupation.

"This is the closest I think we've come to actually confirming at least where they are," said Felix Corley of Forum 18 – a news service that partners with the Norwegian Helsinki Committee in defending freedom of religion, thought and conscience.

The Donetsk Exarchate of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, to which the priests belong, said that it has received no news of the two priests.

Previously, Fr Levitsky was thought by Yevhen Zakharov of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group to be in prison in Russia's Rostov region, while Fr Geleta was believed to be in custody at a separate investigation prison in Russian-occupied Crimea. Fr Geleta suffers from acute diabetes.

Both priests had refused to leave their parishioners following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Shortly after the pair were captured, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, said he had received "the sad news that our priests are being tortured."



Redemptorist Fathers Ivan Levitsky and Bohdan Geleta

Tatyana Moskalkova, Russia's human rights commissioner, claimed on Telegram last month that Russia had proposed exchanging two unnamed Catholic priests for two Orthodox priests.

Levitsky and Geleta are the only two Catholic priests known to be in Russian detention, said Corley.

Moskalkova said that "Ukraine, for absolutely unknown reasons, did not agree to such an exchange."

Major Archbishop Shevchuk has echoed Pope Francis' pleas for an "all-for-all" prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine.

"I recently visited the Catholic priests in their place of detention and made sure that the conditions corresponded to international standards," Moskalkova claimed, without indicating the date and location of the alleged meeting. "On their part, only one request was made, to see their family and friends as quickly as possible."

"We had heard rumours before

that at least one of them was there in that camp," Corley said. "So it does seem likely."

He noted that Moskalkova visited Horlivka in Donetsk in May, which would corroborate the claims.

Fr Andriy Bukhvak, chancellor of the Donetsk Exarchate, said that her reference to them was a "good sign" they remain alive after 18 months in captivity.

It is claimed the priests face a criminal trial, under false charges related to weapons, explosives, and preparing allegedly 'extremist' texts in their church.

But even the attempt to charge the priests under Russia's criminal code is a breach of international law, Corley said. "The international community recognises these territories as occupied and you can't impose new laws on occupied territory."

"According to the Geneva Conventions, you're supposed to leave the laws that preexisted in force," said Corley.

Cardinal: Ukraine's use of NATO weapons to hit Russia risks escalation of conflict

Carol Glatz

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said allowing Ukraine to use NATO weapons to attack military targets in Russia would lead to "an escalation that no one will be able to control."

"It is a truly disturbing prospect," the cardinal said while in Milan.

The risk is real and should cause concern for "every person who cares about the fate of our world," he added.

The cardinal's comments came in response to a growing number of countries considering lifting or amending restrictions on Ukraine's use of weapons from Western nations to strike inside Russia.

Jens Stoltenberg, secretary general of NATO, said 30th May, "I believe that time has come to (re) consider some of these restrictions to enable the Ukrainians to really defend themselves."

"This is a war of aggression launched by choice by Moscow against Ukraine," he said, and the right to self-defence "includes also striking legitimate military targets

outside Ukraine."

U.S. President Joe Biden has agreed Ukraine could use some US-supplied weapons to strike inside Russia but only to defend the city, Kharkiv, a Ukrainian city that lies just 12 miles from the Russian border and which is the target of a major Russian assault.

Germany also announced it will allow Ukraine to use German weapons to strike targets in Russia, joining other NATO members in easing restrictions on what Ukraine can do with donated weapons.

Leaders opposed to allowing Ukraine to use foreign weaponry to launch attacks on Russian soil are concerned such a move would be seen as a provocation and lead to Russia widening the conflict.

Cardinal Parolin said the Vatican is continuing with its humanitarian efforts, especially concerning the return of Ukrainian children forcibly taken from their homes and into Russia. An effort begun last year "continues, not very rapidly, but it is bearing fruit," the cardinal said.



Pope repeats call for debt relief as part of Jubilee Year

Pope Francis has repeated his appeal that the world's wealthiest nations "acknowledge the gravity of so many of their past decisions and determine to forgive the debts of countries that will never be able to repay them."

"If we really wish to prepare a path to peace in our world, let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry," the pope wrote in *Spes non Confundit (Hope Does Not Disappoint)*, his bull proclaiming the Jubilee Holy Year 2025.

But resolving the debt crisis, its impact on the poor and on the global economy, is not simple, a Vatican

"If we really wish to prepare a path to peace in our world, let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry,"



sponsored conference heard. The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences gathered top experts to discuss

these major problems for the global society and propose international reforms – both those dealing with

existing debt burdens and those looking to ease the burdens.

A United Nations report found that 19 developing countries are spending more on debt interest than on education, and 45 are spending more on debt interest than on health, the gathering heard.

Meeting the experts at the start of their session, Pope Francis told them after the COVID-19 pandemic, "we find ourselves facing a debt crisis that mainly affects the countries of the South of the world, depriving millions of people of the possibility of a decent future."

Servicing the debt means cutting government spending, but, the pope said, "no government can morally

demand that its people suffer deprivations incompatible with human dignity."

Pope Francis called for "a new international financial architecture" and the creation of a "multinational mechanism, based on solidarity and harmony among peoples," one that promotes shared responsibility between lenders and borrowers but offers relief in times of crisis.

No one can have an easy conscience knowing there is "a multitude of brothers and sisters who are hungry and submerged in social exclusion and vulnerability," the pope said. "Letting this happen is a sin, a human sin; even if one does not have faith, it is a social sin."

10 years on, Iraq's Christian community still struggles to find peace at home

Dale Gavlak

For Iraqi Catholics, it's a date they will never forget. The takeover of Mosul by militants of the Islamic State group 10 years ago began a bloody and destructive rampage over the weeks that followed through the country's ancestral heartland which Christians had called home for the 16 centuries.

"Young men spread the warning that Daesh (as Islamic State is known by its Arabic-language acronym) was entering Mosul," Rita, a native of Iraq's once second-largest city, said. She recounted the horror inside the compound of Mary Mother of the Church Parish in Marka – the northeastern suburb of Amman, the Jordanian capital.

The woman, who is in her 50s, and other Iraqis attending the church only provided their first names for fear of retribution for relatives who remain in Iraq.

"My aunt learned about the militants' approach from the neighbours. We knew it would be impossible to stay and so we gathered my sister and my children and headed north for safety, packed inside a car," Rita said of the start of the decade-long traumatic ordeal that has defined her life and that of her family.

The fall of Mosul happened from 4th-10th, 2014, when Daesh insurgents took over the city from the Iraqi army.

Daesh is an Islamic militant organisation that broke with the al-Qaida network and took control of large parts of Iraq and Syria, where it declared a caliphate, a traditional form of Islamic rule, in 2014. It is made up largely of extremist Sunni militants from Iraq and Syria but has drawn jihadi fighters from across the Muslim world and Europe.

"Many Iraqis live with depression. I see it on their faces as they come to church," Fr Khalil Ja'ar, pastor at Mary Mother of the Church, said. "From time to time, I invite them to come and talk in my office. They say, we know there is no resolution, but at least we have the opportunity to talk," he said. Fr Ja'ar deeply identifies with their struggles, because he grew up as a Palestinian refugee in Bethlehem.

He has served Iraqi Christians and other refugees fleeing conflicts in neighbouring lands for many years, providing practical assistance

"Many Iraqi Christians live with depression. I see it on their faces as they come to church ... I call them living saints because they chose to stick to their Christian faith in the face of losing all they had in this world..."



Pope Francis participates in a memorial prayer service at Hosh al-Bieaa, the church square, in Mosul, Iraq, for the victims of the ISIS war, during his visit to Iraq in 2021. All churches were destroyed between 2014 and 2017. Photo: Paul Haring

such as children's schooling, food coupons, housing and now a recently opened health clinic on the grounds of the parish compound to address the refugees.

This Arab priest finds his own life has been forever changed by aiding the refugees, whom he calls "living saints," because they chose to stick to their Christian faith in the face of losing all they had in this world.

The United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, says Jordan now hosts some 53,000 Iraqi refugees, most Christians. These numbers are down from 2014 when many fled Mosul and the Nineveh Plains towns, including Qaraqosh, by initially escaping to the northern Kurdistan region before heading to Jordan in the hopes of resettlement in the West.

"If they've gone, it's been mainly to Australia, but actually very few have left Jordan," Fr Ja'ar explained. "Most are still here, and they feel blocked and forgotten as there is little help. They are not allowed to work nor go to hospitals. International organisations tell them, 'You are Iraqi, you have to go back to your country.' But the situation there is still very dangerous," the parish priest said.

"I know some people who returned and found their homes already occupied by other people," he said.

Other parishioners, like 60-year-old George, an electrical engineer, said it would be impossible to go

back to his family home in Bartella, because it was bombed during the conflict. Shi'ite militias have now taken over the once-predominantly Christian town after it was liberated from Daesh.

"Eventually, we felt like we were living between two fires. The Shi'ite militias came to me demanding my professional electrical tools to sell them for themselves. There was no security, no protection for ordinary citizens. I knew that I had to search for a safe place for my family," added George, who is in the final stages of a resettlement process to Canada.

Another parishioner, Sami, serves at Marka's Mary Mother of the Church as a deacon, but he also worked in his home church, St. Thomas in Karamles, one of the most ancient settlements in

northern Iraq.

"The church bell rang furiously in 2014 warning us that trouble was coming, the militants were soon invading. We had to move fast, stuffing nine people in a ... car; leaving everything behind. It was hot, sunny, dusty, and we had no water. Years later, I tried to return home and found the house had been torched," Sami said.

"Because of what they have encountered in Iraq and the challenges they now face, Iraqi refugees experience a lot of stress," explained Taim Suyyagh, who is the attending physician at the church's newly opened Sant'Angelo health clinic.

Uncontrolled hypertension is one of the chief diseases that Suyyagh sees among the Iraqi refugees coming to the clinic. A lack of funds

also means that some refugees have been unable to follow through with maintaining their medications. But the clinic is hoping to offer positive change with diagnosis and consultations, and by providing medications and offering best ways to treat their illnesses.

"This is to service the Iraqi community with some medical checks and medicine, and to provide training for general assessment and to assist those with disabilities," said Tommaso Riva of the Amman-based Habibi Association, set up in Italy in 2013, to aid the most vulnerable and those affected by conflict.

Riva said that a programme to provide psychological support may first be introduced "in a community way as a training or workshop" to participants, because Middle Eastern society is quite private about sharing personal feelings regarding stress and trauma.

"The refugees and the neighbourhood's poor are usually too shy to seek help. We have said, 'Please come. This is our duty and our privilege to serve you,'" Fr Ja'ar explained. So far, some 150 to 200 have come monthly, but he expects those numbers to rise. "When some people can't make it to the clinic, I ask the doctor and nurse to go to their home for a medical visit."

The priest's pride and joy has been the school he set up a decade ago to enable 200 Iraqi refugee children to be educated as they faced challenges in local schools.

"The kids have (told) me, 'Father ... we don't like to have summer holidays. At home, there is no place to play and it's very dangerous on the streets. At this school, we can meet with our friends, play with them and have good food,'" he said. But funding has been tight, and more resources are badly needed.

"I hope, I pray that we may be able to reopen the school in September because we are financially drained," Fr Ja'ar said. "This would be a disaster for the children."

Left, a labourer works on the al-Hadba minaret during the reconstruction of the Grand al-Nuri mosque, in Mosul. It was among religious buildings destroyed when Daesh insurgents took over the city in 2014.





Celebrations start in Mexico City as Sheinbaum's victory was announced. Inset, the victor celebrates her win, which makes her the first female president in the country's history

Mexico's bishops welcome new president but warn she faces tough challenges

David Agren

Mexico's bishops have sent their congratulations to Claudia Sheinbaum after she secured an overwhelmingly victory in Mexico's presidential election to become the country's first female president. It was a historic accomplishment overshadowed by the killing of election candidates and questions continuing over the future of the country's democratic institutions amid a backdrop of drug gang wars.

The Mexican bishops' conference described the voting as "a great citizen celebration, despite the obstacles and problems that arose during the electoral process, especially due to criminal violence and interference with legality by some authorities."

"We must feel satisfied with the duty fulfilled and with a commitment ahead to care for and improve our democratic institutions," the statement said.

Sheinbaum, 61, claimed between 58.3 per cent and 60.7 per cent of the vote, the National Electoral Institute's president said, besting opposition coalition candidate Xóchitl Gálvez by over 30 points. Sheinbaum's ruling Morena party and its allies took majorities in both houses of Congress – with the final vote count possibly providing enough seats to pass constitutional

amendments without the support of the opposition. Jorge Álvarez Máynez of the Citizen Movement party received 10 per cent support.

The bishops alluded to the prospect of supermajorities in Congress by pledging "a commitment ahead to care for and improve our democratic institutions." Supermajorities would allow outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to introduce planned constitutional changes such as putting Supreme Court justices to a popular vote.

Sheinbaum claimed more than 33 million votes in what was the country's largest ever elections, which filled more than 20,000 public positions at all levels of government. The elections also were the most violent in Mexico's history with over 30 candidates and potential candidates killed in attacks often blamed on drug cartels, which have increasingly moved into the political realm.

Despite the violence, Sheinbaum campaigned on the premise that Mexico was becoming less violent. She even told the authors of a Church plan for peace that their diagnosis was "pessimistic," but continued dialoguing with the plan's authors.

After claiming victory she told supporters: "We will guarantee

freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, of concentration and mobilisation. We are democrats and by conviction we would never create an authoritarian or repressive government.

"We will also respect political, social, cultural and religious diversity. Gender and sexual diversity. We will always continue to fight against any form of discrimination," she added.

Sheinbaum, who won't begin her six-year presidential term until the start of October, described her win as historic. She becomes Mexico's

"We raise our prayers that she can lead Mexico towards better horizons, where the Republic is strengthened, the rule of law is fully exercised..."

first female president and the country's first Jewish head of state, though she identifies as nonreligious.

Mexico's bishops welcomed a woman reaching the highest office in the country, saying, "We raise our prayers so that, with the responsibility and wisdom that the position demands, and always seeking the common good, she can lead Mexico towards better

horizons, where the Republic is strengthened, the rule of law is fully exercised, democracy allows political transition without violence, the development and justice of the entire nation is achieved more effectively and, above all, we begin a period of social reconciliation in the entire country. We sincerely hope that you prioritize dialogue with everyone."

A climate scientist by training and former Mexico City mayor, Sheinbaum ran as the protégé of sitting president López Obrador, promising to continue his populist agenda of providing cash stipends to seniors and single mothers, state intervention in the economy and a less confrontational approach to crime fighting. She presented few original proposals and often repeated López Obrador's comments while campaigning, leaving questions on how she would govern. Questions also arise how her predecessor – who says he is retiring – will attempt to interfere in her administration.

