

A hard winter is
coming...
pg 8

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UK needs to restore Cameron aid pledge

White Paper's focus on climate change and extreme poverty welcomed but failure to restore guarantee to spend 0.7% of GDP on poorest nations criticised

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic aid agencies have given a cautious welcome to the Government's new White Paper on International Development, which has pledged to work to end extreme poverty and tackle climate change.

But at the same time they urged the Government, under new Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron, to go further and restore the commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of national income on overseas aid.

Lord Cameron – who as Prime Minister legislated to ensure the UK would always use a minimum of 0.7 per cent of GDP on aid – has repeatedly stressed that helping the development of poorer nations was a key aspect of his 'compassionate Conservatism' policy.

Th new White Paper – which is headed 'International development in a contested world' – fails to restore the aid pledge, which was cut to 0.5% by Mr Sunak when he was Chancellor in 2021. This oversight was immediately criti-

cised by SCIAF, the Scottish Catholic Church's official relief and aid agency.

"The paper fails to set out the full scale of reforms needed to challenge the unjust structures which perpetuate global inequality," Ben Wilson, SCIAF's Head of Advocacy, said.

"Much more is needed on debt cancellation, cracking down on tax evasion and global trade reform. Ultimately, we need a return to our legally binding 0.7% commitments to aid."

But it did 'cautiously welcome' the White Paper as a positive shift, acknowledging its renewed focus on global challenges.

The White Paper's priorities include mobilising international finance, reforming the international system, tackling climate change, harnessing innovation and putting women and girls centre stage. But SCIAF highlighted "significant concerns" about its limitations, particularly in addressing 'loss and damage'.
Continued on page 2

The app's got it: Andi Liddell, a director of Animmersion UK, who helped develop the app, with Andrew Heard, visitor programmes manager at Ushaw.



Digital trail app helps Ushaw win Historic House award for 2023

A digital app that reveals the history of the former Catholic seminary at Ushaw has helped it to win the Historic Houses Collection Award for 2023. The former seminary in County Durham has been operating as a heritage attraction since 2014, with the college's collection of fine art, religious and

secular objects, and books on display to the public. The app contains animation, text, video, sound and elements of augmented reality, and introduces visitors to Ushaw's collection in a unique and engaging fashion.
Full story: see page 9

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Staying healthy
in older age
COMPANION



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Consultation is chance for pro-life voice on abortion buffer zones

Andy Drozdziak

The Government is to hold a public consultation on whether abortion buffer zones, which would prevent pro-life demonstrations and activities within 150 metres of a clinic, should be allowed.

Powers to enforce the buffer zones were introduced into law in section 9 of the Public Order Act in May, but Home Office minister Lord Sharpe of Epsom acknowledged that it is an “emotive topic”.

“This is new legislation on an emotive topic and there are strong views on all sides of the debate, and determining the appropriate balance will not always be straightforward,” Lord Sharpe said.

“Therefore in order to make sure the legislation can be implemented effectively ... the Government has decided to launch a public consultation on the non-statutory guidance for safe access zones.”

There is confusion surrounding the Buffer zone legislation, with Birmingham police arresting Catholic campaigner Isabel Vaughan-Spruce on multiple occasions for praying silently outside an abortion clinic before issuing an apology for doing so. Meanwhile, army veteran Adam Smith-Connor is awaiting trial for the same offence in Bournemouth.

Lord Sharpe explained that “it is totally unacceptable for anybody to be harassed or intimidated for exer-



Pro-life activist Isabel Vaughan-Spruce is spoken to by police over whether she was ‘silently praying’ for an end to abortion near a clinic

hand, the abortion buffer zone legislation seems to indicate that prayer is indeed forbidden outside abortion clinics,” she said.

“The law is highly ambiguous, and guidance for the members of the public who want to offer help to women seeking abortions outside an abortion clinic is sorely needed”.

Alitheia Williams, SPUC’s Public Policy Manager, said: “It is obviously ridiculous to make it illegal to ‘influence’ someone, and the consultation is likely to draw out the impossibility of policing it. We will be responding to the consultation when it is published, and encouraging supporters to do so.”

Conservative former minister Lord Cormack raised concerns about the rights of protesters who “quietly pray” outside abortion clinics. He asked that ministers “take account of those who merely stand quietly and pray silently” when they carried out the consultation into the new powers.

Crossbench peer Baroness Deech disagreed with the consultation. “I don’t see that a consultation is necessary. I would urge the minister not to delay the will of Parliament any longer,” she said.

cising their legal right to abortion services,” but noted that he is not going to “suggest alternative forms of legislation” and “people are perfectly at liberty to pray wherever they wish.”

Pro-choice minister Baroness Fox said: “However wacky we might consider it, that is a free-speech matter”.

Right To Life UK spokesperson, Catherine Robinson, called for clarity. “The ongoing debate about this legislation is an indication of just how poorly thought through it is. On the one hand, as a representative of the Government, Lord Sharpe points out that people can pray wherever they wish. On the other

Call to restore aid budget now

Continued from page 1

The paper “lacks the transformative ambition needed for the UK to genuinely combat global injustice,” the charity said.

Neil Thorns, director of Advocacy at CAFOD, praised the steps outlined in the White Paper as “timely”.

“The commitment to ending extreme poverty, tackling climate change and delivering over half of UK aid to the lowest income countries is welcomed, and especially timely as we approach COP28,” Mr Thorns said.

“Equally, the UK’s move to partner globally within the multilateral system and to increase the voice of low-income countries is a positive step. The commitment to listen and support local organisations is very welcome as we know it’s often those local faith groups who are first responders in a crisis.”

But Mr Thorns warned that the needs of “smallholder farmers” may be missed with the focus on ‘new technologies.’ “The White Paper lacks an overall strategy for food



systems transformation. The focus on new technologies and innovation potentially misses the needs of smallholder farmers. Any new policy frameworks must ensure these farmers can participate in developing, and can access, useful technologies,” he said, adding that the Government should ‘reconsider’ its 20 per cent investment in fossil fuels.

International development minister Andrew Mitchell described the White Paper as “our pledge to take a patient, partnership-based

approach to development. An approach that looks ahead to the longer-term challenges we face, and can readily adapt to the ongoing global changes confronting us.”

Sarah Champion, the Labour chairwoman of the International Development Committee, said the ideas in the paper “offer hope of a real reset and refresh for the UK on the international development stage,” but cuts to the aid budget would hamper real progress until the funding is restored.

King leads inter-faith talks at time of tension

Andy Drozdziak

Cardinal Nichols joined faith leaders from across the UK to meet King Charles in the Lambeth Palace Library to mark Inter-Faith Week.

The King's visit was undertaken 'to promote tolerance and greater understanding between different faiths and communities.'

The week took place amidst growing concerns about community tensions. London, in particular, has seen a huge increase in anti-semitic incidents following the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict, while the Met Police says Islamophobic offences have also increased since the start of the war.

Cardinal Nichols said the occasion underlined the importance of calm and harmony.

"At a time of heightened community tensions, with fear, anger and protest all too evident, this was an important gathering, expressing His Majesty's deep commitment to the harmony and well-being of all people in this land," the Cardinal said. "I was privileged to be there and to engage in significant conversations with other leaders. Calm is needed. Times to listen to each other are important."



In talks: King Charles with Cardinal Nichols and Archbishop Welby.
Photo: Neil Turner, Lambeth Palace

er are important."

As the aim of the week is to strengthen good inter-faith relations between the different communities in the UK, and to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs, it could not have come at a better time, added the cardinal.

"Working together as faith communities and praying is important in reducing tension and bringing peace," he said.

"This can be done when together we fashion projects and take practical

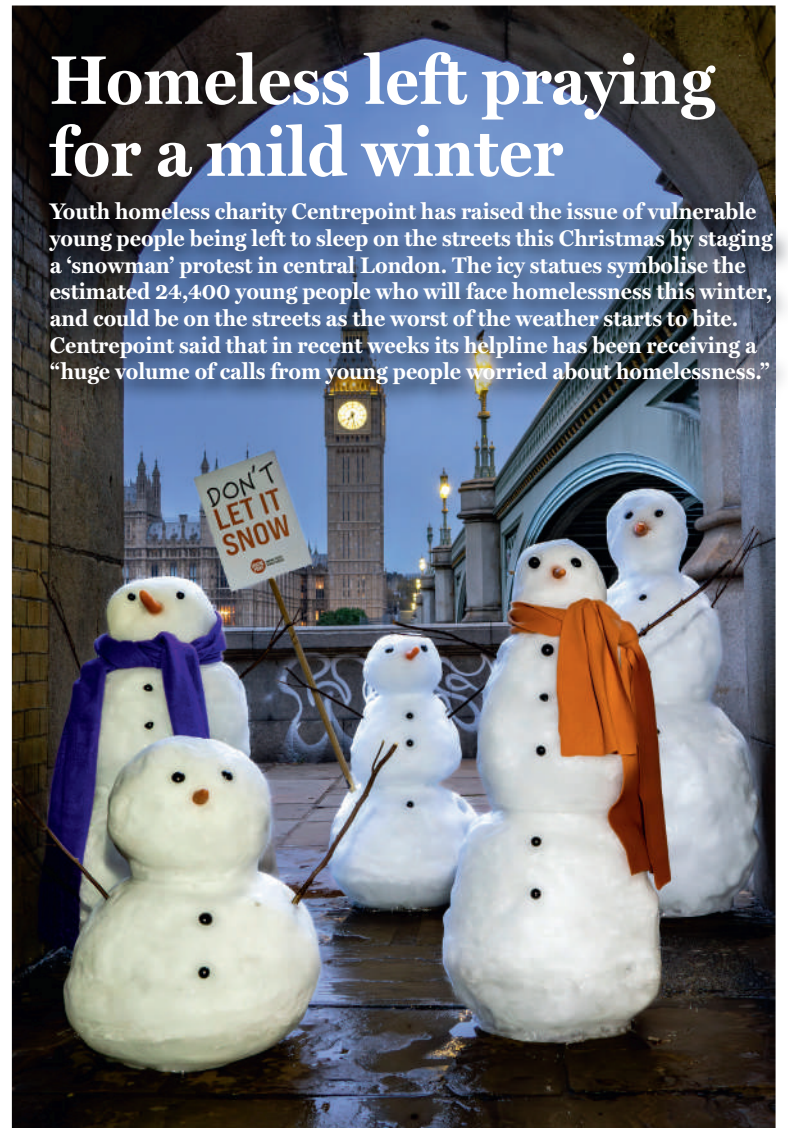
steps to help those most in need. And prayers for peace. Always," he said.

Worryingly, some Inter-Faith week events were cancelled due to the effects of the war, with some participants 'too anxious' to attend.

Catherine Pepinster reported that Julie Siddiqi, an activist focusing on Muslim-Jewish relations, said: "There has been a backlash, with some people in our communities thinking that those involved in inter-faith dialogue weaken their causes."

Homeless left praying for a mild winter

Youth homeless charity Centrepoint has raised the issue of vulnerable young people being left to sleep on the streets this Christmas by staging a 'snowman' protest in central London. The icy statues symbolise the estimated 24,400 young people who will face homelessness this winter, and could be on the streets as the worst of the weather starts to bite. Centrepoint said that in recent weeks its helpline has been receiving a "huge volume of calls from young people worried about homelessness."



Help shine a light on leprosy

You are invited to join us at **Westminster Cathedral** for a Holy Mass to mark Lepra's centenary in 2024.

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Friday 26th January 2024 at 2.30pm

Mass will be celebrated by **Bishop Declan Lang**, Bishop of Clifton Diocese and Chair of the Bishop's Conference Department for International Affairs.

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www.lepra.org.uk/events

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Photography by Tom Bradley

In Brief

Sunak to face more Rwanda rejection

Rishi Sunak is facing ministerial opposition over plans to opt out of European human rights laws to rescue his Rwanda migration policy. As the PM presses for emergency legislation to dis-apply the Human Rights Act and direct courts to ignore the European Convention on Human Rights in asylum cases, cabinet ministers including Home Secretary James Cleverly, Attorney General Victoria Prentis, and Justice Secretary Alex Chalk are said to have reservations about a “hardline” approach, said The Times. A senior government source described the strategy as “mad”.

BBC caught up in new trans row

The presenter of *Woman's Hour* on Radio 4 has been accused of bullying by a trans woman who runs a charity.

Steph Richards, the head of Endometriosis South Coast, clashed with Emma Barnett on air when she was pressed on her reluctance to say “woman” when describing those with the condition. Later, Richards told *The Times* the interview had left her “bruised and upset”. A BBC spokesperson said the interview was “fair and robust”.

Black Friday deals value questioned

Alleged deals on Black Friday should be “taken with a pinch of salt”, Which? said. The consumer group found that just 2 per cent of discounted Black Friday offers were at their cheapest price on the day of the sales event last year. Which? analysed 208 deals available on 25th November 2022 and said that only five were cheapest on that Black Friday. Retailers dismissed the claims.

Bake Off star warned that her support puts vulnerable at risk

Andy Drozdziak

Assisted dying critics have warned *The Great British Bake Off* judge Dame Prue Leith that legislative proposals in Scotland will put the “vulnerable at risk of coercion”.

The TV judge, who is patron of the Dignity in Dying charity, joined Scottish Liberal Democrat MSP Liam McArthur in Holyrood on Tuesday in support of his Member's Bill on legalising assisted dying for terminally ill Scots.

The proposals would give mentally competent adults with a terminal diagnosis the right to end their life if requested.

Dame Prue shared her reasons for supporting the law change after watching her brother dying from bone cancer.

But ahead of her visit, Dr Gordon Macdonald, chief executive of Care Not Killing, which is spearheading the opposition to Mr McArthur's proposals, said: “The legislation of assisted suicide and euthanasia will put many vulnerable people at risk of abuse and coercion.”

He said the *Bake Off* judge used



Dr Gordon Macdonald

her documentary to express she was “conflicted” by how the policy had evolved in Canada, where people are being offered assisted suicide as an option through the country's medical assistance in dying (Maid) scheme, because they cannot access the proper support they need, for example, in housing, mental health or poverty.

Dr Macdonald said: “Put simply, it's impossible to have a safe system of medicalised killing and MSPs should reject Liam McArthur's dan-

gerous and discriminatory proposals.”

Prue Leith took part in a documentary, *Prue and Danny's Death Road Trip*, alongside her son, Tory MP Danny Kruger, where they debated their opposing views while meeting people with lived experiences.

Scottish bishops have persistently spoken out against the proposals and urged MSPs to reject the proposals. Bishop John Keenan, Bishop of Paisley and vice-president of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, outlined the dangers of coercion and pressure, pointing to the examples of countries such as Canada where assisted suicide is legal.

“Evidence from countries where assisted suicide is legal shows that vulnerable people feel pressured to end their lives through fear of being a burden,” he said. “In such situations the option of assisted suicide is less about having a ‘right’ to die and more about feeling a duty to die.”

He added: “Assisted suicide attacks human dignity and results in human life being increasingly val-



Prue Leith

ued on the basis of its efficiency and utility. Implicit in legal assisted suicide is that an individual can lose their value and worth.”

Earlier this year, the Catholic Church joined The Church of Scotland and the Scottish Association of Mosques in urging MSPs to vote down Liam McArthur's proposals.

Mr McArthur said he was “pleased” Dame Prue was able to speak of her support for his Bill, which will be presented to the Scottish Parliament in the coming months.

Catholic social teaching builds our relations, Sister to say

Catholic Social Teaching has the potential to unlock the challenges facing western society, Sr Helen Alford will argue in an upcoming lecture for the Lincoln Lecture Series.

Lincoln Cathedral is currently hosting a series of lectures on social theology – how God calls us to engage with the world, in terms of the economy, work, nature, freedom, social peace, politics and civic life.

The lectures, curated by Together for the Common Good, feature speakers from different traditions who draw on Catholic social teaching and who explore how the Christian tradition can be a blessing to public life and discourse.

Sr Helen Alford, President of the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences and Dean of the Faculty for Social Sciences at the Angelicum, Rome's Pontifical University, said: “Catholic social teaching has a lot to offer our current situation. It is not an either/or, or right-wing or left-wing. It is much more about us as relational beings, able to build relationships that are important, and that's the basis of the common good.”

“Historically, the Church has tended to be more tolerant of the free market than Communism. But Church teaching has still got a lot of questions about the liberal system, because it's just too narrow. It's not



realistic enough about what it means to be human, and it doesn't give enough importance to our relational dimension.”

“This relational approach is what is needed to restore trust in one an-

other as well as in our institutions. Without this, and the ability to understand our differences, it is difficult to see how else we can heal these often-tribal divisions.”

Sr Helen Alford's online talk will be on the theme of ‘Just Peace? On social peace and the causes of division’, on 27th November 2023, 6.30pm-7.45pm.

Jenny Sinclair, Founder and Director of Together for the Common Good, said: “Sr Helen Alford brings her deep experience to provide a unique insight into the role Catholic Social Teaching can play in reorienting our society towards the common good.”

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Have yourself a merry and green Christmas

A Catholic environmentalist is encouraging Catholics to dream of a 'green Christmas' in the build up to the festive season.

"Christmas is the best time for many, but the worst time from an environmental perspective," Virginia Bell from Laudato Si' Animators told the *Universe*. "Let's use Christmas to move closer to God by thinking about how to care for His creation."

Laudato Si' Animators are part of the Laudato Si Movement, inspired by Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical.

Virginia believes that buying presents can be eco-friendly – especially for children. "Their presents can be an environmental headache, as they are played with for a while before being discarded as they grow out of them quickly," Virginia said. "Yet toys can be reused. There are companies and schemes that rent out toys.

"There are also local schemes that take unwanted toys, and Trash Nothing enables you to give away your unwanted goods – and take other people's offerings."

She also recommends looking for 'eco-friendly' gifts – "you'll be surprised at the sustainable offerings available." Virginia's full take on *A Sustainable Christmas* will be in next week's *Universe*.

#BeeThere causes a buzz for Caritas Christmas campaign

Andy Drozdziak

Caritas Salford says it has been "overwhelmed" after a new animated video promoting its Christmas campaign proved a viral sensation and was viewed over 1,000 times within days of its launch.

As reported in last week's *Universe*, the North West charity launched a special Christmas appeal, #BeeThere, encouraging people to support those in need in Greater Manchester and Lancashire this Christmas.

Director of Caritas Salford, Patrick O'Dowd, told the *Universe*: "We launched the campaign last week and we were hoping it would connect with people, but we've been overwhelmed by the positive feedback and the number of people that have engaged with it already. It's amazing."

The animation was created in partnership with Manchester's video animators Doodledo in response to the cost-of-living crisis. The campaign's creators hope that the appeal will encourage support for those who will be experiencing acute crisis this Christmas.

The animation, which can be



The #BeeThere video features the voices of local children asking how they can help others

viewed at www.caritassalford.org.uk/BeeThere, features a cast of young bee characters, voiced by local children, talking about their dreams and wishes. They discuss what they would do if they encountered someone who did not have access to the things many take for granted. The children were given free rein to answer the questions.

Patrick O'Dowd said: "As the

children in our short animation say, it's not that hard really. If everyone makes one small change, whether that's making a donation, pledging to do something nice for someone, or taking positive action to try and change something in their community, it can make a huge difference."

Mr O'Dowd outlined the scale of the challenge faced by Caritas Salford. "There are so many hardwork-

ing people who are literally unable to feed their children three meals a day," he said. "If basic human dignities like that aren't available to people, they can lose sight of their bigger dreams and wishes too. We want to move towards a world where people are able to dream again – and we're hoping this campaign will shine a light on that this Christmas and beyond."

Catholic
Children's
Society

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vulnerable children
this winter

The Catholic Children's Society is helping families in crisis with food costs and bills so they can feed their children and keep them warm this winter.

We respond within 24 hours and offer comfort and hope to those who need it most.

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UNIVERSE
CATHOLIC WEEKLY
COMMENT
Time for state
to act over
the rise in
anti-semitism

Last weekend we saw an unwelcome element appear on our streets yet again. While no large march was held in London, pro-Palestine protesters turned out at roughly 100 events up and down the country. For some areas, it was their first taste of the disruption London has been dealing with.

For weeks, these demonstrations have been marred by loud anti-Semitic elements. Many protesters have routinely chanted “from the river to the sea”, a slogan widely understood to be a call for the destruction of the state of Israel, amid a torrent of abuse targeting the Jewish state and people.

There have been instances of genocide denial, anti-Semitic signs and some have gone so far as to dress in imitation of Hamas terrorists.

Calls for the release of hostages, or for Hamas’ surrender, have been all-but absent. Some have now started targeting MPs in a way that appears to be an ill-disguised attempt at intimidation. This cannot be allowed to go on without a proper response.

Even the most ardent believers in free speech concede that there must be caveats to prevent threats and calls for violence. Inciting racist hate is rightly illegal. The behaviour of some pro-Palestine protesters has crossed numerous lines time and time again and yet the Government seems paralysed. It cannot be the case that each weekend, our streets play host to displays of anti-Semitic hatred that leaves many Jewish people afraid to venture into their town centres.

The Government can no longer stand idly by. It is clear that extremism has been allowed to fester in this country, spreading hatred and division.

It is time for the state to act as it has both a right and duty to and to confront this scourge in our schools, in our universities, on social media and above all in our streets.

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Inflation dip doesn't mean we're out of the woods yet

It's good news that price inflation is slowing, but here's why it still feels like we're in a cost of living crisis

POLITICS

Özlem Onaran

The latest UK consumer price index (CPI) data has been hailed as a win for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's aim to half inflation, announced earlier this year. Prices rose by 4.6 per cent in October 2023, bringing the rate of price growth down to its lowest point since an October 2022 peak of 11.1 per cent.

But inflation coming down gradually does not mean prices are falling – they are merely increasing at a slower pace. Prices remain high, deepening the cost of living crisis for many, especially those whose nominal wages have not increased at pace with inflation in recent years.

Compounding this, poor households spend a bigger proportion of their income on food, energy, and rent – three costs that have spiked the most in recent years, and still remain high.

A decline in energy prices was the biggest contributor to the recent inflation slowdown. But even though electricity, gas and other fuel costs have fallen by 21.7 per cent since October 2022, these prices remain very high.

Gas prices are about 60 per cent higher than they were in October 2021, and the price of electricity is about 40 per cent higher. Compared to January 2021, electricity, gas and other fuel costs are currently 82 per cent higher.

Annual inflation in the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages is also still high at 10.1 per cent. October 2023 food prices were around 30 per cent higher than in October 2021, while private rents are up by 11.5 per cent compared to January 2021.

The Government's fears of a wage-price spiral – its reasoning for holding out against public sector strikes for so long – have also failed to materialise.

An adequate increase in public sector pay in health, education and the civil service would have reversed decades of below-inflation pay for these workers. And public sector wages do not directly lead to rising input costs for private companies, and so would have done little to fuel a wage-price spiral.

Recent wage disputes and high job vacancy rates have delivered only modest increases in real pay in the public sector (1.4 per cent).



Wages have stagnated in manufacturing and wholesaling, retailing, hotels and restaurants sectors, and fallen in construction (by 2.8 per cent) as of September 2023 compared to September 2022.

The only sectors that saw a substantial real pay rise are finance and business services (2 per cent) and transport and storage (15.8 per cent). In fact, real wages remain below pre-pandemic levels in all other sectors. (*see graph below*)

Boosting profits

Meanwhile, some firms have added the rising costs of inputs like energy and food into the price of the goods they sell, squeezing the

poorly-paid from the other side. Some have even increased their profit margins since 2021 by raising prices at a faster rate than the increase in their input costs.

A Bank of England survey shows many of the firms with the highest profit margins are expected to increase their profit margins further in 2023, while firms with the lowest profit margins reported a drop in 2022, and are only expected to see a partial recovery this year.

Wages could increase without causing higher inflation if the top firms cut their profit margins. This would also help the firms who were not able to pass on high input, wages or borrowing costs to their

customers. With company insolvencies at a 14-year high, they are instead cutting back non-essential spending.

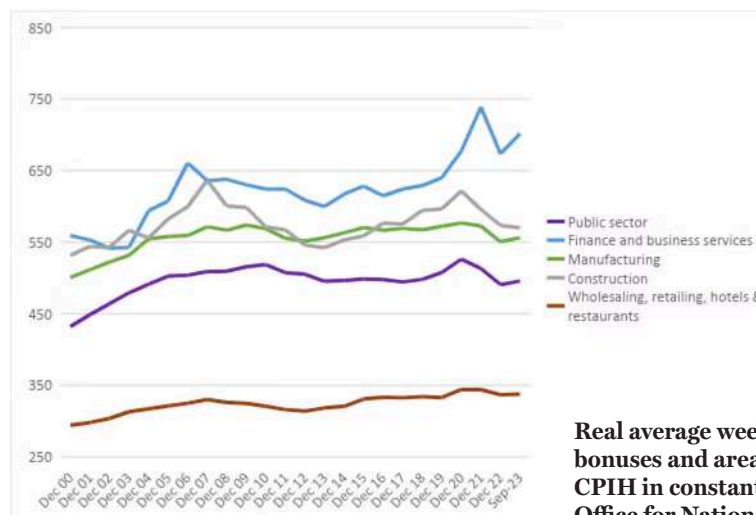
But the Government has done little to address the rise in profit margins for the top companies beyond a limited energy price cap and windfall taxes on energy companies. As food prices soared, Government intervention amounted to meetings with the farmers, food producers and some of Britain's largest supermarkets to discuss capping price increases in 2023 without actual price controls.

The Bank of England may hold interest rates again at its next Monetary Policy Committee meeting in December, despite stagnation in consumer demand and business investment.

These policies will not help to address the multiple intersecting crises facing the UK right now, including inequalities in class, gender and race, ecological breakdown, geopolitical turmoil and technological change – not to mention the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Özlem Onaran is a Professor of Economics, University of Greenwich

Wages are stagnant or falling in some sectors:



Real average weekly earnings (total pay including bonuses and arrears, seasonally adjusted, deflated using CPIH in constant 2015 prices). Author provided using Office for National Statistics data., CC BY-NC-ND

URGENT

Help a young person reach a safe place tonight

This winter thousands of young people in the UK will have nowhere safe to sleep. Some are visible on the streets, but for many, their homelessness is hidden. The danger for all of them is very real.

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DEPAUL

Homelessness has no place

A hard winter, and cold, is coming

Sir John Battle



A row broke out last week in Germany over the early setting up of its renowned Christmas markets, when “it’s not even Advent yet”.

Cities in Britain have, for some years, also introduced classic German markets, but it is their original intention that gets lost in the consumerist need to get ahead of the Christmas spending.

Originally, German markets were set up in the Middle Ages to provide warm clothes and food provisions for families as the winter closed in. They were part of the social support system – not an incentive just to go out and spend to keep economics numbers up.

Now Advent calendars, which traditionally counted down a time of reflection, fasting and repentance in preparation for the coming of Christ, have been transmogrified into further consumerist expenditure – most recently as gift boxes of expensive beauty products. The Harvey Nichols Beauty Advent Calendar retails at £250, the Body Shop’s Ultimate Advent of Wonders at £145, and Boots’ 12 Days of Beauty Advent Calendar costing £75.

High spend shopping is replacing the celebration of the Christmas mystery of the Incarnation, just as the Paschal mysteries of Easter are displaced by Easter eggs. Moreover, it is notably high-end consumerism.

At the same time, for far too many, in the words of poet TS Eliot in *Journey of the Magi*, Christmas may prove to many “a cold coming... just the worst time of the year”. In Eliot’s description, ‘the Birth’ may be ‘hard and bitter for us, like Death, our death’.

The latest edition of *The Lancet* reports that it is now poverty rather than parental neglect that is the principal cause of children being taken into care. With over one million children considered destitute, the divisions in society are widening.

Hard-pressed and under-resourced charities like St Vincent DePaul are left to pick up the pieces and try to retain the real spirit of Christmas.

You can help your local SVP conference support families this coming Christmas and reset the days.

For further information, email: info@svp.org.uk

Million children are missing out because they live in destitution

SOCIETY

Emma Louise Gorman

Millions of people in the UK are unable to meet their most basic physical needs: to stay warm, dry, clean and fed. Living in such conditions is known as destitution.

Recent analysis from charity the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) estimates that around 3.8 million people in the UK experienced destitution at some point during 2022. This is a 61 per cent increase since 2019 – and a 148 per cent increase since 2017.

Living in destitution means severe material hardship. The JRF’s 2022 survey of crisis service users in the UK found that 61 per cent reported going without food in the month before the survey. They often put other needs, such as accommodation or feeding their children, over feeding themselves.

About half of the people surveyed were not able to afford adequate clothing and basic necessities, such as toiletries. Many talked of living in insecure and low quality housing.

One particularly alarming aspect of these most recent statistics is the steep increase in the number of children living in destitution. In 2022, around one million children lived in households who experienced destitution. This is an increase of 88 per cent since the charity’s corresponding 2019 study, and a 186 per cent increase since the 2017 study.

Impact on children

Destitution causes immediate suffering. But for these children, this experience of hardship at a young age will have consequences that last throughout their lives. There is little doubt that both money and environment (housing quality, parental mental health and nutrition, for example) contribute to inequalities in child development.

Both of these factors are affected by living in destitution.

When children reach the age of three, stark differences are already evident between those who live in poverty and those who do not. Children from more well-off families have better developed skills in both cognitive tasks, such as understanding basic concepts like colours, letters, numbers and shapes, as well as socio-emotional skills, such as self-control and resilience.

Other factors that are important in shaping children’s skills include



housing quality and parental mental health.

Inequalities so early in life can compound and widen over time. These differences between the disadvantaged and the better off can be seen in educational achievement, health and criminal activity.

These types of inequalities were also exacerbated by the pandemic. While pupils everywhere missed out on education, these learning losses were not equally distributed: young people from lower socio-economic background fell further behind.

Despite large increases in funding for the early-year sectors, socio-economic inequalities in child development have not generally narrowed, particularly in recent years.

“We know that being hungry at school makes it difficult to concentrate and learn. Measures that address hunger, then, can make a difference. Analysis of a trial of breakfast clubs in English schools, which offered free meals to disadvantaged children aged six and seven, found that they lead to the equivalent of two months’ extra progress in reading, writing and maths in a year...”

And now, the sharp increase in the share of children living in destitution does not paint a optimistic picture for the future.

Making a difference

However, many of these issues can be changed by government policy. For example, we know that being hungry at school makes it difficult to concentrate and learn. Measures that address hunger, then, can make a difference.

For instance, analysis of a trial of breakfast clubs in English schools, which offered free meals to disadvantaged children aged six and seven, found that just the provision of that food lead to the equivalent of two months’ extra progress in reading, writing and maths across the course of one year.

Research has shown that many

early interventions – such as high quality childcare and education programmes for at-risk children – can have long-lasting positive effects. From an economic perspective, acting early to lift children out of poverty and improve their home and learning environments can be a cost-effective way of helping in the long run, both for individuals as well as wider society.

Another option would be reform of the benefits system to make sure families have enough money to live. In the 2022 Joseph Rowntree Foundation survey of people who used crisis centres, 72 per cent did receive social security benefits – but were still destitute.

This rise in children living in household experiencing destitution must be given serious attention.

Successive governments claim to hold upward social mobility as a important goal – that is, the ability of people to move up the economic and social ladder, regardless of their own upbringing and social background.

Reducing destitution would not only benefit children right now, but would help them throughout life. **Emma Louise Gorman is a Principal Research Fellow, Centre for Employment Research, University of Westminster**

Ground-breaking trail app helps Ushaw win Historic House award

Ushaw Historic House has been announced as the winner of the Historic Houses Collection Award 2023, thanks to its innovative digital art trail app.

Ushaw, the former Catholic seminary in County Durham which closed in 2011, has been operated by a charitable trust as a heritage attraction since 2014. The college's collection of fine art, religious and secular objects, and books reflects both its two centuries as an educational foundation on this site, and more ancient antecedents. It now attracts over 50,000 visitors a year.

Last year Ushaw launched an outdoor digital trail app. Free to download and use, the app contains animation, text, video, sound and elements of augmented reality.

The aim of the Ushaw Trail is to introduce visitors to its heritage and collection objects in a unique and engaging fashion. It takes users on a treasure hunt through Ushaw's gardens, with a narrative guiding the user through the house's history.

The fun trail is based on the events of the French Revolution, during which students at Ushaw's predecessor college at Douai in



The Eagle Lectern designed by Augustus Pugin is one of Ushaw's many priceless exhibits

northern France hid the institution's collection of early 18th century silver in order to safeguard it from the revolutionary forces.

In the mid-19th century, with permission from Napoleon III, Ushaw students returned to the, by then derelict, site of the college at Douai in order to recover the silver and bring it to England.

The augmented reality elements of the trail, triggered at ten specific locations, include the appearance of a mid-17th century atlas through the library window. The atlas swoops down to the user and provides a helpful hint to the next loca-

tion on the trail. Other items highlighted include an orrery from 1794, the 15th century Westminster Vestment, and a 1732 bronze sundial spinning in mid-air before pointing the way to Trail's final location. Here, the Douai Silver erupts from the ground in a spectacular finale to the Trail's quest.

Andrew Heard, visitor programmes manager at Ushaw, said: "We are delighted to have won the Historic Houses 2023 Collections Award for our outdoor digital art trail.

"The trail was designed to introduce Ushaw's history and collec-

tions to new audiences and encourage visitors to our gardens and outdoor spaces to discover more about what is inside our buildings. We find it particularly gratifying that the efforts we are making to introduce people to Ushaw and the treasures it contains have been recognised in this way."

Managing director of award sponsor Dreweatts, Jonathan Pratt, said: "The judges were hugely impressed with Ushaw, and in particular, with the quality and innovation of its digital resources, interpretation and community outreach – as well as the sheer variety, inherent interest, and beauty of the collection."

Ushaw – which is now part of the University of Durham – was originally created by scholars from the English College at Douai, fleeing the consequences of the French Revolution. That foundation was itself a product of exile, designed to train Englishmen as Catholic priests during the ban on the public practice of their faith in post-Reformation England.

HMP backing for Pact's pilot programme

Pact (the Prison Advice & Care Trust) has been awarded funding by Her Majesty's Prison service for a new pilot project, providing specialist family-focused support for women leaving prison.

Women in custody will receive emotional support and practical advice from specialist staff, and post-release, staff will ensure that each person has support in the community.

During the pilot, staff members will provide a co-ordinated approach to family resettlement across the nine prisons releasing the most women. Pact will deliver the service in eight prisons and its partner agency, Nepacs, will deliver the service at HMP Low Newton. The project will be evaluated by Her Majesty's Prisons service.

Welcoming the news, Pact Deputy CEO Ellen Green said: "During their sentence, women may have lost housing and work, and many have children who are affected."

"This project will help strengthen relationships between women leaving prison, their family members, and significant others before release, offering vital continuity of care as they move from custody to the community."

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In Brief

Police question comedian Brand

Russell Brand has been interviewed under caution by the Metropolitan Police over allegations of sexual offences.

The comedian and actor was questioned by detectives at a police station in South London on 16th November, the Met confirmed.

In September, he was accused of rape, assault and emotional abuse between 2006 and 2013, following claims made against him in a Channel 4 *Dispatches* documentary and in *The Sunday Times*. Brand has denied the allegations and said his relationships had all been consensual.

Fuel payments questioned

Winter fuel payments for wealthy pensioners have been called into question by a senior Treasury minister, *The Telegraph* reported. Speaking at an event last month, John Glen, then chief secretary to the Treasury, argued that the money would be better spent tackling child poverty. He said that his own mother, who was “perfectly comfortable”, should not be getting the financial support. However, he conceded that rationing the financial support would be “very difficult”. Glen is now paymaster general.

Women claim MoD ‘toxic’ workplace

Sixty senior women at the Ministry of Defence have described a “hostile” and “toxic” culture at the department, reported *The Guardian*. It is claimed that women regularly faced being “propositioned”, “groped” and “touched repeatedly” by male colleagues in a workplace culture that was “hostile to women as equal and respected partners”.

The MoD said it is “deeply concerned” by the complaints made and is “taking action to tackle the issues raised”.

No free ride for Labour say nurses

Nurses have warned Keir Starmer that strikes would continue under a future Labour Government unless it dealt with pay and understaffing. Patricia Marquis, director of the Royal College of Nursing, said that “nursing pay is still not at a level anywhere near the level it needs to be”. She added: “I don’t think we can say that members wouldn’t go out on strike under a Labour Government, not by any stretch of the imagination.”

JFK 60 years on: his leadership style and reality behind the myths

POLITICS

Leo McCann & Simon Mollan

John F. Kennedy retains an iconic status as an exemplary – even inspirational – public figure and his leadership approach has been influential for decades.

The former US president (1961-63) projected an idealist image of leadership, which, at its best, demonstrated that the political system can address society’s most profound challenges. His was an optimistic and ambitious presidency that, although tragically cut short, achieved considerable success across a range of activities as diverse as poverty reduction, bans of nuclear weapons testing, and the Mercury and Apollo space programmes.

At 43 when elected in November 1960, JFK remains the youngest president to take the oath of office – and his youth might have been considered as a disadvantage, especially in foreign policy leadership – but he had honed his foreign affairs knowledge to an extent with his very extensive overseas travel during his time in Congress, and military service. He also appointed an extremely able and highly educated cabinet.

This week marked the 60th anniversary of his death, and it’s worth remembering that the Kennedy presidency laid down a marker for ambitious, informed and progressive styles of leadership. Jack, Robert and Edward Kennedy all contributed in various ways to Democratic political causes, such as expanding civil rights and legislating for healthcare reform.

JFK’s leadership style has been hugely influential, acting as a political and cultural model emulated by subsequent presidents as varied as Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. While politically to the right of Kennedy, Reagan (a former actor) arguably shared JFK’s sense of political theatre. Clinton tried to develop a youthful, vigorous and idealistic image modelled after JFK, although many of his attempts to pass legislation contributing to key Democratic goals (such as healthcare reform) ultimately failed. Clinton, like JFK, liked to gather together large groups of intellectuals and leaders in their fields to discuss policies and issues. Obama believed in diplomacy and negotiations, even with adversaries, as JFK did, according to Ted Sorensen, JFK’s former speechwriter.

Kennedy’s open and engaging style made government and public



service seem worthwhile and relevant. Methods used to construct presidential “leadership rankings” are often challenged, but JFK has consistently been ranked in the top ten of many, despite having just over 1,000 days in office. The Kennedy family thrived on ambition and power, but their professed duty to serve the public seemed genuine, as did the desire to learn and to do better.

JFK governed from the centre, appointing a cabinet with varied political backgrounds. He had an effective record of passing legislation while in office, and he contributed to the eventual passing of the historic civil rights legislation under his successor, Lyndon Johnson.

In our own archival research, we explored the development of what became known as the Hickory Hill seminars, a series of talks and social gatherings that usually took place at Robert and Ethel Kennedy’s home in McLean, Virginia. The events functioned as a place to explore social problems and their solutions, and as a kind of proto-leadership development seminar. Topics of discussion ranged from great literary works to child poverty. Invited speakers included the environmentalist Rachel Carson, and the philosopher A.J. Ayer.

The inner circle of the Kennedy administration would actively engage with external people and

ideas, in stark contrast to the partisan, secretive and often walled-off styles of leadership that are so common today.

JFK’s presidency and leadership featured some notable successes. He used the federal government to enforce racial desegregation in several high-profile situations. And his administration prepared the ground for the aforementioned civil rights legislation which was passed after his death.

Less positively, the power of Kennedy as a brand was deliberately cultivated and policed by his inner circle. His father crowed about selling Jack’s image “like soap flakes”.

Avoiding groupthink

JFK’s weaknesses as a leader were also substantial. He acquiesced to the disastrous Bay of Pigs incursion, where military experts wrongly predicted that Fidel Castro’s regime in Cuba could be overthrown with ease. JFK learnt a lesson the hardest way possible about accepting military advice. After the Bay of Pigs incident, JFK introduced new ways of working to avoid ‘groupthink’. His later success in the Cuban missile crisis was partly derived from this lesson.

But Kennedy also deepened the US’s appalling intervention in Vietnam. He subscribed to the ‘domino theory’ about the supposed need for the US to confront

communism in Asia whatever the cost. His administration dragged America towards an unwinnable war by propping up the unstable South Vietnam regime, and colluding in a bloody coup against one of its leaders.

Speechwriters and academic historians such as Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger Jr expended huge efforts in curating and promoting the Kennedy family image as a form of progressive, even heroic, leadership (Schlesinger was in charge of the day-to-day running of the Hickory Hill seminars, and was a key figure in the development of presidential leadership rankings). These efforts surely influenced the depth and longevity of the Kennedy appeal.

There are other connections between JFK and the study of leadership. Leadership theorist James MacGregor Burns wrote a campaign-trail biography of JFK, and Burns’ work heavily informs the ubiquitous notion of “transformational leadership”, the idea that the most effective and ethical forms of leadership are those that emphasise vision, change and inspiration, rather than the more prosaic forms of leadership that amount to little more than looking after the shop.

JFK is widely remembered as a good president, but the idealistic Camelot vision has undoubtedly been exaggerated.

JFK was due to give a speech in Dallas on what became his final trip, warning of “voices preaching doctrines wholly unrelated to reality” – which, he feared could “handicap this country’s security”. Those aggressive and populist leadership styles are in the ascendancy, as personified by Donald Trump.

Rather than engage with political rivals, their approach is to dismiss and attack them. Robert Kennedy junior, for instance, is running for president following a Trumpian playbook of vilification and populism, positioning himself as an outsider who will “clean up the system”, rather than a scion of one of America’s most influential families.

Despite this, the JFK legacy retains the potential to promote a serious and ethical approach to leadership. It incorporates visions of idealism and public service, not selfishness and vilification. However, this portrayal often fails to acknowledge JFK’s flaws and failures.

Leo McCann is a Professor of Management, University of York

Simon Mollan is a Reader in Management, University of York

St Joseph's salute for DJ old boy Vernon

Andy Drozdziak

BBC radio 2 DJ Vernon Kay made an emotional return to his old Catholic school in Bolton as he rounded-off an ultra-marathon run for the Children in Need charity.

Kay was greeted at St. Joseph's RC High School in Horwich by current pupils, former teachers and classmates and supporters.

The popular host paid tribute to his former school. "I'm so glad that I went to St. Joseph's because that was a real boost on the last stretch. We were coming through Bolton at the top and everyone was beeping their horns. It just really elevates you. It's been absolutely unbelievable. Literally unbelievable," he said.

Music teacher Jane Hampson, who taught the Bolton-born presenter when he was at St. Joseph's, welcomed him through the gates. "I had the honour of being a music teacher here for 17 very happy years," she said, "and during that time, Vernon and his brother Stephen, were my students.

"He has Bolton at the heart of him and deserves all this success, he has worked hard over the years and I'm delighted for him."

St. Joseph's students are affectionately known as 'Joeys'. Samantha Flanagan, social media lead and teaching assistant at the school, said: "I'm particularly excited because I am a past pupil too.

"We have a motto here, 'once a Joey

always a Joey', so no matter where you are, or what you are doing, we are always there for you, which is why I asked if he would like to do the slight detour here."

Helena Flanagan, who was a sports teacher at the school, said: "I came back today to run alongside Vernon and cheer him on."

Kay identified "the generosity of spirit" that spurred him on to complete the

gruelling ultramarathon, during which he ran from Leicester to Bolton Wanderers ground, a distance of 117 miles, over three days, raising over £5 million in the process for Children in Need.

"We're talking about people coming out and openly being happy and joyous, and saying lovely things, and not holding back.

"It's been broad spanning, and it's that, that's been amazing," he said.



Left, Vernon salutes his wellwishers and (above) he's all smiles for his welcoming committee

Photos: Harriet Heywood

Snoop Dogg backs Catholic band's hymn to the homeless

Andy Drozdziak

World-famous rapper Snoop Dogg has joined a London Catholic band and homeless film director to challenge prejudices around homelessness which were ignited by former Home Secretary Suella Braverman's recent comments.

David Fussell, a homeless film director, has joined forces with rap royalty Snoop Dogg and Catholic rockers Ooberfuse to challenge hidden prejudices around homelessness. They have created a track called *Hard Times*, partially in response to former Home Secretary Suella Braverman's pledge to crack-down on tents and her belief that rough sleeping in a tent is a "lifestyle choice".

Her comments were attacked by many working with rough sleepers, and David Fussell said her comments about rough sleeping being "a lifestyle choice" really struck a nerve. "When I slept rough on London's park benches and in shop doorways I had glass bottles smashed in my face," he recalled. His salvation came when he was given a pop-up tent by street workers who were concerned for David's safety.

Eradicating homelessness is important to Snoop Dogg. "When you get it, make sure you give it back, that's how you keep getting it!" Snoop Dogg said, adding that he lives his life by this belief.

Hal St John of Ooberfuse explained how the collaboration came about. "The producer of our track, *Anno Domini Nation*, works with Snoop Dogg so that's how we managed to get him to feature on the song. It's essentially a transatlantic collaboration," he told the *Universe*.

London rough-sleeper David said: "I lived in a tent for four out of the 10 years that I lived on the streets. I started using a tent after someone threw a glass bottle that smashed on my face and I was lucky only



Left, Snoop Dogg, who has collaborated on *Hard Times* with Ooberfuse

to have a small cut on my forehead. A tent will keep you out of the wind and rain/snow and greatly increases your chances of survival on winter nights."

Cherrie Anderson of Ooberfuse said *Hard Times* "is about weathering tough times and shining a light on actual lived experiences of homelessness."

"Having Snoop Dogg involved was amazing. Technology today means that we were able to record our parts in Abbey Road whilst Snoop Dogg, our producer and musicians recorded their parts in the US."

Hal St John added: "Ms Braverman's comments highlight the disconnect between the comfortable corridors of power in Whitehall and what's happening on our city streets. Rough sleeping in a tent is not a lifestyle choice; it's a mirror reflecting back to us the failings of government housing provision. No one should be punished for being homeless."

• *Hard Times* by Ooberfuse featuring Snoop Dogg is released on 1st December 2023.

Listen to the track and watch the music video here: <https://youtu.be/gBHIFpCOeak>



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All eyes are on Lord Cameron

James Somerville-Meikle
Deputy Director, the Catholic Union of Great Britain

It is notoriously hard to keep secrets in Westminster, but the return of David Cameron to Government earlier this month seemed to take almost everyone by surprise.

The appointment of Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, as he is now styled, to the post of Foreign Secretary was perhaps the biggest move in the recent reshuffle.

There is a question over how much these ministerial shake-ups matter, as overall policy is determined by the occupant of No 10 Downing Street. But Ministers do have an important role to play in setting the tone and in how they prioritise their work.

The extent to which David Cameron's move to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will affect Catholic interests is something of a mixed picture.

As leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron was a big supporter of international development. He committed to match Labour's pledge to spend 0.7% of GDP on international aid when his party were in opposition, and upheld this commitment while PM. The man he first appointed as International Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, is now his number two at the Foreign Office in the role of Minister for Development and Africa.