"Sheinbaum's campaign was carried out to position her as the continuer of Obrador's project," said Bárbara González, a political analyst in the city of Monterrey.

"Expectations are that the differences, if there are any, will become evident when she is in the

chair and there is a real transfer of power," she said.

In interviews, Sheinbaum supporters spoke of the outgoing president and his popularity more than the election winner.

Josue Sandoval, 32, sells López Obrador souvenirs in central Mexico City. He recently added Sheinbaum merchandise but the López Obrador items outsell hers five to one, he says. "People love the current president," he said.

Sandoval says that his mother receives a stipend of 6,000 pesos (\$340) every two months, which helps make ends meet. "The other presidents did not want to do this. No. They never paid attention to the people," he said.

Priests see similar appreciation for the cash stipends, along with measures such as raising the minimum wage by more than 100% over the past five years.

"The programmes really proved popular here," said Jesuit Father Pedro Arriaga, who ministers in rural Chiapas, Mexico's poorest state. Chiapas has been rife with drug cartel violence, but people don't blame the president, Fr Arriaga said. They simply explain: Thanks to López Obrador we're receiving this benefit. And that's where the president's popularity lies."



Pope St John Paul II greets crowds during his visit to Poland. Around a third of the country's population turned out to see him, despite intense pressure from the Communist authorities who had only reluctantly agreed to his papal mission to his homeland

Pope's visit created the first crack in the Soviet's wall

Filip Mazurczak

This week marked the 45th anniversary of the moment when St. John Paul II began his first papal pilgrimage to his native Poland, then shackled by a communist dictatorship.

The visit, which opened on 2nd June, had not only an enormous impact on the spiritual renewal of the Polish nation, paving the way for democratic changes, but it also inspired future freedom fighters in other parts of the Soviet empire.

On 16th October 1978, the then 58-year-old Cardinal Karol Wojtyła of Kraków became the first non-Italian to be elected pope in centuries. The fact that the Catholic Church would be headed by a man from behind the Iron Curtain terrified both the Kremlin and the Moscow-inspired Polish communist government of the time.

The new pope decided to follow in his predecessor St. Paul VI's footsteps and make pastoral visits outside Italy. Poland's communist regime reluctantly agreed for him to visit his homeland, and in July 1979, he would appear to enormous crowds in the major cities of Warsaw, Gniezno, Czestochowa, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, his

hometown of Wadowice, as well as the former German Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, Nowy Targ, and a city that was his diocesan seat – Kraków.

"The pope's 1979 visit was the pebble that started the avalanche that changed the geopolitical situation of not only East (and) central Europe, but of the whole world," Pawel Skibinski recalls. "It led to a major crisis of communism and was one of the factors that led to the expansion of the frontiers of the free world," said Skibinski, a professor of history at the University of Warsaw.

His book *The Renewal of This Earth: John Paul II's First Pilgrimage to Poland, June 1979* won the readers' award for Best History Book in Poland.

"When John Paul II kissed the ground at the Warsaw airport, he began the process by which communism in Poland – and ultimately everywhere – would come to an end, ... it was one of the five historical moments that made 1979 the year that would pave the way for our current geopolitical order."

Skibinski explained that the papal visit, during which 11 million people in a nation of 36 million at the time came to see the pope, helped many Poles understand that they were not alone in their rejection of the regime. One year after John Paul's pilgrimage, Solidarity, the first non-communist trade union in the Soviet bloc, was formed in the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk.

In stark contrast to the Polish regime's official stance on atheism, images of John Paul II and the Black Madonna of Czestochowa were hung in the shipyard gates. Eventually, Solidarity became a major non-violent national liberation movement with which communist leaders in Warsaw and Moscow had to contend. The movement started as electrician-

turned-leader Lech Walesa signed the Gdansk accords with the Government legalising Solidarity on 31st August 1980, doing so, in a telling gesture, with a pen bearing the pope's likeness.

According to Skibinski, the pilgrimage helped the American political elites understand that at least in Poland, the largest of the Soviet Union's satellite states, there was a major dissonance between the official ideology and policies of the regime, and the hearts of a large part of society, which could be a major destabilising factor.

Declassified US government documents assert that both Democratic President Jimmy Carter, whose national security advisor was Polish native Zbigniew Brzezinski, and his Republican challenger Ronald Reagan, understood that Polish society could play a major role in ending Soviet hegemony in the region.

Skibinski is not alone among historians in his view that the 1979 pilgrimage played a crucial role in the beginning of the end of communist domination in East-Central Europe – a stance first raised by papal biographer George Weigel, followed by other American academics.

"When John Paul II kissed the ground at the Warsaw airport on 2nd June, 1979, he began the process by which communism in Poland – and ultimately everywhere – would come to an end," Yale historian John Lewis Gaddis wrote in his history of the Cold War. Christian Caryl's book *Strange Rebels: 1979 and the Birth of the 21st Century* argued that the pilgrimage was one of the five historical moments that made 1979 the year that would pave the way for our current geopolitical order.

Yet, Skibinski noted that the impact of the pilgrimage wasn't limited to Polish society and Washington politicians. "Soviet-dominated societies, particularly the Ukrainians and Lithuanians, took great interest in the papal visit," he said.

According to Skibinski, the pope's homily in Gniezno particularly inspired Ukrainians and Lithuanians, simultaneously terrifying the Soviet elites, who, as KGB documents show, considered the sermon to be a "mortal threat."

In the homily, St. John Paul spoke of the Christian national

Continued on next page



“The pope appeared to enormous crowds in Warsaw, Gniezno, Czestochowa and Kraków...”

identity and European identity of the Slavic nations, explicitly mentioning the Ruthenians (Ukrainians), Croats, Czechs, Slovaks, and Bulgarians, as well as the Lithuanians, who, while not Slavs, were Christianised thanks to Poland.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Czechoslovakia, Cardinal František Tomášek of Prague, previously seen as having a compromising attitude towards the regime, became a bold supporter of the anti-communist dissident movement, defender of religious freedom, and supporter of the underground Czechoslovak Church following 1979.

During his visit to Poland in May, Weigel said that the 1979 visit started “the revolution of conscience.”

“In Warsaw, at Victory Square, he gave an amazing homily, during which he asked the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the Earth. It was as if an electric charge went through the crowd, Weigel said.

Filip Mazureczakwites from Warsaw, Poland



Electrician-turned-Solidarity leader Lech Walesa addresses his supporters from the gates of the Gdansk shipyard. ‘Images of John Paul II and the Black Madonna of Czestochowa were hung in the shipyard gates’ as Solidarity became a major non-violent national liberation movement with which communist leaders in Warsaw and Moscow had to contend.

Charity raises concern over sharp increase in crew abandonments

Cases of seafarers abandoned by shipowners without money, support, or the means to get home have reached alarming levels around the world, and global Catholic maritime charity Stella Maris is providing support to some of those affected.

The rise in the number of such distressing cases has become a humanitarian crisis, with many seafarers suffering mental issues as they struggle to find a way to resolve their parlous situation.

“This is a call to action for the entire maritime industry,” said Stella Maris CEO Tim Hill. “We must enforce international laws, hold negligent companies accountable, and provide assistance to abandoned crew.

“Ship abandonment has reached alarming levels, leaving many seafarers stranded without support, wages, or a way home. They deserve respect, dignity, and the assurance that they will never be forgotten.”

Data from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) highlights the huge rise in abandonment cases, which occur when shipowners withhold wages, repatriation, and even basic needs such as food, accommodation and medical care. In just 10 years, known cases have soared from little more than a dozen-a-year to 143 in 2023, with more than 100 cases already reported in 2024.

Deacon Joseph O'Donnell, Stella Maris senior area port chaplain for Scotland and Northern Ireland, said: “We ask companies and organisations which benefit from the maritime industry, such as major retailers, to help us put a stop to abandonment.”

A major issue in numerous labour supply countries is the role of formal recruitment agencies and unlicensed agents, who visit villages with promises of wages and conditions that often don't

materialise. “It will really help if we can cut out these unlicensed agents, better regulate the formal recruiters and properly introduce new skilled work visas,” said Deacon O'Donnell.

He highlighted a recent issue when an Indian crew, which had not received their wages for several months, was abandoned in Troon in south-west Scotland.

“We supplied groceries, clothing, and free SIM cards so they could call families back home,” he said. “We also must consider how much mental strain they are under with no money, no means of getting home and absolutely no idea what their future is.”

Stella Maris provided the crew with pastoral support. Following the charity's intervention, the crew was eventually paid and repatriated back home.

In recent years, Stella Maris has supported other abandoned crews in countries around the world such as Kenya and Taiwan. Its team in Taiwan supported the crew of eight Indonesians on a cargo ship abandoned in Kaohsiung port, who needed provisions and help to return home to their families. Its team in Kenya supported crew members on an abandoned fishing vessel in Mombasa port for over a year with food, water and Wi-Fi.

Margaret Masibo, the Stella Maris chaplain in Mombasa, Kenya, recalls: “The men were desperate. For days they had no food or fresh water. They were starving. Since the ship had been abandoned, not a single person had stepped on board to help – until I did. The men had no money and couldn't disembark because they didn't have papers to be in Kenya. It was heart-breaking.”

“Awareness of these issues needs to be raised to higher government levels. It is a truly global issue,” added Deacon O'Donnell.



Stella Maris Kenya supported crew on an abandoned vessel in Mombasa port

60 Minutes wasn't a gaffe-free zone but it did show the pope in an honest light

Gretchen R. Crowe

In one of the memorable early moments of his pontificate, Pope Francis told millions of young people gathered in Rio de Janeiro for World Youth Day to *Hagan lio!* or “Make a mess!”

Some might say that, over the years, he has (more than?) occasionally followed his own advice, especially when holding a microphone or speaking with a journalist. After-the-fact clarifications have become somewhat commonplace in this pontificate – whether they be about breeding “like rabbits,” white flags in Ukraine or blessings for same-sex couples.

Stressing openness and mercy, Francis’ emphasis has been on welcoming everyone into the Church, and if a mess is made along the way, so be it.

But for a pope who hasn’t always been clear over the years – sometimes even where points of doctrine are concerned – his recent interview with CBS’ Norah O’Donnell offered clarity in spades.

It’s important to note first that Pope Francis was clear about the things he has always offered strong clarity on. He spoke direct and



compelling truths about the horrors of war (he talks with Holy Family parish in Gaza every night at 7 pm), the importance of peace and negotiation, about welcoming the stranger, the fact that the Gospel is open to all and the danger that comes from not caring for our planet. These topics are Francis’ passion, and they are so far the best fruits of his pontificate.

But he also offered somewhat surprising clarity on more controversial topics. Regarding perhaps the most significant of these topics – that of women’s

ordination – Pope Francis answered O’Donnell’s questions boldly and decisively.

O’Donnell: “Will [a young girl today] ever have the opportunity to be a deacon and participate as a clergy member in the church?”

Pope Francis: “No.”

O’Donnell: “I understand you have said no women as priests, but you are studying the idea of women as deacons. Is that something you are open to?”

Pope Francis: “If it is deacons with holy orders, no. But women have always had, I would say, the

function of deaconesses without being deacons, right?”

For a pope who has organised two separate commissions to study the idea of women in the diaconate, and who recently also set up a synodal study group to consider the issue, it was a clear answer in the negative, with no ambiguity, on any kind of future ordination of women to the diaconate or otherwise.

He also offered clarity on the controversial document on blessings, *Fiducia Supplicans* (*Supplicating Trust*), released last December, which offers guidelines for what it calls ‘the blessings of same-sex couples.’

When O’Donnell brought up the topic, asking why the pope last year “decided to allow Catholic priests to bless same-sex couples,” Pope Francis corrected the question’s premise. “No,” he said, “what I allowed was not to bless the union; that cannot be done because that is not the sacrament. I cannot. The Lord made it that way. But to bless each person, yes. The blessing is for everyone.”

If *Fiducia Supplicans* had offered that kind of clarity from the outset, the Church and Pope Francis himself might have been

spared a painful couple of months in early 2024.

This wasn’t a perfect interview, though. There were missed opportunities on Pope Francis’ side, especially when speaking about surrogacy, to explain how the Church teaches, wisely and correctly, that children are gifts from God, not rights to be achieved by any means possible.

There was also a missed opportunity from O’Donnell, when speaking about clergy sexual abuse, to ask about the Vatican’s ongoing investigation into Fr Marko Rupnik, the Slovenian-born priest who has gained international recognition both for his liturgical art and for the numerous accusations of sexual, spiritual and psychological abuse leveled against him in the course of his career.

But, all things considered, the interview with O’Donnell was a good one, worth watching especially for the American church audience. In it, Pope Francis spoke clearly and concisely about the great breadth of truth that can be found in all aspects of the beautiful and challenging social teaching of the Church, and in the Gospel itself. And he did so mess-free.

Rupnik’s art is a dilemma, and calls for Church action

Effie Caldarola

If you’re looking for a creepy, unsettling thriller to stream, *Ripley* fills the bill.

Based on Patricia Highsmith’s 1955 novel, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, the edgy film starring Andrew Scott is shot mostly in Italy against magnificent views of Rome, Naples and the Italian coast.

Ripley has been hired by a wealthy American to go to Italy and persuade his son, who is living a luxurious trust fund life, to return home. Ripley is a grifter and a con man, but the father doesn’t realise that yet. Bad things follow.

But this is not a movie review. No, it’s some thoughts I had while watching the series. Thoughts about artists and their work. And the current debate about what to do with the prolific work of the former Jesuit, Father Marko Rupnik, a famous mosaic artist who has been credibly accused of abusing between 20 to 40 women. For some reason, Ripley is enthralled by the work of the great Italian painter, Caravaggio, who was born in 1571.

Caravaggio’s works are in churches all over Italy, including the Vatican. His realism, his dramatic use of light and dark,



changed the art world.

On retreat once, a priest suggested I look at *The Calling of St. Matthew* to pray about my own calling by Christ. Caravaggio used a real tax collector as a model for Matthew, sitting at the table with his money. Christ, illuminated in the doorway, points a finger at Matthew.

The painting is unforgettable, and I gasped when Ripley sees it, too.

But Caravaggio had extensive

trial and police records – a long rap sheet. He was a violent man who may have suffered from a form of schizophrenia. It is said that in 1606 he murdered a man in a street fight and spent the last four years of his life on the run. In 1609, he was wounded in a knife attack in Naples, and died not long after.

Does it matter to our appreciation of his art that Caravaggio was a murderer?

Currently, there is a debate going on around the world – what to do

with Rupnik’s prolific mosaics. They appear at Lourdes and the Sanctuary of St. John Paul II in Poland. The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Aparecida, the second largest church in the world after St. Peter’s Basilica, has had extensive mosaics completed recently by Fr Rupnik.