The decision to reduce the aid budget to 0.5% of GDP in 2021 was widely criticised by Catholic groups and charities as well as some within the Conservative Party. It remains to be seen whether the return of Lord Cameron will have an impact on overall levels of international aid spending, and where the money is spent.

The return of Baroness Sugg, a former aide to David Cameron, as a Special Adviser in the Foreign Office, is seen by some as less than encouraging. She was instrumental in maintaining the policy of 'pills in the post' for abortions, which had been introduced as a temporary measure during the pandemic.

More broadly, there are concerns that attempts to refocus UK foreign policy on championing fundamental and universally accepted human rights may suffer a set back in light of Cameron's more liberal approach.

One human right that urgently needs supporting is freedom of religion or belief. Some prominent Catholics, including Lord Alton of Liverpool, have warned that David Cameron's close links to China risk undermining UK efforts to challenge human rights abuses in the country, including the persecution of Christians.

Red Wednesday this week will give David Cameron the first opportunity to engage with matters around freedom of religion or belief as Foreign Secretary. He will need to set out his views on this and other policy areas soon. After all, nothing stays secret in Westminster for long.

Pam asks Catholics to show their love for Mary's Meals

Andy Drozdziak

Songs of Praise host Pam Rhodes is getting behind Catholic charity Mary's Meals' new campaign, Double The Love.

From 22nd November 2023 to 22nd January 2024, all donations made to Mary's Meals will be doubled by a group of generous supporters, up to £1 million. Funds raised will provide nutritious school meals for children in some of the world's poorest countries including Haiti, Malawi and Syria.

Pam Rhodes launched the campaign by referring to the Lord's Prayer. "When we say the Lord's Prayer, we know there's a pretty good chance there will be a lot more than bread on our table every day.

"But in the countries that Mary's Meals works, whole communities find that there's no bread or food at all, because they're at the mercy of climate change, of war, and sometimes of sheer poverty," she said.

"So today, when you're planning your next meal, why don't you help to plan their meals too? By supporting the essential work of Mary's Meals this winter, your kindness will go even further, thanks to the Double The Love campaign."

Matt Barlow, executive director of Mary's Meals, thanked Pam Rhodes for supporting Double The Love. "Our mission resonates with her just as it does with so many people of faith.

"From serving meals to just 200 children in Malawi in 2002, to more than 2.4 million children today – our work has been fuelled by prayer and the goodness of all those who believe that no children in this world of plenty should be hungry or out of school," Mr Barlow said.

"Today, there are 67 million children missing out an education worldwide because of poverty, but we know that the simple serving of a school meal has the power to change the future of the communities we work alongside."



Insurer's gift keeps Stella Maris's work around the Black Sea on the right road

International maritime charity Stella Maris has announced the deployment of a new vehicle for its chaplaincy and ship-visiting work in Ukraine, funded by leading mutual insurer, the UK P&I Club.

The vehicle, a Renault Express van, will be used to carry out ship-visiting work in Odesa and along the Black Sea coast, as well as deliver aid to out-of-work Ukrainian seafarers and their families. It will also support port workers, re-

tired seafarers and their families in the region.

UK charity Stella Maris is the maritime agency of the Catholic church and has maintained a physical presence in Ukraine throughout the war. The new vehicle will enhance the charity's work supporting seafarers and their families, and will enable its chaplaincy team to extend their outreach as the war in Ukraine continues.

Stella Maris CEO Tim Hill MBE expressed his appreciation for the donation of the vehicle.

"We are very grateful to the UK P&I Club for stepping forward to fully fund the purchase of a vehicle that is essential for the work of our chaplaincy team in Odesa," Mr Hill said. "The team continues to support seafarers and their families in desperate times and the new vehicle is already being put to great use in Ukraine."

Patrick Ryan, Sustainability Director and Head of Club Secretariat from UK P&I Club, said: "The Club has a firm commitment to a range of maritime charities including Stella Maris. Despite the obvious operational hurdles caused by the conflict, Stella Maris has never wavered in its commitment to Ukrainian seafarers and their families and we're proud to be able to support them to continue to deliver support in these communities."

Stella Maris' chaplains and ship visitors provide seafarers and fishers with pastoral and practical support, information and a listening ear.

Fr Alexander Smerechynskyy, Stella Maris port chaplain in Odesa, said: "This wonderful donation from UK P&I has made a massive difference, not just to our operations but also to our morale. We can now be much more effective and impactful – the sheer value of knowing we are supported and not forgotten after 19 months of war is beyond measure."



Stella Maris chaplains in Odesa, Fr Alexander (wearing hi-viz vest) and Rostyslav, with the new vehicle.

Priest left baffled after arson attack on church

A priest has said it is a mystery why his Co Antrim church was targeted in an apparent arson attack.

Police are appealing for information after the attack damaged a side door of Our Lady and St Patrick's Catholic Church in the Castle Street area of Ballymoney.

Parish priest Father Damian McCaughan discovered the fire last Sunday night and put it out.

He said he was alerted when the fire alarm went off shortly before 10pm.

He said: "I went to have a look and discovered

a fire had been set on the outside of the door.

"It was just about to take hold – I was able to extinguish it. It did a bit of damage but we were able to catch it in time. Obviously we are concerned why someone would do it."

Fr McCaughan said a wooden log covered in a propellant had been laid against the door.

He said: "It is a lovely church, and we are very proud of it, so I didn't want it to be damaged. I gave the log a kick and then I got a bucket of water and threw it over the door to stop the fire.

"The police came out very quickly, they have

put out an appeal. We will see what happens.

"We will make our repairs and keep going."

Asked why he believed the church had been targeted, the priest said: "I don't know, we don't have much trouble up here.

"It is a quiet part of town and lots of people come to visit the church, to walk their dog or visit the graveyard.

"We have never had trouble or anti-social behaviour, so I really don't know who would have gone to the trouble of setting a fire here. I'll leave that with the police."

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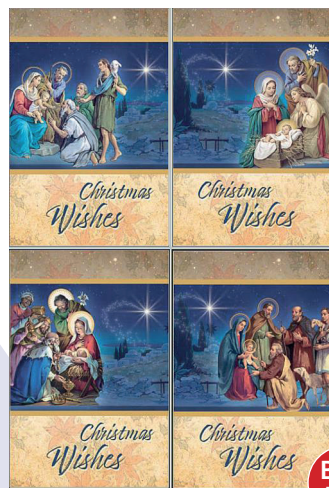


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Pack of 12 Religious Christmas Cards 4.5" x 6.5" (11 x 16 cm) in 4 designs, embossed and gold foil stamped, featuring Nativity image enclosed in gold-embossed wreath and wording: Christmas Peace.

Inside Text: Wishing you a very Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year.

Ref: X0497 Price £6.50 + P&P

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Pack of 12 Religious Christmas Cards 4.5" x 6.5" (11 x 16 cm) in 4 designs, embossed and gold foil stamped. Four inset nativity designs with holly border, and the words Silent Night, Holy Night, all is Calm, all is Bright below.

Inside text: To wish you the Peace of that First Silent Night and the Joy of the First Christmas Day.

Ref: X0874 Price: £6.50 + P&P



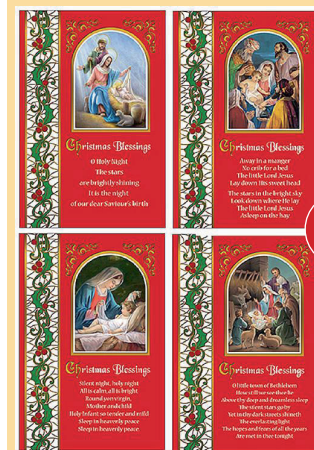
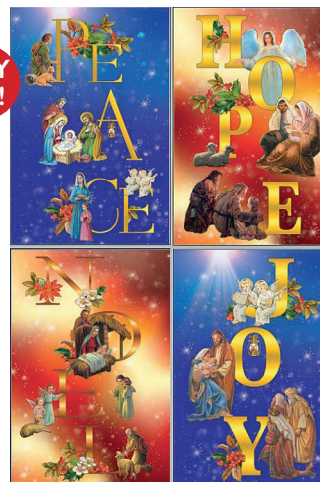
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Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

World hopes pope can push COP28 to take real action on climate change

Pope Francis will break new ground when he addresses the global climate change summit COP28 in Dubai next week - he will be the first pontiff to attend one of the gatherings, which began in 1995.

It was planned that he would attend COP27 in Glasgow two years ago but Covid precautions stopped him taking his place.

His presence, anticipated speech and private bilateral meetings, is hugely anticipated, and will add further strength to his many urgent appeals that nations reduce greenhouse gas emissions, transition swiftly to clean energy sources and compensate countries already harmed by the effects of climate change.

The Vatican said the main thrust of his argument is taken from *Laudate Deum*, the follow-up encyclical to *Laudato Si'*: that “we must move beyond the mentality of appearing to be concerned but not having the courage needed to produce substantial changes.”

Pope Francis had timed the release of his 2015 encyclical to coincide with final preparations for the COP21 conference in Paris. A number of experts believe that document had a deep impact on the successful adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement, a binding agreement for nations to fight climate change and mitigate its effects.

The pope, likewise, timed *Laudate Deum*, which presented an even stronger critique of global inaction and indifference, to coincide with Dubai's summit, saying the meeting “can represent a change of direction, showing that everything done since 1992 was in fact serious and worth the effort, or else it will be a great disappointment and jeopardize whatever good has been achieved thus far.”

Catholic advocacy organisations that have been pushing for global action for years believe the pope's participation at COP28 is going to help convince leaders to make stronger commitments.

Whether this plays out in fact, is another matter.

Lindlyn Moma, advocacy director of the *Laudato Si'* Movement, said that “Pope Francis really recognises that we are in a climate crisis and he is going to COP to make sure that everyone hears this message.

“People listened to *Laudato Si'* but not enough people have heeded to that call and taken the decisive action needed.”

What must be done at COP28, Moma said, is “a binding and total agreement that is very clear on the phase out of fossil fuels.”

‘Poverty is a scandal,’ pope says; Christians have gifts to end it

The material, cultural and spiritual poverties that exist in the world are a “scandal” that Christians are called to address by putting their God-given capacity for charity and love into action, Pope Francis said.

The poor, whether “the oppressed, fatigued, marginalised, victims of war,” migrants, the hungry, those without work or left without hope, “are not one, two, or three, they are a multitude,” the pope said during a Mass celebrated for World Day of the Poor in St. Peter's Basilica.

“And thinking of this immense multitude of the poor, the message of the Gospel is clear: let us not bury the wealth of the Lord. Let us spread charity, share our bread, multiply love,” he said. “Poverty is a scandal.”

Among the 5,000 who filled the basilica for Mass were homeless persons and others in need. After celebrating Mass and praying the Angelus, the pope ate lunch in the Vatican audience hall with some 1,250 people, continuing a tradition he began on the first World Day of the Poor in 2017.

Seated at a central table, the pope prayed that God would bless the food and “this moment of friendship, all together.” On the three-course menu were ricotta cheese-filled pasta tubes, meatballs and tiramisu for dessert.

This year's World Day of the Poor drew its theme from the Book of Tobit: ‘Do not turn your face away



Pope Francis eats lunch with his guests in the Vatican audience hall

from anyone who is poor.’ In the week leading up to the world day, the Vatican extended the hours and operations of a medical clinic it runs near St. Peter's Square dedicated to caring for anyone in need.

In his homily, Pope Francis said that Christians “have received from the Lord the gift of his love and we are called to become a gift to others.” Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the Vatican organiser of the world day, was the main celebrant at the altar.

Reflecting on the day's Gospel reading from St. Matthew, in which

Jesus tells the parable of a man who buries the money given to him by his master rather than seek to multiply it, the pope lamented the many “buried Christians” who hide their gifts and talents underground.

Mercy, compassion, joy and hope, he said, “are goods that we cannot keep only for ourselves.”

“We can multiply all that we have received, making life an offering of love for others,” the pope said, “or we can be blocked by a false image of God and because of fear hide underground the treasure we have re-

ceived, thinking only of ourselves, without becoming passionate about anything other than our own comforts and interests.”

The pope also urged people to be mindful of poverty's “modesty,” noting that “poverty is discreet, it hides. It must be us to go look for it, with courage.”

“Let us pray that each of us, according to the gift we have received and the mission entrusted to us, may strive to make charity bear fruit and draw near to a poor person,” he said.

Ending Church silence on abuse ‘non-negotiable’

Everyone in the Catholic Church must end the silence about clerical sexual abuse and ensure cases are no longer covered up, Pope Francis said, adding it is “non-negotiable.”

Meeting with Italian diocesan representatives of safeguarding programmes, the pope said it also is essential to “pursue the ascertainment of the truth and the restoration of justice in the ecclesial community, including in those cases where certain behaviours are not considered crimes by the law of the state, but are under canon law.”

Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna presented Pope Francis with the conference's second annual report on safeguarding.

While 81 per cent of calls to the Church's report lines were to seek information, the rest were to report cases of abuse to Church authorities, said the report. There were 54 presumed victims and 32 alleged perpetrators – 31 men and one woman – almost evenly divided in thirds between priests, religious and lay Church employees.

The number of Church listening

centres has increased to 186 and now cover 190 of the 206 dioceses.

The group's meeting with Pope Francis took place on the Italian Church's national day of prayer, repentance and education on clerical sexual abuse.

The goal of the Catholic community, he said, must be to “protect, listen and heal.”

The Catholic community must be involved in the protection of minors and vulnerable people, he said, “because the action of protection is an integral part of the Church's mis-

sion in building God's kingdom.”

“Listening to the victims is the step necessary for enabling a culture of prevention to grow... and that culture must include the education of the whole community, good practices and vigilance” he said.

“Only listening to the pain of people who have suffered these terrible crimes paves the way to solidarity and drives one to do everything possible to ensure abuse is not repeated. “This is the only way to truly share what has happened in a victim's life.”



Hello pope, got a new motor?

Pope Francis is pictured left with representatives from Volkswagen as the Holy See received the first of 40 electric vehicles from the German manufacturer. The cars – ID.3s – are part of the Vatican's ongoing commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030 in all its activities, and will help transition its vehicle fleet to net zero. The Vatican's ‘Ecological Conversion 2030’ programme said: “Vatican City State has been dedicated for many years to promoting sustainable development through environmental policies that safeguard the environment and provide strategies for saving energy. We are committed to reaching climate neutrality through a wide variety of initiatives.”

Pope Francis accepted the cars from Christian Dahlheim, chair of Volkswagen Financial Services AG, Marcus Osegowitsch, CEO of Volkswagen Group Italia, and Imelda Labbi, sales and marketing director at Volkswagen Passenger Cars.

Pope admits risk German Church could leave Rome

Carol Glatz

Pope Francis has admitted for the first time that he is concerned about concrete initiatives individual dioceses and the Catholic Church in Germany as a whole are taking, including the establishment of a synodal council, which, he said, threaten to steer it away from the Universal Church.

“Instead of looking for ‘salvation’ in always-new committees and always discussing the same issues with a certain self-referentiality, Catholics need to turn to prayer, penance and adoration as well as reach out to the marginalised and abandoned,” the pope wrote in a recent letter.

“I am convinced (it is) there the Lord will show us the way,” he wrote in the letter, which was published in the German newspaper *Die Welt*.

The letter was a response to four German laywomen who had written to the pope expressing their “doubts and fears” about the outcomes of the Synodal Path, which began in 2019, ending in March 2023.

The women – moral theologian Katharina Westerhorstmann, theologian Marianne Schlosser, philosopher Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz and journalist Dorothea Schmidt – had been prominent participants in the Synodal Path but withdrew their support in February.

They had said the Synodal Path was “casting doubt” on essential Catholic doctrines and teachings, and organisers were ignoring the Vatican’s many warnings, according to a joint statement published by *Die Welt* after their departure.

In his reply, the pope thanked the women for their “kind letter” in which they expressed their concerns about current developments in the Church in Germany.

Cardinal Woelki of Cologne has said LGBT issues must be clarified by Rome, despite in Germany wanting to press on with same-sex blessings



“I, too, share this concern about the numerous concrete steps that are now being taken by large parts of this local Church that threaten to move further and further away from the common path of the Universal Church,” he wrote.

Without a doubt, he wrote, this included the recent formation of a synodal committee. This committee of 74 laypeople and bishops was set up in March and is to spend the next three years establishing a permanent German synodal council.

The synodal council would be a national “advisory and decision-making body,” made up of

bishops and laypeople, that will make key decisions on pastoral, long-term planning and financial matters not decided at diocesan level.

In a letter approved by Pope Francis, top Vatican officials already had warned organisers in January they had no authority to set up such a body.

Writing to the four women, the pope referred to the admonition against forming the council and said a body like that described by the Synodal Path’s resolution “cannot be reconciled with the sacramental structure of the Catholic Church.”

The pope thanked the women for their contributions to theology and philosophy and “for your witness to the faith.” He asked them to continue praying for him and for “our common concern for unity.”

Previous meetings between senior German Church members and Vatican officials had revealed wide disparities in both the power the German Church thought it had in independence, and the path down which many of its synodal discussions were heading.

In particular, German talks on gay marriage in Church, greater female involvement in the Church and the way it welcomes divorced Catholics are far away from the official Vatican line.



Pope Francis greets members and families of the clinicians’ group

Francis in plea to save Italy’s ‘NHS’

Pope Francis has pleaded with a group of Italian physicians to defend the country’s national health service, saying that the Italian constitution was correct when it declared health a human right.

And he also insisted that compassion is “an irreplaceable diagnostic tool” in treating their patients.

Pope Francis met with members of the Italian Federation of Pediatric Physicians and the Association of Italian Hospital Otolaryngologists.

Calling physicians “one of the pillars of the country” and praising

the self-giving dedication of medical professions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the pope noted how the Italian health system is now struggling.

The weakening of the health-care system is undermining the “right to health that is part of the heritage of the social doctrine of the church and is enshrined in the Italian constitution,” the pope said. “Health is a common good.”

Pope Francis urged the physicians to work hard to resist efforts to move toward “only pre-paid medicine or paid medicine and then nothing else. No.”

Polish archbishop tells pope to reject liberal reform calls

Jonathan Luxmoore

The president of the Polish bishops’ conference has bitterly criticised demands for liberal change by the Church in Germany and urged the pope not to allow them to dominate the Rome Synod on Synodality.

“My hope for the ongoing synod is that it won’t be manipulated to authorise German theses which openly contradict Church teaching,” Archbishop Gadecki of Poznan said.

“If doctrinal competence were granted to bishops’ conferences or continental assemblies, then such theses would be considered Catholic – and perhaps imposed on other conferences, despite their obviously non-Catholic character,” he said.

The archbishop was “alarmed” by a 150-page document circulated to synod participants, setting out German demands, as well as by suggestions that “discernments by a single episcopal conference” might carry “authentic doctrinal authority.”

“The authors of this document have decided to start a revolution in the Universal Church – one inspired

by left-liberal ideologies,” the Polish bishops’ president told the pontiff.

“The main themes are change to the Church’s order and teaching on sexual morality, and ordaining women, so that the Church should become as similar as possible to the liberal democratic world, which exemplifies humanism,” he said.

Archbishop Gadecki was also critical of German calls for the Church to adopt the “political systems” of the West, while backing “the blessing of non-sacramental unions, including same-sex unions” on grounds these were not sinful.

“On the contrary, it’s the church’s teaching which is sinful, as well as unmerciful and discriminatory -- it makes the Church responsible for the persecution and suicide of transgender people.”

“In reality, relationships between people, including sexual relationships, are traditionally subject to moral evaluation in the Church’s teaching. In the Catholic approach, we treat every person with respect, but not every human choice.”

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good



Spanish bishops appeal for calm as tempers rise over amnesty

The Spanish bishops' conference has appealed for calm following mass protests against the planned release of jailed Catalan separatists under a deal with the new socialist-led government.

"I'm asking political leaders and opinion formers to do everything possible to lower the social tension – to work at all times for the general interest," said Cardinal Juan José Omella of Barcelona.

"Any deal that modifies the status quo agreed in our 1978 constitution should have the consensus of all and support from a qualified majority of society.

"Otherwise, such pacts will lead only to greater divisiveness and confrontation."

The amnesty for Catalan separatists was agreed in early November by socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez in return for support from Together for Catalonia party and Republican Left for his plan to form a government. It will free hundreds of separatists and law enforcers jailed after an October 2017 Catalan referendum on independence was ruled illegal by the Constitutional Court, sparking prolonged violence.

However, 70 per cent of Spaniards, including a majority of Socialist Party voters, opposed the amnesty in a September opinion poll.

Vatican relief as pause in Gaza conflict offers hope for peace

The Vatican has welcomed an agreement between Israel and Hamas to suspend the devastating war in Gaza – but stressed that the pause in fighting must become a full ceasefire.

"We are relieved that a pause has been agreed," said a Vatican spokesman, "but we need it to further."

The truce will be accompanied by the release of dozens of hostages held by the militant group in return for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. The deal, brokered by Qatar, marks the biggest diplomatic breakthrough since Hamas' rampage into southern Israel on 7th October ignited a war that has devastated vast swaths of Gaza and raised fears of a wider conflict across the Middle East.

Women and children will be released first, and the supply of humanitarian aid flowing into the besieged territory will be ramped up.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Israel would resume the war after the truce and keep fighting "until we achieve all our goals", including the defeat of Hamas.

The announcement capped weeks of indirect Qatari-led negotiations between Israel and Hamas. The United States and Egypt were also involved in stop-and-go talks to free some of the roughly 240 hostages captured by Hamas and other militants during their wide-ranging October 7 raid.

US President Joe Biden welcomed the deal, saying Mr Netanyahu has committed to supporting an "extended pause" to make sure that the hostages are released and humanitarian aid can be sent to Gaza.



The aftermath of an Israeli air strike on Khan Younis

Qatar's Prime Minister and top diplomat, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, said he hoped the deal would eventually lead to a permanent ceasefire and "serious talks" on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In another glimmer of hope that the pause could become longer, Israel said that the truce would be extended an extra day for every additional 10 hostages released by Hamas. The International Committee of the Red Cross said it is stand-

ing by to assist any swap.

It is hoped that as the full extent of the devastation becomes known and as hostages are released, Western pressure on Israel to end its war will grow. Even the US, Israel's chief backer, has expressed concerns about the heavy toll on Gaza's civilian population, with rumours that the State Department is split on whether to continue giving Israel its wholehearted support for the current campaign.

In a statement, Hamas said hun-

dreds of trucks carrying humanitarian aid – including fuel – would be allowed to enter Gaza. It said Israeli aircraft would stop flying over southern Gaza for the duration of the four-day ceasefire and for six hours daily in the north.

More than 11,000 Palestinians have been killed during the offensive.

As the agreement was being signed an air strike on Khan Younis on Tuesday killed 17 people, including several children.

US warning as Hezbollah hits base

US fighter aircraft have struck two operations centres belonging to Iraqi Hezbollah in response to attacks on American bases that have escalated alongside Israel's operations against Hamas in Gaza, defence officials said.

Attacks on US bases included the first use of a short-range ballistic missile against American troops, on Tuesday.

In retaliation US fighter jets struck Kataib

Hezbollah operations centre and a Kataib Hezbollah Command and Control node near Al Anbar and Jurf al Saqr, south of Baghdad.

The US say their forces in Iraq have been attacked 66 times by Iran-backed forces in recent weeks. Officials say the US does not seek a wider conflict, but that the Iran-backed attacks against American forces must stop, and that the US will take further action if needed.