If the art is beautiful and inspiring, should we consider the artist?

Perhaps not. But in Rupnik’s case, we must consider the victims. The alleged victims were all

vulnerable adult women, some involved with the priest through the Loyola Community, which he helped found, and often through their work with his art. One victim used words like “psychological torture” to describe how he would manipulate and control them sexually while enlisting their aid in his mosaics. Often, she reports, he would use religious themes, like the Trinity, to involve them sexually.

He was excommunicated once for granting absolution in the sacrament of reconciliation to someone with whom he had sex.

Yet here we are, wondering if we should remove mosaics. In a Church often criticised for emphasising sexual sins over other wrongs, we spent decades covering up sexual sins if they involved clergy. Have we learned nothing?

And those words I used to describe *Ripley*? Creepy and unsettling. Those are words I feel now when I look at Rupnik’s mosaics and think of female involvement.

Caravaggio’s victims are long gone. But living, breathing women whose lives have been drastically impacted by Rupnik live on. It’s time to honour them by removing his works.

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

God wants you to love Him now, and in Heaven

I often think about God and especially why he revealed himself to us. We simple beings can only guess why he did so because we don't have God's phenomenal knowledge and wisdom. What we do know according to the Catholic Catechism is that "God is a supreme spirit who alone exists in himself and is infinite in all perfection".

We also know that he exists in an environment called Heaven, which must be one that we human beings can never imagine because it has always satisfied God and will do so for all eternity.

So why did God reveal himself to us? When I first started thinking about this, I asked myself: Why does God want us to know him?

I then remembered that the Catechism tells us that: 'God wants us to know and love Him in this world and to be happy with Him forever in the next'.

All this prompted me to ask: 'Why did a phenomenal intelligence such as God who created us, want us to know him, could it be because he wanted something from us?'

If it was, then where can we find any evidence? I wasn't surprised to realise it was all in that wonderful book we call the Bible, written by God's prophets and the disciples of



Jesus, his son. It tells us how God first revealed himself to human beings and made covenants to test their love of and obedience to their creator.

Using his son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, his final covenant was to ask us to love him and our neighbours. To make sure that the human side of this covenant made sense, I like to think that this is why he granted human beings two extra-special things:

**Free will; and
An eternal spiritual soul.**

Free will allows human beings to obey or not God's demands about love without direct interference from anyone, including God himself. The reward for obeying God's demands about love was that the eternal spiritual soul he gave each human being would live with him in heaven for all eternity when their human bodies died. If they did not obey, then their soul would perish in Hell for all eternity.

This all sounded simple, but two things could be used to make sure people disobeyed God's covenant:

Desire; and Satan

Desire is the human emotion that urges people to do specific things. When used in moderation, it is not a problem, but when used in excess, it can cause such things as wars, genocide, hatred, jealousy, and others. These result in human beings not obeying God's covenant. We call this sinning a great way to lose one's soul to Hell.

Satan is the fallen angel of God, who desires the souls of all human beings to go to Hell for all eternity when they die. He uses very

effective and relentless temptations and people's desires to get them to disobey God's covenant, thus losing their souls.

All this is explained in that wonderful book we call the Bible. In it, and to prove God's never-ending love for us, his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, tells, shows, and explains many ways of obeying God's covenant. If you do not have a Bible, you're missing a phenomenal source of inspiration.

We know of all this because God revealed himself through his ancient Prophets and Christ's Disciples, who recorded everything so that all peoples and generations would know about it.

These revelations of God show us his unrelenting love, forgiveness, and compassion. Never be afraid to tell God you are truly sorry for offending him and ask for forgiveness. Some great ways of doing this are to pray and regularly attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Sacraments of Reconciliation, and the Holy Eucharist.

His love and compassion have provided us with many things that enable us to obey his will, which is not hard to do.

However, be careful and continually watch out for our main problems, Desire and Satan.

JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



Speak gently in my silence

There are a few lines in one of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, *The Dry Salvages*, where he refers to the edge between land and sea.

"... The sea is all about us; the sea is the land's edge also, the granite into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses its hints of earlier and other creation..."

I have always been fascinated by the shoreline, this ever-changing definition between the land we walk on and the water which can be turbulent with winter storms or calm in a summers evening, water we can journey on and, now and then, enter to swim.

It is the place where the detritus from the sea is washed on to the land, jumbled and broken, there to be picked over by seagulls or to be explored by the lone walker.

Time and again, we find ourselves in a marginal space, where, swept by life's experience, we are tossed to the edge. Surety is



lost as we find ourselves asking questions to which there appear to be no answers, this edgeland within our experience.

It can be a lonely place to inhabit. I remember once walking a shoreline between a vast expanse of sand dunes and open swathes of sand on the Northumberland coastline and the sea's edge, ever

changing, and meeting no one for over two hours.

Such a place can encourage prayer; it can also leave you with a sense of your own insignificance in the huge expanse of creation. Throughout the short passage of our passing our life in faith, there will be times like this, when being at the land's edge can be perilous

and we seem like just another piece of driftwood tossed up by the sea, insecure and of little consequence. That can indeed be a lonely and painful experience.

Renewal and reassurance come from the Spirit that is within us and from those we meet who are willing to put an arm of encouragement round our shoulder

and walk a few steps with us.

Henri Nouwen, a man of Spirit and great honesty, collected some fine pieces in his book *With open hands*. He concludes one chapter with a short prayer.

'Dear God, Speak gently in my silence. When the loud outer noises of my surroundings and the loud inner noises of my fears keep pulling me away from you, help me to trust that you are still there, even when I am unable to hear you.

'Give me ears to listen to your small, soft voice saying: "Come to me, you who are overburdened, and I will give you rest...for I am gentle and humble of heart".

'Let your loving voice be my guide'.

He then poses a question 'Why do I avoid silence?', a challenge that asks us to face up to our difficulties.

Having just celebrated the feast of Pentecost may we be open to the Spirit and may we help and sustain each other on the journey.

Eucharist is a stumbling block for some but it feeds our hunger for the Lord

Greatest mystery of them all: The Eucharist

There are mysteries and mysteries, and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist ranks as one of the most personal truths of our Christian faith.

Jesus declares that “whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day” (John 6:54). At the Last Supper, he gave us the sacrament of the Eucharist whereby we could receive his body and his blood under the species of bread and wine (Matthew 26:26–28; Luke 22:14–20).

Jesus, however, does not explain how this miraculous transformation of the bread and wine into his body and blood takes place. It is a mystery of faith which many found difficult to accept from the lips of the Lord himself.

Even Jesus’s closest disciples had their doubts about the Eucharist. Many of them objected, saying: “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” And, as a result, some of them “returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him” (John 6:60, 66).

Peter stood apart from the rest, and spoke up for the 12 when Jesus asked if they also wanted to leave him. Peter boldly declared his faith: “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6: 60, 67–6). This is one of the great professions of faith found in the gospels. Jesus acknowledged Peter’s gift of faith which came, not from his own nature, but from God (Matthew 16:17).

We must always remember that the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a mystery. It is not a problem that can be analysed,



Detail of da Vinci's Last Supper by Giacomo Raffaelli

studied, and compartmentalised. It is simply a mystery of faith whereby we receive Christ. The best way to appreciate this mystery is to live it by receiving Christ worthily and by worshipping at the Eucharistic banquet which he has commanded us to do when he said: “do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19).

The Eucharist is such a rich sacrament that it is the source and the summit of the Christian life. We are all one with the Lord and with one another when we share in the breaking of the bread, the body of Christ. When we consume the consecrated bread and wine, we are taking Christ into ourselves to become living temples in which he

tabernacles himself. Not only is Jesus present everywhere: in creation, in his word, where two or three are gathered together in his name, and among the destitute of the world. He is also especially present in a particular place at a particular time when we receive him as our spiritual food during the celebration of the Eucharist.

Jesus gave us the Eucharist after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (John

6:51–58). His listeners thought it would pay to follow a leader who supplied food in such abundance. But, Jesus had another hunger in mind, another kind of life. And so, he advanced the discussion and focused the interest of his listeners beyond the satisfaction of a full belly to acceptance of his very self as the source of life.

At the Eucharist, we accept Jesus’s invitation to the meal of salvation. We recognise his

magnificent sacrifice for our sins on the cross, and our own need for repentance, conversion, and reconciliation.

We acknowledge our constant hunger for the Lord. We discover we are bound to one another as we share the same sacred meal together. We also commit ourselves to live according to the teachings of Jesus, and we pledge ourselves to go forth, peacefully, to serve the Lord by satisfying the hunger and thirst of our brothers and sisters in need.

Lord, enable us to be a Eucharistic people by spreading the awesome love of Your Son around us.

“At the Eucharist, we accept Jesus’s invitation to the meal of salvation... we acknowledge our constant hunger for the Lord...”

Jesus’ love can set us free in even the darkest of times

Procrastination, “let the dead bury the dead.”
—Gospel of Matthew 8 : 22

People like to procrastinate. They like to put things off before committing themselves to doing something important. It is said that one who hesitates is lost because in hesitating, one can let a precious opportunity slip by.

In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 8, a disciple offers an excuse that would prevent him from following Jesus. He wants to go back home first and bury his father. Nothing is wrong with that, in itself, since burying

the dead, especially a parent, is one of the corporal works of mercy that defines a true Christian. The Lord, obviously, is not objecting to burying the dead nor is he advocating the impossible that “the dead bury their dead.” He is speaking paradoxically; that is, he is expressing himself in a way that seems to be contradictory in order to convey a valuable lesson. And, the lesson is that his disciples should not make excuses, any excuses whatsoever in order to avoid following him. He wants his followers to overcome all objections so that they can be with him fully.

The Lord does not want us to be half-hearted followers. “Anyone who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not worthy to be my disciple,” He says. He wants us to be single hearted. He wants us to be sincere and uncompromising in our commitment to follow him.

Life, they say, is an obstacle course. It consists of all kinds of impediments that we need to overcome if we are to succeed in life. The game of golf is an obstacle course and a good golfer must overcome the many pitfalls of the game: sand bunkers, lakes, woods and sudden shifts of the wind in order to be a successful golfer.

It is the same with our spiritual lives. The Lord wants us to overcome the barriers of fear, complacency or lack of understanding that can limit our expectations and prevent us from drawing closer to him. He wants us to avoid the slippery slope of procrastination which can suffocate the spirit.

Even in times of greatest difficulty, however, His love can find a way to set us free.

This message shines a light on the danger of procrastination. Every true Christian needs to avoid this big obstacle to grace if he or she wishes follow Jesus.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



Evil began at the fall – and only Jesus can save us from it now

9th June 2024 – 10th Sunday

Evil is too well documented to be dismissed as just a religious concept. It thrives precisely because many choose to ignore it. Like the psalmist, we recognise our complicity and seek forgiveness.

Genesis 3:9-15

Adam and Eve were tempted and sinned. The consequences of their fall

The Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”

The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Responsorial: from Psalm 130

R./: With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to my voice in supplication. (R./)

If you, O Lord, mark iniquities,

Lord, who can stand?

But with you is forgiveness,

that you may be revered. (R./)

I trust in the Lord;

my soul trusts in his word.

More than sentinels wait for the dawn,

let Israel wait for the Lord. (R./)

For with the Lord is kindness and with him is plenteous redemption;

and he will redeem Israel from all their iniquities. (R./)

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

Paul looks forward to a permanent dwelling place



instead of a temporary tent

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture – “I believed, and so I spoke” – we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Gospel: Mark 3:20-35

Jesus was misjudged by his family and the scribes, but accepted by the ordinary people

Jesus went home with his disciples, and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat.

When his family heard it, they

went to restrain Jesus, for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.”

“Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.” For they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at

those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Overcoming evil

A thread running through today’s readings is about the threat of evil in human existence. The Genesis text deals with the origin of evil – it comes both from outside man (as the Serpent-Tempter) and also from within. The human condition with its experience of disharmony in human relationships and in our relationship with God is presented as a fall from the ideal, and this disharmony which is the essence of evil, is the result of sin.

The homilist might develop the notion of evil from contemporary examples – eg, of political and social discord fragmenting societies with oppression and violent revolution, disharmony in family life, and the resulting chain reaction of bitter responses. Just as in the case of Adam and Eve, sin is never a private affair; it always has social implications, for others are affected.

On this theme of disharmony the parable of Jesus takes on a resonance that was not originally intended; a house divided cannot stand. Equally we can see that a humanity radically divided and fighting against itself cannot survive, since our ingenious creativity has put so much destructive power in our hands. One of the paradoxes of the human situation seems to be that the more we develop our control over the

world and the more good we are capable of producing, the more the possibilities for evil also proliferate. This is the Achilles heel, the radical flaw in the fallen human condition.

This ambiguity was hinted at in the Genesis text when it says: “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Human achievements are so often flawed; we can build our towers to the heavens but they become a Babel of confusion and races. What hope is there then for us? The Gospel provides a way forward. What was hinted at in Genesis came to its full revelation in the ministry of Jesus, who worked to fully overcome the power and influence of evil. What he revealed in action was God’s power restoring creation – healing women and men and making them whole again. From here on our humankind is no longer left on its own in a hopeless struggle against evil. It is now possible for us to share in the new creation, if we belong to Christ.

Still, there is nothing overwhelming about the presence of God in Jesus, as we can see from the cynical reaction of the scribes to him. Pride, the desire to make oneself the arbiter of all that is good, motivates them to see in Jesus not the visible power of the Spirit of God, but a trick of the devil. What seemed to be good they could not deny but only reinterpret, in order to hold on to their own fixed position. Such a closed mentality merits the censure of Jesus; he reminds us that we must be ready to see God’s goodness in unexpected places. Our road back to the new creation involves true openness and humility. It is a journey that does not involve positions of guaranteed privilege. Even the blood relatives of Jesus have no special standing in the kingdom. To belong to Jesus is equally open to all; the only condition is our readiness to commit oneself to doing the Father’s will. This was the commitment that Adam and Eve failed to make but which is opened up to us in Christ.

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“A paradox seems to be that the more we develop our control over the world and the more good we are capable of producing, the more the possibilities for evil also proliferate...”



Trump or Biden: Between the felon and the sinner, how should an American vote?

With the Election campaign in full swing in the UK, and the USA preparing for its own presidential vote in the autumn, the question of how Catholics should vote is of paramount importance. Here, an American Catholic has posed an apt question on the issue of allowing faith to influence voting.

Q: As an American, after the last presidential election, while in confession, I asked the priest this question and his response astounded me. He said voting for a Democrat was a mortal sin. The party's position on abortion demands this, and he went on to list all the party's dreadful practices he considered evil.

I always vote for the candidate I prefer, regardless of their party connection. I did not agree with my confessor and believe that our Church does not consider a party's stance as a reason for sin.

I thought Church and state were not connected. Am I wrong?

I said I did vote for a Democrat and he continued to excoriate me for this action. I was granted absolution but still did not feel comfortable with his reasoning. Please let me know how you think a Catholic should view this question.

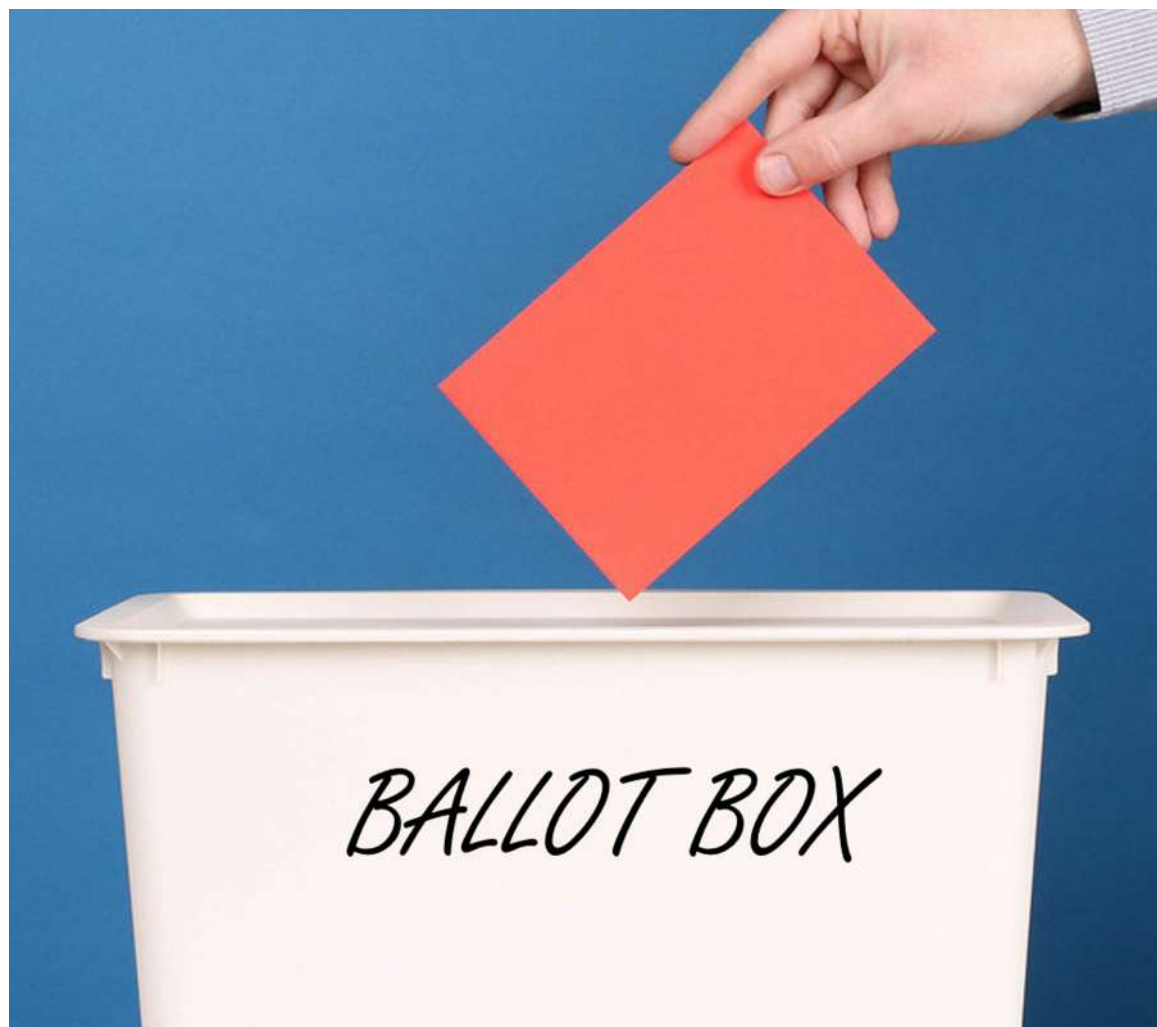
A: First of all, I am sorry to hear that you had a difficult experience in confession. Nobody should be made to feel "excoriated" in the context of a sacrament.

But to answer your question, the short answer is: No, simply voting for a Democrat is not a sin in and of itself.

The longer answer is that the relationship between Church and state in every country is actually more complicated than it might appear at first glance, and there are a number of nuances to take into account when seeking to fully live out our Catholic faith as citizens in secular civil society.

In terms of legal philosophy, the relationship between Church and state is something that Catholic scholars have pondered for millennia. Although it is obvious that secular governments can often enact imprudent or even evil policies, there is a fundamental idea that all legitimate authority is ultimately granted by God and, therefore, ought to be respected.

Yet at the same time, Catholic legal philosophy recognised that the Church and the state often have shared goals and mutual stakes in certain aspects of civil life. Further,



we believe that Catholics are not only called to remain in communion with the Church, but also to be good citizens and to take part in public life in a way appropriate to our own particular vocation and circumstances.

The upshot to this is that Catholics are called to vote according to their well-formed conscience so as to support the dignity of human life in all areas.

Thus, it would be wrong for a Catholic to vote for a pro-abortion politician specifically because of the politician's pro-abortion stance (and this would apply regardless of that politician's party affiliation).

But, on a case-by-case basis, it is morally permissible to vote for a pro-choice candidate if there are

reasons to do so; for example, there may be no clear pro-life candidate, or in conscience you might discern that the pro-life candidate endorses policies that severely and unacceptably undermine human life and dignity in other areas.

Basically, you vote for the candidate who offers a best fit for your faith.

Q: A divorced, annulled Catholic friend of mine recently got engaged to another divorced Catholic, who said her previous marriage was ruled "lacks proper form" by the Church. What does this mean? Are they able to marry in the Catholic Church?

A: Even as a canon lawyer, it's impossible to draw firm

conclusions about another person's canonical marriage situation based on a second hand account and without knowing all the details. Still, it sounds like the marriage in question was invalid due to what we would technically call a "lack of canonical form."

Catholics, and only Catholics, are bound to observe 'canonical form' in marriage as per Canon 1108 of the Code of Canon Law. Essentially, this means that Catholics are required to be married in a Catholic context, saying their wedding vows and exchanging matrimonial consent in the presence of two witnesses and a properly authorised Catholic bishop, priest or deacon.

If a Catholic marries outside of canonical form – for example, if they married in a registry office or stately home – this is not only illicit (that is, against canon law) but also invalid (meaning that the wedding simply wouldn't 'work').

In some cases, depending on specific pastoral needs, it may be possible for a Catholic to receive a 'dispensation from canonical form, or special permission from the bishop, to marry a non-Catholic in a non-Catholic ceremony.

It's also important to note that if

someone becomes Catholic at any point in his or her life, even if they fall away from the Church, he or she is always considered Catholic in canon law. This means that a baptised Catholic who no longer actively practises the faith would still be bound to observe canonical form in their wedding.

So if a Catholic, practising or not, attempts to marry in a non-Catholic ceremony without a dispensation, this marriage would be invalid in a very objective, clear-cut way. Other causes of marriage nullity, like certain psychological issues or a lack of proper intention, are generally less obvious and more nuanced. This is why a marriage can be declared invalid due to lack of form much more quickly and easily than a typical marriage nullity process.

Presuming there are no other impediments, a Catholic who had his or her marriage declared invalid due to lack of form would indeed be free to marry in the Catholic Church.

Q: Our whole Mass is the *Novus Ordo* in English but the priest insists on using the Kyrie Eleison and also has us chanting the *Lamb of God Agnes Dei* prayer in Latin. Does this invalidate the Mass?

A: It's perfectly valid to use Latin chant in the *Novus Ordo* Mass. Often Catholics will refer to the pre-Vatican II missal as the TLM or Traditional Latin Mass, but this is somewhat of a misnomer.

All our liturgical prayers are originally written in Latin, and translations are always made from this Latin 'master copy'. So technically, the *Novus Ordo* is also a Latin Mass.

As Latin 'Roman' Catholics, whose faith comes to us by way of the ministry of the apostle Peter as the first bishop of Rome, Latin is our traditional liturgical language. Even while it's important that we be able to follow along with the liturgy and understand what we are praying, it's also good to keep in touch with our heritage. As the Second Vatican Council document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* says: '... steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them' (No. 54).

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.

"It would be wrong for a Catholic to vote for a pro-abortion politician specifically because of the politician's pro-abortion stance ... But, on a case-by-case basis, it is morally permissible to vote for a pro-choice candidate ... for example, there may be no clear pro-life candidate, or the pro-life candidate endorses other policies that are unacceptable in other areas."

YEAR OF PRAYER

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE CENTRE, STONYHURST

The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst explores the second stage of prayer from the perspective of St Teresa of Avila – including her advice for uniting our will to the will of God.

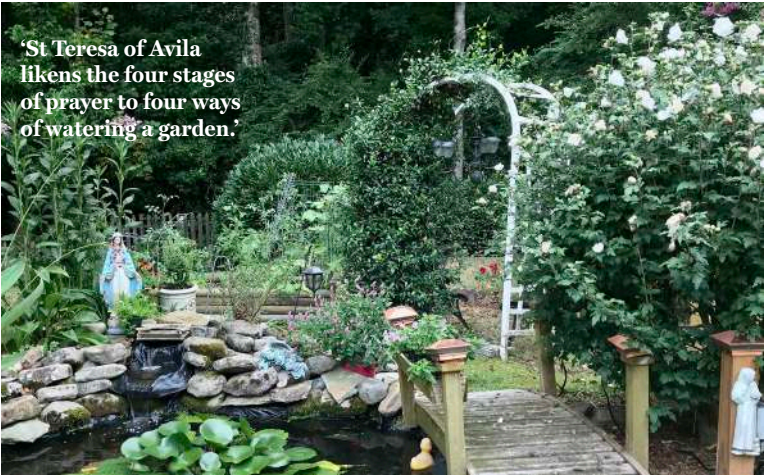
St Teresa reminds us that our prayers let us open up to God’s will

In the previous instalment of the Christian Heritage Centre/*Universe* feature on the Year of Prayer, we introduced the four stages of prayer according to St Teresa of Avila, which she likens to four ways of watering a garden.

The first stage, compared to the laborious act of drawing water from a well, requires the most effort: perseverance in the habit of prayer requires a habituation to its discipline and a concurrent struggle against the acedia or laziness which might hinder our ascent to God. One must face this initial stage of difficulty with courage and with joy, knowing that our endurance in the present will reap rewards in the future.

In this reflection, we consider the second stage of prayer, which Teresa likens to drawing water from a windlass or water mill. Once the trials of the first stage are passed, one advances in prayer with a little more ease, making use of a machine that draws water by harnessing nature.

Here, the Lord grants more supernatural consolations as a recompense for the struggles of the



first stage. The soul is now permitted to enter what Teresa calls “the Prayer of Quiet” or “Devotion of Peace,” a state which she describes as follows: ‘a recollecting of the faculties of the soul [ie, the intellect and the will], so that its fruition of that contentment may be of greater delight. But the faculties are not lost, nor do they sleep. The will alone is occupied in such a way that, without knowing how, it becomes captive. It allows itself to be imprisoned by God, as

one who knows well itself to be the captive of Whom it loves.’ (*The Life of Saint Teresa*, chapter 14).

In other words, the intellect is no longer struggling to understand the reason why one ought to pray, as it may have done in the first stage. Rather, the intellect “rests” in its understanding of the new consolations which it enjoys in the present stage. The will, on the other hand, continues to love God, and this desire for him never ceases. This unceasing reach toward God is



no longer a laborious struggle but a contentedness in recognising that one’s humble position before God. Indeed, the will of human person becomes so completely conformed to the will of Father in imitation of Christ, that the Christian no longer struggles with competing desires. Rather, by uniting one’s desires to the desires of God, the false allure of competing desires is erased, and the soul more efficiently draws from the wellspring of salvation.

In our prayer lives, let us seek the consolations gained by uniting our will to the will of God. As Christ us taught to pray “thy will be done” we live out that petition concretely by actively discerning God’s will and ordering our desires according to his heart. In doing so, we might enter the Devotion of Peace, and realise the truth which Dante came to recognize in *Paradiso*: *E ‘n la la sua voluntade è nostra pace* – “in His will is our peace.”

A refuge for parents? Find it deep within the Sacred Heart

Elizabeth Scalia

The Church dedicates the entire month of June to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, recognising it as a mighty source of hope and immeasurable consolation. No matter how much we plunder the depths of the heart of Christ, we discover that we may go deeper, still.

The Sacred Heart is rather like the Cabinet of Curiosity in Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* books – a mysterious structure no one fully understands yet everyone knows is vital to the proper functioning of, well, all things.

To the human eye, the cabinet looks like an ordinary antique with bowed legs and clawed feet, but opening it reveals endless spaces branching off in more directions than can be seen. Its Tardis-like interior width and breadth are able to contain an infinite number of artifacts while wizards zoom about, exploring its vastness so far into the distance they can barely be detected, rather like the atoms that busily hold us together.

Depending on an artist’s representation, the

Sacred Heart of Jesus – which certainly holds me together – can look like a flaming, thorn-crowned valentine, or a colourful abstract of pulsing movement. From a sideways perspective, especially if one is science-minded, the Sacred Heart can resemble a never-ending Mandlebrot Set. It can even look like a functional human heart: chambers with open vessels by which it receives what it needs to function – the will of God, the flaming love of the Lord and the oxygen of our own trusting prayers.

My devotion to the Sacred Heart came with parenthood. As a young mother, depictions of the heart of Christ began following me around until I was forced to give the devotion some attention. After decades of contemplation, the praying of countless litanies and a home enthronement, I can no more gauge the true immensity of this “abode of justice and love” now than I could back then. I am left pondering the Heart of Christ as a continual empathetic outreach, offering “the safest place” of

protection and solace we all seek and need in our lives.

As the saying goes, after 39 years of parenthood, “I’ve seen some things” and learned a few lessons:

First: Parents mustn’t blink, and not just because our children can paint dogs, flush car keys and fall out of trees in a half-second, but because time advances with flummoxing speed. Now they are in possession of driver’s licences – your sleep officially ends; next they are moving out, being grown-ups. One day they walk in and show you their first gray hairs. Yes, it happened that fast. All we can do is wonder how many things we missed with what seemed the flick of an eyelid.

Second: Regret is a low demon that brings recriminations every parent feels, reminders of our mistakes. Every parent has regrets but entertaining demons so pathetic that they’re assigned to spend eternity sneering rehearsed harangues at those who must get up for work in the morning is simply wasting the fire that leaps from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to

purge, cleanse and restore. Consign the doubt into those flames of love and that huge heart.