Muslims targeted in new Chinese crackdown on faith

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has claimed that China is tightening its grip on religion after ordering the closure of dozens of mosques as part of Premier Xi's 'Sinicisation' programme.

Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch, says that Islam is at the centre of the current crackdown, "with the closure, destruction and repurposing of mosques part of a systemic effort to curb the practice of Islam in China."

The report follows mounting evidence of systematic human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims in China's north-western Xinjiang region. Beijing denies the accusations of abuse.

HRW says that in the Muslim-majority village of Liaoqiao in the region of Ningxia, three of six mosques have been stripped of their domes and minarets, and the rest have had their main prayer halls de-

stroyed. The mosques now feature Chinese-style pagodas.

It is estimated that around 1,300 mosques in Ningxia alone have been closed or converted since 2020 – a third of the total mosques in the region.

China's leader Xi Jinping has increasingly sought to align religion with its political ideology and Chinese culture. While Catholics are allowed to practise their faith in relative freedom, considerable disquiet has been expressed in some quarters over the Vatican's deal with Beijing to ensure this happens. On a number of occasions this year China appointed its own bishops and archbishops, in direct contravention of Church rules which state that only the pope can make senior appointments.

Much of the unease stems from the fact that the Vatican has never revealed the exact details of its



agreement with China, opening the way for speculation that the deal is largely in Beijing's favour.

The crackdown on mosques has been underway since 2018, when the Communist Party urged region-

al governments to "demolish more mosques and build fewer, and make efforts to compress the overall number," according to a leaked report.

Repression of Muslims, many of whom trace their lineage in China

back to the 8th century, has become severe in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The Chinese Government claims the consolidation of mosques helps reduce the economic burden on Muslims, but some Muslims believe it is part of efforts to redirect their loyalty towards the Party.

In 2018, children under 16 were banned from participating in religious activities or study in Linxia, a city previously known as China's 'Little Mecca' for its Muslim nature.

Arab and Muslim leaders across the world should be "asking questions and raising concerns", said Elaine Pearson, Human Rights Watch's Asia director.

Other ethnic and religious minorities have also been affected by the Government's campaign.

In recent months the authorities have also removed crosses from churches, arrested pastors and pulled Bibles from online stores.

Maverick Milei takes power as Argentina takes step to the right

Unconventional outsider Javier Milei has declared that the “reconstruction of Argentina begins today” after securing a resounding victory in the country’s presidential election last Sunday.

The populist candidate won 55.7 per cent of the vote, easily defeating his rival in the run-off, economy minister Sergio Massa.

Milei’s win is the widest margin since the country’s return to democracy in 1983.

“Argentina’s situation is critical,” said Mr Milei, a self-described anarcho-capitalist who has been compared to former US president Donald Trump.

“The changes our country needs are drastic. There is no room for gradualism, no room for lukewarm measures.”

Mr Massa, the ruling Peronist party candidate had conceded early in the evening, saying Argentines “chose another path” after a fiercely polarised campaign in which Mr Milei promised a dramatic shake-up to the state to deal with soaring inflation and rising poverty.

“Starting tomorrow... guaranteeing the political, social and economic functions is the responsibility of the new president,” Mr Massa said.

With victory to Mr Milei, the country will take an abrupt shift to the right with a president who got his start as a television talking head blasting what he called the “political caste”.

Inflation has soared above 140% and poverty has worsened while Mr Massa has held his post.

Mr Milei has said he would slash the size of the government, scrap the peso and use the US dollar as currency, stimulate the economy



Milei supporters celebrate his victory in Buenos Aires

with tax cuts and eliminate the central bank as a way to tackle galloping inflation that he blames on successive governments printing money indiscriminately in order to fund public spending.

He also espouses several conservative social policies, including an opposition to sex education in schools and abortion, which Argentina’s Congress legalised in 2020.

Mr Massa’s campaign cautioned Argentines that his libertarian opponent’s plan to eliminate key ministries and sharply curtail the state would threaten public services, including health and education, and welfare programmes many rely on.

Mr Milei accused his opponent and his allies of running a “campaign of fear” and he walked back some of his most controversial proposals, such as loosening gun control.

In his final campaign ad, he looked at the camera and assured

eo call with Mr Milei, congratulating him on his victory and praising its signal to the world.

Mr Bolsonaro posted a video of the call to social media.

“You have big work ahead,” he told the president-elect. “The work goes beyond Argentina. You represent a lot to us democrats, and we are lovers of liberty. You represent a lot for Brazil and be sure that everything that’s possible to do for you, I will be at your disposal.”

Mr Milei said in an interview on Radio Mitre that he plans to travel to the United States and Israel before taking office on December 10.

The US trip has a “spiritual connotation” and involves visiting rabbis in Miami and New York with whom he is close. From there, he intends to head to Israel.

Mr Milei, who has long said he was considering converting to Judaism, has often emphasised his support for Israel and frequently waved an Israeli flag at his rallies.

He had previously said he wanted to move Argentina’s Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, following in Mr Trump’s footsteps.

No trip home for Pope Francis? Special feature – pg 18

Pakistan forces Afghans home

More than 400,000 Afghans have returned to their home country following a crackdown on illegal foreigners in the country, Pakistani authorities said.

An estimated 1.7 million Afghans had been living in Pakistan when authorities announced a crackdown, saying that anyone without proper documents had to leave the country by 31st October or face arrest.

However, Pakistani officials said that 1.4 million Afghans registered as refugees need not worry as only people without proper documentation are being sought.

In the 1980s, millions of Afghans fled to neighbouring Pakistan during the Soviet occupation, with more arriving after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in the 1990s, and again in 2021.

Since 1st November, police have been going door-to-door to check migrants’ documentation. Officials said the crackdown involves all foreigners in the country, but most of those affected are Afghans.

The latest development comes days after the World Health Organisation warned that about 1.3 million Afghans were expected to return to their country of origin from Pakistan despite the onset of cold weather. Such expulsions have drawn widespread criticism from international and domestic human rights groups.



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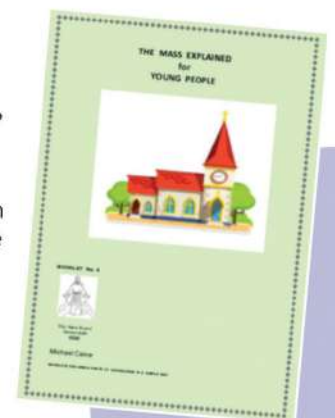
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The Argentine Trump looks set to rip up the rule book after sweeping to power

Peron establishment's doom-laden strategy fails to stop the Milei bandwagon

The chances of an emotional homecoming papal visit appear to have receded still further after a man who once labelled Pope Francis a “filthy leftist” swept home in Argentina’s presidential election last weekend.

As reported on page 17, upstart presidential candidate Javier Milei swept to power on a radical libertarian platform of dollarising the economy and shrinking the state in a country beset by recurring economic crises and triple-digit inflation.

An economist and congressman, Milei claimed 55% of the vote and won all but three of Argentina’s 24 provinces, beating Economy Minister Sergio Massa of the ruling Peronist coalition.

“Today, the reconstruction of Argentina begins,” Milei told enraptured supporters celebrating outside a hotel in central Buenos Aires, who shouted, “Freedom!” and “The caste is going to fall!” – a reference to Milei calling politicians “the political caste.”

“The model of decadence has come to an end,” Milei added. “There is no going back.”

An eccentric figure with an unruly mop of hair, Wolverine sideburns and a vituperative speaking style, Milei has promised to scrap the Argentine peso for the US dollar to curb inflation of more than 140 per cent, eliminate eight of 18 government ministries, “burn down” the Central Bank and only pursue relations with what he considers free nations.

With 40 per cent of the population living in poverty, his win came as a repudiation of the country’s political class and economic policies of the past 20 years. Since the fall of Argentina’s military rulers in 1983 after the chaos of its invasion of the Falklands Islands and subsequent short but brutal war with the UK, Peronists have been the dominating force in Argentinian politics. Harking back to the leadership of Juan Peron, they have long prided themselves on “social justice,” which included free education, health care, and social welfare spending – much of which became less sustainable in recent years, according to analysts, who pointed to the Central Bank’s practice of printing money.

So how did Milei defeat the incumbent party and take Argentina down a path where a political novice is in power – as its neighbour Brazil did with



Bolsonaro, and the United States did with Donald Trump? “I think it is a triumph of offering hope and an alternative view, against someone else giving the opinion that their opponent’s ideas were doomed to fail, said Nicholas Saldas. “Massa’s campaign of fear fell flat as the dire state of the economy under his watch hobbled any chance he had to win the presidency.

“The old phrase of ‘it’s the economy stupid’ still applies,” he added, highlighting his own expertise as a senior analyst for Latin America and the Caribbean at the Economist Intelligence Unit. “But the scale of the victory suggests it was more than just the economy,” he added.

The Peronist campaign revved up a well-oiled machine in time for the first round of voting in October, implementing tax holidays and increasing subsidies to key electoral districts. It was effective enough to deliver Massa a six-point victory in the first round of voting on 22nd October. But any hopes Massa could finish the job last weekend were dashed when it was obvious that the voters of the centre-right candidate Patricia Bullrich, who finished third, followed her lead and switched for Milei.

Milei, for all his bright hopes, eccentric language and enthusiasm, appears to have benefitted most from a political wave which has run through South America and has seen a host of incumbents lose power amid stagnating or recessing economies. “The same party has been governing for (most of) the last 40 years,” said Enrique Flores, a Milei supporter who works in recycling. “It’s going to be a complete turnaround.”

It also portends challenges for Church-state relations. Milei has been incredibly outspoken towards Pope Francis, labelling his fellow Argentine as a “malignant presence on earth,” while a campaign spokesperson even went as far as to call for Argentina to break off relations with the Vatican.

It’s true that Milei stepped back from this comment and softened his tone in recent weeks to win more centrist voters, however. Many of his supporters come from rural, agrarian Argentina where the Church still holds considerable sway, and even Milei’s desire to be an outspoken critic of all those who held power previously couldn’t lead him to attack a Church that still played a key role in so many voters’ lives.

“It remains an open question as

to what happens next between Milei and the Church,” Mariano De Vedia, a political editor and religious affairs writer at the Argentine newspaper *La Nacion*.

“The relationship can get on track if the more moderate style that Milei is showing in his recent appearances persists. It’s likely, however, that as the social crisis deepens, differences will remain,” he said.

Noticeably, the Argentine bishops’ have not commented on Milei’s victory.

What is more interesting is that those priests on the front-line of life in Argentina’s poorest districts have come down hard against the new president, even going so far as to say a Mass of reparation in September after his comments denigrating the pope.

“He’s a person that wants to destroy the state,” said Fr Roberto Ferrari, a priest working with the poor in the Diocese of San Isidro, which covers suburban Buenos Aires. “He wants to be head of state to destroy the state.”

Fr Ferrari, who is part of the Grupo de Curas en la Opcion por los Pobres (Group of Priests in the Option for the Poor), said the Church hierarchy “tried not to enter a political dispute” with Milei.

“Instead of attacking Milei to defend the pope, what they have done is invite him to come (to Argentina) as a positive gesture, instead of making anti-Milei gestures,” he added.

So where does leave that much discussed papal visit? As reported previously in the *Universe*, the pope has held back from visiting his homeland for fear, so sources claim, that he would be used as a political football by politicians.

However, with Milei now safely ensconced in the presidential palace, could we see a moderating of his views and an olive branch extended to the Holy See?

“Milei, for all his ‘outside’ claims, is a shrewd political operator and he will play his cards in a way that suits his popularity best,” said one Vatican commentator. “If things go well, the economy improves and his popularity holds up, you can see Milei thinking a papal visit would cement his position.

“However, if the economy continues to stagnate you can also see him lashing out at his perceived enemies. He will attack the Peronists first, for leaving the country in so bad a state, but after that it is easy to see this Trump of the Argentine put the Church back into the firing line.”

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WORLD SPOTLIGHT

Remembering Soviet-era genocide of Ukraine, ecumenical service prays hope overcomes hatred

Gina Christian

As hundreds gathered at a US church to mark a Soviet-era genocide against Ukrainians, “our hearts, our hope, our prayer” will conquer the hatred and violence that fuel war, said Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia.

The archbishop led a final benediction concluding an ecumenical prayer service held at St. Patrick Cathedral in New York City to mark the 90th anniversary of the Holodomor, an artificial famine in Ukraine engineered by Soviet Union leader Josef Stalin between 1932-1933.

The annual commemoration, held for more than 30 years, was organised by the Ukrainian American Congress Committee of America.

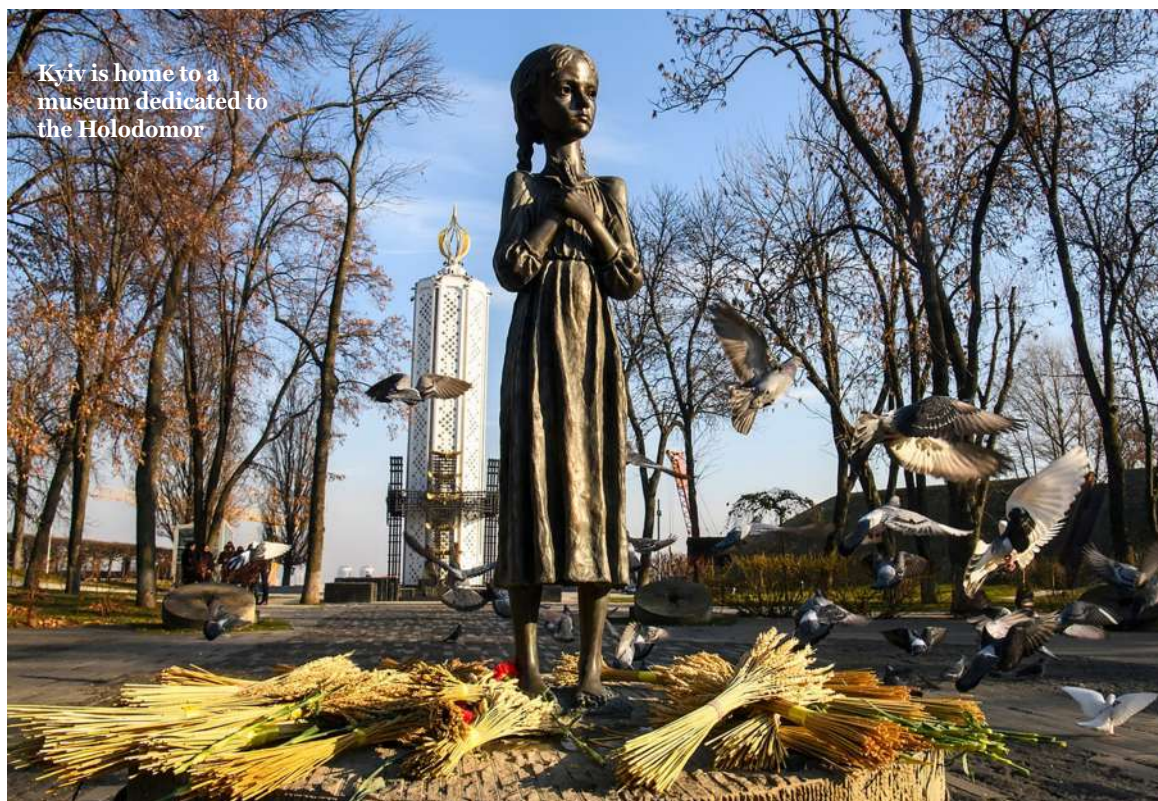
Named for the Ukrainian words signifying ‘hunger’ and ‘death,’ Stalin’s famine claimed approximately seven-10 million Ukrainian lives in tandem with a brutal Soviet policy of collectivisation, theft, terror and abuse that sought to erase Ukrainian cultural and political identity.

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of the Latin Archdiocese of New York welcomed those on hand at the service, many of whom had arrived after taking part in a solemn procession from St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church in New York’s East Village neighbourhood, with several dressed in traditional Ukrainian attire and carrying stalks of wheat, emblematic of the Holodomor.

Among the dignitaries in attendance at the cathedral were Metropolitan Antony and Archbishop Daniel of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, Ukraine Ambassador to the US Oksana Markarova, Ukraine Ambassador to the United Nations Sergiy Kyslytsya, US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Ambassador Elisabeth Millard, acting representative of the US to the U.N. Economic and Social Council.

The Ukrainian Chorus Dumka of New York provided music for the gathering, including a rendition of Mykola Lysenko’s *Prayer for Ukraine*, a spiritual anthem of that nation long performed as a closing hymn at Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church of Ukraine liturgies.

Seated in the front row at the service were two Holodomor survivors, Nadia Severyn and



Kyiv is home to a museum dedicated to the Holodomor

Ukrainian Orthodox Father Yuriy Bazylevsky.

“They have big hearts. They lived with hope,” said Archbishop Gudziak during his benediction. “They have overcome incredible brutality (and) and bloodshed to give life, and through their presence, to give us hope.”

In his opening remarks, Cardinal Dolan described the “magnificent Ukrainian people” as “experts in suffering.”

Russian aggression against Ukrainians has spanned centuries under tsarist, Soviet and post-communist regimes, including that of current Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Since launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 – which continues attacks begun in 2014 that killed and injured thousands – it is estimated that Russia has killed more than 9,701 Ukrainian civilians (including 510 children); injured some 17,748; held 19,600 children in Russian “re-education” camps; forcibly transferred 2.5 million Ukrainians from southern and eastern Ukraine to the Russian Federation; and committed close to 113,138 documented war crimes, according to Ukraine’s Government.

Currently, there are an estimated 5.1 million individuals internally displaced within Ukraine, according to the International Organization for Migration, part of the United Nations network. More than 6.2 million Ukrainians have

sought safety abroad since the start of the full-scale invasion.

Some 30 countries, as well as the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, have declared the 1932-1933 Holodomor a genocide. So has the vatican; in a letter to the Ukrainian people written in November 2022, Pope Francis recalled the “terrible genocide of the *Holodomor*.”

Markarova noted that “more than 30” US states have “already recognised the Holodomor as genocide,” with New York becoming the 34th to do so shortly before the prayer service.

Kyslytsya said that 45 UN member states, including the US and the UK, have signed on to Ukraine’s declaration on the 90th anniversary of the Holodomor.

In 2018, the US Congress recognised the Holodomor as a genocide.

Russia’s latest attacks on Ukraine’s grain harvests, upon which numerous nations are dependent, have evoked again the Holodomor.

Having walked away from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which enabled Ukrainian grain shipments to continue amid the war, Russia has continued to relentlessly target Ukraine’s ports, while ravaging Ukraine’s fertile soil through extensive mining and through the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam.

In a report released last week

The Hague-based Global Rights Compliance – an international human rights law foundation – found Russia had systematically planned prior to its full-scale invasion of Ukraine to pillage over \$1 billion of Ukrainian grain per year. The report will form a forthcoming dossier of starvation war crimes that will be submitted to the International Criminal Court.

“We are again faced with starvation, suffering and horror for not only Ukraine but nations throughout the world,” said Metropolitan Antony in his reflection.

Amid such horrors, Ukrainians offer the world a “radiant example” of “perseverance and hope,” said Cardinal Dolan.

He stressed the importance of the commemoration, saying that “remembrance is so important that Jesus ... the night before he died on the cross” instituted the Eucharist, asking his disciples to “do this in remembrance of me.”

“The last word of our prayer today is a word of hope,” said Archbishop Gudziak. “And so we pray our hearts, with great hope and a trust that humanity, created in God’s image and likeness, will overcome the hate – in Ukraine, among terrorists, killing in the Holy Land, the death of Muslims in China ... antisemitism and Islamophobia.

“It will overcome the hatred of Putin. That is our prayer today.”

Zelensky thanks press for keeping Ukraine story on front pages

President Volodymyr Zelensky has hailed the important role of the world’s media in fostering international support for Ukraine, as he met representatives of Fox News and *The Sun*, including Fox Corporation chief executive Lachlan Murdoch.

He thanked his guests for “comprehensive coverage” of the war, including shining light on “Russian atrocities” despite personal risks.

He also told *The Sun* how he has survived at least five assassination attempts by Russian President Vladimir Putin, likening his reaction to the attempts as “just like Covid”.

He told the newspaper: “The first one is very interesting, when it is the first time, and after that it is just like Covid. “First of all people don’t know what to do with it and it’s looking very scary.

“And then after that, it is just intelligence sharing with you detail that one more group came to Ukraine to (attempt) this.”

But he could not tell the newspaper exactly how many plots he had survived.

The Sun also reported that Mr Zelensky accused the Kremlin of helping Hamas launch attacks in Israel in October, and that the Ukraine-Russia conflict could spiral into a third world war.

He also said Ukraine needs more Western aid and weapons.

Mr Zelensky thanked reporters across the globe for garnering support. “All this time, journalists, cameramen, editors, photographers, drivers have been on the frontline,” he said. “As this is a hybrid war, information is also a weapon in Russian hands.

“My sincere condolences to the families and friends of those very brave men and women who lost their lives trying to show what is happening in Ukraine.

“In particular, it is thanks to journalists from many countries that we now have such support in the world.”

He also emphasised the importance of keeping the world’s attention on the conflict at a time when it is “blurred by other events”.

“For some reason, people treat it like a movie and expect that there will be no long pauses in the events, that the picture before their eyes will always change, that there will be some surprises every day,” he said. “But for us, for our warriors, this is not a movie. These are our lives. This is daily hard work. And it will not be over as quickly as we would like, but we have no right to give up and we will not.”

Naples' narrow alleyways' advent treasures remind us how to be the Christians Jesus wanted us to be

Emily Stimpson Chapman

In many countries, the Via San Gregorio Armeno wouldn't even qualify as an alley. Measuring perhaps 5 feet across, it's barely wide enough for three men to pass through it abreast. Yet come Advent, the little street in Naples, Italy, welcomes thousands of visitors from around the country and around the world every day.

The visitors come not because the street leads anywhere, but rather for the street itself. Or, more accurately, for the shops that line the street – hundreds of tiny workshops, where artisans and their assistants craft the 'presepe' for which Naples is known.

The tourists who visit are inclined to call the presepe Nativity scenes, but that doesn't do them justice. They are much more than that. They are more than Mary, Jesus and Joseph. More than oxen, donkeys and sheep. More even than

shepherds, angels and Wise Men.

The presepe are entire villages, with butchers, bakers and candlestick makers all going about the business of their lives while the newly born Christ Child sleeps in their midst. In the houses and shops of the presepe, fires burn and candles gleam. Bread appears to bake. Wine stands ready for pouring.

This is no silent night, but rather a night filled with love, laughter and life.

The detailing of each and every piece of the presepe found along the Via San Gregorio Armeno is exact and minute, the work of artists who spend years honing their craft. The Neapolitans take their presepe seriously. For them, it's more than art. It's their heritage, part of their city's life since the modern presepio first was crafted here in the mid-16th century.

In 1563, the Council of Trent urged Catholics to embrace the creche as a particularly Catholic tradition (as opposed to the Christmas tree favoured by Martin Luther). Neapolitan artist St. Gaetano is said to have been the first to answer the call, crafting the forerunner of the modern presepio. Other artists followed suit, creating elaborate scenes with richly dressed, life-sized statues for churches and convents throughout the city.

As the years passed, other artisans in Naples started making smaller scenes for private homes – scenes with multitudes of figurines and intricate moving parts. The passing of more years brought the incorporation of regional markers into the presepe, with life outside the stable where the Holy Family rested taking on the look and culture of the towns for which they were made.