Third: The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the refuge of parents. Truly, it is the refuge of all of us, but for parents, the Sacred Heart is the mysterious, otherworldly and supernatural thing that pulls us back from the edges of every anxiety because it is an actual “abode.” It is the place into which we can safely place every mental and spiritual ache, every anxiety and fear.

My elder son just pulled up to show me his new motorcycle – a beautiful contraption that instantly filled my heart with unspeakable maternal dread. Do you know how many bad things can happen to your child on a motorcycle? I do! I imagined every one of them in a nanosecond.

And then I hugged my graying little boy – because he is forever my little lad – and wished him luck and acknowledged him for a prudent, careful man whose bike just needed a blessing.

Cardinal evokes wonders of the garden as he hopes marriages will flourish and bloom

Deacon Roger Carr-Jones, Marriage & Family Life Co-ordinator for the Diocese of Westminster

May is marked in Westminster cathedral by a rich variety of very special celebrations, one of which is the Annual Mass of Thanksgiving for Matrimony. Over 465 couples from across the diocese, at various stages of their married life, came together to renew and recommit themselves to each other.

This celebration of marriage is very special. On this day the cathedral is the setting in which the great variety and display of married love is resplendent.

In his welcome address, Cardinal Nichols spoke of the “joy of matrimony”, touching on the imagery of a garden tended by the couple. This annual celebration of matrimony, he said, like a flower show, stimulates a greater interest in God’s design of married love.

Just as the gardens of married life are bespoke, the couples present created the design and flora for the day. The Church provided the rich soil of its teaching on marriage and the liturgy into which the unique gardens of married love are planted.

Nearby a well-known flower show was held in Chelsea. At the heart of that lies sharing the joy of gardening” At the heart of our celebration, the cardinal said, lies the sharing of the joy of matrimony. It is this quiet joy which sustains



the garden of married love, requiring the spouses to provide ongoing nutrients, weeding and watering. Marriage, like a garden, has to be tended and cared for.

Like gardening, marriage provides important lessons in life, from the willingness of the couple to overcome difficulties, to their learning to work in harmony for a common design. It requires constant monitoring of the soil quality of the relationship and just as it takes time to grow a garden, it takes a lifetime to grow a marriage. The first wedding recorded in the Book of Genesis was created in a garden, Eden.

Cultivating a good marriage is like two people growing a healthy garden, one which is always being redesigned and recreated afresh each and every day. Marriage, like

the Chelsea gardens, is not so much about grand designs as the careful attention to detail. In marriage it is not big romantic acts that sustain the relationship but small acts of simplicity and love shown each day.

Marriage, as with a beautiful garden, requires patience and resilience, moving from that initial sketched out vision on the wedding day, to learning throughout the journey to revisit and reimagine afresh your unique Marriage Garden. A great garden is never the result of chance, but of design and hard work. Like a great flower show, the Mass for Matrimony has a format, yet is always marked by its sheer variety of colours and designs. This year every couple went home bearing the award, ‘Best in Show’.



Lawrence takes the reins with archives society in excellent health

Andy Drozdziak

The new chairman of the UK Catholic Archives Society has spoken of the “great privilege” of taking on the role.

The UK Catholic Archives Society (CAS), which will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2029, acts as the trades guild for all workers in Catholic heritage professions. It elected Lawrence R. Gregory as its new chairman at this year’s AGM on 20th May, following the resignation of Dr Jonathan Bush from the position.

Mr Gregory told the *Universe*: “Having been involved in preserving Catholic heritage since I was a teenager, it is a great privilege to now be elected to lead the CAS, particularly as we approach our golden jubilee.”



Mr Gregory, 39, has worked in Catholic archives since the age of 18 when he first began volunteering as an assistant archivist, training under Fr David Lannon at the Salford diocesan archives. He paid tribute to the work of his

predecessors, Dr Jonathan Bush and Judith Smeaton. “Thanks to my immediate predecessors Jonathan Bush and Judith Smeaton, the society is in an excellent state,” he said. “Working with the council team assembled by Dr Bush, I feel

The new council of the CAS, from left to right. Daniel Flint (archivist to the Institute of Mercy Sisters); Lawrence Gregory - Chairman (archivist to NINS); Jenny Smith (archivist to the Union of Mercy Sisters); Claire Marsland - Secretary (museum curator at Ushaw College); Jon Purcell - Treasurer (retired librarian); Isabel Keating - journal editor (archivist to the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus)

sure our efforts to protect Catholic heritage will continue to flourish.”

Mr Gregory is senior archivist and UK agent to the National Institute for Newman Studies, affiliated to the University of Duquesne, Pittsburgh. He splits his time between his home in Staffordshire and the institute in Pennsylvania, overseeing the digitisation of the personal papers of the 19th century English Catholic hierarchy and Oxford Movement figures, whilst serving as a trustee of both the Catholic Family History Society and the Lancashire and

Cheshire Antiquarian Society.

In recognition of his work, Mr Gregory was this month recognised by the British Association for Local History in collaboration with the UK National Archives, which presented him with the award for ‘Outstanding Individual Contribution 2024.’

The award was given ‘for his long-standing commitment and expertise in bringing the history of Catholicism to the wider community, and for his kindly support of others in this continuing task.’

Neve’s witty take on Barbie lands her speaking title

Young students from the North West captivated their audience in a public speaking competition.

The annual 5th and 6th Form Public Speaking Competition, organised by Province 4 of the Catenian Association, took place at Liverpool Hope University Chapel, with speakers representing schools from Liverpool, St Helens, Birkenhead, Ellesmere

Port and Chester. The public speaking competition is open to pupils aged 16-18 years old.

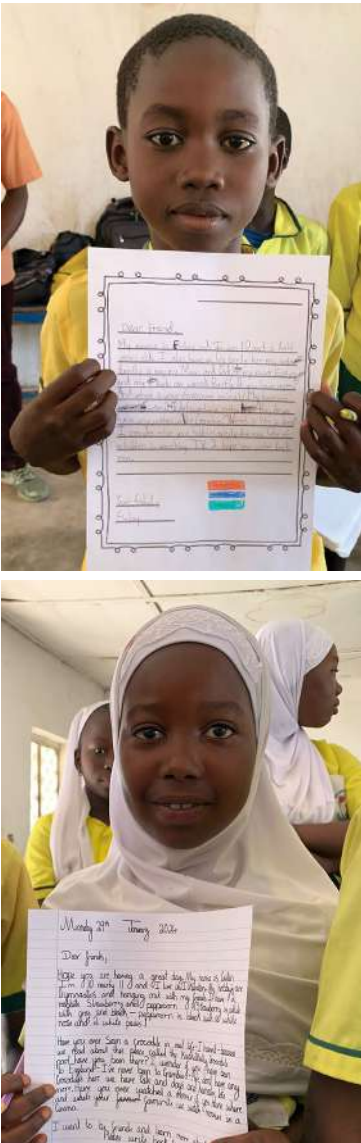
The six speakers taking part spoke on a variety of topic, with subject titles including ‘Christianity to me’, ‘Some thoughts on AI’ and ‘Manipulation or Skill? Psychology in the Court Room.’

The winner of the Competition was Neve

Kirby-Collins, who spoke on ‘the impact of Barbie!’

Neve, a pupil at Archbishop Beck Catholic College, Liverpool, captivated the audience with her wit, personality and grasp of her subject. She will now go on to represent her school and Province 4 at the Association’s Great Britain National Public Speaking Competition on 1st September in Manchester.

Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald, MAfr OBE assisted by Provincial President Peter Matthews, presented Certificates and gift vouchers to Neve and the speakers from the five other competing schools. Neve and her headteacher, Paul Stirling, were presented with the Hope Shield, which will be proudly displayed by the school until next year’s competition.



Sir Dembo children receive their letters all the way from Derbyshire

Letters build a bridge to children of Gambia

Pupils at a Derbyshire Catholic primary school are fundraising to ‘make a difference’ to the lives of children in Gambia.

Year 6 pupils at St Thomas’ Catholic Voluntary Academy, in Ilkeston, are raising money to buy desks and chairs for classrooms at Sir Dembo School.

The fundraising drive was launched in line with a pledge that Year 6 pupils took, which was linked to children’s rights and responsibilities, particularly the right to an education.

Staff then thought that this would be a good opportunity to rejuvenate an historic link which St Thomas’ shares with Sir Dembo.

The first step saw pupils write to the President of Gambia about making sure that children’s rights are being upheld and that children there have the same opportunities as children in this country.

Then St Thomas’ pupils wrote to pupils at Sir Dembo, telling them about their lives, hobbies, families and what they do at school.

Daniel Conlon, Year 6 teacher, said the pupils were thrilled when they received replies from pupils at Sir Dembo.

He said: “We watched a video of the children receiving our letters and our pupils couldn’t believe it.

Some of them could spot their own letters on the video and it really brought everything to life for them.

“We asked the school what they needed and what we are looking to raise money for is some desks and chairs. The children are planning cake sales to help raise the money and we want to raise as much as we can. It would be great to see photos of the desks and chairs we’ve raised being used by the children at Sir Dembo. That would help our children to see that they have really made a difference. We are hoping to write to the children there again and when our Year 6 pupils leave, hopefully our current Year 5 can pick this up and the link between the two schools can continue.”

Pupil Leo, 11, said: “In our letters we asked how old the children were and we told them what our hobbies are. I was so happy when I saw them reading our letters and when we got our replies. I think it’s good because it gives us a different perspective.”

Pupil Willow, 11, said: “I think what the children at Sir Dembo sit on now at school doesn’t look very comfortable, so that’s why we decided to fundraise for some new desks and chairs. It makes us realise how fortunate we are to have everything that we have.”

Lilly-Mae’s stunning artwork captures ‘inspirational’ Greta

A student from St John Plessington Catholic College in Bebington, Wirral, has won the first heat of the annual dot-art Schools competition and will have her artwork displayed in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Year 9 student, Lilly-Mae Bithell, captivated judges with a beautiful watercolour painting which features a high-contrast portrait of Greta Thunberg on an intricate stencilled background.

15 entries were shortlisted, which all went to an online public vote.

Lilly-Mae was announced as the overall winner for St John Plessington, and she will now have her submission framed and showcased in the Walker Art Gallery for the dot-art Schools exhibition from 5th June-7th July.

Lilly-Mae said: “I chose Greta Thunberg because she inspires me to make a difference and help change our earth. Winning has made me feel a lot more confident about myself and as a result, I have picked art as a GCSE subject.”

Peadar McLoughlin, headteacher of St John Plessington Catholic College, added: “This achievement showcases her exceptional talent and exemplifies the unwavering spirit of creativity and excellence that defines our school community.

“We are ever so proud of her for making it this far and to see her

work in the Walker Art Gallery will be a very special moment.”

The inter-school art competition is now in its twelfth year and is open to Year 5 and Year 9 students from all educational settings across the Liverpool City Region. It is judged by a panel of respected arts professionals including James Murphy, the first dot-art Schools overall winner in 2013 and now director of Event Horizon video production. He was joined on the panel by renowned sculptor Faith Bebbington, Alice Demba, National Museums Liverpool, Louise Hesketh, Curious Minds, and professor Matthew Pateman, the



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AROUND THE PARISHES/EDUCATION

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

Public witness of faith as Corpus Christi processions draw crowds in city centres

Corpus Christi processions took place on the streets of Edinburgh and Birmingham on Sunday 2nd June, the feast of Corpus Christi, as a public witness to faith in Jesus Christ.

The procession in Scotland was organised by the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh, and began at St Patrick's Church in The Cowgate, before heading onto the Royal Mile, with participants singing hymns in praise of Jesus.

It followed Mass in which Archbishop Leo Cushley was the principal celebrant. Archbishop Cushley said: "It's a very visible and public celebration of our Faith."

"The Corpus Christi procession is intended for the good of all the people who live here, that they may be blessed and have peace."

Catholic organisations taking part included The Sovereign Order of Malta, The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre and The Knights of St Columba.

Fr Gerard Hatton, Fr Ninian Doohan and all at St Patrick's were thanked for hosting this special event. Other priests who concelebrated Mass were Fr Josh

Moir (St Patrick's, Kilsyth), Fr James Cadman (St Mary & St David, Hawick, Jedburgh, Kelso) and Fr Joe McAuley (Archdiocese of Glasgow).

In Birmingham, a number of processions took place at parishes across the archdiocese, including the annual procession from St Michael's, Moor Street, to St Chad's Cathedral.

It took place after Mass at St Michael's, celebrated by Archbishop Bernard Longley.

The procession through the city centre attracted hundreds of participants in glorious sunshine before concluding with prayer before the Blessed Sacrament at the cathedral.

Archbishop Bernard, along with several other clergy and religious orders, were involved in the procession, which saw petals scattered along the route.

Those gathered stopped for prayer along the route and were joyous in their singing.

The afternoon event was organised by the Polish community of St Michael's, in conjunction with the cathedral.



Above, the scene in Edinburgh, and left, in Birmingham



Our Lady's joins trust in move that will boost educational excellence

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Warrington, has become a member of Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust (HFCMAT).

The partnership marks the beginning of an exciting chapter in the school's journey and will help open up a myriad of opportunities for the school, including enhanced resources, collaborative learning initiatives and access to a wider network of expertise.

The school will continue its mission of ensuring pupils achieve their full potential as children of

God in a safe and loving learning environment.

Our Lady's joins five other primary schools within HFCMAT, alongside two secondary schools from across Wirral and Cheshire.

David Gilby, head of school at Our Lady's, said: "We are delighted to be a part of Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust. This partnership signals a pivotal time in Our Lady's Catholic Primary School's journey, and we are excited for the future as part of the Trust."

Andy Moor, CEO of HFCMAT,

said: "We are thrilled to welcome Our Lady's Catholic Primary School into Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust. Our Lady's join our growing family of ambitious schools, each committed to delivering educational excellence with Christ at the centre."

"Our vision of formation, inspiration and transformation is the foundation on which the Trust is built and sets our course for developing excellence, embracing opportunities, and building strong communities with Gospel values at the heart."

Notre Dame students earn prizes for screen time warnings

Volunteers from In2MedSchool work with students, schools and communities to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds apply to study medicine and healthcare-related degrees at university.

Among the students who got involved with the project was Davie Domalaon from L6 at Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College. He won an essay writing competition based around the theme of the dangers of screen time, and he thanked his biology teacher, Hannah Smith, for encouraging him to take part in the competition.

Fellow L6 student Bettina Cahlig won the poster competition on the

same theme of screen time. It was Bettina's first time making an academic poster – she's obviously a natural!

She said: "I found the research competition fun as researching all about the effects of screentime was both interesting and eye-opening as it's a subject that a lot of people can relate to."

The winners were each awarded a trophy from In2MedSchool to celebrate their achievement.

The school was full of praise for both the students and the programme, adding: "Well done to all participants, Notre Dame is proud of you!"



Catholic padres through the years: War has changed, their mission has not

Dominic Crossley reviews a new book tracing the fascinating history of Catholic priests serving the British armed forces, *Defend Us in Battle: Catholic Chaplains in the British Military*

‘Stories that can so easily remain hidden from our history books and sit outside our collective memory are those of the contribution made by our brave and faithful military chaplains...’

So writes Bishop Paul Mason, Bishop of the Forces, in his foreword to this eye-opening and intriguing account of the work and ministry of Catholic chaplains to the British military.

In this thoroughly researched, succinctly written and well-illustrated book, James Hagerty and Barry Hudd have ensured that the ministry of Catholic military chaplains, conducted in war and in peace, will not easily be forgotten.

Thirty-three well-focused and informative chapters begin with the Jesuit *missio castrensis* in the post-Reformation Wars of Religion in Europe, when Jesuits priests established missions to soldiers in camp and on the battlefield.

In following chapters, the authors skilfully take us through the conduct of military chaplaincy in the English Civil War, the Jacobite period, the Napoleonic Wars, the Indian Mutiny, colonial wars of the 19th century, the two World Wars, the Korean War, post-colonial emergencies, the Cold War, the Falklands War, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan.

One appendix sets out details of the first commissioned Catholic army chaplains in 1858 while a second lists the ecclesiastical supervision of military chaplains.

What becomes obvious, apart from the frequency of conflict, is that while the locations, tactics and technology of war may change, the padres’ ministry does not.

A feature of official – ie, non-Catholic – attitudes was opposition



A sketch of Fr Robert Nash, a padre in the Boer War

to ‘What becomes obvious, apart from the frequency of conflict, is that while the locations, tactics and technology of war may change, the padres’ ministry does not...’



Fr Michael Fava (left) at the Welsh Guards Memorial, The Falklands Islands

Catholic chaplains in the 18th and 19th century army and Royal Navy. Despite the relaxation of Penal Laws, Catholic soldiers, many of whom were Irish, were not allowed commissioned chaplains until 1858 while Catholic chaplains were not commissioned in the Royal Navy until 1943. RAF chaplains were, however, commissioned in 1918 with the establishment of the RAF’s Chaplaincy Service. Each of these developments is examined in detail as are the not inconsiderable ecclesiastical tensions arising from the supply (by dioceses and religious orders) and the supervision of chaplains by a Bishop of the Forces who was not a member of the national hierarchies.

Some padres, like many men they served, paid the ultimate sacrifice. Fr John Wheble of Westminster Diocese died in the Crimean War, Fr Patrick Fairhurst of Liverpool Diocese was killed during the Indian Mutiny and Fr John Moloney of Newport Diocese died in the Boer War.

In the First World War, Royal Navy chaplain Fr Stewart Phelan, an Irish Oblate of Mary Immaculate, was killed at Jutland, and in the Second World War, Fr Gervase Hobson-Matthews, a Benedictine monk of Downside Abbey, was killed at Dunkirk.

Within living memory Fr Gerry Weston of Liverpool Diocese was killed by an IRA bomb in Aldershot in 1972. Military chaplaincy is

indeed a dangerous ministry.

Throughout the well-paced narrative, the authors emphasise the contribution of Irish priests who served as chaplains in the British military, a fact brought into sharp focus with the current Case for Canonisation of Fr Willie Doyle SJ an army chaplain who died on the Western Front in 1917. Even today, Irish priests still volunteer for this specialised ministry.

As Bishop Mason writes: ‘The experiences of chaplains can

present an existential challenge, put great stress on family life and raise many questions of faith all in a context of uncertainty. It is into that space that our chaplains have brought hope through Word,



Sacrament and through their very presence as they serve those who serve us. Men and women who place themselves in harm’s way for the protection and security of our nation, for the preservation of peace, are owed a special care by the Church’.

There are those who claim that uniformed chaplains are paid servants of the state and legitimise the violence of war. The Church, however, disagrees.

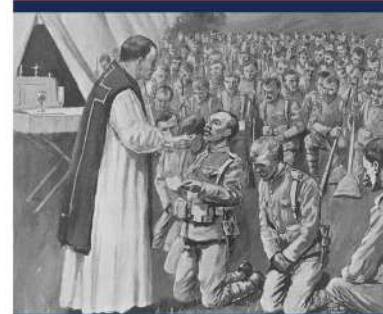
Defend Us in Battle illustrates how Catholic chaplains have, over the centuries, exercised their ‘vocation within a vocation’ to the British military, their dependants and the nation.

DEFEND US IN BATTLE: CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS IN THE BRITISH MILITARY
James Hagerty and Barry Hudd.
Sacristy Press, Durham, pp. 403. Price £25. (Pre-launch discount price £20).
Available at www.sacristy.co.uk/book/catholic-military-chaplains

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GARDENING

Bloomin' marvellous: rose growing may be easier than you think

Ever fancied growing roses but put off by the scare stories? Relax: Tim Eaton thinks the problems are over-stated

Over the years as I've visited many gardens around the country, I'm reminded that in spite of the beauty of roses in a garden, they are one of the most feared plants to grow. Some gardeners try and succeed at growing pristine specimens, others attempt and give up, and some never try, waving the white flag before even getting started.

One thing is true; other than their beauty, roses are notorious for two things. First, they are most famous for their susceptibility to certain diseases, namely black spot. Second, roses are one of the favourite cuisines of Japanese beetles and other chewing, sucking pests. The beauty of a rose bush can be decimated overnight by a hungry group of beetles.

In spite of the potential ravages that can be imposed on these plants, with diligence and proactive measures, pests and diseases can be kept in check.

However, it's this required extra attention, combined with the perceived need to wage constant chemical warfare that seems to turn away more gardeners every year.

Good news

Over the last several years, great strides have been made in disease resistance when it comes to shrub roses. Plant breeder William Radler found it overwhelming to keep up with the rituals required to keep his many roses looking healthy. So he began the mission of literally breeding the diseases right out of roses.

In 1988 his mission became a reality when the award-winning Knock Out™ Rose was created. Since its introduction The Knock Out Rose continues to reinforce its reputation as truly carefree.

As a prolific bloomer and disease resistant plant, it has easily become the best selling new rose on the market.

Simple, safe rose care alternatives

There is an arsenal of products available to dust and spray roses for every pest and disease known to man, but at what cost? I am a strong advocate for exercising an increased level of tolerance before ever reaching for a chemical control. Even then, I'll go for the most benign options first.

Over my years behind the scenes at countless public and private gardens, I've made note of the most effective, benign methods I've experienced personally and through interviews



with other experts when growing roses to fight pest and diseases. The following list includes some of my findings and offers some of the more eco-friendly solutions.

Harpin protein

This is relatively new proprietary technology discovered at Cornell University in America. It has been hailed as a major scientific breakthrough by many experts. In nature, harpin proteins are produced by bacteria that cause plant diseases. Although harpin products have no direct effect on pathogens or pests, studies show that when plants detect harpin, they activate their own natural growth and defence

system to protect themselves. In addition, harpin activates the plant's photosynthetic activity making for an overall healthier plant.

Neem oil

Although not new, neem continues to be a front runner as an effective pest and disease control method, especially with roses. Neem is derived from the Neem tree native to India.

For controlling diseases on roses such as black spot and powdery mildew, neem has many fans and is a proven preventative and control. As an insecticide, neem is an effective control at fighting one of rose's most notorious pests, beetles. Neem can act as a repellent, it can

disrupt the feeding cycle of certain other pests and it can suffocate others.

Neem is available as a concentrate that you mix with water and spray on your plants. It is also available as a ready-to-use spray. However, some neem RTU sprays include other active ingredients (organic or synthetic) to increase the killing power.

For me, sticking with the pure neem oil concentrate is the most benign and eco-friendly route. It breaks down quickly in the environment and is non-toxic to mammals.

Potassium bicarbonate

Potassium bicarbonate has been proven effective in over 200 university studies and more than nine years of organic agricultural use at preventing and curing many plant diseases including black spot on roses.

Unlike many other commercial fungicide products, potassium bicarbonate is safe to use and is even approved for use by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI). The formula used at the consumer level is the same used for commercial agriculture.

It is currently available to the consumer as GreenCure® (www.greencure.net).

With eco-friendly options for growing and keeping roses healthier and with less time required than ever before, maybe it's time for you to think about taking another look at adding them to your garden soon.



Pests do love roses, but there are natural and organic defences you can apply

HEALTH

A run a day keeps the doctor away – but you have to take care not to over do it

Run streaks: is it safe to run every day? Jonathan Melville and Matthew Slater consider whether there are risks involved, and what steps you need to take to keep yourself injury-free

Running is a great form of exercise that has numerous benefits for our health. For instance, people who consistently run at least an hour a week throughout their lives tend to live three years longer and have fewer chronic illnesses, compared with people who don't do any exercise.

But some people are taking their love of running up a notch – running every day for as many days in a row as possible. This trend is being referred to online as a 'run streak'. The rules of the run streak trend are simple: runners must complete a minimum of one mile (1.6km) every day, either on road, trail or the treadmill.

There are some remarkable streaks currently on going. Jim Taylor is said to have the longest streak among runners in Britain, having completed at least a mile a day for over 30 years. Globally, the longest streak is held by Jon Sutherland, a US runner who has reportedly run at least mile a day for over 50 years.

These are certainly incredible feats – but what are the effects on the body of running every day? Is it actually safe?

The risks of a run streak

Whether you're an amateur or professional runner, in order to get fitter you need to follow a training regime that places just the right amount of stress on the body so it can adapt. This is usually done through low-intensity runs and interval training, followed by periods of rest.

When this cycle is consistently repeated over months, runners will notice many changes in their fitness. These include a 5 per cent–10 per cent improvement in maximal oxygen consumption (the maximum amount of oxygen the body can use and transport to its working muscles), reduced heart rate during low-intensity runs, and improved ability to use fat for energy. All of these improvements help runners get faster or run further with less fatigue.

But a key element to becoming a better runner is taking rest periods. This allows the joints and ligaments to recover from the stress that running places on them. Rest also permits the body to replenish carbohydrate stores in the muscles, ensuring the body has energy for subsequent training days. Rest days can also help improve a runner's recovery time between workouts.

But the nature of the run streak trend means there are no days off. This could have many potential pitfalls that runners should know about.

Continual training without adequate rest can cause many harms to the body. In extreme cases – such as ultra-endurance running – mild scarring of the heart can occur.



It can also weaken the immune system by reducing the function of immune cells. This can increase risk of respiratory infections and cause drastic changes in hormones, such as an up-to-40 per cent reduction in adrenaline and testosterone. T

his may lead to poor recovery between runs and symptoms of overtraining – including changes in mood or muscle damage.

Runners must also be mindful of potential overuse injuries. These affect up to 70 per cent of elite and recreational runners and could derail a run streak. One of the leading causes of overuse injuries is poor hip-muscle stabilisation in runners. This type of injury is more likely to happen as the training volume increases.

Is there a safe way to run every day?

To complete a run streak safely, pay attention to your training load – a combination of the volume, frequency and intensity of your workouts. It's pivotal to manage this – taking particular care with the intensity of your runs, since the frequency of training is daily and the duration of runs is at least one mile.

High-intensity runs – such as intense sprint intervals – place more stress on the body and take longer to recover from, compared with low-intensity runs.

There's also a window when the immune system is suppressed after high-intensity

“Even elite runners have periods away from running or rest blocks ... In fact, passive recovery – which involves doing no exercise at all – is better than active recovery for helping the body to repair itself and adapt to the stress of training...”

running of up to two hours. Keeping most of the runs easy will not only help you stay consistent, it will also reduce the chances of illness and injuries.

When starting a run streak, consider simply completing the minimum distance required (one mile per day) before gradually increasing the amount of running you do.

If you're worried about taking days off, active recovery may be useful. This involves doing light exercise on your easier run streak days – such as a very light jog.

Or, if you're willing to break your streak but don't want to take time off from exercise, you could always go for a brisk walk instead. This allows muscles to recover from the stress of

running and can reduce muscle soreness.

Rest days are still strongly recommended, however. Even elite runners have periods away from running or incorporate rest blocks during a week of training. In fact, passive recovery – which involves doing no exercise at all – is generally considered better than active recovery for helping the body to repair itself and adapt to the stress of training.

Not taking any rest and attempting run to every day could also result in obsessive behaviour towards exercise – and in turn, have negative effects on your body. Before starting a run streak, evaluate whether it's really in line with your fitness goals.

Running is a great way to improve your health, both physically and mentally. But runners should proceed with caution if they're thinking of going for a run streak, to prevent overtraining and other risks to their health. Keep in mind things such as intensity and be sure to properly fuel after each run.

This will reduce the likelihood of injury and health complications, and should ensure a more enjoyable run streak experience.

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LIFESTYLE

Three top tips for sticking to a healthy lifestyle

As the seasons change, a familiar moment of truth happens in many households. As you put away jumpers and coats, and bring out t-shirts, shorts and summer dresses, you wonder how your summer clothes mysteriously got one size smaller over the winter.

And then the realisation hits: your new year's resolution to exercise more and eat right has fallen by the wayside. It's all too common.

It's not the resolutions themselves that are the problem. Exercising more is an excellent goal! It's the motivation factor. How can you make healthy lifestyle changes that will stick?

Dana Ryan, Ph.D., MA, MBA, director of sports performance, nutrition and education and Chair of the Herbalife Fitness Advisory Board at Herbalife, says it's all about enjoyment, community and confidence.

"In my opinion, the magic ingredient that helps boost the motivation is making friends and becoming part of a community," Ryan said. "The added accountability that friendships or fitness mates can provide can help to create long-lasting healthy active habits."

A research study in the US found the same

thing. Accountability is a key factor in sticking with positive changes. Yet it's about more than dutifully reporting in. Much more.

Here are Ryan's top three tips for making healthy changes in your lifestyle that stick.

1. Choose an activity you enjoy while you're doing it. It's crucial to pick an activity you enjoy and that feels good to your body. This is a huge predictor of success, and it's a typical area that people get wrong. When embarking on a fitness journey, many people focus on how they feel after the workout is over. A sense of accomplishment, that buzz of electricity, a rush of endorphins.

But if you're slogging through a workout – running on a treadmill as you watch the distance tick off, ever so slowly – to feel good after it's over, it's likely you won't stick to it for long. Burnout kicks and you'll be making excuses to avoid the gym. Instead, find an activity that makes you feel good while you're doing it.