Today, little has changed. The

presepe crafted in Naples and distributed throughout Italy and around the world are much the same as the presepe crafted in Naples during Napoleon's day. Technology has given the artists the tools to include electric fires and burning candles in their miniature masterpieces, but most of the materials used are as they were, crowded with life and embodying local culture.

In the seaside town of Sorrento, the *presepio* on display in the town square shows fishermen working on their nets, while a market sells the large lemons for which the town is known. The Roman presepe often feature aqueducts, pine trees and olive groves. Sicilian presepe include coral and alabaster, while Neapolitan presepe overflow with food – bread, fruit, roasts and wine.

The scene immediately around the manger, however, is almost always the same. Christ lies in his

bed of straw, while his adoring mother and foster-father look upon him. The oxen and the ass are there too, as are the shepherds and the magi. That scene is the unchanging heart of the presepio. It witnesses to the miracle of love, grace and humility born in Bethlehem long ago, and it gives meaning and purpose to the whole riotous tableau to which it belongs.

But the riotous tableau isn't incidental to the presepio.

The men and women who populate it, eating and drinking, working and resting, fighting and arguing, have a meaning as well. They have a witness to give.

On one level, the varied figurines within the presepio remind us that the Incarnation isn't an abstraction. God didn't just become man. He became man in a specific time and place. When he was born, men and women were eating and drinking, working and resting, fighting and



A woman sits outside a nativity display in the traditional market of San Gregorio Armeno in central Naples



arguing. On the night he first looked upon his Creation with human eyes, both political dramas and personal dramas were unfolding.

History records the political dramas – the intrigues of Caesar’s government and machinations of Herod’s court. The personal ones remain hidden. But they were no less real, and the representation of them within the presepio helps us see that God did indeed come into this raucous world of ours on a cold night 2,000 years ago.

The villagers of the presepio also remind us of how ignorant men were of the miracle transpiring in their midst. Love and existence himself had become incarnate and entered time to redeem and save his people, but except for a handful of shepherds and Wise Men, no one knew. They were busy worrying about their roast of lamb and the interest due on their loans, while God lay a stone’s throw away in a cradle of hay.

In that reminder there’s a reminder for us as well. It’s a reminder that we too have God in our midst – at every Mass and in every tabernacle – and should guard against neglecting that miracle because we’re too busy fretting about roasts and loans of our own.

Even more importantly, however, the presepio reminds us that even in the fretting about roasts and loans we’re called to encounter Christ.

Christ came into a busy world 2,000 years ago, and he comes into an even busier world now. But he didn’t and doesn’t come into the world to remain separate from the eating and drinking, working and resting, fighting and making up. Rather, he came – he comes – to enter into it all and transform it.

The Incarnation made it possible for Christ to atone for man’s sin and offer us the reward of eternal life.

“To become holy, we can’t meet Christ just in the church. We can’t meet him only where he waits for us. We have to welcome him into our lives as well ...”

But it also made it possible for Christ to redeem the life we live now, to make every thing we do and encounter in these bodies of ours an opportunity to discover him, serve him and become more like him.

By not forgetting about the world into which Christ entered, those who pioneered the presepio, like the greatest of saints, demonstrated that they understood that. They understood that to become the men and women God made us to be, so much more is required than simply going to Mass on Sundays and confession once a year. To become holy, we can’t meet Christ just in the church. We can’t meet him only where he waits for us. We have to welcome him into our lives as well – into our homes and offices, kitchen tables and Facebook pages, the rooms where we sit with our friends, and the rooms where we rock our babies to sleep.

That’s the call going forth from those Neapolitan presepe. It’s a call to live a life where we both see Christ in everything we do and see everything we do as a way to approach Christ. That’s a sacramental life. That’s a Catholic life. That’s the life to which we’re called in Advent, at Christmas and on every other day of the year.

What a world it would be if every tourist thronging the Via San Gregorio Armeno at Advent-time answered that call.

What a world it would be if we answered that call.

Patriarchs, Church leaders urge Holy Land’s Christians to ‘stand strong’ in Advent message

Judith Sudilovsky

Christmas in Bethlehem and the Holy Land this year will be one of solemnity, prayer and fasting as the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem called upon the faithful to forgo “unnecessarily festive activities” this year and to “stand strong” with those facing the afflictions of war, focusing more on the spiritual meaning of Christmas.

“Since the start of the war, there has been an atmosphere of sadness and pain. Thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children, have died or suffered serious injuries,” they said in a statement earlier this month.

“Many more grieve over the loss of their homes, their loved ones, or the uncertain fate of those dear to them. Throughout the region, even more have lost their work and are suffering from serious economic challenges.”

The continuing conflict between Hamas and Israel has led to thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands being forced to flee their homes. But despite repeated calls for a humanitarian ceasefire and a de-escalation of violence, the war has continued, leaving the Church leaders full of grief and unprepared to ‘celebrate’ Christmas as they usually would.

They said that though the sacred Advent season is normally one of joy and anticipation in preparation for the celebration of Christmas including religious services as well as colourful public festivities, “these are not normal times.”

“We call upon our congregations to stand strong with those facing such afflictions by this year foregoing any unnecessarily festive activities,” the Church leaders said. “We likewise encourage our priests and the faithful to focus more on the spiritual meaning of Christmas in their pastoral activities and liturgical celebrations during this period, with all the focus directed at holding in our thoughts our brothers and sisters affected by this war and its consequences, and with fervent prayers for a just and lasting peace for our beloved Holy Land.”

They also invited the faithful to “advocate, pray and contribute generously” as they are able for the relief of victims of the war and the needy.

“In these ways, we believe, we will be standing in support of those continuing to suffer – just as Christ did with us in his Incarnation, in order that all of God’s children might receive the hope of a New Jerusalem in the



Bethlehem’s Christmas celebrations will be deliberately muted this year

presence of the Almighty, where ‘death shall be no more, neither mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away’ (Revelation 21:4),” they wrote in their statement.

Meanwhile, bishops around the globe joined prayers for peace in the Holy Land and condemned the violence. The Australian bishops’ conference issued a statement titled *Praying for a Lasting Peace*.

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe of Perth, president of the conference, said that “the Australian Catholic Bishops join with the Australian Catholic community in expressing our grief and anguish over the suffering of people in the Holy Land.”

Along with praying “for our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land” and holding them “and their suffering in our hearts,” the archbishop called people of faith “to pray with us for a lasting peace and the triumph of human dignity,” encouraging the acts of charity “to provide for the material needs of people who are isolated and facing the greatest hardship. The need is urgent,” Archbishop Costelloe said.

In a powerful homily on Remembrance Day, Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta condemned both “those who enacted the attacks which lead to the death of innocent Israelis,” but also condemned those “who are causing the deaths of ten thousand

“We encourage our priests and the faithful to focus more on the spiritual meaning of Christmas in their pastoral activities and liturgical celebrations”

Palestinians.”

Lamenting the number of children killed, Archbishop Scicluna questioned by what logic one could reason that those children were terrorists.

“There is a leader who has the power to end this conflict, but instead quoted the word of God,” the Archbishop Scicluna said in reference to a statement made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he said that “There is a time for everything. A time for peace, and a time for war.” Netanyahu said calls for a ceasefire are calls “for Israel to surrender” to terrorists, and that a ceasefire would only be possible if all 239 hostages held by militants in Gaza are released.

In his homily, the archbishop urged his listeners not to forget the dignity of humanity, adding that “we are currently living through a spectacle of barbarity and lack of humanity.”

“The tragedy is that those who have the veto in the UN Security Council are not doing their duty. Today it is our duty to remember and to not forget,” Archbishop Scicluna said.

The French bishops also addressed the Israel-Gaza war during their Lourdes plenary assembly. “We call on all our fellow citizens, in France, not to give in to the simplistic logic of confrontation between religious communities,” Archbishop Mâric de Moulins d’Amieu de Beaufort of Reims and president of the bishops’ conference said. “The question of antisemitism has particular resonance for us Christians,” Bishop Pierre-Antoine Bozo of Limoges added.

“But we are also very touched by what hurts and bruises the Palestinians. We are not taking sides,” he said.

Preparing for Advent: Insta-culture and why patience is a Christian virtue

Scott P. Richert

When my sisters and I were young, my mother would spend all of Advent baking biscuits and making sweets. That may hardly seem remarkable; after all, countless millions of Christmas biscuits, cakes and other treats are baked and consumed every year between the start of December and Christmas Day. But my mother didn't eat any of the biscuits she baked, and neither did we – not before Christmas, that is.

Every fairy cake, Polish wedding cake, fruit cake, square of fudge, and chunk of peanut brittle was packed away in vintage green Tupperware or metal tins (depending on whether they were intended for us or for relatives and friends), to be brought out only once Christmas Day had dawned.

Four or five decades later, that seems remarkable, because what economists call 'delayed gratification' is simply not part of life anymore – and that's as true of Catholics and other Christians as it is of the average person. Fifty years ago, the question "What do you want for Christmas?" meant something very different than it does today, when a couple of clicks on Amazon can satisfy the desire of a child of any age with next-day (or even same-day) delivery.

When I was a child, I thought as a child, which meant that, of course, I wanted to eat just one biscuit hot out of the oven or sneak



one piece of fudge. But Mum never let me do so, because satisfying my desire wasn't the point of her baking. In fact, if anything, the purpose of all of her preparations throughout Advent was the opposite: to increase my desire, and to direct it toward its proper end.

If you eat it before Christmas, a Christmas biscuit is just a biscuit.

A bigger lesson

My mother entered into eternal life in the early morning hours of 1st November-All Saints Day.

Through the days and nights before she quietly passed from us, my father, my sister Monica and I held those hands that had mixed, shaped and baked all of those biscuits just a few feet away from where the hospital bed was set up in the living room of the house that had been our family home for all but a handful of months of my parents' 56 years of marriage. Polish wedding cakes and biscuits were the last things on our minds as we prepared ourselves and one another for life without her.

But a few days later, when Fr Charles Hall, the priest who had anointed Mum seven weeks earlier, and who would celebrate her funeral Mass on 6th November, asked us for a particular memory of Mum that would help him to understand who she really was, the first thing that came to mind was her Advent baking. Everything we do reveals something about where our heart lies. Too often, by necessity as much as by choice, we are caught up in the here and now. There's work to be done, bills to be

paid, clothes to be washed, children to be fed.

But as much as necessity may seem to force our hand, there is an element of choice in our actions as well. And that choice involves not simply what we do but why we choose to do it. I do not know, and of course, I cannot ask her now, whether Mum really intended to teach us a lesson with her Advent baking. But as we talked with Fr Charles, we realised that she had done just that.

Joyful expectation

To be a Christian means to live always with a sense of longing, of that joyful expectation tinged with sorrow that comes from knowing that the greatest desire of our heart will never be fulfilled in this earthly life. That, perhaps more than any other part of the Christian experience, is a reality that the modern world rejects.

A few hours after our mother passed from this life, my sister and I stood beside our father in the church where we had first received the gift of faith, and we sang with all the saints in glory of the life yet to come. And as we prayed for the repose of my mother's soul, we gave thanks for the years we had spent with her, and for the biscuits and sweets through which Mum had prepared us all for living that day and the rest of our lives in the deep longing for, and joyful expectation of, our reunion before God.

You don't know who you are; you need others to tell you

David Mills

One of the most important rules for living in the world is: You are probably not who you think you are, and many others know you better than you know yourself.

This is an old-guy lesson, I'm afraid, one of those lessons one learns from long and painful, often embarrassing experiences. We charge into life full of certainties – among them the certainty that we know exactly who we are – and then we find out we don't. That usually happens in stages over time, and it's rarely fun.

We can easily see this in other people, because sometimes it's really obvious. The man who thinks he's God's gift to women and hits on women half his age, and doesn't understand why they don't respond. The woman who thinks she's a ray of sunshine and never notices that people hide when they see her coming. The man who thinks he's a bold truth-teller who doesn't know he's usually wrong and blames his not having any

friends on everyone else's unwillingness to hear the truth.

A true lesson

In one of the most terrifying passages in scripture, Jesus speaks of the unexpected hour when the Son of Man returns and separates the sheep from the goats. The goats see themselves as sheep and protest Jesus's judgment.

They'd thought they were good religious people – they'd have done anything for Jesus – and find the angels herding them to the down escalator. It turns out Jesus sees them differently, and he's the only one who sees clearly.

St. Augustine knew that we're all a mess, and such a mess we don't know how much of a mess we are. As a theologian said to me, in his Confessions the saint teaches that "We are unavailable to ourselves."

We hear Augustine's famous line 'Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee' as a truism, but for the saint it was a hard-won discovery. He'd gone wrong in all

sorts of ways following his restless heart, because he didn't know who he was and therefore couldn't see who was the answer to all his questions and desires.

The problem

It's not a small thing, this ignorance. It hurts our relation to our Creator and Redeemer, and our relation to the world, especially the people who know us.

Here's a practical example that affects almost all our lives, thanks to both the media and social media: the belief that you must speak out, hard and loud, against the enemy. That you must go after them the way General Sherman went through Georgia. That you are 2023's Elijah facing the prophets of Baal.

We feel zeal for the good and that feeling makes sense. We see error as a fire set by arsonists that will sweep through the building unless we stop the arsonists. We must warn everyone about the arsonists as loudly and forcefully as we can.

See something, say something. Yell something

But if something must be said, must it be said by you? A lot of social media anger (and division in the Church) would be avoided if everyone tempted to speak out first asked themselves "Am I the person to do this?"

Are you actually a prophet like Elijah with his role and his duties? Is that who you are and who God wants you to be? Maybe, but it seems unlikely. You're probably not articulate enough, clever enough or holy enough. Few of us are, even among those of us who speak out for a living.

In any case, it is obvious that many people who think of themselves that way don't have the gifts for it, and more importantly, don't have the character for it. Maybe they may become the person to speak out. They're not that person now.

Good and bad zealotry

The Greek St. Nectarios of

Aegina, a holy man who seemed to other Orthodox a kind of fanatic because he took holiness so seriously, knew something about this. He distinguishes two kinds of zeal. "The zealot according to knowledge," he said, "motivated by the love of God and his neighbour, does all things with love and self-effacement. He does nothing that might bring sorrow to his neighbour."

But the zealot "not according to knowledge is a ruinous man who turns the Gospel of Grace and love upside down.

His zeal is a seductive fire, a consuming fire. Destruction comes forth from him and desolation follows in his wake."

Who are we really? Which kind of zealot would we be if we tried speaking out?

There's no easy answer, except to listen to those good people who know you and love you enough to tell you the truth.

And to watch your language until you know.

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE

ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE



It's our eternal soul that provides the purpose for our creation

Here's a question to ponder: Is there a soul?

I was talking to a friend who doesn't believe in God and who said that there is no such thing as a soul.

I suspect that this is something many people believe, but I always tell them that every human being who has ever existed has not just a soul, but a necessary and eternal one.

If there was nothing after our death, it would mean that we could lead any type of life we wanted, because there would be no consequences during our life or after our death.

Civilisation would mean nothing to us. It's only when we must account for our actions that we need a civilisation with laws of behaviour as a necessity.

Most of the laws introduced by today's western nations are based upon the teachings of Christianity. Here in the UK, the main document in our history referring to the law was introduced by the people, making sure that we all obey it, even the king. It's called the Magna Carta

This document was a great



influence when the American founding fathers drew up their Declaration of Independence

A replica of it, whose principles underline much of their

constitution, is displayed in the Crypt of the US Capitol.

If countries had no laws to govern how their peoples can act, there would be widespread chaos

all over the world. Everything would be dictated by the strong.

Most of the laws in Christian countries around the world are based upon the Ten Commandments,

a covenant between God and humanity, given to Moses by God.

His son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, reduced it all down to love God and our neighbours.

If we do this there would be no conflicts of any kind between human beings.

Like all things created by intelligent beings, this covenant between human beings and the Christian God must have a purpose, which is: **A reward for obeying it, or punishment if we do not.**

The reward is eternal life in Paradise with God if we obey, and eternal damnation in hell if we do not. This explains why there must be life of some kind after our mortal bodies die.

Since our human bodies die and then perish, how can we live for ever after our death. The only answer is if we have another type of life.

Jesus taught us that we do indeed have one. It is a spiritual, eternal one we call a soul, without it there would be no purpose for our existence, yet we do exist.

Our eternal soul provides the purpose for our creation.

JOURNEY IN FAITH

Remembering a decade

CHRIS MCDONNELL



We tend to chunk periods of time into decades and identify them by some defining characteristic. Depending on our age (and memory) it only takes a few pointers for a decade to be named, either by person or event.

President John F Kennedy was shot and killed in a motorcade in Dealey Plaza, in the city of Dallas, Texas on 22nd November 1963, some 60 years ago. With that fatal shot, so died a dream summed up in JFK's inauguration challenge: "Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans - born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage ... Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

On that same day two other men died, both of them novelists,

C.S.Lewis and Aldous Huxley. Lewis, who wrote children's books for adults, was perceptive of our human condition. He wrote in the *Problem of Pain*: "Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also more hard to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden: it is easier to say 'My tooth is aching' than to say 'My heart is broken.'

Huxley looked ahead to a different pattern of human existence, one of uniformity and control, in his novel. In a *Brave New World*, a controlled and conforming society was divided into five castes of academic ability. He was also a pacifist. In his novel *Eyeless in Gaza* he wrote: "Those who defend war have invented a pleasant-sounding vocabulary of abstractions in which to describe the process of mass murder."

Three different yet significant



men who all happened to die on the same day, November 22nd 1963.

The Second Council of the Vatican (1962-65) had opened in the October of 1962. Called by John XXIII, it was to be a brief papacy for John's days concluded in early June 1963, just a few weeks after the publication of his seminal peace encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*. Although his time in the See of Peter was to be short, his words are

still significant. "I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in."

With two major issues coming to the boil in the US, Civil Rights and the Vietnamese war, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights act in to law in early July, 1964 and began the build-up of American forces in Vietnam.

At the beginning of the decade, May 1961, President Kennedy, in a speech to Congress, declared: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth." With five months to go, in July 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin did just that.

The 60s was a decade of music and clothes, the Beatles, the Stones, Carnaby Street and the designer Mary Quant. Colour and a

vivacious way life replaced the drabness of the 50s. It was also influenced by the growth of a drug culture, the social consequence of which still accompany us some sixty years on.

No small wonder that the phrase "the Sixties" has become a generic term for ten fateful years. Let's conclude this brief reflection on a significant decade with the final verse of a Bob Dylan song.

*Come mothers and fathers throughout the land
And don't criticize what you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command
Your old road is rapidly aging
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand
For the times, they are a-changin'.*

A song covered by many singers, "The times they are a-changin'" became the anthem of a generation. They are changing still.

God yearns for a united Christian family

The prayer of Jesus after the last supper was that his followers be one, so that the world would know that his Father sent him (John 17 : 20 – 21).

How manifest is that message of unity among Christians in the world of today? What do we see? A Church united or a Church divided? One thing is sure: the Lord wants us to be one, just as He and the Father are one.

The question is: How do we achieve this unity when there is so much division and animosity among Christians themselves and among Christian denominations? Can it be done? The answer, I believe, is yes.

It can be done if we follow the example of Christ to love one another as he has loved us. We can be united in the teaching of the gospel, and we can be united in our common cause of following the example of Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Christian unity must be a top priority for every individual Christian. That is why St Paul urges the Christians of his day to “make every effort” to maintain “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). When St Paul was writing, the Church was still one and undivided. Yet he admonished the Christians back then to do all in their power to work for unity in the body in Christ.

The situation today is far from the unity of the early Christians. The Church of Christ has suffered schisms upon schisms, divisions upon divisions, factions upon factions, with the result that anyone espousing “one flock, one shepherd” would appear to be dreaming an impossible dream. Still, that is what the Lord prayed for, and that is what we are commanded to strive for so that all “will become one flock under one shepherd” (John 10:16).

We must all work together for

‘When St Paul was writing, the Church was still one and undivided. Yet he admonished the Christians back then to do all in their power to work for unity in the body in Christ.’



Christian unity because we share so much in common. We should not be defined by our differences, but by what we have in common. Still, many Christians focus on their differences rather than on what they possess in common as followers of Christ. This can lead to division rather than unity.

In the Catholic Church today, for example, two different and opposing factions are evident.

One faction may be described as ideologues; that is, those who

espouse doctrinal fundamentalism or clarity of doctrine. There’s nothing wrong with this, in itself, but there’s more to the gospel than insisting on clarity of doctrine. Jesus insists that the person who will enter his kingdom is the one “who hears my word and puts it into practice.”

The other faction stresses the pastoral; namely, it puts the emphasis on following the example of Christ who reached out with love and compassion to draw all people

to himself.

There is no good reason why these two factions should be in conflict with one another when they have so much in common. We all share in one baptism, we profess the same gospel, we are powered by the same Holy Spirit, we are all children of the same God, and we are all called to follow the example of Jesus who is the fulfillment of God’s will for us on earth. What we have in common is much greater than what divides us. With this in

mind, we need to come together as Christians, not just Catholics, to share the love of Christ, and to spread this good news in a world waiting to be healed.

This is a very challenging task. The challenge facing every Christian today in regard to Christian unity is: do you have the will?

Do you believe it is possible? If you take Jesus’ prayer for unity seriously in the gospel of John, the answer is quite simply: yes.

John the Baptist yielded to no man - until Christ came along

“John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3:12

Today’s scriptures offers us the hope of a better life if we cast off sin and turn to the Lord with humility of heart. John the Baptist, as the forerunner of Christ, is the bearer of this news: the need to repent of

our sins.

The Gospel account about John the Baptist paints a picture of a rugged and straight-talking prophet. John was no sweet talker. He was tough as nails, this eater of honey and locusts. He saw no hint of life in the haughty Pharisees who stood before him unmoved and smug in their self-righteousness. They could have blossomed and led their people to experience the freedom and exhilaration of the children of God. John might as well lay the axe to a dry and lifeless trunk as expect a change of heart in these unforgiving men of stone or as Christ described them, “whited

sepulchres.”

God’s salvation, however, will not be stopped. It will sprout and grow and bloom wherever there is a willing heart. John the Baptist was aware of this and he delivered his message, straight and unadorned to those along the River Jordan’s banks.

John was prepared to move aside for one “more powerful” than himself, and when he stood down, the desert blossomed forth a saviour, Christ the Lord. Is it any wonder that Heaven and nature sing; is it any wonder that good people are full of cheer at Christmas time? Is it any wonder that the prophet Isaiah spoke of this birth of the

saviour as a time when the wolf and the lamb, the bear and the cow, the ox and the lion will be at ease together.

These are images of the peaceful reign of God.

The season of Advent which will be on us shortly is all about hope but we need to earn that hope by repenting of sin first, in order to receive Christ into our lives.

The baptism of Christ is greater than the baptism of repentance by John. Christ’s baptism is a baptism of the holy spirit; it is a baptism within that carries with it the power to renew our feeble spirits to follow Christ’s example.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



Christ passed a different kind of judgement, one of forgiveness and love

26th November – Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe b, (A) On this, the last Sunday in the liturgical year, we honour Christ the King. It is a feast on which to renew our loyalty to Jesus our Saviour, shown in the way that we love our neighbour. The shepherd-theme is prominent, both as basis for our trusting God's care, and as a challenge to be, each in our own way, co-workers with the great Shepherd of our souls

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
God promises to personally care for his people, as the shepherd cares for the sheep

Thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats:

Responsorial: Psalm 22:1-3, 5-6
R./: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose. (R./)

Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit. He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name. (R./)

You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing. (R./)



The fresco of the Glory of Christ the King in the church Santuario del Santissimo Crocifisso by Gersam Turri 1927-1929

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever. (R./)

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
At the end of the world, all enemies will be overcome and Christ will rule as universal king

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one.