Not sure what that is? Try different things. Experiment with Pilates, book a few sessions with a personal trainer at the gym, join the



rowing club on a nearby lake or river, or rent a kayak for a few hours. Dust off your bike and take it for a spin. Find a pickleball club near you. Get those 10,000 steps in with a neighbour each morning. You'll find something you like to do,

2. Stick with it past the learning curve. This is key. Give it a shot. It's especially true if you're trying a new activity. Feel clumsy on a rowing machine? Can't lift as much weight as you thought? Don't worry. You don't have to be perfect right away. Most people aren't Serena Williams the first time they pick up a tennis racket. The secret is to give it a little time for your body to get used to those new movements. You'll get better at it. After a while, you'll be able to bike farther and Pilates will feel more natural. It is at that point you'll start to feel body confidence. And then you're hooked.

3. Find a community where you feel recognised and supported. Here's where accountability comes into play. But remember, it's not about dutifully reporting in. It's about finding a community to support your fitness

goals. It could be a fitness club where you go every day after work. It could be a workout friend you meet up with at the park, a group of neighbours who walk together, a wellness coach who motivates you through your nutrition and fitness routine – or even your dog, who waits at the door each morning with his leash. Numerous studies show how finding community, even if it's a community of just one other person, helps people achieve their fitness goals.

Each of these tips supports the others. If you pick an activity that you enjoy, you'll experience a heightened emotional response and a greater release of the exercise-induced happy hormones dopamine and serotonin. This induced feeling of joy may encourage you to keep at it. If you keep at it beyond the learning curve, you'll master body movement and feel confident, and that will keep you coming back for more. And if you do it with a friend, it will elevate your social connections and encourage you further.

Even if those resolutions fell by the wayside, it's not too late to pick them up! Then watch how those summer clothes will magically become the right size again, just in time for the warm weather.

Long weekend? Plan a last-minute road trip

There's nothing better than sneaking an extra day or two off work – so why not make the most of it? Even without the opportunity to do a lot of planning ahead of time, you can have a great time by going on an exciting excursion that's not too far from home. Here are some tips to help you enjoy a fun road trip during your next long weekend.

Keep it short and sweet

Instead of making your road trip fill your entire weekend, you could consider taking just a day trip or an overnight stay at a location not too far away, so you'll also have time to work on your garden or just relax at home for a day or so after your adventure.

A brief but enjoyable change of scenery may be just what you need to put things in perspective – and create fun new memories with your family, friends or that special someone.

Play tourist in your own town

First, identify a couple of attractions you'd like to visit that are within an hour or two (or three!) of your home base.

Try an online search like: 'Tourist attractions within an hour of my home,' 'National parks in my area,' and/or 'Festivals and events near me during the weekend of ...' to find a few options that you've never experienced before. You can even narrow your search to suit your specific preferences by adding phrases like "outdoor recreation," "cultural events" or "food festivals."

Then do a little research about the hours your chosen attractions or events will be open, any fees you'll need to cover, plus nearby amenities



you can combine with your trip, such as restaurants, recreation areas or scenic spots.

Top tip: To avoid big crowds or queues, opt for less popular or touristy events and venues, or plan your visit outside peak times.

Be flexible about where to stay

While you may be able to find last-minute openings at convenient hotels or bed and breakfast by searching your preferred travel sites online, if they're already fully booked you may need to widen your search to check out holiday rentals like AirBnB or Vrbo – or even camping opportunities in the area, if you enjoy sleeping under the stars.

Being willing to travel off the beaten track may also open up more opportunities for places to stay.

"Your next great holiday could be right around the corner..."

Pack wisely

Include a few layers of clothes so you'll be ready for any kind of weather (no matter what the forecast says), such as extra jackets or rain coats, as well as necessary toiletries including sun cream and insect spray – and, of course, your favourite playlist!

Make sure to pack plenty of car-friendly snacks and drinks, including reusable water bottles, fruit and sandwiches so you don't have to spend too much money en route – or time searching for restaurants while you're on the road. A small portable cooler can help you keep drinks and food items cold during your journey.

Make sure your car is up to the task

If you haven't had any car maintenance done recently, be sure to check that your tyres, brakes, oil and battery are all in good shape before you head out.

Also ensure that your boot is packed with safety items like jump cables, a jack and spare tyre, plus a first aid kit. This will go a long way toward having peace of mind on the road, even if nothing goes wrong. Keeping your phone charged and having a current membership to a roadside assistance service are also good safety measures.

Wherever you're headed during your long weekend, remember to relax, have fun and take lots of pictures! Your next great holiday could be right around the corner.

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FILMS

Fun cat Garfield's back – but they forgot the jokes

John Mulderig

The world's most famous lasagne-loving, Mondays-averse feline gets a third big-screen outing with *The Garfield Movie* (Columbia). Director Mark Dindal's animated adaptation of cartoonist Jim Davis' long-running comic strip is generally amiable and family-friendly. But sadly, it's only fitfully amusing.

Chris Pratt voices the gluttonous orange tabby cat. Kidnapped by Jinx (voice of Hannah Waddingham), a villainous female Persian, Garfield soon discovers that his abductor's real target is his estranged dad, Vic (voice of Samuel L. Jackson).

Garfield believes that Vic abandoned him when he was a kitten, leaving him on his own until he was adopted by his human friend, Jon (voice of Nicholas Hoult). Now, however, he must put away his resentment and learn to co-operate, as father and son endeavour to obtain the king's ransom in milk Jinx is demanding.

So it's off to a dairy farm where Garfield, Vic and Jon's dog, Odie (voice of Harvey Guillén) – Garfield's best friend – receive training in tactics from Otto (voiced by Ving Rhames), a bull resentful over the treatment his beloved cow has received at the hands of the establishment's managers. Cue a

sequence in which various scenes from famous action films are satirised.

There are a few bursts of enjoyable comedy and some gentle sentiment. But the script's lessons about not judging others too hastily and the value of teamwork can't disguise the slapdash nature of the proceedings.

That said, there's not much for parents to worry about along Garfield's path to greater insight. Even the potty humour – seemingly inevitable in children's films these days – is kept in bounds with only one sight gag and a single throwaway line of dialogue. Toddlers, however, might find some scenes of peril frightening.

The most novel feature of the new film is the appearance of Garfield's father, who has never been seen before. Director Mark Dindal said this gave the film a "unique" angle.

"When you have so many years of material, it's like what hasn't been done. The idea of Garfield's father came from his conversations with Jim Davis."

Chris Pratt was, he added, always first choice to play the iconic feline. Chris just fit the character so well. We knew we would have a certain level of his ability to adlib and improvise was what made this film special."

Garfield, voiced by Chris Pratt, and Jon Arbuckle, voiced by Nicholas Hoult, in *The Garfield Movie*.



FILMS

Music stars' unsung hero is mum – but it could be prayer

Kristina Cooper

The rise to musical prominence in the American Christian music scene of Rebecca St James and her brothers Luke and Joel Smallbone, who are better known as the duo, King and Country, is brought to life in a new film, *Unsung Hero*.

It tells the story of their family's arrival from Australia in 1991. Joel, as well as directing and writing the script (with Richard Ramsey), plays his own father. It's clearly a family production, with other members working behind the scenes or playing cameo roles like Rebecca, who is seen briefly as a Qantas air hostess on the family's flight over to America.

This could have resulted in a boring, smug vanity project. Thankfully the film is an inspirational and moving story about the importance of faith and family. A kind of *Waltons* for the 21st century, it is very comforting to know that, even today, such families exist.

Although one of the strands of the story line is about how Rebecca, who has a beautiful voice, gets discovered, this is not the main thrust of the film. Rather it is a homage to their remarkable stay-at-home mother, Helen, the *Unsung Hero* of the title. For, as the film shows, it is her courage and resourcefulness and faith in God, that help the family to survive when they find themselves stranded and penniless in



Nashville, when her husband's business fails.

If she is the heroine, the arc of story follows the spiritual journey of her husband David. At the beginning he is a driven music mogul, full of dreams, unaware of the cost his family, particularly his wife, is paying. When everything crashes he is left frantic. But as his father tells him at one point, "Your family are not in the way

– they are the way."

And so they prove in more ways than one. Following their mother's lead, the six children, rise to the challenge to provide for the family in their new straitened circumstances, doing odd jobs, cleaning houses and gardening. The work may be hard but there is a sense of joy and comradeship in it that was missing in the luxury

life they had before. It is their father, David, who finds this change in their fortunes the most difficult to cope with. This is particularly galling when one of the clients for whom the family house cleans turns out to be a former record business associate of his.

What I found so encouraging was the portrayal of prayer in their normal family life. It brought me back to a time in my own Christian homem when we too would pray for our everyday needs like the Smallbones do.

At a time of so much anxiety about the cost of living and parents worrying about their children, this film provides the reassurance of God's presence when times are hard. The film shows that suffering and hardship, if met with the right spirit and trust in God, strengthens and purifies rather than destroys.

No wonder after such a formative experience in their childhood, despite their worldly success in later life, the Smallbones have all remained close to one another and are all still strong practising Christians.

This is a wonderful warm bath of a film and a tribute to mums everywhere, who sacrifice their lives for their children wondering if they are making any impact at all. 'Unsung Hero' will be out in selected cinemas from 14 June. For tickets, visit www.unsungheromovie.co.uk

Infamous pirate book that shaped our views on bucaneeers could have been a satire on politics

HISTORY

Richard Blakemore



Three hundred years ago, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson first hit the shelves of London's booksellers.

The book aimed, according to Johnson, to give "a distinct Relation of every Pyrate who has made any Figure".

Here were all the fabled plunderers of the seas: Blackbeard, Bartholomew Roberts, Anne Bonny and Mary Read and many others. More than any other book, the *General History* changed the way we see pirates. It created the image that word still conjures today.

The first edition appeared on 14th May 1724 (in the Julian calendar; 27th May in the calendar we use now). It was sold by Charles Rivington at the Bible and Crown in St Paul's Churchyard, London, a popular location for booksellers.

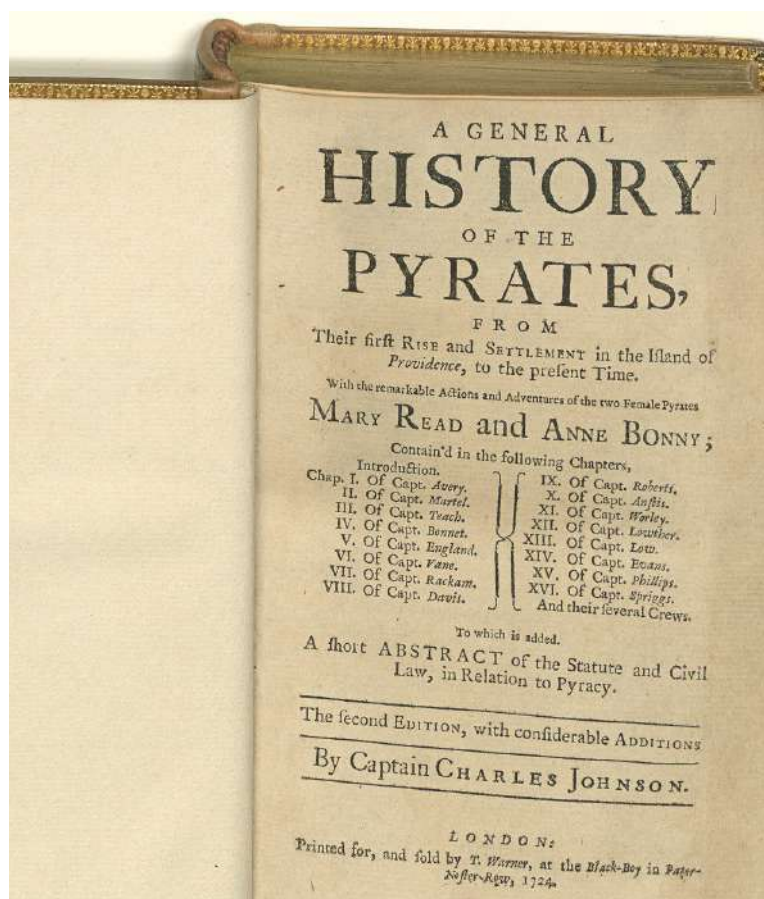
James Lacy at the Ship near Temple Gate and J. Stone near the Crown coffee house also stocked it.

As I discuss in my new book, *Enemies of All: The Rise and Fall of the Pirates*, Johnson's history was an immediate sensation.

A second edition, 'with considerable additions', was rushed out the same year, after its forerunner's 'success by the Publick occasioned a very earnest Demand'.

In the second edition, Johnson promised a sequel 'if the Publick gives him Encouragement' – and the public must have done just that. Johnson's additional volume was published a few years later, by 1728. Translations and abridged versions soon followed.

The *General History* appeared in the waning years of what historians sometimes call the 'golden age of piracy'. Though the meaning of that term varies, it is generally applied to the 1710s and 1720s. Blackbeard, or Edward Teach, died only six years before the *General History* appeared, in 1718; Bonny and Read were put on trial in 1720. The US historian Marcus Rediker estimates that some 5,000 pirates roamed the Atlantic and Indian oceans in these decades.



Yet, the success of the *General History* was not only due to its topicality. It is a gripping, vivid read. It is full of characterful descriptions and dramatic action, as well as some horrifyingly graphic details. Teach is described as a man of 'uncommon Boldness and personal Courage', known for his 'Frolics of Wickedness'. His 'Cognomen of Black-beard' derived, Johnson writes, from the 'large Quantity of Hair, which like a frightful Meteor, covered his whole Face and frightened America more than any Comet ... Imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury, from Hell, to look more frightful'.

Johnson provides so many of the ideas now associated with piracy. He defines the Jolly Roger as the name commonly given to the stereotypical black flag of a pirate. He describes a scene that features something like walking the plank (albeit in a chapter on Roman pirates).

Another key feature he presents is various pirate codes, of which Roberts' is the most well-known. Johnson claims it stated that 'Every Man has a Vote in Affairs of Moment', as well as 'equal Title' – or right – to alcohol and provisions.

Pirates form part of a commonwealth or fraternity, to use Johnson's terms, as 'Confederates and Brethren in Iniquity'.

Bonny and Read appear prominently too. These are the only pirates who were not captains who Johnson names on the title page, and who get chapters and illustrations of their own. As Sally O'Driscoll has shown, these pictures became increasingly sexualised in later editions. Bonny and Read's story involved cross-dressing and the hint of a lesbian love affair – yet many details of it were considerably embellished or, more likely, made up.

That is the problem with the *General History*. Authors and artists – from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* to those behind the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie franchise, the Netflix drama *Black Sails*, *Our Flag Means Death* on HBO and the Playstation game *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* – have gone back to it again and again. So too have academic historians, mining its colourful tales. Yet it remains a puzzle.

It mixes together fanciful invention with accurate accounts



taken from contemporary newspapers and court records. One of its more famous characters is Captain Misson, a French rover associated with the utopian pirate settlement of Libertalia, who never existed – and neither did Libertalia, for that matter.

The book's authorship, and the true identity of Captain Charles Johnson, is also a mystery. In the 1930s, a literary scholar suggested Johnson was in fact Daniel Defoe. Many websites and libraries still list the book under Defoe's name, though most scholars now disagree with the attribution.

A more likely candidate, according to historian Arne Bialuschewski, is a Jacobite controversialist by the name of Nathaniel Mist.

Mist worked with Defoe at times and got into trouble with the law for his forthright opinions about the Georgian monarchy. His *Weekly Journal* published the first two (very positive) reviews of the *General History*. You have to wonder at that coincidence.

If Mist was the author, it would explain the purpose of the *General History* as not a historical account

of piracy but rather, as literature scholar Richard Frohock points out, a satire on British politics.

In the *General History*, the supposedly democratic pirates are pilloried, their democracies regularly collapsing into violent chaos. Its real target was people like the directors of the South Sea Company who, the author claims, were even worse than pirates. One review in the *Weekly Journal* suggested that each pirate was an allegory of some prominent public figure. Sadly, it didn't identify any.

The tradition of using pirates as political rhetoric to get at opponents was nothing new. It dates back at least to Roman times and Cicero, if not earlier.

Yet the *General History* pursued that tactic in such a way that it has captured imaginations ever since. There is a deep irony in the fact that its author's original purpose has been forgotten, while the very particular image of pirates he concocted has survived and thrived. **Richard Blakemore is an Associate Professor in Social and Maritime History, University of Reading**

Election moves us to look for candidates who will do most for the common good

“There is one sign which we should never lack: the option for those who are least, those whom society discards.” Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 195

The General Election on Thursday, 4th July, is an opportunity for the Catholic community to exercise active citizenship and contribute to the building up of God’s Kingdom of ‘love, justice and peace’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, 39).

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council reminded us of the importance and purpose of voting. They went so far as to call it a duty, and not just for Catholics. ‘All citizens, therefore, should be mindful of the right and also the duty to use their free vote to further the common good’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, 75).

For this reason, CSAN is launching a campaign – *#RegisterToVote* – to encourage everyone in the Catholic community who is eligible, to register to vote and to use their vote on 4 July. In this campaign, parishes, schools, colleges and university chaplaincies will have a particularly important role to play in encouraging their parishioners and students to register and to cast their vote.

If you haven’t registered to vote in the General Election, you must do so by 23:59 on Tuesday, 18 June 2024. If you are eligible, you can do so here: gov.uk/register-to-vote.

Photo ID is necessary in order to be permitted to vote. Use this link for details: gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate.

The Church does not tell people which party to vote for and, as our bishops reminded us prior to a previous election, ‘a general election must never be confused with a single-issue referendum’ (*The Common Good*, 65), but the Church gives us the principles by which we can discern which candidate and which party will best advance the common good.

The common good has been a keystone of Catholic Social Teaching from the outset. In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Fathers of the Council defined the common good as, “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment.”

The Bishops of England and Wales reminded us that this definition is otherwise described as ‘integral human development’ – the flourishing of the whole person – which we have a responsibility for, since ‘all are responsible for all, collectively, at the level of society, not only as individuals’ (*The Common Good*, 48).

The promotion of the common



Mr Speaker, Lesley Hoyle MP, chats to students at a CAFOD meeting

good, the key criterion for determining who we vote for, means the flourishing of all people and the whole person, with no one left behind. Integral human development means that every person has a right to what is required to live a fully human life such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to raise a family, the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to medical care, rest and social services (*Pacem in Terris*, 11; *Gaudium et Spes*, 26).

The common good is based on another foundational principle in Catholic Social Teaching, the dignity of the human person. This dignity is intrinsic, and indelible, conferred on us by our divine origin and eternal destiny. We are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27), that is we are made in love and for love, ‘each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of

“There will be many issues debated in the Election but one question should be at the forefront of any Catholic contribution: what impact will any proposed policy have on the poorest members of the community?”

us is necessary’ (*Laudato Si*, 65). The Church has always promoted and protected the dignity of the human person throughout the life course, from conception to the natural end of life.

All of the principles of Catholic social teaching are inspired by the Gospel, the good news of our salvation in Jesus Christ. At the heart of the Gospel is love, since ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8) and love is the new commandment given to us by Jesus (John 15:12). The will of God for human beings is that we live in unity and love. Our Father, who has a tender concern for

everyone, ‘has willed that all people should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, 25). The Church’s guiding vision of a “civilisation of love” (Pope Paul VI) is based on the will of God for his children.

Love, as the Catechism reminds us, ‘is the greatest social commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice, and it alone makes us capable of it. Love inspires a life of self-giving’. The Gospel begins in love but does not end there, but rather with what love insists upon, namely justice and peace, a society which is worthy of the human person.

With love at the heart of our approach to the General Election, a distinctive style and tone should characterise Catholics who take part in public discourse. Writing in 1996, the bishops were keen ‘to

raise the level of public debate’ (*The Common Good*, 6). Since then, we have seen further deterioration in the tone of public discourse, with increased polarisation and aggression, at times directed to MPs, with tragic consequences. A public discourse motivated by love will be patient and kind, as St Paul reminds us (1 Corinthians 13: 1-13). It will not be rude or resentful, but will rejoice in the truth.

Nor does a loving discourse imply that we shy away from difficult issues for fear of courting controversy. Another characteristic of a Catholic approach to public

discourse at any time, and especially during a general election, will be boldness (parrhesia). Pope Francis reminds us that “holiness is also parrhesia: it is boldness, an impulse to evangelise and to leave a mark in this world” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 129). In this we are inspired by the apostles in the early days of the Church who prayed, ‘grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness’ (Acts 4:29). We are called to raise a prophetic voice, ‘to identify and resist structures of injustice in [our] society’ (*The Common Good*).

We are called as Catholics by the teaching of the Church (*Mater et Magistra*) to ‘see’ what is happening in our society, to ask the question, what is going on? In particular, we ask the question, what is going on with people who experience various types of poverty, be that material, relational or spiritual poverty? The Church has a preferential option for the poor, because ‘God’s heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself ‘became poor’ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 197). There will be many issues debated in the Election but one question should be at the forefront of any Catholic contribution: what impact will any proposed policy have on the poorest members of the community?

The Bishops of England and Wales, in their cost-of-living statement in October 2023 had already confirmed this priority: ‘... the fact that many of the pressures facing the Government are long term in nature heightens, rather than lessens, the case for ensuring that the ‘preferential option for the poor’ is at the forefront of the Government’s priorities. This principle requires that policies are scrutinised for their impact on the poor: “Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker,

but whoever is kind to the needy honours God” (Proverbs 14:31). And, in this difficult environment, new policy options should be considered that will promote human dignity and the common good more effectively.’

When we try to ‘see’ what is going on with people in our society – with children and their mental health, with people who are sick, with food banks, with people who are homeless, in prison or elderly, we need to be attentive to our way of seeing, in other words, our own prejudices. We are called to see with the eyes of grace, to see people as God our merciful Father sees them.

We are then invited to pray, to discern what the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching tells us about what we see. What is of God, what is not of God? What is humanising? Where is the injustice, the exploitation, the isolation, the suffering? The Gospel forms us in a way of seeing and discerning which insists on solidarity, the truth that we are “all responsible for all” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38), not individuals motivated only by self-interest and material gain. We were made for relationship, for community. Life to the full means living in ‘right relationship’ with God, other people, and the earth, our common home.

Having prayed for the grace to see reality as it is, in other words as God sees reality, we discern what is the best thing we can do to promote the common good and the dignity of the person. Where is the need for renewal, for justice? This may involve a local project to improve the community, or a campaign to advance social justice, or the forming of a new group to bridge divisions, increase participation and reduce isolation and loneliness. In the General Election, this means choosing to vote for the candidate and political party we believe in good conscience will most effectively build up the common good.

In the coming weeks, the team at Caritas Social Action Network will produce more resources which you may find helpful in your discernment as a parish, school, chaplaincy, family, or an individual.

General Election Resources
Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) has published *Do Justice: A Vision for Spiritual and Civic Renewal in England and Wales*.
<https://dojustice.co.uk/>
 • For further guidance, contact CSAN at admin@csan.org.uk
 • Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales

The hero inside: RIP Rob Burrow

SPORT

Dr Colm Hickey

Do you remember the M People song 'Search for the Hero'?

Here are some of the lyrics:
*'But it's then, then that faith arrives
 To make your feelings alive
 And that's why, you should keep on aiming high
 Just seek yourself and you will shine
 You've got to search for the hero inside yourself
 Search for the secrets you hide
 Search for the hero inside yourself
 Until you find the key to your life
 In this life, long and hard though it may seem
 Live it as you'd live a dream, aim so high
 Just keep the flame of truth burning bright
 The missing treasure you must find.'*

One man who found the hero inside himself was rugby league legend and MND campaigner Rob Burrow, who sadly died last week.

Burrow was born in Castleford. His father was a branch secretary of the GMB trade union and, together with his wife Irene, brought up the family of three children (Rob has two older sisters Joanne and Claire) in Castleford.

Rob was educated at Airedale High School and began playing rugby league at the age of seven for Castleford Panthers. He later played at junior level with Featherstone Lions, although he was repeatedly told that, because of his height – 5 ft 5 in – and weight (less than 11 st), he would never make it as a professional player.

Yet he proved everyone wrong and, in a 16-year professional career with Leeds Rhinos, made nearly 500 appearances between 2001 and 2017.

Known as 'the smallest player in Super League', he was also one of its most successful, winning eight Super League championships, two Challenge Cups, being named to the Super League Dream Team on three occasions and winning the Harry Sunderland Trophy twice.

If that was all he was known for it would have been enough. After all, he had met the challenge, defied the odds and been incredibly successful. He was a sporting icon and a role model for everyone who loved rugby league. But let's be honest: rugby league does not have the national appeal of rugby union, or the global appeal of football. I do not know how many details about his stellar career many of you would have known. I confess that, although I like watching a big match, I do not follow the Super



League. It is hard for a sport to cut through.

So, he would have been known as a great player and a hero in the world of rugby league, but perhaps not so well known nationally or internationally.

All that changed, however, in December 2019, when he was

diagnosed with motor neurone disease. It was a devastating moment. What would you do? If you retreated into the bosom of your family and tried, as well as you could, to live quietly, privately, simply, knowing that day-by day you would become frailer and that sooner or later, and it would be

Rob in his hey-day, with one of the two Challenge Cups he won with his club side, Leeds

sooner, as the time between diagnosis and death is approximately three years, you would die.

If you did that, living a life of private dignity, anyone, everyone would understand and marvel at your courage.

However, if you did that, you would only be what you are: ordinary. That is what we all are: mundane, average, ordinary, nothing special. We all say: 'I could never do *that*.' In truth, life puts the *extra* ordinary people before us all the time. Burrows heard the same information as any other patient with MND. Yet Burrows did not take a step back. He did not retreat. He did not say: 'This is a battle I cannot win.' Why? The answer is simple. Such an action was not in his DNA. Retreat? Backdown? Accept the inevitable? Give up? Never! Had he done any of those things, he would never have achieved what he achieved in the game. He would never have achieved what he achieved in life.

Following his diagnosis, Burrow raised awareness for MND with fellow player and best mate Kevin Sinfield. The MND group added he was a "passionate advocate" for people with the "brutal" disease and "inspired support from so many." Burrow and Sinfield helped raise more than £15million, including more than £6m to build a Rob Burrow Centre for MND in Leeds. The two men were awarded CBEs in 2024 because of their efforts in raising funds and

Rob with his family. He described himself as "just a lad from Yorkshire." He went to his local school and married his childhood sweetheart (they met when he was 15), and they had three young children together. He was a family man who, like others before, and others to come, received a devastating medical diagnosis.



awareness of the disease.

In a moving tribute after his death, his wife Lindsey said: "Although we knew this day would arrive, I am somehow still feeling at a loss for words that our loving, kind, caring husband and father has departed. I was incredibly proud and fortunate to call Rob my husband."

Burrow recorded a final message before he died. He said: "By the time that you watch this, I will no longer be here. I am just a lad from Yorkshire who got to live out his dream of playing rugby league."

"As a father of three young children, I would never want any family to have to go through what my family have since my diagnosis. I hope I have left a mark on the disease. I hope it shows to live in the moment. I hope you find inspiration from the whole story."

"My final message to you is, whatever your personal battle, be brave and face it. Every single day is precious. Don't waste a moment. In a world full of adversity, we must still dare to dream."

"Rob Burrow, over and out."

What can we learn from Rob Burrow? In one sense, he was not like you or me. First, he was a fantastic professional sports star, who represented both his country and Great Britain, which I doubt you have done. Yet in another sense he was just like you or me. He was a man with a job who described himself as "just a lad from Yorkshire." He went to his local school and married his childhood sweetheart (they met when he was 15). He had three young children. He was a family man. He, like others before, and others to come, got a devastating medical diagnosis.

You will know of other friends or family in your life battling an incurable disease. There is no rhyme or reason for it. My own younger brother died of MS. Yet somehow these people find the hero inside themselves. They find a strength, a determination, a motivation to do something good, to be positive, to leave a legacy something that leaves us in awe of them.

So, what is your personal battle? We all have one. Rob Burrow said: "Be brave and face it." He reminds us that "every day is precious. Don't waste a moment." He urges us that, "In a world full of adversity we must still dare to dream." He is an inspiration to us all.

Mahatma Gandhi once said: "You must be part of the change you wish to see." Rob Burrow was. But remember and appreciate that he calls us to be a better person, to dare to dream, to search for the hero inside ourselves.

Just think: if we could all do this, what a better world this would be. That would be a real legacy.

Rob Burrow RIP.

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LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Ordinary Form Liturgical Calendar
Sunday Year B, Weekday Cycle II
Sunday, June 9: Gen 3:9–15; Ps. 130 r. 7; 2 Cor. 4:13–5:1; Mk. 3:20–35
Monday, June 10: 1Kgs.17:1–6; Ps. 121; Mt.5:1–12
Tuesday, June 11: St Barnabas, Apostle Acts 11:21–26,13:1–3; Ps. 98:1–6; Mt.5:13–16
Wednesday, June 12: 1Kgs.18:20–39; Ps.16:1–2,4–5,8,11; Mt.5:17–19
Thursday, June 13: St Anthony of Padua, Priest, Doctor of the Church 1Kgs.18:41–46; Ps.65:10–13; Mt.5:20–26
Friday, June 14: 1Kgs.19:9,11–16; Ps.27:7–9,13–14; Mt.5:27–32
Saturday, June 15: 1Kgs.19:19–21; Ps.16:1–2,5,7–10; Mt.5:33–37

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Late 19th C Painting of St Anthony
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