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46
We will be judged by the standard of visible, tangible love

Jesus said to them, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd

separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'

Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or

naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

A Kingdom of Justice, Love and Peace

Paul visualises Christ handing over the kingdom to God the Father at the end of time. This ideal kingdom is not something merely hoped for as a future gift, but something being worked for by Christians in the present time. The kingdom is indeed to be hoped for, but somehow it is also in our midst, in the process of becoming. Today's gospel shows how we are to promote the fuller coming of God's kingdom in our world. It comes whenever justice is done for the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, and the oppressed. To behave in this way is to imitate the Shepherd-King himself who is presented in our Gospels as one who eases alienation, who feeds, gives rest, heals and makes strong. Among his final words was a promise to the thief being crucified at his side, that he would be enfolded by the eternal love of God, in paradise.

The best way to honour Christ our King is to work for the unfolding and promoting of his kingdom. In working for the relief of deprived, oppressed or marginalised people, we are serving Christ in person, because he fully

identified with people in need, right up to his final moment in this life. The disciple of Christ the King cannot afford the luxury of living in a gated community, resolutely secure in a fortress, comfortably "keeping myself to myself" with the lame claim that "I do nobody any harm." To be deaf to the cries of my neighbour in need is to be deaf to Christ. To be blind to the anguish of the dying is to be blind to Christ. To recognise Christ as our Shepherd-king involves being carers or shepherds in some way ourselves; for the work of the Kingdom goes on until he comes again.

Two standards of judgement

A random act of kindness, a glass of water given out of goodness, seems like a very low threshold for a personal friendship with Christ. Christians have always had a strong trust in Christ's humanity; he was like us in every way except that he did not sin. Although this Sunday portrays him returning in regal splendour, the judgments of Jesus are not like ours either. He seeks good among the ordinary and the bad alike; too often we seek bad among the ordinary and the good alike. Just as Jesus told the soldiers arresting him that his kingdom was not of this world; his standard of judgment is not of this world either. That should be good news, although not everybody sees it that way.

"Vengeance is mine," said the Lord. Traditionally Christ has been represented as coming in majesty and power. From Michelangelo's ceiling of the Sistine Chapel to the mosaics in many a church, that image is prominent. The classic picture includes tormented souls being dragged off to eternal flames. It is likely that almost all of us have an idea of some of the people who should be in that category.

In the 1970s musical *Godspell*, Stephen Schwartz recreated that judgment scene. Only, this time, Jesus brings the damned along too. They had sung a song asking for mercy and they received it. That is an image which is very much in keeping with the words of Christ the King: "Judge not and you will not be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven."

He brings a different kind of rule, a rule where boundless mercy trumps self-righteous justice. **Published by kind permission of the Association of Catholic Priest.** See www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

FR DOYLE

Bring your children up in the faith - but it doesn't invalidate marriage if you don't

Q. I can understand that Jesus died on the cross to reconcile us with the Father, but why do we say that Jesus died to forgive our sins when we have to repent continually for those sins?

A. The Bible does say that Jesus has forgiven our sins. St. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:13 that “even when you were dead in transgressions ... he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.”

But it is perhaps more precise to say that Jesus, by suffering and dying for our redemption, has simply opened for us the possibility of Heaven – something we could not have done for ourselves.

The question remains, though, that if pardon for sin comes ultimately from Christ's work on Calvary, how is it received by individuals? The answer is that Jesus wants us to do our own part in making amends for our sins, so our eternal salvation is not automatic.

Remember that Matthew's Gospel (25:41) pictures Jesus at the last judgment saying to some, “Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” If the manner of our life has effectively been a denial of God's teachings, we will be judged on that.

And if God had already forgiven all of human sin in a single act, it would have made no sense for Christ to bestow on the disciples the power to forgive sins when he told them (Jn 20:22-23) following the resurrection: “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

Nor would it have made sense for Jesus, when teaching the disciples to pray the Our Father, to explain: “If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions” (Mt. 6:14-15).

Q. My question concerns Catholic sacramental marriage, which I understand to include a commitment by the couple to do their best to raise their children in the Catholic faith. Is a marriage invalidated when the parents, not even one of them, do not fulfill their commitment to raise their children in the faith - especially when they make no effort to bring children to Mass or share faith with them, even at an early age?

A. You are correct in assuming



that a Catholic marriage includes the commitment to raise children in the Catholic faith.

In fact, during the wedding ceremony itself, the priest asks the couple: “Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?”

And even in a mixed marriage (where one of the spouses is not a Catholic), the Catholic party must pledge to continue to practise the Catholic faith and must also (in the words of Canon 1125.1) “make a sincere promise to do all in his or her power so that all offspring are baptised and brought up in the Catholic Church.”

But the failure later in marriage to carry out that commitment does not affect the sacramental validity of the marriage itself. A valid Catholic marriage results when, in freely consenting to marry, the couple has the intention to marry for life, to be faithful to one another and to be open to children

Q. I am wondering what Mary did and where she lived during the three years of Jesus' ministry. Did she travel with the “women who ministered to him”?

A. In the Gospels, once the public ministry of Jesus has begun, Mary is mentioned in only a few scenes. We can assume that his mother did not accompany him throughout the course of that 2 ½ year period but continued to reside at Nazareth.

At a general audience in March 1997, Pope St John Paul II said: “The beginning of Jesus' mission also meant separation from his mother, who did not always follow her son in his travels on the roads of Palestine.

Jesus deliberately chose separation from his mother and from family affection, as can be inferred from the conditions he gave his disciples for following him and for dedicating themselves to proclaiming God's kingdom.”

Mary was present, of course, at the wedding feast of Cana (Jn. 2:1-11), where Jesus saved the hosts from embarrassment by providing more wine at his mother's request. Also, on one occasion during the course of Christ's preaching journeys, we learn (Lk. 8:19) that Mary and Jesus' “brothers” came to hear him but could not enter because of the crowd.

It was then that Jesus explained: “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it” (Lk 8:21). Mary was present, of course, at the foot of the cross during Christ's passion, and it was there that Jesus committed his mother (Jn. 19:26-27) to the care of his beloved disciple John.

Q. My understanding is that the Church teaches that bishops and priests are the successors of the apostles. Can this line really be traced back to one of the original apostles?

A. The Twelve Apostles were the privileged eyewitnesses sent to proclaim the teachings of Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew (28:19-20) reflects the fact that Christ, following the resurrection, commissioned the apostles and guaranteed his help: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age,” Jesus said.

It is the further belief of the Church, in what is known as the doctrine of apostolic succession, that bishops and priests today are linked in an unbroken line to those same original apostles.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, who died in the year 108 and is believed to have been a disciple of the apostle John, wrote in a letter to the Ephesians: “For we ought to receive every one whom the Master of the house sends to be over his household, as we would do him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord himself.”

The visible sign of ordination, from the New Testament onward, has been the imposition of hands. Thus, the transmission of the apostolic ministry is achieved by that ritual, together with the prayer of the celebrant that the ordinand be granted the gift of the Holy

Spirit to accomplish the ministry for which he has been chosen.

Q. I am an old-time Catholic. We were taught that, to be forgiven in confession, we had to: 1) be truly sorry; 2) resolve firmly never to commit the sin again; and 3) make it right (eg, give the money back). On television and in films, sometimes a murderer confesses to a priest who is unable then to break the seal of confession. Are murderers forgiven if they do not turn themselves into the police and serve prison time for the crime? Or is the sin forgiven with no strings attached?

A. With regard to the conditions for forgiveness, you learned your catechism well. In fact, the present-day Catechism of the Catholic Church says: “Many sins wrong our neighbour. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries)” (No. 1459).

You are right, too, about the seal of confession; a priest is bound to absolute secrecy. The church's Code of Canon Law could not be more clear: “The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason” (Canon 983).

A later canon stipulates that a priest who would violate the seal is to be excommunicated (Canon 1388). (In 2017, when an Australian government commission recommended that Catholic priests become mandatory reporters on child sexual abuse, the Catholic Church strongly objected as applied to the sacrament of penance.)

As to your specific question, forgiveness in the sacrament is contingent on a person's genuine sorrow and sincere resolve not to commit the sin again; those are the “strings attached.”

God's forgiveness is total and absolute, and murderers, like everyone else at the end of confession, are told that their ‘sins are forgiven.’

Beyond that, a priest has no power to condition absolution on the sinner's turning himself in to the police.

The confessor can encourage, plead with, urge the penitent to do exactly that but, having judged the penitent to be truly sorry, the absolving priest has no authority to impose this further step as a prerequisite to absolution.

Advertising: Andrea Black – advertising@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

Stewardship, and five keys to help disciples respond to Jesus' call

Susan M. Erschen

What is "stewardship"?

Stewardship is perhaps one of the most misunderstood words in the Church today. Some people think it is all about money. Others think it means only time, talent and treasure. Some wonder if it is just another word for fundraising or tithing.

In reality, "stewardship" is the word that describes our entire relationship with God. God loved and trusted us so much that he made us his stewards. Our challenge is to strive to be good stewards by recognising that everything we have is a gift from God, taking time to be grateful for the gifts that God has given us, realising that God gives each of us all we need plus enough to share, and turning to the Holy Spirit for guidance in sharing our gifts as God intended.

Stewardship, therefore, is linked to our life of following Jesus and once one chooses to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option. Anyone who wants to be good at any task must study it and practice it.

Stewardship, too, takes practice. Society tempts us to triumph in our material accomplishments and continually strive for more. At times resisting this pull toward self-centred materialism requires practice, prayer and careful study of God's teachings.

At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ gave us important final messages: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me but I who chose you and appointed you to go bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: Love one another" (Jn 15:15-17).

This simple message from Our Lord gives us five keys for living as good stewards: spend time with God, realise God has chosen us, contribute something for God, trust in God's abundance, and love and serve.

1. Spend time with God

God is the owner and master of everything. Yet, we are not his slaves. We are the stewards he trusts, the ones he invites to know him and his will. Stewardship draws us closer to God. When we embrace the role of steward, we open ourselves to know God more fully.

We foster that relationship by attending Mass more frequently; weaving more prayer into and



throughout our busy days; finding time to study scripture and religious books, articles or websites; participating in faith-enrichment activities in our parish and stepping into a church or chapel for quiet time alone with God.

2. Realise God has chosen us

How awesome it is to realise God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, has chosen us. Everything we are, everything we do and everything we have is a result of God choosing us, loving us and blessing us.

God chooses each one of us to be the stewards of different gifts. We may have a musical talent, financial aptitude, a generous spirit or a positive attitude. Even our faith is a gift from God.

God does not give us all the same gifts. We could look around and see people who have more gifts than we have and become jealous. Or, we

How awesome it is to realise God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, has chosen us. Everything we are, everything we do and everything we have is a result of God choosing us, loving us and blessing us.

could look around the world and see people who have much less than we have, and learn to be compassionate. The choice is ours.

3. Contribute something for God

Based on the unique combination of gifts God has given us, each of us is called to make a contribution that is uniquely ours to make. We can contribute in a variety of ways by providing a helping hand or a strong back; leadership, knowledge or wisdom; financial support; a listening ear or a gentle smile; a new idea; and special skills or talents.

Only we, through prayer, know what God is calling us to contribute.

4. Trust in God's abundance

It can be difficult for any of us to give away something that we think we need. However, stewardship teaches us to look at our financial situations in a new way. When we

Stewardship is not a gift we give to God but rather a gift God gives to us... Jesus has called on us to be good stewards of the resources of God

believe our own needs will be met, it is easy for us to give.

Unfortunately, the endless advertising so prevalent in today's media convinces us we have endless needs. However, the things the world tempts us to have are not needs. They are wants. God may not give us all we want, but we must trust that he will give us what we need, when we ask. In turn, we generously share with the world what God has entrusted to us.

5. Love and Serve

When we share our resources more generously with the parish, we take the focus off the parish's financial burdens. In this way, stewardship encourages ministry and a more loving parish community. When we love and serve others in our parish, we build

up a community that will also love and serve us. We become part of something greater than ourselves. We feel a sense of belonging. We also develop a sense of compassion when we reach out to those who are most in need. Belonging and compassion are two of the many unexpected benefits of living as God's stewards.

Stewardship is not a gift we give to God but rather a gift God gives to us.

From the earliest disciples of Jesus Christ, Catholics made the work of the Church, Christ's body, a priority in their lives. The great cathedrals and simple country churches where people worship, schools where countless children are educated, hospitals that care for the sick and charitable institutions that serve the needs of many, have been built by generations of the faithful.

They gave, even when they had little to give, because they knew Jesus had called them as his disciples to be good stewards of the resources God entrusted to them.

Susan M. Erschen is a former director of stewardship and is the author of the books 'God's Guide to Grandparents' and 'Finding a Loving God in the Midst of Grief'



AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



Salford's young Catholics plan future vision for Church in a Big Listen event

Young people across the diocese of Salford are helping to shape the future of the local Church after taking an active role in the diocesan synod.

Last weekend, almost 30 young adults from parishes across the diocese gathered at St Augustine's church in Manchester to take part in the Big Listen exercise for the young adult community.

Fr David Yates, director for Salford Youth and Young Adults Ministry, began the session by celebrating the monthly young adults' Mass, before the group came together to learn more about the diocesan synod and their role in developing the Church across Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

The exercise was led by Young Adults Synod Members, Rachel Li and Maureen Usiagwu, who guided the group through the four questions of the Big Listen, and collected their responses.

These questions invited the group to reflect on their core values, the mission of the Church, and its role in the 21st-century.

After sharing their thoughts, the group sealed individual responses in an envelope, which will then be fed into the portal by the Young Adult Members.

Reflecting on the exercise, the group gave fantastic feedback, reporting that the session helped them understand more about our diocesan synod and the role all are asked to play in the future of the Church.

One attendee, Efe, said: "I liked the structure of the session and the whole thing was better than I was expecting from a church meeting! It gets you to think seriously about how we live our lives and our faith, which is a good thing."

Another group member, Mary, added: "What I liked about the questions is that there are no right or wrong answers, and by talking about these things openly with other people, you come to realise that a lot of people see things the same way."

"Before this evening, I didn't have a clue what a synod was, what the questions were, what the diocese was asking of us, but just looking at the questions, I realised that it's just asking us what we've always been asked: how can we live out our faith today?"



Collage of photos showing small groups of young adults sitting round tables in discussion. Top right, Young Adult Synod member Maureen Usiagwu leads the session; right, Fr David Yates



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AROUND THE PARISHES/EDUCATION



Bishop Stephen receives fittingly warm welcome on return 'home' to Birmingham

Hundreds welcomed Bishop Stephen Wright back to the Archdiocese of Birmingham on Friday 17th November for a Mass of Thanksgiving at St Chad's Cathedral.

Bishop Stephen, a former Auxiliary Bishop of the archdiocese, was installed as the 15th Bishop of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle in July.

The Mass of Thanksgiving was attended by Bishop Stephen's fellow clergy, family, friends and former parishioners from parishes he served in Stechford, Banbury and Burton upon Trent, along with a group from his home parish of St Austin's, Stafford.

School children from a host of local schools were also in attendance, including the following primary schools: St Modwen's,

Burton; St Chad's, Birmingham; Corpus Christi, Stechford; St Cuthbert's, Stechford; St Austin's, Stafford; and Blessed Mother Teresa's, Stafford. There were also pupils present from Blessed William Howard Catholic School, Stafford and Blessed George Napier School, Banbury.

Archbishop Bernard Longley warmly welcomed Bishop Stephen back, and gave an introduction to the congregation.

It felt extra special as people were able to gather and celebrate in person with Bishop Stephen. When he was ordained bishop at St Chad's Cathedral in October 2020 it was with a limited congregation because of Covid restrictions, and not many people were able to travel to his installation in Newcastle.

During his homily Bishop Stephen talked about his new home in the north and how he was settling in, including regular walks and bird watching in Northumberland and discovering places of pilgrimage.

He also shared his thoughts on the Northern Saints, and how they were a continual inspiration – especially St Cuthbert, who is still widely revered today.

Bishop Stephen said he was very privileged to wear the cross of St Cuthbert and be the bishop of his homeland, adding that there was much to learn from his style of ministry – that being 7th century synodality.

He concluded his homily saying: "Respond with generosity to the Lord's call to serve His people."

Bishops' delight as St Winefride's Well made national shrine

The bishops of England and Wales have elevated St Winefride's Well to the status of a national shrine.

The shrine at Holywell in Flintshire, North Wales, has been a site of pilgrimage for almost 1,400 years since St Winefride was decapitated there by Caradog, a spurned suitor, and miraculously re-headed by her uncle, St Beuno.

St Winefride's inspired King Henry V, who made a pilgrimage to the shrine, and also novelists like Ellis Peters, the author of the

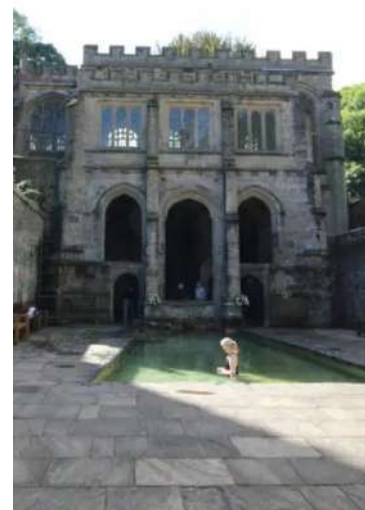
Cadfael detective series, and poets like Gerard Manley Hopkins, the Victorian Jesuit.

The elevation of the shrine was agreed by the bishops at their autumn plenary meeting last week.

Bishop Peter Brignall of Wrexham, the local ordinary for Holywell, said that the national status was a recognition of both the importance of St Winefride to the Church in the British Isles and also its significance as a heritage site.

He said: "Everyone is more than welcome to come and visit, whether they are of faith or not, to discover a bit of our country's tradition and heritage, and that they come with open hearts to that commitment to God that they may not have within their own lives, but are able to recognise in the lives of others and be prepared to be touched by that."

The bishop added that he hoped the shrine would appeal particularly to women who sought healing as a result of violence or abuse, and might draw inspiration from the saint who is honoured there.



Left, the new national shrine of St Winefride's Well

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AROUND THE PARISHES/EDUCATION

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

Diversity and unity at first deanery festival

Jane Crone

On Saturday, 4th November, Caritas in East Anglia held its first deanery festival at St Laurence's Church in Cambridge.

The day began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Peter Collins, during which he spoke about the role Catholic volunteers play in the life of the Church. At the end of Mass, the Caritas in East Anglia candle was taken through into a church hall filled with stalls showcasing the work of local, national, and international organisations such as the SVP, food banks, the Cantonese Chaplaincy, the Justice and Peace Group, UCM, and CWL. The team from the Saturday morning St Laurence's coffee hub kindly provided refreshments while stallholders spent time getting to know each other and greeting visitors.

During the day, stallholders and visitors heard from two speakers. A local speaker, Selwyn Image, spoke about setting up Emmaus UK in

Cambridge, while Margaret Clark outlined the role the National Board of Catholic Women plays in the life of the Church in England and Wales.

Fr John Warrington, Chair of Caritas in East Anglia, said it had been great "to welcome so many diverse organisations and projects to our first Caritas East Anglia Festival. There was a real buzz in the room after Mass, conversation flowed as old friends met and new friendships were made.

"The speakers provided insight and reflection leading to thoughtful questions and discussion.

"At the end of the day, prayer and reflection drew us together and helped us give thanks for all that we shared and celebrated, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

For more information on Caritas in East Anglia, see www.rcdea.org.uk/caritas-east-anglia/



CSI report full of praise for St Mary Magdalen

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School in Seaham has been rated 'Outstanding' and a 'vibrant and living example of the mission of the Church', by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI).

CSI lead inspector Leigh-Anne Young said: "There is a wealth of opportunities for pupils to step up to leadership and this is embraced by the pupils. Their deep care and understanding that they are known and loved by God makes them proud, authentic and skilled at carrying out these roles. Pupils fully understand and embrace the core message of the school mission statement; they are 'centred in Christ'."

The report also praised pupil behaviour as 'outstanding' and highlighted a 'true sense of nurture and belonging'.

Leadership at the school is praised for being 'visionary at all levels'... and as a result, 'there is complete engagement from all members of the school family.' Religious literacy and scripture have 'a high priority'.

Headteacher Andrea Goodwin, who is described as 'truly inspirational' in the report, said: "As a school family, we are extremely proud that the inspectors clearly recognised the mission of our school to keep Christ at the centre, whilst confidently engaging in the world around us.

"The commitment and positive relationships at all levels from our staff, families, governors, parish community but mostly from our exceptional children is something to be celebrated.

We will continue in our drive for all children to flourish and live out Gospel values."

Catholic Women's League remembers refugees and prisoners at its annual AGM

The Catholic Women's League held its AGM and annual conference at High Leigh Conference Centre, 30th October to 1st November.

Guest speakers included Bishop Paul McAleenan, lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees, who gave an excellent speech on the relationship between Catholic social teaching and refugees.

Malcolm Johnstone from the London and Slough Run, a charity that distributes items such as food, drink, clothing, bedding and toiletries to homeless people on the streets of London, also spoke.

As well as listening to talks, members enjoyed social activities, morning and evening prayers, a rosary walk around the grounds, and Mass celebrated by Bishop McAleenan.

The CWL has partnered with the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) for a three-year period and has been assembling backpacks for prisoners to take with them when



their sentence has finished. Members handed over another 99 backpacks to Marie Norbury and Theresa Alessandro from Pact as a result of a packing operation at

High Leigh. They continue to sew crosses in pockets which are distributed to prisoners through prison chaplains.

• **The Catholic Women's League**



offers women the opportunity to engage in a mixture of spiritual, social, educational and charitable activities. Its website can be found at catholicwomensleaguocio.org.uk

New members are always welcome—the CWL are always keen to set up groups in new locations. Please contact the National Secretary at natsec@cwlhq.org.uk.

New leadership course launched

Pictured right are delegates at a new Catholic leadership course launched by St Bonaventure's School, East London.

The training day saw 35 aspiring leaders in Catholic education drawn from across England take part in discussions and seminars led by former school leader and current chief executive officer of Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), Raymond Friel OBE.

The over-arching aim of the course is to equip educators with the essential skills they need to promote Catholic education and prepare them to tackle future challenges.



St Catherine’s revels in the drama of ‘the Scottish play’

Young thespians from St Catherine’s Catholic Primary School in Newcastle had the opportunity to tread the boards with the prestigious Royal Shakespeare Company when they performed one of the Bard’s most infamous plays at the Northern Stage.

The Year 3 and 4 pupils took part in *Macbeth* as part of the RSC’s Associate Schools Programme.

“We have been involved in this project for a few years now, and the children have loved it,” said Emily Barnes, Year 4 teacher at St Catherine’s, a member of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust. “Every year the children ask if we will be taking part again.”

Twenty-two budding actors from the school were involved in the production, appearing in classic scenes which included the infamous three witches.

The final performance, which took place at Newcastle’s Northern Stage theatre, was enjoyed by an audience of around 500 people, and featured pupils from several other primary schools in the area.

“They loved it,” continued Miss Barnes. “It was a brilliant experience for all the children involved.”

“These opportunities give the children a fantastic opportunity to perform on a lovely stage, which in turn builds confidence in so many children.”



Cardinal’s visit is welcome boost to East Timorese community’s faith

Canon John Minh
His Eminence Cardinal Virgilio do Carmo of East Timor recently visited Catholic communities in Peterborough and Cambridge.

East Timor’s population of about 1.2 million is around 98 per cent Catholics and it retains strong connections with Portugal, to the extent that its two official languages are Tetum and Portuguese.

There are around 500 East Timorese living in Cambridge and the surrounding areas and they actively participate in the local parishes. Recently, a member of their community, Sr Mary Gonçalves FDC, made her Perpetual Profession of Vows in the Daughters of Divine Charity

Congregation at the central church, Our Lady of the Assumption and the English Martyrs, in Cambridge City. Many East Timorese act as altar servers, readers, and special ministers of Holy Communion in the Cambridge area.

To support them in their good works, His Excellency João Paulo Rangel, Ambassador of East Timor to the UK, arranged an official visit by Cardinal Virgilio do Carmo to meet East Timorese communities in the UK. On Wednesday, 10th November he met with members in Peterborough at St Peter and All Souls on Geneva Street, and the following day, in Cambridge. In Cambridge, he said Mass and baptised a baby at St Laurence’s

Church on Milton Road. Although it was a weekday, about 200 attended Mass and the reception afterwards.

The cardinal’s pastoral tour has strengthened the East Timorese communities in East Anglia. Vina Fernandes, president of the East Timorese Community in Cambridge (ETICC), said: “When God sends a cardinal, it’s a visitor from Heaven.”

A proposed programme for their liturgical, pastoral, and cultural activities in 2024 has been discussed by the local clergy.

It is hoped that the new liturgical year will see remarkable growth in the spiritual life of the East Timorese communities in this diocese.

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The Universe Catholic Weekly's guide to the more leisurely side of life

GARDENING

Don't just focus on growing your own vegetables – give fruit a chance, too

Five reasons why you shouldn't try to grow your own fruit... and the reasons why each one of them is wrong!

When it comes to growing our own food, the natural starting point for most of us is a vegetable garden. Yet by stopping there, (which I'm guilty of), means missing out on a lot. Growing fruit is just as important as growing vegetables because it gives us control over what is in our food and where it comes from.

But home grown fruit also provides incredible flavours and a larger selection of varieties than what is typically found in the grocery store. And by growing fruit organically, we are reducing the demand for conventionally grown fruit...and that supports the environment.

For some, adding fruit to the garden can be intimidating. Yet by using sound gardening practices, growing a wide variety of delicious fruit from healthy trees and shrubs is possible in your own backyard or even a deck or patio. In speaking with many food-gardeners not currently growing fruit, a few objections kept surfacing.

In no particular order, here were the some of the most popular reasons for not starting.

Not enough room to grow fruit

Of course, if you're growing a standard tree then that argument will hold water for many people, but with so many options today for miniature, dwarf, and semi-dwarf fruit trees, as well as the fact that almost any tree can be grown in a container, the lack of space argument is no longer valid.

No, you might not be able to have an orchard, but there's no reason why you can't have multiple containers of fruit bearing trees and shrubs.

From a single strawberry pot, to container grown figs and even trees, all can thrive in a container. Or, select varieties bred for small spaces and containers.

Pest and disease issues are too common

One of the most often raised concerns when growing fruit trees and berry plants is their potential susceptibility to pests and diseases. But this is a problem that can be overcome.

Like a healthy garden and landscape, keeping a clean planting site is key. Pruning and destroying diseased limbs, removing mummified fruit, (especially in late autumn/winter) to avoid re-contamination of diseases and spores, avoid



planting in poorly drained sites, and don't overwater to prevent root-rot and water molds.

And yes, some fruit trees, like apples are hosts to their fair share of pests. However, there are numerous effective conventional and organic controls.

In addition, many of the perceived problems are only cosmetic. Personally, I'd prefer a blemished apple that's perfectly fine to eat, vs. one that has been sprayed with a pesticide just to prevent a little cosmetic damage.

Too time consuming

What do you mean, time consuming? Mother Nature does most of the work!

The biggest issue referenced here usually pertains to the time invested in a pest prevention regime if you choose to do so. Using best practices to choose and site your plants properly from the start will go a long way to preventing many of the most time-consuming issues.

Don't let past failures put you off... to borrow the hackneyed phrase, "remember, past results are not an indication of future performance"... it fits nicely for all gardening...

Like the rest of the trees and shrubs in your garden, know before you buy. A good local nursery specialising in fruit can be a huge help here. Some of the best resources for selecting high quality plants appropriately suited for your area are online and mail order resources.

Other important duties involve early pruning to train you trees for size and shape, and of course the all important harvesting. Yet let us all be reminded that time invested in harvesting is perhaps the greatest benefit of growing fruit.

Too Messy

The importance of maintaining a clean environment for aesthetics and to reduce pest and disease issues later will indeed require time. But on the assumption you are not growing a large orchard, presumably this task is easily managed along with your other weekend chores.

Being vigilant with picking off young fruit early also eliminates excess fruit drop later.

Lack of success in the past

To borrow the phrase: "past results are not an indication of future performance", should be applied here if your success in the past is lacking. The same principles that apply to the rest of the plants in your landscape apply to fruit trees and shrubs too.

With all the resources available today, as well as newer, more resistant varieties, and your options and chances for success are greater than ever.

HEALTH

Epigenetic clock countdown dictates your risk of strokes or dementia

Sara Hägg & Jonathan Ka Long Mak

As we journey through life, the risk of developing chronic diseases, including cancer, heart disease and neurological disorders, increases significantly.

However, while we all grow older chronologically at the same pace, biologically, our clocks can tick faster or slower. Relying solely on chronological age – the number of years since birth – is inadequate to measure the body's internal biological age.

This discrepancy has prompted scientists to find ways to determine a person's biological age. One way is to look at 'epigenetic clocks' which consider chemical changes that occur in our DNA as we age. Another approach uses information from medical tests, such as blood pressure, cholesterol levels and other physiological measurements.

By using these biomarkers, researchers have discovered that when a person's biological age surpasses their chronological age, it often signifies accelerated cell ageing and a higher susceptibility to age-related diseases.

Our new research suggests your biological age, more than the years you've lived, may predict your risk of dementia and stroke in the future.

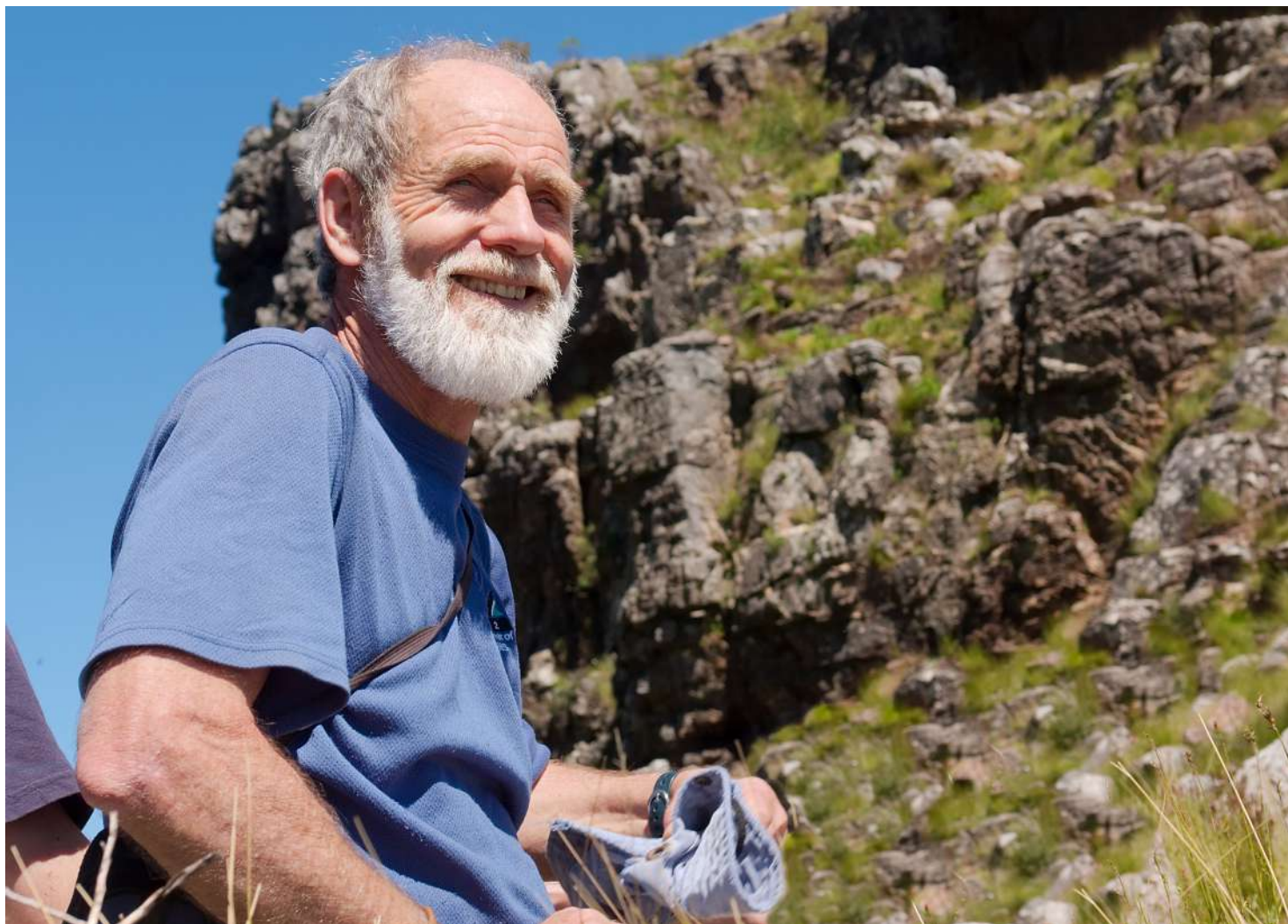
Previous studies have shed light on this association but they were often limited in scale. This has left gaps in our understanding of how biological ageing relates to various neurological disorders, including Parkinson's disease and motor neuron disease.

To bridge this gap, our study, published in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, examined over 325,000 middle-aged and older British adults. We investigated whether advanced biological age increases the future risks of developing neurological diseases, including dementia, stroke, Parkinson's disease and motor neuron disease.

To assess biological age, we analysed 18 biomarkers collected during medical check-ups conducted between 2006 and 2010. These included blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol levels, inflammation markers, waist circumference and lung capacity.

We then followed participants for nine years to see who developed neurological diseases. Those with older biological ages at the study's start had significantly higher risks of dementia and stroke over the next decade – even after considering differences in genetics, sex, income and lifestyle.

Imagine two 60-year-olds enrolled in our study. One had a biological age of 65, the other 60. The one with the more accelerated biological



age had a 20 per cent higher risk of dementia and a 40 per cent higher risk of stroke.

Strong association

It is worth noting that while advanced biological age showed a strong association with dementia and stroke, we saw a weaker link with motor neuron disease and even an opposite direction for Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's disease often exhibits unique characteristics. For instance, although smoking typically accelerates ageing, it paradoxically exerts a protective effect against Parkinson's disease.

Our findings show that biological ageing processes probably contribute substantially to dementia and stroke later in life. Together with our previous research showing a significant association between advanced biological age and cancer risks, these results suggest that

"Assessing biological age from routine blood samples could someday become standard practice. Those with accelerated ageing could be identified decades before dementia symptoms arise."

slowing the body's internal decline may be key to preventing chronic diseases in late life.

Assessing biological age from routine blood samples could someday become standard practice. Those with accelerated ageing could be identified decades before dementia symptoms arise. While currently incurable, early detection provides opportunities for preventive lifestyle

changes and close monitoring.

For example, research starts to suggest that biological age may be slowed down or even reversed by lifestyle intervention including exercise, sleep, diet and nutritional supplements.

Replicating our results in diverse groups of people is next step. We also hope to unravel connections between genetic background, biological ageing and other major diseases, such as diabetes and heart diseases.

For now, monitoring internal ageing processes could empower people to delay cognitive decline, providing hope for a healthier and more fulfilling life in later years.

Sara Hägg is an Associate Professor, Molecular Epidemiology, Karolinska Institutet

Jonathan Ka Long Mak is a PhD Candidate, Karolinska Institutet



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HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Help to stay sniffle free this Christmas

Five expert tips to help you survive Christmas holidays with allergies and asthma

If you're wondering why you're sniffing and sneezing when you thought the worst of allergy season was behind you, don't be surprised. The pollen season may be over, but winter offers plenty of challenges for anyone with allergies or asthma.

"Because allergy and asthma symptoms can occur year-round, it's best to be aware of seasonal issues and your individual triggers," said allergy expert Gailen Marshall. "Knowing what to expect can help prevent flare-ups so you can relax and enjoy the holidays."

Just in time to help you get through the Christmas season with a smile on your face, here are five tips to keep in mind.

1. Be prepared

Because you'll be gathering with others over the Christmas season, make sure to prevent transmission of viruses like the flu by being up to date with your flu shot and COVID vaccines. Having the flu can make your asthma symptoms more severe, so protect yourself before the peak of the season.

You can also substitute 'air kisses' and fist bumps to keep some distance between yourself and others.



2. Real tree, or not real tree? That is the question

Because Christmas decor often includes wreaths, branches and trees, the question arises if it's better to go natural or not. Both real and artificial trees and wreaths can cause problems, but you can take steps to reduce their risk of making you sneeze and wheeze.

Some people have contact skin allergies to a substance called terpene found in the sap of real trees. Also, live trees may still have mould spores and pollen on them that can cause nasal allergies to flare. Take time to rinse off live trees before bringing them in the house.

For artificial trees and other decorations you only use once a year, dust and mould can

accumulate in storage. Consider wearing a mask to clean trees and other decor before displaying them. You can use a handheld vacuum to gently remove dust from an artificial tree.

3. Eat, drink and be wary

Get-togethers mean exposure to foods that may have ingredients you or someone else might be allergic to. Hosts will appreciate knowing if you or a family member has a serious food allergy, so be sure to share that information. You can offer to bring a separate dish or dishes to avoid causing disruption to your hosts. If it's your turn to host, communicate with guests about menu ingredients ahead of

time in case someone has an allergy you don't know about – they will thank you!

Some people may have an intolerance to alcohol, which shows up as a stuffy nose, headache and/or flushed skin immediately after drinking – most commonly after drinking red wine and alcohol that has colour. If this sounds familiar, the only way to prevent this reaction is to avoid drinking alcohol.

4. The road more travelled

If you're visiting friends or relatives over the holidays, you may encounter all kinds of triggers – whether from perfumed fellow travellers or your friends' pets – that send your allergic reactions into high gear. Cold dry outside air can also trigger your asthma. Before travelling, make sure you're up to date on your medications. Take them before your trip – and be sure to pack whatever you need to get through your travels with as little difficulty as possible.

5. See an allergist

If over-the-counter medications aren't helping your symptoms, you may want to see an allergist before the holidays get going – especially if you've never seen one or it's been a while since your last visit. Allergists are trained to diagnose and treat symptoms, and to work with you to create an individual action plan. For year-round allergy symptoms, you might consider immunotherapy (allergy shots). Allergy shots can reduce symptoms and help modify and prevent allergy development.

By following these tips and planning ahead, you'll be able to make the most of all the holidays you love to celebrate.

Feeling burnt out? Watch out for these symptoms

If long workdays leave you wondering if you're burnt out, take a closer look. While typical signs of work-related burnout can mean you're overdue for serious PTO, other symptoms may indicate psychological, emotional and/or physical issues that need to be addressed for your well-being.

Listing your symptoms may provide a clearer picture of what you need for self-care. While some symptoms may lead you to seek a visit with your physician or consult a mental health professional, others may indicate a common source of discomfort in today's digital environment: your eyes.

Frequently experienced eye-related issues

These symptoms and others can be due to – or worsened by – excessive screen time, including work, gaming, watching TV or interacting on social media for more than two hours consecutively each day.

Eyestrain is very common in today's visually demanding world, especially if your workday involves extensive reading and staring at a computer. Sore, dry or watery eyes, itching or burning sensations, sensitivity to light, headaches and difficulty focusing can develop.

Headaches accompanied by visual symptoms like flashing or sparkling lights and darkening of vision could indicate you're experiencing migraine with aura. However, it's critical to rule out other potential causes like damage inside your eye, a retinal tear or retinal detachment, which can only be determined through an

in-person comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist. Headaches can be exacerbated by both stress and excessive screen time.

Blurred vision when looking quickly from near to far could be a sign of accommodative dysfunction, a condition frequently found in anyone who works up close for long periods of time, such as those who work on screens. Blurring and inability to focus can occur without proper lighting and posture, or if you're not taking enough breaks.



Dry eye is a medical condition in which someone doesn't create enough of a quality tear film to lubricate and nourish the eye. Tears are necessary for maintaining the health of the front surface of the eye and providing clear vision. Dry eye may be caused or worsened when reading or staring at a screen for long periods of time.

Neck and shoulder pain can result from tilting your head at odd angles because your glasses aren't designed for looking at a computer, or if you bend toward the screen to see more clearly. Poor lighting, a glare on your screen, improper viewing distances, poor seating posture or uncorrected vision problems could all contribute to neck and shoulder pain.

If you're experiencing symptoms, visit an optometrist for a comprehensive in-person eye exam. Optometrists can test for a wide variety of conditions to understand the causes of your discomfort. Only by examining your eyes in-office can an optometrist determine how to help relieve your symptoms.

"Unfortunately, eye health is not the first thing people think of when they're experiencing workplace discomfort, but a well-functioning visual system is crucial for everyday wellness," said eye expert Dr. Ronald Benner. "Eye health impacts your overall health – and also provides important early indicators of numerous diseases. An annual comprehensive eye exam with a doctor of optometry is vital to ensure everyone's eye health, whether they wear glasses or not."

Better work habits

In addition to seeing your optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam, here are tips to help safeguard your eyes:

The 20/20/20 rule. It's important to rest your eyes while on your computer, gaming or using any device for long periods. For every 20 minutes on a digital device, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This gives your eyes a chance to refocus.

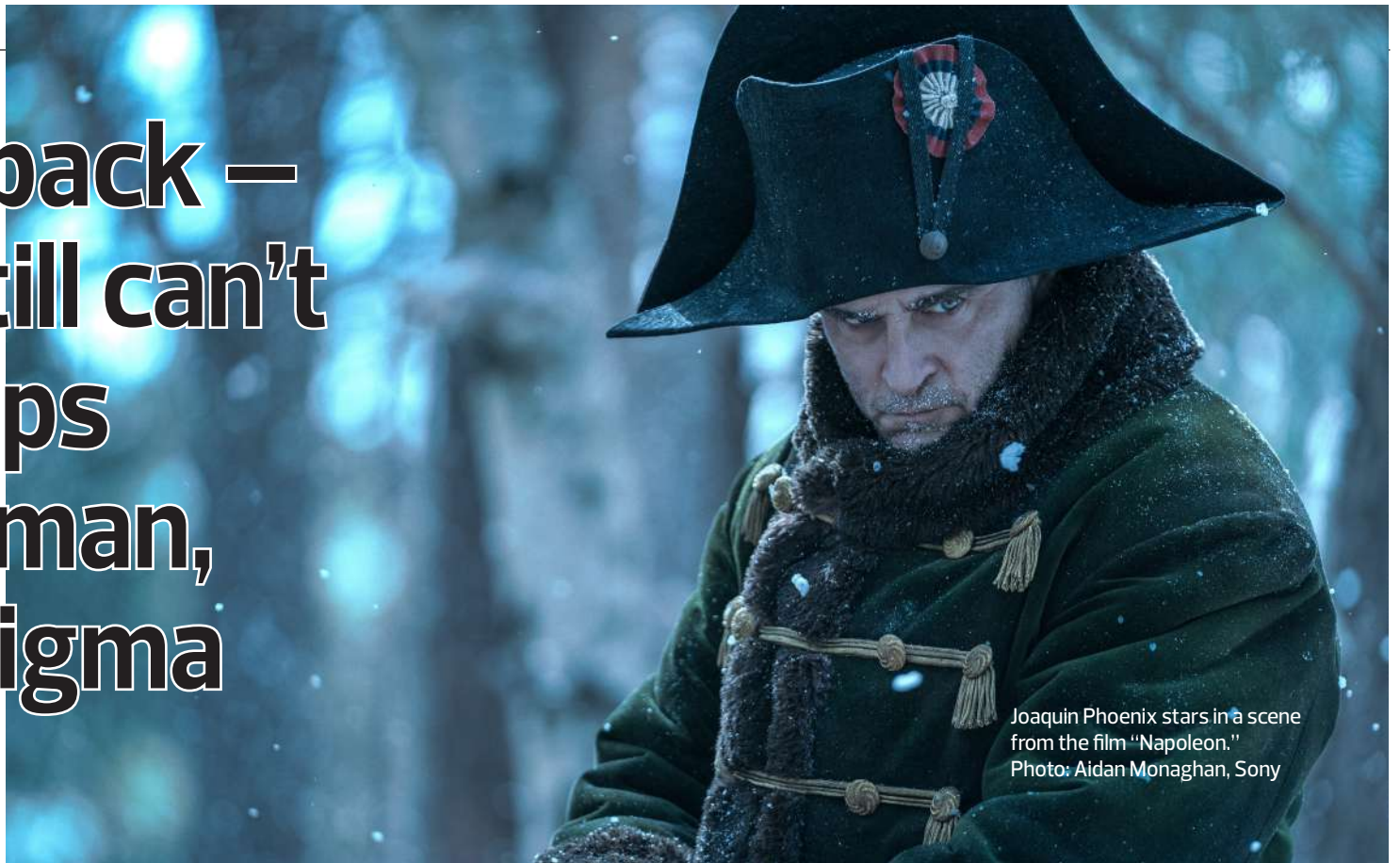
Blink! Blinking keeps the front surface of the eye moist, but it's common for people to blink less often when doing tasks on electronic devices. Blink rate can actually slow by up to 40% when you're looking at a screen. To minimise the chances of developing dry eye, try to blink more frequently. Setting reminders on your devices can help you remember to do so.

Digital device distance. Your computer screen should be 15–20 degrees below eye level (about 4–5") as measured from the centre of the screen, and 20 inches from your eyes. Smaller devices should be a minimum of 13 inches away to give the visual system a break, and make sure to use the zoom feature to increase small print and details instead of bringing the device closer to your eyes.

The right glasses for the job. Whether your corrective lenses are worn for distance, reading or both, they may not provide the best vision for viewing computer screens. Tell your optometrist about your daily job tasks and hobbies. You may benefit from wearing glasses specifically made for computer work.

FILMS

Boney's back – but we still can't get to grips with the man, or the enigma



Joaquin Phoenix stars in a scene from the film "Napoleon."
Photo: Aidan Monaghan, Sony

John Mulderig

Is "Napoleon" (Sony) dynamite? The answer might depend on whom you ask.

Viewers out for a sweeping spectacle will likely come away from director Ridley Scott's historical epic satisfied. But those seeking insight into the conquering French emperor's personality will find there's a hollow ring to star Joaquin Phoenix's portrayal of him.

Battlefield gore and steamy sex scenes, moreover, make the film's demanding fare suitable only for the hardest grown-ups.

As Napoleon's military and political career advances, he falls for the young widow Josephine de Beauharnais (Vanessa Kirby). Screenwriter David Scarpa's depiction of their relationship,

however, is eccentric. Their dialogue carries undertones of a mutual, sadomasochistic desire for mastery, while their physical interaction is better fitted to a barnyard than a marital chamber.

Napoleon, the script would have us believe, was a weirdly awkward character. Phoenix fumes and smoulders but also delivers lines so out of place as to provoke laughter. The upshot is an unconvincing portrait, though the sequence devoted to his eventual divorce from Josephine – whom he still loved but who had failed to produce an heir – is poignant.

The climactic Battle of Waterloo is also

handled impressively. But what precedes it, while sometimes visually striking, is flawed at a human level. Whether mature filmgoers ultimately reckon the artistic tally in the red or the black, they'll have to be prepared for the numerous taxing elements included in this polished, but often implausible, retrospective.

Joaquin Phoenix told *empireonline.com* of the irresistible pull of working with Ridley Scott. "The truth is, there was just a very nostalgic idea of working with Ridley again," he said.

"I had such an incredible experience working with Ridley on *Gladiator*, and I was so young. It was my first big production. I really yearned for

that experience again, or something similar."

Phoenix also shared the lengths he went to with Scott to portray Napoleon. "We sat for ten days, all day, talking scene by scene. In a sense, we rehearsed. Absolutely detail by detail," he said.

For his part, Scott compares the leader with leaders like Alexander the Great, Adolf Hitler, Stalin.

"At the same time, he was remarkable with his courage, and in his can-do and in his dominance. He was extraordinary... I'm staring at Joaquin and saying, 'This little demon is Napoleon Bonaparte.' He looks like him," Scott said.

Marvels? Not so sure ... more the mediocres ...

John Mulderig

Considered artistically, the quirky, sometimes humorous but more often confusing superhero adventure *The Marvels* (Disney) presents a mixed bag of ingredients that will likely appeal to some viewers but not others. Assessed for its morality, the film is equally miscellaneous and confronts parents with a potential quandary.

There are few explicitly troublesome elements included in the comics-rooted script director Nia DaCosta co-wrote with Megan McDonnell and Elissa Karasik. Yet one of the central relationships binding the picture's three female main characters comes freighted with a distinct sexual undertone.

Given the Magic Kingdom's recent record of propagandising on behalf of homosexuality, this skirting of the line between adulation and desire complicates evaluation of film's appropriate audience.

Like their elders, however, teenagers who do obtain permission to patronise *The Marvels* may be too distracted by its frenetic proceedings to ponder its underlying ethics to any great extent. In fact, although this follow-up to 2019's *Captain Marvel* touches on themes of family reconciliation and altruism, it's really all about strong women smacking down the baddies.

This time out, the titular heroine of the earlier movie (Brie Larson), aka Carol Danvers, battles intergalactic warrior Dar-Benn (Zawe Ashton). With her home planet having been

environmentally impoverished by a long civil war, Dar-Benn is bent on stealing the natural resources of other worlds to restore her own.

As she strives to check Dar-Benn, Danvers obtains the aid of astronaut Monica Rambeau (Teyonah Parris), the daughter of her deceased best friend. She's also helped by Kamala Khan (Iman Vellani), alias Ms. Marvel, a Jersey City teen who idolises – and perhaps lusts after – her.

Initially accidental, their partnership is complicated by the fact that the three have become metaphysically entangled so that anytime one of them exercises her superpower, she switches locations with another member of the trio. Though the filmmakers have fun playing with this concept, it eventually becomes more wearying than fanciful.

As the plot develops, we discover that, although her methods may be thoroughly

misguided, Dar-Benn is not entirely a villain. Instead, she sees herself as a champion of her endangered people.

We also learn that Danvers herself was partially responsible for the crisis Dar-Benn is trying to remedy. And Danvers' dealings with Monica, who has looked up to her since childhood and once regarded her as an honorary aunt, have been problematic as well. So much so, that the two start off estranged from each other.

While such moral subtleties are introduced, they mostly go undeveloped and register as beside the point. This is, overwhelmingly, an action film. So those in search of escapist entertainment will likely come away from its scenes of bloodless combat satisfied; those seeking dramatic substance, not so much.

Brie Larson told *Harper's Bazaar* that she was initially "scared" of playing a superhero due to of the effects of being part of such a huge franchise. "I was scared of what would happen to me," she said. "I was like, 'What world is this, where are the choices I have to make as an artist?'"

"What I always come back to is – I have to live with myself in a way that nobody else has to. The choices I make, I have to live with, whether I regret them or not."

Pictured left: Iman Vellani, Brie Larson and Teyonah Parris star in a scene from the film *The Marvels*. Photo/Marvel Studios



Reynolds bucked the trends of his day by adding a touch of devilment to his painting

HISTORY

Jenny Graham

Restorers uncover demon in a 1789 painting – and reveal the decline of superstition in the Age of Reason

The recent story that restorers had uncovered the image of a Gothic-looking demon in a late work by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) seems fitting for these long, dark evenings. The sinister face hovers above the head of a dying clergyman in *The Death of Cardinal Beaufort*, painted in 1789.

Fake-or-fortune-style reveals such as this, where Reynolds's hollow-eyed fiend re-emerges, fanged and uncanny from the gloom of centuries of over painting, are always popular with the public. But what are we to make of Reynolds's devilish detail in his painting, and how does it fit into the larger story of demonic representation in the art and literature of the 18th century?

First of all, we can be sure that the painted demon was put there by Reynolds because it was much discussed at the time. The scene of the dying cardinal comes from Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part II*. Witnessing bedside the death throes of Beaufort – a corrupt, mad and guilt-ridden figure – King Henry beseeches God to drive away "the busy meddling fiend / That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul".

In Shakespeare's writing, this fiend is a figure of speech, a metaphor for mental torment. Unconventionally for a painter at the time, Reynolds gives a face to this devil, and makes the fiend a visible being. It leers out of the shadows, behind Beaufort's pillow, a grotesque detail out of character in Reynolds's usual art of grand portraiture and soberly historical picture subjects.

Reynolds's contemporaries were deeply critical of the inclusion of this demonic creature in an otherwise traditional history painting. Doubtless this had to do with Reynolds's official status as the president of the Royal Academy of Arts (which champions art and artists) and author of 15 lectures on art, known as the Discourses. The art theory of the day, as far as history painting was concerned, favoured improving subjects,



rendered in an idealised manner, but taken from the life. There was little room for the fantastical or the macabre, for several reasons.

Demons in the Age of Reason

Broadly speaking, the Age of Reason saw 'the death of Satan', when science and rational thought sought to replace the religious superstitions of the previous century. Devils and demons, since they couldn't be proven to exist in this new era of factual enquiry, lost much of their fear-driven religious power as tangible beings at loose in the world, sent to punish sinners.

Yet demons didn't altogether disappear. In literature, they left the realm of physical possibility and entered the mind as metaphors for the human struggle between good and evil. As such, demons retained their moral function of teaching good souls how not to behave. Now the punishment for sin was not eternal damnation but the threat of a far more real internal mental conflict, madness and even suicide.

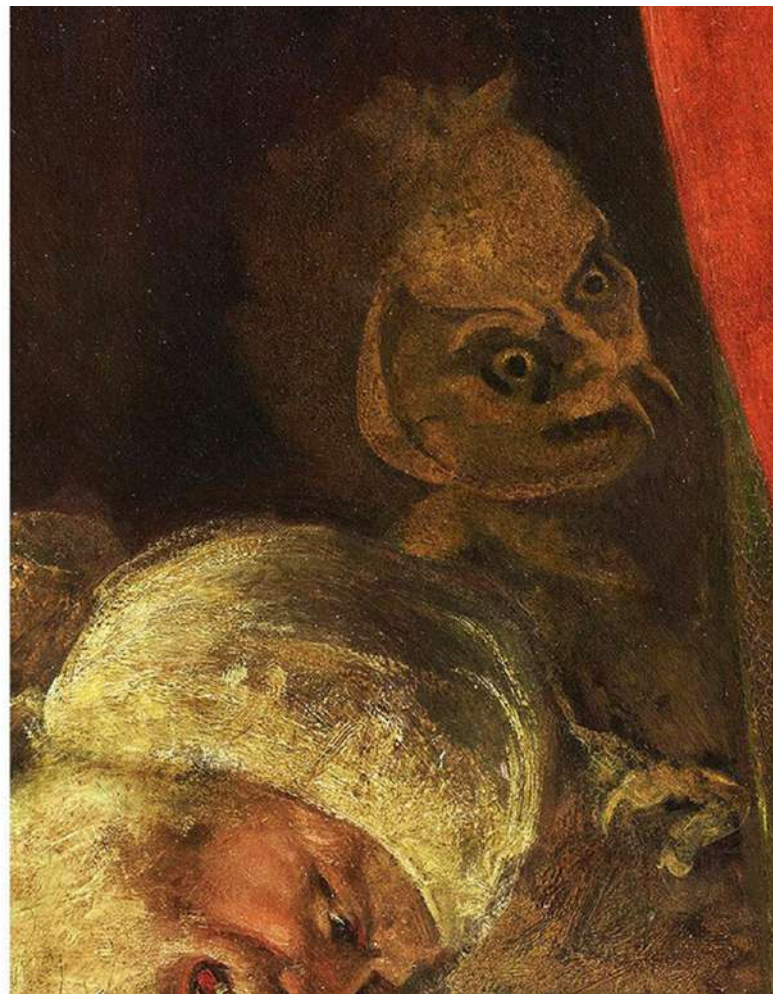
In the new genre of the novel, especially, writers could still explore the dark forces working beneath the surface of the human condition through devilish allusions while reassuring readers that good moral conduct was within their own control. In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719),

Moll Flanders (1722) and *Roxanna* (1724), or Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), demons don't appear as such, but the behaviour of key characters is repeatedly described in devilish language.

The most frightening concepts, it was thought, were best left as suggestions of the mind. Embodied devils and demons only appeared on stage or in the Gothic novel later in the 18th century. In the latter they were often found in disguise, as in MG Lewis's *Ambrosio the Monk* (1796).

In art, the shift towards the Gothic was influenced by Henry Fuseli (1741-1825). His painting *The Nightmare* showed a real-looking demon, larger than life, crouching on the body of a sleeping woman. The imp caused a sensation when the painting was shown at the Royal Academy in 1782.

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Fuseli earned the nickname *Painter in Ordinary to the Devil*, and was influential in London for his visionary images in this newly fashionable style. One such fan was Sir Joshua Reynolds, who became closely acquainted with Fuseli and an admirer of his work.

In 1789, they both contributed paintings to John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, a commercial exhibition space on Pall Mall which commissioned the best artists of the day to make pictures of subjects taken from Shakespeare.

This was the context for Reynolds's fiend in *The Death of Cardinal Beaufort*, which appeared in that exhibition. Tellingly, Fuseli had already shown a drawing of the same subject at the Royal Academy as early as 1772, a work in which Beaufort's own face took on a demonic look with reference to his internal possession.

By the 1780s, Shakespearean fiends were common among Boydell's artists. George Romney (1734-1802) made several sketches of other scenes in *Henry VI Parts I and II* where demons are conjured up by characters, and a painting of Joan of Arc doing the same, now lost.

Demons and devils visibly re-entered the art of the 18th century in the realm of satire. Here, in the monochrome print, winged or inky black devils became symbols for a host of contemporary social problems. Hogarth spoofed the religious convictions of the Methodist Church by having a little devil whisper in the ear of a sleeping congregant.

Satirist James Gillray pilloried the scourge of the 18th-century gluttonous diet, the painful condition of gout, depicting it as a sharp-toothed demon, sinking its fangs into a well-fed human foot.

Thus in 1789, the year of the French Revolution, far from losing the plot, the ageing Reynolds was part of a revolution in art that saw the demons of the imagination, so beloved of 18th-century literature, brought back vividly into the visual realm.

Jenny Graham is an Associate Professor in Art History, University of Plymouth

Relativity and resilience in sport

SPORT

Dr Colm Hickey

If anyone asks you: 'Are you a good footballer', what should you say? If you say 'Yes', you run the risk of being considered as too big headed, a hostage to fortune when your next mistimed tackle, missed open goal or own goal leads to derision and accusations of boastfulness.

If, on the other hand, you say 'No', people may accuse you of being too modest and lacking self-confidence.

The best answer, I suggest, is to say: 'It depends. Compare me to Lionel Messi and the answer is obviously "No", but if you compare me to messy Lionel, the answer is "Yes".' Football, like all sporting ability, is therefore relative.

Let me give a specific non-football example. Athletic performances are inherently relative in nature and, because athletic achievements are obtained in competition with others, it is not those who perform well who win Olympic medals, but those who perform better than others. Eric Moussambani, for example, was one of the best swimmers of Equatorial Guinea, which was mainly because most Guineans do not know how to swim at all. Moussambani won brief international fame at the 2000 Summer Olympics for an extremely unlikely victory. Moussambani, who had never seen an Olympic-sized (50 metres) swimming pool before, swam his heat of the 100m freestyle on 19th September in the unprecedentedly slow time of 1:52.72. This was the slowest time in Olympic history, but he won his heat after both his competitors were disqualified due to false starts. Although Moussambani's time was still too slow to advance to the next round, he set a new personal best and an Equatoguinean national record. He later became the coach of the national swimming squad of Equatorial Guinea.

There are many, many swimmers far faster than Moussambani who never got the chance to compete in the Olympics. Ability is not absolute – it is relative.

I once played in a team made up primarily of teachers and police officers. Our manager, Chris, was a police officer who had been a teacher. He was a tall, taciturn, coach who took football very seriously. Every team talk he ever gave, and I played for the club for about ten years, invariably began with the following words 'This lot are really good.' It did not matter if it was a friendly, a cup match where we were divisions above, a league match when we played the bottom of the division; the opposition were



"From manager Chris's point of view, we were always lucky to scrape through – no matter the result. Our feet were not just kept on the ground but buried deep within it..."

to be respected and feared.

In the team, we had Mick, who had played a very high level of non-league football – twice reaching the 2nd round of the FA Cup, and who had played for Great Britain students at the World Student Games. In midfield was Robin, a member of the Tactical Support Group, who was nicknamed 'the Terminator' by the local criminal community. We also had Gary, who had been on the books of Arsenal, and another Gary, the goalkeeper, who had played for Port Vale in the Football League. So, everything was relative. We were a team full of characters – each one who contributed something to the team and, in relative terms, everyone was different to each other. So, do you measure success collectively (the team did well) or individually (Mick was a better player than Robin)?

Meanwhile, from manager Chris's point of view, we were always lucky to scrape through – no matter the result. Our feet were not just kept on the ground but buried deep within it. Victory or defeat was always relative.

"Humility allows us to be mentally prepared for failure and, if you have true humility, people who are close to you will help lift you up when things are not going your way ... the key to overcoming obstacles and becoming successful starts with learning from your mistakes..."

That brings me to the UEFA Euro qualifiers and the performance of Gibraltar, ranked 201 in the FIFA world rankings, who lost 14-0 to France this week. They are ranked 4th. At half time, with France 7-0 up, its manager, Didier Deschamps, said: "Full marks, boys, for the first half. Let's have more of the same in the second. Keep things as simple as possible and, whenever we can, we score. There are no limits. I want the same determination from everybody. Don't hold back boys."

After the game, he said: "Even if we could have been more efficient, it's as much about respecting the opponent as scoring goals. Fourteen is not bad. It is also about setting higher objectives and not being satisfied with what we have. This squad is competitive, they always want more."

After the match, the Gibraltar squad was so shattered, a senior source told the *Gibraltar Chronicle*, that "it was like a morgue" in the away dressing room, adding that players were crying, quiet, sunken heads and not a word was spoken. Victory or defeat is relative.

What about FIFA's lowest ranked team? San Marino are the worst-ranked nation in football, according to FIFA. Based in north-central Italy, it has played 205 games in its relatively short history, losing all but 10 of those. In fact, San Marino have only ever won one game - a 1-0 friendly against Liechtenstein back in 2004. *La Serenissima*, as they are known, have scored just 30 goals in their 37-year existence, conceding 832 in return. On seven

occasions they have conceded 10, and have lost by four or more goals 99 times. The team has only picked up three points in its combined 152 competitive qualifiers, and on 14 occasions have managed to go a whole year without scoring.

Yet it has enjoyed a (relatively) successful qualifying campaign. After ending a two-year goal drought against Denmark in a 2-1 loss, a goal against Kazakhstan in their 3-1 defeat marked the first time in 18 years they had scored in back-to-back matches. Then, on Tuesday at San Marino stadium, Filippo Berardi's 97th-minute penalty against Finland marked the first time in their history that the minnows have scored in three consecutive matches.

Yes, they lost (again), but the thrashings are getting less, the gap is closing, there is hope and, although it sits bottom of the rankings, there is a sense of achievement. Victory or defeat is always relative.

What relevance do these stories have for us today? Is there anything that we can take from apparent failure to recalibrate it as a pathway to success? People tend to see success as positive and failure as a negative. There are many valuable lessons you can learn from failure, and this knowledge can help you become more successful.

At its most basic definition, failure is a lack of success. People often discount the part that failure plays in success, preferring to cling to the myth of overnight success. When Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz was asked how he felt about the company's seemingly quick success, he said: "If, by overnight success, you mean staying up and coding all night, every night for six years straight, then it felt quite tiring and stressful."

Rarely is there success without failure. By following your dreams, you will experience failure, but that failure doesn't stop people – it's how people handle failure that

Gibraltar's Mouelhi reacts after his team concede again against France. After losing 14-0, the dressing room was said to be 'like a morgue.' Things improved, however, when they acquitted themselves better in a 6-0 loss to the Dutch

stops them. When you encounter failure, tackle it head on and learn from your mistakes. Realise that every idea that pops up in your mind isn't going to work. Take the time to organise your thoughts after a failure and realise what you did wrong. Above all else, be willing to learn and grow.

It is important to stay humble so that, when failure hits, it hurts so bad that you think you'll never be successful again. By staying humble you can cope with loss and failure. When you have success, never forget that you're human, and treat everyone with the same humility and respect that you expect in return. Humility allows us to be mentally prepared for failure and, if you have true humility, people who are close to you will help lift you up when things are not going your way.

The key to overcoming obstacles and becoming successful starts with learning from your mistakes. When you experience failure ask yourself why it happened. Was it a result of something you did? Or did an outside force play a part?

Another way to learn from failure is to embrace change. Many people are fearful and resist change, but sometimes you must change things drastically. If things are not going your way, and you must start over, sometimes you must sit back and look at the changes that need to be made and embrace them. By embracing change, you encourage healthy mental growth and development.

Learning from failure is important, although not accomplishing your goal can leave you unmotivated. However, if you can see that failure opens learning possibilities, you can make progress.

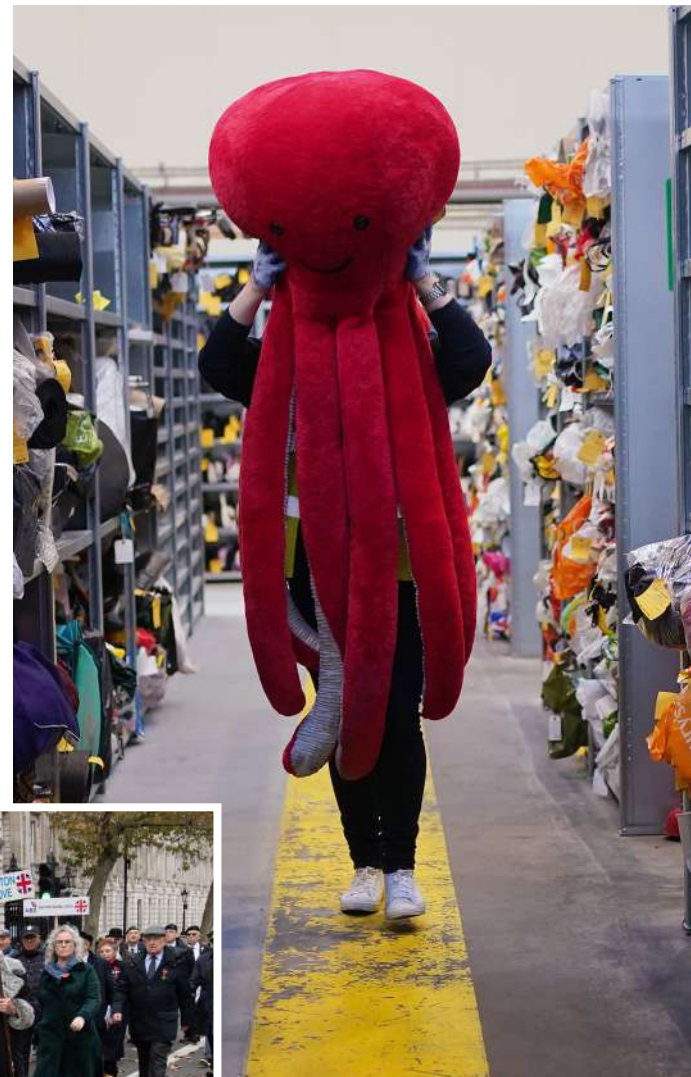
But you can look at it another way: If you fail, you open yourself up to new ways of learning and help you to learn who to trust. Although some may feel shame in failure, that is only if you let it. Dismiss nonconstructive, negative feedback that comes from failing. Building self-trust can boost your confidence when you try again, which may lead to future success. This will lead to resilience and, although failure is painful, it can build resilience, which is why the pain is a little less each time it occurs. With this resilience comes more fearlessness to get back up and try again.

By the way, Gibraltar learned from its failure. In its next match against the Netherlands, eighth on the FIFA rankings, it lost 6-0. Another loss to be sure, but remember, victory or defeat, success or failure, is always relative.

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



Above, people walking along the Dark Hedges as workmen begin the operation to remove a number of trees in Northern Ireland's famous Dark Hedges, near Armony in Co Antrim, amid concerns they could pose a risk to the public. The tunnel of trees became famous when it was featured in the HBO fantasy series *Game Of Thrones* and now attracts significant numbers of tourists from around the world. Six of the trees are being removed and remedial work will be carried out on several others.



A six-foot tall octopus soft toy is among the items stored at the Transport for London Lost Property Office - which celebrates its 90th anniversary this year - in West Ham, east London, which sorts and stores the items left on London's public transport system.



Above, people take part in the annual parade by AJEX, the Jewish Military Association, to honour and remember the service of Jewish servicemen and women 'who fought and served for freedom since World War I' at the Cenotaph, Whitehall, on 19th November.



Photo issued by Historic England of the smokehouse in Craster, Northumberland which has produced kippers for almost 170 years and has been given Grade II listed status.

Below, pop-artist Phillip Colbert completes Michelangelo's unfinished Manchester Madonna masterpiece at The National Gallery, London, using the latest OnePlus phone - the OnePlus Open.



Above, Amanda Fowles takes a photo of 'Nectary' an installation by artist Alison Smith and scientist Dr. Chris Hassall that forms part of Light Up Wakefield 2023. The illuminated flower, one of a number of giant glowing flowers in the Hepworth Wakefield's sunken garden, invites visitors to experience the world from the viewpoint of a pollinating insect.

LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I
Sunday, November 26: Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
 Ezek. 34:11-12, 15-17; Ps. 23:1-3, 5-6 r.1; 1 Cor. 15:20-26, 28; Mt. 25:31-46

Monday, November 27:
 Dan.1:1-6,8-20; Dan.3:52-56; Lk.21:1-4

Tuesday, November 28:
 Dan.2:31-45; Dan.3:57-61; Lk.21:5-11

Wednesday, November 29:
 Dan.5:1-6,13-14,16-17,23-28; Dan.3:62-67; Lk.21:12-19

Thursday, November 30: St Andrew, Apostle, patron of Scotland
 Rom.10:9-18; Ps. 19:2-5; Mt.4:18-22

Friday, December 1: Weekday of Advent
 Dan.7:2-14; Dan.3:75-81; Lk.21:29-33

Saturday, December 2: Weekday of Advent
 Dan.7:15-27; Dan.3:82-87; Lk.21:34-36



St Andrew

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